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## 警世通言

STORIES TO CAUTION

THE WORLD

II



大中华文库

汉英对照

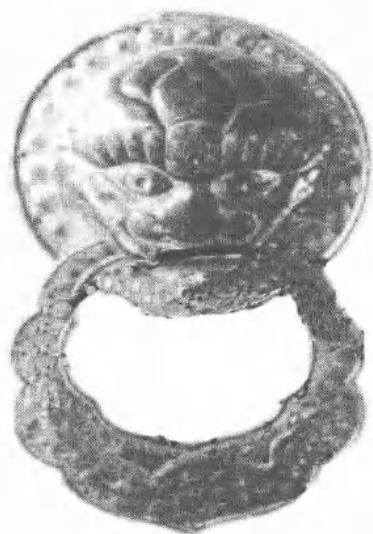
LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS

Chinese-English

# 警世通言

## Stories to Caution the World

II



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## 目 录

第十二卷	510
范鳧儿双镜重圆	
第十三卷	544
三现身包龙图断冤	
第十四卷	584
一窟鬼癫道人除怪	
第十五卷	622
金令史美婢酬秀童	
第十六卷	688
小夫人金钱赠年少	
第十七卷	718
钝秀才一朝交泰	
第十八卷	760
老门生三世报恩	
第十九卷	798
崔衙内白鹞招妖	
第二十卷	838
计押番金鳧产祸	
第二十一卷	878
赵太祖千里送京娘	



第二十二卷 940

宋小官团圆破毡笠

第二十三卷 1004

乐小舍拚生冤偶



## CONTENTS

- STORY 12* 511  
A Double Mirror Brings Loach Fan and  
His Wife Together Again
- STORY 13* 545  
Judge Bao Solves a Case through a Ghost  
That Appeared Thrice
- STORY 14* 585  
A Mangy Priest Exorcises a Den of Ghosts
- STORY 15* 623  
Clerk Jin Rewards Xiutong with a Pretty  
Maid-servant
- STORY 16* 689  
The Young Lady Gives the Young Man a  
Gift of Money
- STORY 17* 719  
The Luckless Scholar Rises Suddenly in  
Life
- STORY 18* 761  
A Former Protégé Repays His Patron  
unto the Third Generation
- STORY 19* 799  
With a White Falcon, Young Master Cui  
Brings an Evil Spirit upon Himself
- STORY 20* 839  
The Golden Eel Brings Calamity to Officer  
Ji
- STORY 21* 879  
Emperor Taizu Escorts Jingniang on a One-  
Thousand-*Li* Journey



*STORY 22* 941  
Young Mr. Song Reunites with His Family  
by Means of a Tattered Felt Hat

*STORY 23* 1005  
Mr. Le Junior Searches for His Wife at  
the Risk of His Life





## 第十二卷

### 范鳅儿双镜重圆

帘卷水西楼，一曲新腔唱打油。宿雨眠云年少梦，休讴，  
且尽生前酒一瓯。明日又登舟，却指今宵是旧游。同是  
他乡沦落客，休愁。月子弯弯照几州？

这首词末句乃借用吴歌成语，吴歌云：

月子弯弯照几州，几家欢乐几家愁，  
几家夫妇同罗帐，几家飘散在他州。

此歌出自南宋建炎年间，述民间离乱之苦。只为宣和失政，奸佞专权，延至靖康，金虏凌城，掳了徽钦二帝北去。康王泥马渡江，弃了汴京，偏安一隅，改元建炎。其时东京一路百姓惧怕鞑虏，都跟随车驾南渡。又被虏骑追赶，兵火之际，东逃西躲，不知拆





## Story 12

### A Double Mirror Brings Loach Fan and His Wife Together Again

*Curtains are raised on West Water Tower  
Midst singing of a new tune with doggerel lyrics.  
About romantic nights and youthful dreams,  
Sing no more!  
Just finish the wine while you live and breathe!*

*Tomorrow when we board the boat again,  
Tonight will be but a memory.  
Fellow travelers stranded in distant land,  
Grieve no more!  
How far does the crescent moon shine?*

The last line of the above lyric poem is taken from a folk song popular in the Wu region. This is how the song goes:

*How far does the crescent moon shine?  
It finds some households joyful, some in sorrow,  
Some married couples sharing the same bed,  
Some families scattered throughout the land.*

Originating in the Jianyan reign period [1127–31] during the Southern Song dynasty, the above song captures the miseries of families separated in those troubled times. Back in the Xuanhe reign period [1119–25], government affairs were at sixes and sevens with evil men in power. This situation lasted into the Jingkang reign period [1126–27], when the Jurchens ravaged the capital, captured Emperors Huizong and Qinzong, and carried them off to the north. After Prince Kang crossed the river on a clay horse,<sup>1</sup> he abandoned Bianjing [also called the Eastern Capital],<sup>2</sup> contented himself with exercising control over only one part of the empire, and changed the reign title to Jianyan. At the time, residents of the Eastern Capital and surrounding areas, out of fear for the Jurchen troops, followed the emperor [Emperor Gaozong, formerly prince of Kang] in a massive migra-



散了几多骨肉。往往父子夫妻终身不复相见。其中又有几个散而复合的，民间把作新闻传说。正是：

剑气分还合，荷珠碎复圆。

万般皆是命，半点尽由天。

话说陈州有一人姓徐名信，自小学得一身好武艺，娶妻崔氏，颇有容色。家道丰裕，夫妻二人正好过活。却被金兵入寇，二帝北迁。徐信共崔氏商议，此地安身不牢，收拾细软家财，打做两个包裹，夫妻各背了一个，随着众百姓晓夜奔走。行至虞城，只听得背后喊声振天，只道鞑虏追来，却原来是南朝杀败的溃兵。只因武备久弛，军无纪律，教他杀贼，一个个胆寒心骇，不战自走；及至遇着平民，抢掠财帛子女，一般会扬威耀武。[眉批]此承平日久之通弊。徐信虽然有三分本事，那溃兵如山而至，寡不敌众，舍命奔走。但闻四野号哭之声，回头不见了崔氏。乱军中无处寻



tion to the south. Goodness knows how many families were torn apart amid the flames of war as they fled helter-skelter from the pursuing Jurchen cavalry! All too many fathers and sons, husbands and wives never saw each other again for the rest of their lives. But there were also a few cases in which separated families were reunited, and the stories went around from mouth to mouth. Truly,

*The Fengcheng swords joined together again,<sup>3</sup>  
 The shattered dewdrops on lotus leaves merged anew.  
 Fate dictates everything under the sun;  
 Nothing is free of the will of Heaven.*

The story goes that there lived in Chenzhou a man called Xu Xin, who had been learning martial arts from an early age. His wife Cui-shi was a woman quite fair to look upon. They had enough means to live a comfortable life. But then, the invading Jurchen troops came and carried the two emperors off to the north. Xu Xin and Cui-shi consulted each other and concluded that this was not a safe place for a permanent home, whereupon they packed up what valuables they could carry into two bundles, and, each carrying one bundle over a shoulder, they followed the crowd of refugees and pressed onward day and night.

When they reached Yucheng, they heard earthshaking cries behind them. They thought that the Jurchens had caught up with them, but as it turned out, the cries came from defeated Song troops in flight. The Song army had been lax for so long in its preparedness against war that the soldiers had thrown all discipline to the winds. When ordered to fight the enemy, they trembled with fear and took to their heels, one and all, without ever bothering to engage the enemy, but when they encountered civilians, they turned ferocious, committing robbery left and right and seizing children by force. (*This is what becomes of an army after prolonged years of peace.*)

Although reasonably skilled in martial arts, Xu Xin by himself stood no chance of prevailing against the swarming troops in flight, and so he ran for all he was worth. Surrounded by wails of grief, he turned back to look, but his wife was nowhere in sight. It being impossible to search amid all the chaos, there was nothing for it but to



觅，只得前行。行了数日，叹了口气，没奈何，只索罢了。行到睢阳，肚中饥渴，上一个村店，买些酒饭。原来离乱之时，店中也不比往昔，没有酒卖了。就是饭，也不过是粗粝之物，又怕众人抢夺，交了足钱，方才取出来与你充饥。徐信正在数钱，猛听得有妇女悲泣之声，事不关心，关心者乱。徐信且不数钱，急走出店来看，果见一妇人，单衣蓬首，露坐于地上。虽不是自己的老婆，年貌也相仿佛。徐信动了个恻隐之心，以己度人，道：“这妇人想也是遭难的。”不免上前问其来历。妇人诉道：“奴家乃郑州王氏，小字进奴。随夫避兵，不意中途奔散，奴孤身被乱军所掠。行了两日一夜，到于此地，两脚俱肿，寸步难移，贼徒剥取衣服，弃奴于此。衣单食缺，举目无亲，欲寻死路，故此悲泣耳。”徐信道：“我也在乱军中不见了妻子，正是同病相怜了。身边幸有盘缠，娘子不若权时在这店里住几日，将息贵体，等在下探问荆妻消耗，就便访取尊夫，不知娘子意下如何？”[眉批]说话中听。妇人收泪而谢道：“如此甚好。”徐信解开包裹，将几件衣服与妇人穿了，同他在店中吃了些饭食，借半间房子，做一块儿



push ahead. After walking for several days, he heaved a sigh of resignation and gave up all hope of finding her.

Hungry and thirsty when he came upon Suiyang, he stopped at a village inn to buy some food and wine. As it turned out, in this time of war, the inn was not what it had once been. There was no wine to be had, and what was offered in the way of food was nothing but some coarse stuff, served only after it was paid for, to forestall attempts to snatch it away.

Xu Xin was counting out the money when, all of a sudden, he heard a woman sobbing. As the saying goes, "Better not let things get to your heart. If they do, they'll give you no peace of mind." He stopped counting the money and rushed out of the inn for a look. There, he saw a woman, thinly clad, with disheveled hair, sitting on the ground outside. She was not his wife but was of about the same age and bore a physical resemblance to his wife as well. Xu Xin's compassion was aroused. In empathy, he thought, "This woman must have been through a lot, too." So he stepped forward and asked her who she was.

The woman replied, "My maiden name is Wang, my given name Jinnu. I am a native of Zhengzhou. I became separated from my husband when we were fleeing from the fighting, and then, all alone, I was seized by the soldiers and ended up here after walking for two days and a night. Because I couldn't move another step on account of my swollen feet, the scoundrels stripped me of my warmer clothes and dumped me here, cold and hungry, with no one to turn to for help. I'd be better off dead. That's why I'm crying."

"I lost my wife in the commotion. You and I are in the same boat, so to speak. Luckily, I still have some traveling money. You'd better stay a few days in this inn for a good rest. I'll go out to make inquiries as to my wife's whereabouts, and while I'm at it, I'll also ask about your husband. How does that sound to you?" (*Nice words.*)

The woman stopped crying and said thankfully, "That would be nice."

Xu Xin untied his bundle and took out a few pieces of clothing for the woman to wear. After they had something to eat, he rented



安顿。徐信殷殷勤勤，每日送茶送饭。妇人感其美意，料道寻夫访妻，也是难事，今日一鰥一寡，亦是天缘，热肉相凑，不容人成就了。又过数日，妇人脚不痛了。徐信和他做了一对夫妻，上路直到建康。正值高宗天子南渡即位，改元建炎，出榜招军，徐信去充了个军校，就于建康城中居住。

日月如流，不觉是建炎三年。一日徐信同妻城外访亲回来，天色已晚，妇人口渴，徐信引到一个茶肆中吃茶。那肆中先有一个汉子坐下，见妇人入来，便立在一边偷看那妇人，目不转睛。妇人低眉下眼，那个在意，徐信甚以为怪。少顷，吃了茶，还了茶钱出门，那汉又远远相随。比及到家，那汉还站在门首，依依不去。徐信心头火起，问道：“什么人？如何窥觑人家的妇女！”那汉拱手谢罪道：“尊兄休怒，某有一言奉询。”徐信忿气尚未息，答应道：“有什么话就讲罢！”那汉道：“尊兄倘不见责，权借一步，某有实情告诉。若还嗔怪，某不敢言。”徐信果然相随，到一个僻静巷里。那汉临欲开口，又似有难言之状。徐信道：“我徐



half a wing for their lodging. Every day, with much attentiveness, he brought her tea and food, and she was very grateful for the kindness. The search for a lost spouse being most probably quite a hopeless undertaking, the two of them, one without a wife and the other without a husband, could hardly refrain from doing what human beings would do when two warm bodies are thus brought together by the will of heaven.

A few days later, since the woman's feet had stopped aching, they set out for Jiankang as husband and wife. This happened at a time when Emperor Gaozong's court, having moved south and assumed the reign title of Jianyan, was putting up notices recruiting men for the army. Xu Xin enlisted as a low-ranking officer and took up residence in the city of Jiankang.

The days and the months flew by. Before they knew it, it was the third year of the Jianyan reign period. One late afternoon, they were on their way back from visiting relatives outside the city when, his wife being thirsty, Xu Xin took her to a teahouse for some tea. A man who had been sitting in the teahouse rose at the sight of the woman entering and stood off to one side, his eyes furtively fixed on her. The woman, her eyes lowered, did not notice anything, but Xu Xin grew apprehensive. A few moments later, the tea finished, the couple paid the bill and departed, but the man followed them at a distance. When they reached home, the man stood still at the gate, reluctant to leave. Xu Xin flared up. "Who are you?" he snapped. "How can you steal glances at someone else's wife?"

Apologetically, the man said, his hands respectfully folded across his chest, "Please do not be angry, my honorable brother. I have a question for you."

His anger not yet subsided, Xu Xin said curtly, "Whatever you have to say, out with it!"

"If you don't mind, may I ask you to come out and talk? I have something to tell you, but if you're going to yell at me, I won't dare say a thing."

As the man requested, Xu Xin followed him to a secluded alley. The man was about to say something but held himself back, looking



信也是个慷慨丈夫，有话不妨尽言。”[眉批]不遇慷慨丈夫，枉对他尽言，自取慢耳。那汉方才敢问道：“适才妇人是谁？”徐信道：“是荆妻。”那汉道：“娶过几年了？”徐信道：“三年矣。”那汉道：“可是郑州人，姓王小字进奴么？”徐信大惊道：“足下何以知之？”那汉道：“此妇乃吾之妻也。因兵火失散，不意落于君手。”徐信闻言，甚跼蹐不安，将自己虞城失散，到睢阳村店遇见此妇始末，细细述了：“当时实是怜他孤身无倚，初不晓得是尊阍，如之奈何？”那汉道：“足下休疑，我已别娶浑家，旧日伉俪之盟，不必再题。但仓忙拆开，未及一言分别，倘得暂会一面，叙述悲苦，死亦无恨。”[眉批]可怜。徐信亦觉心中凄惨，说道：“大丈夫腹心相照，何处不可通情，明日在舍下相候。足下既然别娶，可携新闻同来，做个亲戚，庶于邻里耳目不碍。”那汉欢喜拜谢。临别，徐信问其姓名，那汉道：“吾乃郑州列俊卿是也。”是夜，徐信先对王进奴述其缘由。进奴思想前夫恩义，暗暗偷泪，一夜不曾合眼。到天明，盥漱方毕，列俊卿夫妇二人到了。徐信出门相





quite ill at ease. Xu Xin said, "I am an easygoing man. Feel free to say to me whatever you have to say." (*If he were to speak his mind to someone less easygoing, wouldn't he be bringing humiliation upon himself?*)

Only then did the man make so bold as to ask, "Who is the woman with you?"

"She's my wife."

"How many years have you been married?"

"Three years."

"Is she from Zhengzhou? Is she called Wang Jinnu?"

Xu Xin gave a start. "How did you know that?"

"She was my wife," said the man. "We were separated in the war. Who would have guessed that she would be with you!"

Feeling quite uneasy upon hearing these words, Xu Xin told the man everything about how he had lost his own wife at Yucheng and how he had met this woman at the inn in Suiyang. "At the time, I very much pitied her in her helplessness. I had no idea she was your wife. What's to be done now?"

"Don't worry," said the man. "I have remarried. My former marriage need not be mentioned again. But I didn't even get to say a word of good-bye to her in all that chaos. If I could see her for a moment and tell her what I've been through, I'll have no regrets when I die." (*How sad!*)

"Real men treat each other's with an open heart," said Xu Xin, also overcome by sadness. "There's nothing one real man can't do for another. Come to our house tomorrow. Since you have remarried, bring your new wife along. Let's claim some kinship, so that the neighbors won't think anything is amiss."

The man happily bowed his thanks. Before they parted company, Xu Xin asked for his name. The man replied, "I am Lie Junqing of Zhengzhou."

That night, Xu Xin told Wang Jinnu what had happened. Recalling her former husband's love, she shed many a surreptitious tear throughout a wakeful night.

After daybreak, they had hardly finished washing their faces and



迎，见了俊卿之妻，彼此惊骇，各各恸哭。原来俊卿之妻，却是徐信的浑家崔氏。自虞城失散，寻丈夫不着，却随个老嫗同至建康，解下随身簪珥，赁房居住。三个月后，丈夫并无消息。老嫗说他终身不了，与他为媒，嫁与列俊卿。谁知今日一双两对，恰恰相逢，真个天缘凑巧，彼此各认旧日夫妻，相抱而哭。当下徐信遂与列俊卿八拜为交，置酒相待。至晚，将妻子兑转，各还其旧。[眉批]事大奇。从此通家往来不绝，有诗为证：

夫换妻兮妻换夫，这场交易好糊涂。

相逢总是天公巧，一笑灯前认故吾。

此段话题做“交互姻缘”，乃建炎三年建康城中故事。同时又有一事，叫做“双镜重圆”。说来虽没有十分奇巧，论起夫义妇节，有关风化，到还胜似几倍。正是：

话须通俗方传远，语必关风始动人。

话说南宋建炎四年，关西一位官长，姓吕名忠翊，职授福州监税。此时七闽之地，尚然全盛。忠翊带领家眷赴任：一来福州



rinsing their teeth when Lie Junqing and his wife arrived. As Xu Xin went out to greet the guests, both he and Lie's wife were stunned and burst into loud wails of grief, for it turned out that she was none other than Xu Xin's former wife Cui-shi.

After losing sight of her husband and looking for him in vain, she had followed an old woman to Jiankang and rented a room using her jewelry. When three months had gone by without any news from Cui-shi's husband, the old woman volunteered to be a matchmaker and married Cui-shi off to Lie Junqing, insisting that it would not be possible to maintain widowhood for the rest of her life.

Who could have predicted that the two couples would meet in such a chance encounter by the will of heaven? They fell on the shoulders of their former spouses and wept. Then and there, Xu Xin and Lie Junqing pledged brotherhood in an eight-bow ceremony. Wine was set out. After evening fell, the wives were returned to their former husbands to resume the old marriage ties. (*How remarkable!*) Henceforth, the two families visited each other back and forth in a never-ending stream. There is a poem in evidence:

*The husbands changed wives; the wives changed husbands;  
All this shuffling around — how senseless!  
And so they met by the will of heaven,  
And reunited in joy by the lamp.*

The above story, titled "The Exchange of Spouses," took place in the third year of the Jianyan period in the city of Jiankang.

At about the same time, there unfolded another story, about a broken mirror being made whole again. The plot is not as extraordinary as the previous one, but as far as marital fidelity is concerned, this story is far superior in moral terms. Truly,

*Stories in simple words circulate more widely;  
Stories that teach morals touch the heart more deeply.*

The story goes that in the fourth year of the Jianyan reign period during the Southern Song dynasty, to the west of Tong Pass, there lived an official called Lü Zhongyi, who had just been assigned the post of tax commissioner of Fuzhou. At that time, the Min region [present-day Fujian Province] was at the height of its prosperity.



凭山负海，东南都会，富庶之邦；二来中原多事，可以避难。于本年起程，到次年春间，打从建州经过。《輿地志》说：“建州碧水丹山，为东闽之胜地。”今日合着了古语两句：

洛阳三月花如锦，偏我来时不遇春。

自古“兵荒”二字相连，金虏渡河，两浙都被他残破。闽地不遭兵火，也就见个荒年，此乃天数。

话中单说建州饥荒，斗米千钱，民不聊生。却为国家正值用兵之际，粮饷要紧，官府只顾催征上供，顾不得民穷财尽。常言“巧媳妇煮不得没米粥”，百姓既没有钱粮交纳，又被官府鞭笞逼勒，禁受不过，三三两两，逃入山间，相聚为盗。[眉批]此时调停得体，方见能吏手段。“蛇无头而不行”，就有个草头天子出来，此人姓范名汝为，仗义执言，救民水火。群盗从之如流，啸聚至十数万。无非是：

风高放火，月黑杀人。



Zhongyi took his family there, partly because Fuzhou, located by the mountains and the sea, was a rich metropolis in the southeastern region and partly to get away from the war-ravaged central plains. They set out on their journey in that year, and in the spring, their route led them past Jianzhou. According to *The Atlas*, “Jianzhou, with its green waters and red mountains, is a famous scenic spot in the eastern Min region.” But, just as was said by an ancient poet’s two lines:

*Luoyang being a sea of flowers in spring,  
 I picked the wrong season for a visit.*

Since time immemorial, war and famine have gone together. As the Jurchens crossed the Yangzi River, they left in their wake nothing but devastation throughout the Liang-Zhe region [present-day Zhejiang Province, Shanghai, and the southern part of Jiangsu Province]. The Min region, though spared the flames of war, was in the throes of a lean year by the will of heaven. In Jianzhou, where our story takes place, a picul of rice cost a thousand in cash, and the people could hardly survive the famine.<sup>4</sup> But the government still aggressively collected taxes to support the much needed army in spite of the fact that people were living in dire poverty. As the proverb goes, “Even the cleverest housewife cannot cook gruel without rice.” Pushed by the relentless officials to come up with the money and grain that they did not have, the local people could not take the hard life any longer. In twos and threes, they fled into the mountains and formed gangs of bandits. (*Now is the time for competent officials to rise to the occasion and handle such situations properly.*) As the saying goes, “A snake without a head goes nowhere.” Sure enough, a certain Fan Ruwei [d. 1132] appeared on the scene as a ringleader. He spoke words of justice and offered the people the help they so desperately needed. Outlaws in the region flocked to him, and soon, he had under his command more than a hundred thousand men much given to the usual acts of such gangs:

*Setting fires when the wind is high,  
 Taking lives on moonless nights;  
 Starving together on foodless days;*



无粮同饿，得肉均分。

官兵抵当不住，连败数阵。范汝为遂据了建州城，自称元帅，分兵四出抄掠。范氏门中子弟，都受伪号，做领兵官将。汝为族中有个侄儿名唤范希周，年二十三岁，自小习得一件本事，能识水性，伏得在水底三四昼夜，因此起个异名唤做范鳅儿。原是读书君子，功名未就，被范汝为所逼，——凡族人不肯从他为乱者，先将斩首示众。希周贪了性命，不得已而从之。虽在贼中，专以方便救人为务，不做劫掠勾当。贼党见他凡事畏缩，就他鳅儿的外号，改做“范盲鳅”，是笑他无用的意思。[眉批] 好人中有贱人，贼人中有好人，俗语言鳅本此。

再说吕忠翊有个女儿，小名顺哥，年方二八。生得容颜清丽，情性温柔，随着父母福州之任。来到这建州相近，正遇着范贼一支游兵，劫夺行李财帛，将人口赶得三零四散。吕忠翊失散了女儿，无处寻觅，嗟叹了一回，只索赴任去了。单说顺哥脚小伶俜，行走不动，被贼兵掠进建州城来。顺哥啼啼哭哭，范希周中途见而怜之。问其家门，顺哥自叙乃是宦家之女。希周遂叱开军士，亲解其缚，留至家中，将好言抚慰，诉以衷情：“我本非反贼，



*Sharing meat when it comes their way.*

Unable to fend them off, government troops were beaten in one battle after another. Fan Ruwei took the city of Jianzhou and, calling himself the Supreme Commander, sent his men in all directions to loot and rob. All the men in his clan were given phony titles as commanders of all levels.

Among his relatives was a nephew called Fan Xizhou, twenty-three years of age and known for his remarkable swimming skills, which he had acquired at an early age. For his ability to stay underwater for three to four days and nights in a row, he gained the nickname "Fan the Loach." He had been forced by Fan Ruwei to give up his unsuccessful pursuit of a scholarly career and take up banditry. The fact was, any clan member who refused to join Fan Ruwei would be beheaded in a public place. To save his skin, Xizhou felt obliged to submit. Even though he was a member of a gang of bandits, he took every opportunity to help people and refrained from acts of robbery and looting. Scorning his faint-heartedness, fellow bandits changed his nickname to "Fan the Blind Loach," for they thought him a man capable of nothing. (*Among the good, there are evil ones. Among the evil, there are good ones. "Blind Loach" is a case in point.*)

Now, Lü Zhongyi had a daughter whose pet name was Shunge. At sixteen years of age, she was as pretty as she was sweet and gentle in temperament. She was with her parents on their journey to Fuzhou when, as they neared Jianzhou, they ran into a group of Fan Ruwei's bandits. All their possessions were taken away, and parents and daughter were driven apart. It being impossible to find his lost daughter, Lü Zhongyi sighed for some time but then continued his journey to take up his post.

Let us turn our attention to Shunge. With her small feet, she could hardly cover much distance and ended up a captive of the bandits. When they brought the sobbing girl to Jianzhou, Fan Xizhou saw her on the road and took pity on her. He asked about her family background, and Shunge told him that she was from an official's family, whereupon Xizhou sharply ordered the men to go away, untied the ropes that bound her, and led her to his home, where he com-



被族人逼迫在此，他日受了朝廷招安，仍做良民。小娘子若不弃卑末，结为眷属，三生有幸。”顺哥本不愿相从，落在其中，出于无奈，只得许允。次日希周禀知贼首范汝为，汝为亦甚喜。希周送顺哥于公馆，择吉纳聘。希周有祖传宝镜，乃是两镜合扇的。清光照彻，可开可合，内铸成鸳鸯二字，名为“鸳鸯宝镜”，用为聘礼。遍请范氏宗族，花烛成婚。

一个是衣冠旧裔，一个是閨阁名姝。一个儒雅丰仪，一个温柔性格。一个纵居贼党，风云之气未衰；一个虽作囚俘，金玉之姿不改。绿林此日称佳客，红粉今宵配吉人。自此夫妻和顺，相敬如宾。

自古道“瓦罐不离井上破”，范汝为造下迷天大罪，不过乘朝廷有事，兵力不及。岂期名将张浚、岳飞、张俊、张荣、吴玠、吴玠等，屡败金人，国家粗定。高宗卜鼎临安，改元绍兴。是年冬，高宗命韩蕲王讳世忠的，统领大军十万前来讨捕。范汝为岂





forted her with kind words. In all sincerity, he said, “I’m not some rebellious bandit. I’m here because my clansman forced me to join him. Should the imperial court offer us amnesty someday, I’ll become a law-abiding subject as before. If you are not disdainful of my lowly station and agree to marry me, that will be a blessing that will last me through three incarnations.”

Shunge did not wish to comply, but having fallen into bandits’ hands, she resignedly gave her consent. The next day, Xizhou reported the matter to Fan Ruwei, the ringleader, much to the latter’s joy. Xizhou then escorted Shunge to the ringleader’s residence and chose an auspicious day for the betrothal. Xizhou offered as betrothal gift a prized family heirloom — a shining two-leafed folding mirror. It bore the inscription “love birds” on the inside and was called “The Precious Love Birds Mirror.” All the members of the Fan clan were invited to the wedding.

*He a descendant of landed gentry;  
 She an offspring of a distinguished clan.  
 He a learned man with refined manners;  
 She a woman of a warm, gentle nature.  
 Though among bandits, he kept his lofty bearing;  
 Though a captive, she maintained her dignified air.  
 That day, the outlaws were the honored guests;  
 That night, the beauty was wedded to a good man.*

Henceforth, the husband and wife lived in harmony in full respect of each other.

As the ancient proverb says, “A water jar that stays by the well breaks by the well.” Fan Ruwei was able to commit heinous crimes only because the imperial army was engaged elsewhere, but Zhang Jun, Yue Fei, Zhang Jun, Zhang Rong, Wu Jie, Wu Ling, and other famous generals repelled the Jurchens’ attacks, and the empire began to regain peace.<sup>5</sup> Emperor Gaozong made Lin’an [present-day Hangzhou] his capital and changed the reign title to Shaoxing [1131–62].

That winter, Emperor Gaozong ordered Han Shizhong, later enfeoffed as Prince of Qi, to lead a mighty army a hundred thousand



是韩公敌手，只得闭城自守。韩公筑长围以困之。原来韩公与吕忠翊先在东京有旧，今番韩公统兵征剿反贼，知吕公在福州为监税官，必知闽中人情土俗。其时将帅专征的都带有空头敕，遇有地方人才，听凭填敕委用。韩公遂用吕忠翊为军中都提辖，同驻建州城下，指麾攻围之事。城中日夜号哭，范汝为几遍要夺门而出，都被官军杀回，势甚危急。顺哥向丈夫说道：“妾闻‘忠臣不事二君，烈女不更二夫’。妾被贼军所掠，自誓必死。蒙君救拔，遂为君家之妇，此身乃君之身矣。大军临城，其势必破。城既破，则君乃贼人之亲党，必不能免。妾愿先君而死，不忍见君之就戮也。”[眉批]此妇人大有见识，大有志节。引床头利剑便欲自刎。希周慌忙抱住，夺去其刀，安慰道：“我陷在贼中，原非本意，今无计自明，玉石俱焚，已付之于命了。你是宦家儿女，掳劫在此，与你何干？韩元帅部下将士，都是北人，你也是北人，言语相



strong on a punitive expedition against the bandits.<sup>6</sup> Fan Ruwei, certainly no match for Prince Han, could do no better than close the city gates and try to hold his position against the oncoming army. Prince Han had fortifications erected all around the city and laid siege to it.

It so happened that Prince Han and Lü Zhongyi were old friends from their days in the Eastern Capital. Now that he was leading troops against the bandits, Han thought that Lü, being the tax commissioner of Fuzhou, must be familiar with the customs and sentiments of the people of the Min region. In those times, army commanders on expeditions carried blank letters of appointment so that they could, on their own authority, appoint to office any competent qualified person they found in the local area. Accordingly, Han made Lü Zhongyi a deputy commander, to be stationed with him by the Jianzhou city walls to direct the siege against the city.

Within the city walls, wails of grief were heard day and night. Several times, Fan Ruwei tried to fight his way out, but each time he was pushed back by the government troops. In such a desperate situation, Shunge said to her husband, "I've heard the saying, 'A loyal minister does not serve two sovereigns; a chaste woman does not serve two husbands.' When I was captured by the bandits, I swore to take my own life. When you were so kind as to save me, I became your wife and committed myself to you. With a mighty army laying siege, the city will surely fall. And when the city falls, you, a member of the ringleader's clan, will not be spared. I'd rather die before you than witness your death." (*This is a woman with vision and moral fortitude.*) So saying, she drew out a sharp sword from the head of the bed and tried to cut her own throat, but with alacrity, Xizhou put his arms around her and snatched away the sword.

Trying to calm her down, he said, "I became a member of the gang against my will, but there being no way for me to exonerate myself now, fine jade and common stone will perish together, and I leave everything to fate. But you are the daughter of an official, and you were captured and brought here by force. You're not guilty in any way. Supreme Commander Han's men, officers as well as soldiers, are all northerners, just as you are. As you speak the same dialect,



合，岂无乡曲之情？或有亲旧相逢，宛转闻知于令尊，骨肉团圆，尚不绝望。人命至重，岂可无益而就死地乎？”顺哥道：“若果有再生之日，妾誓不再嫁。便恐被军校所掳，妾宁死于刀下，决无失节之理。”希周道：“承娘子志节自许，吾死亦瞑目。万一为漏网之鱼，苟延残喘，亦誓愿终身不娶，以答娘子今日之心。”顺哥道：“‘鸳鸯宝镜’，乃是君家行聘之物，妾与君共分一面，牢藏在身。他日此镜重圆，夫妻再合。”说罢相对而泣。

这是绍兴元年冬十二月内的说话。到绍兴二年春正月，韩公将建州城攻破，范汝为情急，放火自焚而死。韩公竖黄旗招安馀党，只有范氏一门不赦。范氏宗族一半死于乱军之中，一半被大军擒获，献俘临安。顺哥见势头不好，料道希周必死，慌忙奔入一间荒屋中，解下罗帕自缢。正是：

宁为短命全贞鬼，不作偷生失节人。

也是阳寿未终，恰好都提辖吕忠翊领兵过去，见破屋中有人自缢，急唤军校解下。近前观之，正是女儿顺哥。那顺哥死去重苏，半



they'll surely be kind to you. You might even meet an old friend or kinsman who will send your father a message, and you'll be reunited with your family. There is hope for you. Nothing is more precious than life. How can you think of dying needlessly in this place?"

"If I do indeed survive," said Shunge, "I vow never to remarry. But if I fall a captive again, I'd rather die by the sword than lose my chastity."

"With this solemn vow, I'll be able to die without regrets," said Xizhou. "If by any chance I should slip through the net, so to speak, and manage to live, I also vow never to remarry out of gratitude to your devotion."

"Let's each take one half of the Precious Love Birds Mirror, the betrothal gift from you, and hold on to it. Some day, the mirror will be made whole again, just as we will be reunited." With that, husband and wife shed many a tear.

This happened in the twelfth month of the first year of the Shaoxing reign period [1131].

In the first month of the following year, the city of Jianzhou fell under Han's assault. In desperation, Fan Ruwei set a fire and burned himself to death. Prince Han had a yellow imperial flag raised and offered amnesty to all of Fan's followers except members of his clan, half of whom had already died in the chaos. The other half were captured by government troops and sent to Lin'an. ([ Illegible.]) At this ominous turn of events, Shunge thought Xizhou must have died. In panic, she rushed into an abandoned house, took off her silk kerchief, and put her neck through the noose. Truly,

*She would rather die early but chaste*

*Than live and lose her virtue.*

But her allotted span of life was not meant to expire at this time. It so happened that Deputy Commander Lü Zhongyi was passing by, followed by his troops, and he caught the sight of the body hanging from the ceiling of a dilapidated house. Without a moment's delay, he had a soldier take the woman down. When he went for a closer look, he found the woman to be none other than his very own daughter Shunge. She returned to life from the brink of death, but it was a



晌方能言语，父子重逢，且悲且喜。顺哥将贼兵掳劫，及范希周救取成亲之事，述了一遍。吕提辖嘿然无语。

却说韩元帅平了建州，安民已定，同吕提辖回临安面君奏凯。天子论功升赏，自不必说。一日，吕公与夫人商议，女儿青年无偶，终是不了之事，两口双双的来劝女儿改嫁。顺哥述与丈夫发誓之言，坚意不肯。吕公又道：“好人家儿女，嫁了反贼，一时无奈。天幸死了，出脱了你，你还想他怎么？”[眉批]也说得是。顺哥含泪而告道：“范家郎君，本是读书君子，为族人所逼，实非得已。他虽在贼中，每行方便，不做伤天理的事。倘若天公有眼，此人必脱虎口。[眉批]料着了。大海浮萍，或有相逢之日。孩儿如今情愿奉道在家，侍养二亲，便终身守寡，死而不怨。若必欲孩儿改嫁，不如容孩儿自尽，不失为完节之妇。”吕公见他说出一班道理，也不去逼他了。

光阴似箭，不觉已是绍兴十二年，吕公累官至都统制，领兵在封州镇守。一日，广州守将差指使贺承信捧了公牒，到封州将领司投递。吕公延于厅上，问其地方之事，叙话良久方去。顺哥



long while before she was able to speak. Father and daughter now reunited, both were overcome by mixed emotions of joy and sorrow. Shunge told of how she had been captured by the bandits and how Fan Xizhou had saved her and married her. Her father was struck speechless.

Now, having brought peace back to Jianzhou and pacified the local people, Supreme Commander Han returned to Lin'an with Lü Zhongyi to report the victory to the emperor. How the Son of Heaven rewarded them for their accomplishments need not be described here.

One day, Lü consulted his wife, saying that it would not do for their daughter to remain single while so young. He and his wife both urged Shunge to remarry, but Shunge firmly refused, citing the vows she had exchanged with her husband. Mr. Lü exploded: "It was out of necessity rather than choice that you, of such a good family, married a bandit. Now that he has died by the grace of heaven, you are free. Why think about him any more?" (*He does have a point.*)

Tearfully, Shunge said, "Mr. Fan was a scholar and a gentleman. He was forced into banditry by his kinsman against his will. He may have been among bandits, but he did good deeds whenever he could and stayed away from anything that is against the law of heaven. If heaven is judicious, he will surely be saved from the jaws of death. (*She will be proved right.*) Even duckweeds that float apart in the ocean might get together again. But until that happens, I'll gladly join the Daoist order and serve you and mother at home. I'll die without complaints even if I stay a widow until the end of my life. If you insist that I remarry, I'd just as soon kill myself to keep my name as a chaste woman untarnished." Impressed by this answer, which sounded right to him, Mr. Lü gave up trying to pressure her.

Time shot by like an arrow. Quite unnoticeably, it was the twelfth year of the Shaoxing reign period. Mr. Lü had risen steadily in the official echelon to become regional commander in chief, leading a regiment stationed in Fengzhou [in present-day Guangdong Province].

One day, the commander of Guangzhou sent a Major He Chengxin to deliver an official document to Lü's headquarters in Fengzhou. Lü invited him into the hall and asked him about the local



在后堂帘中窃窥，[眉批]窥墙窥窗，总不如此窥帘者，无心而得力。等吕公入衙，问道：“适才賚公牒来的何人？”吕公道：“广州指使贺承信也。”顺哥道：“奇怪！看他言语行步，好似建州范家郎君。”吕公大笑道：“建州城破，凡姓范的都不赦，只有枉死，那有枉活？广州差官自姓贺，又是朝廷命官，并无分毫干惹，这也是你妄想了，侍妾闻知，岂不可笑！”顺哥被父亲抢白了一场，满面羞惭，不敢再说。正是：

只为夫妻情爱重，致令父子语参差。

过了半年，贺承信又有军牒奉差到吕公衙门。顺哥又从帘下窥视，心中怀疑不已，对父亲说道：“孩儿今已离尘奉道，岂复有儿女之情。但再三详审广州姓贺的，酷似范郎。父亲何不召至后堂，赐以酒食，从容叩之。范郎小名鳅儿，昔年在围城中情知必败，有‘鸳鸯镜’，各分一面，以为表记，父亲呼其小名，以此镜试之，必得其真情。”吕公应承了。次日贺承信又进衙领回文，吕公延至后堂，置酒相款。饮酒中间，吕公问其乡贯出身。承信





situation in Guangzhou. Their conversation lasted quite a while before the man took his leave. Shunge watched furtively from behind the curtain that separated the front and the back sections of the hall. (*To peep from behind a curtain is better than to peep from behind a wall or a window. An inadvertent act that will prove to be consequential.*) When Mr. Lü came back to the living quarters of the yamen, she asked, “Who was that man delivering documents?”

“He Chengxin, a major from Guangzhou.”

“How very strange!” exclaimed Shunge. “He walks and talks just like my husband Fan Xizhou of Jianzhou.”

Mr. Lü laughed. “After Jianzhou fell, none of the Fan clan members was spared. There are only cases of people who were killed by mistake. Have you ever heard of anyone who survives by mistake? That man from Guangzhou is a Mr. He, and he’s a court-appointed officer, too. He has absolutely nothing to do with that Fan of yours. You are fantasizing. Wouldn’t the maids laugh at you if they hear about this?”

Thus ridiculed by her father, Shunge was so mortified that she dared not utter another word. Truly,

*The love between the husband and the wife*

*Pitted the father against the daughter.*

Six months later, He Chengxin again came to Mr. Lü’s yamen to deliver military documents. Again, Shunge watched skeptically from behind the curtain. She then said to her father, “Having forsaken the mundane world and joined the Daoist order, I hardly have any passionate feelings left in me. But that Mr. He whom I watched carefully is truly the very image of my husband. Could you take him into the back hall and gradually sound him out over some wine and food? My husband has a nickname ‘The Loach.’ Years ago in the siege of Jianzhou, knowing the city was going to fall, he gave me half of a double-leaved love birds mirror as a keepsake. If you call him by his nickname and test him with this mirror, you’ll find out the truth.”

Mr. Lü promised to do as she said. The next day, when He Chengxin came again to the yamen to get the letter of reply, Mr. Lü invited him into the back hall and set out some wine and food in his



言语支吾，似有羞愧之色。吕公道：“鳅儿非足下别号乎？老夫已尽知矣，但说无妨也。”承信求吕公屏去左右，即忙下跪，口称“死罪”。吕公用手搀扶道：“不须如此。”承信方敢吐胆倾心告诉道：“小将建州人，实姓范，建炎四年，宗人范汝为煽诱饥民，据城为叛，小将陷于贼中，实非得已。后因大军来讨，攻破城池，贼之宗族，尽皆诛戮。小将因平昔好行方便，有人救护，[眉批] 彼不行方便者，如何？遂改姓名为贺承信，出就招安。绍兴五年拨在岳少保部下，随征洞庭湖贼杨么。岳家军都是西北人，不习水战。[眉批] 鳅儿不盲。小将南人，幼通水性，能伏水三昼夜，所以有‘范鳅儿’之号。岳少保亲选小将为前锋，每战当先，遂平么贼。岳少保荐小将之功，得受军职，累任至广州指使，十年来未曾泄之他人。今既承钩问，不敢隐讳。”吕公又问道：“令孺人何姓？是结发还是再娶？”承信道：“在贼中时曾获一宦家女，纳之为妻。逾年城破，夫妻各分散逃走。曾相约，苟存性命，夫不再娶，



honor. In the course of the drinking, Lü asked about Chengxin's native place and his family background. Chengxin became evasive, looking as if ashamed. Lü said, "Isn't 'The Loach' your nickname? This old man knows everything. You can tell me! No harm will be done to you!"

Chengxin asked Lü to dismiss the servants and, dropping to his knees, said, "I've committed a capital offense!"

Lü raised him to his feet and said, "You don't have to do this!"

It was then that Chengxin made a clear breast of his past. "I am a native of Jianzhou. My surname is Fan. In the fourth year of the Jianyan reign period, my kinsman Fan Ruwei incited the starving people to rebel and made the city his stronghold. I joined them against my will. When the government troops stormed the city, all members of the ringleader's clan were killed, but I was saved by some people because of my frequent acts of kindness. (*Had he not been given to acts of kindness, what would have happened to him?*) So I changed my name to He Chengxin and enlisted in the army through the amnesty.

"In the fifth year of the Shaoxing reign period, I was assigned to Yue Fei's regiment. I followed him in the expedition against Yang Yao of Dongting Lake.<sup>7</sup> Yue Fei's men, being all northwesterners, were not accustomed to battles on water. (*The Loach is by no means blind.*) But I am a southerner. I learned to swim at an early age and can stay underwater for three days and nights in a row. That's why I'm called 'Fan the Loach.' General Yue himself picked me to be in his vanguard. In each battle, I was always in the forefront. After Yang Yao's rebellion was put down, Yue Fei reported my merits to the court, and I was assigned a military post, from which I have risen to be a major in Guangzhou. In all these ten years, I have never let on about any of this to other people, but now that you are asking, I dare not keep anything from you."

"What is your wife's surname? Is she your first wife or second?"

"When I was with the bandits, I came across a girl from an official's family and took her as my wife. When the city was stormed the following year, we took flight separately. We had vowed that any one



妇不再嫁。小将后来到信州，又寻得老母。至今母子相依，止畜一粗婢炊爨，未曾娶妻。”吕公又问道：“足下与先孺人相约时，有何为记？”承信道：“有鸳鸯宝镜，合之为—，分之—为二，夫妇各留—面。”吕公道：“此镜尚在否？”承信道：“此镜朝夕随身，不忍少离。”吕公道：“可借—观。”承信揭开衣袂，在锦裹肚系带上，解下一个绣囊，囊中藏着宝镜。吕公取观，遂于袖中亦取—镜合之，俨如生成。承信见二镜符合，不觉悲泣失声。吕公感其情义，亦不觉泪下，道：“足下所娶，即吾女也。吾女见在衙中。”遂引承信至中堂，与女儿相见，各各大哭。吕公解劝了，且作庆贺筵席。是夜即留承信于衙门歇宿。

过了数日，吕公将回文打发女婿起身，即令女儿相随，到广州任所同居。后—年承信任满，将赴临安，又领妻顺哥同过封州，拜别吕公。吕公备下千金妆奁，差官护送承信到临安。自谅前事—年远，无人推剥，不可使范氏无后，乃打通状到礼部，[眉批]是大道。复姓不复名，改名不改姓，叫做范承信。后累官至两淮留守，



who survived would never remarry. Later, I went to Xinzhou and found my old mother, who now lives with me. There're just the two of us, plus a maidservant who does the cooking. I have not remarried. ”

Lü asked again, “Did you and your wife give each other a keepsake when you exchanged vows?”

Chengxin replied, “There was a double-leafed love birds mirror, which is one mirror when put together and two mirrors when taken apart. Each of us took one part of it. ”

“Do you still have your part of it?”

“I carry it with me day and night without ever parting with it. ”

“May I see it?”

Chengxin lifted his clothes and took from his brocade waistband an embroidered purse in which lay the mirror. Lü looked at it and took the other half of the mirror from his own sleeve. He put the two halves together and found them to be a perfect match.

Seeing the mirrors joined as one, Chengxin burst into sobs in spite of himself. Moved by his profound feelings, Lü said, with tears flowing unbeknownst to himself, “Your wife is my daughter. She is now in this house. ”

So saying, he led Chengxin into the main hall to meet his daughter. The couple burst into loud wails of grief. Lü comforted them with soothing words and had a celebration feast prepared. He kept Chengxin in his residence for the night. A few days later, Lü gave his official letter of reply for his son-in-law to deliver back to Guangzhou, telling his daughter to follow Chengxin and take up residence in Guangzhou.

A year later, with his term of office expiring, Chengxin took his wife Shunge to Lin'an. As they were passing by Fengzhou, they paid a visit to Lü to bid him farewell. Having prepared in advance a lavish dowry worth a thousand taels of gold, Lü dispatched guards to escort the couple to Lin'an.

Now, believing that what had happened such a long time ago was not likely to be scrutinized and feeling that the Fan family line should not be broken, Mr. Lü wrote an appeal to the Ministry of Rites (*The right thing to do.*), by whose permission Chengxin's for-

夫妻偕老。其鸳鸯二镜，子孙世传为至宝云。后人评论范鳅儿在逆党中涅而不淄，好行方便，救了许多人性命，今日死里逃生，夫妻再合，乃阴德积善之报也。有诗为证：

十年分散天边鸟，一旦团圆镜里鸳。  
莫道浮萍偶然事，总由阴德感皇天。





mer surname, but not his former given name, was then restored and his new name became Fan Chengxin. Later, he rose in rank until he became governor of the Huai region and lived happily with his wife to a ripe old age. The Precious Love Birds Mirror became a family heirloom that was passed down from generation to generation.

In later times, it was said that Fan the Loach's escape from the jaws of death and his reunion with his wife were the workings of heaven, a reward for his good deeds of saving many lives and leading a clean life although surrounded by bandits. There is a poem in testimony:

*Like birds that flew apart for ten long years  
 They rejoined, as did the Love Birds in the Mirror.  
 By no means was it a chance happening,  
 But a divine reward for his good deeds.*

This story has been translated by Earl Wieman as "Loach Fan's Double Mirror" in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph Lau S. M. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>1</sup> Legend has it that when pursued by the Jurchens, Zhao Gou, prince of Kang (later to become Emperor Gaozong), took refuge in a temple. After he crossed the river on horseback and threw off his pursuers, he found that the horse he was riding was the clay horse he had seen in the temple, sent by the god of the temple to help him.

<sup>2</sup> Bianjing, also called the Eastern Capital, is present-day Kaifeng, Henan.

<sup>3</sup> According to legend, Zhang Hua (232–300) saw an aura over Fengcheng that spoke of hidden precious swords. After he appointed Lei Huan prefect of Fengcheng, Lei dug up a pair of swords and presented one to Zhang, keeping the other for himself. After both men died, the swords were seen at Yanping Ferry, where they joined together and changed into two dragons.

<sup>4</sup> A picul equals 133.33 pounds.

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Jun (1097–1164), courtesy name Deyuan, a native of Sichuan, was an official in the Privy Military Council.

Yue Fei (1103–42) is revered as a national hero in China for his accomplishments in repelling the advances of Jurchen (Jin) invaders.

Zhang Jun (1086–1154), courtesy name Boying, a native of Gansu, fought the Jurchens with Yue Fei but later joined in the conspiracy against Yue Fei.

Zhang Rong was a fisherman turned military official known for his deeds in fighting the Jurchens.

Wu Jie (1093–1139), courtesy name Jinqing, was a general in the Song army.

Wu Ling (1102–1167), courtesy name Tangqing, was Wu Jie's brother.





<sup>6</sup> Han Shizhong (1089–1151) was a famous general best remembered for successfully repelling the attacks of invading Jurchen (Jin) troops. He is featured as the prince of Xian'an, in story 8.

<sup>7</sup> Yang Yao (d. 1135) was the leader of a peasant rebellion in the Dongting Lake region.





## 第十三卷

### 三现身包龙图断冤

甘罗发早子牙迟，彭祖颜回寿不齐。  
范丹贫穷石崇富，算来都是只争时。

话说大宋元祐年间，一个太常大卿，姓陈名亚，因打章子厚不中，除做江东留守安抚使，兼知建康府。一日与众官宴于临江亭上，忽听得亭外有人叫道：“不用五行四柱，能知祸福兴衰。”大卿问：“甚人敢出此语？”众官有曾认的，说道：“此乃金陵术士边瞽。”大卿分付：“与我叫来。”即时叫至门下，但见：

破帽无檐，蓝缕衣裙，霜髯瞽目，伛偻形躯。

边瞽手携节杖人来，长揖一声，摸着阶沿便坐。大卿怒道：“你既瞽目，不能观古圣之书，辄敢轻五行而自高？”边瞽道：“某善能听简笏声知进退，闻鞋履响辨死生。”大卿道：“你术果验否……”说



## Story 13

### Judge Bao Solves a Case through a Ghost That Appeared Thrice

*Gan Luo achieved fame young, and Ziya late; <sup>1</sup>  
Peng Zu lived long, and Yan Hui died early; <sup>2</sup>  
Fan Dan was penniless, and Shi Chong rich; <sup>3</sup>  
It is all a matter of time and fate.*

The story goes that during the reign period of Yuanyou [1086–93] in the Song dynasty, there was, in the imperial court, a chamberlain for ceremonies by the name of Chen Ya. After a failed attempt to impeach Zhang Zihou, <sup>4</sup> Chen Ya was demoted to pacification commissioner of the Jiangdong Circuit and concurrently magistrate of Jiankang [present-day Nanjing].

One day, he was feasting with his assembly of officials in the Riverside Pavilion when he heard someone cry outside, “I can tell your fortune even without knowing the five phases and the eight characters in your horoscope! <sup>5</sup>”

“Who has the temerity to make such a claim?” said the magistrate.

Those officials who had seen the man before replied, “This is Bian’gu, fortune-teller from Jinling.”

“Bring him over to me.”

And so the man was brought to the pavilion. There, for all to see, was

*A man in rags with a brimless and tattered hat,  
A frosty beard, sightless eyes, and stooping shoulders.*

Carrying his walking cane, Bian’gu entered the pavilion and, a deep bow, groped for a place to sit before he sank down on a step. The magistrate said in anger, “Being a blind man unable to read the classics, how can you think so highly of yourself that you speak so lightly of the five phases?”

Bian’gu replied, “I can foresee changes by listening to the clicking of bamboo tablets and predict life or death by listening to the



言未了，见大江中画船一只，橹声咿轧，自上流而下。大卿便问边警，主何灾福。答言：“橹声带哀，舟中必载大官之丧。”大卿遣人讯问，果是知临江军李郎中在任身故，载灵柩归乡。大卿大惊道：“使汉东方朔复生，不能过汝。”赠酒十樽，银十两，遣之。

那边警能听橹声知灾福。今日且说个卖卦先生，姓李名杰，是东京开封府人。去兖州府奉符县前，开个卜肆，用金纸糊着一把太阿宝剑，底下一个招儿，写道：“斩天下无学同声。”这个先生，果是阴阳有准。

精通《周易》，善辨六壬。瞻乾象遍识天文，观地理明知风水。五星深晓，决吉凶祸福如神；三命秘谈，断成败兴衰似见。

当日挂了招儿，只见一个人走将进来，怎生打扮？但见：

裹背系带头巾，着上两领皂衫，腰间系条丝绦，下面着



sound of footsteps. ”

“How accurate are you?” Even as the magistrate spoke, a painted boat was seen coming downstream, its oars creaking. The magistrate asked Bian’gu what he could make of it. Bian’gu rejoined, “The creaking of the oars sounds sad. That boat must be carrying some high official’s coffin. ”

The magistrate sent someone to make an inquiry. Sure enough, the boat was carrying a coffin in which lay the body of Director Li of Linjiang District [in present-day Jiangxi Province], who had died at his post, on its way to Director Li’s hometown. Agape with astonishment, the magistrate exclaimed, “Even if Dongfang Shuo<sup>6</sup> were reborn, he couldn’t be as good as you are. ” He gave the fortune-teller ten jars of wine and ten taels of silver before sending him away.

This is a man able to tell things by the sound of oars. Now, let me tell of another fortune-teller, Li Jie by name, who was a native of Kaifeng, the Eastern Capital. He traveled to Fengfu County, Yanzhou Prefecture, and opened a fortune-telling shop in front of the county yamen. Under a Tai’e<sup>7</sup> sword covered with gilded paper, he hung up a sign that said “Death to all those with little learning but too much readiness to echo the views of others. ” And he was indeed most accurate in his applications of the yin and yang theories in his divinations.

*Well-versed in the Book of Changes of Zhou,  
 Knowing all methods of divinations,  
 He read signs in all patterns in heaven,  
 And was a master of feng shui on earth.  
 Knowing all there was to know about the stars,  
 He told fortunes with divine accuracy.  
 Conversant with every law of destiny,  
 He never missed the mark in his prophecies.*

He had just hung up the signboard when a man walked into the shop. How did he look? He had

*A bag on his back, a cap on his head,  
 A black double-collar shirt with a silk waistband,  
 A clean pair of shoes and white socks on his feet,*



一双干鞋净袜，袖里袋着一轴文字。

那人和金剑先生相揖罢，说了年月日时，铺下卦子。只见先生道：“这命算不得。”那个买卦的，却是奉符县里第一名押司，姓孙名文，问道：“如何不与我算这命？”先生道：“上覆尊官，这命难算。”押司道：“怎地难算？”先生道：“尊官有酒休买，护短休问。”押司道：“我不曾吃酒，也不护短。”先生道：“再请年月日时，恐有差误。”押司再说了八字。先生又把卦子布了道：“尊官，且休算。”押司道：“我不讳，但说不妨。”先生道：“卦象不好。”写下四句来，道是：

白虎临身日，临身必有灾。

不过明旦丑，亲族尽悲哀。

押司看了，问道：“此卦主何灾福？”先生道：“实不敢瞒，主尊官当死。”又问：“却是我几年上当死？”先生道：“今年死。”又问：“却是今年几月死？”先生道：“今年今月死。”又问：“却是今年今月几日死？”先生道：“今年今月今日死。”再问：“早晚时辰？”先生道：“今年今月今日三更三点子时当死。”押司道：“若今夜真个死，万事全休；若不死，明日和你县里理会。”先生道：“今夜不死，尊官明日来取下这斩无学同声的剑，斩了小子



*And a scroll of writing in his sleeve.*

After exchanging a greeting with the fortune-teller, the man gave the date and the hour of his birth, and the astrological chart was drawn. But, quickly, the fortune-teller announced, "No, I can't do this for you."

The man, Sun Wen by name, was chief clerk of the Fengfu County yamen. He asked, "Why won't you tell my fortune?"

"Your Honor, this is too difficult a job for me."

"What do you mean?"

"Stay away from wine, and stop covering up for anyone."

"I haven't been drinking, nor am I covering up for anyone."

"Give me the date and the hour of your birth again, in case there was a mistake."

The chief clerk repeated the information. The fortune-teller set to work again and then said, "Sir, you'd better give up."

"I don't mind hearing whatever you've come up with."

"It doesn't look good." So saying, the fortune-teller wrote a quatrain that said,

*This is the day the white tiger arrives,<sup>8</sup>*

*Bringing with it sorrow and misery.*

*At midnight, before tomorrow morning,*

*All your kith and kin will be in mourning.*

The chief clerk read it and asked, "What does all this mean?"

"I won't keep anything from you, sir, but you are going to die."

"In what year am I going to die?"

"This very year."

"Which month?"

"This very month."

"On which day?"

"This very day."

"At what hour?"

"Around midnight tonight, at the third quarter of the third watch."

"If I do indeed die tonight, you'll be off the hook, but if I don't, I'll settle the score with you tomorrow at the county court."

"If you don't die tonight, sir, come again tomorrow and cut off



的头!”押司听说，不觉怒从心上起，恶向胆边生，把那先生摔出卦铺去。怎地计结?那先生：

只因会尽人间事，惹得闲愁满肚皮。

只见县里走出数个司事人来拦住孙押司，问做甚闹。押司道：“甚么道理!我闲买个卦，却说我今夜三更三点当死。我本身又无疾病，怎地三更三点便死?待摔他去县中，官司究问明白。”众人道：“若信卜，卖了屋；卖卦口，没量斗。”众人 and 烘孙押司去了，转来埋怨那先生道：“李先生，你触了这个有名的押司，想也在此卖卦不成了。从来贫好断，贱好断，只有寿数难断。你又不是阎王的老子，判官的哥哥，那里便断生断死，刻时刻刻日，这般有准。说话也该放宽缓些。”先生道：“若要奉承人，卦就不准了；若说实话，又惹人怪。‘此处不留人，自有留人处。’[眉批]自是涉世恶语。”叹口气，收了卦铺，搬在别处去了。

却说孙押司虽则被众人劝了，只是不好意思。当日县里押了文字归去，心中好闷。归到家中，押司娘见他眉头不展，面带忧容，便问丈夫：“有甚事烦恼?想是县里有甚文字不了。”押司道：





my head with this sword, which is meant for all those who have little learning but are much too ready to echo others' views. "

At these words, the chief clerk fumed with rage. With one swipe, he grabbed the fortune-teller and threw him out of the shop. How did this end for the fortune-teller?

*For all his knowledge of human affairs,  
 He brought upon himself sorrows galore.*

From the county yamen emerged several officers, who blocked Chief Clerk Sun's way and asked what the commotion was all about. Sun complained, "What an unreasonable man! I asked him to tell my fortune. I did this just for fun, but he said that I was going to die at the third quarter of the third watch tonight. I am a perfectly healthy man. How am I going to drop dead this very night just like that? I'm going to take him to the county yamen to have the court settle the matter. "

Someone in the crowd said, "If you believe in fortune-telling, you'll end up selling your house. If you make a living telling fortunes, you do nothing but make up stories. " The crowd pacified Sun and sent him on his way.

Turning back, they scolded the fortune-teller, saying, "Mr. Li, now that you've offended this well-known chief clerk, you won't be able to keep your business here. It's always easier to tell if someone is going to be poor and lowly than to say how long someone is going to live. You are not King Yama's father or a brother of the Judge of the Dead. How can you be so sure about the exact hour of someone's death? You should have used some ambiguous words. "

"If I say only things that please people, I'll be sacrificing accuracy. And yet, when I speak the truth, I give offense. Oh well, as the saying goes, 'If this place doesn't tolerate me, there will be places that do!'" (*Cynical words.*) With a sigh, he picked up his things and moved his business elsewhere.

Now, even though Sun had been calmed by the crowd, he still felt uneasy. After disposing of his official business for the day, he returned home in dejection. Noticing his knitted brows and worried look, his wife asked, "Is there anything troubling you? Is some



“不是，你休问。”再问道：“多是今日被知县责罚来？”又道：“不是。”再问道：“莫是与人争闹来？”押司道：“也不是。我今日去县前买个卦，那先生道，我主在今年今月今日三更三点子时当死。”押司娘听得说，柳眉剔竖，星眼圆睁，问道：“怎地平白一个人，今夜便教死？如何不摔他去县里官司？”押司道：“便摔他去，众人劝了。”浑家道：“丈夫，你且只在家里少待。我寻常有事，兀自去知县面前替你出头，[眉批]妇人好出头的，定是可畏。如今替你去寻那个先生问他。我丈夫又不少官钱私债，又无甚官事临逼，做甚么今夜三更便死？”押司道：“你且休去。待我今夜不死，明日我自与他理会，却强如你妇人家。”当日天色已晚，押司道：“且安排几杯酒来吃着。我今夜不睡，消遣这一夜。”三杯两盏，不觉吃得烂醉。只见孙押司在校椅上，朦胧着醉眼打瞌睡。浑家道：“丈夫，怎地便睡着？”叫迎儿：“你且摇觉爹爹来。”迎儿到身边摇着不醒，叫一会不应。押司娘道：“迎儿，我和你扶押司入房里去睡。”

若还是说话的同年生，并肩长，拦腰抱住，把臂拖回。孙押



work at the yamen baffling you?"

"No. Don't ask. "

"Were you punished in any way by the magistrate today?" she pressed.

"No. "

"Did you fight with someone then?"

"No. It's just that I went to a fortune-teller in front of the county yamen, and he said that I would die around midnight tonight at the third quarter of the third watch. "

His wife bristled at these words. Her willow-leaf shaped eyebrows raised high, her starry eyes opened wide, she said, "For a perfectly healthy man to die this very night! How preposterous! Why didn't you take him to the county court?"

"I did try, but the onlookers stopped me. "

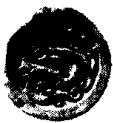
"Husband, you just stay at home. Am I not usually the one who goes forward and pleads to the magistrate on your behalf when the need arises? (*Women who seek publicity are to be feared.* ) Now this time, let me go find that fortune-teller and say to him, 'My husband doesn't owe the government or anyone any money, nor is he driven desperate by some lawsuit. How can you say he's going to drop dead tonight? '"

"Don't go. After I live through tonight, I'll deal with him tomorrow myself. That'll be better than having a woman take care of this. "

Evening fell. The chief clerk said, "Give me a few cups of wine. I want to stay awake the whole night through. " Several cups later, he got quite drunk before he knew it, and, his eyes glazed with wine, he dozed off on his folding chair.

His wife said, "Husband, how can you go to sleep?" She called out for Ying'er the maid. "Come here," said she, "and shake Father to wake him up. "

Ying'er came over, shook him, and called his name but to no avail. "Ying'er," said the wife, "let's carry him to the bedroom. " If this storyteller had been born in the same year as the chief clerk and grown up with him shoulder to shoulder, I would have put my arms around his waist and dragged him back to where he had been. He



司只吃着酒消遣一夜，千不合万不合上床去睡，却教孙押司只就当年当月当日当夜，死得不如《五代史》李存孝，《汉书》里彭越。正是：

金风吹树蝉先觉，暗送无常死不知。

浑家见丈夫先去睡，分付迎儿厨下打灭了火烛，说与迎儿道：“你曾听你爹爹说，日间卖卦的算你爹爹今夜三更当死？”迎儿道：“告妈妈，迎儿也听得说来。那里讨这话！”押司娘道：“迎儿，我和你做些针线，且看今夜死也不死？若还今夜不死，明日却与他理会。”教迎儿：“你且莫睡！”迎儿道：“那里敢睡？”道犹未了，迎儿打瞌睡。押司娘道：“迎儿，我教你莫睡，如何便睡着？”迎儿道：“我不睡。”才说罢，迎儿又睡着。押司娘叫得应，问他如今甚时候了。迎儿听县衙更鼓，正打三更三点。押司娘道：“迎儿，且莫睡则个。这时辰正尴尬那！”迎儿又睡着，叫不应。只听得押司从床上跳将下来，兀底中门响。押司娘急忙叫醒迎儿，点灯看时，只听得大门响。迎儿和押司娘点灯去赶，只见一个着白的人，一只手掩着面，走出去，扑通地跳入奉符县河里去了。正是：

情到不堪回首处，一齐分付与东风。



should have stayed awake throughout the night, sipping his wine. The last thing he should have done was go to bed to sleep. But as it was, he died that very night, a death more tragic than that of Li Cunxiao [d. 894], as described in *The History of the Five Dynasties*, and of Peng Yue [d. 196], as described in *The History of Han*. Indeed,

*The cicada feels first the autumn winds;  
 And he had a foreboding of his death.*

With the husband already in bed, the wife told Ying'er to put out the kitchen fire, adding, "Did you hear Father say that a fortune-teller told him today that he was going to die at midnight tonight?"

"Yes, Mother, I did indeed. What nonsense!"

"Ying'er, let's do some sewing and stay awake tonight to see if that's really going to happen. If not, we'll deal with that fortune-teller tomorrow. Don't go to sleep!"

"I wouldn't dare!" said Ying'er. But before the words were quite out of her mouth, she started drifting off to sleep.

"Ying'er! I told you not to sleep, but you are already dozing off!"

"I am not!" But even as she spoke, she fell asleep again.

Her mistress woke her up and asked, "What time is it now?"

At this moment, Ying'er heard the county yamen's night-watch drum striking the third quarter of the third watch.

"Ying'er!" exclaimed Mrs. Sun. "Don't sleep! This is the moment!"

But Ying'er fell asleep again, this time giving no response. All of a sudden, Mrs. Sun heard her husband jump out of bed, and then, the middle door of the house made a noise. Hurriedly, she woke up Ying'er, and by the time a lamp had been lit, they heard the outer gate opening. Carrying the lamp, the two gave chase, and what did they see but a man in white walking out with a hand over his face and throwing himself with a splash into the Fengfu County river. Indeed,

*When life comes to be filled with pain,  
 To the east wind one gives oneself away.*



那条河直通着黄河水，滴溜也似紧，那里打捞尸首？押司娘和迎儿就河边号天大哭道：“押司，你却怎地投河，教我两个靠兀谁？”

即时叫起四家邻舍来，上手住的刁嫂，下手住的毛嫂，对门住的高嫂、鲍嫂，一发都来。押司娘把上件事对他们说了一遍。刁嫂道：“真有这般作怪的事！”毛嫂道：“我日里兀自见押司着了皂衫，袖着文字归来，老媳妇和押司相叫来。”高嫂道：“便是，我也和押司厮叫来。”鲍嫂道：“我家里的早间去县前干事，见押司捧着卖卦的先生，兀自归来说。怎知道如今真个死了。”刁嫂道：“押司，你怎地不分付我们邻舍则个，如何便死！”簌地两行泪下。毛嫂道：“思量起押司许多好处来，如何不烦恼！”也眼泪出。[眉批]描出一团婆子气。鲍嫂道：“押司，几时再得见你！”即时地方申呈官司，押司娘少不得做些功果，追荐亡灵。

捻指间过了三个月。当日押司娘和迎儿在家坐地，只见两个妇女，吃得面红颊赤。上手的提着一瓶酒，下手的把着两朵通草花，掀开布帘入来道：“这里便是。”押司娘打一看时，却是两个媒人，无非是姓张姓李。押司娘道：“婆婆多时不见。”媒婆道：“押司娘烦恼，外日不知，不曾送得香纸来，莫怪则个！押司如今也



The river was a tributary of the Yellow River, and it was quite impossible to retrieve the body in the rapid currents. Mrs. Sun and the maid stood by the river and burst out crying, "Chief Clerk! Why did you have to throw yourself into the river? Who is going to support the two of us now?"

They started shouting for the neighbors to come out. Mrs. Diao from up the street, Mrs. Mao from down the street, Mrs. Gao and Bao from across the street, all rushed over.

After hearing Mrs. Sun's story, Mrs. Diao said, "How very strange!"

Mrs. Mao said, "I saw him return home in his black shirt, carrying documents. I even exchanged greetings with him." Mrs. Gao said, "That's right, so did I!" Mrs. Bao had this to say, "My husband went to the county yamen on some business in the morning and saw the chief clerk grabbing the fortune-teller. He told me about it when he came home. Who would have thought that he would really die!"

And then Mrs. Diao put in, "Oh, Mr. Sun, how could you have died without even a word to us neighbors!" With these words, she burst into tears. Mrs. Mao commented again, "How sad! Especially when you think of all the kindnesses he did!" Her eyes also misted over. (*Nice description of a bunch of garrulous old women.*) Mrs. Bao wailed, "Mr. Sun, when shall we ever get to see you again?"

Losing no time, the local headman reported the matter to the authorities, and, as would be expected in such a case, Mrs. Sun had some sutras chanted in memory of the deceased.

With the snap of a finger, three months sped by. One day, Mrs. Sun and Ying'er were sitting at home when two women, flushed red with wine, came in the door, one carrying a bottle of wine the other holding two rice-paper plant blossoms. Raising the cotton portiere, they stepped in, saying, "Yes, this is the place."

Mrs. Sun looked up and saw that they were matchmakers with surnames that could not have been any other than the common Zhang and Li. Mrs. Sun said, "Long time no see, grannies!"

The matchmakers said, "Sorry to disturb you, ma'am! We



死得几时？”答道：“前日已做过百日了。”两个道：“好快，早是百日了。押司在日，直恁地好人，有时老媳妇和他厮叫，还啫不迭。时今死了许多时，宅中冷静，也好说头亲事是得。”押司娘道：“何年月日再生得一个一似我那丈夫孙押司这般人？”[眉批]好人多糊涂，押司之谓也。媒婆道：“恁地也不难，老媳妇却有一头好亲。”押司娘道：“且住，如何得似我先头丈夫？”两个吃了茶，归去。过了数日，又来说亲。押司娘道：“婆婆休只管来说亲。你若依得我三件事，便来说。若依不得我，一世不说这亲，宁可守孤孀度日。”当时押司娘启齿张舌，说出这三件事来。有分撞着五百年前夙世的冤家，双双受国家刑法。正是：

鹿迷秦相应难辨，蝶梦庄周末可知。

媒婆道：“却是那三件事？”押司娘道：“第一件，我死的丈夫姓孙，如今也要嫁个姓孙的；第二件，我先丈夫是奉符县里第一名押司，如今也只要恁般职役的人；第三件，不嫁出去，则要他人舍。”[眉批]巧言。两个听得说，道：“好也，你说要嫁个姓孙的，也要一似先押司职役的，教他入舍的。若是说别件事，还费些计





didn't hear about it earlier, so please forgive us for not sending any incense or paper money. How long has it been since your husband died?"

"I just observed the hundredth day of his death the day before yesterday. "

"How time flies! So it's been more than one hundred days. What a nice man he was. Whenever I greeted him, he always greeted me back. Since he's been gone for so long, you must be very lonely. Why don't we make a match for you?"

The widow rejoined, "Where can I ever find a man as good as he was?" (*Good men often don't know what happens right under their noses, and the chief clerk was one of them.* )

The matchmakers said, "But that's not all that difficult! We do have a good candidate for you. "

"Stop it! How can there possibly be anyone like my deceased husband?"

The two matchmakers had some tea and left, but a few days later, they came back for a second attempt. The widow said, "Don't come again with any of your marriage proposals unless you can meet all three of my conditions. Otherwise, don't bring up this subject ever again. I'd rather live out my days as a widow. " So she listed her three conditions, and as a consequence, the two lovers, whose love bond dated back five hundred years, came to be punished according to the law of the land. Truly,

*The case of the deer baffled the Qin prime minister;*<sup>9</sup>

*The dream about butterflies confused Zhuangzi.*<sup>10</sup>

"What three conditions?"

"First, my deceased husband's surname was Sun, and Sun must also be the surname of whomever you propose. Second, my deceased husband was the number one chief clerk in Fengfu County. Your man must have the same post. Third, I'm not leaving this house. He has to move in. " (*Clever words.*)

At these demands, the two matchmakers said, "Hooray! So you want to marry a man with the surname of Sun, with the same job as your deceased husband, and who will move into your house. Well,



较，偏是这三件事，老媳妇都依得。好教押司娘得知，先押司是奉符县里第一名押司，唤做大孙押司。如今来说亲的，元是奉符县第二名押司。如今死了大孙押司，钻上差役，做第一名押司，唤做小孙押司，他也肯来入舍。我教押司娘嫁这小孙押司，是肯也不？”押司娘道：“不信有许多凑巧！”[眉批]巧言。张媒道：“老媳妇今年七十二岁了。若胡说时，变做七十二只雌狗，在押司娘家吃屎。”押司娘道：“果然如此，烦婆婆且去说看，不知缘分如何？”张媒道：“就今日好日，讨一个利市团圆吉帖。”押司娘道：“却不曾买在家里。”李媒道：“老媳妇这里有。”便从抹胸内取出一幅五男二女花笺纸来，正是：

雪隐鹭鸶飞始见，柳藏鹦鹉语方知。

当日押司娘教迎儿取将笔砚来，写了帖子，两个媒婆接去。免不得下财纳礼，往来传话。不上两月，入舍小孙押司在家。

夫妻两个，好一对儿，果是说得着。不则一日，两口儿吃得酒醉，教迎儿做些个醒酒汤来吃。迎儿去厨下一头烧火，口里埋怨道：“先的押司在时，恁早晚，我自睡了。如今却教我做醒酒汤！”只见火筒塞住了孔，烧不着。迎儿低着头，把火筒去灶床脚上敲，敲未得几声，则见灶床脚渐渐起来，离地一尺已上，见一



other conditions might be harder to meet, but these three things are no problem! Listen, ma'am, your deceased husband, being the number one chief clerk of Fengfu County, was called Big Chief Clerk Sun. The man we have in mind for you used to be the number two chief clerk of the county. Now that Big Sun is dead, number two has become number one. He is known as Young Chief Clerk Sun. And he's willing to move in. Now what do you say?"

"This is too much of a coincidence to be true!" exclaimed the woman. (*Clever words!* )

Matchmaker Zhang said, "I am seventy-two years old. If I fabricated anything, may I change into seventy-two dogs to eat shit at your house!"

"If it's indeed as you say," said the woman, "please go ahead and make the proposal to him. I wonder if there's a predestined marriage bond between him and me. "

"Today being an auspicious day," said Matchmaker Zhang, "write us a note on some red lucky paper. "

"I don't have such stationery at home," said the widow.

"I've got some with me," said Matchmaker Li. So saying, she produced from her apron a sheet of floral-patterned paper. Truly,

*Egrets are not seen till the snow melts away;*

*Parrots in willows are not noticed till they talk.*

Then and there, the widow had Ying'er bring over a brush-pen and an ink slab. The note thus drawn up was taken away by the matchmakers. As was expected, betrothal gifts were offered, and messages traveled back and forth. Before two months were out, Young Chief Clerk Sun had moved in, and a nice, loving couple the two turned out to be.

The days went by. One evening, the couple, in an inebriated state, told Ying'er to make some soup to sober them up. While she was trying to make the kitchen fire, Ying'er said aloud resentfully, "If the old chief clerk were alive, I'd have gone to bed by now. But these two make me work!" Noticing that one end of the fire tube was blocked and would not burn, she bent down to knock it against the foot of the stove. She had knocked just a few times when the stove



个人顶着灶床，脖项上套着井栏，披着一带头发，长伸着舌头，眼里滴出血来，[眉批]一现身。叫道：“迎儿，与爹爹做主则个！”唬得迎儿大叫一声，匹然倒地，面皮黄，眼无光，唇口紫，指甲青，未知五脏如何，先见四肢不举。正是：

身如五鼓衔山月，命似三更油尽灯。

夫妻两人急来救得迎儿苏醒，讨些安魂定魄汤与他吃了。问道：“你适来见了甚么，便倒了？”迎儿：“告妈妈，却才在灶前烧火，只见灶床渐渐起来，见先押司爹爹，脖项上套着井栏，眼中滴出血来，披着头发，叫声迎儿，便吃惊倒了。”押司娘见说，倒把迎儿打个漏风掌：“你这丫头，教你做醒酒汤，则说道懒做便了，直装出许多死模活样！莫做莫做，打灭了火去睡！”迎儿自去睡了。

且说夫妻两个归房，押司娘低低叫道：“二哥，这丫头见这般事，不中用，教他离了我家罢。”小孙押司道：“却教他那里去？”押司娘道：“我自有个道理。”到天明，做饭吃了，押司自去官府承应。押司娘叫过迎儿来道：“迎儿，你在我家里也有七八年，我也看你在眼里，如今比不得先押司在日做事。我看你肚里莫是要嫁个老公？如今我与你说头亲。”迎儿道：“那里敢指望，



gradually rose until it was more than a foot up in the air. A man appeared, pushing up the stove with his head, his neck framed by the railings of a well, his long hair coming loose, his tongue hanging low, his eyes dripping blood. (*First apparition.*) He cried, "Ying'er! Help your father!"

Ying'er was so frightened that with a loud scream, she collapsed on the ground, her face sallow, her eyes glazed over, her lips purple, her fingernails turning blue. We do not know what was happening to her internal organs, but her limbs had all gone limp. Truly,

*Weak as the waning moon at the fifth watch,*

*Feeble as the spent oil lamp before dawn.*

The couple rushed over to bring Ying'er back to consciousness. After feeding her with some "soul-pacifying" liquid, they asked, "What did you see that made you faint?"

Ying'er said to the woman, "I was making a fire when the stove gradually went up in air, and I saw the deceased chief clerk, his neck framed by the railings of a well, his eyes dripping blood, his hair hanging loose. He called my name, and I was so scared I fell to the ground."

At this account, the woman slapped Ying'er across the face and said, "A fine maid you are! You could have just said that you're too lazy to make the soup. You didn't have to come up with such tricks, faking death and all! Well, no more work for you now. Put out the fire and go to sleep." And Ying'er did as she was told.

Back in their own room, the woman whispered to her husband, "Second Brother, that girl saw something. We can't keep her any longer. Let's send her away."

"But where?"

"I have an idea."

After breakfast the next morning, Young Sun went off to the yamen for work. The woman called Ying'er over and said to her, "Ying'er, you've been with me for seven or eight years now, and I like you a lot. But you're not working as hard as when the other chief clerk was alive. Is it because you are thinking of marriage? If so, let me make a match for you."



却教迎儿嫁兀谁？”押司娘只因教迎儿嫁这个人，与大孙押司索了命。正是：

风定始知蝉在树，灯残方见月临窗。

当时不由迎儿做主，把来嫁了一个人。那厮姓王名兴，浑名唤做王酒酒，又吃酒，又要赌。迎儿嫁将去，那得三个月，把房卧都费尽了。那厮吃得醉，走来家把迎儿骂道：“打脊贱人！见我恁般苦，不去问你使头借三五百钱来做盘缠？”迎儿吃不得这厮骂，把裙儿系了腰，一程走来小孙押司家中。押司娘见了道：“迎儿，你自嫁了人，又来说甚么？”迎儿告妈妈：“实不敢瞒，迎儿嫁那厮不着，又吃酒，又要赌。如今未得三个月，有些房卧，都使尽了。没计奈何，告妈妈借换得三五百钱，把来做盘缠。”押司娘道：“迎儿，你嫁人不着，是你的事。我今与你一两银子，后番却休要来。”迎儿接了银子，谢了妈妈归家。那得四五日，又使尽了。当日天色晚，王兴那厮吃得酒醉，走来看迎儿道：“打脊贱人！你见恁般苦，不去再告使头则个？”迎儿道：“我前番去，借得一两银子，吃尽千言万语，如今却教我又怎地去？”王兴骂道：“打脊贱人！你若不去时，打折你一只脚！”迎儿吃骂不过，只得连夜走来孙押司门首，看时，门却关了。迎儿欲待敲门，又



“How could I dream of marrying? But who are you marrying me off to?”

The man Mrs. Sun had in mind was to be the cause of vindication for the deceased Big Sun. Truly,

*Cicadas in the trees aren't heard till the wind dies;  
The moon outside isn't seen till the lamp goes out.*

To pick up our story, Ying'er was married off, without having any say in the matter, to a fellow called Wang Xing, nicknamed Wang the Wino, a drinker and a gambler. Less than three months into the marriage, he had used up all of Ying'er's dowry.

One day, in a drunken state, the man came home and yelled at Ying'er, “You cheap slut! How can you watch me live in such misery without going to your master and mistress to borrow a few hundred in cash?”

Unable to bear such abuse, Ying'er put on a skirt, tied it up around her waist, and walked all the way to Young Sun's house. At the sight of Ying'er, the woman said, “Ying'er, you are a married woman now. What could you have to say to me?”

“To be honest with you, this is a bad marriage for me. My husband drinks and gambles, and in less than three months, he has spent all my dowry. There's nothing for it now but to ask you for a loan of a few hundred cash to tide us over.”

“Ying'er,” said the woman, “being married to the wrong man is your problem. Now here's one tael of silver for you, but don't come here again.” Ying'er accepted the silver and thankfully took her leave.

But the money was gone in a matter of four or five days.

One evening, an inebriated Wang Xing walked up to Ying'er and said, “You worthless slut! Why don't you go again and get something from your mistress when you see me in such misery?”

“The last time I went, I was given a good talking-to for that one tael of silver. How can you tell me to go again?”

“You cheap slut! If you don't go, I'll break your leg!”

Unable to fend off the stream of curses, Ying'er could not do otherwise than go to Sun's house before the night was out, but upon



恐怕他埋怨，进退两难，只得再走回来。过了两家人家，只见一个人道：“迎儿，我与你一件物事。”只因这个人身上，我只替押司娘和小孙押司烦恼。正是：

龟游水面分开绿，鹤立松梢点破青。

迎儿回过头来看那叫的人，只见人家屋檐头，一个人舒角幞头，绯袍角带，抱着一骨碌文字，低声叫道：“迎儿，我是你先的押司。如今见在一个去处，未敢说与你知道。你把手来，我与你一件物事。”迎儿打一接，接了这件物事，随手不见了那个绯袍角带的人。迎儿看那物事时，却是一包碎银子。迎儿归到家中敲门，只听得里面道：“姐姐，你去使头家里，如何恁早晚才回？”迎儿道：“好教你知，我去妈妈家借米，他家关了门。我又不敲，怕吃他埋怨。再走回来，只见人家屋檐头立着先的押司，舒角幞头，绯袍角带，与我一包银子在这里。”王兴听说道：“打脊贱人，你却来我面前说鬼话！你这一包银子，来得不明。你且进来。”迎儿入去，王兴道：“姐姐，你寻常说那灶前看见先押司的话，我也都记得，这事一定有些蹊跷。我却怕邻舍听得，故恁地如此说。你把银子收好，待天明去县里首告他。”正是：

着意种花花不活，等闲插柳柳成阴。

王兴到天明时，思量道：“且住，有两件事告首不得。第一件，





reaching the house, she found the gate closed. She thought of knocking but checked herself for fear of being scolded. In a quandary, she saw nothing for it but to turn back. After passing two or three houses, she heard a man saying, “Ying’er, I have something for you.” Now, this man makes me fear for Mrs. Sun and Young Sun! Truly,

*A turtle in water — black amid blue;*

*A crane on a pine branch — white amid green.<sup>11</sup>*

Ying’er turned around to look at the man, and there he stood, under the eaves of a house, wearing a cap, a red robe, a waistband with a horn clasp and carrying a scroll of documents in his arms. In a subdued voice, he continued, “Ying’er, I’m the dead chief clerk. I can’t tell you where I live now, but hold out your hand, I’ve got something for you.”

Ying’er held out her hand. The moment something was placed in it, the man disappeared. Ying’er saw that in her hand was a package of loose silver. She returned home and, at her knock, Wang Xing said from within, “Sister, what took you so long at your mistress’ house?”

“Let me tell you what happened. I went there to borrow some rice, but their gate was closed. I didn’t knock for fear that they might get angry. When I turned back, I saw the deceased chief clerk standing under the eaves of a house, wearing a cap, a red robe, and a horn waistband, and he gave me a package of silver. Here it is.”

“You slut! What nonsense is this! You have some more explaining to do about that package of silver, but get inside first.”

Ying’er went in. “Sister,” said Wang Xing, “I remember what you said before about seeing the dead man by the stove. There must be something fishy about all this. I said those things a moment ago because I was afraid that the neighbors might hear you. Put the silver away for now. Let’s wait until tomorrow morning to go to the county yamen to press charges against them.” Truly,

*Flowers wither when given too much care;*

*Willows flourish when left unattended.*

The next morning, Wang Xing thought to himself, “Hold it! I can’t press charges for two reasons. First, he is the number one chief



他是县里头名押司，我怎敢恶了他？第二件，却无实迹，连这些银子也待入官，却打没头脑官司。不如赎几件衣裳，买两个盒子送去孙押司家里，到去谒索他则个。”计较已定，便去买下两个盒子送去。两人打扮身上干净，走来孙押司家。押司娘看见他夫妻二人，身上干净，又送盒子来，便道：“你那得钱钞？”王兴道：“昨日得押司一件文字，撰得有二两银子，送些盒子来。如今也不吃酒，也不赌钱了。”押司娘道：“王兴，你自归去，且教你老婆在此住两日。”王兴去了，押司娘对着迎儿道：“我有一炷东峰岱岳愿香要还，我明日同你去则个。”当晚无话。

明早起来，梳洗罢，押司自去县里去。押司娘锁了门，和迎儿同行。到东岳庙殿上烧了香，下殿来去那两廊下烧香。行到速报司前，迎儿裙带系得松，脱了裙带，押司娘先行过去。迎儿正在后面系裙带，只见速报司里，有个舒角幞头、绯袍角带的判官，叫：“迎儿，我便是你先的押司。[眉批]三现身。你与我申冤则个！我与你这件物事。”迎儿接得物事在手，看了一眼，道：“却不作怪，泥神也会说起话来！如何与我这物事？”正是：

开天辟地罕曾闻，从古至今希得见。

迎儿接得来，慌忙揣在怀里，也不敢说与押司娘知道。当日烧了香，各自归家。把上项事对王兴说了。王兴讨那物事看时，却是



clerk in the county. How could I ever dare make an enemy of him? Second, there's no hard evidence. Even these loose pieces of silver would be confiscated, and it would be a lawsuit without a suspect. I'd better redeem a few pieces of clothing from the pawnshop, buy a couple of boxes of sweets for Mr. Sun with the money, and pay him a visit." His mind thus made up, he went out and bought two boxes of sweets.

After dressing up neatly, the couple went to Sun's house. At the sight of the neatly dressed couple bearing boxes of gifts, Mrs. Sun asked, "Where did you get the money?"

Wang Xing replied, "I earned two taels of silver drawing up a paper for the chief clerk. So I'm bringing some gifts for you. I've given up drinking and gambling."

"Wang Xing," said Mrs. Sun, "you may go home now, but I'd like to keep your wife here for a couple of days."

After Wang Xing was gone, the woman said to Ying'er, "I need to travel to Eastern Peak Temple to offer some incense. Go with me tomorrow."

Nothing of note occurred that night. The next morning, after washing up, the chief clerk went to the yamen, whereas his wife, after locking up the gate, set out with Ying'er on their journey. After burning some incense in the main hall of Eastern Peak Temple, they went to offer more incense in the corridor. When they were passing the Shrine of Retribution, Ying'er's skirt belt came loose. While Ying'er was busy tying up her belt, Mrs. Sun went ahead on her own. Suddenly, a statue of a judge wearing a cap, a red robe, and a horn waistband called out from inside the shrine, "Ying'er, I am the deceased chief clerk! (*Third apparition.*) Redress the wrong done to me! I've got something here for you." Ying'er took the object and said, looking at it, "How very strange for a clay statue to talk! Why did he give me this?" Truly, this is something

*Unheard of since the beginning of the universe,  
 And hardly ever seen from time immemorial.*

Hastily Ying'er hid the object in her bosom and thought it prudent not to reveal anything about this to Mrs. Sun. After offering in-



一幅纸。上写道：

大女子，小女子，前人耕来后人饵。要知三更事，掇开火下水。来年二三月，句已当解此。

王兴看了解说不出，分付迎儿不要说与别人知道，看来年二三月间有甚么事。

捻指间，到来年二月间，换个知县，是庐州金斗城人，姓包名拯，就是今人传说有名的包龙图相公。他后来官至龙图阁学士，所以叫做包龙图。此时做知县还是初任。那包爷自小聪明正直，做知县时，便能剖人间暧昧之情，断天下狐疑之狱。到任三日，未曾理事。夜间得其一梦，梦见自己坐堂，堂上贴一联对子：

要知三更事，掇开火下水。

包爷次日早堂，唤合当吏书，将这两句教他解说，无人能识。包公讨白牌一面，将这一联楷书在上，却就是小孙押司动笔。写毕，包公将朱笔判在后面：“如有能解此语者，赏银十两。”将牌挂于



cense, they went their separate ways.

Upon hearing Ying'er's account of what had happened, Wang Xing asked to see the object and found it to be a scroll of paper bearing the following inscription:

*The big daughter's child, the small daughter's child;  
 The former sowed for the latter to reap.  
 To know what happened at the third watch of the night,  
 Remove the fire and drain the water underneath.  
 In the second or third month of next year,  
 Ju Si will come to solve this riddle.*

Unable to make head or tail of it, Wang Xing told Ying'er, "Don't let anyone else know about this. It looks like something's going to happen in the second or third month of next year."

In the time it took to snap a finger, the second month of the new year rolled around. A new county magistrate came to replace the old one. A native of the town of Jindou in Luzhou, he was called Bao Zheng [999-1062], the very Judge Bao who came to be so celebrated in stories of our day. Later known as Academician Bao after he rose to that post in the Longtu Pavilion Imperial Academy, he was, at the time this story took place, a county magistrate serving in his first official post. From an early age, he had been known for his intelligence and integrity. While serving as a county magistrate, he manifested a deep understanding of hidden human feelings and solved cases that would have baffled others.

On the third night after taking up office, before he began to attend to official business, he had a dream in which he was seated in a hall with a couplet posted on the wall:

*To know what happened at the third watch of the night,  
 Remove the fire and drain the water underneath.*

The next morning, Magistrate Bao called a court session and told all the clerks on duty to explain these two lines, but no one was able to come up with an answer. He then asked for a blank placard and had none other than Young Sun copy the couplet onto it in the regular style of calligraphy. The magistrate then added with his vermilion brush-pen: "A reward of ten taels of silver will be offered to



县门，哄动县前县后，官身私身，捱肩擦背，只为贪那赏物，都来赌先争看。

却说王兴正在县前买枣糕吃，听见人说知县相公挂一面白牌出来，牌上有二句言语，无人解得。王兴走来看时，正是速报司判官一幅纸上写的话，暗地吃了一惊：“欲要出首，那新知县相公是个古怪的人，怕去惹他；欲待不说，除了我再无第二个人晓得这二句话的来历。”买了枣糕回去，与浑家说知此事。迎儿道：“先押司三遍出现，教我与他申冤，又白白里得了他一包银子。若不去出首，只怕鬼神见责。”王兴意犹不决，再到县前，正遇了邻人裴孔目。王兴平昔晓得裴孔目是知事的，一手扯到僻静巷里，将此事与他商议：“该出首也不该？”裴孔目道：“那速报司这一幅纸在那里？”王兴道：“见藏在我浑家衣服箱里。”裴孔目道：“我先去与你禀官。你回去取了这幅纸，带到县里。待知县相公唤你时，你却拿将出来，做个证见。”当下王兴去了。裴孔目候包爷退堂，见小孙押司不在左右，就跪将过去，禀道：“老爷白牌上写这二句，只有邻舍王兴晓得来历。他说是岳庙速报司与他一幅纸，纸上还写许多言语，内中却有这二句。”包爷问道：“王兴如



anyone able to solve this riddle. ” The placard was hung on the gate of the county yamen, and soon a large crowd of county employees and commoners had gathered, all attracted by the reward offer and jostling one another for a better view.

Wang Xing was buying some date cakes near the county yamen when he heard that the magistrate had hung out a placard bearing a couplet that no one could interpret. He went to take a look. When he saw two lines that he had seen on the scroll from the judge of the Shrine of Retribution, he was quite shocked. “If I go and tell the truth,” he thought, “that new county magistrate is so unpredictable that I’m afraid I might give him offense. But if I don’t say anything, no one else will ever know what is behind these two lines. ”

After returning home with the date cakes, he told his wife about this. Ying’er said, “The dead chief clerk has appeared three times, telling me to redress the wrong done to him. We also got a package of silver from him without having done anything to earn it. If we don’t go to the authorities, I’m afraid the ghosts and the gods will be after us. ”

Wang Xing remained undecided. Once again, he headed for the county yamen and there ran into a neighbor, a county clerk named Pei. Knowing Clerk Pei to be a wise man, Wang Xing pulled him into a secluded alley and consulted him. “Should I or should I not come forward?”

“Where’s that scroll from the Judge of Retribution?” asked Pei.

“It’s hidden in my wife’s clothes trunk. ”

“First, let me go to the yamen to report the matter on your behalf. In the meantime, go back to get that scroll and bring it to the yamen. When the magistrate calls you, you can present it as evidence. ”

So Wang Xing turned back home. Clerk Pei went into the yamen and waited until Magistrate Bao dismissed the court session. Observing that Young Sun was not around, Pei approached the magistrate and, falling to his knees, said, “Your Honor, my neighbor Wang Xing is the only one who knows the story behind the couplet on the placard. He says that he received at the Shrine of Retribution in Eastern Peak Temple a scroll of paper on which were written these two



今在那里？”裴孔目道：“已回家取那一幅纸去了。”包爷差人速拿王兴回话。

却说王兴回家，开了浑家的衣箱，检那幅纸出来看时，只叫得苦，原来是一张素纸，字迹全无。不敢到县里去，怀着鬼胎，躲在家里。知县相公的差人到了，新官新府，如火之急，怎好推辞？只得带了这张素纸，随着公差进县，直至后堂。包爷屏去左右，只留裴孔目在傍。包爷问王兴道：“裴某说你在岳庙中收得一幅纸，可取上来看。”王兴连连叩头禀道：“小人的妻子，去年在岳庙烧香，走到速报司前，那神道出现，与他一幅纸。纸上写着一篇说话，中间其实有老爷白牌上写的两句，小的把来藏在衣箱里。方才去检看，变了一张素纸。如今这素纸见在，小人不敢说谎。”包爷取纸上来看了，问道：“这一篇言语，你可记得？”王兴道：“小人还记得。”即时念与包爷听了。包爷将纸写出，仔细推详了一会，叫：“王兴，我且问你，那神道把这一幅纸与你的老婆，可再有甚么言语分付？”王兴道：“那神道只叫与他申冤。”包爷大怒，喝道：“胡说！做了神道，有甚冤没处申得，偏你的婆娘会替他申冤？他到来央你！[眉批] 申冤只在此数句。这等无稽之





lines and a lot more. ”

“Where is this man Wang Xing?” asked the magistrate.

“He has gone back home to get that scroll. ”

Magistrate Bao sent an officer to bring Wang Xing to court posthaste.

Meanwhile, Wang Xing, back at home, opened his wife’s trunk and took out the scroll. As soon as he spread it out for a look, he let out a cry of dismay. It was now a blank piece of paper without the slightest trace of a character. Losing all courage to go to the county yamen, he stayed indoors in trepidation. But the officer dispatched by the county magistrate arrived. How could Wang Xing resist the fiery zeal of a county administration in its first term of office? Resignedly, he took the blank paper and followed the officer to the yamen and straight into the inner hall.

Magistrate Bao dismissed his attendants, keeping only Clerk Pei by his side, and asked Wang Xing, “Mr. Pei said that you received a scroll of paper from Eastern Peak Temple. Show it to me. ”

With one kowtow after another, Wang Xing said, “My wife made an incense-offering trip to Eastern Peak Temple last year. While she was passing the Shrine of Retribution, a god gave her a scroll of paper. It contained, among other lines, the very couplet inscribed on Your Honor’s placard. I put the scroll in a trunk, but when I went just some moments ago to take it out, I found it to be blank. It is here now. Everything I said is true. ”

Magistrate Bao took the scroll. After one look, he asked, “Do you remember what was written on it?”

“Yes, I do. ” Right away, Wang Xing started reciting the lines.

After taking down every word on a piece of paper, Magistrate Bao perused the lines for a while before he said, “Wang Xing, let me ask you, what did that deity say to your wife when he gave her the scroll?”

“He told her to redress the wrong done to him. ”

The magistrate flew into a rage. “You are lying! How can a deity have grievances that need to be redressed by humans? And he begs your wife, of all people, to help him? (*Exactly so.* ) Whom are



言，却哄谁来！”王兴慌忙叩头道：“老爷，是有个缘故。”包爷道：“你细细讲。讲得有理，有赏；如无理时，今日就是你开棒了。”王兴禀道：“小人的妻子，原是伏侍本县大孙押司的，叫做迎儿。因算命的算那大孙押司其年其月其日三更三点命里该死，何期果然死了。主母随了如今的小孙押司，却把这迎儿嫁出与小人为妻。小人的妻子，初次在孙家灶下，看见先押司现身，项上套着井栏，披发吐舌，眼中流血，叫道：‘迎儿，可与你爹爹做主。’第二次夜间到孙家门首，又遇见先押司，舒角幞头，绯袍角带，把一包碎银，与小人的妻子。第三遍岳庙里速报司判官出现，将这一幅纸与小人的妻子，又嘱付与他申冤。那判官爷模样，就是大孙押司，原是小人妻子旧日的家长。”[眉批]说得明白。

包爷闻言，呵呵大笑：“原来如此！”喝教左右去拿那小孙押司夫妇二人到来：“你两个做得好事！”小孙押司道：“小人不曾做甚么事。”包爷将速报司一篇言语解说出来：“‘大女子，小女子’，女之子，乃外孙，是说外郎姓孙，分明是大孙押司，小孙押司。‘前人耕来后人饵’，饵者食也，是说你白得他的老婆，享用他的家业。‘要知三更事，掇开火下水’，大孙押司，死于三更时



you trying to fool with such nonsense?"

Wang Xing hastened to reply with another kowtow, "Your Honor, there is an explanation for this."

"Then tell me! And be specific! I'll have a reward for you if what you say makes sense. If not, you'll be the first one to be put under the rod!"

"My wife Ying'er used to be a maid serving Big Chief Clerk Sun of this county. A fortune-teller predicted that he was going to die at the third quarter of the third watch that very night, and so he did. His widow married Young Chief Clerk Sun, her current husband, and married Ying'er off to me. The first time the deceased chief clerk appeared to my wife was in the kitchen of the Sun house. With the railings of a well around his neck, his hair coming down loose, his tongue hanging out, and his eyes dripping blood, he cried, 'Ying'er, help your father!' The second time was at the gate of the Sun house one night. This time he wore a cap, a red robe, and a horn waistband. He gave my wife a package of loose silver. The third time was in Eastern Peak Temple, where he appeared as a judge of the Shrine of Retribution and gave my wife this scroll, telling her to redress the wrong done to him. The judge looked exactly like Big Sun, my wife's deceased master." (*Clear exposition.*)

At this account, Magistrate Bao burst into a peal of laughter. "So that's what happened!" By his order, his men apprehended the Sun couple and brought them to court.

"A fine thing the two of you did!" he said to the couple.

Young Sun protested, "I didn't do anything wrong!"

Magistrate Bao launched into an explication of the inscription given by the judge at the Shrine of Retribution. "As for the first line, 'The big daughter's child, the small daughter's child,' well, 'a daughter's child' is a 'grandchild,' which is the character *sun*, a surname that is obviously shared by the two chief clerks, the big one and the small one. As for the line 'The former sowed for the latter to reap,' 'to reap' means to have something to live on, a reference to the fact that you, at no expense to yourself, took his wife and enjoy his family property. As for the third and fourth lines 'To know what



分，要知死的根由，‘掇开火下之水’。那迎儿见家长在灶下，披发吐舌，眼中流血，此乃勒死之状。头上套着井栏，井者水也，灶者火也，水在火下，你家灶必砌在井上，死者之尸，必在井中。‘来年二三月’，正是今日。‘句已当解此’，‘句已’两字，合来乃是个包字，是说我包某今日到此为官，解其语意，与他雪冤。”  
 [眉批] 解得明白。喝教左右：“同王兴押着小孙押司，到他家灶下，不拘好歹，要勒死的尸首回话。”众人似疑不信，到孙家发开灶床脚，地下是一块石板。揭起石板，是一口井。唤集土工，将井水吊干，络了竹篮，放人下去打捞，捞起一个尸首来。众人齐来认看，面色不改，还有人认得是大孙押司，项上果有勒帛。小孙押司唬得面如土色，不敢开口。众人俱各骇然。

元来这小孙押司当初是大雪里冻倒的人，当时大孙押司见他冻倒，好个后生，救他活了，教他识字，写文书。不想浑家与他有事。当日大孙押司算命回来时，恰好小孙押司正闪在他家。见说三更前



happened at the third watch of the night / Remove the fire and drain the water underneath, ' Big Sun died at midnight, and to find out the cause of his death, one would have to drain the water under the fire. Ying'er saw her master by the kitchen stove, his hair coming down loose, his tongue hanging out, his eyes dripping blood. These are signs of death by strangulation. There were the railings of a well around his neck. A well is the source of water. The kitchen stove is the source of fire. As for ' the water underneath,' there must be a well under your kitchen stove, and the dead body must be inside the well. ' The second or third month of next year' is now. As for the line ' Ju Si will come to solve this riddle,' well, the characters *ju* [sentence] and *si* [the sixth of the twelve Earthly Branches], when put together, make the character *bao*, which means that I, Bao Zheng, would be here to serve as the judge and solve the riddle to redress the wrong done to him. " (*Well explained.* )

He then ordered his men and Wang Xing to take Young Sun under guard to his own kitchen and, whatever the circumstances, bring back the dead body. Somewhat skeptical, the men went to Sun's house. When they removed the stove, a stone slab underneath came into view. When the slab was pried open, they saw that there was indeed a well. They hired some laborers to drain the well. A man and a bamboo basket were let down into the well, and sure enough, the man came up with a dead body. The men gathered around for a look and found that the face appeared as if still alive. Some of the men recognized it as the face of Big Sun. Around his neck there was indeed a piece of silk with which he had been strangled. Young Sun was so frightened that he was struck dumb, his face drained of all color. The others were also appalled.

What had happened was that the younger Sun had once almost frozen to death in the snow. Big Sun saw him and, taking pity on the fine-looking young man, brought him back to life and later taught him to read and write. Little did he expect that his wife would carry on an affair with the young man. On the day that the older Sun came home after having had his fortune told, the younger Sun happened to have sneaked into his house. Hearing that the older Sun was to die at



后当死，趁这个机会，把酒灌醉了，就当夜勒死了大孙押司，擗在井里。小孙押司却掩着面走去，把一块大石头漾在奉符县河里，扑通地一声响，当时只道大孙押司投河死了。后来却把灶来压在井上，次后说成亲事。当下众人回复了包爷。押司和押司娘不打自招，双双的问成死罪，偿了大孙押司之命。包爷不失信于小民，将十两银子赏与王兴。王兴把三两谢了裴孔目，不在话下。

包爷初任，因断了这件公事，名闻天下，至今人说包龙图，日间断人，夜间断鬼。有诗为证：

诗句藏谜谁解明，包公一断鬼神惊。

寄声暗室亏心者，莫道天公鉴不清。



around midnight, the younger man took the opportunity to get him drunk and then strangled him and threw him into the well. The younger Sun then walked toward the river, covering his face with his hand, and threw a rock into the water, making a loud splash, to make people believe that the older Sun had thrown himself into the river. The kitchen stove was then moved to cover the well. Later, the couple got married through the services of the matchmakers.

The officers reported the matter to Magistrate Bao. The Sun couple confessed without being put under the rod and were sentenced to death as repayment for Big Sun's life. Keeping his promise to an insignificant villager, Magistrate Bao gave Wang Xing the reward of ten taels of silver. Wang Xing, in his turn, gave Clerk Pei three taels as a token of his gratitude, but that need not be gone into here.

Having solved the case in the first few days of his term of office, Magistrate Bao became a well-known figure, and his name spread throughout the land. Even today, stories about how he solved his cases among mortal beings in daytime and among ghosts at night still circulate far and wide, as testified by the following poem:

*The lines contained a most baffling riddle;  
Judge Bao's verdict amazed ghosts and deities.  
Let it be known to those guilty of crimes:  
Never assume that heaven does not know.*

This story has been translated as "The Ghost Came Thrice" in *Lady Dragon: Chinese Stories from the Ming Dynasty*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company, 1981).

<sup>1</sup> Gan Luo was a native of the state of Qin during the Warring States period. He was granted a royal title at the age of twelve for his meritorious service to the state.

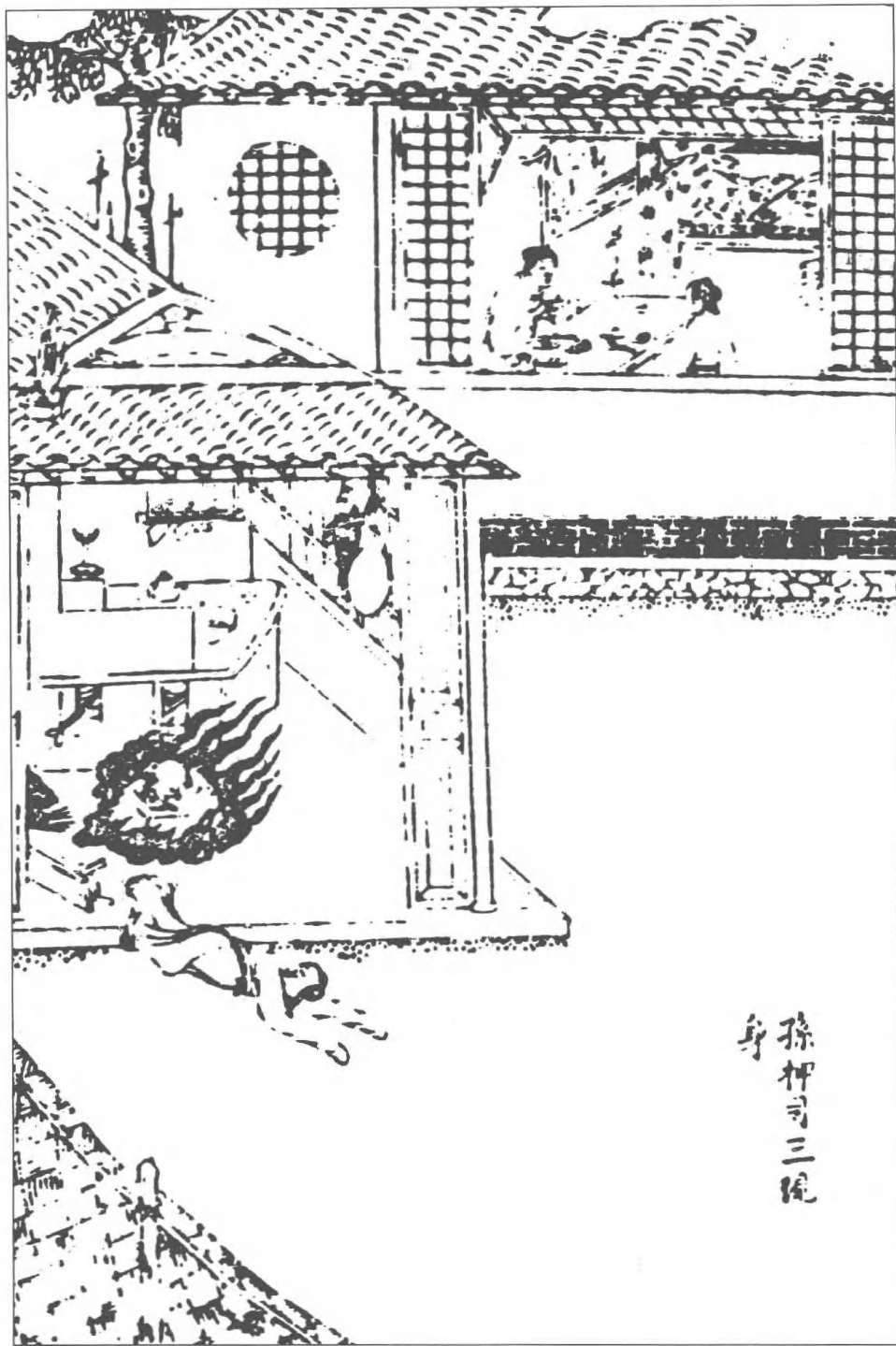
Ziya is Jiang Ziya, or Lü Wang, also popularly known as Taigong Wang or Jiang Taigong. He was a Zhou dynasty military strategist who did not rise to eminence until he was about eighty years old.

<sup>2</sup> Peng Zu was a legendary figure in the time of the sage king Yao (before 2100 B. C. E.) who was said to have lived for eight hundred years.

Yan Hui (521–490 B. C. E.) was a student of Confucius. For more about Yan Hui, see story 1.

<sup>3</sup> Fan Dan (112–185), an erudite scholar on the classics, was also known for his poetry.

For more on Shi Chong's wealth and downfall, see story 36 in Feng Menglong, *Stories*



孫押司三院  
身



*Old and New, a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Zhang Dun (1035–1105), courtesy name Zihou, was a court official committed to Wang Anshi's reforms.

<sup>5</sup> The five phases are water, fire, wood, metal, and earth. The eight characters of the astrological chart are two characters for the year of birth (one for the Heavenly Stem, one for the Earthly Branch), two for the month, two for the day, and two for the hour. Phases and characters combined are used to tell one's fortune.

<sup>6</sup> Dongfang Shuo (154–93 B. C. ) was a great man of letters of the Western Han dynasty. Stories about his wisdom and his fortune-telling skills abound.

<sup>7</sup> The Tai'e sword is believed to have been cast by the legendary ironsmiths Ganjian and Ouyezhi in the Spring and Autumn period.

<sup>8</sup> In fortune-tellers' parlance, a white tiger symbolizes misfortune.

<sup>9</sup> A story in *Liezi* tells of a woodsman in the state of Zheng who forgot where he had hidden the deer he had killed and thought he had dreamed about it. Another man heard about this, found the deer, and took it home. Then the woodsman dreamed he remembered the place where he had hidden the deer and also saw the man who had taken the deer. The two men brought the case to court. When asked for his judgment, the prime minister said, "I can't tell what is dream and what is not." The mention of "Qin" suggests an allusion to Prime Minister Zhao Gao of the Qin dynasty. He demanded absolute obedience by pointing at a deer, calling it a horse, and killing everyone who disagreed. Feng Menglong may have confused the two stories.

<sup>10</sup> Zhuangzi or Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369–286 B. C. ) was a Daoist philosopher. According to *Zhuangzi*, he once dreamed that he was a butterfly that did not know it was Zhuang Zhou. When he awoke suddenly, he found himself Zhuang Zhou again but did not know whether he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamed that he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming it was Zhuang Zhou. For more about Zhuang Zhou, see story 2.

<sup>11</sup> "Green" (*qing*) is a homophone of the character for "clear," implying in this context that the case is to be solved.





## 第十四卷

### 一窟鬼癩道人除怪

宋人小说旧名《西山一窟鬼》

杏花过雨，渐残红零落，胭脂颜色。流水飘香，人渐远，难托春心脉脉。恨别王孙，墙阴目断，谁把青梅摘？金鞍何处？绿杨依旧南陌。消散云雨须臾，多情因甚，有轻离轻拆。燕语千般，争解说些子伊家消息。厚约深盟，除非重见，见了方端的。而今无奈，寸肠千恨堆积。

这只词名唤做《念奴娇》，是一个赴省士人，姓沈名文述所作，元来皆是集古人词章之句。如何见得？从头与各位说开：

第一句道：“杏花过雨。”陈子高曾有《寒食》词，寄《谒金门》：

柳丝碧，柳下人家寒食。莺语匆匆花寂寂，玉阶春草湿。



## Story 14

### A Mangy Priest Exorcises a Den of Ghosts

*The apricot blossoms, washed by the rain,  
Fade and fall, their petals the color of rouge,  
Their fragrance flowing with the river.  
The dear one is farther away, but love lingers.  
One leaves in sorrow, the other gazes  
And waits in vain in the shadow of the wall.  
Who will be picking the green plums?  
Where is the gold-saddled horse going?  
Green willows still line the road to the south.*

*In a moment, the clouds and rain are gone,<sup>1</sup>  
The tender feelings — easily they come and go.  
The swallows chatter away,  
Spreading news about the one afar.  
The vows of everlasting love —  
When will we meet face-to-face again?  
Only then would the mind know any peace.  
But now, there is little else to be done  
Than to bear the overwhelming weight of grief.*

The above lyric poem to the tune of “The Charms of Niannu” was written by a scholar named Shen Wenshu<sup>2</sup> while he was in the provincial capital for the civil service examinations. It is in fact a cento, with lines by poets of earlier times. How do we know this? Well, let me start from the beginning:

The first line, “The apricot blossoms, washed by the rain,” is based on a line from Chen Zigao’s poem, “Cold Food Festival,”<sup>3</sup> to the tune of “A Visit at the Golden Gate”:

*When the thin willow twigs turn green,  
Cold food is set under the trees.  
Chirping orioles midst lonely flowers,  
Jade terraces wet with spring grass,*



闲凭熏笼无力，心事有谁知得？檀炷绕窗背壁，杏花残雨滴。

第二句道：“渐残红零落，胭脂颜色。”李易安曾有《暮春》词，寄《品令》：

零落残红，似胭脂颜色。一年春事，柳飞轻絮，笋添新竹。寂寞，幽对小园嫩绿。登临未足，怅游子归期促。他年清梦，千里犹到城阴溪曲。应有凌波，时为故人凝目。

第三句道：“流水飘香。”延安李氏曾有《春雨》词，寄《浣溪沙》：

无力蔷薇带雨低，多情蝴蝶趁花飞，流水飘香乳燕啼。南浦魂消春不管，东阳衣减镜先知，小楼今夜月依依。

第四句道：“人渐远，难托春心脉脉。”宝月禅师曾有《春词》，寄《柳梢青》：

脉脉春心，情人渐远，难托离愁。雨后寒轻，风前香软，春在梨花。行人倚棹天涯，酒醒处残阳乱鸦。门外秋千，



*I lean on the incense burner, idle and tired,  
With whom can I share what weighs on my mind?  
With joss sticks all around the windows and walls,  
I watch the rain-washed apricot blossoms.*

The second line, “Fade and fall, their petals the color of rouge,” comes from a line in Li Yi’an’s<sup>4</sup> lyric poem, “Late Spring,” to the tune of “The Official Ranks”:

*The color of rouge, the petals fade and fall;  
Spring returns: willow catkins fly, bamboo shoots grow.  
In solitude, I watch the small garden,  
A patch of tender green.  
I climbed a hill and looked out, but in vain;  
How sad that the traveler has tarried!  
In a fond dream, at yonder stream by the wall,  
I see my loved one’s eyes in the waves.*

The third line, “Their fragrance flowing with the river,” comes from the lyric poem “Spring Rain,” by a certain Li-shi of Yan’an, to the tune of “Sand of Silk-washing Stream”:

*The roses droop low under the raindrops;  
The butterflies flit lovingly midst the flowers,  
Whose fragrance flows with the river as young swallows sing.  
I grieve on the southern bank,<sup>5</sup> but spring is less caring  
Than the mirror that told Dongyang of his gaunt looks.<sup>6</sup>  
Tonight, the moon lingers over the roof.*

As for the fourth line “The dear one is farther away, but love lingers,” there is a lyric poem titled “Spring,” by the Precious Moon Chan Master,<sup>7</sup> to the tune of “Budding Tips of Willow Branches”:

*Love lingers as the dear one is farther away,  
Leaving me with the sorrow of parting.  
The rain washed away the chill in the air;  
The wind sends wafts of gentle aroma;  
Spring dwells in the blossoms of the pear trees.*

*The one at the oar travels throughout the land.  
Waking from his wine-induced sleep,*



墙头红粉，深院谁家？

第五句、第六句道：“恨别王孙，墙阴目断。”欧阳永叔曾有《清明》词，寄《一斛珠》：

伤春怀抱，清明过后莺花好。劝君莫向愁人道，又被香轮，碾破青青草。夜来风月连清晓，墙阴目断无人到。恨别王孙愁多少，犹顿春寒，未放花枝老。

第七句道：“谁把青梅摘。”晁无咎曾有《春词》，寄《清商怨》：

风摇动，雨濛松，翠条柔弱花头重。春衫窄，娇无力，记得当初，共伊把青梅来摘。都如梦，何时共？可怜敲损钗头凤。头山隔，暮云碧，燕子来也，全然又无些子消息。

第八句、第九句道：“金鞍何处？绿杨依旧南陌。”柳耆卿曾有《春词》，寄《清平乐》：

阴晴未定，薄日烘云影；金鞍何处寻芳径？绿杨依旧南



*He sees the sun setting midst flying crows.  
 A swing in the yard, a rouged face atop the wall,  
 Whose imposing mansion might this be?*

The fifth and sixth lines, “One leaves in sorrow, the other gazes / And waits in vain in the shadow of the wall,” originate in the poem “Clear and Bright Festival,” by Ouyang Yongshu,<sup>8</sup> to the tune of “A Bushel of Pearls”:

*Spring fills the heart with sadness;  
 After Clear and Bright come orioles and flowers.<sup>9</sup>  
 I urge you not to head for the path of sorrow,  
 Where perfumed wheels crush the green grass again.*

*As the moon and the wind give way to dawn,  
 One waits in vain in the shadow of the wall,  
 The other leaves, how deep the sorrow!  
 The sudden spring chill withers the buds ere they bloom.*

The seventh line, “Who will be picking the green plums?” is from Chao Wujiu’s<sup>10</sup> lyric poem “Spring” to the tune of “The Sad Qingshang Tune”:

*The wind sways and shakes, the rain blurs and blinds,  
 The twigs too weak to bear the weight of the blossoms.  
 The spring clothes too thin for the feeble body,  
 I recall the days when you and I picked green plums.*

*When shall we share these dream-like memories?  
 How sad that my hair is too thin for hairpins now!  
 Topped by twilight clouds, the mountain pass blocks the  
 way;*

*The swallows come, but bring me no news of you.*

The eighth and ninth lines, “Where is the gold-saddled horse going? Green willows still line the road to the south,” are from Liu Qiqing’s<sup>11</sup> lyric poem “Spring” to the tune of “Pure and Serene Music”:

*Overcast one moment, sunny the next;  
 The pale sun sets off the contours of the clouds.  
 What fragrant path seeks the gold-saddled horse?*



陌静。 厌厌几许春情，可怜老去难成！看取镊残霜鬓，不随芳草重生。

第十句道：“消散云雨须臾。”晏叔原曾有《春词》，寄《虞美人》：

飞花自有牵情处，不向枝边住。晓风飘薄已堪愁，更伴东流流水过秦楼。 消散须臾云雨怨，闲倚阑干见。远弹双泪湿香红，暗恨玉颜光景与花同。

第十一句道：“多情因甚，有轻离轻拆。”魏夫人曾有《春词》，寄《卷珠帘》：

记得来时春未暮，执手攀花，袖染花梢露。暗卜春心共花语，争寻双朵争先去。 多情因甚相辜负，有轻拆轻离，向谁分诉？泪湿海棠花枝处，东君空把奴分付。

第十二句道：“燕语千般。”康伯可曾有《春词》，寄《减字木兰花》：

杨花飘尽，云压绿阴风乍定。帘暮闲垂，弄语千般燕子飞。





*Green willows still line the quiet road to the south.  
My last vestiges of tender feelings,  
Alas, are too old to have much meaning.  
The frosty hairs plucked from my temples  
Do not grow back like the green grass of spring.*

The tenth line, “In a moment, the clouds and rain are gone,” is taken from Yan Shuyuan’s<sup>12</sup> lyric poem “Spring” to the tune of “The Beautiful Lady Yu”:

*The flying petals drift toward the ones they love;  
The branch is not where they prefer to stay.  
Sadly, the morning wind blows them apart,  
Into the river east, past the house of pleasure.*

*In a moment, the loathsome clouds and rain are gone,  
Idly she leans against the balustrade,  
Shedding tears that wet the rosy cheeks.  
Alas! The beauty shares the flowers’ fate.*

The eleventh line “The tender feelings — easily they come and go,” is from Lady Wei’s<sup>13</sup> lyric poem “Spring” to the tune of “Raising the Beaded Curtain”:

*You came, I remember, before spring was late;  
Hand in hand, we plucked flowers whose dew soaked our  
sleeves.*

*Secretly we prayed to the flowers for love;  
Both tried to be the first to find twin blossoms.*

*The tender feelings were betrayed, but why?  
Easily they come and go — who can share my grief?  
My tears wet the crabapple blossoms;  
The god of spring gave me orders in vain.*

As for the twelfth line “The swallows chatter away,” there is a lyric poem about spring by Kang Boke<sup>14</sup> to the tune of “Magnolia Blossoms, Abbreviated”:

*The willow catkins are all blown away;  
The clouds hang over the green; the wind is still.*



小楼深静，睡起残妆犹未整。梦不成归，泪滴斑斑金缕衣。

第十三句道：“争解说些子伊家消息。”秦少游曾有《春词》，寄《夜游宫》：

何事东君又去。空满院落花飞絮；巧燕呢喃向人语，何曾解说伊家些子（苦）？况是伤心绪，念个人儿成睽阻。一觉相思梦回处，连宵雨。更那堪，闻杜宇。

第十四句、第十五句道：“厚约深盟，除非重见。”黄鲁直曾有《春词》寄《捣练子》：

梅凋粉，柳摇金，微雨轻风敛陌尘。厚约深盟何处诉？除非重见那人人。

第十六句道：“见了方端的。”周美成曾有《春词》，寄《滴滴金》：

梅花漏泄春消息，柳丝长，草芽碧。不觉星霜鬓白，念时光堪惜。兰堂把酒思佳客，黛眉颦，愁春色。音书千



*The curtains are down; the flying swallows chatter.  
Her room quiet, her morning toilette not yet done,  
She laments that his return had been but a dream,  
And teardrops stain her gold-threaded dress.*

The thirteenth line, “Spreading news about the one afar,” comes from Qin Shaoyou’s<sup>15</sup> lyric poem “Spring” to the tune of “Touring the Palace at Night”:

*Why is the god of spring gone again?  
The deserted courtyard is strewn with  
Fallen flowers and willow catkins.  
The swallows twitter and chirrup in my ears,  
But bring me no news about the one afar.  
The melancholy deepens at the thought  
Of the one at the far end of the earth.  
In dreams, the pangs of love come back again,  
Midst a drizzle that lasted through the night.  
Adding to the grief, the cries of cuckoos!<sup>16</sup>*

The fourteenth and fifteenth lines, “The vows of everlasting love — / When will we meet face-to-face again?” come from Huang Luzhi’s<sup>17</sup> lyric poem about spring to the tune of “Pounding White Silk”:

*The plum blossoms fade and wither;  
The willows sway and spill gold.  
The gentle rain and soft breeze clear the dusty road.  
The vows of everlasting love — who will listen?  
When will we meet face-to-face again?*

The sixteenth line, “Only then would the mind know any peace,” is from Zhou Meicheng’s<sup>18</sup> lyric poem about spring to the tune of “Drops of Gold”:

*The plum blossoms herald the advent of spring;  
The willows bud; the grass turns green.  
All too soon, my temples turn the color of frost;  
How I lament the passage of time!*

*In her boudoir, a toast to the one far away,*



里相疏隔，见了方端的。

第十七句、第十八句道：“而今无奈，寸肠千恨堆积。”欧阳永叔曾有词寄《蝶恋花》：

帘幕东风寒料峭，雪里梅花，先报春来早。而今无奈寸肠思，堆积千愁空懊恼。旋暖金炉薰兰澡，闷把金刀剪彩呈纤巧。绣被五更香睡好，[眉批]“香睡”二字可作绣房轩名。罗帏不觉纱窗晓。

话说沈文述是一个士人，自家今日也说一个士人，因来行在临安府取选，变做十数回跷蹊作怪的小说。我且问你：这个秀才姓甚名谁？却说绍兴十年间，有个秀才，是福州威武军人，姓吴名洪。离了乡里，来行在临安府求取功名，指望：

一举首登龙虎榜，十年身到凤凰池。

争知道时运未至，一举不中。吴秀才闷闷不已，又没甚么盘缠，也自羞归故里，且只得胡乱在今时州桥下开一个小小学堂度日。



*With knit eyebrows and sad thoughts of spring,  
To meet over a distance of a thousand li,  
Only then would the mind know any peace.*

The seventeenth and eighteenth lines, “But now, there is little else to be done / Than bear the overwhelming weight of grief” borrow from Ouyang Yongshu’s lyric poem to the tune of “Butterflies Lingering over Flowers”:

*The curtains keep out the chilly east wind;  
Plum blossoms in the snow herald the spring.  
There is little else to be done  
Than bear the gut-wrenching pangs of longing  
And the overwhelming weight of grief.*

*With the golden stove lit for a perfumed bath,  
Gloomily I take up the gold scissors  
And make paper-cuts of exquisite patterns.  
Under an embroidered quilt, I at last fall sweetly asleep,  
 (“Sweet sleep” can well serve as a name for a boudoir. )  
Unaware that dawn has lit up the window screens.*

The Shen Wenshu quoted above was a scholar, and now, let me tell of another scholar whose trip to Lin’an to sit for the civil service examinations provided material for a most remarkable story more than ten episodes in length.

Storyteller, what is the name of that scholar? Well, in the tenth year of the Shaoxing reign period [1131–62], a scholar named Wu Hong left his home village in the Weiwu commandery of Fuzhou and went to Lin’an to seek fame and fortune through the examinations, hoping to:

*Take first honor on the first try,  
And gain the highest office in ten years.*

But, he failed in the examinations, his time not having come yet. In low spirits, Scholar Wu felt too ashamed to return home, nor for that matter did he have enough money to travel. Seeing no alternative, he managed to open a small school at the foot of what is now Prefecture Bridge. In this way, he intended to make a living while he



等待后三年，春榜动，选场开，再去求取功名。逐月却与几个小男女打交。捻指开学堂后，也有一年之上。也罪过那街上人家，都把孩儿们来与他教训，颇自有些趑足。

当日正在学堂里教书，只听得青布帘儿上铃声响，走将一个人人来。吴教授看那人来的人，不是别人，却是半年前搬去的邻舍王婆。元来那婆子是个撮合山，专靠做媒为生。吴教授相揖罢，道：“多时不见，而今婆婆在那里住？”婆子道：“只道教授忘了老媳妇，如今老媳妇在钱塘门里沿城住。”教授问：“婆婆高寿？”婆子道：“老媳妇犬马之年七十有五，教授青春多少？”教授道：“小子二十有二。”婆子道：“教授方才二十有二，却像三十以上人。想教授每日价费多少心神。据老媳妇愚见，也少不得一个小娘子相伴。”教授道：“我这里也几次问人来，却没这般头脑。”婆子道：“这个不是冤家不聚会。好教官人得知，却有一头好亲在这里。一千贯钱房卧，带一个从嫁，又好人材，却有一床乐器都会，又写得，算得，又是咋嘛大官府第出身，只要嫁个读书官人。教授却是要也不？”教授听得说罢，喜从天降，笑逐颜开，道：“若还真个有这人时，可知好哩！只是这个小娘子如今在那里？”婆子道：“好教教授得知，这个小娘子，从秦太师府三通判位下出来，有两个月，不知放了多少帖子。也曾有省、部、院里当职事



waited for another chance to seek fame and fortune at the next examination, in spring in three years' time. And so, month after month, he kept company with little boys and girls.

In the snap of a finger, more than a year went by. Thanks to the neighborhood residents who sent their children to his school, he had put aside a tidy sum of money.

One day, he was teaching in the schoolroom when the bell by the blue-cloth portiere rang, and in walked a woman. Schoolmaster Wu recognized her as Granny Wang, a former neighbor and a match-maker by profession who had moved away about half a year ago.

Schoolmaster Wu bowed with folded hands and said, "I haven't seen you for a long time, granny. Where do you live now?"

"I thought Schoolmaster Wu had forgotten all about me! I now live by the city gate of Qiantang."

"What is your venerable age?" asked the teacher.

"This old woman is seventy-five. And how about you in your blooming youth?"

"Twenty-two."

"For a twenty-two-year-old, you look like you're over thirty. You must be working too hard every day! In my humble opinion, you really can't do without a wife to keep you company."

"Well, I have indeed been asking around, but there's just no one suitable."

"As the saying goes, 'Those not predestined for each other will never get to meet.' Let me tell you, I have a good match for you. She has a thousand strings of cash for a dowry, and she'll bring a maidservant with her. A real beauty she is, too, and she's able to play all sorts of musical instruments, write, and do arithmetic. What's more, she's from a prominent official's family. Her only wish is to marry a scholar. Now, what do you say?"

Imagine his joy at this blessing from heaven! Wreathed in smiles, he said, "How nice it would be if there really were such a person! But where is the young lady?"

"Let me tell you, Mr. Wu. Goodness knows how many marriage proposal letters this young lady has received in the two months since



的来说他，也曾有内诸司当差的来说他，也曾有门面铺席人来说他。只是高来不成；低来不就。小娘子道：‘我只要嫁个读书官人。’更兼又没有爹娘，只有一个从嫁，名唤锦儿。因他一床乐器都会，一府里人都叫做李乐娘。见今在白雁池一个旧邻舍家里住。”

两个兀自说犹未了，只见风吹起门前布帘儿来，一个人从门首过去。王婆道：“教授，你见过去的那人么？便是你有分取他做浑家……”王婆出门赶上，那人不是别人，便是李乐娘在他家住的，姓陈，唤做陈干娘。王婆厮赶着人来，与吴教授相揖罢。王婆道：“干娘，宅里小娘子说亲成也未？”干娘道：“说不得，又不是没好亲来说他，只是吃他执拗的苦，口口声声，只要嫁个读书官人，却又没这般巧。”王婆道：“我却有个好亲在这里，未知干娘与小娘子肯也不？”干娘道：“却教孩儿嫁兀谁？”王婆指着吴教授道：“我教小娘子嫁这个官人，却是好也不好？”干娘道：“休取笑，若嫁得这个官人，可知好哩。”吴教授当日一日教不得学，把那小男女早放了，都唱了喏，先归去。教授却把一把锁锁了门，同着两个婆子上街。免不得买些酒相待他们。三杯之后，





she left the establishment of the deputy prefect, the third son of Grand Preceptor Qin.<sup>19</sup> There have been letters from officials in the three departments<sup>20</sup>, the six ministries<sup>21</sup>, and the Privy Military Council, from runners for the various palace bureaus, and from merchants and shop-owners, but they are either too highly placed or too lowly for her. She said, 'I wish to marry none but a scholar.' Having lost both parents, she has only a maidservant, Jin'er, with her. Because she plays all kinds of musical instruments, she's called 'Li the Music Lady' by all and sundry in the establishment. She's now staying with a former neighbor at White Wild Goose Pond. "

While they were talking, a woman was seen passing by the door as a gust of wind blew up the portiere. Granny Wang said, "Schoolmaster Wu, did you see the woman passing by? You are indeed destined to have Li the Music Lady for your wife!" She rushed out the door and overtook that woman, who was none other than Madam Chen, called Godmother Chen, with whom Li the Music Lady was staying. Granny Wang brought her in to exchange greetings with Schoolmaster Wu.

"Godmother," said Granny Wang, "has match been made yet for the young lady at your house?"

"No," replied Godmother Chen. "It's not that there are no good candidates. It's just that she's so stubborn. She insists on marrying a scholar, but it's not something that works out all that easily. "

"I have a good candidate here," said Granny Wang. "But I don't know if Godmother and the young lady would be willing to accept him. "

"Whom do you have in mind for my child?"

Pointing at Wu, Granny Wang said, "This very gentleman here. What do you say?"

"You must be joking. How wonderful if she could be married to this gentleman!"

Too excited to teach the rest of the day, Wu dismissed the children early. After they left, chanting farewell, the schoolmaster locked the door and went out with the two women for a drink, which he felt he owed them. After three cups, Granny Wang stood up and



王婆起身道：“教授既是要这头亲事，却问干娘觅一个帖子。”干娘道：“老媳妇有在这里。”侧手从抹胸里取出一个帖子来。王婆道：“干娘，‘真人面前说不得假话，旱地上打不得拍浮’。你便约了一日，带了小娘子和从嫁锦儿来梅家桥下酒店里，等我便同教授来过眼则个。”干娘应允，和王婆谢了吴教授，自去。教授还了酒钱归家，把闲话提过。

到那日，吴教授换了几件新衣裳，放了学生，一程走将来梅家桥下酒店里时，远远地王婆早接见了。两个同入酒店里来。到得楼上，陈干娘接着，教授便问道：“小娘子在那里？”干娘道：“孩儿和锦儿在东阁儿里坐地。”教授把三寸舌尖舐破窗眼儿，张一张，喝声采，不知高低，道：“两上都不是人！”如何不是人？元来见他生得好了，只道那妇人是南海观音，见锦儿是玉皇殿下侍香玉女。恁地道他不是人？看那李乐娘时：

水剪双眸，花生丹脸。云鬓轻梳蝉翼，蛾眉淡拂春山。  
朱唇缀一颗夭桃，皓齿排两行碎玉。意态自然，迥出伦辈。



said, "If the schoolmaster accepts this match, I'll have to ask Godmother for a betrothal letter."

"I have one right here." So saying, Godmother Chen produced one from her undergarment.

"Godmother," said Granny Wang, "as the saying goes, 'One doesn't tell lies to honest people, just as one doesn't swim on dry land.' Set a date to bring the young lady and her maid Jin'er to the wineshop by Mei Family Bridge so that the schoolmaster and I can go and size her up."

Godmother agreed. She and Granny Wang thanked Wu and took their leave. After paying the wine bill, Wu returned home.

Let us skip over trivialities and come to the big day. Schoolmaster Wu changed into new clothes, dismissed his pupils, and walked all the way to the wineshop by Mei Family Bridge. Granny Wang met him on the way when he was still a good distance from the wineshop, and, together, the two entered the wineshop and went upstairs. After Godmother Chen greeted them, the schoolmaster asked, "Where is the young lady?"

"My child and Jin'er are sitting in the east room."

The teacher wet the paper window with the tip of his tongue and made a hole through which he took a peek. With a cheer, he exclaimed, forgetting himself, "These two are not human!"

How could they not be? Well, as a matter of fact, he was so struck with their beauty that he thought the young lady was the bodhisattva Guanyin, and Jin'er a jade maiden serving the Jade Emperor. How do we know their beauty was out of this world? This was how Li the Music Lady looked:

*Her eyes were sparkling pools of water,  
 Her cheeks the color of blushing flowers.  
 Her cloud-like hair shaped like cicada wings,  
 Her eyebrows, two lines of distant spring hills.  
 Her red lips like a cherry,  
 Her white teeth, two rows of jade chips.  
 Her manner naturally graceful,  
 She stood out among her peers,*



有如织女下瑶台，浑似嫦娥离月殿。

看那从嫁锦儿时：

眸清可爱，鬓耸堪观。新月笼眉，春桃拂脸。意态幽花未艳，肌肤嫩玉生香。金莲着弓弓扣绣鞋儿，螺髻插短短紫金钗子。如捻青梅窥小俊，似骑红杏出墙头。

自从当日插了钗，离不得下财纳礼，奠雁传书。不则一日，吴教授取过那妇女来，夫妻两个好说得着：

云淡淡天边鸾凤，水沉沉交颈鸳鸯。

写成今世不休书，结下来生双绾带。

却说一日是月半，学生子都来得早，要拜孔夫子。吴教授道：“姐姐，我先起去。”来那灶前过，看那从嫁锦儿时，脊背后披着一带头发，一双眼插将上去，脖项上血污着。教授看见，大叫一声，匹然倒地。即时浑家来救得苏醒，锦儿也来扶起。浑家道：“丈夫，你见甚么来？”吴教授是个养家人，不成说道我见锦儿恁地来？自己也认做眼花了，只得使个脱空，瞒过道：“姐姐，我起



*Like the Weaving Maiden from the Jade Terrace,  
 Like Chang'e from the Moon Palace.*

He then looked at Jin'er the maid, and this was what he saw:

*Her eyes limpid and lovely,  
 Her hair done up high and a sight to see;  
 Her eyebrows the shape of new moons,  
 Her face a pink peach blossom.  
 Her manner like a bud before opening,  
 Her skin soft and fragrant.  
 Embroidered shoes on her golden lotus feet,  
 A small gold hairpin in her shell-shaped bun.  
 A green plum in youthful love,<sup>22</sup>  
 A red apricot blossom over the fence.*

After meeting his intended that day and sticking a hairpin in her hair,<sup>23</sup> Teacher Wu sent over the obligatory betrothal gifts and a goose, and documents were exchanged.

In a matter of days, the young lady moved in as Teacher Wu's wife. Each found in the other a perfect companion:

*A pair of phoenixes up in the clouds;  
 Loving mandarin ducks in water.  
 They vowed never to part in this world,  
 And formed ties of love for future lives.*

One day, as it happened to be the mid-point in the lunar month, the pupils arrived early for a ritual to pay homage to Confucius. Schoolmaster Wu said to his wife, "Sister, I'll have to get up first and go to the ceremony." As he passed the kitchen stove, he saw Jin'er the maid. Lo and behold! Her hair was all hanging loose down her back, her eyes were slanting upward, and her neck was stained with blood. With a loud cry, the schoolmaster fell to the ground.

Immediately, his wife rushed over and brought him back to consciousness. Jin'er also came and helped him to his feet. His wife asked, "Husband, what did you see?"

Being a responsible head of a household, he was prudent with his words, and he could not very well describe the state in which he had found Jin'er. Believing that his eyes had deceived him, he lied,



来时少着了件衣裳，被冷风一吹，忽然头晕倒了。”锦儿慌忙安排些个安魂定魄汤与他吃罢，自没事了。只是吴教授肚里有些疑惑。

话休絮烦，时遇清明节假，学生子却都不来。教授分付了浑家，换了衣服，出去闲走一遭。取路过万松岭，出今时净慈寺里，看了一会，却待出来。只见一个人看着吴教授唱个喏，教授还礼不迭，却不是别人，是净慈寺对门酒店里量酒，说道：“店中一个官人，教男女来请官人。”吴教授同量酒入酒店来时，不是别人，是王七府判儿，唤做王七三官人。两个叙礼罢，王七三官人道：“适来见教授，又不敢相叫，特地教量酒来相请。”教授道：“七三官人如今那里去？”王七三官人口里不说，肚里思量：“吴教授新娶一个老婆在家不多时，你看我消遣他则个。”道：“我如今要同教授去家里坟头走一遭，早间看坟的人来说道：‘桃花发，杜酝又熟。’我们去那里吃三杯。”教授道：“也好。”两个出那酒店，取路来苏公堤上，看那游春的人，真个是：

人烟辐辏，车马骈阗。只见和风扇景，丽日增明，流莺啭绿柳阴中，粉蝶戏奇花枝上。管弦动处，是谁家舞榭歌台？语笑喧时，斜侧傍春楼夏阁。香车竞逐，玉勒争驰。白面郎



“Sister, I didn’t put on enough clothes after I got up, so I suddenly felt dizzy at a cold draught and collapsed.” Hastily, Jin’er fed him some soup with a soothing effect, and, soon, the excitement was over, but not Wu’s misgivings.

Not to encumber our story with unnecessary details, let us tell of what happened on the day of the Clear and Bright Festival. It being a holiday, there was no school. Wu told his wife that he was going to take a walk. After changing clothes, off he went. When he passed by Ten Thousand Pines Ridge, he stepped into what is now Cleansing Mercy Temple and looked around. On his way out, he saw a man chanting a greeting to him. He quickly returned the greeting. The man was a waiter in the wineshop opposite the temple. The waiter said, “A gentleman in the wineshop told me to invite you over, sir!”

As Wu followed the waiter into the wineshop, he saw that the gentleman was none other than Administrative Assistant Wang Qi, better known as Third Master Wang Qi. After an exchange of greetings, Wang Qi said, “I didn’t dare call you when I saw you a moment ago. That’s why I asked the waiter to invite you over.”

“Where are you off to, Third Master?”

Wang Qi thought to himself, “Schoolmaster Wu is newly married. Let me play a prank on him.” Aloud, he said, “Shall we go together to visit my family graves? The grave watcher came over earlier and said, ‘The peach trees are in bloom, and the homemade wine is ready.’ Let’s go and have a few drinks, shall we?”

“All right,” said the teacher.

The two men left the wineshop and headed for Su Causeway, where they saw lots of people on spring outings. Truly,

*Crowds milling around, horse carriages lining up,  
 Soft breezes fan the scenery;  
 The bright sun lends it greater luster.  
 The orioles chirp among green willows,  
 The butterflies play amid prized flowers.  
 The music of wind and string instruments —  
 From which hall do the strains come?  
 Jovial chitchat and laughter*



敲金鞦响，红妆人揭绣帘看。

南新路口讨一只船，直到毛家步上岸，迤迳过玉泉龙井。王七三官人家里坟，直在西山驼献岭下。好座高岭！下那岭去，行过一里，到了坟头，看坟的张安接见了。王七三官人即时叫张安安排些点心酒来。侧首一个小小花园内，两个人去坐地。又是自做的杜酝，吃得大醉。看那天色时，早已：

红轮西坠，玉兔东生。佳人秉烛归房，江上渔人罢钓。

渔父卖鱼归竹径，牧童骑犊入花村。

天色却晚，吴教授要起身，王七三官人道：“再喝一杯，我和你同去。我们过驼献岭、九里松路上，妓弟人家睡一夜。”吴教授口里不说，肚里思量：“我新娶一个老婆在家里，干颡我一夜不归去，我老婆须在家里，如何是好？便是这时候去赶钱塘门，走到那里，也关了。”只得与王七三官人手厮挽着，上驼献岭来。

你道事有凑巧，物有故然，就那岭上，云生东北，雾长西南，下一阵大雨。果然是银河倒泻，沧海盆倾，好阵大雨！且是没躲处，冒着雨又行了数十步，见一个小小竹门楼，王七三官人道：





*Arise from spring towers and summer pavilions.  
 Perfumed carriages and jade-reined horses compete;  
 Fair-faced men loudly kick their gold stirrups;  
 Women in red watch from behind the curtains.*

At South New Road Crossing, they rented a boat and sailed up to Mao Family Pier, where they went ashore and wended their way past Jade Spring and Dragon Well. Wang Qi's family graves lay at the foot of Camel Ridge of West Hill, and a fine tall hill it was! After climbing up the hill, they began descending and covered another *li* before they reached the graves. They were greeted by Zhang An the grave watcher, and Wang Qi told him to bring some wine and refreshments. He and Schoolmaster Wu then went to sit in a small garden nearby. They drank the homemade wine until they were quite inebriated. By this time, evening had set in.

*The red orb has sunk in the west;  
 The jade hare has risen in the east.  
 The beauty returns to her room, candle in hand;  
 The fisherman goes home from the river,  
 To sell the fish along the bamboo paths;  
 The herdboyc rides a calf to the village of flowers.*

As it was getting quite late, Wu wished to go. Wang Qi said, "Have another drink. I'll go with you. We'll cross Camel Ridge and spend the night in some brothel on Nine-*Li* Pine Road."

Without saying anything out loud, Wu thought, "I'm a newly married man. How can I make my wife wait for me at home while I fool around and stay out all night? But at the same time, even if I start on the way home right now, by the time I get to Qiantang Gate, it will be closed for the night." Resignedly, he followed Wang Qi up Camel Ridge, helped by Wang's supporting hand.

As coincidence would have it, when they gained the top of the ridge, clouds gathered in the northeast, a fog rose from the southwest, and a heavy rain came down with the force of the surging currents of the Silver River [the Milky Way] and the raging waves of the vast ocean. A fine rainstorm it was! Finding no shelter around them, they plodded ahead in the rain for several tens of steps before



“且在这里躲一躲。”不是来门楼下躲雨，却是：

猪羊走入屠宰家，一脚脚来寻死路。

两上奔来躲雨时，看来却是一个野墓园。只那门前一个门楼儿，里面都没甚么屋宇。石坡上两个坐着，等雨住了行。正大雨下，只见一个人貌类狱子院家打扮，从隔壁竹篱笆里跳入墓园，走将去墓堆子上叫道：“朱小四，你这厮有人请唤，今日须当你这厮出头。”墓堆子里漫应道：“阿公，小四来也。”不多时，墓上土开，跳出一个人来，狱子厮赶着了自去。吴教授和王七三官人见了，背膝展展，两股不摇而自颤。看那雨却住了。两个又走。地下又滑，肚里又怕，心头一似小鹿儿跳，一双脚一似斗败公鸡，后面一似千军万马赶来，再也不敢回头。行到山顶上，侧着耳朵听时，空谷传声，听得林子里面断棒响。不多时，则见狱子驱将墓堆子里跳出那个人来。两个见了又走，岭侧首却有一个败落山神庙，人去庙里，慌忙把两扇庙门关了。两个把身躯抵着庙门，真个气也不敢喘，屁也不敢放。听那外边时，只听得一个人声唤过去，道：“打杀我也！”一个人道：“打脊魍魉，你这厮许了我人情，又不还我，怎的不打你？”王七三官人低低说与吴教授道：“你听得外面过去的，便是那狱子和墓堆里跳出来的人！”两个在里面颤做一团。吴教授却埋怨王七三官人道：“你没事教我在这里



they saw a small gateway with a bamboo arch over it. Wang Qisan said, "Let's go there for shelter." Actually, what they were about to do would not bring them shelter from the rain but,

*Like pigs and sheep on their way to the butcher's,  
 With each step they went nearer to their deaths.*

When they reached the gate, they saw that it led to an unguarded cemetery. Behind that gate lay no houses of any kind. The two men sat down on a rock slope to wait out the rain before continuing their journey. Amid the downpour, a man who looked like a prison warden jumped over the bamboo fence into the cemetery and walked to a grave mound, shouting, "Zhu Xiaosi, you are needed. It's your turn to get out today."

A voice called out from within the mound, "Coming, Grandpa!" In a moment, the grave mound split open. A man jumped out and was led away by the prison warden. When Wu and Wang saw this, they hunched their backs over their bent knees, and their legs shook violently in spite of themselves.

As soon as the rain let up, they pushed on, sloshing through the slippery mud, their fearful hearts throbbing like those of frightened young deer and their feet as weak as those of a rooster defeated in a cockfight. They would not even take so much as one quick look back, as if afraid a mighty army was pursuing them.

When they gained the top of the ridge, they strained their ears to listen and heard, echoing throughout the empty valley, the beating of a rod coming from the woods. Soon, the prison warden came into view, chasing the man who had jumped out of the grave mound. At the sight, Schoolmaster Wu and Wang Qi turned on their heels and ran. A dilapidated temple to the mountain god loomed on one side of the ridge. They entered and quickly shut both sides of the double door. Throwing their whole weight against it, they dared not even breathe or fart. They heard a voice crying, "You're beating me to death!" Another voice said, "You monster! You promised me a favor but failed to deliver. How can I not beat you?"

Wang Qi whispered to Schoolmaster Wu, "Listen! It's the prison warden and the man from the grave!" As they cowered in



受惊受怕，我家中浑家却不知怎地盼望？”兀自说言未了，只听得外面有人敲门，道：“开门则个！”两个问道：“你是谁？”仔细听时，却是妇女声音，道：“王七三官人好也！你却将我丈夫在这里一夜，直教我寻到这里！锦儿，我和你推开门儿，叫你爹爹。”吴教授听得外面声音：“不是别人，是我浑家和锦儿，怎知道我和王七三官人在这里？莫教也是鬼？”两个都不敢则声。只听得外面说道：“你不开庙门，我却从庙门缝里钻入来！”两个听得恁地说，日里吃的酒，都变做冷汗出来。只听得外面又道：“告妈妈，不是锦儿多口，不如妈妈且归，明日爹爹自归来。”浑家道：“锦儿，你也说得是，我且归去了，却理会。”却叫道：“王七三官人，我且归去，你明朝却送我丈夫归来则个。”两个那里敢应他。妇女和锦儿说了自去。

王七三官人说：“吴教授，你家里老婆和从嫁锦儿都是鬼。这里也不是人去处，我们走休。”拨开庙门看时，约莫是五更天气，兀自未有人行。两个下得岭来，尚有一里多路，见一所林子里，走出两个人来。上手的是陈干娘，下手的是王婆，道：“吴教授，我们等你多时，你和王七三官人却从那里来？”吴教授和王



fear, trembling all over, Wu complained to Wang, "Didn't you have anything better to do than to bring me here for such misery? My wife at home must be worried sick!"

Before these words were quite out of his mouth, a knock was heard at the door. "Open up!" came the demand.

"Who's there?" they asked. When the reply came, they listened intently and realized that it was a woman. "Third Master Wang Qi! A fine thing you did, taking my husband here for the night and making me go on this search for him all this way! Jin'er, let's force the door open and get your master out."

Recognizing the voice as none other than that of his wife, Wu thought, "It's my wife and Jin'er, but how did they know Mr. Wang and I were here? Could they also be ghosts?" Neither of the two men dared make a sound.

"If you don't open up, I'll have to squeeze myself in through a crack!"

At these words, the wine that the two men had drunk earlier in the day turned into cold sweat seeping out through their pores. Another voice said, "Ma'am, I don't want to speak out of turn, but it might be better if you go back home now. Tomorrow my master will surely come home by himself."

"You're right, Jin'er. Let's go now before we do anything more." Then she called out, "Third Master Wang Qi, I'm going home now. Be sure to escort my husband home tomorrow."

Neither men dared utter a word in reply. The woman and Jin'er left after having spoken those words.

"Schoolmaster Wu, your wife and her maid Jin'er are both ghosts. This is no place for humans. Let's get out of here!"

After opening the temple door, they saw that it was about the fifth watch of the night before dawn, still too early to see people moving about. A little more than one *li* before they reached the foot of the ridge on their way down, they saw two people emerge from the woods. The first was Godmother Chen, and the second was Granny Wang. "Schoolmaster Wu," they called out, "we've been waiting for you for a long time. Where have you been with Third Master



七三官人看见道：“这两个婆子也是鬼了，我们走休！”真个便是獐奔鹿跳，猿跃鹤飞，下那岭来。后面两个婆子，兀自慢慢地赶来。“一夜热乱，不曾吃一些物事，肚里又饥，一夜见这许多不祥，怎地得个生人来冲一冲！”正恁地说，则见岭下一家人家，门前挂着一枝松柯儿，王七三官人道：“这里多则是卖茅柴酒，我们就这里买些酒吃了助威，一道躲那两个婆子。”恰待奔入这店里来，见个男女：

头上裹一顶牛胆青头巾，身上裹一条猪肝赤肚带，旧瞞裆裤，脚下草鞋。

王七三官人道：“你这酒怎地卖？”只见那汉道：“未有汤哩。”吴教授道：“且把一碗冷的来！”只见那人也不则声，也不则气。王七三官人道：“这个开酒店的汉子又尴尬，也是鬼了！我们走休……”兀自说未了，就店里起一阵风：

非干虎啸，不是龙吟，明不能谢柳开花，暗藏着山妖水怪。吹开地狱门前土，惹引酆都山下尘。

风过处，看时，也不见了酒保，也不见有酒店，两个立在墓堆子上。唬得两个魂不附体，急急取路到九里松曲院前讨了一只船，



Wang Qi?"

At the sight of these two, Wu and Wang said, "So they are ghosts, too. Let's get out of here!"

With the speed of river deer and stags, with the agility of apes and falcons, they fled down the ridge, followed by the two women moving at their own leisurely pace.

"We haven't had anything to eat throughout this hectic night. We're starved. How I wish we could run into a real human being to offset the bad luck that's been dogging us."

They had hardly said this when they saw, at the foot of the ridge, a house that looked like a wineshop, with a pine tree branch sticking out over the door by way of a sign. "This is most probably a place that sells home-brewed wine," said Wang. "Let's have a cup or two to fortify ourselves and hide from the two old hags." So they ran into the wineshop, where they saw a man wearing

*A green turban the color of cow's gall bladder,  
 A red waistband the color of pig's liver,  
 A pair of old pants, and a pair of straw sandals.*

"How much for the wine?" asked Wang Qi.

The man answered, "I haven't prepared water to heat up the wine."

"Just give us a bowl of cold wine, then!" said Wu, but the man fell silent, without breathing.

"This wineshop owner is so weird," said Wang Qi. "He must be a ghost, too! Let's go!" Before he had quite finished speaking, a gust of wind sprang up in the wineshop.

*It is neither the roar of a tiger,  
 Nor the bellow of a dragon.  
 Not the kind to make willows die and flowers bloom,  
 But one that hides demons on hills and in waters.  
 It whips up the soil by the gate of hell;  
 It stirs up dust at the door of the Underworld.*

When the wind died down, the two men found themselves standing on top of a grave mound, with neither the wine seller nor the wineshop anywhere in sight. Frightened out of their wits, they raced



直到钱塘门，上了岸。王七三官人自取路归家。

吴教授一径先来钱塘门城下王婆家里看时，见一把锁锁着门。问那邻舍时，道：“王婆自死五个月有零了。”唬得吴教授目瞪口呆，罔知所措。一程离了钱塘门，取今时景灵宫贡院前，过梅家桥，到白雁池边来，问到陈干娘门首时，十字儿竹竿封着门，一碗官灯在门前。上面写着八个字道：“人心似铁，官法如炉。”问那里时，“陈干娘也死一年有馀了。”离了白雁池，取路归到州桥下，见自己屋里，一把锁锁着门，问邻舍家里：“拙妻和粗婢那里去了？”邻舍道：“教授昨日一出门，小娘子分付了我们，自和锦儿往干娘家里去。直到如今不归。”吴教授正在那里面面厮觑，做声不得。只见一个癞道人，看着吴教授道：“观公妖气太重，我与你早早断除，免致后患。”吴教授即时请那道人入去，安排香烛符水。那个道人作起法来，念念有词，喝声道：“疾！”只见一员神将出现：

黄罗抹额，锦带缠腰，皂罗袍袖绣团花，金甲束身微窄地。剑横秋水，靴踏狻猊。上通碧落之间，下彻九幽之地。





all the way to Nine-Li Pine Wineshop, where they took a boat and headed straight for Qiantang Gate. After going ashore, Wang Qi went home, whereas Wu made for Granny Wang's house by Qiantang Gate, only to find the door padlocked. Upon inquiry, the neighbors told him, "Granny Wang has been dead for more than five months now." Wu stood there stupefied, eyes wide open, mouth agape, without the least idea of what to do. He then left Qiantang Gate and went past what is now the Jingling Palace examination grounds, Mei Family Bridge, and White Wild Goose Pond until he arrived at Godmother Chen's house, by whose door, sealed as it was with two bamboo sticks laid crosswise, hung a lamp bearing the insignia of the local government. On the door was written: "The human heart may be as hard as steel, but the law of the land is the furnace." Upon inquiry, he was told, "Godmother Chen has been dead for more than a year."

After leaving White Wild Goose Pond, he returned home by Prefecture Bridge, only to find his own house also padlocked. He asked the neighbors, "Where did my wife and the maid go?"

The neighbors told him, "After you left home yesterday, your wife said to us, 'I'm taking Jin'er with me to visit my godmother.' And they haven't come back yet."

Schoolmaster Wu was still staring speechlessly at the neighbors when a mangy Daoist priest came into view. Fixing his eyes on Wu, he said, "I can see that you've been much plagued by evil spirits. Let me do an exorcism for you, to forestall future trouble."

Right away, Wu invited the priest inside and had incense, candles, and holy water prepared. Muttering incantations, the priest began his exorcism. As he cried out, "Presto!" a celestial warrior appeared.

*A yellow silk band around his forehead,  
 A brocade belt around his waist,  
 A black embroidered robe,  
 Close-fitting gold armor,  
 A flashing sword hanging by his side,  
 Lion-patterned boots on his feet,*



业龙作祟，向海波水底擒来；邪怪为妖，入山洞穴中捉出。六丁坛畔，权为符吏之名；上帝阶前，次有天丁之号。神将声喏道：“真君遣何方使令？”真人道：“在吴洪家里兴妖，并驼献岭上为怪的，都与我捉来！”神将领旨，就吴教授家里起一阵风：

无形无影透人怀，二月桃花被绰开。

就地撮将黄叶去，入山推出白云来。

风过处，捉将几个为怪的来。吴教授的浑家李乐娘，是秦太师府三通判位乐娘，因与通判怀身，产亡的鬼。从嫁锦儿，因通判夫人妒色，吃打了一顿，因恁地自割杀，他自是割杀的鬼。王婆是害水蛊病死的鬼。保亲陈干娘，因在白雁池边洗衣裳，落在池里死的鬼。在驼献岭上被狱子叫开墓堆，跳出来的朱小四，在日看坟，害痲病死的鬼。那个岭下开酒店的，是害伤寒死的鬼。道人一一审问明白，去腰边取出一个葫芦来，人见时，便道是葫芦，鬼见时，便是酆都狱。作起法来，那些鬼个个抱头鼠窜，捉入葫芦中，分付吴教授“把来埋在驼献岭下”。癫道人将拐杖望空一

*He moves about both in heaven and in hell.  
 If a dragon makes mischief,  
 He dives to the seabed to capture it.  
 If an evil spirit makes trouble,  
 He enters its cave to ferret it out.  
 Among the celestial warriors,  
 He is the one guarding magic charms;  
 Before the Lord on High, he's a divine general.*

The celestial general chanted a greeting and asked, "Where does the Sage want me to go?"

"Bring me all the evil spirits that are wreaking havoc in Wu Hong's home and on Camel Ridge!" Thus instructed, the celestial general conjured up a gust of wind right there in Wu's house.

*Formless, shadowless, it pierces one's bosom;  
 It blows open the peach blossoms of early spring.  
 It sweeps withered leaves on the ground,  
 It enters mountains and expels white clouds.*

When the wind was gone, the ghosts that had been wreaking havoc were brought into the presence of the priest. Schoolmaster Wu's wife, Li the Music Lady, had been the concubine of Grand Preceptor Qin's third son, who had died in childbirth. Jin'er the maid had slit her own throat after being beaten by Mr. Qin Junior's wife, who was jealous of her beauty. So she, too, was a ghost and had died by her own hand. Granny Wang had died of schistosomiasis. Godmother Chen had drowned in White Wild Goose Pond while washing clothes. Zhu Xiaosi, the ghost that had jumped out of a grave on Camel Ridge at the call of the prison warden, was a grave watcher who had died of consumption. The owner of the wineshop at the foot of the ridge had died of typhoid fever.

Having now established all the facts, the priest took a gourd from his waist. To human eyes, it was a gourd, but to a ghost, it was a representation of hell. As the priest conjured up his magic, the ghosts covered their heads with their hands and scurried off like frightened mice, but they were all caught and put into the gourd. Turning to Schoolmaster Wu, the priest said, "Take it and bury it at the foot





撇，变做一只仙鹤，道人乘鹤而去。吴教授直下拜道：“吴洪肉眼不识神仙，情愿相随出家，望真仙救度弟子则个！”只见道人道：“我乃上界甘真人，你原是我旧日采药的弟子。因你凡心不净，中道有退悔之意，因此堕落今生，罚为贫儒，教你备尝鬼趣，消遣色情。你今既已看破，便可离尘办道，直待一纪之年，吾当度汝。”说罢，化阵清风不见了。吴教授从此舍俗出家，云游天下。十二年后，遇甘真人于终南山中，从之而去。诗曰：

一心办道绝凡尘，众魅如何敢触人？

邪正尽从心剖判，西山鬼窟早翻身。



of Camel Ridge. ” Then, the mangy priest tossed his cane into the air. When the cane turned into a red-crowned crane, the priest rose in the air onto the crane’s back, ready to fly away.

Wu dropped to his knees and said with a bow, “With the eyes of a human, I, Wu Hong, did not know that you were an immortal. I wish to follow you and enter the Daoist order. Please redeem me and take me as your disciple!”

The priest said, “I am Sage Gan from heaven. You used to be one of my disciples responsible for picking medicinal herbs. But you had not rid yourself of all the desires of a mortal human being and regretted having left the mundane world, hence your downfall. As a punishment, you were destined to be a poor Confucian scholar in this life, to experience ghostly antics to the full and to be a victim of lust. But now that you’ve seen the truth, you may renounce the mundane world and enter the Daoist order. I shall come to redeem you after another twelve-year cycle. ” With this, he vanished in a refreshing puff of wind.

Henceforth, Schoolmaster Wu renounced the mundane world and became a traveling Daoist. Twelve years later, he met Sage Gan in the Zhongnan Mountains and went away with him. There is a poem that says,

*If the heart is set against the mundane,  
No evil spirits would dare draw near.  
If the heart can tell right from wrong,  
All ghosts on West Hill would have been set free.*

This story has been translated by Morgan T. Jones as “A Mangy Taoist Exorcises Ghosts,” in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). In the original edition, a note appended to the title reads “The Song dynasty text was titled ‘A Den of Ghosts of West Hill.’ ”

<sup>1</sup> “Clouds and rain” is a metaphor for sexual encounters; it was first used in a prose poem attributed to Song Yu (ca. 290—ca. 223 B. C. E. ).

<sup>2</sup> This poem was written by Shen Tang, courtesy name Gongshu, not Wenshu.

<sup>3</sup> Chen Ke, courtesy name Chen Zigao, was a *ci* poet of the Northern Song dynasty.

The Cold Food Festival, a day in April on which no fire is lit for cooking, originated during the Spring and Autumn period in commemoration of Jie Zitui the hermit. When searching for Jie Zitui, Duke Wen of Jin ordered that a fire be lit on the mountain where the hermit was



西山窟鬼早  
番身



living, hoping to drive him out of his quarters, but Jiezeitui held on to a tree and burned to death.

<sup>4</sup> Li Yi'an is Li Qingzhao (1084–1151), China's greatest woman poet. This poem, however, was written not by her but by Zeng Yu of the Northern Song dynasty.

<sup>5</sup> *Nanpu* (the southern bank) is often used to denote a place where people bid each other farewell.

<sup>6</sup> "Dongyang" is a reference to Shen Yue (441–513), a man of letters of the Liang dynasty in the Southern Dynasties period. He once served as prefect of Dongyang.

<sup>7</sup> The Precious Moon Chan Master was a monk-poet in the Southern Song dynasty.

<sup>8</sup> Ouyang Xiu (1007–72) was a great historian, epigraphist, statesman, poet, and essayist.

<sup>9</sup> The Clear and Bright Festival, usually falling one day after the Cold Food Festival (see note 3), is a day on which people visit the graves of their ancestors.

<sup>10</sup> Chao Buzhi (1053–1110), courtesy name Wujiu, was a *ci* poet in the Northern Song dynasty.

<sup>11</sup> Liu Yong (d. 1053), courtesy name Qiqing, was a famous Northern Song *ci* poet. For more on Liu Yong, see story 12 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New, a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Yan Jidao (ca. 1040–1112 or 1031–1106), courtesy name Shuyuan, was a Northern Song poet whose poems were mostly of a melancholy nature.

<sup>13</sup> Lady Wei was the wife of Zeng Bu (1036–1107), a Northern Song dynasty official under the reformer Wang Anshi.

<sup>14</sup> Kang Yuzhi (d. circa 1162), courtesy name Boke, was a scholar-official and a *ci* poet.

<sup>15</sup> Qin Guan (1049–1100), courtesy name Shaoyou, was a famous *ci* poet.

<sup>16</sup> According to legend, 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.

<sup>17</sup> Huang Tingjian (1045–1105), courtesy name Luzhi, was a famous Song dynasty poet.

<sup>18</sup> Zhou Bangyan (1056–1121), courtesy name Meicheng, was a Northern Song *ci* poet.

<sup>19</sup> Grand Preceptor Qin is Qin Hui (1090–1155), prime minister for nineteen years during the Song dynasty.

<sup>20</sup> The three departments are the Department of State Affairs, the Secretariat, and the Chancellery.

<sup>21</sup> The six ministries are the Ministries of Personnel, Revenue, Rites, Defense, Justice, and Works.

<sup>22</sup> The "green plum" comes from the phrase "green plums and a bamboo horse," which refers to a girl and a boy with an innocent affection for each other playing together.

<sup>23</sup> In the Song dynasty, a bridegroom-to-be visited the bride-to-be on a chosen day bearing gifts and, if pleased with her, stuck a hairpin in her hair.



## 第十五卷

### 金令史美婢酬秀童

塞翁得马非为吉，宋子双盲岂是凶。  
祸福前程如漆暗，但平方寸答天公。

话说苏州府城内有个玄都观，乃是梁朝所建。唐刺史刘禹锡有诗道“玄都观里桃千树”，就是此地。一名为玄妙观。这观踞郡城之中，为姑苏之胜。基址宽敞，庙貌崇宏，上至三清，下至十殿，无所不备。各房黄冠道士，何止数百。内中有个北极真武殿，俗名祖师殿。这一房道士，世传正一道教，善能书符遣将，剖断人间祸福。于中单表一个道士，俗家姓张，手中惯弄一个皮雀儿，人都唤他做张皮雀。其人有些古怪，荤酒自不必说，偏好吃一件东西。是甚东西？

吠月荒村里，奔月腊雪天。

分明一太字，移点在傍边。

他好吃的是狗肉。屠狗店里把他做个好主顾，若打得一只壮狗，定去报他来吃，吃得快活时，人家送得钱来，都把与他也不算帐。





## Story 15

### Clerk Jin Rewards Xiutong with a Pretty Maidservant

*A gain may turn out to be a loss;  
 A misfortune can be a blessing in disguise.  
 What lies in the future no one can tell;  
 Just do the right things to repay heaven's kindness.*

Our story takes place in the prefecture of Suzhou. Within the city gates there stands a Xuandu Temple, built in the Later Liang dynasty. The line "A thousand peach trees in Xuandu Temple," written by Prefect Liu Yuxi [772-842] of the Tang dynasty, is a reference to this very temple, which is also called Xuanmiao Temple.<sup>1</sup> Situated in the heart of the city of Suzhou, it is a famous landmark covering a large area, a magnificent building complete with a hall devoted to the Three Pure Ones and one devoted to Yama, King of the Ten Halls of Hell. Priests wearing yellow caps and serving in the various halls numbered in the hundreds. There was in the temple a North Pole Zhenwu Hall,<sup>2</sup> more commonly known as the Hall of the Patriarch. Priests who served in this hall were all successors of the Zhengyi sect of Daoism, good at drawing magic figures, deploying celestial warriors to exorcise evil spirits, and predicting the ups and downs in people's lives.

Let me now tell of one of these priests, with the laic surname Zhang before he joined the Daoist order. His fondness for a pet sparrow earned him the nickname Sparrow Zhang. He was an eccentric man. His love of meat and wine was nothing out of the ordinary, but he had an unusual passion for one thing. What was it?

*It barks at the moon in deserted villages,  
 And runs with the wind on wintry days of snow.  
 As for how the character for it is written,  
 Move to the right the dot in the character tai.*

In short, he had a passion for dog meat. The dog slaughterer treated him as his biggest patron. Whenever a big dog was slaughtered, the butcher invariably asked him over to eat the meat. At the



[眉批] 凡人又要吃，又要钱，所以不成仙。或有鬼崇作耗，求他书符镇宅，遇着吃狗肉，就把箸蘸着狗肉汁，写个符去，教人贴于大门。邻人往往夜见贴符之处，如有神将往来，其崇立止。

有个矫大户家，积年开典获利，感谢天地，欲建一坛斋醮酬答，已请过了清真观里周道士主坛。周道士夸张皮雀之高，矫公亦慕其名，命主管即时相请。那矫家养一只防宅狗，甚是肥壮，张皮雀平昔看在眼里，今番见他相请，说道：“你若要我来时，须打这只狗请我，待狗肉煮得稀烂，酒也烫热了，我才到你家里。”主管回复了矫公。矫公晓得他是跷蹊古怪的人，只得依允。果然烫热了酒，煮烂了狗肉，张皮雀到门。主人迎入堂中，告以相请之意。堂中香火灯烛，摆得齐整，供养着一堂神道，众道士已起过香头了。张皮雀昂然而入，也不礼神，也不与众道士作揖，口中只叫：“快将烂狗肉来吃，酒要热些！”矫公道：“且看他吃



height of his enjoyment, Sparrow Zhang would hand the butcher all the money he had received as donations, without ever bothering to ask for the bill. (*That's why those mundane mortal beings who like to eat and keep their money at the same time will never achieve immortality.*) When asked to draw magic figures to exorcise evil spirits that haunt people, he would, if he was in the midst of eating dog meat, dip his chopsticks in the gravy and draw a magic figure to be posted on the front gate of the household that had asked for help. Wherever such magic figures were posted, local residents would see celestial warriors on patrol at night, and the evil spirits' doings would immediately come to an end.

There was a rich man, Jiao, who, out of gratitude to heaven and earth for a lucrative pawnshop business over the years, wished to build an altar and hold a prayer service to offer his thanks. The Daoist priest he asked to officiate at the service, Priest Zhou of Qingzhen Temple, praised Sparrow Zhang's efficacy. Mr. Jiao, who also admired Sparrow Zhang, had his shop manager deliver an invitation. The Jiao household had a watchdog. Sparrow Zhang had long had his eye on that dog of goodly size. Now that the very owner of the dog had invited Sparrow Zhang to his home, the priest said, "If you want me to come, you'll have to slaughter that dog. Only when its meat is cooked tender and wine is nicely warmed up will I come to your house."

At the shop manager's report, Mr. Jiao saw nothing for it but to give his consent, knowing that Sparrow Zhang was an eccentric man. As was told, wine was heated and dog meat was cooked tender, and sure enough, Sparrow Zhang showed up at the door. The host led him to the main hall and requested his service. Well-lined with images of deities along the walls, the hall was brightly lit with candles, and the assembly of priests had already made incense offerings to the gods. Sparrow Zhang strode in jauntily and, dispensing with the obligatory bow to the images of the gods and greetings to the priests, shouted, "Bring me the tender dog meat and be quick about it! And make sure the wine is warm!"

Mr. Jiao said to himself, "Let's wait and see what he does after



了酒肉，如何作用？”当下大盘装狗肉，大壶盛酒，摆列张皮雀面前，恣意饮啖，吃得盘无馀骨酒无馀滴，十分醉饱，叫道：“聒噪！”吃得快活，嘴也不抹一抹，望着拜神的铺毡上倒头而睡，鼻息如雷，自酉牌直睡至下半夜，众道士醮事已完，兀自未醒，又不敢去动掸他。矫公等得不耐烦，到埋怨周道士起来。周道士自觉无颜，不敢分辨，想道：“张皮雀时常吃醉了一睡两三日不起，今番正不知几时才醒？”只得将表章焚化了，辞神谢将，收拾道场。

弄到五更，众道士吃了酒饭，刚欲告辞，只见张皮雀在拜毡上跳将起来，团团一转，乱叫：“十日十日，五日五日。”矫公和众道士见他疯了，都走来围着看。周道士胆大，向前抱住，将他唤醒了，口里还叫：“五日，五日。”周道士问其缘故。张皮雀道：“适才表章，谁人写的？”周道士道：“是小道亲手缮写的。”张皮雀道：“中间落了一字，差了两字。”矫公道：“学生也亲口念过几遍，并无差落，那有此话？”张皮雀在袖中簌簌响，抽出一幅黄纸来，道：“这不是表章？”众人看见，各各骇然道：“这表章已焚化了，如何却在他袖中，纸角儿也不动半毫？”仔细再念一遍，到《天尊宝号》中，果然落了一字，却看不出差处。张皮雀



he eats and drinks. ” Right away, large plates of dog meat and large flasks of wine were set before Sparrow Zhang. Heartily he ate and drank until there was no bone left on the plates nor a drop of wine in the flasks. Now quite full with the meat and the wine, he said, “Thanks!” Contentedly, he lay down on a prayer mat without even bothering to wipe his mouth clean and immediately began to snore like thunder. He slept from late afternoon all the way to the small hours of the next morning. The priests found him still asleep after they had finished the prayer service, but they dared not disturb him. Mr. Jiao lost his patience and grumbled that it was all Priest Zhou’s fault. An ashamed Priest Zhou dared not say a word in defense of himself. He thought, “Sparrow Zhang often sleeps for two or three days at a stretch when he’s the worse for liquor. I wonder when he’ll wake up this time. ” Resignedly, he burned the petition to the gods, offered words of thanks to the celestial warriors, and cleaned up the hall.

At about the fifth watch, the priests were about to take their leave after being treated to wine and food, when, lo and behold, Sparrow Zhang jumped up from the prayer mat and, spinning himself around, screamed, “Ten days! Ten days! Five days! Five days!”

Believing he had gone quite mad, Mr. Jiao and the priests gathered around him to watch. Priest Zhou, being braver than the rest, went up to Sparrow Zhang, held him tight, and woke him up while he was still screaming “Five days! Five days!”

Priest Zhou asked him what he was talking about. Instead of answering, he asked, “Who wrote that petition?”

“This humble priest did,” replied Priest Zhou.

“You missed one character and got two characters wrong. ”

Mr. Jiao intervened, “I read the petition aloud several times and found no mistakes. How can you say such a thing?”

With a rustle, Sparrow Zhang produced from his sleeve a scroll of yellow paper and said, “Isn’t this the petition?”

Appalled at the sight, everyone present said, “The petition has been burned. How could it have ended up in his sleeve, without so much as a crumpled corner?” Upon giving it another careful reading, they realized that one character was indeed missing from the list of



指出其中一联云：

吃亏吃苦，挣来一倍之钱；

柰短柰长，仅作千金之子。

“‘吃亏必苦’该写‘喫’字，今写‘吃’字，是‘吃舌’的‘吃’字了。‘喫’音‘赤’，‘吃’音‘格’，两音也不同。‘柰’字，是‘李柰’之‘柰’；‘奈’字，是‘奈何’之‘奈’；‘耐’字是‘耐烦’之‘耐’。‘柰短柰长’该写‘耐烦’的‘耐’字，‘柰’是果名，借用不得。你欺负上帝不识字么？如今上帝大怒，教我也难处。”矫公和众道士见了表文，不敢不信，一齐都求告道：“如今重修章奏，再建斋坛，不知可否？”张皮雀道：“没用，没用！你表文上差落字面还是小事，上帝因你有这道奏章，在天曹日记簿上查你的善恶。你自开解库，为富不仁，轻兑出，重兑入，水丝出，足纹入，兼将解下的珠宝，但拣好的都换了自用。[眉批]为富不仁的看样。又凡质物值钱者才足了年数，就假托变卖过了，不准赎取。如此刻剥贫户，以致肥饶。你奏章中全无悔罪之言，多是自夸之语，已命雷部于即日焚烧汝屋，荡毁你的家私。我只为感



deities' names invoked, but still, none was able to locate the wrong characters. Pointing to one couplet in the petition, Sparrow Zhang read aloud,

*“Suffering losses and hardships,  
 He doubled his riches,  
 Enduring trials and tribulations,  
 He attained but modest wealth.”*

“The character for ‘suffering’ here, as in ‘suffering a loss’ [literally, to “eat losses”] is wrong. You used the one that means ‘to stutter’ [*chi* in modern Chinese] whereas you should have used the one that means ‘to eat.’ The one you used should be pronounced ‘ge.’ The character for ‘enduring’ [*nai*] is also wrong. The character you wrote is a homophone that is the name of a kind of apple, not the one that means ‘endure.’ How can you throw in an apple in this context? Are you assuming that the Lord on High is illiterate and are therefore trying to cheat him? If the Lord gets angry, there isn’t much I can do to help.”

With the petition right before them, Mr. Jiao and the priests could not reject the evidence of their eyes. In unison, they begged, “May we write another petition and build another prayer altar from scratch?”

“No use!” said Sparrow Zhang. “No use! A few wrong characters is nothing major, but because you sent this petition, the Lord on High checked your file in the Heavenly Registry and found that, ever since you started your business, you have been ruthless in your pursuit of wealth. You pay cheaply for pawned objects but charge steeply for redemptions. You pay out in low-quality silver but take in pure silver of the finest quality. You replace nice pieces of pawned jewelry and keep them for yourself. (*All the heartless rich, be warned!*) You also disallow redemption for valuable objects when their term expires, falsely claiming that they had been sold. It’s through such exploitation of the poor that you amassed your wealth. And yet, your petition is full of self-praise, without a word of repentance for your trespasses.

“The Thunder Department has already been ordered to burn your



你一狗之惠，求宽至十日，上帝不允。再三恳告，已准到五日了。你可出个晓字：‘凡五日内来赎典者免利，只收本钱。’其向来欺心，换人珠宝，赖人质物，虽然势难吐退，发心喜舍，变卖为修桥补路之费。有此善行，上帝必然回嗔，或者收回雷部，也未可知。”矫公初时也还有信从之意，听说到“收回雷部，也未可知”，到不免有疑。“这风道士必然假托此因，来布施我的财物。难道雷部如此易收易放？”况且掌财的人，算本算利，怎肯放松。口中答应，心下不以为然。张皮雀和众道士辞别自去了。矫公将此话阁起不行。到第五日，解库里火起，前堂后厅，烧做白地。第二日，这些质当的人家都来讨当，又不肯赔偿，结起讼来，连田地都卖了。矫大户一贫如洗。有人知道张皮雀曾预言雷火之期，从此益敬而畏之。

张皮雀在玄都观五十馀年，后因渡钱塘江，风逆难行，张皮雀遣天将打缆，其去如飞。皮雀呵呵大笑，触了天将之怒，为其





house this very day and destroy all of your possessions. Out of gratitude for your dog meat, I begged for a ten-day grace period, but the Lord on High denied my request. I kept on pleading and finally got the Lord to grant a five-day grace period. You can put up a notice to say, 'In the next five days, pay no interest for redemption of pawned items.' It may be impracticable for you to return to your clients all the money you got by cheating them out of their jewelry and other pawned items, but you can still perform some good works like paying for the building of bridges and the repair of roads. Such good deeds will surely alleviate the anger of the Lord on High. He may even revoke his order to the Thunder Department for all I know."

At the beginning, Mr. Jiao felt inclined to follow the advice, but at the words that the Lord On High "may even revoke his order to the Thunder Department," a suspicion entered his mind: "Might this crazy priest be using this as an excuse to make me give away my money and possessions? The Thunder Department can't be as flexible as that!" Moreover, being in charge of a business, he had a quick head for calculating capital and profits. How was he to let go easily of his money? Outwardly he voiced his agreement, but inwardly he thought otherwise.

After Sparrow Zhang and the assembly of priests took their leave, Mr. Jiao did nothing about his promise. Five days later, a fire broke out in his warehouse. The flames consumed everything from the front to the back of the house. The next day, customers flocked to the shop to demand the return of their pawned items, but Mr. Jiao refused to pay compensation for their losses. After a series of lawsuits, Rich Man Jiao sold everything he had, including his land, and was reduced to abject poverty. Those who knew that Sparrow Zhang had predicted a thunder-induced fire henceforth held him in even greater awe.

After he had spent more than fifty years altogether in the Xuandu Temple, Sparrow Zhang took a trip across Qiantang River one day. As the boat was struggling against the wind, he summoned celestial warriors to tow the boat, and the boat started to speed ahead as if flying through air. But his roars of laughter so enraged the celestial war-



所击而死。后有人于徽商家扶鸾，皮雀降笔，自称：“原是天上荀元帅，尘缘已满，众将请他上天归班，非击死也。”徽商闻真武殿之灵异，舍施千金，于殿前堆一石假山，以为壮观之助。这假山虽则美观，反破了风水，从此本房道侣，更无得道者。诗云：

雷火曾将典库焚，符驱鬼祟果然真。

玄都观里张皮雀，莫道无神也有神。

为何说这张皮雀的话？只为一般有个人家，信了书符召将，险些儿冤害了人的性命。那人姓金名满，也是苏州府昆山县人。少时读书不就，将银援例纳了个令史，就参在本县户房为吏。他原是个乖巧的人，待人接物，十分克己，同役中甚是得合。做不上三四个月令史，衙门上下，没有一个不喜欢他。又去结交这些门子，要他在知县相公面前帮衬，不时请他们吃酒，又送些小物事。但遇知县相公比较，审问到夜静更深时，他便留在家中宿歇，日逐打诨。那门子也都感激，在县主面前虽不能用力，每事却也十分周全。时遇五月中旬，金令史知吏房要开各吏送阉库房，思量要谋这个美缺。那库房旧例，一吏轮管两季，任凭县主随意点的。



riors that they killed him.

Later, in a divination exercise in a Huizhou merchant's home, when a T-shaped wooden rod was placed in a tray filled with sand, the following characters, by Sparrow Zhang's hand, appeared in the sand: "I, Grand-marshal Gou in heaven, was not killed but was invited back to heaven by the celestial warriors upon expiration of my predestined bond with the mortal world." Having heard that Zhenwu Hall was most responsive to prayers, the Huizhou merchant donated a thousand pieces of gold and had a rock hill built in front of the hall to add to the grandeur of the view. A delight to the eye though the rock hill was, it destroyed the feng shui. Henceforth, no priest of this hall ever attained the Dao. As the poem says,

*A thunder fire burned the pawnshop warehouse,  
 Bearing out the words of the soothsayer.  
 Sparrow Zhang of Xuande Temple  
 Was not without divine powers.*

Why all this talk about Sparrow Zhang? Well, there was a man whose blind faith in magic and celestial warriors almost led to the loss of human lives. The man, Jin Man by name, was also a native of Kunshan County in Suzhou Prefecture. Having failed in his studies earlier in his life, he bought himself a government post as a clerk in the county revenue office. Being a clever man with modest ways in his dealings with people, he got along very well with his colleagues. In less than three months as a clerk, he had won the hearts of all in the yamen, high and low. He also went out of his way to befriend the janitors, treating them to wine from time to time and giving them small gifts, so that they might put in a good word for him with the county magistrate. Whenever they were detained by the magistrate until late at night and beaten for dereliction of duty, he put them up at his home overnight and kept them entertained, to their deep gratitude. Though the janitors were not able to ask the magistrate for favors for Jin Man, they did everything they could for him.

The middle of the fifth month drew near, which, as Clerk Jin knew, was the time for the personnel office to draw lots to fill the post of treasurer, a sinecure that he coveted. In the old days, the



众吏因见是个利藪，人人思想要管，屡屡县主点来，都不肯服。却去上司具呈批准，要六房中择家道殷实老成无过犯的，当堂拈阄，各吏具结申报上司，若新参及役将满者，俱不许阄。然虽如此，其权出在吏房，但平日与吏房相厚的，送些东道，他便混帐开上去，那里管新参、役满、家道殷实不殷实？这叫做官清私暗。

却说金满暗想道：“我虽是新参，那吏房刘令史与我甚厚，拚送些东西与他，自然送阄的。若阄得着，也不枉费这一片心机；倘阄不着，却不空丢了银子，又被人笑话？怎得一个必着之策便好！”忽然想起门子王文英，他在衙门有年，甚有见识，何不寻他计较？一径走出县来，恰好县门口就遇着王文英道：“金阿叔，忙忙的那里去？”金满道：“好兄弟，正来寻你说话。”王文英道：“有什么事作成我？”金满道：“我与你坐了方好说。”二人来到侧边一个酒店里坐下，金满一头吃酒，一头把要谋库房的事，说与王文英知道。王文英说：“此事只要吏房开得上去，包在我身上，使你阄着。”金满道：“吏房是不必说了，但当堂拈阄怎么这等把



treasurer was appointed by the county magistrate. Everyone coveted this lucrative post, which rotated every two seasons, and contested the magistrate's choice each time. An appeal was made to higher authorities, requesting a public lot-drawing session using a list of candidates from all the six offices. These candidates had to be independently well-off and honest and have clean records. Petitions were also sent to higher authorities, asking to exclude those who were new to their posts as well as those whose terms of office would soon expire. And yet, because power rested with the office of personnel, those who were on good terms with personnel officers sent over gifts and managed to get themselves nominated, irrespective of considerations such as length of service, financial background, etc. This is a case of good rules ending in abuse.

Now, Jin Man said to himself, "I may be a newcomer, but Clerk Liu of the personnel office is a good friend of mine. Why don't I give him some gifts? And let me spare no cost! He'll surely put my name on the list for lot-drawing. And yet, if I am picked, all this scheming will of course have been worthwhile, but if not, won't I have thrown away money for nothing and be ridiculed into the bargain? I wish I could come up with a sure-fire plan!"

Suddenly he recalled Wang Wenying, a janitor who had been serving in the yamen for some years and quite an insightful man at that. Why not consult him? He walked out of the yamen, and, as coincidence would have it, at the very gate, he ran into Wang Wenying.

"Uncle Jin," said Wang, "where are you rushing off to?"

"My good brother, I was on my way to look for you!"

"To do me a favor?"

"Well, let's sit down and talk. "

They entered a nearby wineshop and sat down. While drinking, Jin Man told Wang Wenying about his wish to land the post of treasurer.

"As long as the personnel office puts your name on the list, I'll make sure that your name is picked in the lot-drawing. "

"I'll take care of the personnel office, but the lot-drawing has to be done in public. How can you be so sure?"



稳?”王文英附耳低言，道：“只消如此如此，何难之有!”金满大喜，连声称谢：“若得如此，自当厚谢。”二人又吃了一回，起身会钞而别。金满回到公廨里买东买西，备下夜饭，请吏房令史刘云到家，将上项事与他说知。刘云应允。金满取出五两银子，送与刘云道：“些小薄礼，先送阿哥买果吃，待事成了，再找五两。”刘云假意谦让道：“自己弟兄，怎么这样客气?”金满道：“阿哥从直些罢，不嫌轻，就是阿哥的盛情了。”刘云道：“既如此，我权收去再处。”把银袖了。摆出果品肴馔，二人杯来盏去，直饮至更深而散。明日，有一令史察听了些风声，拉了众吏与刘云说：“金某他是个新参，未及半年，怎么就想要做库房?这个定然不成的。你要开只管开，少不得要当堂禀的，恐怕连你也没趣。那时却不要见怪!”刘云道：“你们不要乱嚷，凡事也要通个情。就是他在众人面上，一团和气，并无一毫不到之处，便开上去难道就是他阉着了?这是落得做人情的事。若去一禀，朋友面上又不好看，说起来只是我们薄情。”又一个道：“争名争利，顾得什么朋友不朋友，薄情不薄情。”刘云道：“噯，不要与人争，只去与



Wang Wenying whispered in his ear, "What's so difficult about that? I only need to do this and that.. "

Much delighted, Jin Man was profuse in his thanks. "If this works out, I'll surely have a handsome thank-you gift for you. "

After some more drinking, they rose, paid their bill, and left.

Back in the yamen, Jin Man had dinner prepared after some shopping around and invited Liu Yun, clerk of the personnel office, to whom he expressed his wish. Liu Yun consented. Jin Man took out five taels of silver and, handing it to Liu, said, "This is a small gift, just for you to buy some sweets. After this thing works out, I'll give you five taels more. "

With affected demureness, Liu Yun said, "Aren't we brothers? Why stand on such ceremony with me?"

"You can be direct with me," said Jin Man. "If you don't object to the paltriness of the sum, I'll take that to be a great kindness. "

"In that case," said Liu Yun, "I'll keep it for now and get something done. " So saying, he slipped the silver up his sleeve. Fruit and some food were laid out. They toasted each other back and forth and did not part company until late at night.

The next day, a clerk got wind of this and, gathering together some other clerks, said to Liu Yun, "Mr. Jin is a newcomer who's been here for less than half a year. It's too early for him to want to be treasurer. This will never do. It is up to you whether to pick him or not, but the lot-drawing has to be conducted in public. I'm afraid this thing won't make you look too good, either. Don't blame me when that happens!"

"You don't have to yell like that," rejoined Liu Yun. "Be reasonable. He's a nice, popular man who has done absolutely nothing that can be faulted. Even if his name is put on the list of candidates, how likely is it that he will be picked? This is a promise I'm only too glad to give him. If you report the matter, you'll be ruining our friendship with him. People will say we are a bunch of false-hearted crooks. "

"In fighting for fame and fortune," said one man, "who cares about friendship or false-heartedness?"



命争。是这样说，明日就是你阉着便好；若不是你，连这几句话也是多的，还要算长。”内中有两个老成的，见刘云说得有理，便道：“老刘，你的话虽是，但他忒性急了些。就是做库房，未知是祸是福，直等结了局，方才见得好歹。什么正经？做也罢，不做也罢，不要闲争，各人自去干正事。”[眉批]老成之见。遂各散去。金满闻得众人有言，恐怕不稳，又去揭债，央本县显要士夫，写信嘱托知县相公，说他“老成明理，家道颇裕，诸事可托”。这分明是叫把库房与他管，但不好明言耳。

话休烦絮，到拈阉这日，刘云将应阉各吏名字，开列一单，呈与知县相公看了。唤里书房一样写下条子，又呈上看罢，命门子乱乱的总做一堆，然后唱名取阉。那卷阉传递的门子，便是王文英，已作下弊，金满一手拈起，扯开，恰好正是。你道当堂拈阉，怎么作得弊？原来刘云开上去的名单，却从吏、户、礼、兵、刑、工挨次写的。吏房也有管过的，也有役满快的，已不在数内。





“Hey!” said Liu Yun, “Don’t fight with people. Fight only your fate. It will be a good thing if you end up being picked. If not, what you said should have been left unsaid. You could have saved your breath.”

A few older and wiser men among the crowd, convinced by Liu Yun’s logic, commented, “Old Liu, you do have a point, but isn’t he overeager? Even if he does land the treasurer’s post, he won’t know until his term is over if it’s a good thing for him or not. So what’s the big deal? Whether he gets the job or not isn’t worth fighting about. Let’s all go our separate ways and tend to our own businesses.” (*Words of the older and wiser.*) Thereupon, the crowd dispersed.

Having heard that there was gossip about him, Jin Man was afraid that his chance might be ruined. Again, he went out to borrow money. Then, he had an eminent literati scholar of the county write to the county magistrate, describing him as a “mature and sensible man of independent means, to whom important tasks can well be entrusted.” This was a broad hint to the magistrate, short of saying in so many words that Jin should be entrusted with the treasury.

Let us skip trivialities and come to the day of lot-drawing. Liu Yun made a list of candidates and showed it to the magistrate. He next had the staff of the magistrate’s study write the names on small slips of paper and then showed the slips to the magistrate. Finally, he assigned a janitor to mix the slips of paper together and call the candidates to come up one by one to draw lots. The janitor assigned to roll up the slips of paper and pass them along was none other than Wang Wenying, who had already played his tricks. Jin Man picked up the first slip of paper that came to his hand, spread it open, and found it to be the right one.

You may very well ask, how could there be any tricks when the lot-drawing was done in public? Well, the fact of the matter was, when making the list, Liu Yun had followed the ranking order of the six offices of the county yamen: the offices of personnel, revenue, rites, defense, justice, and public works. Among the candidates from the office of personnel, some had already served as treasurers,



金满是户房司吏，单上便是第一名了。那王文英卷阉的时节，已做下暗号，金满第一个上去拈时，却不似易如反掌？众人那知就里，正是：

随你官清似水，难逃吏滑如油。

当时众吏见金满阉着，都跪下禀说：“他是个新参，尚不该阉库。况且钱粮干系，不是小事，俱要具结申报上司的。若是金满管了库，众吏不敢轻易执结的。”县主道：“既是新参，就不该开在单上了。”众吏道：“这是吏房刘云得了他贿赂，混开在上面的。”县主道：“吏房既是混开，你众人何不先来禀明，直等他阉着了方来禀话？明明是个妒忌之意。”众人见本官做了主，谁敢再道个不字，反讨了一场没趣。县主落得在乡官面上做个人情，又且当堂阉着，更无班驳。那些众吏虽怀妒忌，无可奈何，做好做歉的说发金满备了一席戏酒，方出结状，申报上司，不在话下。

且说金满自六月初一日交盘上库接管，就把五两银子谢了刘云。那些门子因作弊成全了他，当做恩人相看，比前愈加亲密。



and some were soon leaving office. With these men ruled out, Jin Man, as a senior clerk in the office of revenue, became the first one on the list. When rolling up the slips of paper, Wang Wenyong made a secret mark. Jin Man being the first one to go forward and do the picking, wasn't this whole thing as easy as turning over a hand? None of those present had any inkling of what was afoot. Truly,

*However righteous the authorities,  
The subordinates get to play their tricks.*

Upon witnessing Jin Man drawing the right lot, the assembled officials all fell to their knees and entreated the magistrate, "He is too new in his post to be a treasurer. Moreover, for such an important post involving money and grains, we are supposed to write a letter of acknowledgment to higher authorities. If Jin Man becomes the treasurer, we can't very well rush into such an acknowledgment."

"If he is new," said the magistrate, "his name should not have appeared on the list in the first place."

"It was Liu Yun of the personnel office who accepted his bribe and maneuvered to get his name on the list."

"If this is the case, why didn't you report the matter to me earlier? The fact that you waited until he picked the right lot shows all too clearly that you are saying this out of jealousy."

Now that the county magistrate had taken Jin Man's side, no one dared utter another word of objection for fear of a rebuff. The magistrate was only too glad to be doing a favor to a fellow official. Moreover, since the lot-drawing was a public event, no objection could be justified. However jealous they were, there was nothing the clerks could do. Yielding to a great deal of persuasion, Jin Man prepared a wine feast in their honor and engaged a theatrical troupe for the occasion. Only then did they agree to write the letter of acknowledgment of Jin Man's assumption of the post.

The handover of the treasury took place on the first day of the sixth month. Jin Man thanked Liu Yun with the additional five taels of silver that he had promised and treated as his benefactors the janitors whose tricks had gotten him his new position. They became even closer than before.



他虽则管了库，正在农忙之际，诸事俱停，那里有什么钱粮完纳。到七八月里，却又个把月不下雨，做了个秋旱。虽不至全灾，却也是个半荒，乡间人纷纷的都来告荒。知县相公只得各处去踏勘，也没甚大生意。眼见得这半年库房，扯得直就勾了。时光迅速，不觉到了十一月里，钦天监奏准本月十五日月蚀，行文天下救护。本府奉文，帖下属县。是夜，知县相公聚集僚属师生僧道人等，在县救护，旧例库房备办公宴，于后堂款待众官。金满因无人相帮，将银教厨夫备下酒席；自己却不敢离库。转央刘云及门子在席上点管酒器，支持诸事。众官不过拜几拜，应了故事，都到后堂饮酒，只留这些僧道在前边打一套饶钹，吹一番细乐，直闹到四更方散。刚刚收拾得完，恰又报新按院到任。县主急忙忙下船，到府迎接。又要支持船上，往还供应，准准的一夜眼也不合。天明了，查点东西时，不见了四锭元宝。金满自想：“昨日并不曾离库，有谁人用障眼法偷去了？只恐怕还失落在那里。”各处搜



Though he was now in charge of the treasury, there was no tax to collect because, as it was the busy farming season, everything other than farming had ground to a halt. Then, the lack of rain in the seventh and eighth months caused a drought in the autumn. Even though it was not the worst famine ever, the situation was severe enough. Villagers flocked to the county seat to ask for emergency relief. The county magistrate had to go on tours of inspection without knowing what more he could do. In a few months' time, the county treasury was barely able to cover all the expenses.

Time flew. Quite unnoticeably, it was already the eleventh month of the year. The Imperial Bureau of Astronomy, predicting a lunar eclipse on the fifteenth day of the month, issued throughout the land a directive for the populace to hold prayer services. The prefecture relayed the directive to subordinate counties. That very night, the county magistrate assembled local officials, monks, and scholars in the county yamen for a prayer service. According to established practice, it was the treasurer's job to make preparations for a feast in the back hall of the yamen in honor of all those present. With no one to help him, Jin Man paid the kitchen staff to prepare the feast, but he himself dared not leave the treasury. He asked Liu Yun and other janitors to keep an eye on the wine vessels and take care of everything related to the feast. The guests made a few perfunctory bows by way of fulfilling their obligations and then proceeded to the back hall for the feast. The monks were kept in the front hall to play percussion and string instruments. The service lasted until the fourth watch of the night. The dishes had scarcely been cleared away when an announcement came that the new inspector was ready to take up his post. Losing no time, the county magistrate took a boat to the prefectural seat to extend his welcome. Jin Man was kept so busy, first with the feast and then with making arrangements for the boat, that he did not get so much as a wink of sleep the whole night through.

After daybreak, an inventory made of the treasury found four ingots of silver missing. Jin Man thought, "I never left the treasury yesterday. Who could have played some magical trick and stolen them? Maybe they are still around somewhere." A thorough search turned



寻，那里见个分毫。着了急，连声叫苦道：“这般晦气，却失了这二百两银子，如今把什么来赔补？若不赔时，一定经官出丑，如何是好！”一头叫言，一边又重新寻起，就把这间屋翻转来，何尝有个影儿。慌做一堆，正没理会，那时外边都晓得库里失了银子，尽来探问，到拌得口干舌碎。内中单喜欢得那几个不容他管库的令史，一味说清话，做鬼脸，喜谈乐道。正是：

幸灾乐祸千人有，替力分忧半个无！

过了五六日，知县相公接了按院，回到县里。金满只得将此事禀知县主。县主还未开口，那几个令史在傍边，你一嘴，我一句，道：“自己管库没了银子，不去赔补，到对老爷说，难道老爷赔不成？”县主因前番闹库时，有些偏护了金满，今日没了银子，颇有赧容，喝道：“库中是你执掌，又没闲人到来，怎么没了银子？必竟将去嫖赌花费了，在此支吾。今且饶你的打，限十日内将银补库，如无，定然参究。”

金满气闷闷地，走出县来。即时寻县中阴捕商议。江南人说阴捕，就是北方叫番子手一般。其在官有名者谓之官捕，帮手谓之白捕。金令史不拘官捕、白捕，都邀过来，到酒店中吃三杯。说道：“金某今日劳动列位，非为己私，四锭元宝寻常人家可有？不比散碎的好用，少不得败露出来。只要列位用心，若缉访得实，



up nothing. Then he panicked. "What bad luck!" he groaned. "How am I going to pay back these two hundred taels of silver? If I don't pay them back, there will be a lawsuit and a scandal. Oh, what am I going to do?"

So saying, he started another search, almost turning the storage house upside down, but not even a shadow of an ingot was seen. He cowered in fear, without the least idea of what to do. By this time, news of the lost treasury silver had spread, and inquiries came pouring in. He had to explain the situation until his mouth ran dry and his tongue fell to pieces. Those who had objected to his assumption of the treasurer's post were overjoyed. With relish, they indulged in sarcastic comments along with many a grimace. Truly,

*All gloated over his misfortune;*

*None gave a helping hand or shared his grief.*

Five or six days later, after the county magistrate had returned, escorting the inspector to the county yamen, Jin Man had no choice but to report the loss to the magistrate. Before the magistrate so much as opened his mouth, the clerks standing by spoke up, one after another, "The treasury is his responsibility. Instead of making up for the missing amount out of his own pocket, he tells the magistrate about the loss. He can't be thinking of having the magistrate pay for it?"

Vexed that Jin Man, whom he had defended at the lot-drawing session, had been remiss in his duty, the magistrate said sharply to him, "The treasury is your responsibility. How could any silver be missing when no outsiders have been allowed in? You must have spent the money in some gambling house or brothel, and now you come to me with your lies. I'll spare you from a thrashing today. Pay back the entire amount within ten days. Otherwise, you'll be in for some disciplinary action."

A dejected Jin Man left the county yamen and consulted officers responsible for making arrests. He invited all the officers and their aides to a wineshop for a few drinks. "It is not for my own sake," said he, "that I am asking this favor of all of you today. An ordinary family is not likely to have as many as four ingots of silver. Also, since large ingots are more unwieldy than loose silver, the thief is



拿获赃盗时，小子愿出白金二十两酬劳。”捕人齐答应道：“当得，当得！”一日三，三日九，看看十日限足，捕人也吃了几遍酒水，全无影响。知县相公叫金满问：“银子有了么？”金满禀道：“小的同捕人缉访，尚无踪迹。”知县喝道：“我限你十日内赔补，那等得你缉访！”叫左右：“揣下去打！”金满叩头求饶，道：“小的愿赔，只求老爷再宽十日，容变卖家私什物。”知县准了转限。金满管库又不曾趁得几多东西，今日平白地要赔这二百两银子，甚费措置。家中首饰衣服之类，尽数变卖也还不勾。身边畜得一婢，小名金杏，年方一十五岁，生得甚有姿色：

鼻端面正，齿白唇红，两道秀眉，一双娇眼。鬓似乌云发委地，手如尖笋肉凝脂。分明豆蔻尚含香，疑似夭桃初发蕊。

金令史平昔爱如己女，欲要把这婢子来出脱，思想再等一二年，遇个贵人公子，或小妻，或通房，嫁他出去，也讨得百来两银子。如今忙不择价，岂不可惜！左思右想，只得把住身的几间房子，权





bound to be exposed. Please do the best you can. I'll offer twenty taels of silver as a reward to anyone who can solve the case and find the culprit as well as the silver. "

The officers replied in unison, "We'll try. "

One day stretched to three, and three days to nine. All too quickly, the ten days allowed went by. The officers were treated to one feast after another, but all to no avail.

The county magistrate summoned Jin Man to his court. "Have you recovered the silver?" he asked.

"I have been on the case with the officers, but no trace has been found. "

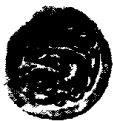
"I gave you ten days to make the repayment. I'm not going to wait until you solve the case!" He ordered his men, "Take him down for a thrashing!"

With one kowtow after another, Jin Man pleaded for mercy. "I am willing to pay, but please give me another ten days so that I have enough time to sell off my household effects. " The magistrate granted him the ten days.

Jin Man had never embezzled when he was treasurer. And now, out of the blue, he had to scrape together two hundred taels of silver, which would be quite an effort for him. Even if he sold all the jewelry and clothes in the house, he still would not come up with enough money. He had a young maidservant named Golden Apricot who, at fifteen years of age, was quite fair to look upon. She had

*A well-shaped nose, a charming face,  
 White teeth, red lips, trim eyebrows, lovely eyes,  
 Black, cloud-like hair that hung down to the floor,  
 Fingers slender and pointed, skin smooth and glossy,  
 Verily a sweet budding flower,  
 A peach blossom before full bloom.*

Mr. Jin loved this girl as he did his own daughter and was hoping to offer her in a couple of years as a concubine or a maidservant to some rich young man in exchange for a hundred or so taels of silver. To dispose of her at this moment of crisis for less than she was worth would be too much of a pity.



解与人。将银子凑足二百两之数，倾成四个元宝，当堂兑准，封贮库上。分付他：“下次小心。”

金令史心中好生不乐，把库门锁了，回到公廨里，独坐在门首，越想越恼。着甚来由，用了这主屈财，却不是青白晦气！正纳闷间，只见家里小厮叫做秀童，吃得半醉，从外走来。见了家长，倒退几步。金令史骂道：“蠢奴才，家长气闷，你到快活吃酒？我手里没钱使用，你到有闲钱买酒吃？”秀童道：“我见阿爹两日气闷，连我也不喜欢，常听见人说酒可忘忧，身边偶然积得几分银子，买杯中物来散闷。阿爹若没钱买酒时，我还馀得有一壶酒钱在店上，取来就是。”金令史喝道：“谁要你的吃！”原来苏州有件风俗，大凡做令史的，不拘内外人都称呼为“相公”。秀童是九岁时卖在金家的，自小抚养，今已二十馀岁，只当过继的义男，故称“阿爹”。那秀童要取壶酒与阿爹散闷，是一团孝顺之心。谁知人心不同，到挑动了家长的一个机括，险些儿送了秀童的性命。正是：

老龟烹不烂，移祸于枯桑。

当时秀童自进去了。金令史蓦然想道：“这一夜眼也不曾合，那里有外人进来偷了去？只有秀童拿递东西，进来几次，难道这银



Turning his thoughts this way and that, he found himself with no better alternative than to mortgage his house, for which he got two hundred taels of silver. He had the silver cast into four ingots and, after having them weighed in the presence of witnesses in the magistrate's court, put them under seal in the treasury warehouse. After being told to be more careful in the future, Clerk Jin gloomily locked up the treasury door and returned to his official residence. Sitting by the door all alone, he brooded over what had happened, growing more and more furious as he did so. The whole thing had cost him so much money, and all for what? Why all this bad luck?

He was still in this somber mood when Xiutong, a page boy in his household, entered from outside in a half-inebriated state. The young man recoiled a few steps at the sight of his master. Mr. Jin lashed out, "You stupid ass! How could you have been merrily drinking when your master is so miserable? Where did you get the extra money for wine when I don't have a penny?"

"I've been feeling low these last couple of days, seeing how unhappy you are, Father. I often hear people say that wine can drown all sorrows. As I happen to have saved a few maces of silver, I went to buy some wine to take my mind off all this. If you don't have money for wine, Father, I've left enough at the wineshop for another flask. I'll go get it for you."

Jin Man snapped, "Who wants anything from you?" As a matter of fact, it was the custom in Suzhou to address all government clerks as "Uncle." Xiutong, now in his twenties, had been sold to the Jin family at the age of nine and, having grown up in the Jin household as an adopted son, called Jin Man "Father." It was out of filial devotion that he offered to drown Father's sorrows with wine. But human hearts are different. His offer, contrary to what he had expected, aroused his master's suspicion and almost led to his death. Indeed,

*When the old turtle's meat won't cook tender,  
 Innocent mulberries are cut down to feed the fire.*

After Xiutong went into the house, Clerk Jin was suddenly struck by a thought: "How could outsiders have come in and stolen anything when I was wide awake all through the night? Only Xiutong



子是他偷了？”又想到：“这小厮自幼跟随奔走，甚是得力，从不见他手脚有甚毛病，如何抖然生起盗心？”又想到：“这小厮平昔好酒，凡为盗的，都从好酒赌钱两件上起。他吃溜了口，没处来方，见了大锭银子，又且手边方便，如何不爱？不然，终日买酒吃，那里来这许多钱？”[眉批]旋转几想，描画如见。又想到：“不是他，他就要偷时，或者溜几块散碎银子，这大锭元宝没有这个力量。就偷了时，那里出笏？终不然，放在钱柜上零支钱？少不得也露人眼目。就是拿出去时，只好一锭，还留下三锭在家，我今夜把他床铺搜检一番，便知分晓。”又想到：“这也不是常法，他若果偷了这大银，必然寄顿在家中父母处，怎肯还放在身边？搜不着时，反惹他笑。若不是他偷的，冤了他一场，反冷了他的心肠。哦，有计了，闻得郡城有个莫道人，召将断事，吉凶如睹，见寓在玉峰寺中，何不请他来一问，以决胸中之疑？”[眉批]此回书原为破巫覡之惑而作。过了一夜，次日金满早起，分付秀童买些香烛纸马果品之类，也要买些酒肉，为谢将之用，自己却到玉峰寺去请莫道人。

却说金令史旧邻有个闲汉，叫做计七官，偶在街上看见秀童



came in a few times to fetch and carry. Could he have committed the theft? But this boy has been following me around ever since he was a child. He's been such a help to me, and I've never had any reason to suspect him of theft. How could he have suddenly turned a thief?" Then he thought again, "This boy drinks. All those who steal start out of a love for drinking and gambling. He could very well have incurred a large wine bill but has no means of paying for it, and at the sight of large ingots of silver there for the taking, how could he not be tempted? Otherwise, where could he have gotten so much money to spend on wine?" (*Vivid description of the twists and turns of his thoughts.*) Then again, another thought struck him: "No, it's not him. If he were the thief, he would have just taken a few pieces of loose silver. He wouldn't have had the audacity to take large ingots. Even if he had, where could he have gotten them off his hands? He couldn't very well leave them in a banking house and withdraw from the account every time he needs money, because that would have attracted attention. Even if he did do that, he could only deposit one ingot and leave the other three at home. Let me search his bed tonight, and everything will come to light." But again, he thought otherwise: "That isn't the way to go, either. Had he indeed stolen so much silver, he would have deposited them with his parents instead of keeping them with him. If my search turns up nothing, I'll be held up to ridicule, and if he's not the culprit, I'll have wronged him and broken his heart. Oh, yes, I have it! They say there's a Priest Mo in the city who has the power to summon celestial warriors to solve cases and get at the truth. He's now living in Jade Peak Temple. Why don't I invite him over and have him solve my problem?" (*This story was written for the express purpose of debunking the myth about the magic power of Daoist priests.*)

The next day, Jin Man rose early and instructed Xiutong to buy some candles, paper horses, and fruit, wine and meat to offer to celestial warriors in gratitude, while he himself made his way to Jade Peak Temple to invite Priest Mo.

Now, among Clerk Jin's former neighbors was an idler named Ji the Seventh, who happened to catch sight of Xiutong walking sulkily



买了许多东西，气忿忿的走来，问其缘故。秀童道：“说也好笑，我爹真是交了败运，干这样没正经事！二百两银子已自赔去了，认了晦气罢休，却又听了别人言语，请什么道人来召将。那贼道今日鬼混，哄了些酒肉吃了，明日少不得还要索谢。成不成，吃三瓶，本钱去得不爽利，又添些利钱上去，好没要紧。七官人，你想这些道人，可有真正活神仙在里面么？有这好酒好肉到把与秀童吃了，还替我爹出得些气力。斋了这贼道的嘴，‘咕噪’也可谢你一声么？”正说之间，恰好金令史从玉峰寺转来。秀童见家长来了，自去了。金满与计七官相见问道：“你与秀童说甚么？”计七官也不信召将之事的，就把秀童适才所言，述了一遍。又道：“这小厮到也有些见识。”金满沉吟无语，那计七官也只当闲话叙过，不想又挑动了家长一个机括。[眉批] 口气的件件挑动了悬机括。

只因家长心疑，险使童儿命丧。

金令史别了计七官自回县里，腹内踌躇，这话一发可疑：“他若不曾偷银子，由我召将便了，如何要他怪那个道士？”口虽不言，分明是“土中曲蟮，满肚泥心”。少停莫道人到了，排设坛场，却将邻家一个小学生附体。莫道人做张做智，步罡踏斗，念咒书符，



down the street, laden with purchases. When Ji asked Xiutong what was bothering him, Xiutong replied, "How laughable! My father must be under some evil star to be thinking of doing such an absurd thing! He has already paid for the loss of two hundred taels of silver out of his own pocket. Shouldn't he have just accepted his bad luck and let the matter drop? But he listened to some stupid advice and is hiring some kind of priest to summon celestial warriors. After fooling around and gorging himself on the food and wine today, that swine of a priest will surely also ask for payment tomorrow. As the saying goes, 'Three jars of wine are gone before anything is done.' Paying for the loss was no easy job, and now he's adding interest to the capital. What a senseless thing to do! Mr. Ji, do you think there can be any real immortals among those priests? Why! I am the one who can use the good wine and meat, so as to do my father better service! To think of wasting all the good stuff on that swine of a priest! Will he even say one word of thanks?"

At this point, Clerk Jin was seen returning from his trip to Jade Peak Temple. At the sight of his master, Xiutong turned away. Jin Man exchanged greetings with Ji the Seventh and asked him, "What were you and Xiutong talking about?"

Not one to believe in celestial warriors, Ji repeated Xiutong's words, adding, "That young man is not without good sense."

Jin Man fell silent as he reflected on what he had heard. Ji the Seventh did not think more of what he had said, little knowing that he had added to Jin Man's suspicions. (*Nothing would not arouse his suspicions.* )

*The master's suspicious mind*

*Jeopardized the young man's life.*

Clerk Jin said goodbye to Ji the Seventh and returned to the county yamen. What he had just heard filled his mind with apprehension. "If he were not guilty, he wouldn't have objected to having celestial warriors on the case. And he bad-mouthed the priest, too!" Without saying anything out loud, he was assailed by suspicions.

In a short while, Priest Mo arrived and had an altar laid out. Trying to induce a celestial warrior to possess a little schoolboy from



小学生就舞将起来，像一个捧剑之势，口称“邓将军下坛”，其声颇洪，不似小学生口气。金满见真将下降，叩首不迭，志心通陈，求判偷银之贼。天将摇首道：“不可说，不可说。”金满再三叩求，愿乞大将指示真盗姓名，莫道人又将灵牌施設，喝道：

鬼神无私，明彰报应。

有叩即答，急急如令！

金满叩之不已，天将道：“屏退闲人，吾当告汝。”其时这些令史们家人，及衙门内做公的，闻得莫道人在金家召将，做一件希奇之事，都走来看，塞做一屋。金满好言好语都请出去了，只剩得秀童一人在傍答应。天将叫道：“还有闲人。”莫道人对金令史说：“连秀童都遣出屋外去。”天将教金满舒出手来，金满跪而舒其左手。天将伸指头蘸酒在金满手心内，写出秀童二字，喝道：“记着！”金满大惊，正合他心中所疑，犹恐未的，叩头嘿嘿祝告道：“金满抚养秀童已十馀年，从无偷窃之行。若此银果然是他所盗，便当严刑究讯，此非轻易之事。神明在上，乞再加详察，





next door, Priest Mo put on an act, bowing to the constellations, chanting incantations, and drawing magic figures. The little boy started moving his limbs and assumed the posture of someone holding a sword, saying in a voice too sonorous to belong to a little boy, "I, General Deng, have stepped down from the altar."

Believing that a celestial warrior had indeed descended from heaven, Jin Man made one kowtow after another and implored the warrior, in all earnestness, to bring the thief to justice.

The celestial warrior said, shaking his head, "I am not supposed to reveal anything." Jin Man fell to kowtowing again and begged the warrior to reveal the thief's name. Priest Mo laid out another spiritual tablet and ordered in a harsh voice,

*"Ghosts and deities have nothing to hide;*

*Retributions are all in the open.*

*To every question, an answer!*

*For every answer, quick action!"*

With Jin Man kowtowing nonstop, the celestial warrior said, "Dismiss everyone else present, and I will tell you." The hall was at this point filled with yamen employees and family members of the clerks, all gathered there to watch the spectacle of Priest Mo summoning celestial warriors on behalf of Jin Man. With courteous words, Jin Man asked them to leave. Only Xiutong stayed behind in case his service were needed. The celestial warrior exclaimed, "This hall is not yet cleared of all those who have no business here!" Thereupon, Priest Mo said to Clerk Jin, "Send Xiutong away as well."

The celestial warrior told Jin Man to hold out his hand. Jin Man fell to his knees and stretched out his left hand. The celestial warrior dipped a finger in wine and wrote the two characters *xiutong* in Jin Man's palm. "Remember this!" he thundered.

Jin Man gave a violent start. This tallied with his own suspicions. Yet, not being absolutely sure, he kowtowed again and prayed silently, "I've been supporting Xiutong for more than ten years. He has never stolen anything. If he is indeed the culprit this time, I'll surely put him under strict interrogation, but this is no trivial matter. I pray that the Celestial General will give the matter more consideration



莫随人心，莫随人意。”天将又蘸着酒在桌上写出秀童二字，又向空中指画，详其字势，亦此二字。金满以为实然，更无疑矣。当下莫道人书了退符，小学生望后便倒，扶起，良久方醒，问之一无所知。

金满把谢将的三牲与莫道人散了福。只推送他一步，连夜去唤阴捕拿贼。为头的张阴捕，叫做张二哥。当下叩其所以。金令史将秀童口中所言，及天将三遍指名之事，备细说了。连阴捕也有八九分道是，只不是他缉访来的，不去担这干纪，推辞道：“未经到官，难以吊拷。”金满是衙门中出入的，岂不会意，便道：“此事有我做主，与列位无涉。只要严刑究拷，拷得真赃出来，向时所许二十两，不敢短少分毫。”张阴捕应允，同兄弟四哥，去叫了帮手，即时随金令史行走。此时已有起更时分，秀童收拾了堂中家伙，吃了夜饭，正提碗行灯出县来迎候家主。才出得县门，被三四个阴捕，将麻绳望颈上便套。不由分说，直拖至城外一个冷铺里来。秀童却待开口，被阴捕将铁尺向肩胛上痛打一下，大喝道：“你干得好事！”秀童负痛叫道：“我干何事来？”阴捕道：



and refrain from following a human's train of thought. "

Again, the celestial warrior dipped a finger in wine and wrote the characters *xiutong* on the table. With the same finger, he then traced the same two characters in the air. Jin Man was now fully convinced. Not a doubt remained in his mind. Right away, Priest Mo drew a magic figure to end the session. Just as quickly, the little boy fell backward. After he was helped up, he gradually regained consciousness and, when asked, professed to know nothing about what had happened.

Jin Man gave the priest the sacrificial offerings he had prepared for the celestial warrior. Under the pretext of escorting the priest out, he went posthaste to the police officers. The sheriff, known as Second Brother Zhang, asked for an explanation. Mr. Jin gave him the whole account of what Xiutong had said and how the celestial warrior had written Xiutong's name three times. Even the sheriff was more than half convinced, but unwilling to shoulder responsibility for a case he had not sought, he declined, saying, "No charge has been made officially. Torture is hardly in order in this case. "

Being a man familiar with the ways of the yamen, how could Jin Man not understand what was expected of him? He said, "I'll take all responsibility for this matter. I won't implicate any of you. If you apply torture and force him to produce the stolen silver, I will give you twenty taels of silver, not a mace less. "

Sheriff Zhang gave in and, along with his brother, known as Fourth Brother Zhang, and an assistant, followed Clerk Jin home. It being about the first watch of the night, Xiutong had put the hall in order, eaten his supper, and, lantern in hand, was on his way out of the yamen to meet his master. He was barely outside the gate when he ran into three or four officers, who threw a hemp rope around his neck. Without allowing him one word of explanation, they dragged him all the way to a courier post in a deserted place in the suburbs. Before Xiutong could open his mouth, an officer slapped him hard on the shoulder with a steel ruler, roaring, "A fine thing you did!"

Xiutong cried out in pain, "What did I do?"

"Where are the four ingots of silver you stole from the treasury?"



“你偷库内这四锭元宝，藏于何处？窝在那家？你家主已访实了，把你交付我等。你快快招了，免吃痛苦。”秀童叫天叫地的哭将起来。自古道：

有理言自壮，负屈声必高。

秀童其实不曾做贼，被阴捕如法吊拷。秀童疼痛难忍，咬牙切齿，只是不招。原来《大明律》一款，捕盗不许私刑吊拷。若审出真盗，解官有功。倘若不肯招认，放了去时，明日被他告官，说诬陷平民，罪当反坐。众捕盗吊打拶夹，都已行过，见秀童不招，心下也着了慌。商议只有阎王闫、铁膝裤两件未试。阎王闫是脑箍上箍，眼睛内乌珠都涨出寸许；铁膝裤是将石屑放于夹棍之内，未曾收紧，痛已异常，这是拷贼的极刑了。秀童上了脑箍，死而复苏者数次，昏愤中承认了，醒来依旧说没有。阴捕又要上铁膝裤，秀童忍痛不起，只得招道：“是我一时见财起意，偷来藏在姐夫李大家床下，还不曾动。”阴捕将板门抬秀童到于家中，用粥汤将息，等候天明，到金令史公廨里来报信。此时秀童奄奄一息，



To whom did you give them? Your master has already learned the whole truth of the matter and has handed you over to us. Now, out with the truth, if you want to be spared the pain!”

Xiutong burst into loud wails, calling on heaven and earth to be his witnesses. There is an ancient saying:

*Those in the right speak with force;*

*Those wrongly accused raise their voices.*

The fact was, Xiutong was not guilty. Throughout the torture, he kept his teeth clenched and refused to admit any wrongdoing, despite the unbearable pain. *The Laws of the Great Ming Dynasty* has an article that prohibits unauthorized torture during the interrogation of suspects. If the interrogation leads to the arrest of the real criminal, the interrogators can claim credit. If the suspect refuses to confess and has to be released, the suspect can sue the interrogators and charge them with framing an innocent person. The punishment for this crime is equal to the punishment for whatever crime the suspect has been accused of. After hanging Xiutong up, thrashing him, and applying finger squeezers without getting a confession, the officers began to panic. They consulted one another and decided to resort to the two remaining tools of torture — the “king of hell” hoop, which, when tightened across the forehead, could make the eyeballs pop out about an inch, and the “iron-knee pants,” a pair of rods filled with pieces of crushed stone that caused excruciating pain when the rods were tightened over the knees. These were the cruelest instruments of torture.

With the hoop across his forehead, Xiutong went through several rounds of fainting and reviving. At last, in a moment of haziness, he admitted to the theft, but as soon as he woke up, he reverted to his protests of innocence. When the officers applied the “iron-knee pants,” Xiutong found the pain more than he could bear. In desperation, he said, “I stole the silver ingots in a moment of greed and hid them under the bed of my brother-in-law, Li Da. I have not touched them since then.”

The officers carried Xiutong on a door plank to Sheriff Zhang’s home and fed him porridge to help him recover. After the much awaited daybreak came, they went to Jin to make their report. By this time,



爬走不动了。

金令史叫了船只，自同捕役到李大家去起赃。李大家住乡间，与秀童爹娘家相去不远。阴捕到时，李大又不在家，吓得秀童的姐儿面如土色，正不知甚么缘故，开了后门，望爹娘家奔去了。阴捕走入卧房，发开床脚，看地下土实不松，已知虚言。金令史定要将锄头垦起，起土尺馀，并无一物。众人道：“有心到这里蒿恼一番了。”翻箱倒笼，满屋寻一个遍，那有些影儿。金令史只得又同阴捕转来，亲去叩问秀童。秀童泪如雨下，答道：“我实不曾为盗，你们非刑吊拷，务要我招认。吾吃苦不过，又不忍妄扳他人，只得自认了。说姐夫床下赃物，实是混话。毫不相干。吾自九岁时蒙爹抚养成人，今已二十多岁，在家未曾有半点差错。前日看见我爹费产完官，暗地心痛，又见爹信了野道，召将费钱，愈加不乐，不想道爹疑到我身上。今日我只欠爹一死，更无别话。”[眉批]说得可怜。说罢闷绝去了，众阴捕叫唤，方才醒来，兀自唉唉的哭个不住。金令史心下亦觉惨然。须臾，秀童的爹娘和姐夫李大都到了，见秀童躺在板门上，七损八伤，一丝两气，大哭了一场，奔到县前叫喊。知县相公正值坐堂，问了口词，忙差



Xiutong was on the verge of death, unable to walk or even crawl.

Clerk Jin hired a boat and joined the officers on a trip to Li Da's home to search for the silver. Li Da lived in the countryside, not far from Xiutong's parents' home. When the officers arrived, Li Da was not at home. Xiutong's older sister was so frightened that her face turned ashen. Not knowing what the commotion was all about, she opened the back door and fled to her parents' home. The officers entered the bedchamber and moved the bed, only to find the ground firm and solid with no signs of having been dug. They knew immediately that Xiutong had made up the confession, but Jin Man still insisted on digging with hoes. After they had dug more than one foot deep into the ground without finding anything, they said, "We'll have to turn this place upside down." They rummaged through the chests and trunks and searched throughout the house, but there was no trace of a silver ingot to be seen.

Jin Man could do no more than return with the officers to question Xiutong personally. With tears pouring like rain, Xiutong replied, "I did not do it, but you put me to such horrible torture to make me confess that I couldn't take it any more. And yet, I couldn't bring myself to name other people, so I had to say I did it and made up all that nonsense about hiding the silver under my brother-in-law's bed. Father has supported me ever since I was nine years old. Being now in my twenties, I have never ever done the least wrong in the household. A few days ago, it made my heart ache to see Father repay the treasury out of his own pocket. I felt worse when I saw how Father believed in a charlatan priest and spent money on a ritual to summon celestial warriors. I never thought Father would suspect me. The only thing I owe Father now is death. I have nothing further to say." (*What sad words!*) This said, he fainted. After the officers' cries brought him back to consciousness, he sobbed unceasingly. Jin also felt wretched.

In a little while, Xiutong's parents and his brother-in-law Li Da arrived. At the sight of Xiutong lying on a door plank, breathing his last and with bruises all over him, they burst into tears and ran over to the county yamen to cry out their grievances.



人唤金满到来，问道：“你自不小心，失了库内银两，如何通同阴捕，妄杀平人，非刑吊拷？”金满禀道：“小的破家完库，自然要缉访此事，讨个明白。有莫道人善于召将，天将降坛，三遍写出秀童名字，小的又见他言语可疑，所以信了。除了此奴，更无影响，小的也是出乎无奈，不是故意。”知县也晓得他赔补得苦了，此情未知真伪，又被秀童的爹娘左禀右禀，无可奈何。此时已是腊月十八了。知县分付道：“岁底事忙，且过了新年，初十后面，我与你亲审个明白。”众人只得都散了。金满回家，到抱着一个鬼胎，只恐秀童死了，到留秀童的爹娘伏侍儿子，又请医人去调治，每日大酒大肉送去将息。那秀童的爹娘，兀自哭哭啼啼絮絮咕咕的不住。正是：

青龙共白虎同行，吉凶事全然未保。

却说捕盗知得秀童的家属叫喊准了，十分着忙，商议道：“我等如此绷吊，还不肯吐露真情，明日县堂上可知他不招的。若不招时，我辈私加吊拷，罪不能免。”乃请城隍纸供于库中，香花





The county magistrate happened to be in session. After listening to the complaints, he immediately sent for Jin Man and said to him, "You lost some silver of the treasury through your own carelessness. How could you have colluded with the arresting officers and murdered an innocent man through unauthorized torture?"

Jin Man replied, "Having depleted my own resources to pay back the treasury, I of course had to investigate and get to the bottom of the matter. I engaged a Priest Mo known for his skill in summoning celestial warriors. A celestial warrior descended from the altar and wrote Xiutong's name three times. Xiutong himself also had said things that sounded suspicious to me. That's why I believed the celestial warrior. Apart from this servant of mine, I have no other suspects. I did this out of necessity rather than choice. I didn't mean to hurt him."

The county magistrate knew that repaying the missing silver had cost Jin dearly, but with the case unsolved and pressed by Xiutong's parents' constant complaints, he was at a loss as to what to do. It being already the eighteenth day of the last month of the year, he said, "There are too many things to be done before the end of the year. Let us wait until after the tenth day of the new year before I take over the case and find the real culprit."

Everybody present had no choice but to leave. Jin Man returned home with a guilty conscience, afraid that Xiutong would die. He asked Xiutong's parents to stay at his residence to take care of their son. He also sent for a physician and provided Xiutong with large portions of wine and meat every day, but Xiutong's parents still wept endlessly and kept up a constant stream of complaints. Truly,

*A green dragon and a white tiger<sup>3</sup>*

*Bring either joy or woe, when together.*

Let us turn our attention to the officers, who, panicking when they heard that the county magistrate had sided with Xiutong's parents, consulted one another, saying, "We put that fellow through such severe torture without getting a confession from him. He'll surely stick to his story when he's tried at the county court. And if he does refuse to confess, we'll be in for punishment because we put him



灯烛，每日参拜祷告，夜间就同金令史在库里歇宿，求一报应。金令史少不得又要破些怪在他们面上。到了除夜，知县把库逐一盘过，交付新库吏掌管。金满已脱了干纪，只有失盗事未结，同着张阴捕向新库吏说知：“原教张二哥在库里安歇。”那新库吏也是本县人，与金令史平昔相好的，无不应允。是夜，金满备下三牲、香纸携到库中，拜献城隍老爷，就将福物请新库吏和张二哥同酌。三杯以后，新库吏说家中事忙，到央金满替他照管，自己要先别。金满为是大节夜，不敢强留。新库吏将厨柜等都检看封锁，又将库门锁钥付与金满，叫声“相扰”，自去了。金满又吃了几杯，也就起身，对张二哥说：“今夜除夜，来早是新年，多吃几杯，做个灵梦，在下不得相陪了。”说罢，将库门带上落了锁，带了钥匙自回。

张二哥被金满反锁在内，叹口气道：“这节夜，那一家不夫妇团圆，偏我晦气，在这里替他们守库！”闷上心来，只顾自筛自饮，不觉酩酊大醉，和衣而寝。睡至四更，梦见神道伸只靴脚踢他起来，道：“银子有了，陈大寿将来放在厨柜顶上葫芦内了。”



through unauthorized torture. ” They set up an image of the city god in the treasury and, with candles lit and incense burning, prayed to the image every day. At night, they slept in the treasury with Jin and prayed together for a response from the city god. Clerk Jin could hardly avoid spending some money on the officers.

On New Year’s eve, the county magistrate took careful stock of the inventory and entrusted matters of the treasury to a new treasurer. Jin Man was relieved of all his duties, but with the case of the theft still unsolved, he and Sheriff Zhang asked the new treasurer to let Second Brother Zhang sleep in the treasury. Being a native of the county and a good friend of Jin’s, the new treasurer readily gave his consent. That night, Jin Man prepared some incense, paper, and sacrificial beef, lamb, and pork and brought them to the warehouse to offer to the city god. The ritual over, he offered the food and wine to the new treasurer and Second Brother Zhang. After three cups, the new treasurer said that he had to attend to some domestic affairs and asked Jin Man to take care of things for him. Since it was New Year’s Eve, Jin Man thought it better not to insist that he stay. After checking the seals and locks on the cabinets, the new treasurer gave Jin Man the key to the warehouse and left with a few words of thanks.

Several more cups later, Jin Man also rose and said to Second Brother Zhang, “It being New Year’s eve, and tomorrow New Year’s Day, please drink as much as you want and have an inspiring dream, but I have to ask to be excused. ” So saying, he closed the warehouse door after him, locked it, and went home, carrying the key with him. Thus locked in the warehouse, Second Brother said to himself with a sigh, “On such a festive occasion, no married couple stays apart, except luckless me, guarding the warehouse for them!”

Feeling melancholy, he served himself one cup of wine after another, and before he knew it, he had drunk himself into a stupor. Without even bothering to take off his clothes, he lay down and fell asleep.

At the fourth watch of the night, he saw in his dream a divine being kicking him with a booted foot, saying, “The silver is there, in a gourd that Chen Dashou put on top of the cabinet. ”



张阴捕梦中惊觉，慌忙爬起来，向厨柜顶上摸个遍，那里有什么葫芦。“难道神道也作弄人？还是我自己心神恍惚之故？”须臾之间，又睡去了。梦里又听得神道说：“银子在葫芦里面，如何不取？”张阴捕惊醒，坐在床铺上，听更鼓，恰好发擂。爬起来，推开窗子，微微有光。再向厨柜上下看时，并无些子物事。欲要去报与金令史，库门却又锁着，只得又去睡了。少顷，听得外边人声热闹，鼓乐喧阗，乃是知县出来同众官拜牌贺节，去文庙行香。天已将明，金满已自将库门上钥匙交还新库吏了。新库吏开门进来，取红纸用印。张阴捕已是等得不耐烦，急忙的戴了帽子，走出库来。恰好知县回县，在那里排衙公座。那金满已是整整齐齐，穿着公服，同众令史站立在堂上，伺候作揖。张阴捕走近前把他扯到旁边说梦中神道，如此如此：“一连两次，甚是奇异，特来报你，你可查县中有这陈大寿的名字否？”说罢，张阴捕自回家去不题。

却说金满是日参谒过了知县，又到库中城隍面前磕了四个头，回家吃了饭，也不去拜年，只在县中稽查名姓，凡外郎、书手、

Waking up with a start, Sheriff Zhang hastily clambered to his feet and groped across the top of the warehouse cabinets, but no gourd was found. "Do divine beings also play tricks on people? Or is it just my nerves?"

Soon he drifted off to sleep again, only to dream again. This time, the deity said, "The silver is right there in the gourd. Why don't you take it?"

Sheriff Zhang woke up again in alarm. Sitting on the bed, he listened to the strikes of the night-watch drum. He then rose and pushed open the window to let in the first faint light of dawn. He looked back at the cabinets, top to bottom, but saw nothing placed on top. He was about to report the matter to Jin when he remembered that the door was locked from the outside. He saw nothing for it but to go back to sleep.

A few moments later, there came into his hearing the clamor of voices as well as drum music. It was the county magistrate, accompanied by an assembly of subordinates, on his way to the Confucian temple to offer incense in celebration of the new year. When it got lighter, the new treasurer opened the door and came in to get red paper and the seal, Jin Man having already returned the key to him. Impatient with the waiting, Sheriff Zhang put on his hat and rushed out of the warehouse.

By this time, the county magistrate had returned to the yamen and, with the assembled officials taking their assigned places, was ready to call the court to order. Jin Man, neatly attired in an official's costume, stood respectfully among the other officials, at the service of the magistrate. Sheriff Zhang walked up to him, pulled him to one side, and told him about his dreams. "This extraordinary thing happened twice in a row," he added. "That's why I rushed over here to report to you. You may want to check if there's a man called Chen Dashou in this county." Having said that, Sheriff Zhang returned home, and there we shall leave him.

After paying his respects to the county magistrate, Jin Man kowtowed four times to the image of the city god in the treasury warehouse before he returned for lunch. Instead of going out to pay New





皂快、门子及禁子、夜夫，曾在县里走动的，无不查到，并无陈大寿名字。整整的忙了三日，常规年节酒，都不曾吃得，气得面红腹胀，到去埋怨那张阴捕说谎。张阴捕道：“我是真梦，除是神道哄我。”金满又想起前日召将之事，那天将下临，还没句实话相告，况梦中之言，怎便有准？说罢，丢在一边去了。又过了两日，是正月初五，苏州风俗，是日家家户户，祭献五路大神，谓之烧利市。吃过了利市饭，方才出门做买卖。金满正在家中吃利市饭，忽见老门子陆有恩来拜年，叫道：“金阿叔恭喜了！有利市酒，请我吃碗。”金令史道：“兄弟，总是节物，不好特地来请得。今日来得极妙，且吃三杯。”即忙教嫂子暖一壶酒，安排些见成鱼肉之类，与陆门子对酌。闲话中间，陆门子道：“金阿叔，偷银子的贼有些门路么？”金满摇首：“那里有？”陆门子道：“要脏露，问阴捕，你若多许阴捕几两银子，随你飞来贼，也替你访着了。”金满道：“我也许过他二十两银子，只恨他没本事赚我的钱。”陆门子道：“假如今日有个人缉访得贼人真信，来报你时，你还舍得这二十两银子么？”金满道：“怎么不肯？”陆门子道：



Year calls, he stayed in the county yamen, searching the registry books for Chen Dashou's name, but after three days of searching intensively through all current and former employees — including clerks, scribes, officers, janitors, prison wardens, and night watch men — no Chen Dashou was found. Having missed all the usual festive feasts on account of these three days of futile work, he was so upset that, his face flushed with anger, he went to reproach Sheriff Zhang for lying to him. Sheriff Zhang retorted, "I did have those dreams, unless the divine being was playing tricks on me."

Jin Man recalled what had happened a few days ago with the celestial warrior who lied even after taking the trouble to descend the altar. Compared with that, how trustworthy could a few words said in a dream be? So Jin Man put the matter out of his thoughts.

Two days later, on the fifth day of the first month of the new year, it was the custom of the Suzhou region for every household to make sacrificial offerings to the god of wealth. No business was to be done on that day until after the sacrificial meal was eaten. Jin Man was at home, eating the sacrificial meal, when Lu You'en, an old janitor of the yamen, came to pay a New Year call. "Uncle Jin," he called out, "Happy New Year! Let me share your sacrificial meal!"

"Brother," said Jin. "I couldn't very well invite you over for just another sacrificial meal, but I'm so glad you are here! Please have a few drinks with me!" Right away, he told his wife to heat up a jar of wine and set out whatever food they had in the house in the way of fish and pork and started toasting Mr. Lu.

In the course of their conversation, Lu said, "Uncle Jin, how is the case of the theft coming along?"

Jin shook his head and said, "I don't have a clue!"

"As they say, 'To get a thief, ask the police.' Offer the police a handsome reward, and they'll get the thief for you, even if the thief is on wings."

"I did offer them twenty taels of silver. Too bad they're not competent enough to claim the money from me."

"If someone has found the thief and offers you the information, will you still be willing to part with the twenty taels of silver?"



“金阿叔，你若真个把二十两银子与我，我就替你拿出贼来。”金满道：“好兄弟，你果然如此，也教我明白了这桩官司，出脱了秀童。好兄弟，你须是眼见的实，莫又做猜谜的话。”陆门子道：“我不是十分看得的实，怎敢多口？”金令史即忙脱下帽子，向髻上取下两钱重的一根金挖耳来，递与陆有恩道：“这件小意思权为信物，追出赃来，莫说有馀，就是止剩得二十两，也都与你。”陆有恩道：“不该要金阿叔的，今日是初五，也得做兄弟的发个利市。”陆有恩是已冠的门子，就将挖耳插于网中之内，教：“金阿叔且关了门，与你细讲。”金满将大门闭了，两个促膝细谈。正是：

踏破铁鞋无觅处，得来全不费工夫！

原来陆有恩间壁住的，也是个门子，姓胡名美，年十八岁，有个姐夫叫做卢智高。那卢智高因死了老婆，就与小舅同住。这胡美生得齐整，多有人调戏他，到也是个本分的小厮。自从父母双亡，全亏着姐姐拘管。一从姐姐死了，跟着姐夫，便学不出好样，惯熟的是那七字经儿：

赌钱、吃酒、养婆娘。

去年腊月下旬，陆门子一日出去了，浑家闻得间壁有斧凿之声，初次也不以为异。以后，但是陆门子出去了，就听得他家关门，打得一片响。陆门子回家，就住了声。浑家到除夜，与丈夫饮酒，





“Why would I not be?”

“Uncle Jin, if you give the twenty taels to me, I will produce the thief.”

“My good brother, if you really can do that, you’ll be helping me close the file on this case and let Xiutong off the hook. My good brother, you’d better be an eyewitness. I’m not going to put up with more riddles!”

“How would I dare say anything if I wasn’t an eyewitness?”

With alacrity, Mr. Jin took off his hat, from which he drew out a gold ear pick weighing one eighth of a mace. He handed it to Lu You’en, saying, “This little thing will serve as a token. If you can really produce the evidence, even if I’m left with only twenty taels of silver, I’ll give it all to you, not to speak of more if I have any.”

“I shouldn’t demand anything from you, but today is the fifth day of the month, I deserve a little windfall.”

Lu You’en being a janitor senior enough to wear an official hat, he inserted the ear pick in his hairnet and said, “Uncle Jin, please close the door and let me tell you the whole story.”

Jin Man closed the door, and the two men sat down, face-to-face, for a long talk. Truly,

*You’ve worn out iron shoes on a long, fruitless search,  
And now you hit upon it without a stroke of work.*

It so happened that Lu You’en had an eighteen-year-old next-door neighbor, Hu Mei by name, who was also a janitor and was living with his widowed brother-in-law by the name of Lu Zhigao. Hu Mei’s good looks attracted much amorous attention, but he had been a well-behaved young man kept in line by his older sister after the death of his parents. However, after his sister’s death, he had no good example to follow in the person of his brother-in-law and strayed into a life of gambling, drinking, and womanizing.

One day in the last third of the previous month, while Lu You’en was out, his wife heard the sound of hammering next door. She did not think it out of the ordinary the first time she heard it, but afterward, every time Lu You’en was out, she heard the neighbor’s door being bolted and then loud hammering. As soon as Lu returned



说及此事，正不知凿什么东西？陆门子有心，过了初一，自初二初三一连在家住两日，侧耳而听，寂然无声。到初四日假做出门往亲戚家拜节，却远远站着，等间壁关门之后，悄地回来，藏在家里。果听得间壁槌凿之声，从壁缝里张看，只见胡美与卢智高俱蹲在地下。胡美拿着一锭大银，卢智高将斧敲那锭边下来。陆门子看在眼里，晚间与二人相遇问道：“你家常常凿什么东西？”胡美面红不语。卢智高道：“祖上传下一块好铁条，要敲断打厨刀来用。”陆有恩暗想道：“不是那话儿是什么？他两个那里来有这元宝？”当夜留在肚里，次日料得金令史在家烧利市，所以特地来报。

金满听了这席话，就同陆有恩来寻张二哥不遇，其夜就留陆有恩过宿。明日初六，起个早，又往张二哥家，并拉了四哥，共四个人，同到胡美家来。只见门上落锁，没人在内。陆门子叫浑家出来问其缘故。浑家道：“昨日听见说要叫船往杭州进香，今早双双出门。恰才去得，此时就开了船，也去不远。”四个人飞星



home, the noise stopped.

On New Year's Eve, the husband and wife were drinking when she brought up the subject, wondering what the neighbors could have been up to. Lu grew suspicious. After New Year's Day, he stayed at home the following two days as well and listened with strained ears, but all was quiet. On the fourth day of the new year, he left the house, pretending to be going out to pay a New Year call on a relative. Instead, he stopped at a distance from the house. After the neighbor's door was bolted, he sneaked back home. Sure enough, he heard the sound of hammering coming from the other side of the wall. Peeping through a crack in the wall, he saw Hu Mei and Lu Zhigao squatting on the floor, Hu Mei holding a large ingot of silver and Lu Zhigao chiseling the edge off the ingot with an ax.

When he ran into them that evening, Lu asked, "What is it you're chipping away at?"

Hu Mei reddened but didn't say anything. Lu Zhigao replied, "We have a good bar of iron, a family heirloom, that we are trying to fashion into a kitchen knife."

Lu thought, "What else can it be but the famous lost silver? How else could the likes of these two be in possession of such an ingot of silver?"

He kept the knowledge to himself that night and went to report to Jin the next day, expecting him to be at home making offerings to the god of wealth.

After listening to his account, Jin Man went with Lu to look for Second Brother Zhang but failed to find him at home. That night, he kept Lu You'en in his house.

The next day, the sixth day of the month, they rose bright and early and went again to Second Brother Zhang's home. This time, they got him, and along with Fourth Brother, the company headed for Hu Mei's house, only to find the door locked with no one inside. Lu You'en called for his wife and asked her what had happened. She said, "Yesterday I heard them talking about renting a boat to Hangzhou to make incense offerings. Both of them left this morning just a short while ago. Even if the boat has set out, it shouldn't have



赶去，刚刚上驷马桥，只见小游船上的王溜儿，在桥堍下买酒籩米。令史们时常叫他的船，都是相熟的。王溜儿道：“金相公今日起得好早。”金令史问道：“溜儿，你赶早买酒籩米，往那里去？”溜儿道：“托赖揽个杭州的载，要去有个把月生意。”金满拍着肩问：“是谁？”王溜儿附耳低言道：“是胡门官同他姓卢的亲眷合叫的船。”金满道：“如今他二人可在船里？”王溜儿道：“那卢家在船里，胡舍还在岸上接表子未来。”张阴捕听说，一索先把王溜儿扣住。”溜儿道：“我得何罪？”金满道：“不干你事，只要你引我到船上就放你。”溜儿连买的酒籩的米，都寄在店上，引着四个人下桥来，八只手准备拿贼。这正是：

闲时不学好，今日悔应迟。

却说卢智高在船中，靠着栏干，眼盼盼望那胡美接表子下来同乐。却一眼瞧见金令史，又见王溜儿颈上麻绳带着，心头跳动，料道有些诧异，也不顾铺盖，跳在岸上，舍命奔走。王溜儿指道：“那戴孝头巾的就是姓卢的。”众人放开脚去赶，口中只叫：“盗库的贼休走！”卢智高着了忙，跌上一交，被众人赶上，一把拿住。也把麻绳扣颈，问道：“胡美在那里？”卢智高道：“在表子刘丑



gotten far. ”

The four men raced off. They had just gained Four Horse Bridge when they saw Wang Liu'er, a boatman, buying wine and rice by the bridge. The yamen employees often rented his small pleasure boat and were therefore on quite good terms with him. “Mr. Jin,” said Wang Liu'er, “how early you got up today!”

“Liu'er,” said Jin, “where are you going, buying wine and rice so early in the morning?”

“I have patrons going to Hangzhou on business for a month or two. ”

“Who are they?” asked Jin Man, patting Liu'er on the shoulder.

Wang Liu'er whispered in his ear, “It's Janitor Hu and his relative Lu. ”

“Are they in the boat at this moment?”

“Lu is, but Hu is still on the shore getting a prostitute. ”

At these words, Sheriff Zhang threw his hemp rope over Wang Liu and held him tight. “What did I do wrong?” protested Wang Liu'er.

Jin Man replied, “This has nothing to do with you. You just lead us to the boat. You'll be set free soon enough. ”

Depositing the wine and rice in the shop, Liu'er led the four men down the bridge, their eight hands ready to catch the thieves. Truly,

*For those who tend to go astray,  
Regrets always come too late.*

Lu Zhigao was leaning against the railing in the boat, looking forward to having some fun with the prostitute Hu Mei was supposed to bring back, but his heart gave a jump when he caught sight of Jin with Wang Liu'er in tow, a rope around his neck. Feeling that something was wrong, he leaped ashore, leaving his bedding and personal effects behind, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him. Wang Liu'er said, pointing at him, “That man wearing a white cap of mourning is Lu. ”

The four men gave chase, crying, “Stop the thief who stole from the treasury!” Lu Zhigao panicked and slipped. The men were immediately upon him. Throwing a rope over his neck, they asked, “Where's Hu Mei?”



姐家里。”众人教卢智高作眼，齐奔刘丑姐家来。胡美先前听得人说外面拿盗库的贼，打着心头，不对表子说，预先走了，不知去向，众人只得拿刘丑姐去。都到张二哥家里。搜卢智高身边，并无一物，及搜到毡袜里，搜出一锭秃元宝，锭边儿都敲去了。张二哥要带他到城外冷铺里去吊拷，卢智高道：“不必用刑，我招便了。去年十一月间，我同胡美都赌极了，没处设法。胡美对我说：‘只有库里有许多元宝空在那里。’我教他：‘且拿几个来用用。’他趁十五月蚀这夜，偷了四锭出来，每人各分二锭。因不敢出笏，只敲得锭边使用。那一锭藏在米桶中，米上放些破衣服盖着，还在家里。那两锭却在胡美身边。”金满又问：“那一夜我眼也不曾合，他怎么拿得这样即溜？”卢智高道：“胡美几遍进来，见你坐着，不好动手。那一夜闪入来，恰好你们小厮在里面厨中取蜡烛，打翻了麻油，你起身去看，方得其便。”众人得了口词，也就不带去吊拷了。此时秀童在张二哥家将息，还动弹不得，见拿着了真赃真贼，咬牙切齿的骂道：“这砍头贼！你便盗了银子，却害得我好苦。如今我也没处伸冤，只要咬下他一块肉来，消这口气。”便在草铺上要爬起来，可怜那里挣扎得动。众人尽来安



“He’s with the prostitute Ugly Sister Liu. ”

The men made Lu Zhigao lead the way to Ugly Sister Liu’s house, but Hu Mei, having heard the hue and cry, was so frightened that without saying anything to the prostitute, he had taken to his heels, destination unknown. The men had to take Ugly Sister Liu along with Lu Zhigao to Second Brother Zhang’s home.

A search of Lu’s body turned up nothing, but in his stocking was found the remains of an ingot of silver, its two protruding ends as well as the edging all chiseled off. When Second Brother Zhang threatened to take him to a courier station in a deserted place outside of the city for torture, Lu Zhigao said, “Spare me the torture. I confess. In the eleven month of last year, Hu Mei and I gambled ourselves into more debt than we could ever pay back. Hu Mei said to me, ‘There are a lot of silver ingots in the county treasury, sitting there and doing nothing.’ I told him to bring a few home for our use. On the fifteenth night of the month, when there was a lunar eclipse, he stole four ingots, two for each of us. We didn’t dare allow them to be seen in public, so we had to chip off small pieces. There’s another ingot hidden at home in a rice bucket covered up with some tattered clothes. The other two are with Hu Mei. ”

“But that night, I didn’t even sleep a wink, ” said Jin Man. “How did he manage to steal them? What a neat job he did!”

“He entered the warehouse several times without being able to do anything because you were sitting there, but your page boy happened to knock over some sesame oil when he was getting a candle from a cabinet inside, and you went to take a look. That was when Hu Mei made his move. ”

Having obtained a confession, the men gave up the idea of torturing Lu. When Xiutong, who was recovering in Second Brother Zhang’s home, still incapable of movement, heard that the real thief had been identified and the silver found, he cursed through clenched teeth, “That goddamn scoundrel! He stole the silver but brought me all this suffering! There’s no one to do right by me anyway, so let me bite off a piece of his flesh and feel vindicated!” He struggled to get up from his straw bed but, alas, any movement was far beyond



慰，劝住了他，心中转痛，呜呜咽咽的啼哭。金令史十分过意不去，不觉也吊下眼泪，连忙叫人抬回家中调养。自己却同众人到胡美家中，打开锁搜看。将米桶里米倾在地上，滚出一锭没边的元宝来。当日众人就带卢智高到县，禀明了知县相公。知县验了银子，晓得不枉，即将卢智高重责五十板，取了口词收监。等拿获胡美时，一同拟罪。出个广捕文书，缉访胡美，务在必获。船户王溜儿，乐妇刘丑姐，原不知情，且赃物未见破散，暂时讨保在外。先获元宝二个，本当还库，但库银已经金满变产赔补，姑照给主赃例，给还金满。[眉批]好官。这一断，满昆山人无有不服。正是：

国正天心顺，官清民自安。

却说金令史领了两个秃元宝回家，就在银匠铺里，净银鑿开，把二八一十六两白银，送与陆门子，不失前言。却将十两送与张二哥，候获住胡美时，还有奉谢。次日金满候知县出堂叩谢，知县有怜悯之心，深恨胡美，乃出官赏银十两，立限，仰捕衙缉获。





him. The men all tried to pacify him and calmed him down. As rage turned to grief, he broke into sobs.

Feeling apologetic, Clerk Jin found himself also in tears. He hastened to have Xiutong carried to his residence to be nursed back to health, whereas he himself went with the men to Hu Mei's house and unlocked the door to conduct a house search. They turned over the rice bucket, and a silver ingot with the edging chipped off rolled out with the rice.

That day, the men brought Lu Zhigao to the county yamen and reported the matter to the county magistrate, who, after having the silver examined, realized that this time, they had the right man. By his order, Lu Zhigao was given fifty strokes of the rod. His confession was put on file, and he was scheduled to be sentenced together with Hu Mei when the latter was caught. A wanted circular was issued ordering the arrest of Hu Mei. As for Wang Liu'er the boatman and Ugly Sister Liu, they were released on bail because they were not involved in the case nor had they taken any share of the stolen silver. The two confiscated ingots of silver should, by rights, be returned to the treasury, but since Jin Man had already repaid the treasury by mortgaging his property, the ingots were given to him in accord with the relevant rules. (*A good magistrate.*) No one in the Kunshan region was not impressed by the fairness of this ruling. Indeed,

*With good rulers at the imperial court,  
 Heaven gives its blessings to the land.  
 With good officials in the government,  
 People live in peace and contentment.*

Now, Jin took the edgeless ingots to a silversmith's shop on his way home and had them broken into loose pieces of silver. In keeping with his promise, he gave sixteen taels of it to Lu You'en. To Second Brother Zhang, he gave ten taels, promising more if Hu Mei was captured. The next day, Jin Man waited until the county magistrate entered the court and bowed thankfully to the latter. Out of compassion for Jin Man, the magistrate hated Hu Mei with great intensity. He announced a reward of ten taels of silver and ordered the police to hunt down the man before a set deadline.



过了半年之后，张四哥偶有事到湖州双林地方，船从苏州娄门过去，忽见胡美在娄门塘上行走。张四哥急拢船上岸，叫道：“胡阿弟，慢走！”胡美回头认得是阴捕，忙走一步，转湾望一个豆腐店里头就躲。卖豆腐的老儿，才要声张，胡美向兜肚里摸出雪白光亮水磨般的一锭大银，对酒缸草盖上一丢说道：“容我躲过今夜时，这锭银与你平分。”老儿贪了这锭银子，慌忙检过了，指一个去处，教他藏了。张四哥赶到转湾处，不见了胡美，有个多嘴的闲汉，指点他在豆腐店里去寻。张四哥进店问时，那老儿只推没有。张四哥满屋看了一周遭，果然没有。张四哥身边取出一块银子，约有三四钱重，把与老儿说道：“这小厮是昆山县门子，盗了官库出来的，大老爷出广捕拿他。你若识时务时，引他出来，这几钱银子送你老人家买果子吃。你若藏留，我禀知县主，拿出去时，问你个同盗。”老儿慌了，连银子也不肯接，将手望上一指。你道什么去处？

上不至天，下不至地。

躲得安稳，说出晦气。

那老儿和妈妈两口只住得一间屋，又做豆腐，又做白酒，狭窄无处睡，将木头架一个小小阁儿，恰好打个铺儿，临睡时把短梯爬



Half a year later, Fourth Brother Zhang was in Shuanglin of Huzhou on some business when, passing by Gate Lou of Suzhou on his boat, he suddenly caught sight of Hu Mei walking by Gate Lou Pond. Without losing one moment, Fourth Brother Zhang pulled the boat over to the bank and went ashore, shouting, "Brother Hu, slow down!" Turning around to look, Hu Mei recognized Zhang as an officer from the yamen. He took to his heels and dived into a tofu shop. Before the old tofu seller could cry out, Hu Mei took out a big ingot of silver, white as snow, shining as if polished by a waterstone, and, throwing it on the straw lid of a wine jar, said, "Let me hide here. If I can pass tonight safely, I'll share the silver with you, half and half."

Coveting the silver, the old man quickly took it and motioned Hu Mei to a hiding place. By the time Fourth Brother Zhang reached the corner, Hu Mei was already out of sight. A meddling idler pointed at the tofu shop. When Fourth Brother Zhang stepped into the shop and asked for Hu Mei, the old man insisted that no such man was there. Fourth Brother Zhang looked all around the room, and, sure enough, no Hu Mei was to be seen. Zhang took out a piece of silver weighing about three to four mace and gave it to the old man, saying, "That young fellow is a janitor employed by Kunshan County. He's a fugitive wanted by the county magistrate for stealing from the county treasury. If you know what's good for you, bring him out, and this silver will be yours to buy some goodies with. If you hide him, I'll report you to the magistrate, and you'll be charged with abetting a criminal."

The old man was so frightened that he dared not take the offer of silver but pointed upward with his hand. What do you suppose he pointed at?

*Beneath the ceiling but above the floor,  
 A good hiding place, if undisclosed.*

The old man and his wife occupied only one room, which doubled as a workshop for making tofu and white wine. Left with no space in which to sleep, they had put up a wooden frame for a makeshift bed. To reach the bed, they had to climb up a short ladder



上去，却有一个店橱儿隐着。胡美正躲得稳，却被张四哥一手拖将下来，就把麻绳缚住，骂道：“害人贼，银子藏在那里？”胡美战战兢兢答应道：“一锭用完了，一锭在酒缸盖上。”老者怎敢隐瞒，于缸罉里取出。张四哥问老者：“何姓何名？”老者惧怕，不敢答应。傍边一个人替他答道：“此老姓陈名大寿。”张四哥点头，便把那三四钱银子，撒在老儿柜上，带了胡美，踏在船头里面，连夜回昆山县来，正是：

莫道亏心事可做，恶人自有恶人磨。

此时卢智高已病死于狱中。知县见累死了一人，心中颇惨，又令史中多有与胡美有勾搭的，都来替他金满面前讨饶，又央门子头儿王文英来说。金满想起囤库的事亏他，只得把人情卖在众人面上，禀知县道：“盗银虽是胡美，造谋实出姐夫，况原银所失不多，求老爷从宽发落。”知县将罪名都推在死者身上，只将胡美重责三十，问个徒罪，以儆后来。元宝一锭，仍给还金满领去。金满又将十两银子，谢了张四哥。张四哥因说起腐酒店老者始末，众人各各骇然。方知去年张二哥除夜梦城隍分付：“陈大寿已将



behind which stood a cabinet. Hu Mei was hiding there quite safely when Fourth Brother Zhang, with one swipe of his hand, dragged him down and trussed him up with hemp rope. "You swine! Where did you hide the silver?" said Zhang.

Trembling all over, Hu Mei replied, "I spent one ingot. The other one is on the lid of the wine jar."

Not daring to conceal anything any longer, the old man took the silver from the wine jar. Fourth Brother Zhang asked the old man, "What's your name?"

The old man was too afraid to answer. A man nearby answered, "He's Chen Dashou."

Fourth Brother Zhang nodded and placed the three or four mace of silver he had promised on the old man's counter. With Hu Mei in tow, he took a boat and returned to Kunshan County before the night was out. Truly,

*Do nothing that would trouble the conscience;*

*The wicked will get their fill of torment!*

By this time, Lu Zhigao had died of illness in prison, which greatly saddened the county magistrate. Moreover, many clerks who were buddies with Hu Mei approached Jin Man to ask for leniency for the young man. Head Janitor Wang Wenying succumbed to their pleas and also came to put in a good word for Hu Mei with Jin Man. Remembering the favor Wang Wenying had done him at the lot-drawing session, Jin Man agreed, ostensibly to please the many petitioners. To the county magistrate he said, "Though Hu Mei did the stealing, it was, in fact, his brother-in-law who gave him the idea. Moreover, the stolen silver is not a significant amount. Please be lenient in your settlement of the case."

Placing the entire responsibility for the crime on the dead man alone, the county magistrate sentenced Hu Mei to nothing more than thirty thrashings of the rod as a warning against abetting a criminal act. The one ingot left was also given to Jin Man, who, in his turn, gave ten taels of silver to Fourth Brother Zhang as a reward.

Zhang's account of what had happened at the old man's tofu shop startled everyone, because it evoked memories of Second Brother



银子放在橱顶上葫芦内了。”‘葫’者，胡美；“芦”者，卢智高；“陈大寿”乃老者之姓名，胡美在店橱顶上搜出。神明之语，一字无欺。果然是：

暗室亏心，神目如电。

过了几日，备下猪羊，抬往城隍庙中赛神酬谢。金满因思屈了秀童，受此苦楚，况此童除饮酒之外，并无失德，更兼立心忠厚，死而无怨，更没有甚么好处酬答得他。乃改秀童名金秀，用己之姓，视如亲子。将美婢金杏许他为婚，待身体调治得强旺了，便配为夫妇。金秀的父母俱各欢喜无言。后来金满无子，家业就是金秀承顶。金秀也纳个吏缺，人称为小金令史，三考满了，仕至按察司经历。后人诗叹金秀之枉，诗云：

疑人无用用无疑，耳畔休听是与非。

凡事要凭真实见，古今冤屈有谁知？



Zhang's dream of the year before in which a city god told him that Chen Dashou had put the silver in a gourd on top of a cabinet. The word for "gourd" being *hulu* — *hu* as in Hu Mei, *lu* as in Lu Zhigao—"Chen Dashou" being the name of the old man, and Hu Mei being found on top of a shop cabinet, the divine being's statement was borne out to the last word. Indeed,

*An evil deed done in the dark  
Is seen as clear as lightning by the gods.*

A few days later, pigs and sheep were carried to the city god temple to be offered as gifts of thanks.

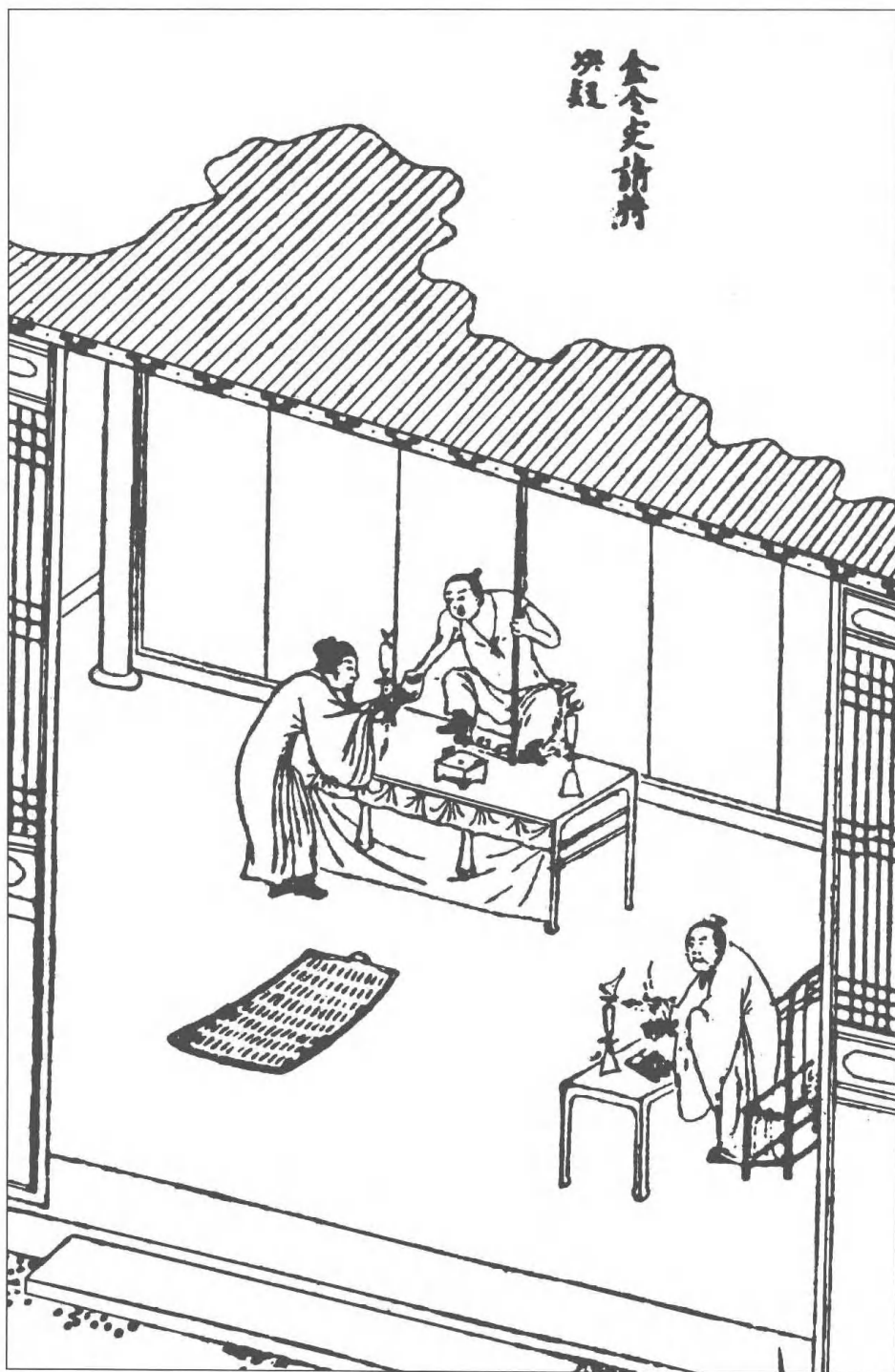
Jin Man felt bad about having wronged Xiutong who, a most honest and loyal man with no complaints even when on the verge of death, had gone through so much suffering for no misdemeanor other than a weakness for wine. Jin Man showed his gratitude by changing the young man's name to Jin Xiu and, in giving the young man his own surname, treating Xiutong as his son. He also betrothed his beautiful maidservant Golden Apricot to the young man and held the wedding after Xiutong regained his health. Jin Xiu's parents were also greatly delighted. Later, as Jin Man did not have a son of his own, Jin Xiu inherited the family property. Jin Junior also attained a post in the yamen and came to be known as "Little Clerk Jin." After passing the three triennial examinations required for incumbent government clerical employees, he rose to be a registrar in the Surveillance Bureau.

A poet of later times had this to say in lament over the wrong inflicted on Jin Xiu:

*Use none whom you suspect; suspect none whom you use;  
Turn a deaf ear to idle gossip!  
Believe only what you see with your own eyes!  
Too many injustices have been done!*

<sup>1</sup> The Xuandu Temple referred to in two of Liu Yuxi's poems is not the Xuanmiao Temple of Suzhou but is located south of Chang'an, the capital (present-day Xi'an in Shaanxi Province).

<sup>2</sup> Zhenwu or Xuanwu was a legendary figure of the Han dynasty who was said to have crossed the Eastern Sea and received a double-edged sword from a god. He then went into the mountains, from which he later ascended to heaven. Because he watched over the northern re-





gion by order of the Lord on High, the title Xuanwu became identified with the serpent-entwined tortoise that symbolizes the north.

<sup>3</sup> A green dragon symbolizes good luck, and a white tiger, misfortune.



## 第十六卷

### 小夫人金钱赠年少

谁言今古事难穷？大抵荣枯总是空。  
算得生前随分过，争如云外指溟鸿。  
暗添雪色眉根白，旋落花光脸上红。  
惆怅凄凉两回首，暮林萧索起悲风。

这八句诗，乃西川成都府华阳县王处厚，年纪将及六旬，把镜照面，见须发有几根白的，有感而作。世上之物，少则有壮，壮则有老，古之常理，人人都免不得的。原来诸物都是先白后黑，惟有髭须却是先黑后白。又有戴花刘使君，对镜中见这头发斑白，曾作《醉亭楼》词：

平生性格，随分好些春色，沉醉恋花陌。虽然年老心未老，满头花压巾帽侧。鬓如霜，须似雪，自嗟恻。几个相知劝我染，几个相知劝我摘。染摘有何益。当初怕作短命鬼，如今已过中年客。且留些，收晚景，尽教白。

如今说东京汴州开封府界，有个员外，年逾六旬，须发皤然。只因不伏老，兀自贪色，荡散了一个家计，几乎做了失乡之鬼。



## Story 16

### The Young Lady Gives the Young Man a Gift of Money

*Who says the world will run short of stories to tell?  
The ups and downs in life all vanish in the end.  
However free you claim your life to be,  
You're no match for the swan geese above the clouds.  
Before you know it, the eyebrows turn snowy;  
In a trice, the color in the cheeks fades away.  
Sad and forlorn, I cast a look around;  
The bleak evening woods stir in the mournful wind.*

The above eight-line poem was written by Wang Chuhou of Huayang County, Chengdu Prefecture, in Xichuan, lamenting a few white hairs he saw in the mirror when he was approaching sixty. All beings in this world progress from youth to the prime of life to old age. No one is exempt from this eternal law of nature. Other things may go from white to black, but hair and beards go the other way around, from black to white.

A certain Prefect Liu, who was in the habit of wearing flowers in his hair, composed a lyric poem to the tune of "The Tower with the Wine Pavilion" at the sight of his graying hair in the mirror:

*A carefree man with a love for the charms of spring,  
I revel in the beauty of flower-lined paths.  
The years go by, but the heart remains young;  
The flowers sit heavy all over my hat,  
Over temples that are frosty white, alas!  
Some advise dyeing, some counsel plucking,  
But dyeing and plucking, to what avail?  
I had once feared a death before my time,  
But here I still am, past the prime of my life.  
I'll keep the white to adorn my last years.*

Now I propose to tell of a rich man more than sixty years of age who lived in Kaifeng Prefecture in Bianzhou [or Bianjing], the Eastern Capital. His hair was all snowy white, but instead of recon-





这员外姓甚名谁?却做甚么事来?正是:

尘随车马何年尽?事系人心早晚休。

话说东京汴州开封府界身子里,一个开线铺的员外张士廉,年过六旬,妈妈死后,孑然一身,并无儿女。家有十万资财,用两个主管营运。张员外忽一日拍胸长叹,对二人说:“我许大年纪,无儿无女,要十万家财何用?”二人曰:“员外何不取房娘子,生得一男半女,也不绝了香火。”员外甚喜,差人随即唤张媒李媒前来。这两个媒人端的是:

开言成匹配,举口合姻缘。医世上凤只鸾孤,管宇宙单眠独宿。传言玉女,用机关把臂拖来;侍案金童,下说词拦腰抱住。调唆织女害相思,引得嫦娥离月殿。

员外道:“我因无子,相烦你二人说亲。”张媒口中不道,心下思量道:“大伯子许多年纪,如今说亲,说甚么人是得?教我怎地应他?”则见李媒把张媒推一推,便道:“容易。”临行,又叫住了道:“我有三句话。”只因说出这三句话来,教员外:

青云有路,番为苦楚之人;白骨无坟,化作失乡之鬼。



ciling himself to his age, he indulged in the pleasures of the flesh until he dissipated all his family fortune and almost ended up a ghost in an alien land. What was the name of this man and what did he do? Truly,

*The dust of traffic will never settle;  
 The bonds of love easily fade away.*

The story goes that on Jieshen Street in Bianzhou, the Eastern Capital, there was a general store owned by a Squire Zhang Shilian, a childless man in his sixties, living alone after his wife had passed away. With personal wealth amounting to a hundred thousand strings of cash, he employed two managers to take care of his shop. Suddenly one day, Squire Zhang said to the two men, sighing and pounding his chest, "Why would a childless old man like me need all this money?"

The two men replied, "Why don't you get yourself a new wife so as to have a child, be it a boy or a girl, to continue your family line?"

Delighted, Squire Zhang immediately sent for Matchmakers Zhang and Li. Now, about those matchmakers:

*Their eloquence matches up couples;  
 Their words tie up the marriage knot.  
 They tend to solitary phoenixes;  
 They take care of all who sleep alone.  
 With tricks, they drag over the Jade Maiden;  
 With sweet words, they seize the Golden Boy by the waist.<sup>1</sup>  
 They make the Weaving Maiden sick with longing;<sup>2</sup>  
 They urge Chang'e the Moon Goddess to leave the moon.*

Squire Zhang said, "Being childless, I would like to ask you a favor: Please find me a wife."

Without saying anything out loud, Matchmaker Zhang thought, "He's so old and rickety. There's no way I can find him a wife. But what shall I say in reply?"

Nudging Matchmaker Zhang, Matchmaker Li said, "That will be easy to do!"

As they turned to go, Squire Zhang stopped them, saying, "I have three conditions." It was these three conditions that made him



媒人道：“不知员外意下何如？”张员外道：“有三件事，说与你两人：第一件，要一个人材出众，好模好样的；第二件，要门户相当；第三件，我家下有十万贯家财，须着个有十万贯房奁的亲来对付我。”两个媒人，肚里暗笑，口中胡乱答应着：“这三件事都容易。”当下相辞员外自去。

张媒在路上与李媒商议道：“若说得这头亲事成，也有百十贯钱撰。只是员外说的话太不着人，有那三件事的他不去嫁个年少郎君，却肯随你这老头子？偏你这几根白胡须是沙糖拌的？”李媒道：“我有一头到也凑巧，人材出众，门户相当。”张媒道：“是谁家？”李媒云：“是王招宣府里出来的小夫人。王招宣初娶时，十分宠幸，后来只为一句话破绽些，失了主人之心，情愿白白里把与人，只要人有门风的便肯。随身房计少也有几万贯，只怕年纪忒小些。”张媒道：“不愁小的忒小，还嫌老的忒老，这头亲张员外怕不中意？只是雌儿心下必然不美。如今对雌儿说，把张家年纪瞒过了一二十年，两边就差不多了。”李媒道：“明日是个和合日，我同你先到张宅讲定财礼，随到王招宣府一说便成。”是晚各归无语。次日，二媒约会了，双双的到张员外宅里说：“昨日



*A poor wretch who could have had a good life;  
A ghost in a strange land with no grave for his bones.*

“What three conditions?” asked the matchmakers.

“Listen! First, she must have better than average looks. Second, she must be from a family of the same class as mine. Third, since I have a hundred thousand strings of cash, she must bring over a dowry of equal value. ”

Laughing inwardly, the two matchmakers replied, without meaning what they said, “These three conditions can be easily met.” With that, they took leave of Squire Zhang.

On their way back, Matchmaker Zhang said to Li, “If we do pull off this match, we’ll make about a hundred strings of cash, but his conditions are much too unreasonable. Wouldn’t those who meet all three conditions be better off with a young man than this ancient one? Does he think his beard is white because it’s coated with white sugar?”

“But I do have someone in mind,” said Matchmaker Li. “It just so happens that she does have better than average looks and is from the same class as he is. ”

“Which family is she from?”

“I’m talking about Pacification Commissioner Wang’s concubine,” said Matchmaker Li. “When she was first married to Commissioner Wang, she was made much of, but later, she lost his favor over a misspoken word, and so Mr. Wang is offering her to anyone of decent status. Her dowry won’t be less than several tens of thousands in cash. The only thing is, she’s too young. ”

Matchmaker Zhang said, “Being too young is better than being too old. Squire Zhang will be only too pleased at this match, but the girl will surely be none too happy. Let’s take ten to twenty years off Mr. Zhang’s age when we speak to her, so that the age disparity won’t be too much of a problem. ”

“Tomorrow is a lucky day,” said Matchmaker Li. “Let’s first go to Mr. Zhang to set the amount of the betrothal gifts before we go to Mr. Wang. I’m sure we’ll pull this off on the first try.” That night, they parted and went their separate ways home, and nothing of note



员外分付的三件事，老媳寻得一头亲，难得恁般凑巧：第一件，人材十分足色；第二件，是王招宣府里出来，有名声的；第三件，十万贯房奁，则怕员外嫌他年小。”张员外问道：“却几岁？”张媒应道：“小如员外三四十岁。”张员外满脸堆笑道：“全仗作成则个！”

话休絮烦，当下两边俱说允了。少不得行财纳礼，奠雁已毕，花烛成亲。次早参拜家堂，张员外穿紫罗衫，新头巾，新靴新袜。这小夫人着干红销金大袖团花霞帔，销金盖头，生得：

新月笼眉，春桃拂脸。意态幽花殊丽，肌肤嫩玉生光。  
说不尽万种妖娆，画不出千般艳冶。何须楚峡云飞过，便是蓬莱殿里人。

张员外从下至上看过，暗暗地喝采。小夫人揭起盖头，看见员外须眉皓白，暗暗地叫苦。花烛夜过了，张员外心下喜欢，小夫人心下不乐。过了月馀，只见一人相揖道：“今日是员外生辰，小





happened until the next day.

After meeting at an appointed place the next day, the two matchmakers went to see Mr. Zhang. "Mr. Zhang, we've found someone who meets all three of your conditions. Such a coincidence is rare, you know! First, she is as pretty as can be. Second, she is from Pacification Commissioner Wang's establishment, and his is a well-known name! Third, she has a dowry worth a hundred thousand strings of cash. We're only afraid that you'll think she's too young for you."

"How old is she?" asked Squire Zhang.

"She's thirty to forty years younger than you are, sir," replied Matchmaker Zhang.

Beaming with smiles, Zhang said, "Well, I'm counting on you to make this match!"

Let us skip trivialities and come to the point at which both parties gave their consent. As was the usual practice, betrothal gifts were sent to the bride, the bridegroom went to the bride's home to greet her, and bridal candles were lit for the wedding ceremony.

The next morning, when it was time to pay homage to the ancestors' tablets at the family altar, Squire Zhang appeared in a purple silk robe, a new cap, new shoes, and new socks. The young lady wore a wide-sleeved crimson gown of gold lamé in floral patterns and a similar gold-lamé kerchief over her face. She had:

*Eyebrows shaped like the crescent moon,  
Cheeks rosy as the peach blossoms of spring.  
Her posture lovely as a secluded flower,  
Her fair and tender skin lustrous as jade.  
She had more grace than could be told,  
And more charm than could be painted.  
A cloud over the Wu Mountains,  
A fairy on Penglai Island.*

Looking her over from head to foot, Squire Zhang cheered inwardly, but when the young lady's kerchief was lifted, she groaned to herself at the sight of his frosty hair and eyebrows. The day after the wedding ceremony found Squire Zhang gleeful but the young lady



道送疏在此。”原来员外但遇初一月半，本命生辰，须有道疏。那时小夫人开疏看时，扑簌簌两行泪下，见这员外年已六十，埋怨两个媒人将我误了。看那张员外时，这几日又添了四五件在身上：  
[眉批] 不量力。

腰便添疼，眼便添泪，耳便添聋，鼻便添涕。

一日，员外对小夫人道：“出外薄干，夫人耐静。”小夫人只得应道：“员外早去早归。”说了，员外自出去。小夫人自思量：“我恁地一个人，许多房奁，却嫁一个白须老儿。”心下正烦恼，身边立着从嫁道：“夫人今日何不门首看街消遣？”小夫人听说，便同养娘到外边来看。这张员外门首，是胭脂绒线铺，两壁装着厨柜，当中一片紫绢沿边帘子。养娘放下帘钩，垂下帘子，门前两个主管，一个李庆，五十来岁；一个张胜，年纪三十来岁。二人见放下帘子，问道：“为甚么？”养娘道：“夫人出来看街。”两个主管躬身在帘子前参见。小夫人在帘子底下启一点朱唇，露



dejected.

More than a month later, a man came and said with a bow, "Today being Squire Zhang's birthday, this unworthy priest is here to present you, sir, with a prayer."

It so happened that Squire Zhang was in the habit of offering a Daoist prayer on the first and the fifteenth day of every month as well as on his birthday. When the young lady spread open the prayer scroll for a look, the tears began to roll down her cheeks as she read that the Squire was already more than sixty years old. Filled with resentment against the two matchmakers, she moaned to herself, "They've ruined me!"

As for Squire Zhang, with the passage of the days, he had more of the following than ever before: (*He overtaxed himself.*)

*More pain in his back, more tears in his eyes, more deafness in his ears, and more mucus in his nose.*

One day, he said to his young wife, "I'm going out on some minor business. You'll have to put up with the loneliness."

The young woman forced herself to say, "Come home early." But, after he left, she thought, "With my looks and lavish dowry, how come I ended up with a white-haired old man for a husband?"

She was in the midst of these gloomy thoughts when her maid, who had come with her from the Wang establishment, suggested, "Madam, why don't you cheer yourself up and go to the door to watch the street?"

At this suggestion, the young lady followed the maid out for a look. The front of the residence was occupied by Zhang's small general store, which had cabinets all along the walls and a purple-silk-rimmed portiere that separated it from the interior of the house. As the maid let down the portiere from its hooks, the two store clerks, a Mr. Li Qing of about fifty years of age and a Mr. Zhang Sheng, about thirty, asked, "Why are you doing this?"

"The mistress is here to see what's going on outside," replied the maidservant.

Bowing low, the two clerks greeted the mistress from the other side of the portiere. The young lady, her red lips opening slightly and



两行碎玉，说不得数句言语，教张胜惹场烦恼：

远如沙漠，何殊没底沧溟；重若丘山，难比无穷泰华。

小夫人先叫李主管问道：“在员外宅里多少年了？”李主管道：“李庆在此三十馀年。”夫人道：“员外寻常照管你也不曾？”李主管道：“一饮一啄，皆出员外。”[眉批]带挈了李主管。却问张主管，张主管道：“张胜从先父在员外宅里二十馀年，张胜随着先父便趋事员外，如今也有十馀年。”小夫人问道：“员外曾管顾你么？”张胜道：“举家衣食，皆出员外所赐。”小夫人道：“主管少待。”小夫人折身进去不多时，递些物与李主管，把袖包手来接，躬身谢了。小夫人却叫张主管道：“终不成与了他不与你？这物件虽不直钱，也有好处。”张主管也依李主管接取，躬身谢了。小夫人又看了一回，自人去。两个主管，各自出门前支持买卖。原来李主管得的是十文银钱，张主管得的却是十文金钱。当时张主管也不知道李主管得的是银钱，李主管也不知张主管得的是金钱。当日天色已晚，但见：

野烟四合，宿鸟归林。佳人秉烛归房，路上行人投店。  
渔父负鱼归竹径，牧童骑犊返孤村。



revealing her pearly teeth, said a few words that caused Zhang Sheng enough troubles to

*Fill a vast desert and the deepest sea;  
And weigh heavier than Mount Tai and Mount Hua.*

The young woman first addressed Clerk Li. "How many years have you been with Squire Zhang?"

"I am Li Qing. I've been working here for more than thirty years."

"Does the Squire treat you well?"

"Every expense of mine is paid for by the Squire's grace." (*So, Clerk Li is well taken care of.*)

She then turned to Clerk Zhang, who replied, "I am Zhang Sheng. My now deceased father came here to work more than twenty years ago. I was with him, and it's been more than ten years since I myself began serving the master."

"Does the Squire take good care of you?" asked the young lady.

"The Squire kindly pays for all the expenses incurred by my family."

"Please wait a moment," said she, whereupon she turned back and disappeared into the house. A few moments later, she reemerged and handed a packet to Clerk Li, who respectfully took it, covering his hand with his sleeve, and thanked her with a bow. She then said to Clerk Zhang, "I can't very well give him something while neglecting you. This may not be worth much, but it may come in handy." Clerk Zhang took the packet in the same way as Li had and thanked her with a bow.

From behind the portiere, the young lady continued watching events on the street for a while before she went back into the interior of the house. The two clerks returned to the front of the store and tended to business. As a matter of fact, Li had received ten silver coins, whereas Zhang had been given ten gold coins, but at the time, neither had any idea what the other had received. That evening, as the sky darkened, there, for all to see, were:

*Strands of fog merging over the wilderness,  
Birds returning to their nests in the woods,  
Ladies going to their rooms, candles in hand,  
Wayfarers finding lodging in roadside inns,*



当日晚算了帐目，把文簿呈张员外，今日卖几文，买几文，人上欠几文，都金押了。

原来两个主管，各轮一日在铺中当直，其日却好正轮着张主管值宿。门外面一间小房，点着一盏灯。张主管闲坐半晌，安排歇宿，忽听得有人来敲门。张主管听得，问道：“是谁？”应道：“你则开门，却说与你。”张主管开了房门，那人踉将入来，闪身已在灯光背后。张主管看时，是个妇人。张主管吃了一惊，慌忙道：“小娘子，你这早晚来有甚事？”那妇人应道：“我不是私来，早间与你物事的教我来。”张主管道：“小夫人与我十文金钱，想是教你来讨还？”那妇女道：“你不理会得，李主管得的是银钱。如今小夫人又教把一件物来与你。”只见那妇人背上取下一包衣装，打开来看道：“这几件把与你穿的，又有几件妇女的衣服把与你娘。”只见妇女留下衣服，作别出门，复回身道：“还有一件要紧的到忘了。”又向衣袖里取出一锭五十两大银，撇了自去。当夜张胜无故得了许多东西，不明不白，一夜不曾睡着。明日早起来，张主管开了店门，依旧做买卖。等得李主管到了，将铺面交割与他，张胜自归到家中，拿出衣服银子与娘看。娘问：“这物事那里来的？”张主管把夜来的话，一一说与娘知。婆婆听得说道：“孩儿，小夫人他把金钱与你，又把衣服银子与你，却

*Fishermen, laden with fish, walking down bamboo-lined paths,*

*Herdboys on buffaloes returning to the village.*

That evening, the two clerks balanced the books, submitted them to Squire Zhang, and affixed their signatures to the accounts of the day, which listed sales, purchases and amounts payable. The two men usually rotated night duty in the shop, and it so happened that Clerk Zhang was the one on duty that very night. Near the door was a small room, lit by a lamp. After sitting idly for some time, Zhang was preparing for bed when suddenly he heard a knock at the door. "Who is it?" he asked.

"I'll tell you as soon as you open the door. Hurry!" As Zhang opened the door, someone slipped in and dived behind the lamp. Finding the visitor to be a woman, Zhang gave a start and hastened to say, "Young lady, why are you here at this hour of the night?"

The woman said, "I came not for myself but for the one who gave you a gift earlier today."

"The young mistress gave me ten gold coins. So she sent you to take the money back?"

"No. You may not know that Mr. Li got only silver. And now I have another thing for you from the young mistress." She took a package of clothes from her back and opened it, saying, "These are a few pieces of clothing for you. There are also some woman's clothes for your mother." She put the clothes down and took leave of him, but before she was quite out the door, she turned back to add, "I forgot an important thing." So saying, she took out a fifty-tael ingot of silver from her sleeve and put it down before she went off. That night, Zhang Sheng found himself a much richer man for no reason that he could figure out.

After a sleepless night, he rose bright and early the next morning and went about taking care of the day's business. Upon Li's arrival, he handed the business over to him and returned home, where he showed his mother the clothes and the money.

"Where did you get them?" his mother demanded, whereupon Zhang gave her a full account of what had happened the day before.





是甚么意思?娘如今六十已上年纪,自从没了你爷,便满眼只看你。若是你做出事来,老身靠谁?明日便不要去。”[眉批]贤哉母氏。这张主管是个本分之人,况又是个孝顺的,听见娘说,便不往铺里去。张员外见他不去,使人来叫,问道:“如何主管不来?”婆婆应道:“孩儿感些风寒,这几日身子不快,来不得。传语员外得知,一好便来。”又过了几日,李主管见他不来,自来叫道:“张主管如何不来?铺中没人相帮。”老娘只是推身子不快,这两日反重,李主管自去。张员外三五遍使人来叫,做娘的只是说未得好。张员外见三回五次叫他不来,猜道:“必是别有去处。”张胜自在家中。

时光迅速,日月如梭,捻指之间,在家中早过了一月有馀。道不得坐吃山崩,虽然得这小夫人许多物事,那一锭大银子,容易不敢出笏,衣裳又不好变卖。不去营运,日来月往,手内使得没了,却来问娘道:“不教儿子去张员外宅里去,闲了经纪,如今在家中日逐盘费如何措置?”那婆婆听得说,用手一指,指着屋梁上道:“孩儿你见也不见?”张胜看时,原来屋梁上挂着一个包,取将下来,道:“你爷养得你这等大,则是这件物事身上。”打开纸包看时,是个花栲栳儿。婆婆道:“你如今依先做这道路,





Upon hearing these words, the old lady said, "My son, what does the young mistress mean by giving you all this gold and clothes and silver? I'm now in my sixties and have only you since your father's death. If you get into trouble, to whom shall I turn for support? Don't go to the store tomorrow." (*What a wise mother!*) Being a decent man and a filial son, Zhang followed his mother's advice and did not go back to work.

Finding him absent from the shop, Squire Zhang sent for him with the question, "Why doesn't Mr. Zhang show up for work?" To which the old lady replied, "My son can't come because he has caught a cold and is not feeling well these days, but please tell the master that he'll be back as soon as he has recovered."

Another few days later, anxious over his continued absence, Li went personally to his house, saying loudly, "Why doesn't Mr. Zhang come to work? I have no one to help me in the shop!" The old lady insisted that he was not feeling well, adding that his conditions had, in fact, worsened in the last couple of days. Li left. Over and over again, Squire Zhang sent for him, but each time, Clerk Zhang's mother said that he had not yet recovered. Wondering why he still would not show up, Squire Zhang said, taking a guess, "He must have found another job," but in fact, all this time, Zhang Sheng was at home.

Time flew. The sun and the moon shuttled back and forth, and within the time it takes to snap a finger, Zhang had stayed home for more than a month. As the saying goes, "Those who sit idle and do nothing can eat away a mountain of fortune." The young mistress had been generous, but he dared not redeem the large ingot of silver nor could he very well sell the clothes. Without income, his resources began to dwindle with the passing days and months. He said to his mother, "You told me not to go back to Squire Zhang, but without a job, how am I going to pay for our daily expenses?"

Upon hearing these words, the old lady pointed at a beam in the ceiling, saying, "Don't you see what's up there, my son?"

Zhang took a look and saw a package hanging from the beam. As he took it down, his mother said, "This was how your deceased fa-



习爷的生意，卖些胭脂绒线。”当日时遇元宵，张胜道：“今日元宵夜，端门下放灯。”便问娘道：“儿子欲去看灯则个。”娘道：“孩儿，你许多时不行这条路，如今去端门看灯，从张员外门前过，又去惹是招非。”张胜道：“是人都去看灯，说道今年好灯，儿子去去便归，不从张员外门前过便了。”娘道：“要去看灯不妨，则是你自去看不得，同一个相识做伴去才好。”张胜道：“我与王二哥同去。”娘道：“你两个去看不妨，第一莫得吃酒，第二同去同回。”分付了，两个来端门下看灯。正撞着当时赐御酒，撒金钱，好热闹。王二哥道：“这里难看灯，一来我们身小力怯，着甚来由吃挨吃搅？不如去一处看，那里也抓缚着一座鳌山。”张胜问道：“在那里？”王二哥道：“你到不知，王招宣府里抓缚着小鳌山，今夜也放灯。”两个便复身回来，却是王招宣府前。原来人又热闹似端门下，就府门前不见了王二哥。张胜只叫得声苦：“却是怎地归去？临出门时，我娘分付道‘你两个同去同回’，如何不见了王二哥？只我先到屋里，我娘便不焦躁。若是王二哥先回，我娘定道我那里去。”当夜看不得那灯，独自一个行来行去，猛省



ther supported you while you were growing up.” He opened the paper wrappings to reveal a wicket basket. The old lady continued, “You can very well do what he did and make a living as a traveling peddler of miscellaneous household items. ”

It being the day of the Lantern Festival, Zhang said, “Tonight, there will be a lantern show at Duan Gate. I’d like to go and see the lanterns. ”

“My son, you haven’t been to that street for quite some time. You’ll only be inviting trouble if you pass by Squire Zhang’s door on your way to see the lanterns at Duan Gate. ”

“People are all going out to see the lanterns. They say it’s a great lantern show this year. I’ll be back soon enough. I won’t go past Squire Zhang’s door. ”

“All right, you may go, but you must not go alone. You’ll have to go with a friend. ”

“I’ll go with Second Brother Wang. ”

“All right, if you go together. But first, don’t drink! Second, be sure to go and come back together!”

Thus instructed, Zhang went with Second Brother Wang to see the lanterns by Duan Gate. They came upon a bustling scene where wine from the emperor as well as money were being distributed to a swarming crowd. Second Brother Wang suggested, “We can’t very well see much of the lanterns in this spot. We are not big and strong enough to fight off all the pushes and shoves. Why don’t we go to another place where there’s also a lantern hill?”

“Where’s that?” asked Zhang.

“Don’t you know? Commissioner Wang has also put up a lantern hill, though a smaller one, and those lanterns are lit up tonight, too. ”

The two men wended their way to the Wang residence but found as much hustle and bustle there as at Duan Gate. By the gate of the Wang residence, Zhang Sheng lost sight of Second Brother Wang. He let out a groan, thinking, “How am I going to face my mother? She told me before I left to come back with him. And now he’s gone! If I go home first, she won’t be worried, but if she sees Second Brother Wang first, she’ll worry about me.” Forgetting all about the lanterns,



道：“前面是我那旧主人张员外宅里，每年到元宵夜，歇浪线铺，添许多烟火，今日想他也未收灯。”

迤迤信步行到张员外门前，[眉批]偏不记娘言□。张胜吃惊，只见张员外家门便开着，十字两条竹竿，缚着皮革底钉住一碗泡灯，照着门上一张手榜贴在。张胜看了，唬得目瞪口呆，罔知所措。张胜去这灯光之下，看这手榜上写着道：“开封府左军巡院，勘到百姓张士廉，为不合……”方才读到“〔为〕不合”三个字，兀自不知道因甚罪，则见灯笼底下一人喝声道：“你好大胆，来这里看甚的？”张主管吃了一惊，拽开脚步便走。那喝的人大踏步赶将来，叫道：“是甚么人，直恁大胆？夜晚间，看这榜做甚么？”唬得张胜便走。渐次间，行到巷口，待要转弯归去，相次二更，见一轮明月，正照着当空。正行之间，一个人从后面赶将来，叫道：“张主管，有人请你。”张胜回头看时，是一个酒博士。张胜道：“想是王二哥在巷口等我，买些酒吃归去，恰也好。”同这酒博士到店内，随上楼梯，到一个阁儿前面。量酒道：“在这里。”掀开帘儿，张主管看见一个妇女，身上衣服不堪齐整，头上蓬松，正是：

乌云不整，唯思昔日豪华；粉泪频飘，为忆当年富贵。

秋夜月蒙云笼罩，牡丹花被土沉埋。

这妇女叫：“张主管，是我请你。”张主管看了一眼，虽有些面熟，却想不起。这妇女道：“张主管如何不认得我？我便是小夫



he paced around all by himself, and then, he suddenly recalled, "My former master Squire Zhang lives right ahead. Every Lantern Festival night, he would close up shop and put on lots of lanterns. Maybe he hasn't taken them down yet." So he proceeded to Squire Zhang's house. (*Casting his mother's admonition to the winds.*)

To his astonishment, he found the Squire's door sealed with two bamboo poles laid crosswise. Above the poles was a poster visible by the light of a pig bladder lamp nailed to the door through a leather pad. Appalled at the sight, Zhang stood there stupefied, eyes wide open, mouth agape, not knowing what to do. He then took a step forward and began to read: "The police bureau of Kaifeng Prefecture has found Zhang Shilian guilty of..." At the words "guilty of," he wondered what wrongs Squire Zhang could have committed.

At this point, he caught sight of a man under the lamp. The man yelled, "How dare you poke around in this place!" Startled, Zhang took to his heels. The man chased him with big strides, shouting, "Who goes there? How dare you come here! Why read the poster at this time of the night?" Zhang was so frightened that he ran all the faster to the corner of the lane, where he turned and headed home.

It was about the second watch of the night with a lambent moon shining in the sky. As he was pressing ahead, a man ran after him, calling, "Mr. Zhang, you are being invited!" Looking around, Zhang saw that the man was a waiter in a wineshop. He thought, "It must be Second Brother Wang waiting for me at the corner to have a few drinks with him before going home. That's just as well."

He followed the waiter to the wineshop, where they climbed up the stairs and stopped in front of a private booth. The waiter said, "Right here." Lifting the portiere, Clerk Zhang saw a shabbily dressed woman with disheveled hair. Truly,

*Her hair tousled, she thought only of her past glory;  
 Tears flowing, she recalled her wealth of yesteryear.  
 The moon was obscured by the autumn clouds,  
 The peony was buried under the earth.*

The woman exclaimed, "Mr. Zhang, I am the one who invited you here." Zhang took a look at the woman. Although he thought she



人。”张主管道：“小夫人如何在这里？”小夫人道：“一言难尽。”张胜问：“夫人如何恁地？”小夫人道：“不合信媒人口，嫁了张员外，原来张员外因烧燬假银事犯，把张员外缚去左军巡院里去，至今不知下落。家计并许多房产，都封估了。我如今一身无所归着，特地投奔你。你看我平昔之面，留我家中住几时则个。”张胜道：“使不得！第一家中母亲严谨，第二道不得‘瓜田不纳履，李下不整冠’。要来张胜家中，断然使不得。”小夫人听得道：“你将为常言俗语道‘呼蛇容易遣蛇难’，怕日久岁深，盘费重大。我教你看……”用手去怀里提出件物来：

闻钟始觉山藏寺，傍岸方知水隔村。

小夫人将一串一百单八颗西珠数珠，颗颗大如鸡豆子，明光灿烂。张胜见了喝采道：“有眼不曾见这宝物！”小夫人道：“许多房奁，尽被官府籍没了，则藏得这物。你若肯留在家中，慢慢把这件宝物逐颗去卖，尽可过日。”张主管听得说，正是：

归去只愁红日晚，思量犹恐马行迟。

横财红粉歌楼酒，谁为三般事不迷？



looked familiar, he could not quite place her.

“Mr. Zhang, why don’t you recognize me? I’m your former master’s wife.”

“Oh, but why are you here, madam?”

“It’s a long story.”

“How did you end up in such a state?”

“I shouldn’t have listened to the matchmakers and married Squire Zhang. He has been accused of counterfeiting silver and was tied up and taken under guard to the police bureau. Nothing has been heard from him since. His possessions and many real estate holdings have been sealed and confiscated by the government. I am left all alone, with nowhere to go. You are my only hope. Please keep me in your home for a while, for old time’s sake.”

“This can’t be done! First, my mother is very strict. Second, as the saying goes, ‘To avoid suspicions, don’t bend to pull your shoes in a melon field nor reach to adjust your cap under a plum tree.’ For you to stay in my home is quite out of the question!”

The young lady said, “You must be thinking of the proverb ‘It’s easier to have a snake come than to make it go.’ You’re afraid that if I stay long, the expenses will be high. Let me show you this.” So saying, she took something out from her bosom.

*The temple hidden in the hills is not known*

*Until one hears its bells strike.*

*The village by the water is not seen*

*Until the boat moors at the shore.*

What the young lady took out was a string of one hundred and eight shining pearls, each the size of a water lily seed, of the kind that foreign merchants shipped inland from the coast. Zhang exclaimed, “I’ve never seen anything like this before!”

“The government has confiscated all my dowry except these pearls, which I had hidden away. If you’re willing to take me, you can sell off the pearls one by one and get more than enough for daily expenses.” These words made Zhang

*Eager to go home before the sun sets,*

*And afraid that the horse goes too slowly;*



当日张胜道：“小夫人要来张胜家中，也得我娘肯时方可。”小夫人道：“和你同去问婆婆，我只在对门人家等回报。”

张胜回到家中，将前后事情逐一对娘说了一遍。婆婆是个老人家，心慈，听说如此落难，连声叫道：“苦恼，苦恼！小夫人在那里？”张胜道：“见在对门等。”婆婆道：“请相见。”相见礼毕，小夫人把适来说的话，从头细说一遍：“如今都无亲戚投奔，特来见婆婆，望乞容留。”婆婆听得说道：“夫人暂住数日不妨，只怕家寒怠慢，思量别的亲戚再去投奔。”小夫人便从怀里取出数珠递与婆婆。灯光下婆婆看见，就留小夫人在家住。小夫人道：“来日剪颗来货卖，开起胭脂绒线铺，门前挂着花栲栳儿为记。”张胜道：“有这件宝物，胡乱卖动，便是若干钱。况且五十两一锭大银未动，正好收买货物。”张胜自从开店，接了张员外一路买卖，其时人唤张胜做小张员外。[眉批]人无贤愚，无贵贱，有钱者居上耳。可叹，可叹！小夫人屡次来缠张胜，张胜心坚似铁，只以主母相待，并不及乱。

当时清明节候，怎见得？





*Romance, wine, and overnight wealth,  
Who does not fall under their spell?*

So Zhang said, "Madam, if you want to live in my house, you'll have to get permission from my mother."

"I'll go with you. While you talk to her, I'll wait across the street."

Back at home, Zhang acquainted his mother with everything that had happened. Upon hearing of the young lady's misfortunes, the softhearted old lady cried out, "How sad! How sad! Where is the young lady now?"

"She's waiting across the street."

"Bring her in!"

After an exchange of greetings, the young woman repeated in detail what she had told Zheng, adding, "With no relatives to turn to, I've come expressly to see you, madam. Please let me stay."

At these words, the old lady said, "You're welcome to stay for a few days, but since we're too poor to be good hosts, you may consider going to some other relative later on."

At this point, the young lady took out her string of pearls and handed it to Zhang's mother, who looked at it by the lamplight and repeated her invitation to the young woman to stay.

"Let's cut one pearl off the string in a couple of days," suggested the young lady, "and then sell it so as to open a small general store. A basket can be hung by the door as a store sign."

"With this treasure in the house," said Zhang, "we can get a pretty sum of money any time we sell a pearl or two. We also have that fifty-tael ingot of silver intact. That alone should be enough for us to purchase the goods we need."

So Zhang opened a store, continuing Squire Zhang's line of business. He came to be called Squire Zhang Junior by all and sundry. (*Personal integrity and social status don't matter. Whoever has money rises to the top. How lamentable!*) Time and again, the young lady tried to seduce Zhang, but Zhang remained unperturbed, his heart as hard as steel. He treated her consistently as a mistress of the household with never a slip in proper decorum.



清明何处不生烟？郊外微风挂纸钱。  
人笑人歌芳草地，乍晴乍雨杏花天。  
海棠枝上绵蛮语，杨柳堤边醉客眠。  
红粉佳人争画板，彩丝摇曳学飞仙。

满城人都出去金明池游玩，小张员外也出去游玩。到晚回来，却待人万胜门，则听得后面一人叫“张主管”。当时张胜自思道：“如今人都叫我做小张员外，甚人叫我主管？”回头看时，却是旧主人张员外。张胜看张员外面上刺着囚字金印，蓬头垢面，衣服不整齐，即时邀入酒店里，一个稳便阁儿坐下。张胜问道：“主人缘何如此狼狈？”张员外道：“不合成了这头亲事。小夫人原是王招宣府里出来的。今年正月初一日，小夫人自在帘儿里看街，只见一个安童托着盒儿打从面前过去。小夫人叫住问道：‘府中近日有甚事说？’安童道：‘府里别无甚事，则是前日王招宣寻一串一百单八颗西珠数珠不见，带累得一府的人，没有一个不吃罪责。’小夫人听得说，脸上或青或红。小安童自去。不多时二三十人来家，把他房奩和我的家私，都搬将去。便捉我下左军巡院拷问，要这一百单八颗数珠。我不曾见，回说‘没有’。将我打一顿毒棒，拘禁在监。到亏当日小夫人人去房里自吊身死，[眉批]小夫人累人多矣，那得不死。官司没决撒，把我断了。则是一事，至今日



As the Clear and Bright Festival rolled around,  
*Wisps of smoke rose to the clear and bright sky;  
Paper coins of mourning fluttered in the wind.  
Songs and laughter echoed through the meadows;  
On apricot blossoms, rain one moment, sunshine the next.  
Birds chirped on the crab-apple branches;  
A drunken traveler slept by the willow-lined dyke.  
The beauties frolicked on the swings in the yards,  
Flying through the air like brightly clad fairies.*

All the residents of the city turned out to tour Golden Bright Pond, Squire Zhang Junior among them. On his way back in the evening, he was about to go through Wansheng Gate when he heard a voice behind him calling, "Clerk Zhang!" He thought, "Everybody calls me Squire Zhang Junior now. Who could be calling me Clerk Zhang?" As he turned around for a look, whom did he see but Squire Zhang, his former master! Noticing the convict's tattoo on his face, his disheveled hair, and unkempt appearance, Zhang Sheng immediately invited him into a wineshop and sat down with him in a discreet private booth.

"My master," said Zhang Sheng, "why are you in such a state?"

"I shouldn't have married that woman from Commissioner Wang's house! On the last New Year's Day, she was watching the street from behind the portiere when she saw a page boy from the Wang establishment passing by, carrying a box. She stopped him and asked for news from the Wang establishment. The page boy replied, 'There's been nothing else exciting, but the other day, Commissioner Wang couldn't find his string of one hundred and eight pearls. All the servants in the household were blamed.' As she heard this, the color on her face came and went. Soon after the boy left, about twenty to thirty men came to my house, carried off all her dowry and my possessions, and took me to the police bureau, where they demanded that I hand over the string of pearls. Having never laid eyes on it, I said I didn't have it. They beat me black and blue and threw me in jail. The woman had enough sense of honor to hang herself in her room. (*The young lady had brought trouble to too many people to be*



那一串一百单八颗数珠，不知下落。”张胜闻言，心下自思道：“小夫人也在我家里，数珠也在我家里，早剪动几颗了。”甚是惶惑。劝了张员外些酒食，相别了。

张胜沿路思量道：“好是感人！”回到家中，见小夫人，张胜一步退一步道：“告夫人，饶了张胜性命！”小夫人问道：“怎恁地说？”张胜把适来大张员外说的话道了一遍。小夫人听得道：“却不作怪，你看我身上衣裳有缝，一声高似一声，你岂不理睬得？他道我在你这里，故意说这话教你不留我。”张胜道：“你也说得是。”又过了数日，只听得外面道：“有人寻小员外。”张胜出来迎接，便是大张员外。张胜心中道：“家里小夫人使出来相见，是人是鬼，便明白了。”[眉批]张胜理直气壮。教养娘请小夫人出来。养娘入去，只没寻讨处，不见了小夫人。当时小员外既知小夫人真个是鬼，只得将前面事，一一告与大张员外。问道：“这串数珠却在那里？”张胜去房中取出，大张员外叫张胜同来王招宣府中说，将数珠交纳，其余剪去数颗，将钱取赎讫。王招宣赎免张士廉罪犯，将家私给还，仍旧开胭脂绒线铺。大张员外仍



*spared a violent end.* ) But the mystery being still unsolved, the court convicted me instead. To this day, I still have no idea where that string of pearls is. ”

At these words, Zhang Sheng thought, “Both the young lady and the pearls are in my house, and many pearls have already been sold. ” He became quite frightened and plied Squire Zhang with wine and food before they parted company.

On the way home, Zhang Sheng thought, “How very strange!” Upon arriving home and seeing the young lady, Zhang Sheng recoiled a step and said, “Madam, please spare me my life!”

“Why do you say such a thing?” said the young lady.

After Zhang repeated what he had heard from the Squire, the young lady exclaimed, “What a wild story! Look! Don’t you see that I’m dressed in real clothes with seams and stitches? Don’t you hear me speaking with a real voice, now louder than before? Knowing that I’m in your house, he said those things on purpose, to make you drive me away. ”

“Yes, you do have a point there,” conceded Zhang.

A few days later, a voice from outside the house was heard crying, “Squire Zhang Junior has a visitor!”

Emerging from the house to greet the visitor, Zhang Sheng found the latter to be none other than Squire Zhang. Zhang Sheng thought to himself, “Let me get her out, and we’ll know if she’s a ghost or not. ” (*Having done nothing wrong, Zhang Sheng has nothing to fear.*) Forthwith he instructed a maidservant to invite the young lady out. The maidservant went in, but the young lady was nowhere to be found.

Realizing now that she was indeed a ghost, Squire Zhang Junior felt obliged to tell Squire Zhang everything he knew. When asked the whereabouts of the string of pearls, Zhang Sheng went into the house and reemerged with the string.

Squire Zhang had Zhang Sheng accompany him to Commissioner Wang’s establishment, to report the matter and return the pearls and to pay in cash for the few pearls missing from the string. Commissioner Wang pardoned Squire Zhang and gave him back his property. Af-



请天庆观道士做醮，追荐小夫人。只因小夫人生前甚有张胜的心，死后犹然相从。亏杀张胜立心至诚，到底不曾有染，所以不受其祸，超然无累。如今财色迷人者纷纷皆是，如张胜者万中无一。有诗赞云：

谁不贪财不爱淫？始终难染正人心。  
少年得似张主管，鬼祸人非两不侵。

ter resuming his business, Squire Zhang engaged priests from Tianqing Temple to perform a memorial service for the young lady, who had been enamored of Zhang Sheng alive and had sought him out after her death. Luckily, Zhang Sheng had remained unshaken in his resolve not to have any illicit relationship with her. As a result, he stayed out of harm's way and avoided being implicated in the case.

Now, in this day and age, all too many people fall victim to the temptations of money and lust. There may not be a Zhang Sheng in ten thousand men. There is a poem that says in praise of him:

*Who loves not money and pleasures of the flesh?  
But a man of virtue is hard to corrupt.  
If only our youth were all like Clerk Zhang,  
No humans and ghosts could ever do them harm.*

This story has been translated as "The Honest Clerk," 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 "Originally titled 'Zhang Zhicheng the Clerk Escapes an Extraordinary Calamity.'"

<sup>1</sup> Jade Maidens and Golden Boys are maids and page boys who serve the Daoist immortals.

<sup>2</sup> The Weaving Maiden is a star on one side of the Milky Way (Silver River), and her husband, the Herdboy Star, is on the other side. They are able to meet only once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh month, when magpies form a bridge across the river.





## 第十七卷

### 钝秀才一朝交泰

蒙正窑中怨气，买臣担上书声。丈夫失意惹人轻，才入  
荣华称庆。红日偶然阴翳，黄河尚有澄清。浮云眼底总  
难凭，牢把脚跟立定。

这首《西江月》，大概说人穷通有时，固不可以一时之得意，  
而自夸其能；亦不可以一时之失意，而自坠其志。

唐朝甘露年间，有个王涯丞相，官居一品，权压百僚，僮仆  
千数，日食万钱，说不尽荣华富贵。其府第厨房与一僧寺相邻。  
每日厨房中涤锅净碗之水，倾向沟中，其水从僧寺中流出。一日  
寺中老僧出行，偶见沟中流水中有白物，大如雪片，小如玉屑。  
近前观看，乃是上白米饭，王丞相厨下锅里碗里洗刷下来的。长  
老合掌念声：“阿弥陀佛，罪过，罪过！”随口吟诗一首：

春时耕种夏时耘，粒粒颗颗费力勤。





## Story 17

### The Luckless Scholar Rises Suddenly in Life

*Mengzheng had once chafed in his humble cave,<sup>1</sup>  
Maichen had been a peddler to support his studies.<sup>2</sup>  
Great men are scorned when they're down on their luck;  
Praises come only when they rise in life.*

*The red sun can be overcast at times;  
The Yellow River flows clear at places.  
Trust not the clouds that float before your eyes,  
But plant your feet on ground solid and firm.*

The above lyric poem to the tune of “Moon over the West River” basically makes the point that the timing of the ups and downs in one’s life is predestined. Therefore, one must not be boastful of one’s talents in a moment of glory, nor should one lose heart in a moment of failure.

In the Ganlu reign period of the Tang dynasty,<sup>3</sup> there was a Prime Minister Wang Ya, who, having attained the highest grade in officialdom with power over all the other court officials, lived in unspeakable luxury. He had as many as a thousand servants; his daily food expenses ran to ten thousand in cash. His kitchen being adjacent to a Buddhist monastery, the water that was dumped into the ditch after washing pots and pans flowed out the other end into the monastery.

One day, an old monk was on his way out of the monastery when he caught sight of white spots in the ditch water, some as big as flakes of snow, some as small as pulverized jade. Upon taking a closer look, he saw that they were grains of cooked white rice of the highest quality, flowing out into the ditch after the pots and pans were washed in Prime Minister Wang’s kitchen. Joining his palms, the abbot said, “Amitabha! What a sin!” Then and there, he intoned a poem:

*“Farmers plow in spring and weed in summer;*



舂去细糠如剖玉，炊成香饭似堆银。

三餐饱食无馀事，一口饥时可疗贫。

堪叹沟中狼藉贱，可怜天下有穷人。

长老吟诗已罢，随唤火工道人，将笊篱笊起沟内残饭，向清水河中涤去污泥，摊于筛内，日色晒干，用磁缸收贮，且看几时满得一缸。不勾三四个月，其缸已满。两年之内，共积得六大缸有馀。那王涯丞相只道千年富贵，万代奢华。谁知乐极生悲，一朝触犯了朝廷，阖门待勘，未知生死。其时宾客散尽，僮仆逃亡，仓廩尽为仇家所夺。王丞相至亲二十三口，米尽粮绝，担饥忍饿，啼哭之声，闻于邻寺。长老听得，心怀不忍。只是一墙之隔，除非穴墙可以相通。长老将缸内所积饭干浸软，蒸而馈之。王涯丞相吃罢，甚以为美，[眉批]已弃，不应得食，天使忏悔耳。遣婢子问老僧，他出家之人，何以有此精食？老僧道：“此非贫僧家常之饭，乃

*Into every seedling goes much hard work.  
Husked and chaffed, like jade being polished,  
The grains cook into fragrant, silvery rice.  
Thrice a day, they nourish the idle rich,  
While one mouthful can save a poor man's life.  
Alas! Here they lie, dumped into the ditch,  
While, sadly, those in need go hungry!"*

After intoning the poem, the abbot had some acolytes dredge up the grains of rice from the ditch with bamboo strainers, rinse them in the clean water of the river, spread them out on big bamboo trays, let them dry under the sun, and store them in a porcelain vat. Now you may well ask when the vat would ever be filled up. Well, it was filled to the brim in less than three or four months. Within two years, more than six big vats were filled with rice from the ditch.

As for Prime Minister Wang Ya, he thought his wealth and luxurious life style were to last through thousands of generations, but who would have expected that extreme joy brought sorrow in its wake!

One fine day, he gave offense to the imperial court. His entire family stood accused. With the fate of the family yet unknown, the retainers went their separate ways, the servants and page boys took flight, and the grain barns and storage houses were all seized forcefully by enemies of the Wang family. Prime Minister Wang and his closest relatives, all twenty-three of them, found themselves with no food. As they wailed and wept in starvation, their cries reached the monastery and pained the abbot's heart.

The Wang establishment was connected to the monastery by a wall through which a hole could be dug, and the abbot soaked the dried grains of rice in large jars until they became soft, steamed them, and offered them to the Wangs. Prime Minister Wang found the rice delicious. (*Rice already thrown away is not supposed to be eaten, but in this case, heaven makes him repent.*) He sent a maid-servant to the old monk to ask how someone who had renounced the world had come to have such fine rice. The monk replied, "This is by no means the usual fare for this poor monk. What I offered came with





府上滌釜洗碗之餘，流出溝中，貧僧可惜有用之物，棄之無用，將清水洗盡，日色曬干，留為荒年貧丐之食，今日誰知仍濟了尊府之急。正是一飲一啄，莫非前定。”王涯丞相聽罷，嘆道：“我平昔暴殄天物如此，安得不敗？今日之禍，必然不免。”其夜遂伏毒而死。

當初富貴時節，怎知道有今日？正是：貧賤常思富貴，富貴又履危機。此乃福過災生，自取其咎。假如今人貧賤之時，那知後日富貴？即如榮華之日，豈信後來苦楚？如今在下再說個先憂後樂的故事。列位看官們，內中倘有胯下忍辱的韓信，妻不下機的蘇秦，聽在下說這段評話，各人回去硬挺著頭頸過日，以待時來，不要先墜了志氣。有詩四句：

秋風衰草定逢春，尺蠖泥中也會伸。

畫虎不成君莫笑，安排牙爪始驚人。

話說國朝天順年間，福建延平府將樂縣，有個宦家，姓馬，名萬群，官拜吏科給事中。因論太監王振專權誤國，削籍為民。夫人早喪，單生一子，名曰馬任，表字德稱。十二歲游庠，聰明



dishwater from your kitchen into the ditch. I find it too wasteful to throw away whatever can be used again, so I had the rice rinsed in clean water, dried in the sun, and put aside for the poor for a rainy day. Little did I expect that it would ever be offered to your distinguished family in a time of need. Now, doesn't this bear out the saying 'Every bite, every drink, is determined by fate'?"

At these words, Prime Minister Wang Ya said with a sigh, "How could I not come down in the world when I was so wasteful of the products of nature? Nothing could have prevented the misfortune that has befallen me." That night, he took poison and died.

How could he have foreseen such an end when he was at the height of his wealth and power? Truly, the poor and humble aspire to wealth and power, but the rich and mighty are beset with pitfalls. When their good fortune changes to calamity, they have only themselves to blame. The poor and humble of today can hardly foresee a future life of wealth and power. Similarly, the rich and mighty of today can hardly believe that misfortune will befall them later in life.

I now propose to tell a story of misery turning to joy. Dear audience, there may be among you a Han Xin suffering the humiliation of crawling between someone's legs, or a Su Qin snubbed by his wife.<sup>4</sup> After listening to this story of mine, go back home and live your life with your head held high. Do not lose heart while you wait for your turn to rise in life. There is a quatrain that says,

*The wind-swept dead autumn grass will grow back in spring;*

*The lowliest worm will crawl its way out of the mud.*

*Don't laugh at a tiger yet half painted;*

*Add fangs and claws and it will strike terror into one's heart.*

During the Tianshun reign period [1457–64] in this dynasty, there lived an official in Jiangle County, Yanping Prefecture, in Fujian. Ma Wanqun by name, he held the post of Supervising Secretary in the Bureau of Personnel. Later, for his criticisms of Wang Zhen the eunuch, who abused power and jeopardized national interests, he was deprived of his post and reduced to the status of a commoner.

His wife had died early, leaving him one son called Ma Ren, courtesy name Decheng. He started schooling at twelve years of age.



饱学。说起他聪明，就如颜子渊闻一知十；论起他饱学，就如虞世南五车腹笥。真个文章盖世，名誉过人。马给事爱惜如良金美玉，自不必言。里中那些富家儿郎，一来为他是黄门的贵公子，二来道他经解之才，早晚飞黄腾达，无不争先奉承。其中更有两个人奉承得要紧，真个是：

冷中送暖，闲里寻忙。出外必称弟兄，使钱那问尔我。

偶话店中酒美，请饮三杯；才夸妓馆容娇，代包一月。掇臀捧屁，犹云手有馀香；随口踢痰，惟恐人先着脚。说不尽谄笑胁肩，只少个出妻献子。[眉批]好形容。

一个叫黄胜，绰号黄病鬼。一个叫顾祥，绰号飞天炮仗。他两个祖上也曾出仕，都是富厚之家，目不识丁，也顶个读书的虚名。把马德称做个大菩萨供养，扳他日后富贵往来。那马德称是忠厚君子，彼以礼来，此以礼往，见他殷勤，也遂与之交友。黄胜就



A brilliant and well-learned young man he turned out to be. Like Yan Ziyuan, when he was told one thing, he understood ten, and like Yu Shinan, he had learned by heart enough books to fill five carriages.<sup>5</sup> Truly, throughout the land, his writings were second to none, and his reputation had no equal. It goes without saying that Secretary Ma cherished him as he did fine gold and beautiful jade. Partly because he was the beloved son of a highly-placed official and partly because, with his outstanding talent, he would rise considerably sooner or later, the sons of the rich in the area vied with one another in currying favor with him, with two among them outdoing all the others. Truly,

*In cold weather, they sent him warmth;  
 Lest he be bored, they brought him fun.  
 On outings, they called him "Brother,"  
 Paying his bills at every turn.  
 He had only to mention a certain wineshop  
 And they would take him there for three cups.  
 He had only to praise a certain courtesan  
 And they would engage her for him for a month.  
 Their hands on his buttocks, holding his fart,  
 They said the sweet smell passed on to their hands.  
 Whenever he spit, they would rush  
 To wipe out the phlegm with their feet.  
 They smirked, they flattered, they bowed, and they scraped;  
 They stopped short only of offering a wife or a son.*

(Good description.)

One of the two was called Huang Sheng, nicknamed "Huang the Sickly Man." The other was called Gu Xiang, nicknamed "Sky-rising Firecracker." Generations earlier, the two well-off clans had produced scholar-officials. Both men were illiterate but still claimed to have had some education. They showed as much veneration to Ma Decheng as they would to a Buddha, in the hope of keeping the relationship after he rose to fame and fortune. Being the honorable gentleman that he was, Ma Decheng reciprocated their acts of kindness according to decorum and, impressed by their attentiveness, ac-



把亲妹六姨，许与德称为婚。德称闻此女才貌双全，不胜之喜。但从小立个誓愿：

若要洞房花烛夜，必须金榜挂名时。

马给事见他立志高明，也不相强，所以年过二十，尚未完娶。

时值乡试之年，忽一日，黄胜、顾祥邀马德称向书铺中去买书，见书铺隔壁有个算命店，牌上写道：

要知命好丑，只问张铁口。

马德称道：“此人名为‘铁口’，必肯直言。”买完了书，就过间壁，与那张先生拱手道：“学生贱造，求教。”先生问了八字，将五行生克之数，五星虚实之理，推算了一回，说道：“尊官若不见怪，小子方敢直言。”马德称道：“君子问灾不问福，何须隐讳？”黄胜、顾祥两个在傍，只怕那先生不知好歹，说出话来冲撞了公子。[眉批]一路描写，人情曲似。黄胜便道：“先生仔细看看，不要轻谈。”顾祥道：“此位是本县大名士，你只看他今科发解，还是发魁？”先生道：“小子只据理直讲，不知准否？贵造‘偏才





cepted their friendship. Huang Sheng even betrothed his younger sister Liuying to Decheng, who, hearing that Liuying was as talented as she was beautiful, could not have been more delighted. However, he had taken a vow much earlier in his life

*Not to marry until winning honor  
 In the imperial examinations.*

Impressed by this wise decision, Secretary Ma let him have his way. Therefore, now in his twenties, he remained a bachelor.

The year came around in which the provincial examinations were to be held. One day, Huang Sheng and Gu Xiang took Ma Decheng to a bookshop to buy books. Next to the bookshop was a fortune-teller's shop with a sign that read,

*To know what lies in your future,  
 Ask Zhang, the master who never errs.*

Ma Decheng commented, "If the man never errs, I suppose he'll be honest and tell the truth, whatever it is." His shopping done, he went next door and said to Mr. Zhang, folding his hands in a bow, "Would you please tell my fortune?"

The fortune-teller asked for the eight characters of his horoscope,<sup>6</sup> studied the relationship of mutual production and mutual conquest among the five phases and the arrangements of the five planets,<sup>7</sup> and said, "Only if you, sir, promise not to take amiss what I'm going to say will I dare to tell you the truth."

"A gentleman wants to know only about the misfortunes in his fate, rather than the blessings," said Ma Decheng. "There's no need to hide anything from me."

However, Huang Sheng and Gu Xiang, standing at his side, were afraid that the fortune-teller would foolishly blurt out something offensive to Ma. (*Good characterization all along.*) "Go over the horoscope carefully, sir," said Huang Sheng to the fortune-teller. "Don't say anything lightly!"

"You are talking about a distinguished man of this county," admonished Gu Xiang. "He needs to know only if he'll be among the top five in the exam, or if he'll win first honors."

The fortune-teller said, "May I just tell what I see? According to



归禄’，父主峥嵘，论理必生于贵宦之家。”黄顾二人拍手大笑道：“这就准了。”先生道：“五星中‘命缠奎壁’，文章冠世。”二人又大笑道：“好先生，算得准，算得准！”先生道：“只嫌二十二岁交这运不好，官煞重重，为祸不小。不但破家，亦防伤命。若过得三十一岁，后来到有五十年荣华。只怕一丈阔的水缺，双脚跳不过去。”黄胜就骂起来道：“放屁，那有这话！”顾祥伸出拳来道：“打这厮，打歪他的铁嘴！”马德称双手拦住道：“命之理微，只说他算不准就罢了，何须计较。”黄、顾二人，口中还不干净，却得马德称抵死劝回。那先生只求无事，也不想算命钱了。正是：

阿谀人人喜，直言个个嫌。

那时连马德称也只道自家唾手功名，虽不深怪那先生，却也不信。谁知三场得意，榜上无名。自十五岁进场，到今二十一岁，三科不中。若论年纪还不多，只为进场屡次了，反觉不利。又过



your eight characters, sir, you must have been born into an eminent official's family, with your father in a powerful position."

Huang and Gu clapped their hands in glee. "Ha, ha! How accurate!" they said.

The fortune-teller continued, "You were born under the two stars of learning, which means you are blessed with outstanding literary talent."

The two men again burst into hearty laughter. "What a good fortune-teller! How accurate! How accurate!"

"However, at twenty-two years of age, you will have some bad luck. You will suffer a major blow that will not only break up your family but also take some lives. If you manage to live past the age of thirty-one, you will be in for fifty years of booming prosperity. But I'm not sure if you can jump over this ten-foot-wide ditch."

Huang Sheng broke into a stream of curses, "What a lot of garbage! How can this ever be!"

Gu Xiang raised a fist, saying, "Let's beat up this guy, and smash his mouth!"

Ma Decheng stopped them with both hands, saying, "Fortune-telling is a difficult art. Let's just say that he doesn't know what he's doing, and that'll be the end of it. Why all this fuss?"

Huang and Gu went on swearing at the fortune-teller, but Ma managed, as best he could, to calm them down. The fortune-teller, eager to be left in peace, did not ask for payment for his service. Truly,

*Everyone loves those who flatter;  
All detest those who tell the truth.*

Even Ma Decheng himself thought that, for him, fame and fortune were within easy reach. Though he did not bitterly resent the fortune-teller, he did not believe what he had been told. But as it turned out, although he thought he had done well on the three sessions of the examinations, his name was not on the list of successful candidates.

From the age of fifteen until he was twenty-one, he sat for the examinations three times and failed each time. He was still young,



一年，刚刚二十二岁。马给事一个门生，又参了王振一本。王振疑心座主指使而然，再理前仇，密唆朝中心腹，寻马万群当初做有司时罪过，坐赃万两，着本处抚按追解。马万群本是个清官，闻知此信，一口气得病数日身死。马德称哀戚尽礼，此心无穷。却被有司逢迎上意，逼要万两赃银交纳。此时只得变卖家产，但是有税契可查者，有司径自估价官卖。只有续置一个小小田庄，未曾起税，官府不知。马德称恃顾祥平昔至交，只说顾家产业，央他暂时承认。又有古董书籍等项，约数百金，寄与黄胜家中去讫。却说有司官将马给事家房产田业尽数变卖，未足其数，兀自吹毛求疵不已。[眉批]吹毛求疵，以逢迎上司，有骨气者决不如此。马德称扶柩在坟堂屋内暂住。忽一日，顾祥遣人来言，府上馀下田庄，官府已知，瞒不得了。马德称无可奈何，只得入官。后来闻得反



but repeated failures frustrated him. Another year went by. He was now twenty-two.

A protégé of Secretary Ma's wrote a memorial to the emperor, requesting impeachment of Wang Zhen. Suspecting that Secretary Ma was behind the move, Wang Zhen secretly ordered some of his trusted men at court to dig up records of misdemeanors in Ma's past. Thus, Ma came to be accused of embezzling ten thousand taels of silver while serving at an earlier post, and the case was to be handled by the local yamen. In fact, Ma was not a corrupt official. The news gave him such a shock that he choked and fell ill. A few days later, he passed away.

A grief-stricken Ma Decheng wished with every fiber of his being to hold a proper burial service in fulfillment of his filial duties, but the local officials, trying to please their superiors, pressed him to repay the ten thousand taels of silver. He had no choice but to sell off family property. All items registered on government tax books were sold off at prices determined by local officials. The proceeds from the sales went into government coffers. There was, however, a small manor, bought after the major purchases, that had not been taxed and was therefore unknown to the government. Taking Gu Xiang to be the good friend that he had been in better times, Ma Decheng claimed that the small manor was the Gu family's property and pleaded with Gu Xiang to acknowledge it as such for the time being. He also entrusted to Huang Sheng some antiques and books worth hundreds of taels of silver.

Now the local officials, finding that the proceeds from the sale of all of Secretary Ma's real estate were still short of the target, continued probing for more possibilities. (*By probing for more, they are trying to curry favor with their superiors. Those of integrity will never stoop so low.*)

In the meantime, Ma Decheng had taken up lodging in a hut by his father's grave. Suddenly, one day, a messenger sent by Gu Xiang came to say, "The government has learned about that manor of yours. It's no use trying to lie about it anymore."

At his wits' end, Ma Decheng had no choice but to yield it to



是顾祥举首，一则恐后连累，二者博有司的笑脸。德称知人情奸险，付之一笑。过了岁馀，马德称往黄胜家索取寄顿物件，连走数次，俱不相接，结末遣人送一封帖来。马德称拆开看时，没有书柬，止封帐目一纸。内开某月某日某事用银若干，某该合认，某该独认。如此非一次，随将古董书籍等项估计扣除，不还一件。德称大怒，当了来之面，将帐目扯碎，大骂一场：“这般狗彘之辈，再休相见！”从此亲事亦不题起。黄胜巴不得杜绝马家，正中其怀。正合着西汉冯公的四句，道是：

一贵一贱，交情乃见；

一死一生，乃见交情。

马德称在坟屋中守孝，弄得衣衫蓝缕，口食不周。“当初父亲存日，也曾周济过别人，今日自己遭困，却谁人周济我？”守坟的老王撺掇他把坟上树木倒卖与人，德称不肯。老王指着路上几棵大柏树道：“这树不在冢傍，卖之无妨。”德称依允，讲定价钱，先倒一棵下来，中心都是虫蛀空的，不值钱了。再倒一棵，



the government. Later, he learned that it was Gu Xiang who had informed the authorities, partly to avoid being implicated and partly to win a smile from the local officials. Aware of how treacherous people could be, Ma Decheng dismissed it all with a laugh.

More than a year later, he went to Huang Sheng's home to claim the items he had entrusted to his friend, but however many times he went, he was denied admission into the house. Finally, a letter was sent to him. He opened the envelope, only to find that instead of a personal letter, it was a list of expenses, stating that on a certain day of a certain month, a certain amount of silver was spent for a certain purpose, and so the list went on. It also specified which expenses should have been partly paid by Ma and which ones entirely by him. More such bills followed. The estimated value of the antiques and books was then deducted as payment. Thus, nothing was left to be returned to Ma Decheng.

Flying into a rage, Decheng tore the bills into strips in the presence of the messenger, crying furiously, "I don't want to see such a dog and a pig of a man ever again!"

Henceforth, the subject of the betrothal was never brought up again. Huang Sheng was only too anxious to sever all ties with Ma, and what Ma had said could not have suited him better. This bears out the lines by Mr. Feng of the Western Han dynasty:

*A rise, a fall, a moment of life and death,  
 Such are the times that put friendship to the test.*

Living as he now was in a hut by his father's grave during the mourning period, dressed in rags, his daily subsistence uncertain, Decheng thought to himself, "My father helped other people when he was alive, but now that I am the poor and needy one, there's no one to offer me a helping hand."

Old Wang, the grave-watcher, urged him to sell the trees around the grave. He refused. Old Wang then pointed to a few big cypress trees by the roadside and suggested, "These trees are not around the grave. There's no harm in selling them."

Decheng agreed. After the price had been settled, he had one of the cypress trees felled, only to find it a worthless, worm-eaten



亦复如此。德称叹道：“此乃命也。”就教住手。那两棵树只当烧柴，卖不多钱，不两日用完了。身边只剩得十二岁一个家生小厮，央老王作中，也卖与人，得银五两。这小厮过门之后，夜夜小遗起来，主人不要了，退还老王处，索取原价。[眉批]凡落井下石者，皆坟树之虫、小童之便一类耳。德称不得已，情愿减退了二两身价卖了。好奇怪，第二遍去就不小遗了。这几夜小遗，分明是打落德称这二两银子，不在话下。光阴似箭，看看服满。德称贫困之极，无门可告。想起有个表叔在浙江杭州府做二府，湖州德清县知县也是父亲门生，不如去投奔他，两人之中，也有一遇。当下将几件什物家火，托老王卖充路费。浆洗了旧衣旧裳，收拾做一个包裹，搭船上路，直至杭州。问那表叔，刚刚十日之前，已病故了。随到德清县投那个知县时，又正遇这几日为银粮事情，与上司争论不合，使性要回去，告病关门，无由通报。正是：

时来风送滕王阁，运去雷轰荐福碑。

德称两处投人不着，想得南京衙门做官的多有年家。又趁船





hollow tree. A second tree was cut down, but it was just as hollow. With a sigh, Decheng said, "Such is my fate!" With that, he gave up the attempt. The two trees could be sold only as cheap firewood, and the money lasted for not more than two days.

There remained with him one last servant, a twelve-year-old page boy born of servants in the Ma household. Upon Ma's request, with Old Wang as a middleman, the boy was sold for five taels of silver. But after going to the new master, the boy began urinating in his bed every night. The master returned him to Old Wang and demanded the five taels of silver back. (*Those who cast stones on someone who has fallen into a well are not better than worms in graveyard trees or the urine of a little boy.*) Left with no alternative, Decheng sold the boy again to the same man for two taels less. How very strange! This time, the boy did not urinate at night. It was obviously a twist of fate meant to make Ma poorer by two taels of silver, but of this, no more need be said.

Time flew by with the speed of an arrow. Soon, the mourning period came to an end. Reduced to extreme poverty, Decheng had no one to turn to for help. But he recalled that he had an uncle who was the deputy prefect of Hangzhou, Zhejiang, and that the magistrate of Deqing County, Huzhou, was a former protégé of his father's. He thought he might just as well try his luck with these two men and see if one of them would be willing to take him. Right away, he put together a few miscellaneous housewares and asked Old Wang to sell them off for travel money. Carrying a parcel containing his washed and starched but worn-out clothes, he took a boat to Hangzhou. When he inquired, he was told that his uncle had died of illness only ten days before. He then went to see the magistrate of Deqing County, but the magistrate was in the middle of a dispute with his superiors over a financial matter, and, angrily claiming that he was returning to his hometown and pleading illness, closed his doors to visitors. Truly,

*When your time comes, good luck falls in your lap;<sup>8</sup>*

*When your time goes, bad luck follows your heels.<sup>9</sup>*

Decheng's hopes in both cases were dashed. Recalling many other



到京口，欲要渡江，怎奈连日大西风，上水船寸步难行，只得往句容一路步行而去，径往留都。且数留都那几个城门：

神策金川仪凤门，怀远清凉到石城。

三山聚宝连通济，洪武朝阳定太平。

马德称由通济门入城，到饭店中宿了一夜。次早往部科等各衙门打听，往年多有年家为官的，如今升的升了，转的转了，死的死了，坏的坏了，一无所遇。乘兴而来，却难兴尽而返。流连光景，不觉又是半年有馀，盘缠俱已用尽。虽不学伍大夫吴门乞食，也难免吕蒙正僧院投斋。忽一日，德称投斋到大报恩寺，遇见个相识乡亲，问其乡里之事。方知本省宗师按临岁考，德称在先服满时因无礼物送与学里师长，不曾动得起复文书及游学呈子，也不想如此久客于外。如今音信不通，教官径把他做避考申黜。[眉批] □官无怪□然。千里之遥，无由辨复。真是：

屋漏更遭连夜雨，船迟又遇打头风。

德称闻此消息，长叹数声，无面回乡，意欲觅个馆地，权且



officials in Nanjing who were his father's acquaintances, having passed the examinations in the same year as his father had, Decheng again took a boat to Jingkou [modern-day Zhenjiang]. He was about to cross the river when he was told that a strong westerly wind that had been blowing for the last few days made it impossible for boats heading west to move an inch. He saw nothing for it but to walk via Jurong in the direction of Nanjing, a city guarded by the gates of Shence, Jinchuan, Yifeng, Huaiyuan, Qingliang, Shicheng, Sanshan, Jubao, Tongji, Hongwu, Zhaoyang, and Taiping.

Ma Decheng entered the city through Tongji Gate and stayed at an inn for the night. The next morning, he went to the various bureaus to make inquiries and learned that of the many officials who had known his father, some had been promoted, some had transferred out of Nanjing, some had died, and some had come to grief. Having met no one he had hoped to see, he returned to his lodgings with none of the cheerfulness he had felt when he left.

Time went by, and before he knew it, more than six months had passed. All his means were exhausted. If his was not exactly the case of Wu Zixu begging for food at Wu Gate, he was at least as desperate as Lü Mengzheng trying to live off a monastery.<sup>10</sup>

One day, he was at Great Gratitude Repayment Monastery, trying to get a meal from the monks, when he ran into an acquaintance from his hometown. Upon asking for news from his hometown, he was told that the chief examiner was in their region to supervise the examinations of that year, but the local education officials, who had not received any gifts from him when his mourning period expired, had not written on his behalf a new application for candidacy or a statement of intention to travel. Nor had anyone expected his journey to be so prolonged. With no communication possible, he had already been disqualified as a candidate for the examinations. ([ Illegible. ]) Being a thousand *li* away from his hometown, there was nothing he could do to plead his case. Truly,

*An all-night rain wrecks a hut already leaking;  
 A headwind thwarts a boat already slow.*

At this news, Decheng heaved one deep sigh after another. Too



教书糊口，再作道理。谁知世人眼浅，不识高低。闻知异乡公子如此形状，必是个浪荡之徒，便有锦心绣肠，谁人信他，谁人请他？又过了几时，和尚们都怪他蒿恼。语言不逊，不可尽说。幸而天无绝人之路。有个运粮的赵指挥，要请个门馆先生同往北京，一则陪话，二则代笔，偶与承恩寺主持商议。德称闻知，想道：“乘此机会，往北京一行，岂不两便。”遂央僧举荐。那俗僧也巴不得遣那穷鬼起身，就在指挥面前称扬德称好处，且是束修甚少。赵指挥是武官，不管三七二十一，只要省，便约德称在寺，投刺相见，择日请了下船同行。德称口如悬河，宾主颇也得合。不一日到黄河岸口，德称偶然上岸登东。忽听发一声响，犹如天崩地裂之形。慌忙起身看时，吃了一惊，原来河口决了。赵指挥所统粮船三分四散，不知去向。但见水势滔滔，一望无际。德称举目无依，仰天号哭，叹道：“此乃天绝我命也，不如死休！”方欲投



ashamed to return home, he thought of finding a place to teach for a living before deciding on the next thing to do. But, alas, the ordinary man of the world lacks a discerning eye. Hearing of the reduced circumstances of the young man from another part of the land, everyone assumed he was a good-for-nothing. However refined and talented he was, none believed in him. None wanted his services. Some time later, the monks also began to loathe him. Their verbal insolence need not be repeated here.

Luckily, heaven always leaves a door open. There was a Grain Commissioner Zhao who wanted to hire an educated man to join him in escorting a shipment of grain to Beijing, partly to keep him company and partly to write documents for him. Hearing that Commissioner Zhao was consulting the abbot of Gratitude Repayment Monastery about a candidate, Decheng thought, "If I could take this chance and go to Beijing, wouldn't that work out nicely in more ways than one?" Thereupon, he asked the monks for a recommendation. Those worldly monks who could not wait for the pauper to get out of their sight, sang his praises to the commissioner, adding that he would ask for very little by way of remuneration. As a military official, what else did Zhao care for besides keeping down expenses? So at Zhao's invitation, Decheng handed in his visiting card and met the commissioner in the monastery.

On a chosen day, Zhao invited Decheng onto his boat to start the journey. Decheng was as eloquent as could be, and the two got along quite well.

When they reached the mouth of the Yellow River several days later, Decheng was on shore, relieving himself, when he suddenly heard a tremendous blast as terrifying as if the skies had collapsed and the earth had cracked open. Hastily, he rose to take a look. With a start, he saw that the river levees had given way. The boats of grain Zhao was escorting had been washed away and scattered in all directions by the raging waves that surged as far as the eye could see. Feeling all alone in the world with no one to turn to for help, Decheng burst into cries of despair, his face turned toward the sky. "If heaven is so determined to have me die," he lamented, "I might as well do



入河流，遇一老者相救，问其来历。德称诉罢，老者恻然怜悯，道：“看你青春美质，将来岂无发迹之期？此去短盘至北京，费用亦不多，老夫带得有三两荒银，权为程敬。”说罢，去摸袖里，却摸个空，连呼“奇怪”，仔细看时，袖底有一小孔，那老者赶早出门，不知在那里遇着剪绺的剪去了。老者嗟叹道：“古人云：‘得咱心肯日，是你运通时。’今日看起来，就是心肯，也有个天数。非是老夫吝惜，乃足下命运不通所致耳。欲屈足下过舍下，又恐路远不便。”乃邀德称到市心里，向一个相熟的主人家借银五钱为赠。[眉批] 贤哉此老，何异淮阴漂母。德称深感其意，只得受了，再三称谢而别。德称想这五钱银子，如何盘缠得许多路。思量一计，买下纸笔，一路卖字。德称写作俱佳，争奈时运未利，不能讨得文人墨士赏鉴，不过村坊野店胡乱买几张糊壁，此辈晓得什么好歹，那肯出钱。

德称有一顿没一顿，半饥半饱，直捱到北京城里，下了饭店。问店主人借缙绅看查，有两个相厚的年伯，一个是兵部尤侍郎，



so!”

He was about to throw himself into the river when an old man stopped him. The old man asked him who he was. After hearing his account, the old man said in pity, “How can a handsome young man like you not be destined to rise in life someday? You are not very far from Beijing now. You won’t need a lot of money. I have with me three taels of silver that I have no use for. Please take them.”

So saying, he started groping in his sleeve, but he found nothing. “How very strange!” he exclaimed over and over again. Upon closer inspection, he found a small hole in his sleeve. He had left home early that day, and along the way, some thief must have cut his sleeve and stolen his silver. The old man commented with a sigh, “As the ancients say, ‘The day you win sympathy and support is the day your luck begins.’ But what happened today tells me that even with sympathy and support, you still need heavenly will. It’s not that I begrudge my money, but you are just not in luck. I would gladly invite you to my humble home, but it’s too far from here.” Instead, he took Decheng to a friend of his who lived in the center of the town and borrowed five maces of silver, which he then gave to Decheng as a gift. (*What a kind old gentleman! Just as kind as the washerwoman of Huaiyin.*)<sup>11</sup>

Deeply grateful, Decheng felt obliged to accept the money and took his leave with profuse words of thanks. Since five mace of silver was not going to get him much farther along on his journey, he thought of an idea. He used the money to buy a brush-pen and some paper so that he could sell his writing services along the way. Decheng was accomplished in the arts of writing as well as calligraphy, but since his time had not yet come, he had not won appreciation from scholars and connoisseurs. People in village shops buying sheets of calligraphy to use as wallpaper could not tell good penmanship from bad and were quite unwilling to pay good money for it.

And so, in a half-starved state, never knowing where his next meal was coming from, Decheng made his way to the city of Beijing and betook himself to an inn, where he asked the innkeeper for a directory of officials living in the city. In the listing, he found two of



一个是左卿曹光禄。当下写了名刺，先去谒曹公。曹公见其衣衫不整，心下不悦，又知是王振的仇家，不敢招架，送下小小程仪就辞了。再去见尤侍郎，那尤公也是个没意思的，自家一无所赠，写一封柬帖荐在边上陆总兵处。店主人见有这封书，料有际遇，将五两银子借为盘缠。谁知正值北虏也先为寇，大掠人畜，陆总兵失机，扭解来京问罪，连尤侍郎都罢官去了。德称在塞外担阁了三四个月，又无所遇，依旧回到京城旅寓。店主人折了五两银子，没处取讨，又欠下房钱饭钱若干，索性做个宛转，倒不好推他出门，[眉批]亦算贤主人矣。想起一个主意来。前面胡同有个刘千户，其子八岁，要访个下路先生教书，乃荐德称。刘千户大喜，讲过束修二十两。店主人先支一季束修自己收受，准了所借之数。刘千户颇尽主道，送一套新衣服，迎接德称到彼坐馆。自此饗餐





his father's close friends who had passed the examinations in the same year as his father. One was Deputy Secretary You of the Ministry of War, and the other, a Mr. Cao, was deputy director of the Court of Imperial Entertainments.

Right away, Decheng made two visiting cards and went first to see Director Cao. The young man's shabbiness displeased Mr. Cao. Moreover, knowing of the feud between Wang Zhen and the Ma family, Mr. Cao thought it prudent not to make any commitment. He gave the young man a small gift and dismissed him.

Next, Decheng went to see Secretary You, but he did not turn out to be much of a friend either. Not giving Decheng anything by way of a gift, he wrote a letter recommending him to Commander Lu on the frontier. Impressed by the title on the envelope, the innkeeper felt confident in Decheng's eventual rise to fame and fortune and lent him five taels of silver for his journey.

However, things turned out in a way no one could have expected. Because the Mongol tribes were wreaking havoc in the north, kidnapping people and taking animals, Commander Lu was taken under guard to Beijing to face charges of failing to keep the situation under control. Even Secretary You himself was stripped of his official rank and had to return to his hometown.

So, having accomplished nothing in these three to four months of life on the frontier, he went back to the old inn in the capital. The innkeeper could not bring himself to demand repayment of the five taels of silver on top of the bills for room and board. Instead, he made a virtue of necessity and let Decheng stay on. (*What a good man, the innkeeper!*)

Then an idea occurred to him. In a nearby lane, there was a Commander Liu who was looking for a tutor from the south to teach his eight-year-old son. The innkeeper recommended Decheng. Commander Liu was delighted and settled with the innkeeper on a salary of twenty taels of silver. The innkeeper kept a part of the salary for himself and wrote off the amount Decheng owed.

Acting the part of a generous employer, Commander Liu gave Decheng a set of new clothes by way of welcoming him to the estab-



不缺，且训诵之暇，重温经史，再理文章。刚刚坐榖三个月，学生出起痘来，太医下药不效，十二朝身死。刘千户单只此子，正在哀痛，又有刻薄小人对他说道：“马德称是个降祸的太岁，耗气的鹤神，所到之处，必有灾殃。[眉批]怪他说不得。赵指挥请了他就坏了粮船，尤侍郎荐了他就坏了官职。他是个不吉利的秀才，不该与他亲近。”刘千户不想自儿死生有命，到抱怨先生带累了。各处传说，从此京中起他一个异名，叫做“钝秀才”。

凡钝秀才街上过去，家家闭户，处处关门。但是早行遇着钝秀才的一日没采，做买卖的折本，寻人的不遇，告官的理输，讨债的不是厮打定是厮骂，就是小学生上学也被先生打几下手心。有此数项，把他做妖物相看。[眉批]英雄失路，可怜，可怜！倘然狭路相逢，一个个吐口涎沫，叫句吉利方走。可怜马德称衣冠之胄，饱学之儒，今日时运不利，弄得日无饱餐，夜无安宿。同时有个浙中吴监生，性甚硬直。闻知钝秀才之名，不信有此事，特地寻他相会。延至寓所，叩其胸中所学，甚有接待之意。坐席犹未暖，忽得家书报家中老父病故，踉跄而别，转荐与同乡吕鸿胪。吕公



ishment. Henceforth, Decheng found himself well supplied with the necessities of life. He devoted what free time he had left after class to reviewing the classics and histories and doing his writing exercises.

However, barely had three months gone by when his pupil came down with chickenpox. The physician's prescriptions did not work, and the boy died twelve days later. Overcome with grief at the loss of his only son, Commander Liu heard these unkind remarks from some spiteful people: "Ma Decheng is nothing short of bad luck itself. Wherever he goes, misfortune follows suit. (*A valid point.*) Director Zhao hired him, only to lose all the grain shipments in his charge. Secretary You recommended him, only to be stripped of his official rank. He's a scholar who brings bad luck, certainly not someone to keep around." So instead of attributing the boy's death to fate, the commander blamed the tutor for bringing his son bad luck.

As the story got around, Decheng came to be known in the capital as the "Luckless Scholar." Wherever the Luckless Scholar went, all doors along the street closed, one after another. Those who ran in to him in the morning were dogged by bad luck the rest of the day. Those in business suffered a loss; visitors missed the ones they came to see; those filing lawsuits lost their case; those demanding repayment of debts were either beaten up or yelled at. Even a pupil would be slapped on the palm by the teacher. Decheng was made out to be quite a monster. (*A great man reduced to such dire circumstances. Poor thing!*) Those who ran into him on a narrow path would spit onto the ground and say, "Good luck be with me!" before moving on. How tragic that Ma Decheng, a learned scholar from a respectable family, now found himself down on his luck, without even adequate food and housing!

At the time, there was a Mr. Wu in the mid-Zhejiang region, a student at the National University, who, being quite an upright and straightforward man, did not believe what he had heard about the Luckless Scholar. He went out of his way to invite the latter home so as to sound him out about his knowledge, and a cordial host Mr. Wu turned out to be. But before the mats they were sitting on got warm, Wu suddenly received a letter from his hometown, saying that his



请至寓所，待以盛饌，方才举箸，忽然厨房中火起，举家惊慌逃奔。德称因腹馁缓行了几步，被地方拿他做火头，解去官司，不由分说，下了监铺。幸吕鸿胪是个有天理的人，替他使钱，免其枷责。从此钝秀才其名益著，无人招接，仍复卖字为生。

惯与裱家书寿轴，喜逢新岁写春联。

夜间常在祖师庙、关圣庙、五显庙这几处安身。或与道人代写疏头，趁几文钱度日。

话分两头，却说黄病鬼黄胜，自从马德称去后，初时还怕他还乡，到宗师行黜，不见回家，又有人传信，道是随赵指挥粮船上京，被黄河水决，已覆没矣。心下坦然无虑，朝夕逼勒妹子六嫖改聘。六嫖以死自誓，决不二天。到天顺晚年乡试，黄胜夤缘贿赂，买中了秋榜，里中奉承者填门塞户。闻知六嫖年长未嫁，



aged father had died of an illness. Staggering from the shock, he bid his guest adieu but recommended him to a fellow townsman, Mr. Lü, minister of ceremonies.

Accordingly, Mr. Lü invited Decheng home and treated him to a fine meal, but barely had they raised their chopsticks when the kitchen caught fire, and the whole family fled in fright. Decheng, too weak from hunger to run as fast as the others, was caught by the local headman, who accused him of causing the fire and brought him to the authorities. Without being given an opportunity to explain, he was thrown into jail. Fortunately, Minister Lü was a man of high morals. He went to much expense and got Decheng acquitted.

From that time on, the Luckless Scholar took on greater notoriety. With no one willing to extend a helping hand, he eked out a living as before, by selling his calligraphy,

*Writing scrolls of birthday greetings for art sellers,  
 And auspicious couplets for Spring Festivals.*

At night, he often lodged in Patriarch Temple, Lord Guan Temple, and Five Manifestations Temple. Sometimes he also wrote prayers for Daoist priests in exchange for a few pennies to keep himself alive.

Let us pick up another thread of the story and come to Huang Sheng, Huang the Sickly Man. For a time after Ma Decheng's departure, he still feared Ma's possible return. Then, during Ma's continued absence after the chief examiner disqualified him, Huang heard that Ma had followed Director Zhao to Beijing to escort a shipment of grain and had drowned when the levees gave way to the surging waters of the Yellow River. The news put his mind at ease.

Morning and night, he pressed his younger sister Liuying to marry some other man, but she was vowed that she would rather die than marry any man other than the one already betrothed to her. In the examinations at the provincial level toward the end of the Tianshun reign period, Huang Sheng bribed those in key positions and bought himself the degree of *juven*. Sycophants coming to offer congratulations filled up his house, blocking the doors and the windows. Hearing that he had a sister of marriageable age but still unbetrothed, suitors



求亲者日不离门，六嫖坚执不从，黄胜也无可奈何。到冬底，打叠行囊往北京会试。马德称见了乡试录，已知黄胜得意，必然到京，想起旧恨，羞与相见，预先出京躲避。谁知黄胜不耐功名，若是自家学问上挣来的前程，倒也理之当然，不放在心里。他原是买来的举人，小人乘君子之器，不觉手之舞之，足之蹈之。又将银五十两买了个勘合，驰驿到京，寻了个大大的下处，且不去温习经史，终日穿花街过柳巷，在院子里表子家行乐。常言道乐极悲生，嫖出一身广疮。科场渐近，将白金百两送太医，只求速愈。太医用轻粉劫药，数日之内，身体光鲜，草草完场而归。不够半年，疮毒大发，医治不痊，呜呼哀哉死了。既无兄弟，又无子息，族间都来抢夺家私。其妻王氏又没主张，全赖六嫖一身，内支丧事，外应亲族，按谱立嗣，众心俱悦服无言。

六嫖自家也分得一股家私，不下数千金。[眉批] □□□□为德岂



swarmed to his house day in and day out. Liuying's resolve was as firm as ever, and there was nothing Huang Sheng could do about it. At the end of winter, he packed for a journey to Beijing for the palace examinations.

Having read Huang Sheng's name on the list of successful candidates who had passed the provincial level of the examinations, Ma Decheng thought that Huang Sheng would surely go to Beijing. With bitter memories coming back to him, he felt too ashamed of his present circumstances and decided to leave Beijing so as to avoid seeing Huang Sheng.

As a matter of fact, all the fame and success had turned Huang Sheng's head. Had he gained fame through his learning, he would have taken everything for granted and not made too much of it, but as his *juren* degree had been bought with money, he literally danced with joy, for it was indeed a case of a petty rogue stepping into the shoes of a gentleman. With fifty taels of silver, he bought an official travel permit and, once in Beijing, took up lodging in a fancy inn. Instead of reviewing the classics and the histories, he spent the days in the streets of ill repute and wallowed in pleasure in the prostitutes' quarters. As the saying goes, "Extreme joy begets sorrow." His dissolute life gave him boils all over his body. As the day of the examinations drew near, he offered a hundred taels of silver to a physician, hoping for a rapid recovery. The physician applied strong doses of calomel, and within several days, Huang Sheng's skin regained its smoothness. He went through the examinations perfunctorily and returned home.

In less than half a year, the boils came back with a vengeance, this time beyond cure. He died, leaving no brothers or children. As the relatives pounced on his property, his wife Wang-shi had no idea what to do. It was Liuying who made arrangements for the funeral, dealt with the relatives, and supervised matters relating to inheritance among kith and kin in accordance with the family lineage books. All this she did by herself, much to the satisfaction of all and sundry. No one raised any complaints. Liuying herself also got one portion of the property worth several thousands taels of gold. ([Illegible.] )



其然乎。想起丈夫覆舟消息，未知真假，费了多少盘缠，各处遣人打听下落。有人自北京来，传说马德称未死，落莫在京，京中都呼为“钝秀才”。六姨是个女中丈夫，甚有劈着，收拾起辎重银两，带了丫鬟僮仆，雇下船只，一径来到北京寻取丈夫。[眉批]高人。访知马德称在真定府龙兴寺大悲阁写《法华经》，乃将白金百两，新衣数套，亲笔作书，缄封停当，差老家人王安赍去，迎接丈夫。分付道：“我如今便与马相公援例入监，请马相公到此读书应举，不可迟滞。”王安到龙兴寺，见了长老，问：“福建马相公何在？”长老道：“我这里只有个‘钝秀才’，并没有什么马相公。”王安道：“就是了，烦引相见。”和尚引到大悲阁下，指道：“傍边桌上写经的，不是钝秀才？”王安在家时曾见过马德称几次，今日虽然蓝缕，如何不认得？一见德称便跪下磕头。马德称却在贫贱患难之中，不料有此，一时想不起来，慌忙扶住，问道：“足下何人？”王安道：“小的是将乐县黄家，奉小姐之命，特来迎接相公，小姐有书在此。”德称便问：“你小姐嫁归何宅？”王安道：“小姐守志至今，誓不改适。因家相公近故，小姐亲到





Recalling the rumor about her fiancé having drowned, she spent goodness knows how much money, sending people to find out if it was true or not. Someone from Beijing said that Ma Chengde was still alive and that, stranded in Beijing, he was called “the Luckless Scholar.” Being a truly worthy woman and one of action, Liuying put together some luggage and, equipped with much silver, rented a boat and traveled with her maidservants all the way to Beijing to look for her fiancé. (*What a worthy person!*) Through inquiries, she learned that Ma Decheng was copying the *Lotus Sutra* in Great Compassion Hall of Longxing Monastery in Zhending Prefecture and sent Wang An, an old house servant, to greet her husband-to-be, along with a hundred taels of silver, several suits of new clothes, and a sealed letter she had written herself. To Wang An she gave these instructions: “I’m going to pay the National University to get Master Ma into it. So your job is to invite him over so that he can study here in preparation for the examinations. Now, go with all speed.”

Upon arrival in Longxing Monastery, Wang An saw the abbot and asked, “Where, may I ask, is Master Ma from Fujian?”

The abbot replied, “I have here only a Luckless Scholar. There’s no ‘Master’ Ma here.”

“Well, that’s him! Please let me see him.”

The monk led Wang An to Great Compassion Hall and said, pointing, “That’s the Luckless Scholar copying the sutra at the desk.”

Wang An had seen Ma Decheng a few times at home and did not fail to recognize him, however shabbily he was dressed. Promptly he fell to his knees and started kowtowing. Ma Decheng, in this lowest moment of his life, found this reverence all too unexpected. Unable to recall who this man was, Decheng quickly raised him to his feet and asked, “Who might you be?”

“I am a servant in the Huang household of Jiangle County, here to greet you, sir, by the young mistress’ orders. Here’s the young mistress’ letter for you.”

“Whom did your young mistress marry?”

“She remains unmarried to this day. She has vowed never to mar-



京中来访相公，要与相公入粟北雍，请相公早办行期。”德称方才开缄而看，原来是一首诗，诗曰：

何事萧郎恋远游？应知乌帽未笼头。

图南自有风云便，且整双箫集凤楼。

德称看罢，微微而笑。王安献上衣服银两，且请起程日期。德称道：“小姐盛情，我岂不知？只是我有言在先：‘若要洞房花烛夜，必须金榜挂名时。’向因贫困，学业久荒。今幸有馀资可供灯火之费，且待明年秋试得意之后，方敢与小姐相见。”[眉批]硬汉。王安不敢相逼，求赐回书。德称取写经馀下的茧丝一幅，答诗四句：

逐逐风尘已厌游，好音刚喜见侬头。

嫦娥夙有攀花约，莫遣箫声出凤楼。

德称封了诗，付与王安。王安星夜归京，回复了六姨小姐。开诗看毕，叹惜不已。

其年天顺爷爷正遇“土木之变”，皇太后权请郕王摄位，改元景泰。将奸阉王振全家抄没，凡参劾王振吃亏的加官赐荫。黄小



ry another man. My master passed away recently. The young lady is now in Beijing to see you and to pay your way into the National University. She also asks you to leave this place as soon as possible.”

At that moment, Decheng opened the envelope and saw a poem inside:

*Why does he of my heart linger afar?  
He should know that a career is at hand.  
The wind and clouds help the roc soar high;<sup>12</sup>  
The flutes attract the phoenix to the roof.*

After reading the lines, Decheng smiled slightly. As Wang An presented the clothes and silver and asked when he was going to leave the monastery, Decheng said, “I am certainly well aware of the young lady’s good intentions, but I have said before, ‘Not to marry until winning honor / In the imperial examinations.’ Being such a poor man, I’ve been neglecting my studies. Since the young lady is fortunate enough to have money to spare, she may use it to pay for items like lamp oil for my use. I will not presume to see her until after I pass the examinations next autumn.” (*What a man of honor!*)

Wang An did not press him but asked for a letter of reply. Using what remained of a silk scroll on which he had been copying the sutra, he wrote a quatrain by way of a reply:

*Travel-worn, I’m tired of a life on the road;  
The servant’s face was a delight to see.  
The Moon Goddess has a date to pick the flowers;  
Let not the flute notes leave the phoenix tower.*

Decheng put the poem in an envelope and handed it to Wang An, who then returned to Beijing posthaste to report back to Liuying. After reading the poem, she heaved sigh upon sigh.

That year [1049], Emperor Tianshun was captured by the Mongols at Tumupu, in consequence of which the empress dowager asked Prince Cheng to act as regent. The reign title was changed to Jingtai. All the property of the evil minister Wang Zhen was confiscated. Those who had suffered retaliation because of their attempts to impeach Wang Zhen all received promotions for themselves and titles for their offspring.



姐在寓中得了这个消息，又遣王安到龙兴寺报与马德称知道。德称此时虽然借寓僧房，图书满案，鲜衣美食，已不似在先了。和尚们晓得是马公子马相公，无不钦敬。其年正是三十二岁，交逢好运，正应张铁口先生推算之语。可见：

万般皆是命，半点不由人。

德称正在寺中温习旧业，又得了王安报信，收拾行囊，别了长老赴京，另寻一寓安歇。黄小姐拨家僮二人伏侍，一应日用供给，络绎馈送。

德称草成表章，叙先臣马万群直言得祸之由，一则为父亲乞恩昭雪，一则为自己辨复前程。圣旨倒下，准复马万群原官，仍加三级；马任复学复廩；所抄没田产，有司追给。德称差家僮报与小姐知道。黄小姐又差王安送银两到德称寓中，叫他廩例入粟。明春就考了监元，至秋发魁。就于寓中整备喜筵，与黄小姐成亲。来春又中了第十名会魁，殿试二甲，考选庶吉士。上表给假还乡，



After hearing this news in her temporary lodging, Miss Huang sent Wang An to Longxing Monastery to report to Ma Decheng, who, though still an unpaying guest at the monastery, was living in changed circumstances, with books piling up on his desk and an ample supply of nice clothes and good food. Now aware that he was a Mr. Ma or a Master Ma, the monks, one and all, showed him much respect and admiration. He was thirty-two years old, the year that, just as Mr. Zhang, the never-erring fortune-teller, had predicted, was to mark the beginning of the lucky part of his life. Indeed,

*Everything in life is determined by fate;*

*Nothing follows the dictates of human will.*

Decheng was reviewing his lessons in the monastery when Wang An arrived with the news. He packed up his belongings, took leave of the abbot, and went to Beijing, where he took up lodging in a different inn. Miss Huang sent over two servants and a constant supply of items for his daily needs.

Decheng wrote a memorial to the court, stating that his father Ma Wanqun, former court official, had been made to suffer because of his blunt criticism of Wang Zhen. He did this partly to rehabilitate his father and partly out of considerations for his own future. The regent responded by reinstating Ma Wanqun, giving him a three-grade promotion, and restoring Ma Decheng's status as a scholar candidate for the imperial examinations. All of the confiscated estate and property were to be returned by the local officials. Decheng dispatched a servant to inform Miss Huang of what had happened, and she in turn had Wang An send silver to Decheng so that he could pay his way into the National University.

In the following spring, Decheng won first place in the examinations at the university level. In autumn, he won first honors in the provincial-level examinations. There, in his own lodgings, he had a feast laid out in celebration of his and Miss Huang's wedding. The following spring, he won tenth place in the examinations on the Five Classics and second place in the last round of the palace examination and was admitted into the Imperial Academy.

He wrote another memorial to the court, this time requesting



焚黄谒墓，圣旨准了。夫妻衣锦还乡，府县官员出郭迎接。往年抄没田宅，俱用官价赎还，造册交割，分毫不少。宾朋一向疏失者，此日奔走其门如市。只有顾祥一人自觉羞惭，迁往他郡去讠。时张铁口先生尚在，闻知马公子得第荣归，特来拜贺，德称厚赠之而去。后来马任直做到礼、兵、刑三部尚书，六姨小姐封一品夫人。所生二子，俱中甲科，簪纓不绝。至今延平府人，说读书人不得第者，把“钝秀才”为比。后人诗叹云：

十年落魄少知音，一日风云得称心。

秋菊春桃时各有，何须海底去捞针。



permission to return to his hometown and pay homage at his father's grave. He also intended to tell his deceased father about the imperial favors by burning a letter written on yellow paper to him. The request was granted.

In glory, the couple returned to their hometown. They were greeted well before they reached the city gate by an assembly of officials from the county and prefectural yamens. The confiscated estate and property were returned to them at government price, strictly in accordance with the account books and not even one penny short. Those friends who had shunned Decheng now swarmed to his door. Only Gu Xiang felt so ashamed that he moved to another county. Mr. Zhang, the never-erring fortune-teller, went to offer congratulations upon hearing that Young Master Ma had returned after winning honors at the examinations. He left with a handsome reward from Decheng.

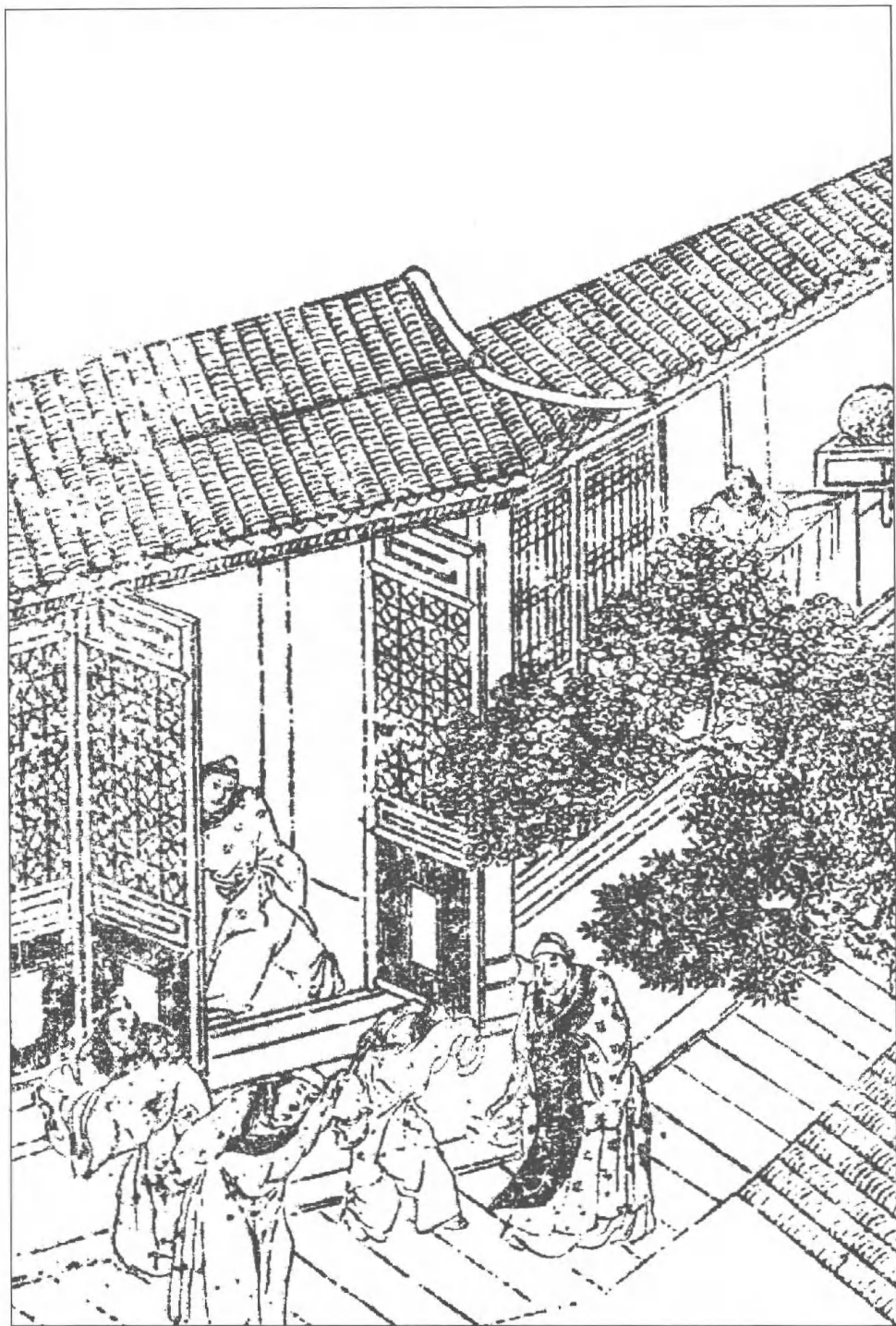
Later, Decheng rose to be secretary of the Ministries of Rites, Defense, and Justice. Liuying was enfeoffed as Lady of the First Order. Both of their two sons won the *jinshi* degree in the civil service examinations, and the family line never ran short of officials. To this day, in Yanping Prefecture, unsuccessful scholars are still being compared to the Luckless Scholar. A later poet had this to say:

*Shunned by all during ten years of distress,  
He rose to fame and fortune overnight.  
The right flowers will bloom in the right season;  
Why fish uselessly for a needle in the sea?*

<sup>1</sup> Lü Mengzheng (944–1011), prime minister for three terms under Emperors Taizong and Zhenzong of the Song dynasty, had suffered great poverty earlier in his life. See the prologue story about Lü and a melon in story 18, in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Zhu Maichen (d.115 B.C.E.) started his career as an official quite late in life. See the prologue story about his wife divorcing him in story 27, in Feng, *Stories Old and New*.

<sup>3</sup> There was no Ganlu reign period in the Tang dynasty. The author might have been thinking of the "Ganlu Incident" of 835, in which Prime Minister Li Xun, under Emperor Wenzong of the Tang dynasty, led a failed attempt to bring down the eunuch clique in the imperial court. There were, however, several reign periods called Ganlu in other dynasties, including one from 53 to 50 B.C. under Emperor Xuandi of the Han dynasty.







<sup>4</sup> Han Xin (d.196 B.C.E.) later helped Liu Bang found the Han dynasty. For more on Han Xin, see note 2 of story 4.

Before he rose to power, Su Qin (d.317 B.C.) of the Warring States period was shunned by his kinsmen for returning home impoverished after a prolonged journey to find employment.

<sup>5</sup> Yan Ziyuan is Yan Hui (521–490 B.C.E.), one of Confucius's students. For more about Yan Hui, see story 1.

Yu Shinan (558–638) was a famous calligrapher of the Tang dynasty. "Having learned by heart enough books to fill five carriages" was what he said, not about himself, but in praise of Liang Renfang of the Southern Dynasties period.

<sup>6</sup> The eight characters of the astrological chart are two for the hour of birth, two for the day, two for the month, and two for the year.

<sup>7</sup> The five phases are water, fire, wood, metal, and earth. The five planets are Mercury (water), Mars (fire), Jupiter (wood), Venus (metal), and Saturn (earth).

<sup>8</sup> Literally, "When your time comes, the wind will send you to the Pavilion of Prince Teng." This is from a Tang dynasty legend about Wang Bo (649–676), a famous poet and master of prose. He was on his way to visit his father in Jiangxi when a gust of wind blew him to the prefect's banquet in the Pavilion of Prince Teng in the city of Nanchang by West River, and that was how he came to write his best-known piece, "A Preface to the Poem on the 'Pavilion of Prince Teng.'"

<sup>9</sup> Literally, "When your time goes, a thunderbolt will smash the stone tablet of Jianfu Temple." This is from a Song dynasty story: When the famous essayist and poet Fan Zhongyan (989–1052) was prefect of Raozhou, a poverty-stricken scholar went to seek his help. Fan Zhongyan offered to make him one thousand rubbings of a Jianfu Temple stone tablet with inscriptions by the most popular calligrapher of the day, Ouyang Xun, and each rubbing would be worth a thousand in cash. On the very night before the rubbings were to be done, the stone tablet was destroyed by a thunderbolt.

<sup>10</sup> Wu Yuan, courtesy name Zixu (d. 484 B.C.E.), was a member of the aristocracy in the state of Wu during the Spring and Autumn period. For a time, he was so impoverished that he was reduced to being a beggar. See also note 3 of story 4 and note 22 of story 11.

It is said that in his days of poverty, Lü Mengzheng (see note 1 above) used to join the monks at meals whenever he heard the meal bell of the nearby monastery. The monks grew so sick of him that they took to ringing the bell only after they had already eaten.

<sup>11</sup> This is a reference to the old woman who gave food to Han Xin (see note 4) when she noticed that he looked hungry. For more on this story, see note 11 of story 6.

<sup>12</sup> "Wind and clouds" is a metaphor for a scholar's receiving recognition from the imperial government.



## 第十八卷

### 老门生三世报恩

买只牛儿学种田，结间茅屋向林泉。  
也知老去无多日，且向山中过几年。  
为利为官终幻客，能诗能酒总神仙。  
世间万物俱增价，老去文章不值钱。

这八句诗，乃是达者之言，末句说“老去文章不值钱”，这一句，还有个评论。大抵功名迟速，莫逃乎命，也有早成，也有晚达。早成者未必有成，晚达者未必不达。不可以年少而自恃，不可以年老而自弃。这老少二字，也在年数上，论不得的。假如甘罗十二岁为丞相，十三岁上就死了，这十二岁之年，就是他发白齿落、背曲腰弯的时候了，后头日子已短，叫不得少年。又如姜太公八十岁还在渭水钓鱼，遇了周文王以后车载之，拜为师尚父，文王崩，武王立，他又秉钺为军师，佐武王伐纣，定了周家八百年基业，封于齐国。又教其子丁公治齐，自己留相周朝，直活到一百二十岁方死。你说八十岁一个老渔翁，谁知日后还有许多事



## Story 18

### A Former Protégé Repays His Patron unto the Third Generation

*Buy an ox and learn to till the fields;  
Build a thatched hut by the spring in the woods.  
Without much time remaining in this life,  
Why not spend a few years in the hills?  
Wealth and rank are but an illusion;  
Only poems and wine bring true bliss.  
The price of everything is on the rise;  
But worthless is the talent of the old.*

The above eight lines are truly words of the wise, but I take issue with the last line “But worthless is the talent of the old.” Generally speaking, the timing of one’s rise in life, whether early or late, is predetermined by fate. Those who achieve fame and fortune early in life may not, after all, retain what they have for the rest of their lives. Those who get there late in life may not be any less successful. The young must not be conceited, nor should the old give up hope. Even the terms “old” and “young” are relative.

For example, Ganluo became prime minister at the age of twelve but died at thirteen.<sup>1</sup> Thus, he had reached the age of hoary hair, loose teeth, stooped shoulders, and a bent back when he was twelve. Without much time left in his life, he no longer qualified as a youth. There is also the case of Jiang Taigong,<sup>2</sup> who, at eighty years of age, was fishing at the Wei River when he was accosted by King Wen of Zhou. He was invited onto the king’s carriage and addressed respectfully as “Master”. After King Wen died and King Wu took the throne, Jiang became his military adviser. He helped King Wu conquer King Zhou of Shang and found the Zhou dynasty that was to last for eight hundred years. After he was granted the territory of the state of Qi, he had his son Duke Ding rule Qi while he himself remained in the Zhou dynasty court as the prime minister until he passed away at the age of one hundred and twenty. How could you have foreseen



业，日子正长哩。这等看将起来，那八十岁上还是他初束发，刚顶冠，做新郎，应童子试的时候，叫不得老年。世人只知眼前贵贱，那知去后的日长日短？见个少年富贵的奉承不暇，多了几年年纪，蹉跎不遇，就怠慢他，这是短见薄识之辈。譬如农家，也有早谷，也有晚稻，正不知那一种收成得好？不见古人云：

东园桃李花，早发还先萎。

迟迟涧畔松，郁郁含晚翠。

闲话休提。却说国朝正统年间，广西桂林府兴安县有一秀才，覆姓鲜于，名同，字大通。八岁时曾举神童，十一岁游庠，超增补廪。论他的才学，便是董仲舒、司马相如也不看在眼里，真个是胸藏万卷，笔扫千军。论他的志气，便像冯京、商辂连中三元，也只算他便袋里东西，真个是足躐风云，气冲牛斗。何期才高而数奇，志大而命薄。年年科举，岁岁观场，不能得朱衣点额，黄



the long and prosperous career for which an eighty-year-old fisherman was destined? Now in his case, at eighty years of age, he was like a young man just reaching the stage when his hair should be tied up under a cap, when he should get married and make his first attempt at the lowest level of the imperial examinations. At that point, an old man he was not.

The ordinary men of the world judge a man only by his status at the moment, with never a thought of future possibilities. Like the shortsighted ignoramuses they are, they dance attendance on rich young men but give the cold shoulder to older men whose talents have not won recognition. Think of the farmers; they grow rice for early as well as late harvesting. It is hard to say which rice yields a better crop. Consider what the ancients used to say:

*Peach and plum blossoms in the east garden,  
First to bloom and first to wither;  
Pine trees by the ravines, slow in their growth,  
Last the longest in their verdant splendor.*

But enough of this chatter. Let me now tell a story that takes place in the Zhengtong reign period [1436-49] of this dynasty.

In Xing'an County, Guilin Prefecture, Guangxi, there lived a scholar by the name of Xianyu Tong, courtesy name Datong. At eight years of age, he was given the title Child Prodigy upon recommendation. At eleven, he started formal education in a government school and skipped a grade to become a student supported by government stipend. So profound was his erudition that he thought nothing of men like Dong Zhongshu and Sima Xiangru.<sup>3</sup> Truly, he had learned ten thousand books by heart, his brush-pen mighty enough to wipe out an army one thousand strong. So high was his opinion of himself that he turned up his nose at men like Feng Jing [1021-94] and Shang Luo [1414-86] who had won first honors at three successive levels of the examinations. Truly, he rode the wind and the clouds, and his ambition soared to the stars.

As it happened, however, for all his literary talent, his was an unhappy lot. Despite his ambitions, fate was against him. Year after year, he sat for the civil service examinations, and year after year,



榜标名。到三十岁上，循资该出贡了。他是个有才有志的人，贡途的前程是不屑就的。思量穷秀才家，全亏学中年规这几两廩银，做个读书本钱。若出了学门，少了这项来路，又去坐监，反费盘缠。况且本省比监里又好中，算计不通。偶然在朋友前露了此意，那下首该贡的秀才，就来打话要他让贡，情愿将几十金酬谢。鲜于同又得了这个利息，自以为得计。第一遍是个情，第二遍是个例，人人要贡，个个争先。

鲜于同自三十岁上让贡起，一连让了八遍，到四十六岁兀自沉埋于泮水之中，驰逐于青衿之队。也有人笑他的，也有人怜他的，又有人劝他的。那笑他的他也不睬，怜他的他也不受，只有那劝他的，他就勃然发怒起来道：“你劝我就贡，止无过道俺年长，不能个科第了。却不知龙头属于老成，梁皓八十二岁中了状元，也替天下有骨气肯读书的男子争气。俺若情愿小就时，三十岁上就了，肯用力钻刺，少不得做个府佐县正，昧着心田做去，尽可荣身肥家。只是如今是个科目的世界，假如孔夫子不得科第，



he failed. By age thirty, he had enough seniority to be assigned a minor government post if he were recommended to the National University, but with his high aspirations, he would not stoop to gaining a career in that way. In weighing his chances, he thought that however poor he was, he at least had some money from his school — a few taels of silver per year for his tuition. Should he leave the school and go to the National University, he not only would be cutting himself off from this source of income but would incur extra expenses as well. Moreover, he stood a greater chance of passing the examinations at the provincial level than at the National University. It therefore would not make sense for him to change the status quo.

After Xianyu made his thoughts known during a casual conversation with friends, the scholar next in line on the waiting list approached him and asked that he yield his place in exchange for several tens of taels of silver. Xianyu Tong was pleased by the deal. After doing it once as a personal favor, he did it a second time and then made it an established practice. Since everyone fought to be first on the roster of candidates to be recommended to the National University, he yielded his right eight times after he reached the age of thirty. When he was forty-six, he was still a student at the same school. Some laughed at him, some pitied him, and some gave him words of advice. To the laughs he turned a deaf ear, and the pity he rejected out of hand, but to those who gave him words of advice, he would retort hotly, “You advise me to wait my turn for appointment as a National University student because you think I’m too old ever to pass the civil service examinations, but you may not know that first honors in the exams are meant for those who are older and more mature. Liang Hao [963–1004] won that honor at eighty-two years of age. He was a credit to all men who proudly apply themselves to their studies.

“Had I been willing to settle for less, I would have accepted the National University option when I was thirty years old. Had I curried favor with the powerful, I would have at least landed the post of a county magistrate. Had I sought personal gain against the dictates of my conscience, I would have been a rich and successful man by now. But this is an empire built upon the system of civil service examina-



谁说他胸中才学？若是三家村一个小孩子，粗粗里记得几篇烂旧时文，遇了个盲试官，乱圈乱点，睡梦里偷得个进士到手，一般有人拜门生，称老师，谭天说地，谁敢出个题目将带纱帽的再考他一考么？不止于此，做官里头还有多少不平处，进士官就是个铜打铁铸的，撒漫做去，没人敢说他不字；科贡官，兢兢业业，捧了卵子过桥，上司还要寻趁他。比及按院复命，参论的但是进士官，凭你叙得极贪极酷，公道看来，拿问也还透头，说到结末，生怕断绝了贪酷种子，[眉批]□□□察□□贪酷者见之应怒。道：‘此一臣者，官箴虽玷，但或念初任，或念年青，尚可望其自新，策其末路，姑照浮躁或不及例降调。’不勾几年工夫，依旧做起。倘拚得些银子央要道挽回，不过对调个地方，全然没事。科贡的官一分不是，就当做十分。悔气遇着别人有势有力，没处下手，随你清廉贤宰，少不得借重他替进士顶缸。有这许多不平处，所以





tion. If Confucius had taken the exams and failed, who would have acknowledged his talent and his scholarship? Suppose a young man in some remote village roughly memorizes a few trite essays in preparation for the examinations, happens to meet a brainless examiner who capriciously praises his essays at random, and ends up being awarded a *jinshi* degree without even knowing what's happening. Admirers will still honor him as a patron and a teacher and treasure the opportunity to talk with him. Would anyone dare to put him, now an official, through another examination?

“And there's more. Even among officials, inequalities abound. Those with *jinshi* degrees are as invulnerable as if made of copper and iron, able to do everything their own way with no one daring to protest. Those assigned to their posts as National University students go about their jobs as cautiously as if crossing a narrow bridge with a load of eggs in their hands. Even so, their superiors are still constantly on their backs. When complaints against officials are reviewed, if the official under investigation is a *jinshi*, however corrupt and cruel he is accused of being, his case will be handled with exceptional leniency. The fact of the matter is, there is this fear that corrupt and cruel officials will be wiped off the face of the earth. (*This is certainly a comment that will infuriate the corrupt and the cruel.*) The sentencing will go like this: ‘This subject of the emperor may have violated the code of conduct for officials, but he is either a newcomer or too young and can well be expected to turn over a new leaf and mend his ways in the future. Therefore, he is hereby demoted for his impetuous style of work or his lack of competence.’ Within a few years' time, he'll be working his way up again. If he bribes higher-ups with whatever silver he can scrape together, he'll just be transferred at the same rank to a different locality, and that will be that. But when it comes to officials who got their posts as National University students, the slightest misdemeanor will be magnified ten times. If nothing can be done to an influential *jinshi* official under investigation, then, however incorrupt and virtuous you are, you'll be the luckless scapegoat.

“With so many inequalities, my conclusion is that those without



不中进士，再做不得官。俺宁可老儒终身，死去到阎王面前高声叫屈，还博个来世出头，岂可屈身小就，终日受人懊恼，吃顺气丸度日！”遂吟诗一首，诗曰：

从来资格困朝绅，只重科名不重人。  
楚士凤歌诚恐殆，叶公龙好岂求真。  
若还黄榜终无分，宁可青衿老此身。  
铁砚磨穿豪杰事，春秋晚遇说平津。

汉时有个平津侯，覆姓公孙名弘，五十岁读《春秋》，六十岁对策第一，做到丞相封侯。鲜于同后来六十一岁登第，人以为诗谶，此是后话。

却说鲜于同自吟了这八句诗，其志愈锐。怎奈时运不利，看看五十齐头，“苏秦还是旧苏秦”，不能勾改换头面。再过几年，连小考都不利了。每到科举年分，第一个拦场告考的就是他，讨了多少人的厌贱。到天顺六年，鲜于同五十七岁，鬓发都苍然了，兀自挤在后生家队里，谈文讲艺，娓娓不倦。那些后生见了他，或以为怪物，望而避之，或以为笑具，就而戏之。这都不在话下。

却说兴安县知县姓蒯名遇时，表字顺之，浙江台州府仙居县



*jinshi* degrees had better not aspire to be officials. I'd rather be an untitled scholar all my life so that when I call out my grievances before King Yama of hell after I die, I may be compensated in my next life. So why should I stoop low and accept a minor post and suffer humiliation day after day?" Then he intoned a poem,

*"Ranking has always been unfair;  
Degrees weigh more than personal merits.  
The mad man of Chu despaired of saving the land;<sup>4</sup>  
The king of She loved dragons, but only fake ones.<sup>5</sup>*

*"If not meant to pass the examinations,  
I'd rather die an untitled scholar.  
To wear out an iron ink slab—how heroic!  
Didn't Lord Pingjin's rise in life come late?"*

In the Han dynasty, there was a Lord Pingjin, named Gongsun Hong, who began studying *The Spring and Autumn Annals* at the age of fifty and won first place in the examinations when he was sixty. Later, he rose to be a prime minister and an enfeoffed lord. Xianyu Tong passed the imperial examinations at the age of sixty-one, an event that was believed to have been forecast in the above poem. But more of this later.

Now, let us come back to the time when Xianyu Tong intoned the above eight-line poem. Henceforth, his determination grew firmer. However, his time had not come yet. By the age of fifty, "Su Qin remained his old self."<sup>6</sup> His status had not changed. A few years later, he began to do badly even on minor examinations. Every time the imperial examinations were held, he was invariably the first one to show up at the examination grounds, an object of widespread scorn and contempt. In the sixth year of the Tianshun reign period [1454–67], a fifty-seven-year-old Xianyu Tong, graying at the temples, still found himself among young men in tireless discussions about literature and the arts. The youngsters looked upon him either as some kind of freak who should be given a wide berth or as a laughing stock to be ridiculed, but of this, no more need be said.

I shall now tell of a certain Kuai Yushi, courtesy name Shunzhi,



人氏。少年科甲，声价甚高。喜的是谈文讲艺，商古论今。只是有件毛病，爱少贱老，不肯一视同仁。见了后生英俊，加意奖借；若是年长老成的，视为朽物，口呼“先辈”，甚有戏侮之意。其年乡试届期，宗师行文，命县里录科。蒯知县将合县生员考试，弥封阅卷，自恃眼力，从公品第，黑暗里拔了一个第一，心中十分得意，向众秀才面前夸奖道：“本县拔得个首卷，其文大有吴越中气脉，必然连捷，通县秀才，皆莫能及。”众人拱手听命，却似汉皇筑坛拜将，正不知拜那一个有名的豪杰。比及拆号唱名，只见一人应声而出，从人丛中挤将上来，你道这人如何：

矮又矮，胖又胖，须鬓黑白各一半。破儒巾，欠时样，蓝衫补孔重重绽。你也瞧，我也看，若还冠带像胡判。不枉夸，不枉赞，“先辈”今朝说嘴惯。休羡他，莫自叹，少不



magistrate of Xing'an County and a native of Xianju County, Taizhou Prefecture, in Zhejiang. Having passed the imperial examinations at an early age, he was held in high esteem. He delighted in discussions about literature and the arts, ancient and modern. He had, however, one *idée fixe*: he loved the young and despised the old and refused to treat them equally. He rewarded handsome youths liberally but insulted the old, whom he dismissed as worthless, addressing them sarcastically as "Honorable Seniors."

The year of which we speak being a year for civil service examinations at the provincial level, the county held a screening examination by order of the Grand Examiner. Without opening the seals at the corners of the examination papers where the examinees' names were entered, County Magistrate Kuai read all the examination papers submitted by scholars over the length and breadth of the county. Fully confident in his own good judgment and fair-mindedness, he picked out the best paper without bothering to find out the identity of the candidate. Proudly, he said to the assembly of scholars gathered before him, "I have graded all the papers, the best of which, with the graceful style typical of the Wu and Yue Region south of the Yangzi River, will surely win honors at the imperial examination. None of the scholars throughout this county can measure up to this one."

The scholars stood there with hands respectfully folded in front of their chests, waiting for that scholar's name to be revealed, in much the same way as the assembly of generals waited for Liu Bang, emperor of Han, to name the commander-in-chief.<sup>7</sup> When the seal on the paper was broken and the name was called out, there, for all to see, emerged a man, threading his way through the crowd. How did the man look?

*Short and fat, with as much white hair as black,  
 His cap in shreds, his blue gown in tatters.  
 Everyone went up for a good close look:  
 Why! Isn't this the king of hell without the crown?  
 Undeserving praises give him none;  
 "Honorable Senior" comes easily to the tongue.  
 Do not envy him, do not lament your fate;*



得大家做老汉。不须营，不须干，序齿轮流做领案。

那案首不是别人，正是那五十七岁的怪物、笑具，名叫鲜于同。合堂秀才哄然大笑，都道：“鲜于‘先辈’，又起用了。”连蒯公也自羞得满面通红，顿口无言。一时间看错文字，今日众人属目之地，如何番悔？忍着一肚子气，胡乱将试卷拆完。喜得除了第一名，此下一个个都是少年英俊，还有些嗔中带喜。是日蒯公发放诸生事毕，回衙闷闷不悦，不在话下。

却说鲜于同少年时本是个名士，因淹滞了数年，虽然志不曾灰，却也是：

泽畔屈原吟独苦，洛阳季子面多惭。

今日出其不意，考个案首，也自觉有些兴头。到学道考试，未必爱他文字，亏了县家案首，就搭上一名科举，喜孜孜去赴省试。众朋友都在下处看经书，温后场。只有鲜于同平昔饱学，终日在街坊上游玩。旁人看见，都猜道：“这位老相公，不知是送儿子孙儿进场的？事外之人，好不悠闲自在！”若晓得他是科举的秀才，少不得要笑他几声。



*At worst, your turn will come in hoary old age.  
Do nothing, take no pains,  
You'll win first place when you are old enough.*

The one who had placed first in the screening examination was none other than the fifty-seven-year-old freak and laughingstock Xianyu Tong. All the scholars present burst into hearty laughter. “‘Honorable Senior’ Xianyu Tong receives his appointment to office again!”

Magistrate Kuai colored deeply, at a loss for words. In a careless moment, he had picked the wrong man for the honor, but since he was in public, how could he change his decision? Checking his fury, he hastily opened all the examination papers. Fortunately, apart from the one who had won first honors, all who passed the screening examination were handsome young men, something that gave him a little comfort in his vexation. After announcing the results of the examination, Mr. Kuai returned to his yamen in dejection, but of this, no more need be said.

In his youth, Xianyu Tong had enjoyed fame, but after so many years of frustration, even though he had not given up all hope, he had felt

*As lonesome as Qu Yuan by the marshes,<sup>8</sup>  
As ashamed as Su Qin of Luoyang.*

Now, much heartened by this unexpected honor, he went on to sit for the examinations at the circuit level. It was thanks more to his being the number one successful candidate at the county level than to the quality of his writing that he was allowed to sit for the examinations at the provincial level.

Merrily he traveled to the provincial capital. The other candidates were all in their rooms, studying the classics in preparation for the last two sessions of the examinations while he, being well learned enough, spent his days roaming up and down the streets. Those who saw him guessed, “This old gentleman must be accompanying a son or a grandson to the examinations. Not being in the game, he is taking it easy!” Had they known he was a candidate for the examinations, they would have exploded with mirth.



日居月诸，忽然八月初七日，街坊上大吹大擂，迎试官进贡院。鲜于同观看之际，见兴安县蒯公，正征聘做《礼记》房考官。鲜于同自想，我与蒯公同经，他考过我案首，必然爱我的文字，今番遇合，十有八九。谁知蒯公心里不然，他又是一个见识道：“我取个少年门生，他后路悠远，官也多做几年，房师也靠得着他。那些老师宿儒，取之无益。”又道：“我科考时不合昏了眼，错取了鲜于‘先辈’，在众人前老大没趣。今番再取中了他，却不又是一场笑话。我今阅卷，但是三场做得齐整的，多应是夙学之士，年纪长了，不要取他。只拣嫩嫩的口气，乱乱的文法，歪歪的四六，怯怯的策论，愤愤的判语，那定是少年初学。虽然学问未充，养他一两科，年还不长，且脱了鲜于同这件干纪。”算计已定，如法阅卷，取了几个不整不齐，略略有些笔资的，大圈大点，呈上主司。主司都批了“中”字。到八月廿八日，主司同各经房





Time flew by. In a trice, the seventh day of the eighth month rolled around. On the streets, a celebration with a great fanfare of drums and wind instruments welcomed the examiners into the examination grounds. Watching the spectacle, Xianyu Tong saw Mr. Kuai of Xing'an County being honored as the examiner for the section on *The Book of Rites*. Xianyu Tong thought, "It so happens that I'll be in Mr. Kuai's section. Being the one who granted me first place in the screening examination, he must have liked my style. Now that my path crosses his, ten to one I'll make it!"

Little did he know that Mr. Kuai thought otherwise. His line of thinking ran like this: "If I pick a young man with a long career ahead of him, I, as his onetime examiner, can count on his loyalty in the future. I have no use for those old ones." Pursuing these thoughts, he said to himself again, "I shouldn't have been so careless at the screening examination and picked that Honorable Senior Xianyu. What a fool I made of myself in front of all those people! If I pick this man again, wouldn't I be laughed at again? When grading the papers this time, I'll disregard those that are written neatly throughout the three sessions because those will surely be the work of well-learned scholars advanced in years. I'll pick only those papers that lack a confident tone, that have jumbled grammar, that bungle the meter of the verses, and that offer faltering arguments in answering essay questions about state policies and muddle-headed judgments of legal cases, for those will be the work of young beginners. They may not be well-learned enough, but I can afford to allow them one or two more chances to pass the examinations and, that way, I'll be able to rid myself of that pest Xianyu Tong."

His mind thus made up, he went through the papers in the way he had prescribed for himself and picked a few that, though written in a disorderly fashion, were not without merit. He transmitted the papers, with bold, conspicuous markings showing his approval, to the chief examiner, who duly gave his endorsement.

On the twenty-eighth day of the eighth month, in the Hall of Ultimate Fairness and in the company of the examiners of all sections, the chief examiner opened the seals over the candidates' names on the



在至公堂上拆号填榜。《礼记》房首卷是桂林府兴安县学生，覆姓鲜于，名同，习《礼记》，又是那五十七的怪物、笑具侥幸了。蒯公好生惊异。主司见蒯公有不乐之色，问其缘故。蒯公道：“那鲜于同年纪已老，恐置之魁列，无以压服后生，情愿把一卷换他。”主司指堂上匾额，道：“此堂既名为‘至公堂’，岂可以老少而私爱憎乎？自古龙头属于老成，也好把天下读书人的志气鼓舞一番。”遂不肯更换，判定了第五名正魁，蒯公无可奈何。正是：

饶君用尽千般力，命里安排动不得。

本心拣取少年郎，依旧取将老怪物。

蒯公立心不要中鲜于“先辈”，故此只拣不整齐的文字才中。那鲜于同是宿学之士，文字必然整齐，如何反投其机？原来鲜于同为八月初七日看了蒯公入帘，自谓遇合十有八九。回归寓中多吃了几杯生酒，坏了脾胃，破腹起来。勉强进场，一头想文字，一头泄泻，泻得一丝两气，草草完篇。二场三场，仍复如此，十



examination papers and copied the names of successful candidates onto announcement posters. The candidate who had won first place in the section on *The Book of Rites* turned out to be Xianyu Tong, student from Xing'an County, Guilin Prefecture. The fifty-seven-year-old freak and laughingstock was again in luck.

Mr. Kuai was flabbergasted. Observing the scowl on Mr. Kuai's face, the chief examiner asked for an explanation. Mr. Kuai replied, "That Xianyu Tong is too old to be on the honor roll. Young students will complain. He should be replaced."

Pointing to the board hanging on the wall, the chief examiner said, "This very hall being the Hall of Ultimate Fairness, how can we discriminate on the basis of age? Since ancient times, it's always been the older and more experienced people who win the highest academic honors. If anything, we'll be giving a boost to the morale of all those who are devoted to learning."

Refusing to have Xianyu replaced, the chief examiner gave him fifth place. There was nothing Mr. Kuai could do about it. Truly,

*You may try and try again,  
But you can't change what's in your fate.  
A young man he had meant to pick,  
But the old freak won out, as before.*

Determined to reject Honorable Senior Xianyu, Mr. Kuai had picked only inferior papers. Being a fine scholar, Xianyu Tong should not have done so poorly. How could he have ended up winning Mr. Kuai's favor?

The fact of the matter was that after saying to himself on the seventh day of the eighth month that he stood a good chance with Mr. Kuai as the examiner for his section, he returned to his lodging and had a few cups too many of unheated wine, which upset his stomach and gave him diarrhea. But he still dragged himself to the examination grounds, where he worked out his draft in his mind during bouts of diarrhea until he had no more than one or two wisps of breath left in him. It was in such a state that he managed to finish the essay for the first session of the examinations. The second and third sessions went by in the same way. Not even one tenth of his talent found its way in-



分才学，不曾用得一分出来。[眉批] 出一分就□得不稳。自谓万无中式之理，谁知蒯公到不要整齐文字，以此竟占了个高魁。也是命里否极泰来，颠之倒之，自然凑巧。那兴安县刚刚只中他一个举人。当日鹿鸣宴罢，众同年序齿，他就居了第一。各房考官见了门生，俱各欢喜，惟蒯公闷闷不悦。鲜于同感蒯公两番知遇之恩，愈加殷勤，蒯公愈加懒散。上京会试，只照常规，全无作兴加厚之意。明年鲜于同五十八岁，会试，又下第了。相见蒯公，蒯公更无别语，只劝他选了官罢。鲜于同做了四十馀年秀才，不肯做贡生官，今日才中得一年乡试，怎肯就举人职？回家读书，愈觉有兴。每闻里中秀才会文，他就袖了纸墨笔砚，捱入会中同做。凭众人耍他，笑他，嗔他，厌他，总不在意。做完了文字，将众人所作看了一遍，欣然而归，以此为常。



to his essays. (*Even one tenth would have worked against him.*) He thought he did not have the slightest chance of passing the examinations, little knowing that Mr. Kuai was not looking for quality. That was how he ended up with such high honors. Because he was destined for bliss after the misery of his life had run its course, the reversal in his fortunes occurred at the same time that the examination standards were turned upside down. In the whole Xing'an County, he was the only one who was granted the degree of *juren*.

The district yamen held a celebration banquet in honor of the examiners and the successful candidates who had received *juren* degrees. The banquet over, the new *juren* degree holders asked one another their ages, and he ranked first. Each section examiner was delighted to get to know the *juren* who had taken the examination in his section. Only Mr. Kuai was in low spirits. Xianyu Tong, on his part, was overflowing with gratitude to Mr. Kuai for having twice recognized his talent, but the more deferential and attentive Xianyu was, the more he upset Mr. Kuai.

At the national level examinations in the capital, everything was done in strict accordance with the rules. No favors could be extended to anyone. Xianyu took these examinations when he was fifty-eight, a year after he had become a *juren*, but he failed. He went to see Mr. Kuai, who said only that he would advise Xianyu to accept an official post and stop taking the examinations. But having been an untitled scholar for the last forty-odd years without accepting a post as a National University student, how was he to stop now and be content with a post as a mere *juren* only one year after passing the provincial examinations?

He returned home and continued his studies with greater gusto than before. Every time local scholars had a literary gathering, he did not fail to show up to make his contribution, bringing his rice paper, ink stick, brush-pen, and ink slab. However much the others made fun of him, laughed at him, yelled at him, or loathed him, he did not pay the least attention. After making his contribution, he read all the writings of the other scholars and returned home in high spirits. This grew into a habit.



光阴荏苒，不觉转眼三年，又当会试之期。鲜于同时年六十有一，年齿虽增，矍铄如旧。在北京第二遍会试，在寓所得其一梦。梦见中了正魁，会试录上有名，下面却填做《诗经》，不是《礼记》。鲜于同本是个宿学之士，那一经不通？他功名心急，梦中之言，不由不信，就改了《诗经》应试。事有凑巧，物有偶然。蒯知县为官清正，行取到京，钦授礼科给事中之职。其年又进会试经房。蒯公不知鲜于同改经之事，心中想道：“我两遍错了主意，取了那鲜于‘先辈’做了首卷，今番会试，他年纪一发长了。若《礼记》房里又中了他，这才是终身之玷。我如今不要看《礼记》，改看了《诗经》卷子，那鲜于‘先辈’中与不中，都不干我事。”比及入帘阅卷，遂请看《诗》五房卷。蒯公又想道：“天下举子像鲜于‘先辈’的，谅也非止一人，我不中鲜于同，又中了别的老儿，可不是‘躲了雷公，遇了霹雳’。[眉批]避老得老，天所以警蒯公，又乌知天所以爱蒯公乎？我晓得了，但凡老师宿儒，经旨必然十分透彻，后生家专工四书，经义必然不精。如今到不要取四



Time passed quickly. Quite unnoticeably, another three years elapsed in the twinkling of an eye, and the national examinations rolled around again. That year, Xianyu Tong was sixty-one years old but still as hale and hearty as ever.

While he was in Beijing for his second attempt at the national examinations, he dreamed that he had made it onto the list of successful candidates and won first honors, but instead of *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Songs* appeared under his name. As he was a learned scholar, there was no classic he did not know well. In his eagerness to achieve fame and fortune, he thought it prudent to believe in the dream and changed his examination topic to *The Book of Songs*.

Well, coincidences will happen. County Magistrate Kuai, being an upright and incorrupt official, received a promotion. He went to Beijing, where he was granted the post of supervising secretary in the Bureau of Rites. The same year, he was further appointed to be a section examiner for the national examinations. Completely unaware of Xianyu Tong's change of subject, Mr. Kuai said to himself, "My plans went wrong twice, and both times that Honorable Senior Xianyu ended up winning first place. Now, this time around, he's even older. Should he place first in the section on *The Book of Rites*, I'll never be able to live down the embarrassment. I'd better change from *The Book of Rites* to *The Book of Songs*, so that Honorable Senior Xianyu's success or failure will have nothing to do with me."

Once in the examiners' chamber behind the portiere, he asked to read the papers from *The Book of Poems* section. He then thought, "There must be more than one man like Honorable Senior Xianyu in this world. If I reject him only to pick another old man, wouldn't I be running from the thunder god only to be hit by lightning, as the saying goes? (*He who runs away from the old is stuck with the old. Could it be that heaven is giving Mr. Kuai a lesson out of its love for him?*) I know what to do. Old scholars must all be well versed in *The Book of Songs*, whereas youngsters, concentrating on the *Four Books*,<sup>9</sup> may not know *The Book of Songs* well enough. Let me skip over those papers that show solid knowledge of the four topics and pick those that are not without evidence of talent and do not stray



经整齐，但是有些笔资的，不妨题旨影响，这定是少年之辈了。”阅卷进呈，等到揭晓，《诗》五房头卷，列在第十名正魁。拆号看时，却是桂林府兴安县学生，覆姓鲜于，名同，习《诗经》，刚刚又是那六十一岁的怪物、笑具！气得蒯遇时目瞪口呆，如槁木死灰模样。

早知富贵生成定，悔却从前枉用心。

蒯公又想道：“论起世上同名姓的尽多，只是桂林府兴安县却没有两个鲜于同，但他向来是《礼记》，不知何故又改了《诗经》，好生奇怪？”候其来谒，叩其改经之故。鲜于同将梦中所见，说了一遍。蒯公叹息连声道：“真命进士，真命进士！”自此蒯公与鲜于同师生之谊，比前反觉厚了一分。殿试过了，鲜于同考在二甲头上，得选刑部主事。人道他晚年一第，又居冷局，替他气闷，他欣然自如。

却说蒯遇时在礼科衙门直言敢谏，因奏疏里面触突了大学士刘吉，被吉寻他罪过，下于诏狱。那时刑部官员，一个个奉承刘吉，欲将蒯公置之死地。却好天与其便，鲜于同在本部一力周旋





from the topic, because such papers must be the work of young men.”

He read the papers and transmitted them to his superiors. When it came time to publicize the results, he saw that the best paper from the section on *The Book of Songs* was tenth on the list of all successful candidates. When the seal over the examinee’s name was broken, there, for all to see, was the name of Xianyu Tong, student from Xing’an County, Guilin Prefecture, none other than that sixty-one-year-old freak and laughingstock! Kuai Yushi was so appalled that his eyes popped wide open, his jaw dropped, and he looked more dead than alive.

*Had he known that wealth and rank are in one’s lot,  
 He would have regretted his futile plots.*

Then Mr. Kuai thought, “Even though there’s no lack of people sharing the same surnames and given names, there can’t be a second Xianyu Tong<sup>10</sup> in Xing’an County, Guilin Prefecture. And yet, he has always concentrated on *The Book of Rites*. I wonder why he switched to *The Book of Songs*. How very strange!”

When Xianyu paid him a courtesy call, Mr. Kuai asked for an explanation of the switch, whereupon Xianyu told of his dream. Heaving sigh upon sigh, Mr. Kuai said, “You are truly destined to gain the *jinshi* degree!” Henceforth, a bond developed between Mr. Kuai the mentor and Xianyu Tong the student.

At the palace examinations, Xianyu Tong came out at the top of the second class and was appointed an administrative aide in the Department of Justice. That this old man, in spite of having won his first success in the imperial examinations, was put in a post of little importance made many people feel that he was being unfairly treated, but he himself remained as cheerful as ever.

Now, Kuai Yushi, when making his usual frank remonstrations regarding the work of the Bureau of Rites, offended Grand Academician Liu Ji with one of his memorials. Liu Ji had Mr. Kuai locked up in the Ministry of Justice detention house on some false charges. Many of the officials in that ministry, eager to ingratiate themselves with Liu Ji, wanted to have Mr. Kuai put to death. Fortunately, by



看觑，所以蒯公不致吃亏。又替他纠合同年，在各衙门恳求方便，蒯公遂得从轻降处。蒯公自想道：“‘着意种花花不活，无心栽杨柳成阴。’若不中得这个老门生，今日性命也难保。”[眉批]一世报恩。乃往鲜于“先辈”寓所拜谢。鲜于同道：“门生受恩师三番知遇，今日小小效劳，止可少答科举而已，天高地厚，未酬万一！”当日师生二人欢饮而别。自此不论蒯公在家在任，每年必遣人问候，或一次或两次，虽俸金微薄，表情而已。

光阴荏苒，鲜于同只在部中迁转，不觉六年，应升知府。京中重他才品，敬他老成，吏部立心要寻个好缺推他，鲜于同全不在意。偶然仙居县有信至，蒯公的公子蒯敬共与豪户查家争坟地疆界，嚷骂了一场。查家走失了个小厮，赖蒯公子打死，将人命事告官。蒯敬共无力对理，一径逃往云南父亲任所去了。官府疑蒯公子逃匿，人命真情，差人雪片下来提人，家属也监了几个，



the grace of heaven, Xianyu Tong was in the same ministry. It was thanks to Xianyu's determined efforts in pleading his case and taking care of him that Mr. Kuai did not suffer too much. Xianyu also sought help from other officials who had passed the examinations in the same year, and, together, they pleaded to various government offices for leniency on Mr. Kuai's behalf. Upon receiving a lighter sentence than he had anticipated, Mr. Kuai thought, "As the poem goes, 'Flowers wilt when given too much care / Willows flourish when left unattended.' If I had not let that old man pass the exams, I wouldn't be alive today." (*A debt of gratitude has been repaid.*)

He went to Honorable Senior Xianyu's home to express his gratitude. Xianyu Tong said, "Three times you granted me academic honors in your kindness. What little I have done for you is not enough to repay even one ten thousandth of the debt of gratitude I owe you!"

That day, the mentor and the student drank to their hearts' content before they parted company. Henceforth, wherever Mr. Kuai was, whether in his hometown or at his duty station, Xianyu would have someone take his greetings to Mr. Kuai once or twice every year as a token of his devotion, however meager his pay.

As time went by, Xianyu Tong was transferred from one post to another within the ministry. Before he knew it, six years had elapsed, and he was due for a promotion to the rank of prefect. As he was held in high regard in the capital for his competence, his integrity, and the experience that came with his age, the Ministry of Personnel was determined to find him a good post, but he could not care less.

It so happened that a letter arrived from Xianju County, saying that Mr. Kuai's son, Kuai Jinggong, was involved in a fight with the wealthy Cha family over the border of the two families' graveyards and that the Cha family had charged Mr. Kuai Junior with beating to death a page boy missing from the Cha establishment and had reported the alleged murder to the authorities. Unable to counter the charges, Kuai Jinggong fled to his father in Yunnan. His disappearance aroused the local authorities' suspicions. As the case involved a human life, the authorities dispatched a large team of officers to track down the fugitive. Even a few family members were taken into custody, to the



阖门惊惧。鲜于同查得台州正缺知府，乃央人讨这地方。吏部知台州原非美缺，既然自己情愿，有何不从，即将鲜于同推升台州府知府。鲜于同到任三日，豪家已知新太守是蒯公门生，特讨此缺而来，替他解纷，必有偏向之情。先在衙门谣言放刁，鲜于同只推不闻。蒯家家属诉冤，鲜于同亦佯为不理。密差的当捕人访缉查家小厮，务在必获。约过两月有馀，那小厮在杭州拿到。鲜于太守当堂申明，的系自逃，与蒯家无干。当将小厮责取查家领状。蒯氏家属，即行释放。期会一日，亲往坟所踏看疆界。查家见小厮已出，自知所讼理虚，恐结讼之日必然吃亏。一面央大分上到太守处说方便，一面又央人到蒯家，情愿把坟界相让讲和。蒯家事已得白，也不愿结冤家。鲜于太守准了和息，将查家薄加罚治，申详上司，两家莫不心服。正是：

只愁堂上无明镜，不怕民间有鬼奸。



shock of the entire household.

Xianyu Tong, having learned upon inquiry that the post of prefect in Taizhou was vacant, asked to be appointed to that position. The Ministry of Personnel was aware that the post of Taizhou Prefect was not an enviable one, but since Xianyu Tong had volunteered, why not comply with his wishes? Thus, Xianyu Tong was promoted to be the prefect of Taizhou Prefecture.

Within three days following Xianyu Tong's assumption of his post, the Cha family learned that the new prefect was Mr. Kuai's protégé. Since he had requested the post in order to solve the dispute, the family thought he would surely take the defendant's side. So they started vicious rumors about him in the yamen, rumors to which Xianyu Tong turned a deaf ear. Nor did he openly pay any attention to the complaints of members of the Kuai clan, but, secretly he sent officers to track down the page boy who was missing from the Cha establishment and told them not to fail in their mission. A little more than two months later, the page boy was captured in Hangzhou. Prefect Xianyu held a court trial and found that the page boy had fled for private reasons that had nothing whatsoever to do with the Kuai family. The page boy was then returned to the Cha establishment to be dealt with by the Chas. The detained members of the Kuai clan were all released.

On an appointed day, Xianyu went in person to inspect the border between the two families' graveyards. With the page boy found, the Chas knew that they did not have a case. Afraid that the court's judgment would be unfavorable to them, they implored those with clout to put in a good word for them with the prefect. At the same time, they sent a messenger to the Kuai residence to say that they were willing to yield on the matter of the border and negotiate peace. The Kuais, for their part, had no intention of maintaining a feud now that the case had been solved. Prefect Xianyu approved the truce. The Cha family paid a small penalty, and the matter was reported to higher authorities. Both families were satisfied. Truly,

*With a sharp eye in the court of judgment,  
 No foul deeds go undetected.*



鲜于太守乃写书信一通，差人往云南府回覆房师蒯公。蒯公大喜，想道：“‘树荆棘得刺，树桃李得荫’，若不曾中得这个老门生，今日身家也难保。”[眉批] 二世报恩。遂写恳切谢启一通，遣儿子蒯敬共赍回，到府拜谢。鲜于同道：“下官暮年淹蹇，为世所弃，受尊公老师三番知遇，得掇科目，常恐身先沟壑，大德不报。今日恩兄被诬，理当暴白。下官因风吹火，小效区区，止可少酬老师乡试提拔之德，尚欠情多多也！”因为蒯公子经纪家事，劝他闭户读书，自此无话。

鲜于同在台州做了三年知府，声名大振，升在徽宁道做兵宪，累升河南廉使，勤于官职。年至八旬，精力比少年兀自有馀，推升了浙江巡抚。鲜于同想道：“我六十一岁登第，且喜儒途淹蹇，仕途到顺溜，并不曾有风波。今官至抚台，恩荣极矣。一向清勤自矢，不负朝廷。今日急流勇退，理之当然。但受蒯公三番知遇之恩，报之未尽，此任正在房师地方，或可少效涓埃。”乃择日起



Prefect Xianyu sent a messenger to deliver a letter to Yunnan Prefecture, to Mr. Kuai, his mentor. A delighted Mr. Kuai thought to himself, "As the saying goes, 'Plant a thistle, and you get thorns. Plant pear and plum trees, and you enjoy the shade.' If I had not let that old man pass the exams, my family would have been ruined. (*A repayment of a debt of gratitude extends to the second generation.*) He wrote a letter stating his sincere gratitude and had his son Kuai Jinggong deliver it to Xianyu Tong's residence.

Xianyu Tong said, "This humble old man was a loser abandoned by the world. It was my honorable mentor who saw me for what I am and let me succeed in the examinations. What I fear most is to leave this world before repaying his immense kindness. My brother, the unjust charges against you should, by rights, have been overturned. What I did was nothing more than fanning the flames when the wind was favorable. This is not nearly enough to repay you for your kindness to me in the examinations." Mr. Kuai Junior being in charge of the household affairs, Xianyu advised him to apply himself to his studies behind closed doors. Nothing of note occurred for a time after that.

His reputation having soared in his three-year term of office as prefect of Taizhou, Xianyu Tong was promoted to be commander of Huizhou and Nanjing, and then, after a series of promotions, he rose to be investigation commissioner of Henan. In all these posts, he served with great assiduity. While in his eighties, and still more energetic than young men, he received another promotion and became governor of Zhejiang. He thought, "Though my success as a scholar came late in life after much frustration, yet, since I passed the examinations at the age of sixty-one, my career has been plain sailing, without ever running into a storm. Now that I've been appointed to be a governor, I've truly come as far as I can. Having always reminded myself to be an upright, clean, and hard-working official worthy of the trust of the imperial court, I should retire before my career goes downhill. However, I have not yet paid in full my debt of gratitude to Mr. Kuai for having recognized my ability three times. This new post being in the very region where my mentor lives, I may be able to do



程赴任。一路迎送荣耀，自不必说。不一日，到了浙江省城。此时蒯公也历任做到大参地位，因病目不能理事，致政在家。闻得鲜于“先辈”又做本省开府，乃领了十二岁孙儿，亲到杭州谒见。蒯公虽是房师，到小于鲜于公二十馀岁。今日蒯公致政在家，又有了目疾，龙钟可怜。鲜于公年已八旬，健如壮年，位至开府。可见发达不在于迟早，蒯公叹息了许多。正是：

松柏何须羨桃李，请君点检岁寒枝。

且说鲜于同到任以后，正拟遣人问候蒯公，闻说蒯参政到门，喜不自胜，倒屣而迎，直请到私宅，以师生礼相见。蒯公唤十二岁孙儿：“见了老公祖。”鲜于公问：“此位是老师何人？”蒯公道：“老夫受公祖活命之恩，犬子昔日难中，又蒙昭雪，此恩直如覆载。今天福星又照吾省。老夫衰病，不久于世，犬子读书无成，只有此孙，名曰蒯悟，资性颇敏，特携来相托，求老公祖





something for him.”

On a chosen day, he left to take up his post. The splendor of the sending-off and welcoming ceremonies and the fanfare that accompanied his journey need not be described here. In a matter of days, he arrived at the provincial seat of Zhejiang.

By this time, Mr. Kuai had risen to the level of assistant provincial administration commissioner, but he was living at home in retirement, incapacitated by an eye ailment. He heard that Honorable Senior Xianyu was to be the governor of the province and went to visit him in Hangzhou, taking along his twelve-year-old grandson. Though he was Xianyu’s mentor, he was more than twenty years younger than Xianyu. But now that he had retired and was afflicted with an eye ailment, he looked frail and forlorn, whereas the eighty-odd-year-old Mr. Xianyu, at the height of his career, looked as if he were still in the prime of his life. It can thus be seen that the timing of one’s rise in life is not all that important. Mr. Kuai heaved many a sigh. Truly,

*Pines and cypresses, envy not peaches and plums;  
 Cherish your branches that defy severe winters.*

After assuming his post, Xianyu Tong was just about to send someone to convey his greetings to Mr. Kuai when he heard announcement that Assistant Commissioner Kuai was already at his door. Beside himself with joy, he rushed out to greet Mr. Kuai. In such haste was he that he did not even bother to check if he had his shoes on right. He invited Mr. Kuai all the way into his private quarters, and the two men exchanged greetings, one as a teacher, the other as a student. Mr. Kuai said to his twelve-year-old grandson, “Greet His Honor.”

“Who is this young man to you?”

“You saved my life,” began Mr. Kuai in response, “and you proved my son innocent when he was in trouble. The infinity of your kindness can be matched only by the sky and the earth. And now, the star of happiness is again shining over this province. Being old and sick, I don’t have many days left in this world. My son failed as a scholar, and I have only my grandson here, named Kuai Wu, who is quite talented. I brought him along to ask for your help.”



青目一二。”鲜于公道：“门生年齿，已非仕途人物，正为师恩酬报未尽，所以强颜而来。今日承老师以令孙相托，此乃门生报德之会也。鄙思欲留令孙在敝衙同小孙辈课业，未审老师放心否？”蒯公道：“若蒙老公祖教训，老夫死亦瞑目。”遂留两个书童服事蒯悟在都抚衙内读书，蒯公自别去了。

那蒯悟资性过人，文章日进。就是年之秋，学道按临，鲜于公力荐神童，入学补廪，依旧留在衙门中勤学。三年之后，学业已成。鲜于公道：“此子可取科第，我亦可以报老师之恩矣。”乃将俸银三百两赠与蒯悟为笔砚之资，亲送到台州仙居县。适值蒯公三日前一病身亡，鲜于公哭奠已毕，问：“老师临终亦有何言？”蒯敬共道：“先父遗言，自己不幸少年登第，因而爱少贱老，偶尔暗中摸索，得了老公祖大人。后来许多年少的门生，贤愚不等，升沉不一，俱不得其气力，全亏了老公祖大人一人，始终看觑。我子孙世世不可怠慢老成之士！”[眉批]有感慨。鲜于公呵呵大笑道：“下官今日三报师恩，正要天下人晓得扶持了老成



“At my age,” said Xianyu, “I shouldn’t be holding any more official posts. I came in all brazenness because I haven’t paid in full my debt of gratitude to you. Now that you have deigned to ask me to take care of your grandson, I’m only too glad to have a chance to repay my debt. I propose that your grandson stay with me and study the same lessons as my grandchildren do. I wonder if you, my mentor, would worry too much if he stays here?”

“If you would be kind enough to teach the boy, I’ll be able to find peace even in death,” said Mr. Kuai.

Thereupon, two page boys were assigned to serve Kuai Wu in his studies in the governor’s mansion. Mr. Kuai took leave of his host and went his way.

With his exceptionally sharp intelligence, Kuai Wu made daily progress in his studies. That very autumn when the grand examiner came for a visit, Mr. Xianyu strongly recommended that Kuai Wu be made a stipend student as a designated Child Prodigy but remain in Xianyu’s residence for continued studies. Three years later, with Kuai Wu’s studies completed, Xianyu said, “This young man is ready for the civil service examinations, and my debt of gratitude to my mentor can now be paid off.” He gave Kuai Wu three hundred taels of silver from his salary with which to buy writing implements and escorted the boy all the way to Xianju County in Taizhou, only to be told that Mr. Kuai had died of illness three days before. After paying a tearful homage to the deceased, Mr. Xianyu asked, “What words did my mentor leave before he passed away?”

Mr. Kuai’s son Kuai Jingong replied, “My deceased father’s last words were that he, having unfortunately passed the examinations too early in his youth, favored the young against the old. It was by accident that he came to know Your Honor. Goodness knows how many young men of varying degrees of worthiness and status he promoted, but none of them did anything for him in return. You are the only one who never stopped taking care of him. Older men should never be neglected, never ever in generations to come!” (*Words said with deep emotion.*)

Mr. Xianyu burst into hearty laughter. “Three times I tried to re-



人也有用处，不可爱少而贱老也。”说罢，作别回省，草上表章，告老致仕。得旨予告，驰驿还乡，优悠林下。每日训课儿孙之暇，同里中父老饮酒赋诗。后八年，长孙鲜于涵乡榜高魁，赴京会试，恰好仙居县蒯悟是年中举，也到京中。两人三世通家，又是少年同窗，并在一寓读书。比及会试揭晓，同年进士，两家互相称贺。

鲜于同自五十七岁登科，六十一岁登甲，历仕二十三年，腰金衣紫，锡恩三代。告老回家，又看了孙儿科第，直活到九十七岁，整整的四十年晚运。至今浙江人肯读书，不到六七十岁还不丢手，往往有晚达者。后人诗叹云：

利名何必苦奔忙，迟早须臾在上苍。  
但学蟠桃能结果，三千馀岁未为长。



pay my debt of gratitude to my mentor precisely for the purpose of letting the world know that helping older men is not an unworthy cause. It will never do to favor the young against the old.” With that, he took his leave and returned to his yamen, where he wrote a memorial requesting permission to retire.

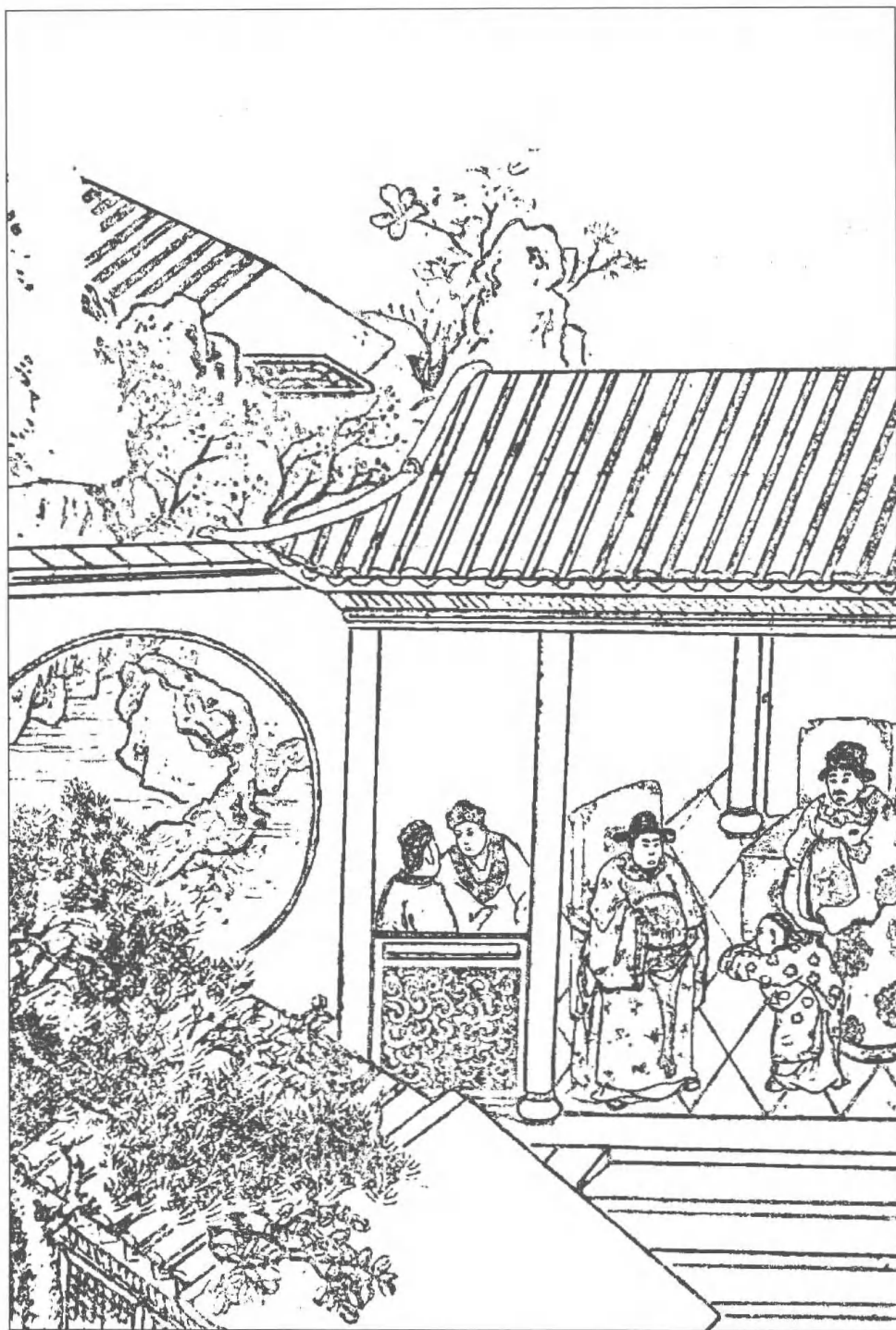
His request granted, he returned to his home village and lived a leisurely life in the woods. What time he had left after teaching his grandchildren he spent with the older men in the village, drinking and writing poems. Eight years later, his oldest grandson Xianyu Han placed high in the provincial examinations and went to the capital for the national examinations. There, he ran into Kuai Wu from Xianju County, who was also there for the examinations after having passed the provincial examinations. With family connections going back two generations and having studied together in childhood, the two young men now shared the same room for their studies. When the results of the examinations were announced, they learned that they both had been awarded the *jinshi* degree, an event both families celebrated with joy.

Xianyu Tong’s career lasted for a total of twenty-three years, starting with his success at the local examinations at the age of fifty-seven and at the national examinations at sixty-one. After retiring to his home village with enough glory and wealth to last for three generations, he witnessed his grandson’s academic success and lived to be ninety-seven years old. His good fortune, though late in coming, lasted for a full forty years. To this day, people in Zhejiang persevere in their studies up to the age of sixty or seventy, and, among them, there is no lack of scholars who gain fame and fortune late in life. A later poet had this to say,

*Why work your fingers to the bone for wealth and rank?  
 Heaven decides the timing of your rise in life.  
 Why not be more like peaches of immortality?  
 A life of three thousand years is by no means long.*

<sup>1</sup> Ganluo was a native of the state of Qin during the Warring States period.

<sup>2</sup> Jiang Taigong was a military strategist during the Zhou dynasty who achieved eminence





when he was about eighty years old.

<sup>3</sup> Dong Zhongshu (179–104 B.C.E.) was an important philosopher.

Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.E.) was one of the most celebrated *fu* (prose poem) writers in the history of Chinese literature. For more on Sima Xiangru, see the prologue story of story 6.

<sup>4</sup> Jieyu, the mad man of Chu, advised Confucius to give up trying to save the land. See *The Analects*, 18.5.

<sup>5</sup> According to a Han dynasty story, the king of the state of She (now pronounced as Ye) was very fond of drawings of dragons, but one day, when a true dragon appeared in his window, he was frightened out of his wits.

<sup>6</sup> Su Qin (d. 317 B.C.E.) returned home impoverished after a long journey seeking employment.

<sup>7</sup> Before he became the first emperor of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang (256–195 B.C.) enlisted the services of Han Xin (d.196 B.C.) and built a platform for a grand ceremony honoring him as commander-in-chief. On Han Xin, see also notes 4 and 11 of story 6.

<sup>8</sup> The model loyal minister Qu Yuan (ca. 340–278 B.C.E.) drowned himself in the Miluo River, frustrated because his ruler repeatedly ignored his advice.

<sup>9</sup> The Four Books are *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*.

<sup>10</sup> “Xianyu” is a very rare surname.



## 第十九卷

### 崔衙内白鹞招妖

古本作《定山之怪》又云《新罗白鹞》

- 早退春朝宠贵妃，谏章争敢傍丹墀。  
蓬莱殿里迎鸾驾，花萼楼前进荔枝。  
羯鼓未终鼙鼓动，羽衣犹在战衣追。  
子孙翻作升平祸，不念先皇创业时。

这首诗，题着唐时第七帝，谥法谓之玄宗。古老相传云：天上一座星，谓之玄星，又谓之金星，又谓之参星，又谓之长庚星，又谓之太白星，又谓之启明星，世人不识，叫做晓星。初上时，东方未明；天色将晓，那座星渐渐的暗将来。先明后暗，这个谓之玄。唐玄宗自姚崇、宋璟为相，米麦不过三四钱，千里不馈行粮。自从姚宋二相死，杨国忠、李林甫为相，教玄宗生出四件病来：

内作色荒，外作禽荒，耽酒嗜音，峻宇雕墙。

玄宗最宠爱者一个贵妃，叫做杨太真。那贵妃又背地里宠一个胡儿，姓安，名禄山，腹重三百六十斤，坐绰飞燕，走及奔马，





## Story 19

### With a White Falcon, Young Master Cui Brings an Evil Spirit upon Himself

*For her sake, he cut the court sessions short;  
None dared offer more advice to the throne.  
She greeted him in the Fairyland Hall;  
She enjoyed lychee in Calyx Tower.  
The battle drums drowned the music of dance;  
The beauties fled, the men in armor charged.  
He let long-standing peace be turned to war,  
He failed the founder of the House of Tang.*

The above poem is about the seventh emperor of the Tang dynasty, posthumously titled Emperor Xuanzong [r.712–56]. As an old legend has it, there is, in the sky, a star called variously the Darkening [*xuan*, as in Emperor Xuanzong] Star, the Gold Star [Venus], the *shen* star, the *changgeng* star, the *taibai* star, and the Enlightening Star. Ordinary folks who do not know the proper name for it call it the Morning Star. It rises in the sky before the eastern sky has brightened. When daybreak draws near, it gradually dims. The process of going from bright to dark is captured by the character *xuan* [as in Emperor Xuanzong].

When Yao Chong [650–721] and Song Jing [663–737] were serving as prime ministers in Emperor Xuanzong's court, rice and wheat cost only three or four maces of silver a bushel. A traveler on a one-thousand-*li* journey did not need to worry about running short of food. But after Prime Ministers Yao and Song died and were replaced by Yang Guozhong [d.756] and Li Linfu [d.752], Emperor Xuanzong began to be afflicted with a weakness for four things: Lust, hunting, wine accompanied by singing and dancing, and fancy buildings.

Emperor Xuanzong had a most beloved consort named Yang Taizhen, who, in her turn, had a clandestine love relationship with a Tartar named An Lushan. Even though he weighed three hundred



善舞胡旋，其疾如风。玄宗爱其骁健，因而得宠。禄山遂拜玄宗为父，贵妃为母。杨妃把这安禄山头发都剃了，搽一脸粉，画两道眉，打一个白鼻儿，用锦绣彩罗，做成襦裤，选粗壮宫娥数人扛抬，绕那六宫行走。当时则是取笑，谁知浸润之间，太真与禄山为乱。一日，禄山正在太真宫中行乐，宫娥报道：“驾到！”禄山矫捷非常，逾墙逃去。贵妃惶惶出迎，冠发散乱，语言失度，错呼圣上为郎君。玄宗驾即时起，使六宫大使高力士高珪送太真归第，使其省过。贵妃求见天子不得，涕泣出宫。

却说玄宗自离了贵妃三日，食不甘味，卧不安席。高力士探知圣意，启奏道：“贵妃昼寝困倦，言语失次，得罪万岁御前。今省过三日，想已知罪，万岁爷何不召之？”[眉批]高力士好个帮闲。玄宗命高珪往看妃子在家作何事。高珪奉旨，到杨太师私第，见过了贵妃，回奏天子，言：“娘娘容颜愁惨，梳沐俱废。一见奴



and sixty catties, An Lushan could catch a flying swallow while he was seated, walk as fast as a galloping horse, and, while dancing the Tartars' dance, spin round and round with the speed of wind. Emperor Xuanzong liked him for being valiant and robust and showered favors upon him. Thus, the man honored the emperor as his father and Consort Yang as his mother. The latter shaved An Lushan's head, powdered his face and nose, painted his eyebrows, wrapped him in brocade and colored silk, and had him carried around the inner quarters of the palace grounds by palace maids of strong physique. This began as a practical joke, but the intimacy led to an illicit sexual relationship between Consort Yang and An Lushan.

One day, Lushan was sporting with Consort Yang in her chamber when a palace maid came to announce, "The emperor is here!" Being a man of exceptional agility, Lushan jumped over the wall and disappeared. In all haste, Consort Yang, with disheveled hair, rushed out to greet the emperor, but in her confusion, she mistakenly called the emperor "My love" instead of "Your Majesty." Emperor Xuanzong turned back right away and ordered Gao Lishi [684–762] and Gao Gui, officers in charge of internal affairs of the palace residential quarters, to send Consort Yang back to her home to reflect on her misdemeanor. Consort Yang asked to see the emperor, but in vain. In tears, she left the palace.

Now, three days without Consort Yang left the emperor in a miserable state. He found no taste in his food and no peace in his sleep. Having learned what was on the emperor's mind, Gao Lishi remarked, "The consort gave offense to Your Majesty only because she was confused in her speech after a daytime nap. After reflecting on her misdemeanor for three days, she should be quite remorseful. Why does Your Majesty not summon her back?" (*What a bootlicker, that Gao Lishi!*)

The emperor told Gao Gui to go and see what Consort Yang was doing at home. Thus ordered, Gao Gui went to Preceptor Yang's residence. After seeing the consort, he reported to the emperor in these words, "Her Ladyship looked miserable. She does not even bother to comb her hair or take a bath. The moment she saw me, she asked



婢，便问圣上安否，泪如雨下。乃取妆台对镜，手持并州剪刀，解散青丝，剪下一缕，用五彩绒绳结之，手自封记，托奴婢传语，送到御前。娘娘含泪而言：‘妾一身所有，皆出皇上所赐。只有身体发肤，受之父母，以此寄谢圣恩，愿勿忘七夕夜半之约。’”原来玄宗与贵妃七夕夜半，曾在沉香亭有私誓，愿生生世世，同衾同穴。此时玄宗闻知高珪所奏，见贵妃封寄青丝，拆而观之，凄然不忍。即时命高力士用香车细辇，迎贵妃入宫。自此愈加宠幸。

其时四方贡献不绝：西夏国进月样琵琶，南越国进玉笛，西凉州进葡萄酒，新罗国进白鹞子。这葡萄酒供进御前，琵琶赐与郑观音，玉笛赐与御弟宁王，新罗白鹞赐与崔丞相。[眉批]来历逶迤。后因李白学士题沉香亭牡丹诗，将赵飞燕比着太真娘娘，暗藏讥刺，被高力士奏告贵妃，泣诉天子，将李白黜贬。崔丞相元来与李白是故交，事相连累，得旨令判河北定州中山府。正是：

老龟烹不烂，遗祸及枯桑。

崔丞相来到定州中山府，远近接入进府，交割牌印了毕。在任果



how the emperor was, her tears falling like rain. She then took a mirror, let her hair down, and, with a pair of Bingzhou scissors,<sup>1</sup> cut off a lock, tied it up with a five-colored string, sealed it with her own hands, and told me to bring it to Your Majesty. Her Ladyship said tearfully, ‘Everything I have, I got from His Majesty. Only my body, my hair, and my skin are given to me by my parents. I am sending this lock of hair as a token of my gratitude to His Majesty and also as a reminder of the vow he took at Eaglewood Pavilion at midnight on the Double Seventh Festival.’”<sup>2</sup>

It was a fact that at midnight on a Double Seventh Festival, Emperor Xuanzong had taken a vow with Consort Yang in Eaglewood Pavilion to share the same quilt and pillow with her, lifetime after lifetime. After he had heard Gao Gui’s report and opened the package containing the lock of hair, Emperor Xuanzong was overcome with grief. Right away, he ordered that Gao Lishi bring Consort Yang back to the palace in a perfumed carriage. Henceforth, he lavished even more favors upon her.

At that time, tributary gifts poured in from all directions: The Xixia [Tangut] offered moon-shaped *pipa* (four-stringed lutes), Vietnam offered jade flutes, Xiliang brought grape wine, and Silla offered a white falcon. The grape wine was served to the emperor, who gave the *pipa* to Zheng Guanyin, the jade flute to the Prince of Ning, his younger brother,<sup>3</sup> and the white falcon to Prime Minister Cui. (*What a roundabout way of introducing the falcon!*)

Later, Academician Li Bai, in his poem in praise of the peonies of Eaglewood Pavilion, compared Consort Yang to Zhao Feiyan.<sup>4</sup> Detecting the veiled satire in the poem, Gao Lishi reported against Li Bai, and following Consort Yang’s tearful complaint to the emperor, Li Bai was demoted. Prime Minister Cui, being an old friend of Li Bai’s, was implicated and demoted by imperial order to prefect of Zhongshan in Dingzhou, Hebei. Truly,

*When the old turtle’s meat won’t cook tender,  
 Innocent mulberries are cut down to feed the fire.*

So Prime Minister Cui went to Zhongshan Prefecture, Dingzhou. He was greeted, still some distance from his destination, by an



然是如水之清，如秤之平，如绳之直，如镜之明。不一月之间，治得府中路不拾遗。时遇天宝春初：

春，春！柳嫩，花新。梅谢粉，草铺茵。莺啼北里，燕语南邻。郊原嘶宝马，紫陌广香轮。日暖冰消水绿，风和雨嫩烟轻。东阁广排公子宴，锦城多少赏花人。

崔丞相有个衙内，名唤崔亚，年纪二十来岁，生得美丈夫，性好畋猎。见这春间天色，宅堂里叉手向前道：“告爹爹，请一日严假，欲出野外游猎。不知爹爹尊意如何？”相公道：“吾儿出去，则索早归。”衙内道：“领爹尊旨。则是儿有一事，欲取覆慈父。”相公道：“你有甚说？”衙内道：“欲借御赐新罗白鹞同往。”相公道：“好，把出去照管，休教失了。这件物是上方所赐，新罗国进到，世上只有这一只，万勿走失！上方再来索取，却是那里去讨？”衙内道：“儿带出去无妨。但只要光耀州府，教



assembly of local officials and was led all the way to the prefectural yamen, where the usual handover formalities were observed. After he took up the post, his administration proved to be, not surprisingly, as clean as water, as fair and untilted as a well-balanced scale, as straight as a tightly pulled cord, and as perceptive in solving cases as a shining mirror. In less than a month, his governance had made such a difference in people's morals that nothing lost on the road would be pocketed by any pedestrian walking by. What I shall be relating next happened one early spring during the Tianbao reign period [ 742 – 56] .

*Spring! Spring!*  
*The willows tender, the flowers fresh;*  
*The plum blossoms fall on the carpet of grass.*  
*The northern orioles warble, the southern swallows chirp;*  
*The horses neigh on the suburban paths;*  
*The carriage wheels run on rustic roads.*  
*The sun thaws the ice and turns the water green,*  
*The wind mild, the rain gentle, the mist soft.*  
*Grand feasts are set out in fancy halls;*  
*Flower viewers filled the much bedecked town.*

Prime Minister Cui had a son called Cui Ya, about twenty years of age, a handsome young man much given to hunting. Inspired by the charms of spring, he said to his father in the hall, taking a step forward with his hands respectfully folded across his chest, “Father, I would like to request a one-day leave for a hunting trip in the country. Would you approve?”

“If you go, be sure to come back soon.”

“As you say, Father. But I have another request.”

“What is it?”

“I wish to borrow the white Silla falcon that the emperor gave you.”

“All right, but take good care of it. Don't lose it. It's a tribute from Silla, and the only one of its kind in the world. Be sure not to lose it! Should the emperor want it back, where do you suppose I could find another one like it?”



人看玩则个。”相公道：“早归，少饮。”衙内借得新罗白鹞，令一个五放家架着；果然是那里去讨！牵将闹装银鞍马过来，衙内攀鞍上马出门。若是说话的当时同年生，并肩长，劝住崔衙内，只好休去。千不合，万不合，带这只新罗白鹞出来，惹出一场怪事。真个是亘古未闻，于今罕有！有诗为证：

外作禽荒内色荒，滥沾些子又何妨。

早晨架出苍鹰去，日暮归来红粉香。

崔衙内寻常好畋猎，当日借得新罗白鹞，好生喜欢，教这五放家架着。一行人也有把水磨角靶弹弓，雁木乌椿弩子，架眼圆铁爪嘴弯鹰，牵搭耳细腰深口犬。出得城外，穿桃溪，过梅坞，登绿杨林，涉芳草渡，杏花村高悬酒望，茅檐畔低亚青帘。正是：

不暖不寒天气，半村半郭人家。

行了二三十里，觉道各人走得辛苦，寻一个酒店，衙内推鞍下马。入店问道：“有甚好酒买些个，先犒赏众人助脚力。”只见走一个





“I’m taking it out just to show it off to admirers and bring honor to our prefecture.”

“Come back soon, and don’t drink too much,” admonished the father.

Mr. Cui Junior assigned a professional birdman to take care of the borrowed falcon, and indeed, where could another one like it be found? His horse now brought before him, he mounted the saddle that was much adorned with gold and silver and set out on his journey.

If this storyteller had been born in the same year and had grown up shoulder to shoulder with him, I would have stopped him from going. He should never have taken this white falcon out. As it was, however, the trip led to a most strange adventure, so strange that the likes of it had never been heard of since time immemorial. There is a poem in testimony:

*He has a weakness for hunting and women;  
 What harm can a little indulgence do?  
 He takes out the falcon in the morning,  
 And returns at dusk, smelling of perfume.*

With his love for hunting, Young Master Cui was much delighted with the falcon he had borrowed that day and placed it under the care of the birdman. Equipped with slingshots with horn handles polished with waterstone and crossbows made of ebony and accompanied by eagles with round eyes, iron-like talons, and hook-shaped beaks as well as dogs with floppy ears, narrow waists, and long muzzles, the hunting team marched into the country. They rode over creeks lined with peach trees, crossed groves of plum trees and poplars, forded streams amid green meadows, and passed villages ablaze with apricot blossoms and banner-flying wineshops behind green portieres hanging from the eaves of thatched roofs. Truly,

*The weather neither warm nor cold,  
 The houses half urban, half rural.*

About twenty to thirty *li* farther on, they felt tired and stopped by a wineshop. Young Master Cui dismounted from his horse and went into the wineshop, asking, “Any good wine? Give me some to



酒保出来唱喏。看那人时，生得：

身長八尺，豹头燕颌，环眼骨髭，有如一个距水断桥张翼德，原水镇上王彦章。

衙内看了酒保，早吃一惊道：“怎么有这般生得恶相貌的人？”酒保唱了喏，站在一边。衙内教：“有好酒把些个来吃，就犒赏众人。”那酒保从里面掇一桶酒出来。随行自有带着底酒盏，安在桌上，筛下一盏，先敬衙内：

酒，酒。邀朋，会友。君莫待，时长久。名呼食前，礼于茶后。临风不可无，对月须教有。李白一饮一石，刘伶解醒五斗。公子沾唇脸似桃，佳人入眉腰如柳。

衙内见筛下酒色红，心中早惊：“如何恁地红！”踏着酒保脚跟人去，到酒缸前，揭开缸盖，只看了一看，吓得衙内：

顶门上不见三魂，脚底下荡散七魄。

只见血水里面浸著浮米。衙内出来，教一行人且莫吃酒，把三两银子与酒保，还了酒钱。[眉批]宋人小说人说赏劳及使费，动是若干两，若干贯，何其多也？盖小说是进御者，恐启官家裁省之端，是以务从广大。观者



reward my men with.”

A waiter came out to greet the patrons. How did the man look?  
 He was

*Eight feet tall, with a leopard head, a swallow's chin,  
 Round eyes, and a bristling beard;  
 A Zhang Fei with his fearsome roar at Changban Bridge,<sup>5</sup>  
 A veritable Wang Yanzhang of Yuanshui Town.<sup>6</sup>*

Cui was startled at the sight of the man. “How can a human being look so evil?” he asked himself.

Having chanted a greeting to the guests, the waiter stood to one side. Cui said, “I need some good wine to reward my men.”

The waiter brought a jar of wine from within. One of Cui's attendants put on the table a wine cup that they had brought along with them, filled it with the wine, and offered it to the young master.

*Wine! Wine!  
 Friends! Tarry not till it's too late!  
 Before meals and after tea,  
 It's a must in the breeze and under the moon.  
 Li Bai<sup>7</sup> drank a hundred liters a time;  
 Liu Ling<sup>8</sup> needed ten just to sober up.  
 One sip gives a young man's cheeks the color of peach  
 And makes a girl's eyebrows droop like willow leaves.*

Cui was alarmed to see that the wine was unusually red. “How can it be so brightly red?” he wondered. He sneaked up behind the waiter, followed him to the inner quarters of the shop, lifted the cover of the wine vat, and looked into it. That one little look so frightened Cui that

*His three souls escaped from the top of his head;  
 His seven spirits fled from the soles of his feet.*

What he saw was a vat full of bloody water with grains of rice soaked in it. He went out and, telling his men to stay away from the wine, gave the waiter three taels of silver in payment of the bill. (*In stories of the Song dynasty, bills and tips all too easily run into several taels of silver and several strings of cash. Why so much? Because stories were often presented to the imperial court, and the figures had*



不可不知。那酒保接钱，唱喏谢了。

衙内攀鞍上马，离酒店，又行了一二里地，又见一座山冈。元来门外谓之郭，郭外谓之郊，郊外谓之野，野外谓之迥。行了半日，相次到北岳恒山。一座小峰在恒山脚下，山势果是雄勇：

山，山。突兀，回环。罗翠黛，列青蓝。洞云缥缈，涧水潺湲。峦碧千山外，岚光一望间。暗想云峰尚在，宜陪谢屐重攀。季世七贤虽可爱，盛时四皓岂宜闲。

衙内恰待上那山去，抬起头来，见山脚下立着两条木栓，柱上钉着一面版牌，牌上写着几句言语。衙内立马看了道：“这条路上恁地利害！”勒住马，叫：“回去休。”众人都赶上来。衙内指着版牌，教众人看。有识字的，读道：

此山通北岳恒山路，名为定山，有路不可行。其中精灵不少，鬼怪极多。行路君子，可从此山下首小路来往，切不可经此山过。特预禀知。

“如今却怎地好？”衙内道：“且只得回去！”待要回来，一个胳膊上架着一枚角鹰，出来道：“覆衙内，男女在此居，上面万千景



to be inflated out of fear that the court might cut down wages. The reader must bear this in mind.) The waiter took the money with a chant of thanks. Cui mounted his horse and left the wineshop.

After a *li* or two, they came to a hill. They had gone through the city's inner and outer gates, passed the suburbs and rural areas, and were now deep into the wilderness. Half a day later, they found themselves at the foot of Mount Heng, or North Mountain, where a small peak caught their attention with its imposing look.

*Mountains! Mountains!  
 Steep or rolling, of all shades of green and blue.  
 Clouds float by the mouths of the caves,  
 Over murmuring creeks in the ravines.  
 The verdure spreads over a thousand hills,  
 Stretching as far as the eye can see.  
 The cloud-shrouded peak should still be there;  
 In our spiked shoes let us climb our way up.  
 The Bamboo Grove Seven were surely likeable,  
 But the Mount Shang Four<sup>9</sup> certainly were not idle.*

Young Master Cui was about to start climbing up when he raised his head and saw at the foot of the hill two wooden columns bearing a board on which a few lines were inscribed. He stopped his horse and read the inscription.

"This is a terror of a place!" he exclaimed. Reining in his horse, he cried, "Let's turn back!" When the rest of his company drew near, he pointed at the board, and those who were literate read the inscription aloud: "This hill, leading to Mount Heng, or the North Mountain, is named Ding Hill. There is a road up and down this hill, but, it being infested with spirits, ghosts, and demons, wayfarers are hereby admonished not to avail themselves of it. Take instead the footpath around the base of the hill. Do not attempt to climb over it. Be advised."

"Now what should we do?"

"We'll have to turn back," said Cui.

He was about to start back when a birdman with an eagle perched on his arm stepped forward and said, "Master, I'm from



致，生数般跷蹊作怪直钱的飞禽走兽。衙内既是出来畋猎，不入这山去？从小路上去，那里是平地，有甚飞禽走兽！可惜闲了新罗白鹞，也可惜闲了某手中角鹰。这一行架的小鹞、猎狗、弹弓、弩子、都为弃物。”[眉批]衙内主意在此，小人之谈有所窥而进矣。衙内道：“也说得是。你们都听我说，若打得活的归去，到府中一人赏银三两，吃几杯酒了归。若打得死的，一人赏银一两，也吃几杯酒了归。若都打不得飞禽走兽，银子也没有，酒也没得吃。”众人各应了喏。

衙内把马摔一鞭，先上山去，众人也各上山来。可煞作怪，全没讨个飞禽走兽。只见草地里掉掉地响，衙内用五轮八光左右两点神水，则看了一看，喝声采！从草里走出一只乾红兔儿来。众人都向前，衙内道：“若捉得这红兔儿的，赏五两银子。”去马后立著个人，手探着新罗白鹞。衙内道：“却如何不去勒？”闲汉道：“告衙内，未得台旨，不敢擅自。”衙内道一声：“快去！”那闲汉领台旨，放那白鹞子勒红兔儿。这白鹞见放了手，一翅箭也似便去。这兔儿见那白鹞赶得紧，去浅草丛中便钻。鹞子见兔儿走的不见，一翅径飞过山嘴去。衙内道：“且与我寻白鹞子。”衙内也勒着马，转山去赶。赶到山腰，见一所松林：

松，松。节峻，阴浓。能耐岁，解凌冬。高侵碧汉，森



these parts. I know that up there in the mountains, there is so much to see, and there are all kinds of rare and precious valuable birds and animals, too. Since you're on a hunting trip, how can you not climb this hill? The footpath is on flat land. How are you going to see birds and animals along the footpath? It would be a shame if the white falcon from Silla and this eagle on my arm can't be put to use. And the same goes for the small eagles, hunting dogs, slingshots, and cross-bows." (*That sycophant can read his young master's mind.*)

"You do have a point," said Cui. "Now, listen, all of you! Those who catch animals alive and take them back to my house will each be rewarded with three taels of silver and a few cups of wine before going home. Those who take back dead animals will each be rewarded with one tael of silver and several cups of wine before going home. Those who get no bird or animal get no money or wine."

The men chanted their consent. Cui whipped his horse and led the way up the hill. His men followed. Strange to say, there were no birds or animals in sight, but only some rustling sounds in the grass. Cui looked with the left and right pupils of his all-seeing eyes and gave a cheer. From the grass emerged a red rabbit. As the men moved forward, Cui exclaimed, "Five taels of silver for anyone who catches that red rabbit!"

Behind Cui's horse stood the man with the white Silla falcon on his arm. "Why don't you give chase?" said Cui.

"Sir, you didn't order me to, so I didn't care," replied the man, who was doing nothing.

"Go now, on the double!"

Thus ordered, the man freed the white falcon to hunt down the red rabbit. The falcon flew with the speed of an arrow, heading straight for the rabbit. With the falcon hot in pursuit, the rabbit ran into a patch of taller grass. The rabbit now lost from sight, the white falcon winged its way over the top of the hill. "Bring the white falcon back for me!" shouted Cui, while he rode ahead around the hill.

About half way up the hill, he came upon a pine forest.

*Pines! Pines!*

*How majestic! What deep shades!*



耸青峰。偃蹇形如盖，虬蟠势若龙。茂叶风声瑟瑟，繁枝月影重重，四季常持君子操，五株曾受大夫封。

衙内手拏著石磨角靶弹弓，骑那马赶。看见白鹞子飞入林子里面去，衙内也入这林子里来。当初白鹞子脖项上带着一个小铃儿，林子背后一座峭壁悬崖，没路上去，则听得峭壁顶上铃儿响。衙内抬起头来看时，吃了一惊，道：“不曾见这般跷蹊作怪底事！”去那峭壁顶上，一株大树底下，坐著一个一丈来长短骷髅：

头上裹着鍍金蛾帽儿，身上锦袍灼灼，金甲辉辉。锦袍灼灼，一条抹额荔枝红；金甲辉辉，靴穿一双鸚鵡绿。

看那骷髅，左手架着白鹞，右手一个指头，拨那鹞子的铃儿，口里啧啧地引这白鹞子。[眉批]好耍子。衙内道：“却不作怪！我如今去讨，又没路上得去。”只得在下面告道：“尊神，崔某不知尊神是何方神圣，一时走了新罗白鹞，望尊神见还则个。”看那骷髅，一似佯佯不采。似此告了他五七番，陪了七八个大喏，[眉批]衙内尽胆大。这人从又不见一个人林子来，骷髅只是不采。衙内忍



*They last down the years through the winters.  
 They reach into the sky from the hills;  
 They twist in the shape of canopies,  
 They wind like crouching dragons.  
 The heavy foliage rustles in the wind;  
 The thriving branches cast shadows of the moon.  
 They keep gentleman's morals in all four seasons;  
 They are honored as Grand Masters of the Fifth Grade.<sup>10</sup>*

Cui rode ahead, holding in his hand a slingshot with a horn handle that had been polished with waterstone. When he saw the white falcon flying into the pine forest, he gave chase.

Behind the forest was a steep cliff with no path leading up. The white falcon had a small bell on its neck. At the sound of a bell jingling from the top of the cliff, Cui raised his head and gave a start. "Never have I seen such a strange thing before!" he said to himself. At the top of the cliff, under a big tree, sat a skeleton about ten feet tall, wearing

*An official's cap adorned with a gold cicada,  
 Glittering gold armor over a brocade gown;  
 A headband the color of lychee shells,  
 And a pair of shoes of parrot green.*

The skeleton had the white falcon perched on his left hand and was fiddling with the falcon's bell with a finger on his right hand while making playful clucking sounds with his tongue. (*What a picture of joy!*)

"How very strange!" said Cui to himself. "I have to claim it, but there's no path for me to go up." He had no choice but to remain where he was. To the skeleton, he said loudly in an imploring tone, "Honorable god, forgive my ignorance of who you are, but that white falcon from Silla is mine. Would you please return it to me?"

The skeleton took no notice of him. Cui repeated his supplication between five to seven times and made seven or eight deep bows. (*What a fearless man!*) None of his men had made it into the forest yet. As the skeleton continued to ignore him, Cui found his patience





不得，拿起手中弹弓，拽得满，觑得较亲，一弹子打去。一声响亮，看时，骷髅也不见，白鹞子也不见了。乘着马，出这林子前，人从都不见。著眼看那林子，四下都是青草。

看看天色晚了，衙内慢慢地行。肚中又饥，下马离鞍，吊缰牵著马，待要出这山路口。看那天色却早：

红日西沉，鸦鹊奔林高噪。打鱼人停舟罢棹，望客旅贪程，烟村缭绕。山寺寂寥，玩银灯，佛前点照。月上东郊，孤村酒旆收了。采樵人回，攀古道，过前溪，时听猿啼虎啸。深院佳人，望夫归，倚门斜靠。

衙内独自一个牵着马，行到一处，却不是早起人来的路。星光之下，远远地望见数间草屋。衙内道：“惭愧！这里有人家时，却是好了。”径来到跟前一看，见一坐庄院：

庄，庄。临堤，傍冈。青瓦屋，白泥墙。桑麻映日，榆柳成行。山鸡鸣竹坞，野犬吠村坊。淡荡烟笼草舍，轻盈雾



wearing thin. He raised the slingshot in his hand, pulled it with all his might, and took good aim at his target. *Bang* went the pellet. When he looked closely again, the skeleton had disappeared, and so had the white falcon.

Cui rode out of the forest, only to find that his men were nowhere in sight. He turned and looked back, and there was the forest, with green grass spreading all around it. He slowly started to move away as he noticed the sky beginning to darken. Feeling the pangs of hunger, he dismounted and led his horse by the reins. He approached the end of the mountain path and saw that the hour was in fact still early.

*The red sun was sinking in the west;  
The ravens and magpies crowed in the woods.  
The fishermen, but not the travelers, stopped for the day;  
Plumes of kitchen smoke curled above the villages.  
In the quiet mountain temple,  
A silver lamp shone before the Buddha statue.  
With the moon ascending the eastern sky,  
The lonely village wineshop took in its banner.  
The woodchopper returned, treading ancient footpaths,  
Crossing creeks, listening to the apes and tigers.  
The lady of the house stood waiting,  
Leaning against the gate.*

All alone, Cui led his horse along a road that was not the one he had taken earlier. Under the starlight, he made out a few thatched huts in the distance. “Thank goodness!” said he to himself. “If there are people living here, I’ll be all right.” As he drew near, he saw that the huts were part of a farmstead.

*Farmstead! Farmstead!  
By the dyke and the hill, blue-tiled roof, whitewashed walls.  
Mulberry and hemp leaves blocked out the sun;  
Elms and willows stood in straight rows.  
Pheasants’ cries echoed through the bamboo groves;  
Wild dogs’ barks rang through the farmstead houses.  
Light wisps of smoke rose from the thatched roofs;*



罩田桑。家有馀粮鸡犬饱，户无徭役子孙康。

衙内把马系在庄前柳树上，便去叩那庄门。衙内道：“过往行人，迷失道路，借宿一宵，来日寻路归家。”庄里无人答应。衙内又道：“是见任中山府崔丞相儿子，因不见了新罗白鹞，迷失道路，问宅里借宿一宵。”敲了两三次，方才听得有人应道：“来也，来也！”

鞋履响，脚步鸣，一个人走将出来开门。衙内打一看时，叫声苦！那出来的不是别人，却便是早间村酒店里的酒保。衙内问道：“你如何却在这里？”酒保道：“告官人，这里是酒保的主人家。我却人去说了便出来。”酒保去不多时，只见几个青衣，簇拥着一个著乾红衫的女儿出来。

吴道子善丹青，描不出风流体段；蒯文通能舌辩，说不尽许多精神。

衙内不敢抬头：“告娘娘，崔亚迷失道路，敢就贵庄借宿一宵。来日归家，丞相爹爹却当报效。”只见女娘道：“奴等衙内多时，果蒙宠访，请衙内且入敝庄。”衙内道：“岂敢辄入！”再三再四，只管相请。衙内唱了喏，随着人去。到一个草堂之上，见灯烛荧煌，青衣点将茶来。衙内告娘娘：“敢问此地是何去处？娘娘是



*A floating mist shrouded the fields of crops.  
With grain to spare, chickens and dogs well-fed,  
And free from corvée, the people thrived and prospered.*

Cui tied his horse to a willow tree in front of the farmstead and knocked at the gate, saying aloud, "I am a wayfarer passing by your house. I have lost my bearings and wish to stay here overnight before making my way home tomorrow." No answer came from within. He continued, "I am the son of Prefect Cui of Zhongshan, former prime minister. I lost my bearings because my white falcon from Silla disappeared, and I hope to stay here for the night."

He knocked two or three times before a voice from inside said, "Coming! Coming!" With a slip-slop of shoes, a man walked out to open the gate. One look at the man was enough to make Mr. Cui cry out in anguish, for the man was none other than the waiter at the village inn where Cui had stopped earlier.

"Why, it's you!" said Cui.

"Sir, this is the residence of my master," said the waiter. "Let me go inside to announce you. I'll be right back."

A few moments later, there emerged from the house a girl in red escorted by several maidservants.

*Wu Daozi, the master of painting,<sup>11</sup>  
Would have failed to capture her charm.  
Kuai Wentong, however glib a talker,<sup>12</sup>  
Could not have found words to describe her grace.*

Without daring to raise his head, Cui said, "Madam, I, Cui Ya, have lost my bearings and would like to stay here overnight. After I return home tomorrow, my father, the prime minister, will surely reward you."

"I've been waiting for you for a long time," said the young lady. "And now, here you are, finally doing me the honor. Please enter this humble house."

"How would I dare go straight in like this?"

But she insisted despite his demurrals. At last, he gave a chant of consent and followed her in. They entered a room brightly lit with candles, and maidservants brought in tea. Cui asked the young wom-



何姓氏？”女娘听得问，启一点朱唇，露两行碎玉，说出数句言语来。衙内道：“这事又作怪！”茶罢，接过盞托。衙内自思量道：“先自肚里又饥，却教吃茶！”正恁沉吟间，则见女娘教安排酒来。道不了，青衣掇过果桌。顷刻之间，咄嗟而办。

幕天席地，灯烛荧煌。筵排异皿奇杯，席展金觥玉斝。珠璫妆成异果，玉盘簇就珍羞。珊瑚筵上，青衣美丽捧霞觞；玳瑁杯中，粉面丫鬟斟玉液。

衙内叉手向前：“多蒙赐酒，不敢祇受！”女娘道：“不妨。屈郎少饮，家间也是勋臣贵戚之家。”衙内道：“不敢拜问娘娘，果是那一宅？”女娘道：“不必问，他日自知。”衙内道：“家间父母望我回去。告娘娘指路，令某早归。”女娘道：“不妨。家间正是五伯诸侯的姻眷，衙内又是宰相之子，门户正相当。奴家见爹爹议亲，东来不就，西来不成，不想姻缘却在此处相会。”衙内听得说，愈加心慌，却不敢抗违，则应得喏。一杯两盞，酒至数巡。



an, "May I venture to ask what place this is? And what is your surname, young lady?"

At these questions, the young woman opened her ruby lips slightly, revealing two rows of small gems of teeth, and said something that made Cui think, "How very strange!"

The tea over and the cups and saucers taken away, Cui said to himself, "I am hungry, and yet they serve nothing but tea!" He was in the midst of these thoughts when the young lady ordered that wine be set out. In a trice, the maidservants moved a small table over and soon laid out a fine spread.

*The much bedecked hall was ablaze with lights;  
 On the feast table, an array of  
 Wondrous cups and vessels of gold and jade.  
 In the pearl compotes, exotic fruits;  
 On the jade plates, the finest delicacies.  
 By the coral table stood fair maidens  
 Holding colorful wine goblets  
 And pouring nectar into precious cups.*

His hands respectfully folded in front of him, Cui stepped forward and said, "I would not dream of accepting the wine that you so kindly offer."

"Please go ahead and take just a sip. Ours is also a family of high status."

"May I ask which official's establishment is this?"

"There's no need to ask. You'll know soon enough."

"My parents at home are waiting for me to return. Please give me directions, so that I can be on my way as soon as possible."

"All right. My family being related by marriage to some leading families of the land and you being the prime minister's son, we are a perfect match as far as family background is concerned. I have seen my father rejecting on my behalf one marriage proposal after another. Who would have known that I was to meet my destined one here?"

These words frightened Cui all the more. He did not dare to contradict her and mumbled something noncommittal. One cup of wine led to another. After several rounds, he pleaded, "Please give me



衙内告娘娘：“指一条路，教某归去。”女娘道：“不妨，左右明日教爹爹送衙内归。”衙内道：“‘男女不同席，不共食’，自古‘瓜田不纳履，李下不整冠’，深恐得罪于尊前。”女娘道：“不妨。纵然不做夫妇，也待明日送衙内回去。”

衙内似梦如醉之间，则听得外面人语马嘶。青衣报道：“将军来了。”女娘道：“爹爹来了，请衙内少等则个。”女娘轻移莲步，向前去了。衙内道：“这里有甚将军？”捏手捏脚，尾著他到一壁厢，转过一个阁儿里去，听得有人在里面声唤。衙内去黑处把舌尖舐开纸窗一望时，吓得浑身冷汗，动弹不得，道：“我这性命休了！走了一夜，却走在这个人家里。”当时衙内窗眼里，看见阁儿里两行都摆列朱红椅子，主位上坐一个一丈来长短骷髅，却便是日间一弹子打的。且看他如何说？那女孩儿见爹爹叫了万福，问道：“爹爹没甚事？”骷髅道：“孩儿，你不来看我则个！我日间出去，见一只雪白鹞子，我见他奇异，捉将来架在手里。被一个人在山脚下打我一弹子，正打在我眼里，好疼。我便问山神土地时，却是崔丞相儿子崔衙内。我若捉得这厮，将来背剪缚





directions and let me go back.”

“All right, I’ll tell my father to escort you home tomorrow.”

“As the saying goes, ‘A man and a woman should not share the same meal table.’ As another ancient proverb says about not arousing suspicion, ‘Don’t bend to pull on your shoes in a melon field / Don’t reach to adjust your hat under a plum tree.’ I’m deeply afraid of giving your father offense.”

“That’s all right. Even if we don’t become husband and wife, please still wait until tomorrow so that my father can escort you back.”

The young man was in a half-drunken torpor when he heard a man speaking and a horse neighing outside. A maidservant announced, “The commander is here.”

“My father’s here. Please wait for a while.” In minced steps, she went off.

“How can there be a military commander in this place?” Cui wondered. On tiptoe, he followed her and saw her turn a corner into a room, where a voice could be heard calling out. Hiding himself in a dark spot, Cui wet the window paper with the tip of his tongue, and what he saw gave him such a shock that he broke into a cold sweat and stood there incapable of movement. “I am as good as dead!” he thought. “I’ve been running around the whole night, only to end up in his home!”

What he had seen through the window was that in the room, which was lined on both sides with vermilion chairs, a ten-foot tall skeleton sat in the seat of honor. It was the very one that Cui had hit with his slingshot earlier in the day. Now let us watch what happened next.

The girl chanted a greeting to her father and asked, “Father, are you all right?”

The skeleton replied, “My child, you may very well ask! After I went out earlier in the day, I saw a snow-white falcon. I was so impressed that I caught it and put it on my hand. Then a man aimed a slingshot at me from the foot of the hill and hit me right in one eye. How it hurt! I asked the local mountain god and was told that it was



在将军柱上，劈腹取心，左手把起酒来，右手把着他心肝；喝一杯酒，嚼一块心肝，以报冤仇……”说犹未了，只见一个人从屏风背转将出来。不是别人，却是早来村酒店里的酒保。将军道：“班犬，你听得说也不曾？”班犬道：“才见说，却不叵耐，崔衙内早起来店中向我买酒吃，不知却打了将军的眼。”女孩儿道：“告爹爹，他也想是误打了爹爹，望爹爹饶恕他。”班犬道：“妹妹莫怪我多口。崔衙内适来共妹妹在草堂饮酒。”女孩儿：“告爹爹，崔郎与奴饮酒，他是五百年前姻眷。看孩儿面，且饶恕他则个！”将军便只管焦躁，女孩儿只管劝。

衙内在窗子外听得，道：“这里不走，更待何时！”走出草堂，开了院门，跳上马，摔一鞭，那马四只蹄一似翻盏撒钹，道不得个慌不择路，连夜胡乱走到天色渐晓，离了定山。衙内道：“惭愧！”正说之间，林子里抢出十馀个人来，大喊一声，把衙内簇住。衙内道：“我好苦！出得龙潭，又入虎穴！”仔细看时，却是随从人等。衙内道：“我吃你们一惊！”众人问衙内：“一夜从那里去来？今日若不见衙内，我们都打没头脑恶官司。”衙内对众



the son of Prime Minister Cui. If I ever get my hands on that bastard, I'll tie him up to a big column, cut open his chest, and gouge his heart out. With a wine cup in my left hand and his heart in my right hand, I'll down one cup with each bite of the heart and savor my revenge."

The words were still ringing in the air when a man emerged from behind the screen. It was none other than the waiter of the village inn. The commander said, "Doggy, did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, I did. That was outrageous! That Cui paid for wine in my shop earlier today. I didn't know he hurt the commander's eye!"

The girl said, "He must have hurt you by mistake, Father. Please forgive him."

The man who was called Doggy said, "Sister, don't blame me for shooting off my mouth, but Mr. Cui Junior was just drinking with you in the hall."

The girl pleaded with her father, "I was drinking with him because I have a marriage bond with him that goes back five hundred years. Please forgive him for my sake!" But the commander went on raving and ranting, and the daughter kept trying to calm him down.

Cui, hearing all this from the other side of the window, said to himself, "I'd better get out of here right now! What am I waiting for?" He made his way out of the hall, opened the gate, jumped on his horse, and gave it a stroke of the whip. The horse galloped blindly ahead in its fright, its hooves flying through the air.

After being on the run for the rest of the night without knowing where he was heading, Cui finally saw, by the light of dawn, that Mount Ding was behind him. "Thank goodness," he said, but the words were hardly out of his mouth when more than ten men charged out of the woods and, with a mighty shout, encircled him. "Woe is me!" he lamented, "I just escaped from the dragon pond, only to plunge right into the tiger's lair!"

Upon a closer look, however, he saw that the men were his followers. "You scared me!" said he.

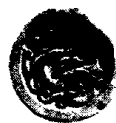
The men asked him, "Where were you all night? If we hadn't found you today, we'd have been in big trouble!" After hearing his



人把上项事说了一遍。众人都以手加额道：“早是不曾坏了性命。我们昨晚一夜不敢归去，在这林子里等到今日。早是新罗白鹞，元来飞在林子后面树上，方才收得。”那养角鹰的道：“覆衙内，男女在此土居，这山里有多少奇禽异兽，只好再入去出猎，可惜担搁了新罗白鹞。”衙内道：“这厮又来！”众人扶策著衙内，归到府中。一行人离了犒设，却入堂里，见了爹妈，唱了喏。相公道：“一夜你不归，那里去来？忧杀了妈妈。”衙内道：“告爹妈，儿子昨夜见一件诧异的事！”把说过许多话，从头说了一遍。相公焦躁：“小后生乱道胡说！且罚在书院里，教院子看著，不得出离。”衙内只得入书院。

时光似箭，日月如梭，捻指间过了三个月。当时是夏间天气：

夏，夏。雨馀，亭厦。纨扇轻，薰风乍。散发披襟，弹棋打马。[眉批]打马戏起于靖康年间，唐时未有。古鼎焚龙涎，照壁名人画。当头竹径风生，两行青松暗瓦。最好沉李与浮瓜，



account of what had happened, they all rejoiced, their hands on their foreheads, saying, "How lucky that you're alive! We didn't dare go back last night and waited in the woods until now. The white falcon had flown to a tree at the back of the woods, and we've just got it down."

The keeper of the eagle said, "Young master, I'm from these parts, so I know the hills here are full of rare birds and animals. We should be doing some more hunting. Too bad the white falcon from Silla is not doing anything."

"There he goes again!" snapped Mr. Cui Junior.

The men escorted Cui back home and, upon arrival, dispersed to claim their rewards, whereas Cui went into the hall, where he chanted a greeting to his parents.

"Where were you all night? Your mother was worried sick," said the prime minister.

"A most extraordinary thing happened to me last night," said Cui, and he repeated the account he had told his followers.

The prime minister grew impatient. "What a tall tale from a fanciful youngster! Now, this is your punishment: Stay in your study! An attendant will be watching you, to make sure you don't leave the room."

In resignation, the young man went into the study.

Time sped by like an arrow. The sun and the moon shot back and forth like a shuttle, and in the snap of a finger, three months went by. It was summer now.

*Summer! Summer!*

*The rains are abundant, the pavilions spacious,*

*The silk fan light, the fragrant air breezy.*

*Let down your hair, loosen your clothes,*

*And play a game or two of horse chess.<sup>13</sup>* (The game of horse chess originated in the Jingkang [1126] reign period. It was not yet in existence in the Tang dynasty.)

*Fragrant incense in the ancient tripod;*

*Famous paintings on the screen walls.*

*A nice breeze down the bamboo trail;*



对青樽旋开新鲜。

衙内过三个月不出书院门，今日天色却热，且离书院去后花园里乘凉。坐定，衙内道：“三个月不敢出书院门，今日在此乘凉，好快活。”听那更点，早是二更。只见一轮月从东上来：

月，月。无休，无歇。夜东生，晓西灭。少见团圆，多逢破缺。偏宜午夜时，最称三秋节。幽光解敌严霜，皓色能欺瑞雪。穿窗深夜忽清风，曾遣离人情惨切。

衙内乘着月色，闲行观看。则见一片黑云起，云绽处，见一个人驾一轮香车，载着一个妇人。看那驾车的人，便是前日酒保班犬。香车里坐着乾红衫女儿，衙内月光下认得是庄内借宿留他吃酒的女娘。下车来道：“衙内，外日奴好意相留，如何不别而行？”衙内道：“好，不走，右手把着酒，左手把著心肝做下口。告娘娘，饶崔某性命！”女孩儿道：“不要怕，我不是人，亦不是鬼，奴是上界神仙。与衙内是五百年姻眷，今日特来效于飞之乐。”教班犬



*Tiled roofs among the two rows of green pines.  
Nothing better to have than this: plums and melons  
And salted fish over a cup of wine.*

Young Master Cui did not take a step outside the study for three months. One day, it was so hot that he left the study and went to a cool spot in the back garden. After sitting down, he said to himself, "For three months I didn't dare take a step out the study door. How nice it is to be enjoying the cool air here!" As the night drum struck two, behold! The moon rose in the east.

*Moon! Moon!  
It never pauses for a rest  
But rises at night in the east  
And sets at dawn in the west.  
In shape more often crescent than round,  
It shines best at midnight and midautumn.  
Its lambent light the color of cold frost,  
Its bright gleam sparkles like shining snow.  
Its rays through the windows on windy nights  
Break the hearts of those missing their loved ones.*

By the light of the moon, Mr. Cui Junior took a leisurely walk around the garden. Suddenly, he noticed a black cloud rise into the sky and then part in the middle to reveal a fancy carriage with a driver and a woman passenger. The driver turned out to be none other than the waiter called Doggy. The woman, clad in dark red, was, as Cui saw by the moonlight, the very same young woman who had kept him for wine at the farmstead. She alighted from the carriage and said, "Young Master, the other day, I was full of good intentions when I asked you to stay. Why did you leave without saying good-bye?"

"If I had stayed, someone would have held my heart in his left hand, to make it go with the wine in his right hand! Please spare my life, young lady!"

"Don't be afraid," said the girl. "I am neither a human being nor a ghost. I am a fairy from the upper world. I have a marriage bond with you going back five hundred years. I'm now here to enjoy con-



自驾香车去。衙内一时被他这色迷了。

色，色。难离，易惑。隐深闺，藏柳陌。长小人志，灭君子德。后主谩多才，纣王空有力。伤人不痛之刀，对面杀人之贼。方知双眼是横波，无限贤愚被沉溺。

两个同在书院里过了数日。院子道：“这几日衙内不许我们入书院里，是何意故？”当夜张见一个妖媚的妇人，院子先来覆管家婆，便来覆了相公。相公焦躁做一片，仗剑入书院里来。衙内见了相公，只得唱个喏。相公道：“我儿，教你在书院中读书，如何引惹邻舍妇女来？朝廷得知，只说我纵放你如此。也妨我儿将来仕路。”[眉批]远虑。衙内只应得喏：“告爹爹，无此事。”却待再问，只见屏风后走出一个女孩儿来，叫声万福。相公见了，越添焦躁。仗手中宝剑，移步向前，喝一声道：“著！”剑不下去，万事俱休，一剑下去，教相公倒退三步。看手中利刃，只剩得剑靶，吃了一惊，到去住不得。只见女孩儿道：“相公休焦。





jugal pleasures with you.”

With that, she bade the waiter drive away in the carriage and leave her behind. In a moment of weakness, Cui was captivated by her charm.

*Lust! Lust!  
Hard to be rid of, easy to be lured;  
It lurks in the boudoir and on willow-lined paths,  
Aiding petty rogues, ruining gentlemen's morals.  
The King of Chen's talent did him no service;<sup>14</sup>  
King Zhou's mighty strength was rendered useless.<sup>15</sup>  
The killer with the painless knife  
Is the very one in front of your face.  
Her lovely eyes are in fact sparkling waves  
That drown the good as well as the foolish.*

After the two of them spent several days in the study, the attendant on guard duty commented, “I wonder why the young master forbids us to go into his study.”

That very night, he caught sight of a seductive-looking woman and reported what he had seen to the housekeeper and the master. Carried away with rage, the prime minister stormed into the study, armed with a sword. The young man felt obliged to chant a greeting to his father.

“My son,” said the father, “I told you to do your studies here. How could you have brought in some woman from the neighborhood? Should the imperial court get word of this, I will be blamed for having spoiled you rotten, and your own future career will be jeopardized!” (*He does think far ahead.*)

The son said only, “Father, I have done no such thing.”

Before the father could ask further, a girl emerged from behind the screen and chanted a greeting. All the more enraged, the prime minister took a step forward and swung the sword in his hand, shouting, “Take this!”

Everything would have been all right had he not used his sword, for of the sharp sword in his hand, only the handle remained. Astounded, the prime minister recoiled three steps, at a loss as to



奴与崔郎五百年姻契，合为夫妇，不日同为神仙。”相公出豁不得，却来与夫人商量，教请法官。那里捉得住！

正恁地烦恼，则见客将司来覆道：“告相公，有一司法，姓罗名公适，新到任来公参。客司说：‘相公不见客。’问：‘如何不见客？’客将司把上件事说了一遍。罗法司道：‘此间有一修行在世神仙，可以断得。姓罗名公远，是某家兄。’”客司覆相公，相公即时请相见，茶汤罢，便问罗真人在何所。得了备细，便修札子请将罗公远下山，到府中见了。崔丞相看那罗真人，果是生得非常，[眉批] 宋时小说，凡言道术必托之罗真人，盖附会公远之名也。便引到书院中，与这妇人相见了。罗真人劝谕那妇人：“看罗某面，放舍崔衙内。”妇人那里肯依。罗真人既再三劝谕不从，作起法来，忽起一阵怪风：

风，风。荡翠，飘红。忽南北，忽西东。春开柳叶，秋谢梧桐，凉入朱门内，寒添陋巷中。似鼓声摇陆地，如雷响振晴空。乾坤收拾尘埃净，现日移阴却有功。



what to do. The girl said, "Don't be angry, sir! I have a five-hundred-year marriage bond with your son. As husband and wife, we will soon become immortals together."

Without any idea what to do next, the prime minister went to consult his wife. He hired an exorcist, but there was no hope of capturing the girl.

The prime minister was fretting and fuming when the janitor came to him, saying, "Sir, there is a Luo Gongshi, the new director of the Law Section, who asked to see you. I told him that the prime minister is not seeing visitors. He asked why, so I told him about the matter. Director Luo said that in this area, there is someone who can do the exorcism. The man has achieved immortality through cultivating his spirit. His name is Luo Gongyuan, Director Luo's older brother."

Right away, the prime minister asked to see him. After tea was served, Mr. Cui Senior asked where Sage Luo lived.

Having obtained detailed information, Cui wrote a letter to Luo Gongyuan, asking him to go down the mountain to the Cui residence, and so he did. Much impressed by Sage Luo's unusual appearance (*In Song dynasty novels, all acts of exorcism are invariably attributed to Sage Luo because of his fame.*), the prime minister led him to the study to see the woman.

Sage Luo advised her, "Let Young Master Cui Junior go, as a favor to me." But the woman turned a deaf ear. After trying a few more times in vain to convince her, Sage Luo began his conjury. An eerie gust of wind suddenly sprang up.

*Wind! Wind!*

*It blows bits of green and red to north, south, east, and west.*

*In spring, it pushes open the willow buds;*

*In autumn, it withers the parasol leaves.*

*It chills wealthy homes behind vermilion doors,*

*It freezes rundown huts in humble alleys.*

*It shakes the earth with the force of drumbeats;*

*It makes the sky vibrate with thunderbolts.*

*It sweeps the universe clean of dust;*



那阵风过处，叫下两个道童来。一个把着一条缚魔索，一个把着一条黑柱杖。罗真人令道童捉下那妇女。妇女见道童来捉，他叫一声班犬。从虚空中跳下班犬来，忿忿地擎起双拳，竟来抵敌。元来邪不可以干正，被两个道童一条索子，先缚了班犬，后缚了乾红衫女儿。喝教现形，班犬变做一只大虫，乾红衫女儿变做一个红兔儿，这骷髅神，元来晋时一个将军，死葬在定山之上。岁久年深，成器了，现形作怪。

罗真人断了这三怪，救了崔衙内性命。从此至今，定山一路，太平无事。这段话本，则唤做《新罗白鹞》《定山三怪》。有诗为证：

虎奴兔女活骷髅，作怪成群山上头。  
一自真人明断后，行人坦道永无忧。



*It brings out the sun and expels darkness.*

After the wind died down, the sage summoned two Daoist youths down to earth; one held a demon-subduing rope, and the other carried a black staff. As Sage Luo ordered that the woman be seized, she cried, "Doggy!" And from midair, Doggy leaped on to the ground, his fists raised in anger, ready to do battle. But evil is no match for righteousness. With the rope, the two Daoist youths bound up Doggy and then the girl in red.

"Show your true selves!" they ordered sharply. Doggy changed into a tiger, and the girl in red changed into a red rabbit.

The skeleton used to be a commander in Jin times and after his death had been buried on Mount Ding. Over the years, it matured into a havoc-wreaking demon. Thus, Sage Luo subdued the three evil spirits and saved the life of Mr. Cui Junior. From that time onward to this day, the Mount Ding region has never known any trouble. This story has been variously called "The White Falcon from Silla" or "The Three Evil Spirits of Mount Ding." There is a poem that bears testimony:

*A tiger, a rabbit, a living skeleton,  
Banded together to wreak havoc on the hills.  
Ever since the sage subdued the demons,  
Wayfarers on the road have had nothing to fear.*

This story has been translated as "The White Hawk of Ts'ui, the Magistrate's Son, Led to Demons," in *Eight Colloquial Tales of the Sung, Thirteenth Century China*, trans. Richard F. S. Yang (Taipei: China Post, 1972). In the original edition, a note appended to the title reads "Titled 'The Three Evil Spirits of Mount Ding' in an ancient version. Also known as 'The White Falcon from Silla.'"

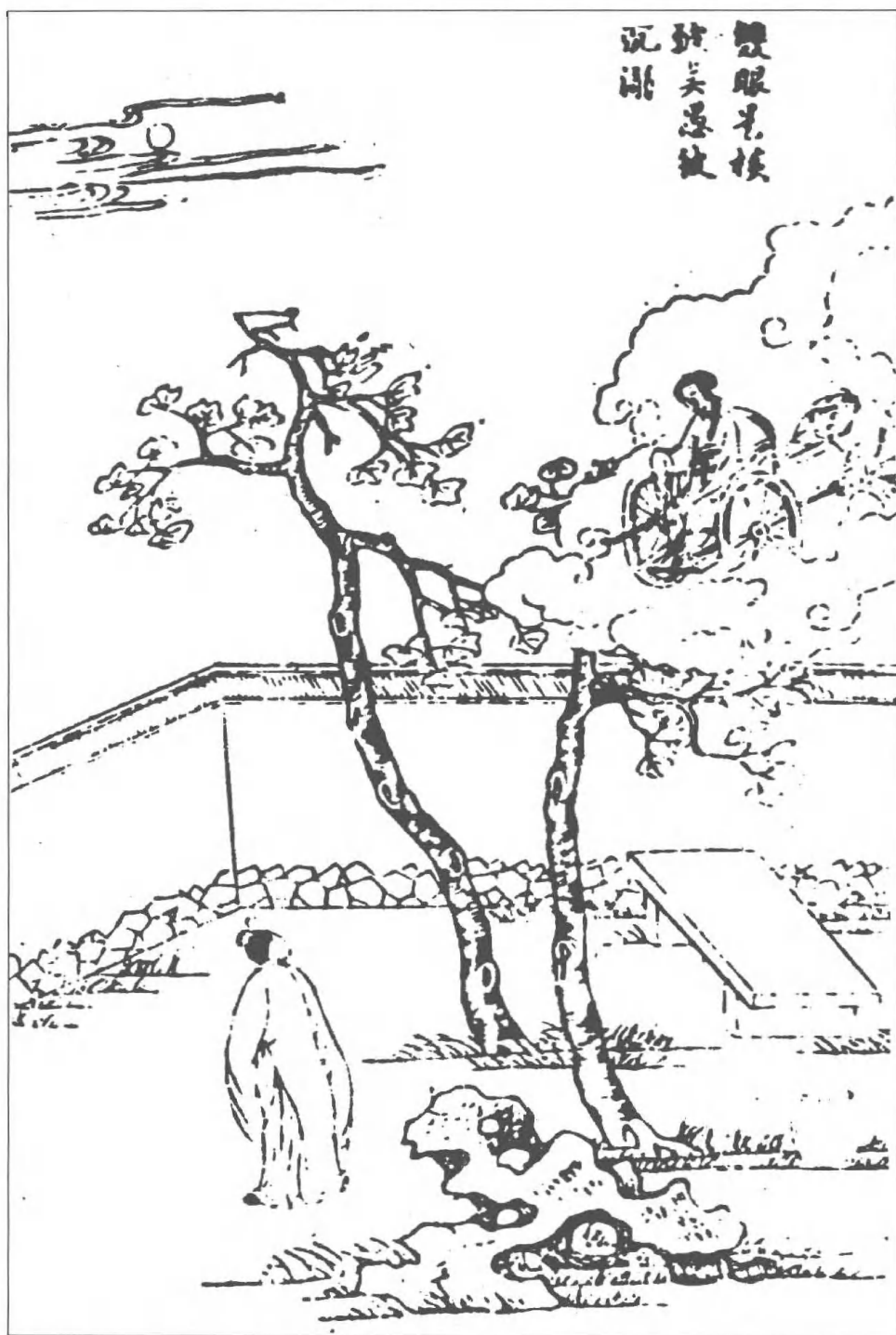
<sup>1</sup> Bingzhou, in present-day Shanxi, was famous for its sharp scissors.

<sup>2</sup> The Double Seventh Festival falls on the seventh day of the seventh month, when the Weaving Maiden Star is believed to meet her husband the Herdboy Star, by crossing a bridge formed by magpies across the Silver River (Milky Way).

<sup>3</sup> The Prince of Ning, Li Xian, a skilled flute player, was actually Emperor Xuanzong's older brother, not his younger brother.

<sup>4</sup> Zhao Feiyan (d. 1 B.C.E.) was the favorite consort of Emperor Cheng of the Han dynasty and later became empress. For more on Zhao Feiyan, see story 9.

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Fei (d. 221) was a brave warrior and, together with Guan Yu, helped Liu Bei (162-223) found the kingdom of Shu in the Three Kingdoms period. According to *The Ro-*



*mance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi), his thunderous shouts from Changban Bridge stopped the advances of Cao Cao's troops and scared Xiahou Jie, a subordinate of Cao Cao's, to death.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Yanzhang (863–923), courtesy name Xianming, was a valiant warrior of the Later Liang dynasty in the Five Dynasties period.

<sup>7</sup> Li Bai (701–762) was one of China's greatest poets. For more on Li Bai, see story 9.

<sup>8</sup> Liu Ling (221–300) was one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove during the Western Jin dynasty.

<sup>9</sup> This is a reference to the four old hermits of the Mount Shang in the early Han dynasty.

<sup>10</sup> Once, when offering sacrifices to the gods on Mount Tai, the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty was caught in the rain and took shelter under a pine tree. Later, he gave the pine tree the title Grand Master of the Fifth Grade.

<sup>11</sup> Wu Daozi was a famous painter of the Tang dynasty and was often commissioned by Emperor Xuanzong (r. 673–756) to paint in the palace.

<sup>12</sup> Kuai Wentong, also known as Kuai Tong, was a sophist of the earlier Han dynasty.

<sup>13</sup> In a horse chess game, all thirty chess pieces, fifteen on each side, are horses.

<sup>14</sup> Chen Shubao (553–604), king of the Chen dynasty during the Southern Dynasties period, was a talented poet, albeit an incompetent ruler obsessed with feminine beauty.

<sup>15</sup> King Zhou was a notorious despot and the last king of the Shang dynasty.



## 第二十卷

### 计押番金鳊产祸

旧名《金鳊记》

终日昏昏醉梦间，忽闻春尽强登山。  
因过竹院逢僧话，又得浮生半日闲。



话说大宋徽宗朝有个官人，姓计名安，在北司官厅下做个押番，止只夫妻两口儿。偶一日下番在家，天色却热，无可消遣，却安排了钓竿，迤迤取路来到金明池上钓鱼。钓了一日，不曾发市。计安肚里焦躁，却待收了钓竿归去，觉道浮子沉下去，钓起一件物事来，计安道声好，不知高低：“只有钱那里讨！”安在篮内，收拾了竿子，起身取路归来。一头走，只听得有人叫道：“计安。”回头看时，却又没人。又行又叫：“计安，吾乃金明池掌。汝若放我，教汝富贵不可言尽；汝若害我，教你合家人口死于非命。”[眉批]何不即时放之，却又害他。仔细听时，不是别处，却是鱼篮内叫声。计安道：“却不作怪！”一路无话。到得家中，放了竿子篮儿。那浑家道：“丈夫，快去厅里去，太尉使人来叫你两遭。不知有甚事，分付便来。”计安道：“今日是下番日期，叫





## Story 20

### The Golden Eel Brings Calamity to Officer Ji (Formerly titled “The Story of the Golden Eel”)

*The days go by in wine-induced dreams;  
While spring is not yet gone, I climb the hills.  
Passing the monks' bamboo yard, I stop to chat  
And gain another half day of leisure.*

As the story goes, during the reign of Emperor Huizong [1101–25] of the Song dynasty, there lived a man called Ji An, who was an officer in the Privy Military Council. He and his wife were the only members of the household. One hot day when he was off duty, he took up a fishing rod and went to Gold and Bright Pond, for lack of a better way to spend his time. A whole day went by without a single fish taking the bait. His patience running out, he was about to put away the fishing rod and return home when he felt the rod sinking into the water. As he pulled it up, heavy with his catch, he gave a cheer, little knowing what he was in for. “Even money can’t buy this anywhere!” said he. He placed the catch in the creel, put away his fishing rod, and started for home.

As he walked, he heard a voice crying, “Ji An!” He looked back, but there was no one to be seen. He pressed on, and the voice said again, “Ji An! I am the god of Gold and Bright Pond. If you let me go, I will make sure that you enjoy more wealth and honor than can ever be described. But if you kill me, I will make you and your whole family die violent deaths.” (*Why not just let it go instead of killing it?*)

Ji An listened intently and realized that the voice came from his own creel. “How very strange!” he muttered to himself. Nothing of note happened the rest of the way.

Upon arriving home, he had barely put down his fishing rod and creel than his wife said, “Husband, go quickly to the yamen. The sheriff sent for you twice. I don’t know what it’s about, but he said you must go to see him as soon as you come back.”



我做甚……”说不了，又使人来叫：“押番，太尉等你。”计安连忙换了衣衫，和那叫的人去干当官的事。了毕，回来家中，脱了衣掌，教安排饭来吃。只见浑家安排一件物事放在面前。押番见了，吃了一惊，叫声苦，不知高低：“我这性命休了！”浑家也吃一惊道：“没甚事，叫苦连声！”押番却把早间去钓鱼的事说了一遍，道：“是一条金鳊，他说：‘吾乃金明池掌，若放我，大富不可言；若害我，教你合家死于非命。’你却如何把他来害了？我这性命合休！”浑家见说，啐了一口唾，道：“却不是放屁！金鳊又会说起话来！我见没有下饭，安排他来吃，却又没事。你不吃，我一发吃了。”计安终是闷闷不已。到得晚间，夫妻两个解带脱衣去睡。浑家见他怀闷，离不得把些精神来陪侍他。自当夜之间，那浑家身怀六甲，[眉批]金鳊投化。只见眉低眼慢，腹大乳高。倏忽间又十月满足。临盆之时，叫了收生婆，生下个女孩儿来。正是：

野花不种年年有，烦恼无根日日生。

那押番看了，夫妻二人好不不喜欢，取名叫做庆奴。

时光如箭，转眼之间，那女孩儿年登二八，长成一个好身材，伶俐聪明，又教成一身本事。爹娘怜惜，有如性命。时遇靖康丙



“It’s my day off today. What can he want of me?”

Before he had quite finished, a messenger came. “Officer Ji! The sheriff is waiting for you.”

In haste, Ji An changed clothes, followed the messenger, and attended to official business. His job done, he returned home, took off his formal robe, and asked to be served supper. When his eyes fell upon a dish that his wife had put before him, he gave a start and cried out in anguish, “I’m as good as dead!”

His wife responded in alarm, “Why say such a thing for no good reason?”

The husband told her what had happened on his fishing trip earlier in the day. “The golden eel said to me, ‘I am the god of Gold and Bright Pond. If you let me go, I will make sure that you enjoy more wealth and honor than can ever be described. But if you kill me, I will make you and your whole family die violent deaths.’ Why did you have to kill it? We’re going to die for this!”

At these words, his wife spit and retorted, “What you said is nothing but a fart! How can an eel talk? There was nothing to go with the rice, so I cooked it for supper. Nothing will happen. If you don’t eat it, I will.”

Ji An remained in low spirits. When night came, he and his wife undressed and went to bed. Noticing his distressed look, the wife went out of her way to cheer him up. And that very night, she got pregnant. (*The golden eel’s reincarnation.*) Her brows and eyelids began to look bloated, her belly protruded, and her breasts swelled.

Soon, ten months had gone by, and she had reached full term. She engaged a midwife, went into labor, and gave birth to a girl. Truly,

*Wild flowers, never planted, come up every year;*

*Worries, though rootless, grow daily to haunt the mind.*

Ji An and his wife were delighted beyond measure. They named the girl Qingnu.

Time flew by like an arrow. In the twinkling of an eye, Qingnu was sixteen years old. She had a good figure and a sharp mind and acquired many skills. Her parents loved her as much as their own lives.



午年间，士马离乱。因此计安家夫妻女儿三口，收拾随身细软包裹，流落州府。后来打听得车驾杭州驻蹕，官员都随驾来临安。计安便迤迳取路奔行在来。不则一日，三口儿入城，权时讨得个安歇，便去寻问旧日官员相见了，依旧收留在厅着役，不在话下。计安便教人寻间房，安顿了妻小居住。不止一日，计安觑着浑家道：“我下番无事，若不做些营生，恐坐吃山空，须得些个道业来相助方好。”浑家道：“我也这般想，别没甚事好做，算来只好开一个酒店。便是你上番时，我也和孩儿在家里卖得。”计安道：“你说得是，和我肚里一般。”便去理会这节事。次日，便去打合个量酒的人。却是外方人，从小在临安讨衣饭吃，没爹娘，独自一个，姓周名得，排行第三。安排都了，选吉日良时，开张店面。周三就在门前卖些果子，自捏合些汤水。到晚间，就在计安家睡。计安不在家，那娘儿两个自在家中卖。那周三直是勤力，却不躲懒。

倏忽之间，相及数月。忽朝一日，计安对妻子道：“我有句话和你说，不要嗔我。”浑家道：“却有甚事，只管说。”计安道：“这几日我见那庆奴，全不像那女孩儿相态。”浑家道：“孩儿日夜不曾放出去，并没甚事，想必长成了恁么！”计安道：“莫托



In the turbulent year of the Jingkang reign period [1126], the Ji family of three gathered their portable valuables and personal belongings into bundles and fled to the prefectural seat. Upon hearing that the emperor had taken up temporary residence in Hangzhou, and that a multitude of officials were following suit, Ji An also made his way there. After traveling for several days, the family of three came to the city of Hangzhou [Lin'an] and found lodging. Ji An sought out officials whom he knew from his old post and was kept in the local yamen as a runner, but of this, no more need be said. He asked someone to find a house for him.

One day, sometime after the family moved into the house, Ji An looked his wife in the eye and said, "I'm thinking of starting a small business, so that I can have something to do when I'm off duty. If we sit idle, we'll eat away all our savings. We need some supplementary income."

His wife agreed. "I've been thinking along the same lines. As far as I can see, there's little we can do except to run a wineshop, so that when you're at work, Qingnu and I can take care of it."

"Exactly what I've been thinking, too."

The decision thus made, Ji An went about making preparations. The next day, he hired a man named Zhou De, third son of the Zhou family, to work as waiter. Zhou De was not a native of Lin'an but had been working in the city ever since he had been orphaned in childhood. With the preparations complete, the wineshop opened on a chosen auspicious day. Zhou San [the third one] was positioned at the entrance selling refreshments and making tea. At night, he slept in Ji An's house. In Ji An's absence, the mother and the daughter took care of the shop. Zhou San proved to be a hardworking man and never loafed on the job.

Several months went by quickly. One day, Ji An said to his wife, "I have something to say to you. Don't get mad at me."

"Whatever you want to say, just go ahead and say it."

"These last few days, I've noticed that our daughter is not carrying herself like a girl anymore."

"I never let her out of the house. She can't have done anything



大。我见他和周三两个打眼色。”[眉批]□又何。当日没话说。一日，计安不在家，做娘的叫那庆奴来：“我儿，娘有件事和你说，不要瞒我。”庆奴道：“没甚事。”娘便说道：“我这几日，见你身体粗丑，全不像模样，实对我说。”庆奴见问，只不肯说。娘见那女孩儿前言不应后语，失张失志，道三不着两，面上忽青忽红，[眉批]更不须疑了。娘道：“必有缘故。”捉住庆奴，搜检他身上时，娘只叹得口气，叫声苦，连腮赠掌，打那女儿：[眉批]打又何益。“你却被何人坏了？”庆奴吃打不过，哭着道：“我和那周三两个有事。”娘见说，不敢出声，攥着脚，只叫得苦：“却是怎的计结？爹归来时须说我在家管甚事，装这般幌子！”周三不知里面许多事，兀自在门前卖酒。到晚，计安归来歇息了，安排些饭食吃罢。浑家道：“我有件事和你说。果应你的言语，那丫头被周三那厮坏了身体。”那计安不听得说，万事全休，听得说时，怒从心上起，恶向胆边生，便要去打那周三。[眉批]打又何益。浑家拦住道：“且商量。打了他，不争我家却是甚活计！”计安道：“我指



wrong. It's just that she's now a grown woman."

"You're not noticing things! I saw her and Zhou San making eyes at each other." ([ Illegible.]) Nothing further was said about the matter that day.

One day, when Ji An was not at home, the mother called Qingnu over and said to her, "My child, I have something to say to you. Don't hide anything from me."

"There's nothing to hide," said Qingnu.

"I've noticed recently that you look quite out of shape. Tell me the truth."

Qingnu prevaricated. Observing her incoherence and consternation, her stuttering and the coming and going of the color on her face (*There should be no more doubt by now.*), the mother said, "There must be something going on!" She seized Qingnu and examined her body. Then she gave a mournful shriek and slapped the girl across the face. (*What good would a few slaps do?*) "Who did this to you?" she demanded.

The slap was too much for Qingnu. She sobbed out, "There is something between Zhou San and me."

At this confession, the mother stomped her feet and cried out in dismay, but she dared not make too much of a commotion. "Now what's to be done? Your father will blame me for not keeping an eye on the goings-on in this house and letting such a scandal happen!"

Not knowing what had occurred inside the house, Zhou San carried on with his job, selling wine at the door. In the evening, Ji An returned home and took a rest. After supper, his wife said, "I have something to tell you. Just as you suspected, our girl has been deflowered by that brute Zhou San."

Had Ji An not been told of this, everything would have been all right, but as it was, a smoldering rage burned in his heart, and he was seized with an urge to beat that Zhou San. (*What good does beating do?*) His wife stopped him, saying, "Let's talk about this first. Don't you know that beating him up isn't something a family of our status should do?"

"I was hoping that hussy would marry a decent official," said Ji



望教这贱人去个官员府第，却做出这般事来。譬如不养得，把这丫头打杀了罢。”做娘的再三再四劝了一个时辰。爹性稍过，便问这事却怎地出豁？做娘的不慌不忙，说出一个法儿来。正是：

金风吹树蝉先觉，断送无常死不知。

浑家道：“只有一法，免得妆幌子。”计安道：“你且说。”浑家道：“周三那厮，又在我家得使，何不把他来招赘了？”[眉批]周三既得使，赘之亦是一策。其成亲后改节，自是金鳧作祸，非人谋所及也。说话的，当时不把女儿嫁与周三，只好休，也只被人笑得一场，两下赶开去，却没后面许多说话。不想计安听信了妻子之言，便道：“这也使得。”当日且分付周三归去。那周三在路上思量：“我早间见那做娘的打庆奴，晚间押番归却，打发我出门，莫是东窗事发？若是这事走漏，须教我吃官司，如何计结？”没做理会处。正是：

乌鸦与喜鹊同行，吉凶事全然未保。

闲话提过，离不得计押番使人去说合周三。下财纳礼，择日成亲，不在话下。

倏忽之间，周三入赘在家一载有馀，夫妻甚是说得着。两个暗地计较了，只要搬出去住。在家起晏睡早，躲懒不动。周三那





An. "And now, look at what happened! Let's kill her, as if we'd never had her!" The mother did her best to calm him down. About two hours later, when his anger had subsided somewhat, he asked, "Now what's to be done?"

Quite unruffled, his wife told him of her plan. Indeed,  
*Cicadas are the first ones to feel the autumn wind;  
 Death comes to those who least expect to die.*

"There's only one way to avoid a scandal," said she.

"Go on," urged Ji An.

"Since that brute Zhou San is working for us, why not take him on as a live-in son-in-law?" (*Not a bad idea. His future betrayal will all be the golden eel's doing, not something that could have been prevented by human efforts.*)

Storyteller, you may well say, had they not married their daughter to Zhou San but instead braved the derision of acquaintances and driven the lovers apart, there would have been no story to tell.

Well, as it happened, Ji An agreed with his wife. "That's a good idea," he said. That very day, he dismissed Zhou San from his service.

On his way out, Zhou thought to himself, "I saw the mother slap Qingnu earlier in the day, and now that Officer Ji is home for the evening, I'm sent on my way. Could it be that I've been found out? If this leaks out, they'll surely take me to the authorities. What's to be done?" And so he fretted. Truly,

*A crow and a magpie when together<sup>1</sup>  
 Bring either joy or woe for all one knows.*

Not to encumber our story with trivialities, let us come to the point when Officer Ji sent a matchmaker to Zhou San to make the marriage proposal. The betrothal gifts were sent, the preliminaries gone through, and the wedding took place on a chosen day, but of this, we shall speak no further.

Soon, more than a year had elapsed since Zhou San had become a live-in son-in-law. A loving young couple he and Qingnu were. With their hearts secretly set on moving out, they shirked their duties, rising late and retiring early. Unable to put up with the way that brute



厮，打出吊人，公然干颡。计安忍不得，不住和那周三厮闹。便和浑家商量，和这厮官司一场，夺了休，却不妨得。[眉批]只合分他异居，夺之非策。日前时便怕人笑，没出手，今番只说是招那厮不着。便安排圈套，捉那周三些个事，闹将起来，和他打官司，邻舍劝不住，夺了休。周三只得离了计押番家，自去赶趁。庆奴不敢则声，肚里自烦恼，正自生离死别。

讨休在家相及半载，只见有个人来寻押番娘，却是个说亲的媒人。相见之后，坐定道：“闻知宅上小娘子要说亲，老媳妇特来。”计安道：“有甚好头脑，万望主盟。”婆子道：“不是别人，这个人虎翼营有请受的官身，占役在官员去处，姓戚名青。”计安见说，因缘相撞，却便肯，即时便出个帖子。几杯酒相待，押番娘便说道：“婆婆用心则个。事成时，却得相谢。”婆婆谢了，自去。夫妻两个却说道：“也好，一则有请受官身；二则年纪大些，却老成；三则周三那厮不敢来胡生事，已自嫁了个官身。我也认得这戚青，却善熟。”话中见快，媒人一合说成。依旧少不得许多节次成亲。却说庆奴与戚青两个说不上、道不得个少女少郎，



Zhou San swaggered around, looking for trouble, Ji An found himself constantly at loggerheads with his son-in-law. Consulting his wife, he said, "Why don't we sue him and put an end to the marriage? (*Letting them move out should have sufficed. Divorce is not a good way out.*) We didn't do anything earlier because we were afraid of being laughed at. This time, we'll just say that he's not good enough as a son-in-law."

Thereupon, they set a trap, caught him in some wrongdoing, and raised a big fuss, resorting to a lawsuit that ended in divorce, despite the neighbors' exhortations to the contrary. Resignedly, Zhou San left the Ji household to make a living on his own. Qingnu dared not say anything but seethed with inward resentment, more willing to die than live.

About half a year after the divorce, a matchmaker came to see Mrs. Ji. After an exchange of greetings, the matchmaker sat down and said, "I'm here because I heard that you're looking for a match for your daughter."

"If you have a good candidate in mind, please do us this favor," said Ji An.

"The one I have in mind is a court-appointed officer serving with the palace guards. His name is Qi Qing."

Believing this to be a predestined match, Ji An gave his consent. Then and there, he prepared a letter of betrothal and treated the matchmaker to a few cups of wine. His wife said, "Please do the best you can, Granny. We'll show you our gratitude when this match is pulled off."

After the matchmaker thankfully took her leave, the husband and wife said, "It's not a bad deal. First, he's a court-appointed officer. Second, he may be some years older, but he's wiser and more discreet. Third, once our daughter is married to an official, that brute Zhou San won't dare to come back and make trouble." The husband added, "I know that man Qi Qing. He's a nice man."

Soon enough, the match was made. After the many premarital formalities were completed, the wedding took place.

However, Qingnu and Qi Qing did not get along. No wonder



情色相当，戚青却年纪大，便不中那庆奴意。却整日闹吵，没一日静办。爹娘见不成模样，又与女夺休，[眉批]爹娘也管不得许多，押番太多事。告托官员，封过状子，去所属看人情面，给状判离。戚青无力势，被夺了休。遇吃得醉，便来计押番门前骂。[眉批]自取。忽朝一日，发出句说话来，教“张公吃酒李公醉”，“柳树上着刀，桑树上出血”。正是：

安乐窝中好使乖，中堂有客寄书来。

多应只是名和利，撇在床头不拆开。

那戚青遇吃得酒醉，便来厮骂。却又不敢与他争。初时邻里也来相劝。次后吃得醉便来，把做常事，不管他。一日，戚青指着计押番道：“看我不杀了你这狗男女不信！”道了自去，邻里都知。

[眉批]言不可不慎。

却说庆奴在家，又经半载。只见有个婆婆来闲话，莫是来说亲？相见了，茶罢，婆子道：“有件事要说，怕押番焦躁。”计安夫妻两个道：“但说不妨。”婆子道：“老媳妇见小娘子两遍说亲不着，何不把小娘子去个好官员家？三五年一程，却出来说亲也



there is the saying, "In young lovers is found mutual passion." Qi Qing was too old to capture Qingnu's heart. All day long, the couple bickered and fought. Not a day went by in peace and quiet. Finding such behavior too unseemly, the parents again wanted a divorce on their daughter's behalf. (*Parents should not be too much in control. Officer Ji is too meddlesome.*) They pulled some strings, and the officials concerned accepted their complaint and granted a divorce, all as personal favors. Qi Qing, who had little influence in local official circles, was expelled from the house. In moments of drunkenness, he would go up to Officer Ji's door and unleash volleys of curses. (*He brought this on himself.*)

Suddenly, one day, he said something that led to a situation in which "Mr. Li gets drunk when it is Mr. Zhang drinking," and "Blood spurts from the mulberry tree when the ax hacks into the willow tree." Truly,

*He could have enjoyed the comfort of his nest,  
 But a note came from a visitor in the hall.  
 Most likely a note to bring him fame and wealth,  
 He should have left it unopened by the bed.*

Every time a drunken Qi Qing came to swear at the Jis' door, they dared not talk back. In the beginning, the neighbors tried to calm Qi Qing, but later, his all too frequent drunken outbursts became routine, and they stopped doing anything about him. One day, Qi Qing swore, pointing at Officer Ji, "Believe me, I'm going to kill that dog of a man!" With that remark, which the neighbors all heard, he departed. (*One can't be too cautious about what one says.*)

Meanwhile, Qingnu remained at home. Another half year went by. One day, an old woman came in for a chat. Could she be a matchmaker? After an exchange of greetings, tea was served. The tea consumed, the woman said, "I have something to say to you, but I'm afraid Officer Ji might get angry with me."

"Go ahead and tell us," said Ji An and his wife.

"Your daughter having had two marriages that didn't work out, why don't you offer her to a good, decent official? Three to five years later, she'll still be young enough for another match."



不迟。”计安听说，肚里道：“也好，一则两遍装幌子，二则坏了些钱物，却是又嫁甚么人是得？”便道：“婆婆有甚么好去处教孩儿去则个？”婆子道：“便是有个官人要小娘子，特地叫老媳妇来说，见在家中安歇。他曾来宅上吃酒，认得小娘子。他是高邮军主簿，如今来这里理会差遣，没人相伴。只是要带归宅里去，却不知押番肯也不肯？”夫妻两个计议了一会，便道：“若是婆婆说时，必不肯相误。望婆婆主盟则个。”当日说定，商量拣日，做了文字。那庆奴拜辞了爹娘，便来伏事那官人。有分教做个失乡之鬼，父子不得相见。正是：

天听寂无声，苍苍何处寻？

非高亦非远，都只在人心。

那官人是高邮军主簿，家小都在家中，来行在理会本身差遣，姓李名子由。讨得庆奴，便一似夫妻一般。日间寒食节，夜里正月半。那庆奴思衣得衣，思食得食。数月后，官人家中信到，催那官人去，恐在都下费用钱物。不只一日，干当完备，安排行装，买了人事，雇了船只，即日起程，取水路归来。在路贪花恋酒，迁延程途，直是怏怏。相次到家，当直人等接着。那恭人出来，与官人相见。官人只应得喏，便道：“恭人在宅干管不易。”便教



At these words, Ji An thought, "That's just as well. For one thing, there have been two scandals. For another, I've gone to quite some expense. But I wonder what kind of man it is this time." Aloud, he asked, "What good candidate do you have in mind for my child, Granny?"

"There's an official who has his eye on your daughter and asked me to make the proposal. He's now resting at home. He came to my house for wine and saw your daughter. He is the assistant magistrate of Gaoyou District, here on some business, without a female companion. He wants to bring your daughter back to his home in Gaoyou later on. Would you be willing?"

After consulting each other, Ji An and his wife said, "We're not going to let you down. Please take care of this for us."

That very day, the matter was settled, a day was chosen, and documents were drawn up. Qingnu bade farewell to her parents and went to serve that official. Alas, she was to become a ghost stranded in alien land, never to see her parents again. Indeed,

*Heaven makes not a sound in reply;  
 Where to find one's bearings in the vast land?  
 What matters, in fact,  
 Is not the distance but the human heart.*

That official was the assistant magistrate of Gaoyou District, Li Ziyou by name, whose wife and children were at home in Gaoyou while he was on business in Lin'an. After acquiring Qingnu, he treated her like his own wife, spending each day as if it were a day of festival and satisfying her every whim for clothes and food. A few months later, Li Ziyou received a letter from home, urging him to return lest he spend too much money in the capital. He completed his business in a matter of days, packed up his belongings, bought some gifts, and promptly started for home in a rented boat. All along the way, he indulged his weaknesses for sex and wine, resentfully putting off the day of his return.

When he finally reached his hometown, officers on duty met at some distance from his house. At home, his wife came out to greet him. Returning her greeting, he said only, "It hasn't been an easy job



庆奴人来参拜恭人。庆奴低着头，走入来立地，却待拜。恭人道：“且休拜。”便问：“这是甚么人？”官人道：“实不瞒恭人，在都下早晚无人使唤，胡乱讨来相伴，今日带来伏事恭人。”恭人看了庆奴道：“你却和官人好快活，来我这里做甚么？”庆奴道：“奴一时遭际，恭人看离乡背井之面。”只见恭人教两个养娘来：“与我除了那贱人冠子，脱了身上衣裳，换几件粗布衣裳着了，解开脚，蓬松了头，罚去厨下打水烧火做饭。”庆奴只叫得万万声苦，哭告恭人道：“看奴家中有老爹娘之面。若不要庆奴，情愿转纳身钱，还归宅中。”恭人道：“你要去，可知好哩。且罚你厨下吃些苦，你从前快活也勾了。”庆奴看着那官人道：“你带我来，却教我恁地模样！你须与我告恭人则个。”官人道：“你看恭人何等情性！随你了得的包待制，也断不得这事。你且没奈何，我自性命不保。等他性下，却与你告。”[眉批]好货。即时押庆奴到厨下去。官人道：“恭人若不要他时，只消退在牙家，转变身钱便了，何须发怒？”恭人道：“你好做作！兀自说哩！”自此罚在厨下，





for you, taking care of the household.”

He then had Qingnu enter the hall to greet his wife. Qingnu walked in, her head lowered, and was about to kowtow when the wife said, “That’s not necessary, but who is this woman?”

“I’m not going to hide anything from you,” said Li Ziyou. “I had no one to serve me in the capital, so I picked a woman at random just to keep me company. Now, I’m bringing her home to serve you.”

Looking at Qingnu, the wife snapped, “A good time you had with my husband! What did you come here for?”

“This happens to be my situation. Madam, please consider the fact that I have left my parents and my hometown.”

The wife summoned two maidservants and ordered them, “Take the headdress off that cheap hussy. Take off her clothes, too, and give her some coarse clothes to wear instead. Take off her shoes and let down her hair. As punishment, she is to help out in the kitchen, fetching water, making the fire, and cooking meals.”

Crying out in despair, Qingnu pleaded tearfully with the wife, “For the sake of my parents, please send me back home if you don’t want me. I’ll gladly return the money paid for me.”

“Going home — that’s too good for you! You’ve had your full share of happiness, and now it’s your turn to suffer and do some hard work in the kitchen.”

Qingnu looked at Li Ziyou and said, “You brought me here, only to land me in such a mess! You must plead with the lady on my behalf.”

“You’ve seen what a temper she has,” said the man. “Even the great Judge Bao wouldn’t be able to do anything in this case. There’s nothing you can do for now, because my very life will be at stake. Let me wait until she calms down before I talk to her on your behalf.”  
(*What a man of spirit!*)

Right away, Qingnu was taken into the kitchen. Li said to his wife, “If you don’t want her, you need only give her back to the go-between and get the money back. Why are you so carried away with anger?”



相及一月。忽一日晚，官人去厨下，只听得黑地里有人叫官人。官人听得，认得是庆奴声音。走近前来，两个扯住了哭，不敢高声，便说道：“我不合带你回来，教你吃这般苦。”庆奴道：“你只管教我在这里受苦，却是几时得了？”官人沉吟半晌，道：“我有道理教你处。不若我告他，只做退你去牙家转变身钱，安排廨舍，悄悄地教你在那里住。我自教人把钱来，我也不时自来和你相聚。是好也不好？”庆奴道：“若得如此，可知好哩。却是灾星退度。”当夜官人离不得把这事说道：“庆奴受罪也勾了。若不要他时，教发付牙家去，转变身钱。”恭人应允，不知里面许多事。且说官人差一个心腹虞候，叫做张彬，专一料理这事。把庆奴安顿廨舍里，隔得那宅中一两条街，只瞒着恭人一个不知。官人不时便走来，安排几杯酒吃了后，免不得干些没正经的事。[眉批]此是破绽。

却说宅里有个小官人，叫做佛郎，年方七岁，直是得人惜，有时往来庆奴那里耍。爹爹便道：“我儿不要说向妈妈道，这个是你姐姐。”孩儿应喏。忽一日，佛郎来，要走入去。那张彬与庆奴两个相并肩而坐吃酒。佛郎见了，便道：“我只说向爹爹道。”



“What an act you are putting on, talking like that!” retorted his wife.

Henceforth, Qingnu worked in the kitchen as a punishment. One month went by.

One evening, Mr. Li went to the kitchen, where, in the darkness, he heard someone call him. Recognizing Qingnu’s voice, he walked up to her. They held onto each other, stifling their sobs lest they be heard.

“I shouldn’t have brought you here, to let you suffer like this!” he lamented.

“This is all your doing. When will it ever end?”

He thought for a while before replying, “I do have a plan to get you out of here. The best thing is for me to plead with her to send you back to the go-between and get back the money. But in fact, I’ll find a secret place for you to live. I’ll have someone send money to you, and I myself will visit you from time to time. What do you say to that?”

“That would be wonderful, if it works out. That will mean my spell of bad luck is over.”

That very night, Mr. Li commented to his wife, “Qingnu has suffered enough. If you don’t want her, just send her back to the go-between and get the money back.” His wife agreed, without knowing what was behind his suggestion.

Mr. Li had a trusted attendant, Zhang Bin, take care of the matter. Qingnu was thus put up in a government-owned house a couple of blocks away from the Li residence. Li’s wife was the only one in the dark. Every so often, Mr. Li came in and, after a few cups of wine, would naturally engage Qingnu in amorous sport. (*The root of trouble.*)

Li had a most adorable seven-year-old boy called Folang. Sometimes Folang came over from the Li residence to play with Qingnu. Li warned him, “My child, don’t tell Mommy about this. This girl here is your older sister.” The boy promised not to tell.

One day, Folang showed up and walked straight in, only to see Zhang Bin and Qingnu sitting shoulder to shoulder and drinking.



两个男女回避不迭，张彬连忙走开躲了。庆奴一把抱住佛郎，坐在怀中，说：“小官人不要胡说。姐姐自在这里吃酒，等小官人来，便把果子与小官人吃。”那佛郎只是说：“我向爹爹道，你和张虞候两个做甚么。”[眉批]小官人吃了聪明的亏。庆奴听了，口中不道，心下思量：“你说了，我两个却如何？”眉头一纵，计上心来：“宁苦你，莫苦我。没奈何，来年今月今日今时，是你忌辰！”[眉批]一个死。把条手巾，捉住佛郎，扑番在床上，便去一勒。那里消半碗饭时，那小官人命归泉世。[眉批]狠哉此妇。正是：  
时间风火性，烧却岁寒心。

一时把那小官人来勒杀了，却是怎地出豁？正没理会处，只见张彬走来。庆奴道：“叵耐这厮，只要说与爹爹知道。我一时慌促，把来勒死了。”那张彬听说，叫声苦，不知高低，道：“姐姐，我家有老娘，却如何出豁？”庆奴道：“你教我坏了他，怎恁地说！”[眉批]狠哉此妇！是你家有老娘，我也有爹娘。事到这里，我和你收拾些包裹，走归行在见我爹娘，这须不妨。”张彬没奈何，只得随顺。两个打叠包儿，漾开了逃走。[眉批]既欲逃即□□□□（疑脱“不杀佛郎”四字）可也，不杀而逃，李生必不敢追赶，而大事成矣。愚哉此妇！离不得宅中不见了佛郎，寻到庆奴家里，见他和张彬走了，孩儿



Folang said, "I'm going to tell Daddy."

In a rush to separate themselves, Zhang Bin scurried away and hid while Qingnu gathered the boy in her arms, sat him on her lap, and said, "Now, don't you go around telling lies. I was here drinking alone, waiting for you to come and share the candies."

But Folang kept saying, "I'll tell Daddy what you and Officer Zhang were up to." (*The little boy is to be a victim of his own smartness.*)

When she heard this, Qingnu thought, "If you tell, what's to become of Zhang Bin and me?" Knitting her eyebrows, she thought hard and hit upon an idea. "Far better that you suffer instead of me. I can't help it, but this day next year will be the first anniversary of your death!" (*One death.*) She grabbed a kerchief, held Folang tight with it, pinned him down on the bed, and strangled him. (*What an evil woman!*) In less time than it took to eat half a bowl of rice, the little boy's soul returned to the netherworld. Truly,

*The raging wind and fire of the moment  
Swept all tranquility out of the heart.*

In a moment of rage, she strangled the little boy.

She was wondering what to do next when Zhang Bin emerged from hiding. "That little swine wanted to tell my husband," said she. "In a moment of panic, I strangled him."

Zhang Bin cried out in dismay. "Sister, I have my old mother to take care of. Now what am I going to do?"

"What a thing to say! Wasn't it you who told me to kill him? (*What an evil woman!*) So you have a mother. Well, I have parents, too. Now that things have come to this, why don't the two of us pack up our things and go to Hangzhou to live with my parents? You wouldn't object?"

Left with no other choice, Zhang Bin had to comply. The two took their parcels and fled the scene. (*Since they were going to flee anyway, they could have done so without killing Folang. Mr. Li would not have dared give chase. Wouldn't they have got what they wanted? What a stupid woman!*)

As was to be expected, Folang's disappearance prompted a



勒死在床。一面告了官司，出赏捉捕，不在话下。

张彬和庆奴两个取路到镇江。那张彬肚里思量着老娘，忆着这事，因此得病，就在客店中将息。不止一日，身边细软衣物解尽。张彬道：“要一文看也没有，却是如何计结？”簌簌地两行泪下：“教我做个失乡之鬼！”庆奴道：“不要烦恼，我有钱。”张彬道：“在那里？”庆奴道：“我会一身本事，唱得好曲，到这里怕不得羞。何不买个锣儿，出去诸处酒店内卖唱，趁百十文，把来使用，是好也不好？”张彬道：“你是好人家儿女，如何做得这等勾当？”庆奴道：“事极无奈。但得你没事，和你归临安见我爹娘。”从此庆奴只在镇江店中赶趁。

话分两头，却说那周三自从夺休了，做不得经纪，归乡去投奔亲戚又不着。一夏衣裳着汗，到秋来都破了。再归行在来，于计押番门首过。其时是秋深天气，蒙蒙的雨下。计安在门前立地，周三见了便唱个喏。计安见是周三，也不好问他来做甚么。周三道：“打这里过，见丈人，唱个喏。”计安见他身上褴褛，动了个恻隐之心，便道：“人来，请你吃碗酒了去。”当时只好休引那厮，却没甚事。千不合，万不合，教人来吃酒，[眉批]说话的都以



search. When the boy's body was discovered in Qingnu's bed, and Qingnu and Zhang Bin were nowhere to be seen, the matter was reported to the authorities, who then offered a reward for the arrest of the fugitives. But of this, no more for the time being.

When they reached Zhenjiang, Zhang Bin came down with an illness, preoccupied as he was with thoughts of his mother and what he had gotten himself into. They stopped at an inn so he could recuperate. As the days wore on, the valuables and clothing they had brought with them all went to pay for their daily expenses. He lamented, "There isn't a penny left. What's to be done?" As the tears rolled down his cheeks, he added, "A ghost in an alien land I will be!"

"Don't worry," Qingnu assured him. "I have money."

"Where is it?"

"I have talent. I sing well. I have nothing to feel shy about here. Why don't I buy a gong and go out to sing in the wineshops of this area? Whatever little I make will come in handy."

"You're from a decent family. How can you stoop so low?"

"There's no other choice. I only wish you'd recover, so we can go back to my parents in Lin'an." Henceforth, Qingnu made the rounds in the wineshops of Zhenjiang.

Let us pick up another thread of the story and turn our attention to Zhou San. After the divorce, he wasn't able to start a small business of his own, nor did he have any luck when he went back to his hometown to seek help from relatives. His clothes, stained by sweat in the summer, were tattered by the time autumn set in. Upon his return to Hangzhou, he went past Officer Ji's door. At the sight of Ji An standing by the door in the misty rain of late autumn, Zhou San chanted a greeting. Recognizing Zhou San, Ji An felt awkward about asking why he had come.

"I'm just passing by. Greetings to you, my father-in-law."

Moved to compassion by the sight of Zhou San's ragged clothes, Ji An said, "Come in and have a cup of wine before you go."

Everything would have been all right had he not invited that brute in. He should never have offered him wine. (*Storytellers make judgments based only on the success or failure of the characters.*) But as



成败论事。却教计押番：

一种是死，死之太苦；

一种是亡，亡之太屈。

却说计安引周三进门。老婆道：“没事引他来做甚？”周三见了丈母，唱了喏，道：“多时不见。自从夺了休，病了一场，做不得经纪，投远亲不着。姐姐安乐？”计安道：“休说！自你去之后，又讨头脑不着。如今且去官员人家三二年，却又理会。”便教浑家暖将酒来，与周三吃。吃罢，没甚事，周三谢了自去。

天色却晚，有一两点雨下。周三道：“也罪过他留我吃酒，却不是他家不好，都是我自讨得这场烦恼。”一头走，一头想：“如今却是怎地好？深秋来到，这一冬如何过得？”自古人极计生，蓦上心来：“不如等到夜深，掇开计押番门。那老夫妻两个又睡得早，不防我。拿些个东西，把来过冬。”那条路却静，不甚热闹。走回来等了一歇，掇开门闪身入去，随手关了。仔细听时，只听得押番娘道：“关得门户好，前面响。”押番道：“撑打得好。”浑家道：“天色雨下，怕有做不是的。起去看一看，放心。”





it was, Officer Ji

*Died a death most tragic,  
Met an end most grievous.*

To resume our story, as Ji An led Zhou San into the house, Mrs. Ji grumbled, "Why did you have to bring him in? You had nothing better to do?"

Zhou San chanted a greeting to his former mother-in-law and said, "It's been a long time since I saw you last. After the divorce, I fell ill, and couldn't start a small business of my own. I went all the way to my hometown to ask my relatives for help but didn't get any. Is Sister well?"

"You may well ask!" said Ji An. "Since you left, she hasn't been able to find another match. She's now with an official. She'll stay in his household for about two to three years before she does anything else." He then had his wife heat some wine and serve it to Zhou San. There being nothing to talk about, after the wine was finished, Zhou San thankfully took his leave.

Night had come on and there was a light drizzle. Zhou San thought, "How nice of him to ask me in for some wine! They are not really to blame. I brought all this trouble upon myself." As he walked along, he continued thinking, "Now what am I going to do? Autumn will soon be over. How am I going to survive the winter?" It has always been said since time immemorial that ideas come to men in desperate situations. Zhou San suddenly came up with an idea. "Why don't I sneak into Officer Ji's house in the dead of night and take a few things for the winter? That old couple go to bed early, and they wouldn't take any precautions against me."

Zhou San turned back to Ji An's street. It was a quiet street without much activity. He waited a while before he maneuvered the door open and sneaked into the house. Having shut the door after him, he listened intently and heard Mrs. Ji's voice, saying, "Did you close the door? I heard some noise from the front door."

Officer Ji replied, "I did bolt it nice and tight."

"It's raining. There might be a thief lurking about. Get up and go for a look, so that we can breathe easier."



押番真个起来看。周三听得，道：“苦也，起来捉住我，却不利害！”却那灶头边摸着把刀在手，黑地里立着。押番不知头脑，走出房门看时，周三让他过一步，劈脑后便剁。觉道衬手，劈然倒地，命归泉世。[眉批]两个死。周三道：“只有那婆子，索性也带来杀了。”不则声，走上床，揭开帐子，把押番娘杀了。[眉批]三个死。点起灯来，把家中有底细软包裹都收拾了。碌乱了半夜，周三背了包裹，倒拽上门，迤迤出北关门。[眉批]金鳧冤已报矣，此后皆金鳧结局。

且说天色已晓，人家都开门。只见计押番家静悄悄不闻声息。邻舍道：“莫是睡杀了也？”隔门叫唤不应。推那门时，随手而开。只见那中门里计押番死尸在地，便叫押番娘，又不应。走入房看时，只见床上血浸着那死尸，箱笼都开了。众人都道：“不是别人，是戚青这厮，每日醉了来骂，便要杀他。今日真个做出来！”即时经由所属，便去捉了戚青。戚青不知来历，一条索缚将去，和邻舍解上临安府。府主见报杀人公事，即时升厅，押那戚



Officer Ji got up to take a look. Hearing the movements, Zhou San groaned, "Woe is me! What if he catches me?"

He went to the kitchen stove and groped around for a knife. Knife in hand, he stood in the darkness, waiting.

Little knowing what was in store for him, Ji emerged from his room. Zhou San waited until Ji An passed him and then aimed a blow at the back of Ji's head. So strong was the blow that Ji fell to the ground with a thump, and his soul returned to the netherworld. (*Two deaths.*) Zhou San said to himself, "Now there's still that old woman left. Let me bump her off as well." Without uttering a sound, he approached the bed, lifted the bed curtain, and killed Mrs. Ji. (*Three deaths.*) He lit the lamp and spent the better part of the night frantically searching throughout the house for portable valuables and putting what he found into a bundle. He then hung the bundle on his back, shut the door behind him, wended his way in a northerly direction, and went out the northern city gate. (*The golden eel has had its revenge. What follows is an account of the death of the reincarnated golden eel.*)

It was broad daylight by now. The neighbors all opened their doors. Only Officer Ji's house remained quiet. The neighbors wondered, "Are they still sound asleep?" They called at the door, but no answer came. When they tried to push the door open, it yielded readily. There, for all to see, was Officer Ji's corpse on the floor by the middle door of the house. The neighbors called out for Mrs. Ji, but there was no answer. They entered the bedchamber and found her blood-soaked body on the bed. And all the trunks and cases were open. They concluded, "This must have been the work of that brute Qi Qing who has come here every day, drunk, to shout threats about killing. And now, he's really done it!"

Without a moment's delay, the matter was reported to the local sheriff, who immediately set out to arrest Qi Qing. Qi Qing, who knew nothing about what had occurred, was trussed up with rope and, hustled along by the neighbors, taken under guard to the Lin'an prefectural yamen.

At the report of a murder case, the prefect immediately opened a



青至面前，便问：“有请官身，辄敢禁城内杀命掠财！”戚青初时辨说，后吃邻舍指证叫骂情由，分说不得。[眉批]公堂冤枉如此不少，仔细看。结正申奏朝廷，勘得戚青有请官身，禁城内图财杀人，押赴市曹处斩。但见：

刀过时一点清风，尸倒处满街流血。

戚青枉吃了一刀。[眉批]四个死。

且说周三坏了两个人命，只恁地休，却没有天理，天几曾错害了一个？只是时辰未到。且说周三迤邐取路，直到镇江府，讨个客店歇了。没事，出来闲走一遭。觉道肚中有些饥，就这里买些酒吃。只见一家门前招子上写道：

酝成春夏秋冬酒，醉倒东西南北人。

周三入去时，酒保唱了喏，问了升数，安排蔬菜下口。方才吃得两盏，只见一个人，头顶着厮锣，入来阁儿前，道个万福。周三抬头一看，当时两个都吃一惊。不是别人，却是庆奴。周三道：“姐姐，你如何却在这里？”便教来坐地，教量酒人添只盏来，便道：“你家中说卖你官员人家，如今却如何恁地？”庆奴见说，泪下数行。但见：

几声娇语如莺啭，一串真珠落线头。



court session. To Qi Qing he said, “As an appointed official, how dare you kill and rob? And in the capital city, too!”

At first, Qi Qing tried to defend himself, but with the neighbors testifying against him, quoting his curses and threats, nothing he said was of any avail. (*There is no lack of similar miscarriages of justice. A closer inspection is imperative.*) The verdict was reported to the imperial court. Qi Qing, an appointed official, was found guilty of the crime of murder with larcenous intent, and in the capital of the empire at that. He was duly taken under guard to the marketplace for execution. Behold:

*The ax went down with a whiff of air;  
The corpse fell, the street awash with blood.*

An unjust death it was. (*Four lives gone.*) If the story had ended here, with Zhou San still at large after taking two lives, there would have been no divine justice. But the fact is, heaven never misses the mark. It is only a matter of time.

The story goes on. Zhou San proceeded to Zhenjiang and took up lodging at an inn. With nothing to do, he went out for a walk. As he was feeling a little hungry, he began to look for a place to buy some wine, and his eyes happened to rest upon a wineshop with a banner that bore these lines:

*Our wine brewed for spring, summer, autumn and winter  
Intoxicates travelers from east, west, north, and south.*

Zhou San stepped inside and was greeted by a waiter. His order for wine taken, plates of food were laid out on the table. He had just downed two cups of wine when a woman with a small gong on her head entered his booth and chanted a greeting. When he looked up, both were astounded, for the woman was none other than Qingnu.

“Sister, why are you here?” asked Zhou San. He offered her a seat and asked the waiter for another winecup before continuing, “Your parents said that you had been sold off to an official. But why are you in such a state?”

When Qingnu heard this, her tears came thick and fast. Listen:

*Her voice as sweet as the oriole's warbles,  
As clear as clicking pearls falling from a string.*



道：“你被休之后，嫁个人不着。如今卖我在高邮军主簿家。到得他家，娘子妒色，罚我厨下打火，挑水做饭，一言难尽，吃了万千辛苦。”周三道：“却如何流落到此？”庆奴道：“实不相瞒。后来与本府虞候两个有事，小官人撞见，要说与他爹爹，因此把来勒杀了。没计奈何，逃走在此，那厮却又害病在店中。解当使尽，因此我便出来撰几钱盘缠。今日天与之幸，撞见你。吃了酒，我和你同归店中。”周三道：“必定是你老公一般，我须不去。”庆奴道：“不妨，我自有道理。”那里是教周三去？又教坏了一个人性命。有诗为证：

日暮迎来香阁中，百年心事一宵同。

寒鸡鼓翼纱窗外，已觉恩情逐晓风。

当时两个同到店中，甚是说得着。当初兀自赎药煮粥，去看那张彬。次后有了周三，便不管他。有一顿，没一顿。张彬又见他两个公然在家干颡，先自十分病做十五分，得口气，死了。两个正是推门入柏，免不得买具棺木盛殓，把去烧了。周三搬来店中，两个依旧做夫妻。周三道：“我有句话和你说，如今却不要你出去卖唱，我自寻些道路，撰得钱来使。”庆奴道：“怎么恁地说？



She said, "After the divorce, I wasn't able to find a good match. I was then sold to the assistant magistrate of Gaoyou District. I was brought to his house, but his wife was so jealous of me that she punished me by putting me in the kitchen to do things like making the fire, carrying water, and cooking meals. I can't tell you in a few words all the hardships I've been through."

"But how did you end up in here?"

"I'll be honest with you. I had an affair with one of my husband's attendants, and my husband's little boy happened to see us together. He said he was going to tell his daddy about us, so I strangled him. Not knowing what to do, we fled that place and ended up here because that fellow fell ill and has to rest at the inn. Since we ran out of money, I decided to make some. What a stroke of luck for me to run into you! After you finish the wine, come with me to my place."

"To be with that man of yours? Not a chance!"

"Don't worry! I know what to do."

Bringing Zhou San home was to cause the death of one more victim. There is a poem in testimony:

*A reunion at sunset in her chamber;  
 A night of joy after a hundred years of longing.  
 The crickets flapped their wings outside the window;  
 The passion went in pursuit of the morning wind.*

So the two of them went to the inn where Qingnu and Zhang Bin were staying. Qingnu and Zhou San felt so attached to each other that Qingnu, who used to take care of Zhang Bin, buying medicine and cooking porridge for him, abandoned her duties and spent most of her time with Zhou San. With his meals few and far between, and the two flirting openly in his presence, Zhang Bin's condition went from bad to worse. One breath short, and he died.

Things were working out so perfectly for them that Zhou San moved in, and he and Qingnu began to live as husband and wife. First, though, as could scarcely be avoided, they bought a coffin and had the body laid in it and cremated.

"I need to talk to you," said Zhou San one day. "Don't go out to sing anymore. I'll think of some other way to make a living."



当初是没计奈何，做此道路。”自此两个恩情，便是：

云淡淡天边鸾凤，水沉沉交颈鸳鸯。欢娱嫌夜短，寂寞恨更长。

忽一日，庆奴道：“我自离了家中，不知音信。不若和你同去行在，投奔爹娘，大虫恶杀不吃儿。”周三道：“好却好，只是我和你归去不得。”庆奴道：“怎地？”周三却待说，又忍了。当时只不说便休，千不合，万不合，说出来，分明似飞蛾投火，自送其死。正是：

花枝叶下犹藏刺，人心怎保不怀毒。

庆奴务要问个备细。周三道：“实不相瞒。如此如此，把你爹娘都杀了，却走在这里，如何归去得！”庆奴见说，大哭起来，扯住道：“你如何把我爹娘来杀了？”周三道：“住，住。我不合杀了你爹娘，你也不合杀小官人和张彬，大家是死的。”庆奴沉吟半晌，无言抵对。倏忽之间，相及数月。周三忽然害着病，起床不得。身边有些钱物，又都使尽。庆奴看着周三道：“家中没柴米，却是如何？你却不要嗔我，‘前回意智今番在’，依旧去卖唱几时。等你好了，却又理会。”周三无计可施，只得应允。自从出去





“The way you put it! I did it because I had no choice.”

Henceforth, their love for each other was like that between

*Phoenixes riding faint clouds in the sky,*

*Lovebirds gliding in the water of the pond.*

*A night filled with pleasure goes by all too quickly;*

*Moments of loneliness stretch all too long.*

One day, Qingnu said, “I haven’t heard anything from my parents since I left home. What do you say about going back to the capital to ask for help from them? ‘Even the most ferocious tiger doesn’t eat its cubs,’ as the saying goes.”

“Well, that’s not a bad idea, but we can’t go back.”

“Why?”

Zhou San was about to tell her but checked himself. If he had not told, everything would have been all right. He should never have come out with the truth, for he was only courting his own death, like a moth flying into a flame. Truly,

*Even the leaves of flowers harbor thorns;*

*How can human hearts not contain venom?*

As Qingnu insisted on being told the truth, Zhou San said, “All right, I’ll level with you. The fact is, I killed both your parents and ended up here after fleeing the scene. How can I go back?”

At these words, Qingnu burst into wails of grief. Seizing Zhou San, she screamed, “Why did you have to kill my parents?”

Zhou San retorted, “Stop it! Granted I shouldn’t have killed your parents, but you shouldn’t have killed the little boy and Zhang Bin either. We are even. Both of us have committed capital crimes.”

Qingnu fell silent, lost in thought and unable to come up with a reply.

Several months passed quickly. All of a sudden, Zhou San took ill and was confined to bed. Their means exhausted, Qingnu said, looking at Zhou San, “We are out of firewood and rice. What’s to be done? Don’t get mad at me, but as the song says, ‘What I had on my mind still is with me.’ I’ll go out and sing, as before, until you get better.”

Zhou San saw nothing for it but to give his consent. After she



赶趁，每日撰得几贯钱来，便无话说。有时撰不得来，周三那厮便骂：“你都是又喜欢汉子，贴了他！”不由分说。若撰不来，庆奴只得去到处熟酒店里柜头上，借几贯归家。撰得来便还他。

一日，却是深冬天气，下雪起来，庆奴立在危楼上，倚着阑干立地。只见三四个客人，上楼来吃酒。庆奴道：“好大雪，晚间没钱归去，那厮又骂。且喜那三四客人来饮酒，我且胡乱去卖一卖。”便去揭开帘儿，打个照面。庆奴只叫得“苦也”，不是别人，却是宅中当直的，叫一声：“庆奴，你好做作，却在这里！”吓得庆奴不敢则声。元来宅中下状，得知道走过镇江，便差宅中一个当直厮赶着做公的来捉，便问：“张彬在那里？”庆奴道：“生病死了。我如今却和我先头丈夫周三在店里住。那厮在临安把我爹娘来杀了，却在此撞见，同做一处。”[眉批]（此处有十余字，模糊不清）当日酒也吃不成，即时缚了庆奴，到店中床上拖起周三，缚了，解来府中，尽情勘结，两个各自认了本身罪犯，申奏朝廷。内有戚青屈死，别作施行。周三不合图财杀害外父外母，庆奴不



began going out to work, he would say nothing when she brought back a few strings of cash at the end of the day but would burst out in curses on a bad day when she brought back nothing. "You must have used the money to help out some man who struck your fancy!" Nor would he allow any explanation. Consequently, on bad days, Qingnu had to borrow a few strings of cash from wineshops she frequented, show them to Zhou San, and then return them to the wineshops as soon as she made enough money.

One day, in the depth of winter, a snowstorm came on. Qingnu was leaning against the railings of a storied restaurant when she saw three or four men coming upstairs for some wine. She said to herself, "In such a big snowstorm, I won't be able to make much, and that brute will surely yell at me again if I go back tonight without bringing him anything. What good luck that a few patrons are coming! I'll go up to them and sing something."

As she lifted the portiere of their booth, her eyes met those of the patrons, and she let out a cry of dismay, for who should be among them but a guard in the employment of the assistant magistrate of Gaoyou!

"Qingnu!" cried the guard. "A fine thing you did! So here's where you live now!" Qingnu was speechless with fright. This is what had happened. The assistant magistrate had reported the matter to the authorities, and after learning that Qingnu was somewhere in Zhenjiang, he dispatched a guard to go to Zhenjiang with a few officers from the yamen to track her down. "Where is Zhang Bin?" demanded the guard.

"He died of an illness," replied Qingnu. "I'm now staying at an inn with my former husband Zhou San, who killed my parents in Lin'an. We ran into each other in this place and are now living together." ([Illegible.] )

Forgetting about their wine, the men tied up Qingnu then and there. Next, they went to the inn, dragged Zhou San out of bed, and tied him up as well. They brought the two to the prefectural yamen for investigation and settlement. Both pleaded guilty. The report to the imperial court contained these words: "Qi Qing died unjustly. His case



合因奸杀害两条性命，押赴市曹处斩。[眉批]□（疑为“六”字）个死。但见：

犯由前引，棍棒后随。前街后巷，这番过后几时回？把眼睁开，今日始知天报近。正是：但存夫子三分礼，不犯萧何六尺条。

这两个正是明有刑法相系，暗有鬼神相随。道不得个：

善恶到头终有报，只争来早与来迟。

后人评论此事，道计押番钓了金鳗，那时金鳗在竹篮中开口原说道：“你若害我，教你合家人口，死于非命。”只合计押番夫妻偿命，如何又连累周三、张彬、戚青等许多人？想来这一班人也是一缘一会，该是一宗案上的鬼，只借金鳗作个引头。连这金鳗说话，金明池执掌，未知虚实，总是个凶妖之先兆。计安既知其异，便不该带回家中，以致害他性命。大凡物之异常者，便不可加害。有诗为证：

李救朱蛇得美姝，孙医龙子获奇书。



shall be dealt with separately. Zhou San, who should not have killed his parents-in-law for money, and Qingnu, who should not have taken two lives because of her adulterous affairs, are to be taken under guard to the marketplace for execution.” (*Six lives gone.*) Behold:

*The poster listing the crimes leads the way;  
 The clubs and the cudgels bring up the rear.  
 The procession passes through the alleys,  
 But will it ever return?  
 With eyes wide open, they learn only now  
 That retribution from heaven is near at hand.*

Truly,

*Even a modicum of Confucian morals  
 Will keep one away from Xiao He’s criminal code.<sup>2</sup>*

As shown in the case of this couple, people are ruled by the laws of the land but are also watched, unseen, by the ghosts and the gods. Indeed,

*All deeds, good and evil, are repaid in the end;  
 But the requitals may come early, or late.*

According to comments from people of later generations, the golden eel caught by Officer Ji did indeed say, in the bamboo creel, “If you kill me, I will make you and your whole family die violent deaths,” but Ji and his wife should have been the only ones involved. Why were Zhou San, Zhang Bin, Qi Qing and others also implicated? Well, they also must have been predestined to die, so they were caught up in the same case, with the golden eel serving as a trigger. Even if the golden eel’s claim to be the god of Gold and Bright Pond was unsubstantiated, it should have been evident that the eel represented a sinister omen of disasters to come. Since Ji An was aware that there was something extraordinary about the eel, he should not have brought it home to be killed. In most cases, no harm should be done to creatures that show signs of being out of the ordinary. There is a poem in evidence:

*Li who saved a red snake, got a beautiful wife;<sup>3</sup>  
 Sun, who cured a dragon, received a wondrous book.<sup>4</sup>  
 Do not harm extraordinary creatures;*

劝君莫害非常物，祸福冥中报不虚。

計抑孝金  
毀產禍



*Retributions, good or bad, never miss the mark.*

<sup>1</sup> A crow symbolizes misfortune, and a magpie good luck.

<sup>2</sup> Xiao He (d. 193 B.C.E.), prime minister under the first emperor of the Han dynasty, formulated the larger part of the Han penal code.

<sup>3</sup> For the story about Li Yuan saving a snake, read story 34 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Sun Simiao (581–682) was a famous physician and author of medical literature. Legend has it that he saved a snake that happened to be the Dragon King's son who had assumed the shape of a snake. The grateful Dragon King gave Sun Simiao a thousand prescriptions.





## 第二十一卷

### 赵太祖千里送京娘

兔走乌飞疾若驰，百年世事总依稀。  
累朝富贵三更梦，历代君王一局棋。  
禹定九州汤受业，秦吞六国汉登基。  
百年光景无多日，昼夜追欢还是迟。

话说赵宋末年，河东石室山中有个隐士，不言姓名，自称石老人。有人认得的，说他原是有才的豪杰，因遭胡元之乱，曾诣军门献策不听，自起义兵，恢复了几个州县。后来见时势日蹙，知大事已去，乃微服潜遁，隐于此山中。指山为姓，农圃自给，耻言仕进。或与谈论古今兴废之事，娓娓不倦。一日近山有老少二儒，闲步石室，与隐士相遇，偶谈汉、唐、宋三朝创业之事。隐士问：“宋朝何者胜于汉唐？”一士云：“修文偃武。”一士云：





## Story 21

### Emperor Taizu Escorts Jingniang on a One-Thousand-Li Journey

*The moon hare and the sun crow speed along;<sup>1</sup>  
A hundred years leave only faint memories.  
Wealth and rank through the dynasties are but a dream;  
The reigns of monarchs last as long as a chess game.  
Yu established the nine regions, followed by Tang;<sup>2</sup>  
Qin annexed the six states, succeeded by Han.  
A hundred years' time is all too short  
For the pursuit of joy night and day.*

During the last years of the Song dynasty, under the house of Zhao, there lived on Stone Chamber Mountain east of the Yellow River a hermit who did not reveal his true name but called himself "the Old Man of Stone." Those who knew him said he was a man of talent and bold spirit, who proposed stratagems to the military during the invasion of the Mongols and, when his proposals were ignored, raised an army of volunteers and won back several prefectures and counties from the Mongols. Later, seeing that the situation was deteriorating and knowing the game was as good as lost, he fled to Stone Chamber Mountain under a concealed identity, named himself after the mountain, and lived a secluded, self-sufficient farmer's life. He regarded any talk of an official's career as a disgrace, but discussions about the rise and fall of dynasties never tired him.

One day, two Confucian scholars, one old and one young, who lived on a nearby mountain were taking a leisurely walk on Stone Chamber when they encountered the hermit. As their conversation turned to the founding of the Han, Tang, and Song dynasties, the hermit asked, "In what ways is the Song dynasty superior to the Han and the Tang?"

One of the scholars replied, "In giving more importance to civilian than to military affairs."

The other said, "Under the different emperors of the Song, no



“历朝不诛戮大臣。”隐士大笑道：“二公之言，皆非通论。汉好征伐四夷，儒者虽言其‘黷武’，然蛮夷畏惧，称为强汉，魏武犹借其馀威以服匈奴。唐初府兵最盛，后变为藩镇，虽跋扈不臣，而犬牙相制，终藉其力。宋自澶渊和虏，惮于用兵。其后以岁币为常，以拒敌为讳，金元继起，遂至亡国，此则偃武修文之弊耳。不戮大臣虽是忠厚之典，然奸雄误国，一概姑容，使小人进有非望之福，退无不测之祸，终宋之世，朝政坏于奸相之手。[眉批]□□□□切当。乃致末年，时穷势败，函侂冑于虏庭，刺似道于厕下，不亦晚乎！以是为胜于汉唐，岂其然哉？”二儒道：“据先生之意，以何为胜？”隐士道：“他事虽不及汉唐，惟不贪女色最胜。”二儒道：“何以见之？”隐士道：“汉高溺爱于戚姬，唐宗乱伦于弟妇。吕氏武氏几危社稷，飞燕太真并污宫闱。宋代虽有



court minister was put to death.”

The hermit burst into hearty laughter. “Both of you gentlemen have got it wrong,” said he. “The Han court frequently launched expeditions against alien tribes in all four directions. Confucian scholars accused it of militarism, but the barbarians were terrified and called the empire ‘the Mighty Han.’ What remained of its might sufficed for Emperor Wu of Wei<sup>3</sup> to subjugate the Huns. In the early Tang, the militia system worked well, but later, powerful regional commanders began to defy the imperial court. Still, they were kept in check through an intricate balance of power, and their military might did render service to the court in the final analysis. As for the Song dynasty, after the Chanyuan Peace Treaty,<sup>4</sup> it dared not resort to military force and preferred to offer annual tributes rather than repel the invaders. This led to the rise of the Jurchens and the Mongols and the Song’s demise. Such were the dire consequences of promoting civilian rather than military causes.

“That no court ministers were put to death may attest to the benevolence of the court, but the evil ministers who betrayed national interests were protected as well, receiving undeserved advancement instead of suffering the consequences for their treachery. Throughout the Song dynasty, the power of the imperial court was in the hands of evil ministers. (*Good analysis.*) Toward the end of the dynasty, Han Tuozhou’s head was presented to the Jin court, and Jia Sidao had to be struck dead in a lavatory.<sup>5</sup> But wasn’t all this too late? How can you say the Song is superior to the Han and the Tang?”

“So in your view,” said the two scholars, “in what way is the Song superior?”

“The Song may not be equal to the Han and the Tang in those respects, but it is superior in one thing: its emperors were not prone to lust.”

“How is that so?”

“Emperor Gaozu of Han was enamored of Consort Qi; Emperor Taizong of Tang had an incestuous relationship with his sister-in-law. Empress Lü-shi and Empress Wu-shi wreaked havoc on the land.<sup>6</sup> Empress Zhao Feiyan and lady Yang Yuhuan brought disgrace to the



盘乐之主，绝无渔色之君，所以高、曹、向、孟，闺德独擅其美，此则远过于汉唐者矣。”二儒叹服而去。正是：

要知古往今来理，须问高明远见人。

方才说宋朝诸帝不贪女色，全是太祖皇帝贻谋之善。不但是为君以后，早朝宴罢，宠幸希疏。自他未曾发迹变泰的时节，也就是个铁铮铮的好汉，直道而行，一邪不染。则看他《千里送京娘》这节故事便知。正是：

说时义气凌千古，话到英风透九霄。

八百军州真帝主，一条杆棒显雄豪。

且说五代乱离，有诗四句：

朱李石刘郭，梁唐晋汉周。

都来十五帝，扰乱五十秋。

这五代都是偏霸，未能混一。其时土宇割裂，民无定主。到后周虽是五代之末，兀自有五国三镇。那五国？

周郭威、北汉刘崇、南唐李璟、蜀孟昶、南汉刘晟。



imperial consorts' quarters in the palace.<sup>7</sup> As for the emperors of the Song dynasty, granted that some were the pleasure-loving sort, but none was obsessed with lust, and Empresses Gao, Cao, Xiang, and Meng<sup>8</sup> were therefore all women of great virtue. This is where Song is far superior to the Han and the Tang.”

The two scholars, fully convinced, voiced their admiration before they bade the hermit adieu. Indeed,

*To know the truth about past and present,  
 Ask only the insightful and the wise.*

It was, in fact, thanks to the admonitions of the first Song Emperor, Emperor Taizu, that later emperors of the dynasty, as was said above, were not prone to lust. From the time he assumed the throne, he began the morning court sessions early and retired late in the evening, seldom sparing time for female company. Even before his rise to power, he was a man of iron will, honest and upright, who never strayed into moral turpitude. The story about his escorting Jingniang on a thousand-*li* journey suffices to illustrate this point. Truly,

*His high morals transcended all time;  
 His honorable spirit rose to Heaven.  
 The true ruler of the eight hundred commanderies,  
 He showed himself a hero with his one cudgel.*

There is a quatrain that describes the chaos of the Five Dynasties period:

*The Houses of Zhu, Li, Shi, Liu, and Guo  
 Of the dynasties Liang, Tang, Jin, Han, and Zhou,  
 All the fifteen emperors  
 Brought havoc to the land for fifty years.*

These five dynasties [907–60] were headed by regional hegemons who never joined forces with one another. In those years, the empire was divided and the people lacked a leader who would stay in power for any sustained period of time. By the late Zhou, though the Five Dynasties period was drawing to an end, there remained five kingdoms and three regions. Which five kingdoms?

Zhou under Guo Wei [r.951–53], Northern Han under Liu



那三镇？

吴越钱佐、荆南高保融、湖南周行逢。

虽说五国、三镇，那周朝承梁、唐、晋、汉之后，号为正统。赵太祖赵匡胤曾仕周为殿前都点检，后因陈桥兵变，代周为帝，混一字内，国号大宋。当初未曾发迹变泰的时节，因他父亲赵洪殷曾仕汉为岳州防御使，人都称匡胤为赵公子，又称为赵大郎。生得面如赭血，目若曙星，力敌万人，气吞四海。专好结交天下豪杰，任侠任气，路见不平，拔刀相助，是个管闲事的祖宗，撞没头祸的太岁。先在汴京城打了御勾栏，闹了御花园，触犯了汉末帝，逃难天涯。到关西护桥杀了董达，得了名马赤麒麟。黄州除了宋虎，朔州三棒打死了李子英，灭了潞州王李汉超一家。来到太原地面，遇了叔父赵景清。时景清在清油观出家，就留赵公子在观中居住。谁知染患，一卧三月。比及病愈，景清朝夕相陪，



Chong [r.951–54], Southern Tang under Li Jing [r.943–61], Shu under Meng Chang [r.935–65], and Southern Han under Liu Sheng [r.943–57].

Which three regions?

Wuyue under Qian Zuo [r.942–47], Jingnan under Gao Baorong [r.949–60], and Hunan under Zhou Xingfeng [unidentified].

Despite the existence of the five kingdoms and the three regions, the Zhou dynasty, after the Liang, the Tang, the Jin, and the Han, proclaimed itself the orthodox dynasty. Zhao Kuangyin,<sup>9</sup> later to be Emperor Taizu, founder of the Song dynasty, served as the marshal of the Zhou palace guards. With the Chen Bridge mutiny, he became emperor of the new Song dynasty, which replaced the Zhou and unified the land.

Before his rise to power, he was called Zhao Dalang or Young Master Zhao, being the son of Zhao Hongyin, defense commissioner of Yuezhou in the service of the Later Han dynasty. Zhao Kuangyin had a ruddy complexion and eyes like morning stars as well as the prowess to do battle with ten thousand men and enough lofty spirit to fill the four seas. He had a propensity for befriending men of heroic mettle in other parts of the land and giving free rein to his chivalrous spirit. Wherever he was, when he saw injustice being done, he would fight for the wronged side, his sword at the ready. He was nothing short of the king of busybodies and the master of troublemakers.

In the city of Bianjing [present-day Kaifeng, Henan], he went on a rampage in the imperial theater and garden. Having thus made himself an enemy of the last Later Han emperor, he fled the capital and roamed the land. In Guanxi, he killed Dong Da of the toll bridge and took possession of a prized horse named Red Unicorn. In Huangzhou he killed Song Hu; in Suzhou he finished off Li Ziyong with three blows of his cudgel and slew Li Hanchao, prince of Luzhou, as well as Li's entire family.

When he came to Taiyuan, he met his uncle, Zhao Jingqing, a Daoist priest at Clear Oil Temple, who kept him at the temple. It so happened that he fell ill at this time and was confined to his bed for as



要他将息身体，不放他出外闲游。一日景清有事出门，分付公子道：“侄儿耐心静坐片时，病如小愈，切勿行动！”景清去了，公子那里坐得住，想道：“便不到街坊游荡，这本观中闲步一回，又且何妨！”

公子将房门拽上，绕殿游观。先登了三清宝殿，行遍东西两廊、七十二司，又看了东岳庙，转到嘉宁殿上游玩，叹息一声。真个是：

金炉不动千年火，玉盏长明万载灯。

行过多景楼玉皇阁，一处处殿宇崔嵬，制度宏敞。公子喝采不迭，果然好个清油观！观之不足，玩之有馀。转到酆都地府冷静所在，却见小小一殿，正对那子孙宫相近，上写着降魔宝殿，殿门深闭。公子前后观看了一回，正欲转身，忽闻有哭泣之声，乃是妇女声音。公子侧耳而听，其声出于殿内。公子道：“蹊跷作怪！这里是出家人住处，缘何藏匿妇人在此？其中必有不明之事。且去问道童讨取钥匙，开这殿来，看个明白，也好放心。”回身到房中，唤道童讨降魔殿上钥匙。道童道：“这钥匙师父自家收管，其中有机密大事，不许闲人开看。”公子想道：“莫信直





long as three months. After he recovered, his uncle kept him company day and night, admonishing him to rest and not to walk about outside the temple.

One day, Jingqing had to go out on an errand. He said to the young man, "My nephew, sit patiently here. You must not tire yourself out when you're just beginning to recover!"

With Jingqing gone, the young man found it hard to sit around doing nothing. He thought, "If I can't go out and see the neighborhood, I can at least take a walk inside the temple. There shouldn't be any harm in doing that." So he closed the door behind him and went on a tour of the many halls of the temple. He started with the Hall of the Three Pure Ones and from there proceeded to the east and west corridors with their seventy-two shrines before turning to Eastern Hill Hall and Jianing Hall. He heaved a sigh of admiration. Indeed,

*In the gold censer burned a thousand-year flame;  
 In the jade lamp shone an eternal light.*

Walking past Panorama Tower and Jade Emperor Hall, Young Master Zhao gave one admiring cheer after another at the magnificence and grandeur of the buildings. What an impressive temple it was! There was more to admire than his eyes could take in. Then, in the quiet, secluded area around Netherworld Hall, he saw, opposite the Hall of Posterity, a tightly closed door and above it the inscription "Demon Subjugation Hall." He looked around for a while and was about to turn back when, suddenly, he heard the sound of a woman sobbing. He listened intently and determined that the sound was coming from within that very hall. "How very strange!" he said to himself. "How can there be a woman hidden in a priests' residence? There must be some secret goings-on here. Let me get a key from an acolyte and find out what this is all about, or I won't be able to put my mind at ease."

He returned to his room and asked an acolyte for the key to Demon Subjugation Hall. The acolyte said, "The key is in the care of His Reverence himself. This matter is so important that no unauthorized persons are allowed into the hall."

Young Master Zhao thought, "As the saying goes, 'Believe not



中直，须防人不仁’，原来俺叔父不是个好人，三回五次只教俺静坐，莫出外闲行，原来干这勾当。出家人成甚规矩？俺今日便去打开殿门，怕怎的！”

方欲移步，只见赵景清回来，公子含怒相迎，口中也不叫叔父，气忿忿地问道：“你老人家在此出家，干得好事？”景清出其不意，便道：“我不曾做甚事。”公子道：“降魔殿内锁的是什么人？”景清方才省得，便摇手道：“贤侄莫管闲事！”公子急得暴躁如雷，[眉批]庸人谓之闲事，英雄才当切感。大声叫道：“出家人清净无为，红尘不染，为何殿内锁着个妇女在内，哭哭啼啼，必是非礼不法之事！你老人家也要放出良心。是一是二，说得明白，还有个商量。休要欺三瞒四，我赵某不是与你和光同尘的！”景清见他言词峻厉，便道：“贤侄，你错怪愚叔了！”公子道：“怪不怪是小事，且说殿内可是妇人？”景清道：“正是。”公子道：“可又来！”景清晓得公子性躁，还未敢明言，用缓词答应道：“虽是妇人，却不干本观道众之事。”公子道：“你是个一观之主，就是别人做出歹事寄顿在殿内，少不得你知情。”景清道：“贤侄



even the most honest; beware of those with evil hearts.’ So, my uncle is not a decent sort! He told me over and over again to sit tight and not move around, and this is what he’s up to! How can a priest do such a thing? I’m going to break into that hall. What do I have to fear?”

He was about to go when he saw his uncle Zhao Jingqing coming back. In anger, the young man stepped forward and, without even addressing Jingqing as “Uncle,” said curtly, “A fine thing you did as a priest!”

Without the least idea of what his nephew was talking about, Jingqing asked, “What did I do?”

“Who is the person you locked up in Demon Subjugation Hall?”

Now realizing what his nephew was referring to, Jingqing waved his hands and replied, “My good nephew, don’t be meddlesome.”

The young man boiled with rage. (*Worthless people meddle. Heroes empathize.*) He cried out at the top of his voice, “A priest who has renounced the world is supposed to be free from the dust of the mortal world. Why is there a woman weeping behind these locked doors? You must have done something dishonorable. You have your conscience to answer to. If you come out with the truth, we can still talk it over, but if you choose to lie, I certainly won’t be on your side!”

At these harsh words, Jingqing said, “My good nephew, you do me injustice!”

“Doing you justice or not is beside the point,” retorted the young man. “Just tell me, is there a woman in that hall?”

“Yes.”

“Now you’re talking!”

Well aware of his nephew’s fiery temper, Jingqing dared not tell him the whole story but instead chose his words carefully. “There is indeed a woman in the hall, but the whole thing has nothing to do with the priests of this temple.”

“Being the head of the temple, you should know what goes on in this place, even if someone else did something bad and brought that woman here.”



息怒！此女乃是两个有名响马不知那里掳来，一月之前寄于此处，托吾等替他好生看守，若有差迟，寸草不留。因是贤侄病未痊，不曾对你说得。”公子道：“响马在那里？”景清道：“暂往那里去了。”公子不信道：“岂有此理，快与我打开殿门，唤女子出来，俺自审问他详细。”说罢，绰了浑铁齐眉短棒，往前先走。

景清知他性如烈火，不好遮拦，慌忙取了钥匙，随后赶到降魔殿前。景清在外边开锁，那女子在殿中听得锁响，只道是强人来到，愈加啼哭。公子也不谦让，才等门开，一脚踏进，那女子躲在神道背后唬做一团。公子近前，放下齐眉短棒，看那女子，果然生得标致：

眉扫春山，眸横秋水。含愁含恨，犹如西子捧心；欲泣欲啼，宛似杨妃剪发。琵琶声不响，是个未出塞的明妃；胡笳调若成，分明强和番的蔡女。天生一种风流态，便是丹青画不真！

公子抚慰道：“小娘子，俺不比奸淫之徒，你休得惊慌！且说家居何处？谁人引诱到此？倘有不平，俺赵某与你解救则个！”那女



“My good nephew, please don’t be angry. The woman was kidnapped, I know not where, by two notorious bandits, who then deposited her here and told us to keep watch over her, saying that if anything should happen to her, not even a blade of grass would be left in this temple. I didn’t tell you about it before because you hadn’t recovered from your illness.”

“Where are the bandits?”

“Somewhere else for now.”

Not convinced, Young Master Zhao said, “What nonsense! Now open the door of that hall for me, call the woman out, and be quick about it! Let me question her.” With that, he rushed forward, his iron cudgel in hand.

Knowing his nephew’s temper all too well, Jingqing thought it better not to stop him. Hurriedly, he took the key and hastened to Demon Subjugation Hall. While Jingqing was opening the lock, the woman inside heard it turning. She thought the bandits were back and started crying even more loudly. Unconcerned with proper etiquette, Young Master Zhao rushed in ahead of his uncle, entering the hall in one stride as soon as the door was opened. The woman had hidden behind the statue of a deity, cowering in fear. When he drew near, he put down his cudgel and looked at her. A truly beautiful woman she was.

*Her brows shaped like the rolling hills of spring;*

*Her eyes sparkling like pools of autumn water.*

*In grief and despair, she looked like Xishi when ill;<sup>10</sup>*

*In tears and sobs, like Consort Yang cutting her hair.<sup>11</sup>*

*With a lute, she could have been Lady Ming<sup>12</sup>*

*Before crossing the frontier pass.*

*With a reed pipe, she could have been Cai Yan,<sup>13</sup>*

*Who was forced to live among the Tartars.*

*Her grace and charm, endowed by heaven,*

*Could hardly be captured by the paintbrush.*

Young Master Zhao assured her, “Young lady, I am not a bad sort. Don’t be afraid. Tell me, where do you live? Who kidnapped you? If you are being unjustly treated, let me help you.”



子方才举袖拭泪，深深道个万福，公子还礼。女子先问：“尊官高姓？”景清代答道：“此乃汴京赵公子。”女子道：“公子听禀……”未曾说得一两句，早已扑簌簌流下泪来。原来那女子也姓赵，小字京娘，是蒲州解梁县小祥村居住，年方一十七岁。因随父亲来阳曲县还北岳香愿，路遇两个响马强人：一个叫做满天飞张广儿，一个叫做着地滚周进。见京娘颜色，饶了他父亲性命，掳掠到山神庙中。张、周二强人争要成亲，不肯相让。议论了两三日，二人恐坏了义气，将这京娘寄顿于清油观降魔殿内，分付道士小心供给看守，再去别处访求个美貌女子，掳掠而来，凑成一对，然后同日成亲，为压寨夫人。那强人去了一月，至今未回。道士惧怕他，只得替他看守。

京娘叙出缘由，赵公子方才向景清道：“适才甚是粗卤，险些冲撞了叔父。既然京娘是良家室女，无端被强人所掳，俺今日不救，更待何人？”又向京娘道：“小娘子休要悲伤，万事有赵某在此，管教你重回故土，再见爹娘。”京娘道：“虽承公子美意，释放奴家出于虎口，奈家乡千里之遥，奴家孤身女流，怎生跋涉？”公子道：“救人须救彻，俺不远千里亲自送你回去。”[眉批]



Only then did the woman wipe her tears away with her sleeves and bow deeply, a courtesy which Zhao returned.

“What is your honorable surname?” asked the woman.

Jingqing replied for him, “This is Young Master Zhao from Bianjing.”

“Young Master, let me tell you what happened.” Before she had quite started, the tears began to trickle down her cheeks. It turned out that her surname was also Zhao. Jingniang by given name, she lived in Xiaoxiang Village, Xieliang County, in Puzhou Prefecture. Now seventeen years of age, she had been traveling with her father to make votive offerings at Northern Mountain<sup>14</sup> in Yangqu County when they ran into two bandits, Zhang Guang’er, nicknamed “Flying in the Sky,” and Zhou Jin, nicknamed “Rolling on the Ground.” Their lust aroused by Jingniang’s beauty, the bandits let her father go but took her to a temple of the local deity. Both wanted her as a wife, and neither was willing to yield to the other. After two to three days of talk, afraid of ruining their friendship, they deposited Jingniang at Demon Subjugation Hall in Clear Oil Temple. After telling the priests to watch over and take good care of her, they departed to look for another attractive woman to abduct, so that each could have a wife. The wedding ceremonies were to be held on the same day, and the two women would be the mistresses of the bandits’ lair. The two bandits had been gone for a month and still had not yet returned. The priests were too afraid of them not to do their bidding.

It was only after this account that Young Master Zhao said to Jingqing, “I have been very rude, Uncle, and almost gave you offense. Since Jingniang is from a decent family and was abducted by bandits, who will save her if I don’t?” He turned to Jingniang and said, “Cheer up, young lady. I’ll take care of everything. I’ll make sure that you go back home to your parents.”

“It’s so kind of you to offer to save me from the tiger’s jaws, but my hometown is a thousand *li* away. How can a woman like me make the journey all alone?”

“If I save someone, I might as well do a thorough job of it. Let me escort you home, whatever the distance.” (*Who else would be*



谁肯？京娘拜谢道：“若蒙如此，便是重生父母。”景清道：“贤侄，此事断然不可！那强人势大，官司禁捕他不得。你今日救了小娘子，典守者难辞其责，再来问我要人，教我如何对付？须当连累于我！”公子笑道：“大胆天下去得，小心寸步难行。俺赵某一生见义必为，万夫不惧！那响马虽狠，敢比得潞州王么？他须也有两个耳朵，晓得俺赵某名字。既然你们出家人怕事，俺留个记号在此，你们好回复那响马。”说罢，轮起浑铁齐眉棒，横着身子，向那殿上朱红榻子，狠的打一下，“柝拉”一声，把菱花窗棂都打下来。再复一下，把那四扇榻子，打个东倒西歪。[眉批]撇脱。唬得京娘战战兢兢，远远的躲在一边。景清面如土色，口中只叫：“罪过！”公子道：“强人若再来时，只说赵某打开殿门抢去了。冤各有头，债各有主。要来寻俺时，教他打蒲州一路来。”景清道：“此去蒲州千里之遥，路上盗贼生发，独马单身，尚且难走，况有小娘子牵绊？凡事宜三思而行。”公子笑道：“汉末三国时，关云长独行千里，五关斩六将，护着两位皇嫂，直到古城





*willing to do this?)*

Jingniang said with a thankful bow, "If so, you'll be the father of my rebirth."

"My good nephew," Jingqing intervened, "this can't be done. Those bandits are so powerful that even the authorities haven't been able to hunt them down. If you take the young lady away, I as her guardian will surely be held responsible. What am I going to say when they come back to claim her? You'll be getting me into trouble as well!"

The young man laughed. "Courage gets you everywhere in the world; timidity doesn't get you even one step from where you are. All my life, I have never failed to fight for a just cause whenever I saw one, nor am I afraid of anyone, even if I'm up against ten thousand men. Those bandits may be powerful, but can they compare with the prince of Luzhou? If they have ears, they should have heard my name. But since you priests are afraid of getting into trouble, let me leave a mark here, so that you know what to say to the bandits."

So saying, he swung his iron cudgel high, turned his body sideways, and brought the cudgel down with all his might upon the latticed vermilion door of the hall. With a crash, the lattice strips fell to the ground. Another blow, and the four leaves of the door crumbled into pieces, scattering every which way. (As easy as that!) Trembling in fear, Jingniang retreated to a far-off corner. Jingqing, turning deathly pale, cried over and over again, "What a sin! What a sin!"

"If the bandits come back," said Young Master Zhao, "just say that Mr. Zhao smashed the door and took the woman by force. Every injustice has its perpetrator; every debt has its creditor. If they want me, tell them to look for me in Puzhou."

"Puzhou is a thousand *li* from here, and the road to Puzhou is swarming with bandits. It's difficult enough to go by yourself. How much more so when you're encumbered by a woman! You'd better think thrice before you do anything!"

The young man laughed. "In the Three Kingdoms period toward the end of the Han dynasty, Guan Yunchang<sup>15</sup> escorted his two



与刘皇叔相会，这才是大丈夫所为。今日一位小娘子救他不得，赵某还做什么人？此去倘然冤家狭路相逢，教他双双受死！”景清道：“然虽如此，还有一说。古者男女坐不同席，食不共器。贤侄千里相送小娘子，虽则美意，出于义气，傍人怎知就里，见你少男少女一路同行，嫌疑之际，被人谈论，可不为好成歉，反为一世英雄之玷！”[眉批]景清要阻公子之行，想是怕那些强盗。公子呵呵大笑，道：“叔父莫怪我说，你们出家人惯妆架子，里外不一。俺们做好汉的，只要自己血心上打得过，人言都不计较。”[眉批]大丈夫语。景清见他主意已决，问道：“贤侄几时起程？”公子道：“明早便行。”景清道：“只怕贤侄身子还不健旺。”公子道：“不妨事！”

景清教道童治酒送行，公子于席上对京娘道：“小娘子，方才叔父说一路嫌疑之际，恐生议论。俺借此席面，与小娘子结为兄妹，[眉批]□□为□□取法，古人，姓何必闻。俺姓赵，小娘子也姓赵，五百年合是一家，从此兄妹相称便了。”京娘道：“公子贵人，奴家怎敢扳高？”景清道：“既要同行，如此最好。”呼道童



sisters-in-law on a thousand-*li* journey, crossing five passes and slaying six generals before arriving in Gucheng for a reunion with Liu Bei. Now, that was the act of a worthy man. If I can't even do something for one young lady, what kind of a man am I? If those two bandits and I are to meet on a narrow road, as enemies are bound to do, it will mean death for both of them."

"That may very well be so," said Jingqing, "but there's another thing. In the old days, men and women did not sit on the same mat and share their food utensils. Your offer to escort the young lady a thousand *li* was made out of the best intentions and a most generous spirit, but other people don't know this. A young man and a young woman traveling together will give rise to suspicions and gossip. Your good intentions will be misconstrued, and your heroic name will be tarnished." (*It must be out of fear of the bandits that Jingqing is trying to stop him from going.*)

With a hearty laugh, the young man replied, "Don't take my words amiss, Uncle, but you priests like putting on a show. You think in one way and act in another. As for us rough fellows, as long as we don't do anything against our conscience, we don't mind what people say." (*Words of a worthy man.*)

Finding him determined to go, Jingqing asked, "So, when are you leaving, my good nephew?"

"Tomorrow morning."

"I'm afraid you're not well enough to undertake the journey, my good nephew."

"That's all right."

Jingqing had an acolyte set out wine for a farewell dinner. At the dinner table, Young Master Zhao said to Jingniang, "Young lady, my uncle was just saying that people may gossip about our traveling together. Let me pledge brotherhood to you right here at this table. My surname is Zhao, and so is yours. ([Illegible]. *In such a ritual in ancient times, the surname did not even have to enter the picture.*) Our ancestors must have belonged to the same clan five hundred years ago. From now on, let's just address each other as brother and sister."

"But how would I dream of claiming a connection with someone



取过拜毡，京娘：“请恩人在上，受小妹子一拜。”公子在傍还礼。京娘又拜了景清，呼为伯伯。景清在席上叙起侄儿许多英雄了得，京娘欢喜不尽。是夜直饮至更馀，景清让自己卧房与京娘睡，自己与公子在外厢同宿。五更鸡唱，景清起身安排早饭，又备些干粮牛脯，为路中之用。公子鞴了赤麒麟，将行李扎缚停当，嘱付京娘：“妹子，只可村妆打扮，不可冶容炫服，惹是招非！”早饭已毕，公子扮作客人，京娘扮作村姑，一般的戴个雪帽，齐眉遮了。兄妹二人作别景清。景清送出房门，忽然想起一事道：“贤侄，今日去不成，还要计较！”不知景清说出甚话来？正是：

鹤得羽毛方远举，虎无牙爪不成行。

景清道：“一马不能骑两人，这小娘子弓鞋袜小，怎跟得上，可不耽误了程途？从容觅一辆车儿同去却不好？”公子道：“此事算之久矣。有个车辆又费照顾，将此马让与妹子骑坐，俺誓愿千



so far above my station in life?" said the young woman.

"If you are going to travel together," put in Jingqing, "this will be the best thing to do." So saying, he had the acolyte bring over a prayer mat.

Jingniang said to her savior, "Please accept this kowtow from your little sister." Young Master Zhao stood by one side and bowed in return. Jingniang then kowtowed to Jingqing, addressing him as "Uncle."

During the course of the dinner, Jingqing related the many heroic deeds of his nephew, to the immense delight of Jingniang. That night, the drinking lasted until after the first watch of the night. Jingqing yielded his own bedchamber to the young woman and joined his nephew in an outer room.

When the roosters crowed at the fifth watch, Jingqing rose, made breakfast, and prepared some dry provisions and beef jerky for his nephew and Jingniang to take on the road.

Young Master Zhao got Red Unicorn ready and tied up the baggage on the horse's back. He then cautioned Jingniang with these words: "Sister, you must dress like a village girl. Do not put on makeup and fancy clothes, so as not to attract undue attention." With breakfast over, the young man dressed as a traveler and Jingniang made herself up as a village girl, wearing a common snow cap that came down to her eyebrows.

The two travelers bade Jingqing farewell. As he escorted them out the door, a thought suddenly struck him. "My good nephew," he said, "you can't leave today. We still need to talk."

What was it that Jingqing wanted to talk about? Truly,

*A magpie needs feather to fly afar;*

*A tiger fangs and claws to make its way.*

Jingqing said, "Two persons can't ride on one horse. How can the young lady keep up with you, with her small bound feet? Wouldn't that slow down the journey? Wouldn't it be better to take your time and find a carriage first?"

"Yes, I've been thinking about that for some time now," said Young Master Zhao. "It's too much trouble to tend to a carriage. I'll



里步行，相随不惮。”[眉批]□（疑为“谁”字）肯。京娘道：“小妹有累恩人远送，愧非男子，不能执鞭坠镫，岂敢反占尊骑，决难从命！”公子道：“你是女流之辈，必要脚力。赵某脚又不小，步行正合其宜。”京娘再四推辞，公子不允，只得上马。公子跨了腰刀，手执浑铁杆棒，随后向景清一揖而别。景清道：“贤侄路上小心，恐怕遇了两个响马，须要用心堤防！下手斩绝些，莫带累我观中之人。”公子道：“不妨，不妨！”说罢，把马尾一拍，喝声：“快走！”那马拍腾腾便跑，公子放开脚步，紧紧相随。

于路免不得饥餐渴饮，夜住晓行，不一日行至汾州介休县地方。这赤麒麟原是千里龙驹马，追风逐电，自清油观至汾州不过三百里之程，不勾名马半日驰骤！一则公子步行恐奔赴不及，二则京娘女流不惯驰骋，所以控辔缓缓而行。兼之路上贼寇生发，须要慢起早歇，每日止行一百馀里。公子是日行到一个土冈之下，地名黄茅店。当初原有村落，因世乱人荒，都逃散了，还存得个小小店儿。日色将晡，前途旷野，公子对京娘道：“此处安歇，



let Sister ride the horse. I'll be glad to cover the one thousand *li* on foot. I won't complain." (*Who else would be willing to do this?*)

"I am ever so obliged to you, my savior, for escorting me over such a great distance. I only regret that I'm not a man and don't know how to hold a horsewhip, put my feet in the stirrups, and ride. How would I dream of taking your horse? This is an order I'll never obey."

"A woman needs an animal to ride on. My feet are not small. Walking suits me fine."

Her pleas rejected by Young Master Zhao, she had no choice but to mount the horse. After strapping on his sword at his waist and taking up his iron cudgel, the young man bowed to his uncle and bade him farewell.

"My good nephew," said Jingqing, "be careful along the way! You may run into those two bandits. Take good care! When you strike, do a clean job of it, so no one at this temple will be implicated."

"Of course, of course," promised Young Master Zhao. With that, he gave Red Unicorn a slap on the rump, shouting, "Go!" Off went the horse, with the young man striding along behind.

On the road, they ate and drank when necessary, resting by night and traveling by day. Soon enough, they found themselves in Jiexiu County, Fenzhou. Red Unicorn, a prized horse with the speed of wind and lightning, could well have covered in half a day the three hundred *li* from Clear Oil Temple to Fenzhou, but Zhao kept a tight rein on it, partly because he was afraid he would not be able to keep pace on foot, and partly because Jingniang, being a woman, was not used to riding a galloping horse. Moreover, because the road was infested with bandits, they had to start late and retire early, and so they made only one hundred *li* a day.

One day, they came to a place called Yellow Thatch Inn at the foot of a small hill. There had been a village, but it was now deserted in the chaos of those troubled times. All that remained was a tiny inn. The sun was about to set and they could see nothing before them but a vast expanse of wilderness, so Zhao said to Jingniang, "Let's stay



明日早行罢。”京娘道：“但凭尊意。”店小二接了包裹，京娘下马，去了雪帽。小二一眼瞧见，舌头吐出三寸，缩不进去，心下想道：“如何有这般好女子！”小二牵马系在屋后，公子请京娘进了店房坐下，小二哥走来站着呆看。公子问道：“小二哥有甚话说？”小二道：“这位小娘子，是客官甚么人？”公子道：“是俺妹子。”小二道：“客官，不是小人多口，千山万水，路途间不该带此美貌佳人同走！”公子道：“为何？”小二道：“离此十五里之地，叫做介山，地旷人稀，都是绿林中好汉出没之处。倘若强人知道，只好白白里送与他做压寨夫人，还要贴他个利市。”公子大怒，骂道：“贼狗大胆，敢虚言恐吓客人！”照小二面门一拳打去。小二口吐鲜血，手掩着脸，向外急走去了，店家娘就在厨下发话。京娘道：“恩兄忒性躁了些！”公子道：“这厮言语不知进退，怕不是良善之人！先教他晓得俺些手段。”京娘道：“既在此借宿，恶不得他。”公子道：“怕他则甚？”京娘便到厨下与店家





here and leave tomorrow morning.”

“As you wish.”

The innkeeper took their luggage while Jingniang dismounted and removed her snow cap. As soon as he caught a glimpse of her, the innkeeper’s tongue hung out as much as three inches. While trying unsuccessfully to draw it back, he thought, “How can there be such a beauty?”

The innkeeper led the horse to the back of the house and tied it. In the meantime, Young Master Zhao escorted Jingniang inside and sat down. When the innkeeper showed up again, gawking at Jingniang, Zhao asked, “Is there something you want to say, innkeeper?”

“How is this young lady related to you, sir?”

“She’s my younger sister.”

“Sir, don’t blame me for speaking out of turn, but you shouldn’t be bringing such a beauty with you on a journey through all these mountains and rivers!”

“Why not?”

“Fifteen *li* from here, there’s a Mount Jie, a large region with very few inhabitants but throngs of bandits. If they hear about her, you’ll have to surrender her to them to be the wife of the bandit chieftain. Not only will you get nothing in return, you’ll have to offer a gift as well!”

In a rage, Zhao thundered, “How dare this miserable dog scare patrons with such lies!” He took one swing, and his fist landed on the innkeeper’s face. Spitting blood, the man scurried off into the street, a hand over his face.

As the innkeeper’s wife shouted angrily from the kitchen, Jingniang said to Zhao, “My kind brother, you were a little too impatient.”

“Judging by the atrocious things that brute said, I don’t think he’s a decent sort. I did that to let him know what kind of a person he’s dealing with!”

“But if we’re going to stay here for the night, we shouldn’t make an enemy of him.”

“What’s there to fear from him?”



娘相见，将好言好语稳贴了他半晌。[眉批]京娘亦非庸女子。店家娘方才息怒，打点动火做饭。

京娘归房，房中尚有馀光，还未点灯，公子正坐，与京娘讲话。只见外面一个人人来，到房门口探头探脑。公子大喝道：“什么人敢来瞧俺脚色？”那人道：“小人自来寻小二哥闲话，与客官无干。”说罢，到厨房下，与店家娘唧唧啾啾的讲了一会方去。公子看在眼里，早有三分疑心。灯火已到，店小二只是不回。店家娘将饭送到房里，兄妹二人吃了晚饭，公子教京娘掩上房门先寝。自家只推水火，带了刀棒绕屋而行。约莫二更时分，只听得赤麒麟在后边草屋下有嘶喊踢跳之声。此时十月下旬，月光初起，公子悄步上前观看，一个汉子被马踢倒在地。见有人来，务能的挣阄起来就跑。公子知是盗马之贼，追赶了一程，不觉数里，转过溜水桥边，不见了那汉子。只见对桥一间小屋，里面灯烛辉煌，公子疑那汉子躲匿在内，步进看时，见一个白须老者，端坐于土床之上，在那里诵经。怎生模样：

眼如迷雾，须若凝霜，眉如柳絮之飘，面有桃花之色。



Jingniang went to the kitchen to greet the innkeeper's wife. Only after Jingniang had said many soothing words to placate her (*Jingniang is by no means of the common run.*) did the woman calm down and start a fire to make supper.

Jingniang returned to her room. It was still light, and the lamp in the room had not yet been lit. Young Master Zhao was seated, talking with Jingniang, when he saw a man sneak up to the door and peek inside.

"Who dares to spy on us?" he snapped.

"I'm here to chat with the innkeeper. It has nothing to do with you, sir." With that, the man went to the kitchen, where he talked with the innkeeper's wife in a subdued voice for quite a while before he left.

While keeping a watchful eye on the man, Zhao was gripped with suspicion. After the lamps were lit, the innkeeper still had not returned. The innkeeper's wife brought supper to Zhao and Jingniang. When they had finished, Zhao told Jingniang to close the door and go to sleep, whereas he, saying he needed to relieve himself, took up his sword and cudgel and went out for a walk around the house.

At about the second watch of the night, he heard Red Unicorn neighing and kicking in the thatched shed at the back of the house. It was near the end of the tenth month, and the rising moon shone brightly. Young Master Zhao tiptoed ahead to see what was happening. The horse had just kicked a man to the ground. Noticing someone approaching, the man scrambled to his feet and took to his heels. Zhao realized that the man must be a horse thief and gave chase.

Before he knew it, he had covered several *li*. After making a turn at Liushui Bridge, he lost sight of the man, but his eyes fell upon a small, brightly lit hut on the other side of the bridge. Suspecting that the man had hidden himself there, he walked into the hut. Inside, he saw a hoary old man sitting solemnly on an earthen bed, chanting scriptures. What did he look like?

*His eyes foggy, his beard frosty,  
 His eyebrows flowing like willow catkins,  
 His face glowing like pink peach blossoms.*



若非天上金星，必是山中社长。

那老者见公子进门，慌忙起身施礼，公子答揖，问道：“长者所诵何经？”老者道：“《天皇救苦经》。”公子道：“诵他有甚好处？”老者道：“老汉见天下分崩，要保佑太平天子早出，扫荡烟尘，救民于涂炭！”公子听得此言，暗合其机，心中也欢喜。公子又问道：“此地贼寇颇多，长者可知他的行藏么？”老者道：“贵人莫非是同一位骑马女子，下在坡下茅店里的？”公子道：“然也。”老者道：“幸遇老夫，险些儿惊了贵人。”公子问其缘故。老者请公子上坐，自己傍边相陪，从容告诉道：“这介山新生两个强人，聚集喽啰，打家劫舍，扰害汾潞地方。一个叫做满天飞张广儿，一个叫做着地滚周进。半月之间不知那里抢了一个女子，二人争娶未决，寄顿他方，待再寻得一个来，各成婚配。这里一路店家，都是那强人分付过的，但访得有美貌佳人，疾忙报他，重重有赏。晚上贵人到时，那小二便去报与周进知道，先差野火儿姚旺来探望虚实，说道：‘不但女子貌美，兼且骑一匹



*He must be the mountain god, if not the Gold Star.*

Seeing Young Master Zhao enter the room, the old man stood up with alacrity and bowed in greeting. Zhao returned the greeting and then asked, "What scripture were you chanting, sir?"

"The scripture is *The Heavenly Emperor Saving a Suffering World.*"

"What good will come of chanting the scripture?"

"With the empire falling apart, I wish to ask for blessings for a new emperor to appear soon to clear away all the flames and dust of war and put an end to the people's misery."

These words delighted Zhao, for they matched his own innermost thoughts. He spoke up again. "This being a bandit-infested area, do you, sir, happen to know anything about the bandits?"

"Might Your Excellency be the traveler with a woman on horseback, now staying at the inn with a thatched roof at the foot of the hill?"

"Yes."

"You are lucky to have met me. Otherwise, Your Excellency would have been in for a shock."

When Zhao asked to know more, the old man invited him to take the seat of honor, sat down to one side, and unhurriedly gave the following account: "Two new bandits appeared in the Jieshan area recently. They gathered together some followers and plundered the Fenzhou and Luzhou region. One of them is called Zhang Guang'er, nickname Flying in the Sky, and the other is called Zhou Jin, nickname Rolling on the Ground. About half a month ago, they abducted a woman from goodness knows where. They got into a fight over which of them could have her for wife. Neither won. So they left her somewhere and went in search of another woman, so that each could have a wife. They instructed innkeepers all along the road to report immediately to them for a handsome reward whenever they saw a woman of beauty.

"Earlier this evening, when you, sir, arrived, the innkeeper went to report to Zhou Jin, who then sent Wild Fire Yao Wang to check things out. Yao Wang reported back in these words: 'Not only



骏马，单身客人，不足为惧。’有个千里脚陈名，第一善走，一日能行三百里，贼人差他先来盗马，众寇在前面赤松林下屯扎。等待贵人五更经过，便要抢劫。贵人须要防备！”公子道：“原来如此，长者何以知之？”老者道：“老汉久居于此，动息都知，见贼人切不可说出老汉来。”公子谢道：“承教了。”绰棒起身，依先走回，店门兀自半开，公子捱身而入。

却说店小二为接应陈名盗马，回到家中，正在房里与老婆说话。老婆暖酒与他吃，见公子进门，闪在灯背后去了。公子心生一计，便叫京娘问店家讨酒吃。店家娘取了一把空壶，在房门口酒缸内舀酒。公子出其不意，将铁棒照脑后一下，打倒在地，酒壶也撒在一边。小二听得老婆叫苦，也取朴刀赶出房来，怎当公子以逸待劳，手起棍落，也打翻了。再复两棍，都结果了性命。京娘大惊，急救不及。问其打死二人之故，公子将老者所言，叙了一遍。京娘吓得面如土色，道：“如此途路难行，怎生是好？”公子道：“好歹有赵某在此，贤妹放心！”公子撑了大门，就厨下暖起酒来，饮了半醉，上了马料，将銮铃塞口，使其无声。扎缚



is the woman a beauty, but she also rides a fine horse, and there's only one man with her. So there's nothing to fear.' There is a Chen Ming, nickname Swift of Foot, who is the fastest walker there is. He is able to cover three hundred *li* in one day. The bandits sent him over to steal the horse while the rest of them lie in wait in the red pine forest down the road. They'll ambush you when you pass by at the fifth watch at dawn. Be prepared."

"I see. But how did you, sir, come to know all this?"

"I've been living here for so long that I know everything that goes on around here. But when you see the bandits, don't mention me on any account."

Zhao thanked him for the warning, picked up his cudgel, and walked back the way he had come. The door of the inn was ajar, so he turned sideways and sidled in.

In the meantime, the innkeeper, who had come back to help Chen Ming steal the horse, was talking with his wife over some wine that she had heated up for him. As soon as he saw Young Master Zhao enter, he ducked behind a lamp.

Zhao thought of a plan. He had Jingniang ask for some wine. So the innkeeper's wife took an empty flask and went to the wine vat by the door to ladle out the wine. While she was not looking, Zhao struck her head from behind. Down she fell, and the wine flask tumbled to one side. Hearing his wife's screams, the innkeeper rushed out of his room, sword in hand, but in his haste, he was no match for the one who was waiting for him, calm and at ease. With a swing of the cudgel, the innkeeper was also struck down. Another two blows, and both husband and wife were dead.

In alarm, Jingniang tried to revive them, but to no avail. When she asked Zhao why he had to kill them, he repeated what the old man had told him. Turning pale, Jingniang said in panic, "What's to be done if the rest of the journey is going to be just as dangerous?"

"But you have me with you. Don't worry, my good sister." So saying, Zhao bolted the main door and went to the kitchen to warm some wine. After getting himself half drunk, he fed the horse and padded the horse bells to muffle the sound. When the bundles were all



包裹停当，将两个尸首拖在厨下柴堆上，放起火来，前后门都放了一把火，看火势盛了，然后引京娘上马而行。此时东方渐白，经过溜水桥边，欲再寻老者问路，不见了诵经之室。但见土墙砌的三尺高，一个小小庙儿，庙中社公坐于傍边。方知夜间所见，乃社公引导。公子想道：“他呼我为贵人，又见我不敢正坐，我必非常人也。他日倘然发迹，当加封号。”公子催马前进，约行了数里，望见一座松林，如火云相似。公子叫声：“贤妹慢行，前面想是赤松林了。”言犹未尽，草荒中钻出一个人来，手执钢叉，望公子便搠。公子会者不忙，将铁棒架住。那汉且斗且走，只要引公子到林中去。激得公子怒起，双手举棒，喝声：“着！”将半个天灵盖劈下，那汉便是野火儿姚旺。公子叫京娘约马暂住：“俺到前面林子里结果了那伙毛贼，和你同行。”京娘道：“恩兄仔细！”公子放步前行。正是：

圣天子百灵助顺，大将军八面威风。

那赤松林下着地滚周进，屯住四五十喽啰，听得林子外脚步





nicely bound in place, he dragged the two corpses onto the pile of firewood in the kitchen, ignited the pile, and set fire to the front and back doors as well. He waited until the flames leapt high before helping Jingniang up onto the horse and starting on their way.

By this time, the eastern sky had brightened. When they passed Liushui Bridge, he tried to find the old man to ask for directions, but the house where the latter had chanted scriptures was gone. Instead, Zhao saw a three-foot-high earthen wall surrounding a tiny temple, on one side of which sat the statue of the local deity. It dawned on Zhao at this moment that it was this local god who had given him advice the night before.

“He called me, Your Excellency,” thought Zhao, “and he dared not take the seat of honor in my presence. I must be someone out of the ordinary. Should I amount to something someday, I’ll surely give him a title.”

Zhao urged his horse on, and after they had covered several *li*, there came into view a forest of pine trees that looked like a fiery red cloud.

“Slow down, Sister! That must be the red pine forest ahead!” As he spoke, a man emerged out of the bushes and charged at him with an iron pitchfork. With the composure of a master, Zhao parried the pitchfork with his iron cudgel. The man retreated while continuing to fight, meaning to lead Zhao into the woods. Zhao was so enraged that he held his cudgel high with both hands and, shouting “Take that!” struck off half of the man’s head. The man turned out to be none other than Wild Fire Yao Wang. Zhao then told Jingniang to hold the horse and added, “I’m going into the woods to make short work of that gang of bandits. And then I’ll come back and we can go on with our journey.”

“Be careful, Brother!”

Zhao strode ahead. Truly,

*A hundred spirits aided the Son of Heaven;*

*In all directions, the mighty warrior inspired awe.*

In the meantime, Zhou Jin “Rolling in the Ground” and forty to fifty of his men were stationed in the red pine forest. When he heard



响，只道是姚旺伏路报信，手提长枪，钻将出来，正迎着公子。公子知是强人，并不打话，举棒便打，周进挺枪来敌。约斗上二十馀合，林子内喽啰知周进遇敌，筛起锣一齐上前，团团围住。公子道：“有本事的都来！”公子一条铁棒，如金龙罩体，玉蟒缠身，迎着棒似秋叶翻风，近着身如落花坠地，打得三分四散，七零八落。周进胆寒起来，枪法乱了，被公子一棒打倒。众喽啰发声喊，都落荒乱跑。公子再复一棒，结果了周进。回步已不见了京娘，急往四下抓寻，那京娘已被五六个喽啰簇拥过赤松林了。公子急忙赶上，大喝一声：“贼徒那里走！”众喽啰见公子追来，弃了京娘，四散去了。公子道：“贤妹受惊了！”京娘道：“适才喽啰内有两个，曾跟随响马到清油观，原认得我。方才说：‘周大王与客人交手，料这客人斗大王不过，我们先送你在张大王那边去。’”公子道：“周进这厮，已被俺剿除了。只不知张广儿在于何处？”京娘道：“只愿你不相遇更好。”公子催马快行。

约行四十馀里，到一个市镇。公子腹中饥饿，带住辔头，欲



footsteps approaching from outside the forest, Zhou Jin thought it was Yao Wang coming back to report. Holding his spear, he emerged from the woods, only to run right into Young Master Zhao, who, knowing this must be one of the bandits, struck at him without bothering to say a word. Zhou Jin fought back with his spear. After about twenty rounds, the men in the woods, realizing that Zhou Jin must have run into the enemy, beat the gong and hurried out to form a circle around the two.

“Come on, those who think you’re good enough to take me on!” shouted Zhao. His iron cudgel whirled up and down in the air like a golden dragon shrouding his body and a jade python winding around him. The bandits who were struck by the cudgel flipped and spun like so many wind-blown autumn leaves; those who got near him fell like the dropping petals of flowers, tumbling to the ground every which way. Zhou Jin began to panic. His movements became confused, and he fell at one blow from Zhao. His followers gave a cry and ran pell-mell into the wilderness. With another strike, Zhao finished off Zhou Jin.

When he turned around, however, Jingniang was nowhere to be seen. In alarm, he searched all around, but five or six of Zhou Jin’s men had taken her, and the group was already clear of the woods. With all the speed he could muster, Zhao caught up with them. “Where do you think you’re going, you scoundrels?” he roared.

Seeing him running toward them, the men dispersed in all directions, abandoning Jingniang. “My good sister,” said Zhao, “it must have been quite a shock for you!”

“Two of the men recognized me because they had accompanied their chiefs to Clear Oil Temple. They said, ‘Chief Zhou is fighting it out with that traveler. Our chief will surely win, so we’re taking you to Chief Zhang first.’”

“I’ve already finished off that brute Zhou Jin. I wonder where Zhang Guang’er is.”

“I hope you won’t run into him,” said Jingniang.

Zhao spurred the horse on. About forty *li* farther on, they came upon a town. Feeling the pangs of hunger, he held the reins and



要扶京娘下马上店。只见几个店家都忙乱乱的安排炊爨，全不来招架行客。公子心疑，因带有京娘，怕得生事，牵马过了店门。只见家家闭户，到尽头处，一个小小人家，也关着门。公子心下奇怪，去敲门时，没人答应。转身到屋后，将马拴在树上，轻轻的去敲他后门。里面一个老婆婆，开出来看了一眼，意中甚是惶惧。公子慌忙跨进门内，与婆婆作揖，道：“婆婆休讶，俺是过路客人，带有女眷，要借婆婆家中火，吃了饭就走的。”婆婆捻神捻鬼的叫：“噤声！”京娘亦进门相见，婆婆便将门闭了。公子问道：“那边店里安排酒会，迎接什么官府？”婆婆摇手道：“客人休管闲事！”[眉批]婆婆与赵景清一般见识。公子道：“有甚闲事，直恁利害？俺是远方客人，烦婆婆说明则个！”婆婆道：“今日满天飞大王在此经过，这乡村敛钱备饭，买静求安。老身有个儿子，也被店中叫去相帮了。”公子听说，思想：“原来如此。一不做二不休，索性与他个干净，绝了清油观的祸根罢！”公子道：“婆婆，这是俺妹子，为还北岳香愿到此，怕逢了强徒，受他惊恐。有烦婆婆家藏匿片时，等这大王过去之后方行，自当厚谢！”婆婆



brought the horse to a halt, meaning to help Jingniang down and go into a restaurant. Observing, however, that the waiters were too busy laying out dinner to pay them the least attention, he grew suspicious. But with Jingniang by his side, he did not want to get into trouble and led the horse past the restaurant.

Only closed doors met his eyes, one house after another. Even a small house at the end of the road had its door shut. Intrigued, he knocked at the door, but no one answered. He walked around the house, tied the horse to a tree, and gently tapped on the back door. An old woman opened the door and looked out, fright written on her face. Zhao quickly stepped in and, bowing to the old woman, said, "Madam, don't be afraid. I am a traveler with a female relative. If we could use your kitchen, we'll be on our way again as soon as we finish eating."

In consternation, the old woman warned, "Hurry!" After Jingniang went in, the old woman closed the door.

"Over at the restaurant, they are laying out a feast. What mighty official are they expecting?" asked Zhao.

Waving her hands, the old woman said, "Don't ask about what doesn't concern you." (*The old lady was of the same mind-set as the priest Zhao Jingqing.*)

"What could be so terrifying about all this? Please enlighten this traveler from afar!"

"Well, today, Master Flying in the Sky will be passing through. We villagers have pooled our money for a feast in his honor so that he'll leave us in peace. My son has also been called to help out in the restaurant."

Upon hearing this explanation, Zhao thought, "So, that's what it is. Now that I've started the job, I might as well make a clean sweep and wipe out the root of trouble for Clear Oil Temple."

Aloud, he said, "Madam, this is my younger sister. We're stopping by this place on our way to North Mountain to make a votive offering. I don't want her to be frightened by the bandits. Could you do her a favor and hide her in your home until after the chief has left? I'll surely have much to offer you by way of thanks."



道：“好位小娘子，权躲不妨事，只客官不要出头惹事！”公子道：“俺男子汉自会躲闪，且到路傍，打听消息则个！”婆婆道：“仔细！有见成馍馍，烧口热水，等你来吃，饭却不方便。”

公子提棒仍出后门，欲待乘马前去迎他一步，忽然想道：“俺在清油观中说出了‘千里步行’，今日为惧怕强贼乘马，不算好汉！”遂大踏步奔出路头。心生一计，复身到店家，大咧咧的喊道：“大王即刻到了，洒家是打前站的，你下马饭完也未？”店家道：“都完了。”公子道：“先摆一席与洒家吃。”众人积威之下，谁敢辨其真假，还要他在大王面前方便，大鱼大肉，热酒热饭，只顾搬将出来。公子放量大嚼，吃到九分九，外面沸传：“大王到了，快摆香案！”公子不慌不忙，取了护身龙，出外看时，只见十馀对枪刀棍棒，摆在前导，到了店门，一齐跪下。那满天飞张广儿骑着高头骏马，千里脚陈名执鞭紧随。背后又有三五十喽啰，十来乘车辆簇拥——你道一般两个大王，为何张广儿恁般齐整？



“What a pretty girl!” exclaimed the old woman. “Yes, it will be all right for her to stay with me for a while, but please don’t cause trouble, sir.”

“Being a man, I know how to take care of myself. I’m going out to find out how things are.”

“Be careful!” cautioned the old woman. “I have some steamed buns here. I’ll boil some water for you to drink with the buns when you come back, but I’m afraid I won’t be able to serve a regular meal.”

Zhao picked up his cudgel and went out by the back door. He was about to mount his horse to meet the bandits when a thought suddenly struck him: “I said in the temple that I would be undertaking a thousand-*li* journey on foot. If I go on horseback out of fear of the bandits, what kind of a man am I?” Thereupon, he strode out onto the street.

Having come up with a plan, he made his way back to the restaurant and shouted in a swaggering manner, “The chief will be here soon. I’m his advance man. Have you got the dinner ready?”

“Yes, we have.”

“Well, set out a table for me first.”

As they were used to the bandits’ abuses, no one dared to verify whether the man was indeed the person he presented himself to be. On the contrary, hoping that he would put in a good word with the chief on their behalf, they brought to him generous portions of fish, meat, warmed wine, and steaming hot rice. Zhao fell to heartily. When he was quite full, a commotion arose outside. Someone announced, “The chief is here. Set out the incense altar, quick!”

Cool and collected, Zhao took up his cudgel and went outside. He saw more than twenty spears, swords, clubs, and cudgels held high in the air as the advance party marched along. Upon reaching the restaurant, the men all dropped to their knees. Zhang Guang’er “Flying in the Sky” was riding a big horse, followed closely by Chen Ming “Swift of Foot,” armed with a whip. Bringing up the rear were thirty to fifty bandits and about ten carriages.

You may well ask, of the two bandit ringleaders, why was



那强人出入聚散，原无定规，况且闻说单身客人，也不在其意了，所以周进未免轻敌——这张广儿分路在外行劫，因千里脚陈名报道二大王已拿得有美貌女子，请他到介山相会，所以整齐队伍而来，行村过镇，壮观威仪。公子隐身北墙之侧，看得真切，等待马头相近，大喊一声道：“强贼看棒！”从人丛中跃出，如一只老鹰半空飞下。说时迟，那时快，那马惊骇，望前一跳，这里棒势去得重，打折了马的一只前蹄。那马负疼就倒，张广儿身松，早跳下马。背后陈名持棍来迎，早被公子一棒打番。张广儿舞动双刀，来斗公子。公子腾步到空阔处，与强人放对。斗上十馀合，张广儿一刀砍来，公子棍起中其手指。广儿右手失刀，左手便觉没势，回步便走。公子喝道：“你绰号满天飞，今日不怕你飞上天去！”赶进一步，举棒望脑后劈下，打做个肉靶。可怜两个有名的强人，双双死于一日之内。正是：

三魂渺渺“满天飞”，七魄悠悠“着地滚”。

众喽啰却待要走，公子大叫道：“俺是汴京赵大郎，自与贼人张广儿、周进有仇，今日都已剿除了，并不干众人之事！”〔眉





Zhang Guang'er the one with all the pomp and show? Well, the bandits had no fixed rules of etiquette when they were on the move. Zhou Jin, having heard that he had to deal with only one male traveler, naturally underestimated his foe. As for Zhang Guang'er, he was away on a looting expedition when Chen Ming "Swift of Foot" reported to him, "Second Chief has acquired a beautiful woman and invites you to meet him at Jieshan." Hence the impressive procession that passed through villages and towns.

Hidden behind the north wall, Zhao had a good view of the approaching procession. When Zhang Guang'er's horse drew near, Zhao shouted, "Watch out for my cudgel, scoundrel!"

With that, he leaped through the crowd and pounced like an eagle swooping down from midair. In less time than it takes to describe, the horse jumped forward in alarm, and a mighty blow of the cudgel broke one of its front legs. The horse collapsed in pain. An agile man, Zhang Guang'er quickly jumped down from the horse. From behind him, Chen Ming emerged with a club, ready to do battle with Zhao, but one blow of Zhao's cudgel knocked him down. Brandishing a sword in each hand, Zhang Guang'er charged at Zhao, who ran to an open space and assumed a martial stance. After more than ten rounds, Zhang Guang'er aimed a blow at Zhao, but Zhao swung his cudgel up and hit Zhang on the fingers. The sword dropped from Zhang's right hand, and he felt his left hand losing strength as well, so he turned on his heels and ran.

Zhao roared, "Isn't your nickname Flying in the Sky? I'll see to it that you don't rise to the sky today!" He stepped forward and smashed Zhang's head from behind. How tragic that two mighty bandits perished on the same day. Indeed,

*Their three spirits flew in the sky;  
 Their seven souls rolled on the ground.*

The rest of the men were about to flee when Zhao yelled, "I am Zhao Dalang from Bianjing. My quarrel is only with the bandits Zhang Guang'er and Zhou Jin. Now that both of them are dead, I have nothing against any of you." (*Spoken like a magnanimous sovereign.*)



批]便是王师气象。众喽啰弃了枪刀，一齐拜倒在地，道：“俺们从不见将军恁般英雄，情愿伏侍将军为寨主。”公子呵呵大笑，道：“朝中世爵，俺尚不希罕，岂肯做落草之事。”公子看见众喽啰中，陈名亦在其内，叫出问道：“昨夜来盗马的就是你么？”陈名叩头服罪。公子道：“且跟我来，赏你一餐饭。”众人都跟到店中。公子分付店家：“俺今日与你地方除了二害，这些都是良民，方才所备饭食，都着他饱餐，俺自有发放。其管待张广儿一席留着，俺有用处！”店主人不敢不依。众人吃罢。公子叫陈名道：“闻你日行三百里，有用之才，如何失身于贼人？俺今日有用你之处，你肯依否？”陈名道：“将军若有所委，不避水火！”公子道：“俺在汴京，为打了御花园，又闹了御勾栏，逃难在此。烦你到汴京打听事体如何？半月之内，可在太原府清油观赵知观处等候我，不可失信！”公子借笔砚写了叔父赵景清家书，把与陈名。将贼人车辆财帛，打开分作三分，一分散与市镇人家，偿其向来骚扰之费。[眉批]有劈着，处分得最当。就将打死贼人尸首及枪刀等项，着众人自去解官请赏。其一分众喽罗分去为衣食之资，各自还乡生理。其一分又剖为两分，一半赏与陈名为路费，一半寄与清油观



Throwing down their spears and swords, the men all dropped to their knees and said, "We've never seen anyone as heroic as you. We'll gladly serve you as our chief."

With a hearty guffaw, Zhao said, "I don't even care for positions in the imperial court. Why would I settle for a life as a bandit?" Catching sight of Chen Ming among the men, he called him forward and asked, "Are you the one who came last night to steal the horse?"

Chen Ming kowtowed in acknowledgment of his trespass. Zhao said, "Come with me. I'll treat all of you to dinner." Thereupon, the men followed him to the restaurant.

To the owner of the restaurant, Zhao said, "I've rid you of two sources of evil today. These are all good men. Feed them well with the food you have prepared. I'll deal with them afterward. As for the table reserved for Zhang Guang'er, save it for me. I need it for a purpose." The innkeeper dared not do otherwise but obey.

After dinner was over, Zhao summoned Chen Ming, saying, "I heard that you can walk three hundred *li* a day. How could you, such an able man, have allowed yourself to serve bandits? Now I've got a job for you. Will you do it?"

"Sir, I'll do anything you say, whatever the risk."

"I am here because I fled Bianjing after smashing up the imperial garden and theater. May I trouble you to go to Bianjing to find out for me how things stand now? In half a month, wait for me at Priest Zhao's place in Clear Oil Temple, Taiyuan Prefecture. Do not fail me!" He borrowed a brush-pen and an ink slab, wrote a letter to his uncle Zhao Jingqing, and handed the letter to Chen Ming.

He then divided the bandits' carriages and money into three portions. One share was for the town's inhabitants, as compensation for the harassment they had suffered. (*Well done! The best part of the division.*) He told the townspeople to take the bandits' corpses and weapons to the authorities to claim the rewards. He gave the second share to the bandits, telling them to divide it among themselves to pay for food and clothing so that they could return to their home villages and lead honest lives. The third share was divided into two halves: one went to Chen Ming for his travel expenses, and the other



修理降魔殿门窗。公子分派已毕，众心都伏，各各感恩。

公子叫店主人将酒席一桌，抬到婆婆家里。婆婆的儿子也都来了，与公子及京娘相见。向婆婆说知除害之事，各各欢喜。公子向京娘道：“愚兄一路不曾做得个主人，今日借花献佛，与贤妹压惊把盏！”京娘千恩万谢，自不必说。是夜，公子自取囊中银十两送与婆婆，就宿于婆婆家里。京娘想起公子之恩：“当初红拂一妓女，尚能自择英雄。莫说受恩之下，愧无所报，就是我终身之事，舍了这个豪杰，更托何人？”[眉批]也是。欲要自荐，又羞开口，欲待不说：“他直性汉子那知奴家一片真心？”左思右想，一夜不睡。不觉五更鸡唱，公子起身韉马要走。京娘闷闷不悦，心生一计，于路只推腹痛难忍，几遍要解。要公子扶他上马，又扶他下马。一上一下，将身偎贴公子，挽颈勾肩，万般旖旎。夜宿又嫌寒道热，央公子减被添衾，软香温玉，岂无动情之处。公子生性刚直，尽心伏侍，全然不以为怪。[眉批]侠肠如铁，可敬



went to the temple to pay for repairs to the door and windows of Demon Subjugation Hall. Everyone present was impressed with the fairness of the distribution and gave him their thanks.

Zhao then had the innkeeper take the food on the table that had been reserved for Zhang Guang'er and carry all of it to the old woman's house. Her son also came to exchange greetings with Zhao and Jingniang. The old woman was given an account of how the two bandits had been eliminated. Everyone was overjoyed. To Jingniang, Zhao said, "Your unworthy brother has never once treated you to anything throughout the journey. Today, let me 'present the Buddha with borrowed flowers,' so to speak, and serve you wine to help you recover from the shock." How Jingniang thanked him profusely need not be described here.

That night, Zhao took ten taels of silver from his bag and gave it to the old woman as payment for providing lodging.

Reflecting on the young man's kindness to her, Jingniang said to herself, "In the old days, even a courtesan like Hongfo got to pick her own hero.<sup>16</sup> Now, I have nothing with which to repay his kindness. As for my marital future, to what other person but this hero shall I commit myself?" (*Right!*) Thinking it would be too embarrassing to recommend herself yet wondering how that straightforward man was to guess her mind if she said nothing, she turned her thoughts this way and that throughout a wakeful night. Before she knew it, the night watch drum had struck five, and the roosters were crowing.

Zhao rose and saddled the horse for the day's journey. Feeling dejected, Jingniang thought of an idea. As they proceeded, she complained of unbearable stomachaches and said time and again that she had to relieve herself, asking the young man to help her mount and dismount the horse, each time leaning against him, holding his neck, and cradling his shoulders, using her charms in every possible way. At night, claiming to be cold one moment and too hot the next, she had him add and then remove a layer of bedding, trying to arouse him with the soft warmth and fragrance of her body. Being an upright man, Zhao did his utmost to tend to her without ever entertaining an



可敬。

又行了三四日，过曲沃地方，离蒲州三百馀里，其夜宿于荒村。京娘口中不语，心下踌躇，如今将次到家了，只管害羞不说，挫此机会，一到家中，此事便索罢休，悔之何及。黄昏以后，四宇无声，微灯明灭，京娘兀自未睡，在灯前长叹流泪。公子道：“贤妹因何不乐？”京娘道：“小妹有句心腹之言，说来又怕唐突，恩人莫怪！”公子道：“兄妹之间，有何嫌疑，尽说无妨！”京娘道：“小妹深闺娇女，从未出门，只因随父进香，误陷于贼人之手，锁禁清油观中，还亏贼人去了，苟延数日之命，得见恩人。倘若贼人相犯，妾宁受刀斧，有死不从。今日蒙恩人拔离苦海，千里步行相送，又为妾报仇，绝其后患。此恩如重生父母，无可报答。倘蒙不嫌貌丑，愿备铺床叠被之数，[眉批]□前未话。使妾少尽报效之万一，不知恩人允否？”公子大笑，道：“贤妹差矣！俺与你萍水相逢，出身相救，实出恻隐之心，非贪美丽之貌。况彼此同姓，难以为婚，兄妹相称，岂可及乱。俺是个坐怀不乱的



undue thought. (*What an iron-hearted honorable man! How respectable!*)

After three or four more days on the road, they came upon Quwo, about three hundred *li* from Puzhou. That night, they took up lodging in a deserted village. Without saying anything aloud, Jingniang debated with herself about what to do now that she was almost home. If she continued to be too bashful to broach the subject, the opportunity would be lost forever once she arrived at home, and regrets would be too late. Dusk fell. In the silence that shrouded the neighborhood, Jingniang stayed up tearfully by the feeble flame of the lamp, heaving deep sighs.

“My good sister,” said Zhao, “what is bothering you?”

“I have something hidden in the depths of my heart, but I’m afraid it would be too presumptuous of me to bring it up. Please don’t take offense, my savior!”

“What is there to hide between brother and sister? Go ahead and tell me.”

“Having been brought up in a secluded boudoir, I had never ventured out of the house before taking that trip with my father to offer incense. And then I was abducted by bandits and locked up in Clear Oil Temple. Luckily for me, the bandits went away. My life was thus prolonged for a few days, and I got to meet you, my savior. Had the bandits tried to violate me, I would have preferred to die rather than submit. (*She never said this before.*) You have so kindly delivered me from the sea of misery, escorted me a thousand-*li* on foot, and taken revenge on my behalf, putting an end to their threat once and for all. Your kindness to me is like that of a parent of my re-birth. I’ll never be able to repay you. If you don’t find me too ugly, I’d be glad to serve you as your wife, so that I can pay off a tiny fraction of my debt to you! Would you agree to that?”

With a hearty laugh, Zhao said, “My good sister, you’ve got it all wrong! We met by chance, just like two patches of duckweeds meeting in the water. I took those risks for you out of sympathy, not desire for your beauty. Moreover, since we have the same surname and call each other ‘brother’ and ‘sister,’ we can hardly marry each other, for that would be a breach of proper human relationships.



柳下惠，你岂可学纵欲败礼的吴孟子！休得狂言，惹人笑话。”京娘羞惭满面，半晌无语。重又开言道：“恩人休怪妾多言，妾非淫污苟贱之辈，只为弱体馀生，尽出恩人所赐，此身之外，别无报答，不敢望与恩人婚配，得为妾婢，伏侍恩人一日，死亦瞑目！”公子勃然大怒，道：“赵某是顶天立地的男子，一生正直，并无邪佞，你把我看做施恩望报的小辈，假公济私的奸人，是何道理？你若邪心不息，俺即今撒开双手，不管闲事，怪不得我有始无终了！”公子此时声色俱厉，京娘深深下拜，道：“今日方见恩人心事，赛过柳下惠、鲁男子。愚妹是女流之辈，坐井观天，望乞恩人恕罪则个！”公子方才息怒，道：“贤妹，非是俺胶柱鼓瑟，本为义气上千里步行相送，今日若就私情，与那两个响马何异？把从前一片真心化为假意，惹天下豪杰们笑话！”京娘道：“恩兄高见，妾今生不能补报大德，死当衔环结草。”两人说话，直到天明。正是：

落花有意随流水，流水无情恋落花。

自此京娘愈加严敬公子，公子亦愈加怜悯京娘。一路无话，看看来到蒲州。京娘虽住在小祥村，却不认得，公子问路而行。





I am a Liuxia Hui, impervious to feminine beauty.<sup>17</sup> How could you imitate that wanton Wumenzi in violation of proper etiquette!<sup>18</sup> Stop this wild talk! People will laugh!”

Acutely embarrassed, Jingniang fell silent. After quite a while, she spoke up again, “Please don’t take amiss what I’m going to say now. I’m not a wanton sort. It’s just that I gained a new life because of your kindness. I have nothing else with which to repay you except this very body. I wouldn’t dream of being your wedded wife. I’ll die content if only I could be your maidservant for one day.”

The young man was enraged. “I’ve been a man of honor all my life. I’ve never done anything evil. Why do you take me for a petty, treacherous man who expects repayment for service and seeks to gain from a supposedly altruistic act? If you keep having such wicked thoughts, I’ll have to leave right away and stop sticking my nose into other people’s affairs. Don’t blame me for abandoning you midway.”

At this indignant outburst, Jingniang bowed deeply and said, “Now I do see what lies deep in your heart. You are superior even to Liuxia Hui and the man of Lu.<sup>19</sup> I am but a woman. Please forgive me for my limited understanding.”

His anger subsiding, Zhao explained, “My good sister, it’s not that I’m a stubborn, inflexible man, but I offered to escort you over a thousand *li* out of a sense of honor. If I’d had designs on you, wouldn’t I be like the two bandits? My sincere offer of help would turn out to be a hypocritical show in the end, for which I’d be ridiculed by all worthy men.”

“These are wise words indeed. If I can’t repay your kindness in this life, I will surely do so in my next.”

Their conversation lasted until dawn. Truly,  
*The flowers fall into the water, seeking love,*  
*But the water flows on, untempted.*

Henceforth, Jingniang held Young Master Zhao in even greater esteem, and he in turn had greater compassion for her. Nothing of note happened for the rest of the journey.

Soon, they arrived at Puzhou. Even though she was a native of Xiaoxiang Village, she did not know the way there, and Zhao had to



京娘在马上望见故乡光景，好生伤感。却说小祥村赵员外，自从失了京娘，将及两月有馀，老夫妻每日思想啼哭。忽然庄客来报，京娘骑马回来，后面有一红脸大汉，手执杆棒跟随。赵员外道：“不好了，响马来讨妆奁了！”妈妈道：“难道响马只有一人？且教儿子赵文去看个明白。”赵文道：“虎口里那有回来肉？妹子被响马劫去，岂有送转之理，必是容貌相像的，不是妹子。”道犹未了，京娘已进中堂，爹妈见了女儿，相抱而哭，哭罢，问其得回之故。京娘将贼人锁禁清油观中，幸遇赵公子路见不平，开门救出，认为兄妹，千里步行相送，并途中连诛二寇大略，叙了一遍。“今恩人见在，不可怠慢！”赵员外慌忙出堂见了赵公子，拜谢道：“若非恩人英雄了得，吾女必陷于贼人之手，父子不得重逢矣！”遂令妈妈同京娘拜谢，又唤儿子赵文来见了恩人。庄上宰猪设宴，款待公子。

赵文私下与父亲商议道：“‘好事不出门，恶事传千里。’妹子被强人劫去，家门不幸，今日跟这红脸汉子回来，‘人无利己，



ask for directions along the way. The scenes of her native place saddened Jingniang as she rode along.

In the meantime, Squire Zhao and his wife, of Xiaoxiang Village, had been shedding many a tear every day for more than two months over the loss of their daughter Jingniang. All of a sudden, a tenant came to report that Jingniang was coming home on a horse, followed by a big, ruddy complexioned man with a cudgel. "My goodness!" exclaimed Squire Zhao. "The bandit is here to demand a dowry!"

"How could there be just one bandit?" Mrs. Zhao wondered. "Let's have our son Zhao Wen go and find out what is happening."

Zhao Wen commented, "Does a tiger ever return its prey? How could my sister be returned by her kidnapper? It can't be my sister. It must be someone who looks like her."

Even as he spoke, Jingniang stepped into the main hall of the house. At the sight of their daughter, the parents fell upon her and, embracing her, burst into tears. After crying their fill, they asked her how she had managed to return home. Thereupon, Jingniang explained that she had been locked up by the bandits in Clear Oil Temple, but, fortunately for her, Young Master Zhao, passing by, had learned about the injustice and broken into the hall to rescue her, pledged brotherhood with her and escorted her on foot over a thousand *li*, and eliminated the two bandits along the journey. "My savior is here. He should be treated with proper respect."

Immediately, Squire Zhao rushed out of the hall and greeted Young Master Zhao with a thankful bow. "If it were not for you, mighty hero," said he, "my daughter would still be at the mercy of the bandits, and we would never have been reunited with her." He then bade his wife and daughter bow their thanks to the young man, and summoned his son to greet the savior. A pig was slaughtered, and a grand feast was laid out in the young man's honor.

Privately, Zhao Wen said to his father, "As the saying goes, 'Good news never leaves the house, but bad news travels a thousand *li*.' My sister's abduction was an unfortunate event for the entire family, but now that she's back with that ruddy-faced man, I suspect



谁肯早起?’必然这汉子与妹子有情，千里送来，岂无缘故？妹子经了许多风波，又有谁人聘他？不如招赘那汉子在门，两全其美，省得傍人议论。”赵公是个随风倒舵没主意的老儿，听了儿子说话，便教妈妈唤京娘来问道：“你与那公子千里相随，一定把身子许过他了。如今你哥哥对爹说，要招赘与你为夫，你意下如何？”京娘道：“公子正直无私，与孩子结为兄妹，如嫡亲相似，并无调戏之言。今日望爹妈留他在家，管待他十日半月，少尽其心，此事不可题起。”妈妈将女儿言语述与赵公，赵公不以为然。少间筵席完备，赵公请公子坐于上席，自己老夫妇下席相陪，赵文在左席，京娘右席。酒至数巡，赵公开言道：“老汉一言相告：小女馀生，皆出恩人所赐，老汉阖门感德，无以为报。幸小女尚未许人，意欲献与恩人，为箕帚之妾，伏乞勿拒。”公子听得这话，一盆烈火从心头掇起，大骂道：“老匹夫！俺为义气而来，反把此言来污辱我。俺若贪女色时，路上也就成亲了，何必千里相送。你这般不识好歹的，枉费俺一片热心！”说罢，将桌子掀



there's something between them, for, as another saying goes, 'Who'd be willing to rise early if not for self-interest?' Why else would he have taken the trouble to escort her over such a distance? Considering everything she has gone through, I don't think she'll get a decent marriage proposal. It would be better to have that man as a live-in son-in-law, which would prevent tongues from wagging. Wouldn't that be nice in more than one way?"

At this suggestion, Squire Zhao, being an old man without a mind of his own and apt to lean in whatever direction the wind was blowing, had his wife put the idea to Jingniang. "Since that young man has escorted you over a thousand *li*," said the mother to her daughter, "you must have yielded yourself to him. Your brother has just suggested to us that we take him on as a live-in son-in-law. What do you say to that?"

"Mr. Zhao is a most honorable and selfless man. After pledging brotherhood with me, he has behaved like a true brother with never a flirtatious word. I hope only that you and father will allow him to stay for about ten or fifteen days, just to show our gratitude. Don't ever bring up this matter again."

The mother repeated these words to Squire Zhang, but he did not think much of them.

A short while later, when the dinner table had been set out, Squire Zhao offered the seat of honor to Young Master Zhao, whereas the old couple themselves sat opposite him, with Zhao Wen on his right and Jingniang on his left. After several rounds of wine, Squire Zhao spoke up, "This old man has some words to offer: My entire family is grateful to you for giving my daughter a new lease on life, but we have nothing to repay you with. Fortunately, she is as yet unbetrothed. Let me offer her to you as a wife. Please do not turn me down."

At these words, Young Master Zhao blazed with rage. "You old fool!" he lashed out. "I came here out of a sense of loyalty and honor, only to be subjected to such an insult! If I were a lecherous man, I would have made her my wife somewhere along the road. Why would I have escorted her all the way here? I shouldn't have



番，望门外一直便走。赵公夫妇唬得战战兢兢。赵文见公子粗鲁，也不敢上前。只有京娘心下十分不安，急走去扯住公子衣裾，劝道：“恩人息怒！且看愚妹之面。”公子那里肯依，一手搥脱了京娘，奔至柳树下，解了赤麒麟，跃上鞍辔，如飞而去。

京娘哭倒在地，爹妈劝转回房。把儿子赵文埋怨了一场，赵文又羞又恼，也走出门去了。赵文的老婆听得爹妈为小姑上埋怨了丈夫，好生不喜，强作相劝，将冷语来奚落京娘，道：“姑姑，虽然离别是苦事，那汉子千里相随，忽然而去，也是个薄情的。[眉批]满眼俗肠恶口，自然着落好人不得。他若是有仁义的人，就了这头亲事了。姑姑青年美貌，怕没有好姻缘相配，休得愁烦则个！”气得京娘泪流不绝，顿口无言。心下自想道：“因奴命蹇时乖，遭逢强暴，幸遇英雄相救，指望托以终身。谁知事既不谐，反涉瓜李之嫌，今日父母、哥嫂亦不能相谅，何况他人？不能报恩人之德，反累恩人的清名，为好成歉，皆奴之罪。[眉批]大英雄语。似此薄命，不如死于清油观中，省了许多是非，到得干净，如今悔之无及。千死万死，左右一死，也表奴贞节的心迹！”捱至夜深，爹妈睡熟，京娘取笔题诗四句于壁上，撮土为香，望空拜了



wasted my goodwill on people who can't tell good from bad!" With that, he pushed over the table and headed straight for the door.

Squire Zhao and his wife trembled with fear, nor did the son dare make a move, seeing what a violent temper Zhao had. Only Jingniang, feeling very ill at ease, rushed over and, grabbing Zhao's sleeve, pleaded, "My savior, for my sake, please don't be angry!"

Far from yielding, he freed himself from her grip and ran all the way to the willow tree, where he untied Red Unicorn, leaped into the saddle, and galloped away as if on wings. In tears, Jingniang collapsed to the ground.

After taking her to her room, her parents turned to their son and scolded him. Feeling humbled and angry, Zhao Wen left the house in a huff. His wife, greatly displeased upon hearing that her parents-in-law had scolded her husband on account of her sister-in-law, said maliciously to the girl in a feigned gesture of consolation, "Sister-in-law, parting may be sorrowful, but how heartless of him to leave so abruptly after such a long journey with you! (*A woman so full of malice naturally ends up with a swine of a husband.*) If he were a man of honor, he would have accepted the marriage offer. But with your youth and beauty, you'll surely get another good match. You have nothing to worry on that score!"

Tears flowing, Jingniang was at a loss for words. She thought, "Because I was born under the wrong star, I was kidnapped by bandits. Luckily, a hero rescued me, and I hoped to commit the rest of my life to him. And yet, not only did things not work out but I've even come under suspicion. My own parents, brother, and sister-in-law don't believe me. What can I expect from other people? Instead of repaying my savior's kindness, I ended up tarnishing his good name. It's all my fault that a good deed has gone awry. (*Words worthy of a great hero.*) With such a sorry fate, I should have died at Clear Oil Temple. That would have spared me all this gossip and made things a lot simpler. Regrets are too late now, but one has to die anyway, in whatever way. Let me show them that I am a chaste woman."

When night came at last and her parents were fast asleep, she took up a brush-pen and wrote a quatrain on the wall. Then, taking a



公子四拜，将白罗汗巾，悬梁自缢而死。[眉批] 可怜！

可怜闺秀千金女，化作南柯一梦人。

天明老夫妇起身，不见女儿出房，到房中看时，见女儿缢在梁间。吃了一惊，两口儿放声大哭，看壁上有诗云：

天付红颜不遇时，受人凌辱被人欺。

今宵一死酬公子，彼此清名天地知！

赵妈妈解下女儿，儿子、媳妇都来了。赵公玩其诗意，方知女儿冰清玉洁，把儿子痛骂一顿。免不得买棺成殓，择地安葬，不在话下。

再说赵公子乘着千里赤麒麟，连夜走至太原，与赵知观相会。千里脚陈名已到了三日，说汉后主已死，郭令公禅位，改国号曰周，招纳天下豪杰。公子大喜，住了数日，别了赵知观，同陈名还归汴京，应募为小校。从此随世宗南征北讨，累功至殿前都点检，后受周禅为宋太祖。陈名相从有功，亦官至节度使之职。太祖即位以后，灭了北汉。追念京娘昔日兄妹之情，遣人到蒲州解





pinch of earth as a substitute for incense, she bowed four times toward an imaginary Young Master Zhao somewhere up in the air and, using a white silk handkerchief, hanged herself from a beam in the ceiling. (*Poor thing!*)

*How sad that a girl worth her weight in gold  
 Faded away into the realm of dreams!*

Wondering why their daughter did not make an appearance after they got up the next morning, the parents went to her room. There, they found her body hanging from a beam. In shock, they burst into loud wails of grief. They saw on the wall a poem that said:

*Heaven gave me a fair face but a sorry fate,  
 To suffer from insults and tyranny.  
 With death I repay my debt of kindness;  
 Heaven and earth know how blameless we both are!*

After Mrs. Zhao took down her daughter's body, her son and daughter-in-law also arrived on the scene. Realizing from the poem that his daughter was as innocent and pure as untainted ice and jade, Squire Zhang gave his son a severe tongue-lashing before setting about buying a coffin and picking a lot for burial, but of this, no more.

In the meantime, Young Master Zhao, riding Red Unicorn, arrived before the night was out in Taiyuan, where he met with Priest Zhao and was told that Chen Ming "Swift of Foot" had been there for three days. He also learned that the last emperor of the Later Han had died, yielding the throne to Lord Guo,<sup>20</sup> who had changed the name of the dynasty to Zhou and was recruiting worthy men from all over the land. Young Master Zhao was overjoyed.

After staying in the temple for a few days, he took leave of Priest Zhao and returned with Chen Ming to Bianjing, where he joined the army as a petty officer. From then on, he followed Emperor Shizong<sup>21</sup> on expeditions north and south and rose, on the basis of his meritorious service, to be chief of the imperial guards. Later, he accepted the offer of the Zhou emperor and became Emperor Taizu of the Song dynasty. Chen Ming, as a loyal follower, was made a regional commander.

After ascending the throne, Emperor Taizu wiped out the North-

良县寻访消息。使命录得四句诗回报，太祖甚是嗟叹，敕封为贞义夫人，立祠于小祥村。那黄茅店溜水桥社公，敕封太原都土地，命有司择地建庙，至今香火不绝。这段话，题做“赵公子大闹清油观，千里送京娘”。后人有诗赞云：

不恋私情不畏强，独行千里送京娘。  
汉唐吕武纷多事，谁及英雄赵大郎。





ern Han dynasty. Recalling his brotherly affection for Jingniang, he sent a messenger to Jieliang County, in Puzhou, to seek her out and was given a copy of the quatrain as a response, much to his chagrin. He bestowed on Jingniang the posthumous title Lady Zhenyi [Chaste and Righteous] and had a shrine built for her in Xiaoxiang Village. The local deity of Liushui Bridge near Yellow Thatch Inn was given the title Deity of the Taiyuan Region. A temple dedicated to him was built on a chosen lot, and it has never been short of worshippers since. The story began to circulate under the title “Young Master Zhao, the Smasher of Clear Oil Temple, Escorted Jingniang Over a Thousand *Li*.” A later poet had this to say in praise of him:

*Untempted by beauty, undaunted by bandits,  
He escorted her on foot for a thousand li.  
In the chaotic years of Lü of Han and Wu of Tang,<sup>22</sup>  
None measured up to Zhao Dalang the hero.*

This story has been translated by Lorraine S. Y. Lieu and the editors as “The Sung Founder Escorts Ching-niang One Thousand *Li*” in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>1</sup> Legend has it that there is a hare in the moon and a three-foot crow in the sun. Hence, the moon is called the Jade Hare, and the sun the Gold Crow.

<sup>2</sup> The Nine Regions are believed to have been established by King Yu in high antiquity. The term is often used as another name for China.

King Tang founded the Shang dynasty.

<sup>3</sup> Emperor Wu of Wei was Cao Cao (155–220), courtesy name Mengde.

<sup>4</sup> In the first year of the Jingde reign period (1004–7) under Emperor Zhenzong, the Liao swept south against the Song. Kou Zhun (961–1023), the prime minister, led an expedition to Chanyuan (in present-day Henan) and killed the leading Liao general. However, the advocates of appeasement prevailed and negotiated peace in a document known historically as the Treaty of Chanyuan.

<sup>5</sup> Han Tuozhou (1151–1207) was a powerful minister during the reign of Emperor Ningzong of the Song dynasty. He was a staunch supporter of Yue Fei (1103–1142), who is revered for fighting against the Jurchen (Jin) invaders. In 1206, Han Tuozhou was defeated by the Jurchen troops, and in the following year, he was killed and his head offered to the Jurchens in a bid for peace.

Jia Sidao (1213–1275) was an evil minister in the Song court. For more on his life and death, see story 22 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Empress Lü-shi (241–180 B.C.E.) was the wife of Liu Bang, founder of the Han dynasty.

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





<sup>7</sup> 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. She later was made empress.

Yang Yuhuan (719–756) was a favorite consort of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–55) of the Tang dynasty. For more on Consort Yang, see story 9.

<sup>8</sup> Empresses Gao, Cao, Xiang, and Meng were the wives of Song Emperors Renzong, Yingzong, Shenzong, and Zhezong, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> Toward the end of the Five Dynasties period, when the Northern Han and the Qidan (Khitan) joined forces in a southward invasion, Zhao Kuangyin led the Zhou dynasty troops in a counterattack, but Zhao maneuvered to have the troops mutiny when they reached Chen Bridge, which was located near present-day Kaifeng, Henan. A robe of the imperial yellow color was thrown over Zhao Kuangyin, and he was declared the emperor of the new Song dynasty.

<sup>10</sup> Xishi, a beauty of the state of Yue in the Spring and Autumn period, was said to have looked even more attractive when she was ill.

<sup>11</sup> For an account of Consort Yang cutting her hair to show her loyalty to Emperor Xuanzong, see story 19.

<sup>12</sup> Lady Ming was Wang Zhaojun, a court lady, who was married off in 33 B.C.E. to a Tartar king.

<sup>13</sup> Cai Yan, courtesy name Cai Wenji (b. ca. 178), popularly believed to be a talented poet, was abducted around the year 192 by Tartar troops and later lived among them for twelve years. She was eventually ransomed and brought back to Han territory.

<sup>14</sup> Northern Mountain is also known as Mount Heng, which is located in Yangqu County at the border between Hebei Province and Shanxi Province.

<sup>15</sup> Guan Yu, courtesy name Yunchang, a sworn brother of Liu Bei's (162–223), is revered to this day as a central figure in the folk pantheon and embodies fidelity to commitments. Together with Zhang Fei (d. 221), he helped Liu Bei found the Kingdom of Shu.

<sup>16</sup> Hongfo was a courtesan in the service of Yang Su, prime minister of the Sui dynasty, when she abandoned him and followed Li Jing (571–649), a military strategist. She later proved to be of great value to him in his career. For more on Li Jing, see note 6 of story 11.

<sup>17</sup> Liuxia Hui (Hui of Liuxia), a court official of the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period, was known for his stoic indifference to sexual temptation.

<sup>18</sup> Wumengzi was the wife of Duke Zhao of the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn period. As both she and her husband were descendants of the royal house of the Zhou dynasty, they bore the same family name of Ji. At the time, those bearing the same family name were prohibited from marrying each other.

<sup>19</sup> As the story goes, one stormy night in the state of Lu, a widow whose house was destroyed by the storm asked her neighbor if he could put her up for the night, but he turned a deaf ear to her.

<sup>20</sup> Lord Guo was Guo Wei (904–954), founder of the Later Zhou dynasty. For more on Guo Wei, see story 15 in Feng, *Stories Old and New*.

<sup>21</sup> Emperor Shizong was Chai Rong, the second emperor of the Later Zhou dynasty, who ruled from 954 to 959.

<sup>22</sup> This is a reference to Empress Lü, wife of Liu Bang of the Han dynasty, and Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang dynasty.



## 第二十二卷

### 宋小官团圆破毡笠

不是姻缘莫强求，姻缘前定不须忧；  
任从波浪翻天起，自有中流稳渡舟。

话说正德年间，苏州府昆山县大街，有一居民，姓宋名敦，原是宦家之后。浑家卢氏，夫妻二口，不做生理，靠着祖遗田地，见成收些租课为活。年过四十，并不曾生得一男半女。宋敦一日对浑家说：“自古道‘养儿待老，积谷防饥’。你我年过四旬，尚无子嗣，光阴似箭，眨眼头白。百年之事，靠着何人？”说罢，不觉泪下。卢氏道：“宋门积祖善良，未曾作恶造业；况你又是单传，老天决不绝你祖宗之嗣。招子也有早晚，若是不该招时，便是养得长成，半路上也抛撇了，劳而无功，枉添许多悲泣。”宋敦点头道：“是！”方才拭泪未干，只听得坐启中有人咳嗽，叫唤道：“玉峰在家么？”原来苏州风俗，不论大家、小家，都有个外号，彼此相称。玉峰就是宋敦的外号。宋敦侧耳而听，叫唤第二



## Story 22

### Young Mr. Song Reunites with His Family by Means of a Tattered Felt Hat

*Seek not a marriage that is against your fate;  
Marriages are predestined; you need not fret.  
The waves of the river may soar to the sky,  
But your boat midstream will safely stay its course.*

In the Zhengde reign period [1506–21], there lived, in the main street of Kunshan, Suzhou Prefecture, a man named Song Dun, a descendant of a long line of officials. He and his wife, Lu-shi, lived off rent from some inherited land, without seeking other means of livelihood. Over forty years of age now, they still had no issue, male or female.

One day, Song Dun said to his wife, “You know what’s been said since ancient times, ‘Raise children to provide for old age, just as you store up grain against a rainy day.’ Both of us are over forty now and still have no children. At the speed time flies, our hair will be turning white in the twinkling of an eye. Who’s going to take care of our funerals?” With these words, the tears started to flow from his eyes.

His wife replied, “The Song family has been doing good for generations and has never been guilty of any evil deed. Moreover, you are the only son. Surely heaven will not end your family line. Some people have children at a later age than others. Even if we had borne and reared one, we would have lost him somewhere along the way if we are not destined to have children. Wouldn’t our pains have been for nothing? Wouldn’t we have suffered the grief of bereavement unnecessarily?”

“Right you are,” Song Dun nodded. He had barely wiped his eyes dry when he heard a cough in the sitting room near the door. A man said loudly, “Is Yufeng [Jade Peak] at home?”

It was the custom in Suzhou for people from families rich as well as humble to call each other by their sobriquets, and “Yufeng” was



句，便认得声音，是刘顺泉。那刘顺泉双名有才，积祖驾一只大船，揽载客货，往各省交卸。趁得好些水脚银两，一个十全的家业，团团都做在船上。就是这只船本，也值几百金，浑身是香楠木打造的。江南一水之地，多有这行生理。那刘有才是宋敦最契之友，听得是他声音，连忙趋出坐启，彼此不须作揖，拱手相见，分坐看茶，自不必说。宋敦道：“顺泉今日如何得暇？”刘有才道：“特来与玉峰借件东西。”宋敦笑道：“宝舟缺什么东西，到与寒家相借？”刘有才道：“别的东西不来干渎，只这件是宅上有馀的，故此敢来启口。”宋敦道：“果是寒家所有，决不相吝。”刘有才不慌不忙，说出这件东西。正是：

背后并非擎诏，当前不是围胸。鹅黄细布密针缝，净手将来供奉。 还愿曾装冥钞，祈神并衬威容。名山古刹几





Song Dun's. Song strained his ears to listen, and the second time the question was asked, he recognized the voice of Liu Shunquan, also known as Liu Youcai, who had a family shipping business of long standing. He had a large boat and made quite a handsome profit transporting goods to various provinces. All of his considerable family wealth came from the business. The boat itself, made entirely of fragrant *nanmu* wood, was worth hundreds of taels of silver. There was no lack of people in this line of work in the region south of the Yangzi River.

Liu Youcai being Song Dun's best friend, Song hurried out into the sitting room as soon as he recognized Liu's voice. Without having to stand on ceremony with each other, they dispensed with the customary bows, and only greeted each other with hands folded across their chests. They then took their seats and were served tea, but these details need not be gone into here.

Song Dun said, "How did you manage to get some free time today, Shunquan?"

"I'm here for one purpose, to borrow something from you, Yufeng."

"Doesn't your great ship have everything? Why would you need to borrow anything from this humble house?"

"I won't trouble you with anything else, but this is something I know you have and can spare. That's why I made so bold as to come and ask this favor."

"If I do have it, I certainly won't be stingy."

Slowly and deliberately, Liu Youcai named what he wanted to borrow. Truly,

*It holds no royal decree when carried on one's back;<sup>1</sup>  
It is not a vest when hung in front from the neck.  
Sewn in fine stitches in light yellow cloth,  
It is held by clean hands at prayer services.*

*It holds money offerings for the dead;  
It adds to the solemnity when prayers are said.  
It has followed its owners to hills and temples;*



相从，染下炉香浮动。

原来宋敦夫妻二口，因难于得子，各处烧香祈嗣，做成黄布袱、黄布袋，装裹佛马楮钱之类。烧过香后，悬挂于家中佛堂之内，甚是志诚。刘有才长于宋敦五年，四十六岁了，阿妈徐氏亦无子息。闻得徽州有盐商求嗣，新建陈州娘娘庙于苏州阊门之外，香火甚盛，祈祷不绝。刘有才恰好有个方便，要驾船往枫桥接客，意欲进一炷香，却不曾做得布袱布袋，特特与宋家告借。其时说出缘故，宋敦沉思不语。刘有才道：“玉峰莫非有吝惜之心么？若污坏时，一个就赔两个。”宋敦道：“岂有此理！只是一件，既然娘娘庙灵显，小子亦欲附舟一往，只不知几时去？”刘有才道：“即刻便行。”宋敦道：“布袱布袋，拙荆另有一副，共是两副，尽可分用。”刘有才道：“如此甚好。”宋敦入内，与浑家说知欲往郡城烧香之事，刘氏也欢喜。宋敦于佛堂挂壁上取下两副布袱布袋，留下一副自用，将一副借与刘有才。刘有才道：“小子先往舟中伺候，玉峰可快来。船在北门大坂桥下，不嫌怠慢时，吃



*It bears the aroma of incense.*

The fact of the matter was that Song Dun and his wife, who were having difficulty conceiving, had been burning incense and offering prayers in temple after temple. They had made themselves yellow cloth wrappers and yellow cloth bags to hold paper horses and paper coins. After each pilgrimage, they piously hung the yellow cloth wrappers and bags in the Buddhist shrine at home.

Liu Youcai was forty-six, five years older than Song Dun. He and his wife Xu-shi were also childless. They heard that a salt merchant from Huizhou, eager to pray for a son, had recently built a temple to the goddess of Chenzhou outside Chang Gate in the city of Suzhou. The temple came to be filled at all times with people offering incense and prayers. Liu Youcai wished to take advantage of a business trip to Maple Bridge in Suzhou to go and offer incense there. As he had not prepared cloth wrappers and bags, he was there to borrow one each from Song.

Upon hearing the purpose of Liu's visit, Song Dun sank into thoughtfulness. As Song remained silent, Liu Youcai said, "You won't begrudge our using them, will you? If we somehow ruin one of them, we'll give you back two."

"What kind of talk is this?" exclaimed Song Dun. "There's just one thing. Since the goddess of the temple is so responsive to prayers, I'd like to go with you in your boat. When are you leaving?"

"Right now."

"My wife has another pair of cloth wrapper and bag. So we'll bring along two pairs, one for each couple."

"Good!"

Song Dun went to the interior of the house and told his wife, to her delight, about his wish to go on an incense-offering trip to Suzhou. From the wall above their Buddhist shrine, Song Dun took down two pairs of cloth wrappers and bags, one for himself and one for Liu Youcai.

Liu said, "I'll go first and wait for you in the boat. Please come quickly. The boat will be waiting under Daban Bridge by North Gate. If you don't mind the lack of ceremony, we'll just eat some prepared



些见成素饭，不消带米。”宋敦应允。当下忙忙的办下些香烛、纸马、阡张、定段，打叠包裹，穿了一件新联就的洁白湖绸道袍，赶出北门下船。趁着顺风，不勾半日，七十里之程，等闲到了。舟泊枫桥，当晚无话。有诗为证：

月落乌啼霜满天，江枫渔火对愁眠。

姑苏城外寒山寺，夜半钟声到客船。

次日起个黑早，在船中洗盥罢，吃了些素食，净了口手，一对儿黄布袱驮了冥财，黄布袋安插纸马、文疏，挂于项上，步到陈州娘娘庙前，刚刚天晓。庙门虽开，殿门还关着。二人在两廊游绕，观看了一遍，果然造得齐整。正在赞叹，呀的一声，殿门开了，就有庙祝出来迎接进殿。其时香客未到，烛架尚虚，庙祝放下琉璃灯来，取火点烛，讨文疏替他通陈祷告。二人焚香礼拜已毕，各将几十文钱酬谢了庙祝，化纸出门。刘有才再要邀宋敦到船，宋敦不肯。当下刘有才将布袱、布袋交还宋敦，各各称谢而别。刘有才自往枫桥接客去了。宋敦看天色尚早，要往娄门趁



vegetarian food along the way. You need not bring rice.”

Song Dun agreed. Hurriedly, he packed some joss sticks, candles, paper horses, paper coins, and ingots made of tinfoil paper. After putting on a brand-new white Huzhou silk robe, he hastened to North Gate and boarded the boat. With a favorable wind, they covered the seventy-*li* distance in less than half a day. They moored their boat by Maple Bridge, and nothing of note happened at night. There is a poem in evidence:

*The moon sets, the crows cry, and frost fills the sky;  
 Sadly I sleep midst maples and fishing boat lights.  
 Beyond the Suzhou walls, from Cold Mountain Temple,  
 Echoes of the midnight bells reach my boat.*

The next morning, they rose before dawn. After washing, they ate some vegetarian food, rinsed their mouths, and washed their hands. Carrying on their shoulders the yellow cloth wrappers filled with paper coins and the yellow cloth bags laden with paper horses and prayer sheets, they walked up to the temple of the goddess of Chenzhou.

By this time, the sky had begun to brighten. The gate of the temple was open, but since the door of the main hall was still closed, the two friends toured the covered arcades. They were commenting with admiration on the architecture, every bit as magnificent as they had expected, when the door of the hall creaked open, and an acolyte emerged to invite them in. There being as yet no other worshipers, the candlestands were still unfilled. The acolyte took down a glazed oil lamp, lit the candles, and asked them for their prayer sheets. After the prayers had been offered, the incense burned, and the obeisances completed, each gave the acolyte several tens of coins as a token of his gratitude. Then, Liu and Song burned the paper coins and left the temple. Again, Liu Youcai invited Song Dun to join him on his boat, but Song Dun declined, whereupon Liu returned the cloth wrapper and bag he had borrowed, and, with words of thanks, they bade each other farewell.

Liu Youcai went in the direction of Maple Bridge to meet some clients. It being still early in the day, Song Dun decided to go to Lou



船回家。刚欲移步，听得墙下呻吟之声，近前看时，却是矮矮一个芦席棚，搭在庙垣之侧，中间卧着个有病的老和尚，恹恹欲死，呼之不应，问之不答。宋敦心中不忍，停眸而看。傍边一人走来说道：“客人，你只管看他则甚？要便做个好事了去。”宋敦道：“如何做个好事？”那人道：“此僧是陕西来的，七十八岁了，他说一生不曾开荤，每日只诵《金刚经》。三年前在此募化建庵，没有施主。搭这个芦席棚儿住下，诵经不辍。这里有个素饭店，每日只上午一餐，过午就不用了。也有人可怜他，施他些钱米，他就把来还了店上的饭钱，不留一文。近日得了这病，有半个月不用饮食了。两日前还开口说得话，我们问他：‘如此受苦，何不早去罢？’他说：‘因缘未到，还等两日。’今早连话也说不出，早晚待死。客人若可怜他时，买一口薄薄棺材，焚化了他，便是做好事。他说‘因缘未到’，或者这因缘就在客人身上。”宋敦想道：“我今日为求嗣而来，做一件好事回去，也得神天知道。”便问道：“此处有棺材店么？”那人道：“出巷陈三郎家就是。”宋敦道：“烦足下同往一看。”

那人引路到陈家来，陈三郎正在店中支分镞匠锯木。那人道：



Gate to take a boat home. He was about to leave when he heard a moan coming from a corner of the wall. Upon drawing near, he saw a low hut made of reed mats by the side of the temple wall. In the hut lay an old monk who, looking deathly ill, gave no response when addressed. Saddened, Song Dun could not take his eyes off the monk. A man walked up to Song and remarked, "Traveler, what's the use of staring at him like that? Why don't you do a good deed before you go?"

"What good deed can I do?" asked Song Dun.

"This monk is from Shaanxi. He's seventy-eight years old. He says that he's been a vegetarian all his life and spends every day reading the Diamond Sutra. Three years ago, he came here to ask for alms for building a temple, but, there being no donors, he put up this reed-mat hut and lodged here, chanting the scriptures all the time with never a stop. In this neighborhood, there is a restaurant that serves vegetarian food. He went there every morning for his one meal of the day and ate nothing after that. Whatever money and rice he received from people who felt sorry for him, he offered to the restaurant as payment for his meals and never kept even a penny for himself. Recently, he became ill and hasn't eaten anything for half a month. Two days ago, when he was still capable of speech, we asked him, 'Wouldn't it be better just to go instead of living on and suffering such pain?' He replied, 'My destined one has not come yet. I'll have to wait another two days.' This morning, he lost his ability to speak. He'll be dying any time now. If you pity him, you'd be doing a good deed by purchasing a modest, thin coffin and paying for his cremation. He said his destined one had not yet come. Who knows? Maybe you are the one he's expecting!"

Song Dun thought, "Since I'm here today to pray for a son, I might as well do a good deed before I return home. Heaven will know about it." Aloud, he asked, "Is there an undertaker around here?"

"Chen Sanlang, who lives down the lane, is an undertaker," the man replied.

"Could I trouble you to take me there?"

The man led him to the undertaker's shop, where they found



“三郎，我引个主顾作成你。”三郎道：“客人若要看寿板，小店有真正婺源加料双辘的在里面。若要见成的，就店中但凭拣择。”宋敦道：“要见成的。”陈三郎指着一副道：“这是头号，足价三两。”宋敦未及还价，那人道：“这个客官是买来舍与那芦席棚内老和尚做好事的，你也有一半功德，莫要讨虚价。”陈三郎道：“既是做好事的，我也不敢要多，照本钱一两六钱罢，分毫少不得了。”宋敦道：“这价钱也是公道了。”想起汗巾角上带得一块银子，约有五六钱重，烧香剩下，不上一百铜钱，总凑与他，还不勾一半。”“我有处了，刘顺泉的船在枫桥不远。”便对陈三郎道：“价钱依了你，只是还要到一个朋友处借办，少顷便来。”[眉批]光景逼真，情节亦紧凑。陈三郎到罢了，说道：“任从客便。”那人哂然不乐道：“客人既发了个好心，却又做脱身之计，你身边没有银子，来看则甚？”说犹未了，只见街上人纷纷而过，多有说这老和尚，可怜半月前还听得他念经之声，今早呜呼了。正是：

三寸气在千般用，一旦无常万事休。





Chen Sanlang giving instructions to a carpenter who was sawing planks of wood. The man said, "Sanlang, I brought you a patron."

Turning to Song Dun, Chen Sanlang said, "If you wish to look at different kinds of wood, I have inside some planks made of two-ply genuine Wuyuan [in Jiangxi Province] wood, but if you want a ready-made coffin, you can take your pick from the ones we've got here."

"I'll take a ready-made one."

Pointing to one coffin, Chen Sanlang said, "This is the finest one. Three taels of silver, even."

Before Sun Dun could start bargaining, the man accompanying him spoke up. "This is a traveler, here to buy a coffin for that old monk in the reed-mat hut. Half of the merit for doing this good deed goes to you. So don't ask for more than it's worth."

"Since it's for a good deed," conceded Chen Sanlang, "I won't presume to ask for too much. Give me one tael and six maces. That's what it cost me. I can't do with any less."

"Fair enough." So saying, Song Dun recalled that he had a piece of silver worth five to six maces in one corner of his waistband, plus a little less than one hundred in copper cash left over from paying for the incense. But that would still be less than half the price asked for. "I have an idea," he thought. "Liu Shunquan's boat is not far from Maple Bridge." Aloud, he said to Chen Sanlang, "The price is fine. It's just that I'll have to borrow some money from a friend. I'll be right back." (*A vivid scene in a tightly woven plot.*)

Chen Sanlang said, "All right, as you wish."

But the man accompanying Song Dun bristled. "You wanted to do good," said he, "and yet you try to slip away. If you don't have the money, why bother to come here and look around?"

Before he had quite finished, they heard passersby saying how sad it was that the old monk, whose intoning of the scriptures had been heard about half a month before, had died that very morning. Truly,

*Everything is done with the three inches of breath;  
All is gone once the last breath goes out.*



那人道：“客人不听得说么？那老和尚已死了，他在地府睁眼等你断送哩！”宋敦口虽不语，心下复想道：“我既是看定了这具棺木，倘或往枫桥去，刘顺泉不在船上，终不然呆坐等他回来。况且常言得‘价一不择主’，倘别有个主顾，添些价钱，这副棺木买去了，我就失信于此僧了。罢罢！”[眉批] 延陵挂剑之谊，不过是宜厥后之昌也。便取出银子，刚刚一块，讨等来一称，叫声惭愧！原来是块元宝，看时像少，称时便多，到有七钱多重，先教陈三郎收了。将身上穿的那一件新联就的洁白湖绸道袍脱下，道：“这一件衣服，价在一两之外，倘嫌不值，权时相抵，待小子取赎。若用得时，便乞收算。”陈三郎道：“小店大胆了，莫怪计较。”将银子、衣服收过了。宋敦又在髻上拔下一根银簪，约有二钱之重，交与那人，道：“这枝簪，相烦换些铜钱，以为殡殓杂用。”当下店中看的人都道：“难得这位做好事的客官，他担当了大事去。其余小事，我们地方上也该凑出些钱钞相助。”众人都凑钱去了。宋敦又复身到芦席边，看那老僧，果然化去，不觉双眼垂泪，分明如亲戚一般，[眉批] 所以成因缘，所以成眷属。心下好生酸楚，正不知什么缘故，不忍再看，含泪而行。到娄门时，航船已开，乃



The man said, "Didn't you hear, traveler? The old monk is dead. He's waiting in the netherworld for you to take care of his burial!"

Song Dun thought, "I'm determined to take this coffin, but if I go to Maple Bridge and don't find Liu Shunquan on the boat, I can't very well sit around and wait for him to come back. As the saying goes, 'Goods set at the same price are not picky about buyers.' Should another patron be willing to pay more for the coffin, I'll lose it and let the monk down. Oh well!" (*So, the one of Yanling<sup>2</sup> who gave his sword to a deceased friend must also have done so only for the prosperity of his own descendants.*)

He took out the piece of silver, the only one he had, and asked for a scale. Upon learning the actual weight of the piece, he let out a cry of surprise, for it weighed over seven maces, more than it looked. After giving it to Chen Sanlang, he took off his brand-new, white Huzhou silk robe and said, "This robe is worth more than one tael of silver. If you think it's worth less, please consider it a pawn. I'll come back to redeem it. But if you think it acceptable, please take it."

"If I may be so bold," said Chen Sanlang. "It's not that I haggle. Please understand." So saying, he took the silver as well as the robe.

Song Dun pulled a silver hairpin, worth about two maces, from his hair-bun and gave it to the man who was with him, saying, "Please exchange this hairpin for some copper coins to pay for funeral expenses."

At this point, onlookers in the shop commented, "What a kind-hearted man! Now that he has paid the bulk of the expenses, we locals should chip in and take care of the rest." So saying, they went off to scrape together some money.

Song Dun returned to the hut and saw that the old monk had indeed passed away. Before he knew it, tears fell from his eyes, as if he were looking at his own kith and kin. (*So, there is indeed a predestined bond, and family ties do exist!*) For some inexplicable reason, he felt sick at heart. Finding the sight too painful, he turned away with tears in his eyes and continued on his journey. Upon reach-



自唤一只小船，当日回家。

浑家见丈夫黑夜回来，身上不穿道袍，面又带忧惨之色，只道与人争竞，忙忙的来问。宋敦摇首道：“话长哩！”一径走到佛堂中，将两副布袱布袋挂起，在佛前磕了个头，进房坐下，讨茶吃了，方才开谈，将老和尚之事备细说知。浑家道：“正该如此！”也不嗔怪。宋敦见浑家贤慧，到也回愁作喜。是夜夫妻二口睡到五更，宋敦梦见那老和尚登门拜谢，道：“檀越命合无子，寿数亦止于此矣！因檀越心田慈善，上帝命延寿半纪。老僧与檀越又有一段因缘，愿投宅上为儿，以报盖棺之德。”卢氏也梦见一个金身罗汉走进房里，梦中叫喊起来，连丈夫也惊醒了。各言其梦，似信似疑，嗟叹不已。正是：

种瓜还得瓜，种豆还得豆。

劝人行好心，自作还自受。

从此卢氏怀孕，十月满足，生下一个孩儿。因梦见金身罗汉，小名金郎，官名就叫宋金。夫妻欢喜，自不必说。此时刘有才也



ing Lou Gate, he realized he had missed the last passenger boat, whereupon he hired a small boat and arrived at home before the night was out.

Wondering why her husband had returned so late, wearing no robe and with a forlorn expression on his face, Mrs. Song supposed he must have been involved in some dispute and quickly walked up to ask what was wrong. Shaking his head, Song Dun said, "It's a long story!" With that, he headed straight for the Buddhist shrine, hung up the two pairs of cloth wrappers and bags, and kowtowed to the Buddha's image.

It was not until he had entered his own chamber and been served tea that he began to tell her about his encounter with the old monk. "You did the right thing," said his wife, without a word of reproach. Her kindness cheered him up.

That night, the couple slept all the way through the fifth watch, when each had a dream. Song Dun saw the old monk coming to thank him with a bow, saying, "My benefactor, you were destined to be childless, and your life span was to end at this point. However, due to your compassionate nature, the Lord on High has ordered that your life span be extended for six years. In addition, this old monk has a predestined bond with you. I will gladly reincarnate into your home and be your son, out of my gratitude to you for buying my coffin." Lu-shi, on her part, dreamed of a gilded arhat walking into the room. She woke up herself as well as her husband with her screams. As they listened to their accounts of these dreams, they heaved sigh upon sigh, unsure whether to believe them or not. Truly,

*Plant melons, and you get melons;*

*Plant beans, and you get beans.*

*Let all be advised to do good works;*

*For as you sow, so will you reap.*

That night, Lu-shi became pregnant. When she had carried the baby to full term, in ten months' time, she gave birth to a son, who was given the name Song Jin, nickname Jinlang [Golden Boy], because of the mother's dream of a gilded arhat. The couple's joy goes without saying.



生一女，小名宜春。各各长成，有人撺掇两家对亲。刘有才到也心中情愿，宋敦却嫌他船户出身，不是名门旧族，口虽不语，心中有不允之意。那宋金方年六岁，宋敦一病不起，呜呼哀哉了。自古道：“家中百事兴，全靠主人命。”十个妇人，敌不得一个男子。自从宋敦故后，卢氏掌家，连遭荒歉，又里中欺他孤寡，科派户役，卢氏撑持不定，只得将田房渐次卖了，赁屋而居。初时，还是诈穷，以后坐吃山崩，不上十年，弄做真穷了。卢氏亦得病而亡。断送了毕，宋金只剩得一双赤手，被房主赶逐出屋，无处投奔。且喜从幼学得一件本事，会写会算。偶然本处一个范举人选了浙江衢州府江山县知县，正要寻个写算的人。有人将宋金说了，范公就教人引来。见他年纪幼小，又生得齐整，心中甚喜。叩其所长，果然书通真草，算善归除。当日就留于书房之中，取一套新衣与他换过，同桌而食，好生优待。择了吉日，范知县与宋金下了官船，同往任所。正是：



At the same time, Liu Youcai's wife gave birth to a daughter, to whom the couple gave the pet name Yichun. As the boy and the girl grew up, the two families were urged to form a marriage alliance. Liu Youcai was willing, but Song Dun looked down upon Liu's status as a proprietor of a shipping business rather than a member of an old family of distinguished lineage. But he said nothing, and kept his disapproval to himself.

When Song Jin was six years old, Song Dun was afflicted with an illness from which he never recovered. His death bore out the saying, "The prosperity of the household depends on the well-being of the master." Even ten women couldn't make up for the loss of a man.

After Song Dun's death, Lu-shi took over the management of the household, but, what with one bad crop after another and government authorities collecting more taxes from the widow and the fatherless child, Lu-shi could not hold out any longer. She had no choice but to sell the family's landed estates little by little and move into a rented house. In the beginning, she exaggerated her poverty, but after living off her savings for a little less than ten years, the poverty became real. She, too, fell ill and died.

After the funeral, Song Jin, with nothing left but his bare hands, was expelled from the house by the landlord and had no one to turn to for help. Luckily, he had, as a child, learned to write and do arithmetic. It so happened that a provincial graduate, Mr. Fan, of the same area, having just been appointed magistrate of Jiangshan County, Quzhou Prefecture, Zhejiang, was looking for a clerk who could write and do arithmetic. Song Jin was recommended to him, and Mr. Fan sent for him. Pleased at the sight of this good-looking boy, he tested him on his skills and found him to be truly proficient in writing and the use of the abacus in multiplication and division. That very day, Mr. Fan decided to keep him in the study, had him change into a new suit of clothes, and shared the same table with him at dinner—such were the favors showered upon him.

On a chosen auspicious day, Magistrate Fan and Song Jin embarked on a government boat on their journey to the magistrate's post. Truly,



冬冬画鼓催征棹，习习和风荡锦帆。

却说宋金虽然贫贱，终是旧家子弟出身，今日做范公门馆，岂肯卑污苟贱，与童仆辈和光同尘，受其戏侮！那些管家们欺他年幼，见他做作，愈有不然之意。自昆山起程，都是水路，到杭州便起早了。众人撺掇家主道：“宋金小厮家，在此写算服事老爷，还该小心谦逊，他全不知礼。老爷优待他忒过分了，与他同坐同食。舟中还可混帐，到陆路中火歇宿，老爷也要存个体面。小人们商议，不如教他写一纸靠身文书，方才妥帖。到衙门时，他也不敢放肆为非。”[眉批]此言近理，全靠耳硬心明。范举人是棉花做的耳朵，就依了众人言语，唤宋金到舱，要他写靠身文书。宋金如何肯写？逼勒了多时，范公发怒，喝教剥去衣服，喝出船去。众苍头拖拖拽拽，剥的干干净净，一领单布衫，赶在岸上，气得宋金半晌开口不得。只见轿马纷纷伺候范知县起陆，宋金噙着双泪，只得回避开去。身边并无财物，受饿不过，少不得学那两个古人：

伍伯吹箫于吴门，韩王寄食于漂母。





*The drums urged the boat to be on its way;  
 Gentle breezes filled out the brocade sails.*

However poor and lowly now, Song Jin was, after all, from a distinguished old family. Even though he was a mere retainer in the service of Magistrate Fan, he would not stoop to the level of the other servants or let them take liberties with him, and the servants resented this boy for his airs. As the journey by water from Kunshan was to end in Hangzhou, from whence they were to travel by land, the servants offered this advice to their master: "That little brute Song Jin needs to be subdued while serving you as a clerk. He knows absolutely nothing about good manners. You, sir, treat him too generously, letting him sit and eat with you. In the boat, he can get away with such behavior, but when traveling on land, you must consider proper decorum when lodging at an inn. As we see it, it wouldn't be right unless you have him draw up a statement of indentured service to you, so that after you assume office, he won't dare to make trouble in the yamen." (*It takes someone with a mind of his own and a clear head to make a wise judgment when presented with such seemingly flawless logic.*)

Mr. Fan, who was an easily influenced man without a mind of his own, followed their advice. He called Song Jin to his cabin and ordered him to write a statement of indentured service. How could Song Jin ever consent to such a thing? When his many harsh words of command came to naught, Mr. Fan flew into a rage and roared, "Take off his clothes and throw him out of the boat!"

Pulling and tugging the boy, the servants stripped him of all his clothes, down to the shirt next to his skin, and drove him out onto the shore. Song Jin was so mortified that he was unable to get a word out for quite some time. Witnessing the assembly of attendants helping the magistrate start the journey on land, with sedan-chairs and horses and all, Song Jin, with tears standing in his eyes, felt obliged to remove himself from the scene. Penniless as he was, and with hunger getting the better of him, he could hardly avoid imitating the two ancients:

*Prime Minister Wu playing flute by Wu Gate;*<sup>3</sup>



日间街坊乞食，夜间古庙栖身。还有一件，宋金终是旧家子弟出身，任你十分落泊，还存三分骨气，不肯随那叫街乞丐一流，奴言婢膝，没廉没耻。讨得来便吃了，讨不来忍饿，有一顿没一顿。过了几时，渐渐面黄肌瘦，全无昔日丰神。正是：

好花遭雨红俱褪，芳草经霜绿尽凋。

时值暮秋天气，金风催冷，忽降下一场大雨。宋金食缺衣单，在北新关关王庙中担饥受冻，出头不得。这雨自辰牌直下至午牌方止。宋金将腰带收紧，挪步出庙门来，未及数步，劈面遇着一人。宋金睁眼一看，正是父亲宋敦的最契之友，叫做刘有才，号顺泉的。宋金无面目“见江东父老”，不敢相认，只得垂眼低头而走。那刘有才早已看见，从背后一手挽住，叫道：“你不是宋小官么？为何如此模样？”宋金两泪交流，叉手告道：“小侄衣衫不齐，不敢为礼了，承老叔垂问。”如此如此，这般这般，将范知县无礼之事，告诉了一遍。刘翁道：“‘恻隐之心，人皆有之。’你肯在我船上相帮，管教你饱暖过日。”宋金便下跪，道：“若得老叔收留，便是重生父母。”当下刘翁引着宋金到于河下，刘翁先上



*King Han being fed by the washing woman.<sup>4</sup>*

He begged for food on the streets by day and slept in old temples at night. But being from a family of distinguished lineage, Song Jin retained some of his pride after all, even though he was down on his luck. He refused to grovel as shamelessly as the average street beggar. He took whatever he was given and starved when nothing came his way, never knowing when his next meal was to come from. In time, he grew sallow and emaciated, a mere shadow of his former comely self. Truly,

*The storm-ravaged flowers fade and lose their red;  
 The frost-laden grass withers, its green all gone.*

It being late autumn, the blustery wind brought a sudden rain-storm. Song Jin was stranded, hungry and cold, with little food or clothes, in the Temple of Lord Guan in Beixinguan. The rain lasted from mid-morning to early afternoon. Tightening his belt, Song Jin stepped out the temple gate. Before he had gone far, he ran head-on into a man who, after a good look, he realized was his father Song Dun's best friend Liu Youcai, sobriquet Shunquan. Feeling too ashamed to greet someone from his hometown, he lowered his head and kept walking, his eyes fixed on the ground. But Liu Youcai had already recognized him. Grabbing the young man from behind with one swipe of his hand, Liu cried out, "Aren't you Young Master Song? Why are you reduced to such a state?"

With tears streaming from his eyes, Song Jin said, his hands folded respectfully in front of him, "Being in such rags, I dare not greet you in the proper way, but I'm much obliged to you, Uncle, for asking."

He then proceeded to give an account of Magistrate Fan's abuse, to which Mr. Liu responded, "You know what they say, 'Compassion dwells in every heart.' If you could help me out on my boat, I'll make sure you don't go hungry and cold."

Down on his knees, Song Jin said, "If you would be so kind as to keep me, Uncle, you'll be as dear to me as a parent of my re-birth."

Right away, Mr. Liu led Song Jin to the riverside. Liu boarded



船，对刘姬说知其事，刘姬道：“此乃两得其便，有何不美。”刘翁就在船头上招宋小官上船，于自身上脱下旧布道袍，教他穿了，引他到后艄，见了妈妈徐氏，女儿宜春在傍，也相见了。宋金走出船头，刘翁道：“把饭与宋小官吃。”刘姬道：“饭便有，只是冷的。”宜春道：“有热茶在锅内。”宜春便将瓦罐子舀了一罐滚热的茶。刘姬便在厨柜内取了些腌菜，和那冷饭，付与宋金道：“宋小官，船上买卖，比不得家里，胡乱用些罢！”宋金接得在手。又见细雨纷纷而下，刘翁叫女儿：“后艄有旧毡笠，取下来与宋小官戴。”宜春取旧毡笠看时，一边已自绽开。宜春手快，就盘髻上拔下针线将绽处缝了，丢在船篷之上，叫道：“拿毡笠去戴。”宋金戴了破毡笠，吃了茶淘冷饭。刘翁教他收拾船上家火，扫抹船只，自往岸上接客，至晚方回，一夜无话。次日，刘翁起身，见宋金在船头上闲坐，心中暗想：“初来之人，莫惯了他。”便吆喝道：“个儿郎吃我家饭，穿我家衣，闲时搓些绳，打些索，也有用处。如何空坐？”宋金连忙答应道：“但凭驱使，不敢有违！”刘翁便取一束麻皮，付与宋金，教他打索子。正是：



his boat first and told his wife about the matter. "Wouldn't this be nice in more than one way?" she said, whereupon Mr. Liu went to the bow of the boat and waved to Young Master Song, signaling to him to come on board. He then took off his old robe and put it on Song Jin before leading the young man to the stern to greet his wife, Xu-shi. His daughter Yichun off to one side also greeted the young man. After Song Jin went back to the bow, Mr. Liu said, "Offer some rice to Young Master Song."

"Rice I do have, but it's cold," said Mrs. Liu.

"There's some hot tea in the pot," said Yichun. She then filled a clay jar with boiling-hot tea. Mrs. Liu gave Song Jin the cold rice along with some pickled vegetables she had taken from the kitchen cupboard and said, "Young Master Song, our business is run from our boat, which doesn't have the comforts of home. Please make do with whatever I can offer!"

Song Jin accepted the food. Noticing that it had started to drizzle, Mr. Liu cried out to his daughter, "There's an old felt hat by the rudder at the back. Bring it over for Young Master Song."

As she picked up the hat, Yichun noticed that the seam on one side was split. Being swift of hand, she took a needle and thread from her hair and sewed up the hat before tossing it onto the mat. "Here's the hat for you," said she. Song Jin put on the old felt hat and poured the hot tea over the cold rice and ate it. After telling him to tidy up the cabins and sweep the boat clean, Mr. Liu went ashore to greet clients. He returned late, and the night went by without further ado.

Upon rising the next morning, Mr. Liu saw Song Jin sitting idly at the bow of the boat. He thought, "He's just starting out. Let's not spoil him." Aloud, he said harshly, "You there! You owe everything you eat and wear to this family. If you have time to spare, do something useful like making some cord and rope. How can you just sit there without doing anything?"

With alacrity, Song Jin replied, "I'll do whatever you want me to do. I would never dream of disobeying you."

Thereupon Mr. Liu gave him a sheaf of hemp and taught him



在他矮檐下，怎敢不低头。

宋金自此朝夕小心，辛勤做活，并不偷懒。兼之写算精通，凡客货在船，都是他记帐，出入分毫不爽。别船上交易，也多有央他去拿算盘，登帐簿，客人无不敬而爱之，都夸道：“好个宋小官，少年伶俐。”刘翁、刘姬见他小心得用，另眼相待，好衣好食的管顾他。在客人面前，认为表侄。宋金亦自以为得所，心安体适，貌日丰腴，凡船户中无不欣羨。光阴似箭，不觉二年有馀。刘翁一日暗想：“自家年纪渐老，止有一女，要求个贤婿以靠终身，似宋小官一般，到也十全之美，但不知妈妈心下如何？”是夜与妈妈饮酒半醺，女儿宜春在傍，刘翁指着女儿对妈妈道：“宜春年纪长成，未有终身之托，奈何？”刘姬道：“这是你我靠老的一桩大事，你如何不上紧？”刘翁道：“我也日常在念，只是难得个十分如意的。像我船上宋小官恁般本事人才，千中选一，也就不能勾了。”刘姬道：“何不就许了宋小官？”刘翁假意道：“妈妈说那里话！他无家无倚，靠着我在船上吃饭，手无分文，怎好把女儿许他？”刘姬道：“宋小官是宦家之后，况系故人之子。当初



how to make rope with it. Truly,

*When the eaves of his host's house are so low,  
How would he dare not to bend his head down?*

Henceforth, Song Jin went about his duties carefully, working hard from morning to night with never an idle moment. Being proficient in writing and arithmetic, he doubled as a bookkeeper, recording all transactions without the slightest error. Other boat-owners also came to ask for his help with the abacus and bookkeeping. All the clients held him in high regard and praised him for his brilliance in spite of his youth. Impressed by his conscientiousness and useful service, Mr. and Mrs. Liu began to see him in a favorable light and provided him with good food and clothing. They presented him to their clients as their nephew. Song Jin was also content with the arrangement. His health improved, and his emaciated form began to fill out, to the delight of all of Liu's business associates.

Time flew by like an arrow. Quite unnoticeably, two years went by. One day, Mr. Liu thought to himself, "I'm getting on in years. With only one daughter, I need a good son-in-law to provide for me in my old age. Young Master Song would suit us perfectly. I wonder what Mother has in mind."

That night, when he and his wife were half tipsy with wine, Mr. Liu pointed at Yichun who was off to one side and said to his wife, "Now that Yichun is of marriageable age, what are we going to do about her future?"

"This is an important matter that concerns our livelihood in our old age," said his wife. "Why don't you do something?"

"I have in fact been thinking about it constantly. It's just that a good candidate is hard to come by. Someone as capable and handsome as Young Master Song is one in a thousand."

"Then why not take him in as our son-in-law?"

"What are you talking about?" Mr. Liu pretended to object. "He has no family to fall back on. He works for me and doesn't have a penny to his name. How can we commit our daughter to him?"

"Young Master Song is from an official's family," countered his wife. "Plus, he's the son of an old friend. There *was* a marriage pro-



他老子存时，也曾有人议过亲来，你如何忘了？今日虽然落薄，看他一表人材，又会写，又会算，招得这般女婿，须不辱了门面，我两口儿老来也得所靠。”刘翁道：“妈妈，你主意已定否？”刘姬道：“有什么不定？”刘翁道：“如此甚好！”原来刘有才平昔是个怕婆的，久已看上了宋金，只愁妈妈不肯，今见妈妈慨然，十分欢喜。当下便唤宋金，对着妈妈面许了他这头亲事。宋金初时也谦逊不当，见刘翁夫妇一团美意，不要他费一分钱钞，只索顺从。刘翁往阴阳生家选择周堂吉日，回复了妈妈，将船驾回昆山。先与宋小官上头，做一套绸绢衣服与他穿了，浑身新衣、新帽、新鞋、新袜，妆扮得宋金一发标致。

虽无子建才八斗，胜似潘安貌十分。

刘姬也替女儿备办些衣饰之类。吉日已到，请下两家亲戚，大设喜筵，将宋金赘入船上为婿。次日，诸亲作贺，一连吃了三日喜酒。宋金成亲之后，夫妻恩爱，自不必说。从此船上生理，日兴一日。

光阴似箭，不觉过了一年零两个月。宜春怀孕日满，产下一女。夫妻爱惜如金，轮流怀抱。期岁方过，此女害了痘疮，医药





posal when his father was alive. How could you have forgotten? He may be down on his luck, but look at him! Such a handsome young man able to write and do arithmetic won't be a disgrace to his in-laws, and the two of us could have someone to support us in our old age."

"Mother," said Mr. Liu, "are you quite determined?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"So much the better," said Mr. Liu.

As a matter of fact, Liu Youcai was a henpecked husband. He had set his mind on Song Jin a long time ago but was afraid that his wife would object. Now that she had agreed so readily, he was delighted beyond measure. Then and there, he called for Song Jin and, with his wife present, offered the marriage proposal. Song Jin demurred at first, but, touched by the couple's sincerity and relieved that he was not expected to spend one penny, he gave in to Mr. Liu. Mr. Liu then went to see a fortune-teller, who picked an auspicious day for the wedding. After reporting back to Mrs. Liu, he brought his boat back to Kunshan. There, he had Young Master Song tie up his hair in a bun at the top of his head to mark his coming of age and had a silk gown made for him. Decked out in new clothes, a new hat, and new shoes and socks, Song Jin looked all the more striking:

*He might not have Cao Zhi's literary talent,<sup>5</sup>*

*But he was every bit as handsome as Pan An.<sup>6</sup>*

For her part, Mrs. Liu went about preparing clothes and jewelry for her daughter. On the chosen auspicious day, the couple invited relatives from both clans to a grand feast to celebrate Song Jin's new status as a live-in son-in-law. The next day, the relatives came to offer their congratulations, and the feasting lasted three days. I shall skip over details about the young couple's love for each other after the wedding, but henceforth, the shipping business grew more and more prosperous day by day.

Time flew like an arrow. All too quickly, a year and two months had gone by. When her pregnancy reached full term, Yichun gave birth to a daughter, whom the young couple cherished like a piece of gold and took turns holding in their arms. However, hardly had the



不效，十二朝身死。宋金痛念爱女，哭泣过哀，七情所伤，遂得了痲瘵之疾。朝凉暮热，饮食渐减，看看骨露肉消，行迟走慢。刘翁、刘姬初时还指望他病好，替他迎医问卜。延至一年之外，病势有加无减。三分人，七分鬼。写也写不动，算也算不动。到做了眼中之钉，巴不得他死了干净，却又不死。两个老人家懊悔不迭，互相抱怨起来。当初只指望半子靠老，如今看这货色，不死不活，分明一条烂死蛇缠在身上，摆脱不下。把个花枝般女儿，误了终身，怎生是了？为今之计，如何生个计较，送开了那冤家，等女儿另招个佳婿，方才称心。两口儿商量了多时，定下个计策，连女儿都瞒过了，只说有客货在于江北，移船往载。行至池州五溪地方，到一个荒僻的所在，但见孤山寂寂，远水滔滔，野岸荒崖，绝无人迹。是日小小逆风，刘公故意把舵使歪，船便向沙岸上阁住，却教宋金下水推舟。宋金手迟脚慢，刘公就骂道：“痲病鬼！没气力使船时，岸上野柴也砍些来烧烧，省得钱买。”宋金自觉惶愧，取了斫刀，挣扎到岸上砍柴去了。刘公乘其未回，把



baby girl passed her first birthday when she caught smallpox and, failing to respond to medicine, died twelve days later. Song Jin cried so bitterly over the loss of his beloved daughter that his excessive grief wore him down, and he fell victim to consumption. His temperature went down in the early morning but rose to a fever at night, and he ate and drank less and less. Soon, his bones stood out in his emaciated body, and his movements were slow and painstaking.

In the beginning, Mr. and Mrs. Liu hoped for his recovery, and they engaged doctors and asked for divinations on his behalf. But as the illness dragged on for more than a year and got worse instead of better, with Song Jin looking more like a ghost than a human and unable to write or do arithmetic, the Liu couple began to see him as a thorn in their flesh. They could hardly wait for him to die, and yet he hung on to life. Overcome with regret, they busily blamed each other. They had counted on this son-in-law to support them in their old age, but the miserable wretch, now more dead than alive, was like a rotting dying snake twining itself around them. Unable to shake him off, what were they going to do about their daughter? She was still in the bloom of youth, and her future was being ruined. They needed a plan to get that cursed wretch out of the way so that they could take on another son-in-law. Only then would they feel content.

After much consultation with each other, they drew up a plan but did not tell their daughter. Claiming that they had to pick up a shipment of goods from north of the river, the Lius took Song Jin on the trip upriver. When they came to Five Creeks, Chizhou [present-day Guichi in Anhui], they brought the boat to a deserted place where all that met their eyes were forlorn hills, a vast expanse of water, and a stretch of uninhabited land with no sign of human life. Against a slightly unfavorable wind, Mr. Liu maneuvered the boat toward the sandy shore and deliberately ran it aground. He then told Song Jin to go into the water and push the boat. Song Jin's movements being slow, Mr. Liu burst into a torrent of curses, "What a sick dog! If you're too weak to push, why don't you go on shore and chop some firewood so as to save me some money?"

Feeling ashamed, Song Jin took up an ax and dragged himself



舵用力撑动，拨转船头，挂起满风帆，顺流而下。

不愁骨肉遭颠沛，且喜冤家离眼睛。

且说宋金上岸打柴，行到茂林深处，树木虽多，那有气力去砍伐，只得拾些儿残柴，割些败棘，抽取枯藤，束做两大捆，却没有气力背负得去。心生一计，再取一条枯藤，将两捆野柴穿做一捆，露出长长的藤头，用手挽之而行，如牧童牵牛之势。行了一时，想起忘了斫刀在地，又复身转去，取了斫刀，也插入柴捆之内，缓缓的拖下岸来，到于泊舟之处，已不见了船。但见江烟沙岛，一望无际。宋金沿江而上，且行且看，并无踪影。看看红日西沉，情知为丈人所弃。上天无路，入地无门，不觉痛切于心，放声大哭。哭得气咽喉干，闷绝于地，半晌方苏。

忽见岸上一老僧，正不知从何而来，将拄杖卓地，问道：“檀越伴侣何在？此非驻足之地也！”宋金忙起身作礼，口称姓名：“被丈人刘翁脱赚，如今孤苦无归，求老师父提挈，救取微命。”老僧道：“贫僧茅庵不远，且同往暂住一宵，来日再做道理。”宋



ashore to chop firewood. In Song Jin's absence, Mr. Liu punted the boat away with all his might and turned it back the way it had come. At full sail, the boat glided downstream.

*What did he care about his son-in-law's plight?*

*To his delight, the cursed wretch was out of sight.*

In the meantime, Song Jin's steps took him into the depths of the woods. Although the supply of wood was abundant, wielding the ax was far beyond the little strength he had left. He could do no more than pick up fallen branches from the ground, cut some withered twigs from the bushes, and pull out dried-up vines. He tied them into two big bundles, but they were too heavy to carry on his back. Then, an idea came to him. He took another withered vine, and bound the two bundles together with part of it, leaving the rest dangling. He then held the end of the vine and tugged on the bundles, much as a herdboys leads a water buffalo by a rope. After walking like this for a while, he remembered that he had left his ax on the ground, so he turned back, retrieved it, and stuck it in with the firewood. Slowly, he dragged the bundles all the way to the spot where the boat had been moored, but the boat was not there. All he saw was a boundless stretch of mist-shrouded water and sandy islets.

He walked along the river, looking around as he went, but no trace of the boat was to be found. By the time the red sun began to sink below the horizon, he realized that his father-in-law had abandoned him. He was left with no way out, no road to heaven or a gate into the earth. Feeling a stab of pain in his heart, he broke into violent sobs, weeping until he choked and collapsed in a swoon. When he regained consciousness a considerable time later, he caught sight of an old monk, coming from goodness knows where.

Knocking his cane against the ground, the monk asked, "Where are your companions, sir? This is no place to stay!"

In haste, Song Jin rose and told the monk his name, adding, "My father-in-law Mr. Liu tricked me into coming to this place. And now, all alone by my poor self, I have nowhere to go. Please help me, Your Reverence, and save my humble life."

"My thatched hut is not far from here. You may stay with me



金感谢不已，随着老僧而行。约莫里许，果见茅庵一所。老僧敲石取火，煮些粥汤，把与宋金吃了。方才问道：“令岳与檀越有何仇隙？愿问其详。”宋金将入赘船上，及得病之由，备细告诉了一遍。老僧道：“老檀越怀恨令岳乎？”宋金道：“当初求乞之时，蒙彼收养婚配，今日病危见弃，乃小生命薄所致，岂敢怀恨他人？”老僧道：“听子所言，真忠厚之士也。尊恙乃七情所伤，非药饵可治，惟清心调摄可以愈之。平日间曾奉佛法诵经否？”宋金道：“不曾。”老僧于袖中取出一卷相赠，道：“此乃《金刚般若经》，我佛心印。贫僧今教授檀越，若日诵一遍，可以息诸妄念，却病延年，有无穷利益。”宋金原是陈州娘娘庙前老和尚转世来的，前生专诵此经。[眉批]此老僧亦必前生法相，然观金身罗汉投胎，则宋金转世已非此僧矣。今日口传心受，一遍便能熟诵，此乃是前因不断。宋金和老僧打坐，闭眼诵经，将次天明，不觉睡去。及至



tonight and decide what to do tomorrow.”

His heart swelling with gratitude, Song Jin followed the old monk. After about a *li*, a thatched hut did indeed come into view. The old monk struck fire from stones and made porridge for Song Jin. After Song Jin had eaten, the monk asked, “What grudge does your father-in-law have against you? I’d like to hear more.”

Thereupon, Song Jin gave him a full account of how he had been accepted as a live-in son-in-law and had fallen ill.

“Do you hate your father-in-law?”

“He was kind enough to have taken me in when I was a beggar, and then he married his daughter to me. His abandonment of me during my critical illness is attributable only to my own sorry fate. How can I blame anyone for that?”

“These are indeed words of a kind-hearted man,” observed the monk. “Your illness was brought on by grief. Medicine will not work. You’ll regain health only if you rest in peace and quiet. Do you read the Buddhist scriptures at all?”

“No, I’ve never done that.”

The monk took out a scroll of scripture from a sleeve and gave it to Song Jin, saying, “This is the Diamond Sutra. You will gain an understanding of the Buddha through the heart. Let me teach you how to read the scriptures. If you read them aloud once a day, all improper thoughts will go away, as will your illness, and you’ll add years to your life. This will be much to your gain, in more ways than you can ever count!”

As a reincarnation of the old monk in front of the temple to the Chenzhou goddess, Song Jin had, in his previous life, spent much of his time chanting this very book of scripture. (*This old monk must have assumed the same form after reincarnation. Recalling that it was a gilded arhat who had found reincarnation in Song Jin, I don’t think Song Jin is related to this old monk in any way.*) The fact that he could recite the lines fluently after hearing it only once testified to his unsevered ties with his previous life.

Joining the old monk in meditation, Song Jin sat and chanted the scriptures with his eyes closed. As dawn approached, he dozed off



醒来，身坐荒草坡间，并不见老僧及茅庵在那里。《金刚经》却在怀中，开卷能诵。宋金心下好生诧异，遂取池水净口，将经朗诵一遍，觉万虑消释，病体顿然健旺。方知圣僧显化相救，亦是夙因所致也。宋金向空叩头，感谢龙天保佑。然虽如此，此身如大海浮萍，没有着落，信步行走，早觉腹中饥馁。望见前山林木之内，隐隐似有人家，不免再温旧稿，向前乞食。只因这一番，有分教：宋小官凶中化吉，难过福来。正是：

路逢尽处还开径，水到穷时再发源。

宋金走到前山一看，并无人烟，但见枪、刀、戈、戟，遍插林间。宋金心疑不决，放胆前去，见一所败落土地庙，庙中有大箱八只，封锁甚固，上用松茅遮盖。宋金暗想：“此必大盗所藏，布置枪刀，乃惑人之计，来历虽则不明，取之无碍。”心生一计，乃折取松枝插地，记其路径，一步步走出林来，直至江岸。也是宋金时亨运泰，恰好有一只大船，因逆浪冲坏了舵，停泊于岸下修舵。宋金假作慌张之状，向船上人说道：“我陕西钱金也，[眉批]前生原从陕西来，今日暗合，亦是夙因。随吾叔父走湖广为商，道经





without realizing it. When he woke up, he found himself sitting on a deserted grassy slope. The old monk and the thatched hut were nowhere in sight, but the sutra was in his bosom. He opened the volume and found he was able to chant the lines. Much surprised, he rinsed his mouth with water from the pond and intoned the scriptures from beginning to end. All his worries vanished, and his ailing body forthwith regained its health and strength. By this time, he realized that a holy monk had manifested himself in order to save him, in fulfillment of a predestined bond. Song Jin made obeisances toward the sky, giving thanks for the gods' blessings. However, like a duckweed in the ocean, he still had nowhere to go. As he moved ahead aimlessly, he began to feel the pangs of hunger. Seeing something that looked like a house on a wooded hill farther down the road, he could not resist doing what he had done before and walked up to beg for food. These adventures were to deliver Young Master Song from peril and lead him on to fortune. Truly,

*What looked like a dead end opens up a new path;*

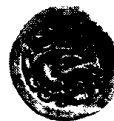
*Where the stream seems to dry up is found a new source.*

Drawing near to the hill, Song Jin saw no signs of human habitation, but there were spears, swords, dagger-axes, and halberds planted on the ground throughout the woods. He grew apprehensive but mustered enough courage to go forward. There was a dilapidated temple to a local deity, in which he saw eight large chests, all tightly sealed and covered with pine needles and straw. He thought, "These must have been hidden here by robbers. The weapons are but a ruse. These being ill-gotten goods, it wouldn't be wrong to take them." An idea came to his mind. He broke off some pine branches and drove them into the soil as he walked back toward the river so as to mark out the trail.

As his life was predestined to begin changing for the better at this time, Song Jin saw a big boat moored by the shore. Its rudder had been damaged by the countercurrents and was being repaired. Feigning panic, he said to the people on the boat, "I am Qian Jin from Shaanxi. (*Song Jin was a native of Shaanxi in his previous life, and again, it was the predestined bond that led to this coincidence.*) I was passing



于此，为强贼所劫。叔父被杀，我只说是跟随的小郎，久病乞哀，暂容残喘。贼乃遣伙内一人，与我同住土地庙中，看守货物，他又往别处行劫去了。天幸同伙之人，昨夜被毒蛇咬死，我得脱身在此，幸方便载我去。”舟人闻言，不甚信。宋金又道：“见有八巨箱在庙内，皆我家财物。庙去此不远，多央几位上岸，抬归舟中，愿以一箱为谢。必须速往，万一贼徒回转，不惟无及于事，且有祸患！”众人都是千里求财的，闻说有八箱货物，一个个欣然愿往。当时聚起十六筹后生，准备八副绳索杠棒，随宋金往土地庙来。果见巨箱八只，其箱甚重，每二人抬一箱，恰好八杠。宋金将林子内枪刀收起藏于深草之内，八个箱子都下了船。舵已修好了，舟人问宋金道：“老客今欲何往？”宋金道：“我且往南京省亲。”舟人道：“我的船正要往瓜州，却喜又是顺便。”当下开船，约行五十馀里方歇。众人奉承陕西客有钱，到凑出银子，买酒买肉，与他压惊称贺。次日西风大起，挂起帆来，不几日，到



by this place with my uncle on a business trip to Huguang when we ran into a group of bandits. They killed my uncle. I told them I was but a page boy, and a very sick one at that, accompanying my master on the trip, so they spared me. The ringleader had one of his men stay with me in the local god's temple to watch over the loot, while he went to find other people to rob. Luckily, the man who stayed with me died last night after being bitten by a poisonous snake. That's how I freed myself and came here. Would you please give me a ride?"

The people in the boat were not quite convinced. Song Jin continued, "There are eight huge chests in the temple. They all belong to my family. The temple is not far from here. Please go on shore and carry them to the boat. You can keep one chest as a token of my gratitude. Please be quick about it. If the bandits come back, not only will you get nothing but there will surely be big trouble, too."

All of the men in the boat, who had left home on a quest for wealth, readily volunteered to go for the eight chests of goods. In no time, they put together a team of sixteen able-bodied young men. Carrying eight sets of ropes and poles, they followed Song Jin to the temple. Sure enough, there, for all to see, were eight huge chests, and enormously heavy they proved to be. With two men to each chest, all eight chests got off the ground. Song Jin picked up the spears and swords that were scattered all over the woods and hid them deep in the grass.

By the time the eight chests were brought onto the boat, the rudder had been fixed. The helmsman asked Song Jin, "Where would you like to go, sir?"

"To Nanjing to visit my relatives."

"We're heading for Guazhou. How nice that Nanjing happens to lie along the way!" said the helmsman.

Immediately, the boat set sail. It traveled more than fifty *li* before stopping so that the men could take a rest. Dancing attendance on the rich traveler from Shaanxi, the men collected some silver and bought wine and meat in his honor, to help him get over his shock as well as to offer him congratulations.



了瓜州停泊。那瓜州到南京只隔十来里江面，宋金另唤了一只渡船，将箱笼只拣重的抬下七个，把一个箱子送与舟中众人，以践其言。众人自去开箱分用，不在话下。宋金渡到龙江关口，寻了店主人家住下。唤铁匠对了匙钥，打开箱看时，其中充物，都是金玉珍宝之类。原来这伙强盗积之有年，不是取之一家，获之一时的。宋金先把一箱所蓄，鬻之于市，已得数千金。恐主人生疑，迁寓于城内，买家奴伏侍，身穿罗绮，食用膏粱。馀六箱，只拣精华之物留下，其他都变卖，不下数万金。就于南京仪凤门内买下一所大宅，改造厅堂园亭，制办日用家火，极其华整。门前开张典铺，又置买田庄数处，家僮数十房，出色管事者十人。又畜美童四人，随身答应。[眉批]不畜婢妾者，不忍负宜春也。惟平日识宜春之心，所以终不负之。满京城都称他为钱员外，出乘舆马，入拥金资。自古道：“居移气，养移体。”宋金今日财发身发，肌肤充悦，容采光泽，绝无向来枯瘠之容，寒酸之气。正是：



The next day, a high westerly wind sprang up. With the sails unfurled, the boat arrived in Guazhou in a matter of days and cast anchor. Nanjing being only about ten *li* by water from Guazhou, Song Jin hired a ferryboat and had seven of the heavier trunks brought down, leaving one as a gift for the men, as he had promised. How the men opened the chest and divided the contents need not be described here.

Upon reaching the mouth of Dragon River, Song Jin took up lodging at an inn and had an ironsmith make keys for the chests. He opened them and found that they were filled to the brim with gold, jade, and other valuables. In fact, the bandits had been hoarding their treasure for many years. These things had by no means been taken from one household in one act of robbery. Song Jin sold off the contents of one chest at the marketplace and made several thousand taels of silver. Afraid that the innkeeper might grow suspicious, he moved into the city, where he bought some household servants and began living in grand style, wearing silk and satin and eating the finest foods. Of the items in the remaining six chests, he kept only the choicest and sold off the rest, fetching no less than tens of thousands of taels of silver. With the money, he bought a big mansion by Yifeng Gate of Nanjing, remodeled the halls, gardens, and pavilions, and beautified the whole place with furniture of the most luxurious kind. He opened a pawnshop by the front gate and acquired several farmsteads, enough page boys for several tens of rooms, and ten capable butlers. For servants to answer to his personal needs, he engaged four fine-looking boys. (*He refrained from keeping female personal servants and concubines out of his regard for Yichun. He was too much her soul mate to ever betray her.*)

To all and sundry throughout the city, he was known as Squire Qian, who never left his gold-filled residence without a grand horse-and-carriage procession. As the ancients say, "A change in one's station in life changes one's demeanor; a change in living conditions changes one's physical constitution." Song Jin's newly acquired wealth brought him good health. His skin became smooth, and his face glowed. Not the least bit of his former haggardness and shabbiness re-



人逢运至精神爽，月到秋来光彩新。

话分两头。且说刘有才那日哄了女婿上岸，拨转船头，顺风而下，瞬息之间，已行百里，老夫妇两口暗暗欢喜。宜春女犹然不知，只道丈夫还在船上，煎好了汤药，叫他吃时，连呼不应。还道睡着在船头，自要去唤他。却被母亲劈手夺过药瓿，向江中一泼，骂道：“痲病鬼在那里？你还要想他！”宜春道：“真个在那里？”母亲道：“你爹见他病害得不好，恐沾染他人，方才哄他上岸打柴，径自转船来了。”宜春一把扯住母亲，哭天哭地叫道：“还我宋郎来。”刘公听得艄内啼哭，走来劝道：“我儿，听我一言，妇道家嫁人不着，一世之苦。那害痲的死在早晚，左右要拆散的，不是你因缘了，到不如早些开交干净，免致担误你青春。待做爹的另拣个好郎君，完你终身，休想他罢！”宜春道：“爹做的是什么事！都是不仁不义，伤天理的勾当。宋郎这头亲事，原是二亲主张。既做了夫妻，同生同死，岂可翻悔？就是他病势必死，亦当待其善终，何忍弃之于无人之地？宋郎今日为奴而死，



mained. Truly,

*When your lucky star shines, you glow in high spirits;*

*When autumn comes, the moon shines with greater luster.*

Let us pick up another thread of the story and come back to Liu Youcai. After tricking his son-in-law into going ashore, he turned the boat back and, to his and Mrs. Liu's secret delight, sailed downstream in a favorable wind, covering a hundred *li* in no time.

Yichun, who had no inkling of what had happened, had brewed some herb medicine soup for her husband. Believing he was on the boat, she called out for him to come out and drink it, but when she got no response, she thought he must have fallen asleep at the bow. She was about to go over and get him when her mother wrested the medicine bowl from her hand, dumped its contents into the river, and snapped, "Don't you know that the wretch isn't here any more? Why do you still think about him?"

"But where can he be?"

"Because his illness doesn't go away, your father is afraid that it will spread to other people, and so, some moments ago, he tricked your husband into going ashore to chop some firewood and then turned the boat around and came back."

In one quick move, Yichun held her mother fast and began to wail at the top of her voice. "Give me back my husband!" she cried.

Mr. Liu came over at the sound of the wails. Trying to calm his daughter down, he said, "My child, listen to me. For a woman, to be married to the wrong husband is the curse of her life. That miserable wretch is about to die anyway. Since the predestined bond is going to be dissolved, why not get out of it sooner, while you are still young? I'll pick another husband for you, a good one, to live with you for the rest of your life. Put this one out of your mind now!"

"What a thing you did, Father! This is a most atrocious violation of the will of heaven! It was at the initiative of you and Mother that I married him. As husband and wife, we are bound together in life and in death. How can I back out of the commitment? Even if he is to die of his illness, he should die in peace. How could you have the heart to abandon him in that deserted place? If he is to die today



奴决不独生。爹若可怜见孩儿，快转船上水，寻取宋郎回来，免被傍人讥谤。”刘公道：“那害病的不见了船，定然转往别处村坊乞食去了，寻之何益？况且下水顺风，相去已百里之遥，一动不如一静，劝你息了心罢！”

宜春见父亲不允，放声大哭，走出船舷，就要跳水，喜得刘妈手快，一把拖住。宜春以死自誓，哀哭不已。两个老人家不道女儿执性如此，无可奈何，准准的看守了一夜。次早只得依顺他，开船上水。风水俱逆，弄了一日，不勾一半之路。这一夜啼啼哭哭又不得安稳。第三日申牌时分，方到得先前阁船之处，宜春亲自上岸寻取丈夫，只见沙滩上乱柴二捆，砢刀一把，认得是船上的刀。眼见得这捆柴，是宋郎驮来的，物在人亡，愈加疼痛，不肯心死，定要往前寻觅，父亲只索跟随同去。走了多时，但见树黑山深，杳无人迹。刘公劝他回船，又啼哭了一夜。第四日黑早，再教父亲一同上岸寻觅，都是旷野之地，更无影响。只得哭下船来，想道：“如此荒郊，教丈夫何处乞食？况久病之人，行走不





because of me, I will not go on living by myself. If you have any pity for me, turn the boat around this instant and bring him back. Otherwise, people will ridicule and condemn you.”

“But that wretch probably went to some village to beg for food once he found the boat gone,” countered Mr. Liu. “What’s the good of looking for him? Moreover, we’ve already gone a hundred *li* downstream on a favorable wind. As they say, ‘Better stay put than move.’ I advise you to give him up.”

Seeing that her father would not do as she said, Yichun burst into loud sobs and went to the side of the boat, ready to jump overboard. Luckily, Mrs. Liu was quick enough and held her back just in time. Yichun vowed to kill herself and cried bitterly as though she would never stop. Little had her parents expected her to be so stubborn. At their wits’ end, they kept watch on her the whole night, and when morning came, they resigned themselves to heading back upstream. Going against the wind as well as the current, they covered less than half the distance in a day. The night was again unrestful, with Yichun weeping and sobbing all the while. They did not arrive at the spot where the boat had moored until late afternoon three days later.

Yichun went ashore to search personally for her husband, but all she saw were two untidy bundles of firewood and an ax lying on the sandy beach. Recognizing the ax as belonging to the family, she was sure that the firewood had been gathered by her husband. With physical evidence at hand but the person gone, she became all the more aggrieved, and instead of giving up, she insisted on pushing farther ahead. Her father was obliged to follow.

After walking for quite some time without seeing any signs of human presence among the dark shadows of the trees and the hills, Mr. Liu urged Yichun to return to the boat, and so she did. Another tearful night went by.

Before dawn on the fourth day, she again made her father go ashore with her to continue with the search but saw nothing other than the expanse of wilderness. Left with no other choice, she wept her way back to the boat, thinking, “Where is he to beg for food in such



动，他把柴刀抛弃沙崖，一定是赴水自尽了。”哭了一场，望着江心又跳，早被刘公拦住。宜春道：“爹妈养得奴的身，养不得奴的心。孩儿左右是要死的，不如放奴早死，以见宋郎之面。”两个老人家见女儿十分痛苦，甚不过意。叫道：“我儿，是你爹妈不是了，一时失于计较，干出这事。差之在前，懊悔也没用了。你可怜我年老之人，止生得你一人，你若死时，我两口儿性命也都难保。愿我儿恕了爹妈之罪，宽心度日，待做爹的写一招子，于沿江市镇各处粘贴。倘若宋郎不死，见我招帖，定可相逢。若过了三个月无信，凭你做好事，追荐丈夫。做爹的替你用钱，并不吝惜。”宜春方才收泪谢道：“若得如此，孩儿死也瞑目。”刘公即时写个寻婿的招帖，粘于沿江市镇墙壁触眼之处。

过了三个月，绝无音耗。宜春道：“我丈夫果然死了。”即忙制备头梳麻衣，穿着一身重孝，设了灵位祭奠，请九个和尚，做了三昼夜功德。自将簪珥布施，为亡夫祈福。刘翁、刘姬爱女之心无所不至，并不敢一些违拗，闹了数日方休。兀自朝哭五更，夜哭黄昏。邻船闻之，无不感叹。有一班相熟的客人，闻知此事，无不可惜宋小官，可怜刘小娘者。宜春整整的哭了半年六个月方



a deserted wilderness? Moreover, he's been sick for so long that he doesn't have the strength to walk far. The fact that the ax lies abandoned on the beach means that he must have thrown himself into the river and drowned." After another burst of sobs, she again tried to jump into the water, but her father held her back.

"You, my parents, gave me my body, but you have no control over my heart. I'm determined to die anyway. Why don't you let me die earlier, so that I may even get to see my husband?"

Pained by their daughter's agony, the old couple cried out, "Child, this is all our fault. What a thing we did in a moment of folly! But since it's already been done, regrets are too late. Both of us are getting on in years. Have pity on us! You are our only child. If you die, our days will also be numbered. Please forgive us, and take it easy. Father will put up notices in towns and marketplaces along the river. If Song Jin isn't dead, he'll see the notices and come back to you. If there's no news in three months' time, you can have the best memorial service you want. Father will pay for it, whatever the cost."

It was only at this point that Yichun stopped crying. Gratefully, she said, "If so, I'll be able to die content."

There and then, Mr. Liu wrote notices announcing his son-in-law's disappearance and posted them in conspicuous spots on walls in towns and marketplaces along the river.

Three months went by without any news of Song Jin. Yichun said, "So, my husband must have indeed died." Promptly, she set about preparing her mourning headdress and hemp clothes. In mourning white from head to foot, she had a spiritual tablet set up for the memorial ceremony and engaged nine monks for a prayer service that lasted three days and nights. She also donated her jewelry in order to ask for blessings for her deceased husband. Out of their boundless love for their daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Liu did not dare raise the slightest objection. During the fanfare, which lasted quite a few days, Yichun wept from dawn to dusk. People on neighboring boats, one and all, sighed with emotion upon hearing her. All of the clients who had gotten to know the family well lamented the fate of Young Master Song and pitied Miss Liu. Yichun wept for six whole months before



才住声。刘翁对阿妈道：“女儿这几日不哭，心下渐渐冷了，好劝他嫁人，终不然我两个老人家守着个孤孀女儿，缓急何靠？”刘姬道：“阿老见得是，只怕女儿不肯，须是缓缓的俛他。”又过了月馀，其时十二月二十四日，刘翁回船到昆山过年，在亲戚家吃醉了酒，乘其酒兴来劝女儿道：“新春将近，除了孝罢！”宜春道：“丈夫是终身之孝，怎样除得？”刘翁睁着眼道：“什么终身之孝！做爹的许你带时便带，不许你带时，就不容你带。”刘姬见老儿口重，便来收科道：“再等女儿带过了残岁，除夜做碗羹饭起了灵，除孝罢！”宜春见爹妈话不投机，便啼哭起来，道：“你两口儿合计害了我丈夫，又不容我带孝，无非要我改嫁他人，我岂肯失节以负宋郎，宁可带孝而死，决不除孝而生。”刘翁又待发作，被婆子骂了几句，劈颈的推向船舱睡了。宜春依先又哭了一夜。到月尽三十日，除夜，宜春祭奠了丈夫，哭了一会。婆子劝



she quieted down.

To his wife, Mr. Liu said, "Our daughter hasn't been crying these last few days, which means she's beginning to put the whole thing behind her. This would be a good time to advise her to marry. The two of us old folks can't very well cling to a widow of a daughter the rest of our lives, can we? Who will take care of us if something happens to us?"

"Good point, old man," said Mrs. Liu. "But I'm not sure if our daughter will listen. Let's talk her into it gradually."

More than a month later, on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth month, Mr. Liu returned by boat to Kunshan from a business trip for the New Year's celebrations. After having drunk at a relative's home until he was tipsy, he approached his daughter, under the emboldening influence of the wine, and said, "The new year being upon us, why don't you take off your mourning clothes?"

"The mourning for my husband is to last for the rest of my life. How can I take off the mourning outfit?"

His eyes opening wide, Mr. Liu roared, "Life-long mourning indeed! Your father is the one who decides when you may wear mourning and when you may not!"

Alarmed by the old man's harsh tone, Mrs. Liu rushed over to make peace. "Let's wait until the year's gone. We'll offer some porridge on New Year's eve and remove the spiritual tablet before we talk about putting an end to the mourning."

Yichun was distressed that the conversation had taken a wrong turn and sobbed, "The two of you did my husband to death and now you forbid me to wear mourning for him, all because you want to make me marry someone else. But how could I ever lose my chastity and betray my husband? I would rather die a widow in mourning than live without it."

Mr. Liu was about to throw another fit when his wife stopped him with a sharp reproof. Pressing a hand against the back of his neck, she pushed him back to his cabin and told him to go to sleep. As before, Yichun wept throughout the night.

On the thirtieth day of the month, which was also New Year's



住了，三口儿同吃夜饭，爹妈见女儿荤酒不闻，心中不乐，便道：“我儿！你孝是不肯除了，略吃点荤腥，何妨得？少年人不要弄弱了元气。”宜春道：“未死之人，苟延残喘，连这碗素饭也是多吃的，还吃甚荤菜？”刘姬道：“既不用荤，吃杯素酒儿，也好解闷。”宜春道：“一滴何曾到九泉，想着死者，我何忍下咽。”说罢，又哀哀的哭将起来，连素饭也不吃就去睡了。刘翁夫妇料道女儿志不可夺，从此再不强他。后人诗赞宜春之节。诗曰：

闺中节烈古今传，船女何曾阅简编？

誓死不移金石志，《柏舟》端不愧前贤。

话分两头。再说宋金住在南京一年零八个月，把家业挣得十全了，却教管家看守门墙，自己带了三千两银子，领了四个家人，两个美童，顾了一只航船，径至昆山来访刘翁、刘姬。邻舍人家说道：“三日前往仪真去了。”宋金将银两贩了布匹，转至仪真，下个有名的主家，上货了毕。次日，去河口寻着了刘家船只，遥



Eve, she poured libations for her husband and wept some more. Her mother calmed her, and the family of three sat down together for dinner. Displeased that she touched neither meat nor wine, Mr. and Mrs. Liu commented, "My child, we know you're determined not to take off your mourning clothes, but how can meat or fish harm you in any way? A young person of your age must not let the vital energies be weakened."

"I am one to die soon. These being the last days of my life, this bowl of rice with vegetables is one bowl too many. Meat is out of the question."

"Well, if you're determined not to touch meat," said her mother, "how about a cup of wine, which is made of rice? It will help you feel better."

"How can even one drop of wine get to the Nine Springs in the underworld? With the dead in my thoughts, I'll never be able to swallow any wine." With that, she began sobbing again and went away to sleep, leaving even her rice and vegetables untouched. Realizing that their daughter was not to be shaken in her resolve, Mr. and Mrs. Liu gave up further attempts to change her mind. A later poet had this to say in praise of Yichun's chastity:

*Stories abound about chaste women, past and present;  
 But a boat woman could not have read the classics.  
 Vowing never to waver in her firm resolve,  
 She is worthy of her predecessor Gongjiang.<sup>7</sup>*

Our story forks at this point. Let us turn our attention to Song Jin, who had been living in Nanjing for one year and eight months. Now as prosperous a man as could be, he had a butler take care of the establishment while he himself, equipped with three thousand taels of silver and accompanied by four servants and two fine-looking page boys, journeyed by hired boat to Kunshan to seek out the Liu family. The neighbors told him, "The Lius left for Yichen three days ago." Thereupon, Song Jin bought some bolts of fabric with some of the silver and wended his way to Yizhen, where he did some trading with a well-known client. The next day, he found the Liu family's boat at the mouth of the river. From a distance, he saw his wife at



见浑家在船艄麻衣素妆，知其守节未嫁，伤感不已。回到下处，向主人王公说道：“河下有一舟妇，带孝而甚美，我已访得是昆山刘顺泉之船，此妇即其女也。吾丧偶已将二年，欲求此女为继室。”遂于袖中取出白金十两奉与王公，道：“此薄意权为酒资，烦老翁执伐。成事之日，更当厚谢。若问财礼，虽千金吾亦不吝。”王公接银欢喜，径往船上邀刘翁到一酒馆，盛设相款，推刘翁于上坐。刘翁大惊，道：“老汉操舟之人，何劳如此厚待？必有缘故。”王公道：“且吃三杯，方敢启齿。”刘翁心中愈疑，道：“若不说明，必不敢坐。”王公道：“小店有个陕西钱员外，万贯家财，丧偶将二载，慕令爱小娘子美貌，欲求为继室。愿出聘礼千金，特央小子作伐，望勿见拒。”刘翁道：“舟女得配富室，岂非至愿！但吾儿守节甚坚，言及再婚，便欲寻死。此事不敢奉命，盛意亦不敢领。”便欲起身。王公一手扯住，道：“此设亦出钱员外之意，托小子做个主人，既已费了，不可虚之，事虽不谐，无





the bow, wearing white clothes of mourning. Realizing that she was still observing mourning for him and had not remarried, he was overcome with emotion.

After returning to his lodgings, he said to his landlord Mr. Wang, "On a boat on the river, there is a very beautiful woman in mourning. I've learned that the boat belongs to Liu Shunquan of Kunshan and that the woman is his daughter. I have been a widower for two years and would like this woman to be my wife." So saying, he took out ten taels of silver from a sleeve, handed the silver to Mr. Wang, and continued, "This meager amount is just for you to buy some wine. Please be my matchmaker. If you work things out, I'll thank you with some handsome gifts. As for wedding gifts, I begrudge nothing, not even a thousand pieces of silver."

Pleased with the silver, Mr. Wang went straight to the boat and invited Mr. Liu to a wineshop, where he ordered a fine spread and asked Mr. Liu to take the seat of honor. In alarm, Mr. Liu said, "Why treat a boatman so sumptuously? There must be a reason for you to do so."

"Have three cups of wine before I make so bold as to say what I have to say."

Mr. Liu grew all the more apprehensive. "If you don't say it right now, I won't dare sit down."

And so Mr. Wang said, "Well, there's a traveler at my inn, a Squire Qian, from Shaanxi. He's a very rich man, and he's been a widower for the last two years. He's impressed by your daughter's beauty and wants to marry her. He asked me to be the matchmaker and offers a thousand pieces of silver as a wedding gift. Please don't turn me down."

"Wouldn't it be nice for a boatman's daughter to marry a rich man? But my daughter is determined to stay a widow. The moment we bring up the subject of remarrying, she threatens to kill herself. So I wouldn't presume to comply with your wish or accept your great kindness."

He was about to stand up when Mr. Wang held him fast, and said, "This dinner is Squire Qian's idea. He asked me to represent him



害也。”刘翁只得坐了。饮酒中间，王公又说起：“员外相求，出于至诚，望老翁回舟，从容商议。”刘翁被女儿几遍投水吓坏了，只是摇头，略不统口，酒散各别。

王公回家，将刘翁之语，述与员外，宋金方知浑家守志之坚。乃对王公说道：“姻事不成也罢了，我要雇他的船载货往上江出脱，难道也不允？”王公道：“天下船载天下客，不消说，自然从命。”王公即时与刘翁说了雇船之事，刘翁果然依允。宋金乃分付家童，先把铺陈行李发下船来，货且留岸上，明日发也未迟。宋金锦衣貂帽，两个美童，各穿绿绒直身，手执熏炉如意跟随。刘翁夫妇认做陕西钱员外，不复相识。到底夫妇之间，与他人不同，宜春在艄尾窥视，虽不敢便信是丈夫，暗暗的惊怪，道：“有七八分厮像。”只见那钱员外才上得船，便向船艄说道：“我腹中饿了，要饭吃，若是冷的，把些热茶淘来罢！”宜春已自心疑。那钱



as the host. Since the bill has already been paid, it won't do to have all the food go to waste. Even if things don't work out, having dinner can't do any harm."

Mr. Liu had to oblige. In the course of the drinking, Mr. Wang brought up the subject again, "Squire Qian's proposal is made out of the deepest sincerity. Please think about it after you go back to your boat."

Still haunted by the horror he had experienced each time his daughter tried to throw herself into the river, Mr. Liu kept shaking his head and never changed his line. When dinner was over, they went their separate ways.

Mr. Wang returned home and relayed Mr. Liu's response to the squire. Realizing how firmly determined his wife was to observe widowhood, Song Jin said to Mr. Wang, "Oh well, the match is off then, but I want to hire his boat to carry some goods up the river for sale. He can hardly turn me down again."

"Boats are supposed, by rights, to transport passengers," replied Mr. Wang. "Needless to say, he'll surely agree."

Right away, Mr. Wang went to tell Mr. Liu about the offer to hire his boat. Mr. Liu indeed gave his consent, whereupon Song Jin had his servants carry his personal belongings on board, leaving the commercial goods to be loaded the following day. With Song Jin wearing a brocade robe and a marten hat and followed by two comely boys in green velvet robes carrying an incense burner and a jade *rui* rod with a cloud-shaped handle,<sup>8</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Liu failed to recognize him and greeted him as Squire Qian from Shaanxi. However, husbands and wives are, after all, closer to each other than to anyone else, and Yichun, who was peeping out from the stern, gave a start. Although not yet convinced that it was her husband, she thought, "The resemblance is quite striking."

While she was watching, Squire Qian went on board. No sooner had he boarded than he said in the direction of the rudder, "I'm hungry. I want a bowl of rice. If it's cold, give me some hot tea to pour over it."

Yichun grew apprehensive. To a page boy, Squire Qian



员外又吆喝童仆道：“个儿郎吃我家饭，穿我家衣，闲时搓些绳，打些索，也有用处，不可空坐！”[眉批]移接还话，有趣。这几句分明是宋小官初上船时刘翁吩咐的话，宜春听得，愈加疑心。少顷，刘翁亲自捧茶奉钱员外，员外道：“你船艙上有一破毡笠，借我用之。”刘翁愚蠢，全不省事，径与女儿讨那破毡笠。宜春取毡笠付与父亲，口中微吟四句：

毡笠虽然破，经奴手自缝。

因思戴笠者，无复旧时容。

钱员外听艙后吟诗，嘿嘿会意，接笠在手，亦吟四句：

仙凡已换骨，故乡人不识。

虽则锦衣还，难忘旧毡笠。

是夜宜春对翁姬道：“舱中钱员外，疑即宋郎也。不然何以知吾船有破毡笠。且面庞相肖，语言可疑，可细叩之。”刘翁大笑道：“痴女子！那宋家痲病鬼，此时骨肉俱消矣！就使当年未死，亦不过乞食他乡，安能致此富盛乎？”刘姬道：“你当初怪爹娘劝你除孝改嫁，动不动跳水求死，今见客人富贵，便要认他是丈夫，



snapped, "You there! You owe everything you eat and wear to this family. If you have time to spare, do something useful like making cords and ropes. How can you just sit there without doing anything?" (*How wonderful that he should be repeating these lines in this context.*) This all too clearly, was what Mr. Liu had said to him when he, Young Master Song, first got onto the boat years before. Yichun was all the more apprehensive.

In a short while, Mr. Liu personally served Squire Qian tea. The squire said, "Please lend me the tattered felt hat on your rudder." Being the stupid man that he was, Mr. Liu detected nothing unusual in that remark and went straight to his daughter to ask for the tattered felt hat. As she handed it to her father, Yichun intoned a quatrain in a subdued voice:

*"However tattered the felt hat may be,  
 It was sewn up by my very own hands.  
 But the one wearing the hat  
 Looks different from before."*

Quietly, Squire Qian listened to these lines from behind the rudder and understood. The hat now in his hands, he also came up with four lines:

*"The mortal, reborn as a fairy,  
 Is recognized by none from his past.  
 He may have returned in wealth and splendor,  
 But he forgets not the old tattered hat."*

That night, Yichun said to her parents, "That Squire Qian in the cabin must be none other than Song Jin. Otherwise, how could he have known that we have this tattered old hat on board? Also, he does look and talk like my husband. You must sound him out carefully."

Mr. Liu burst out laughing. "Silly girl! That miserable sick wretch has gone from this world, flesh and bones and all! Even if he didn't die, he must be begging for food somewhere far away. How could he have come into such enormous wealth?"

"You blamed us for trying to talk you into taking off your mourning clothes and remarrying, and threatened at every turn to



倘你认他不认，岂不可羞！”宜春满面羞惭，不敢开口。刘翁便招阿妈到背处道：“阿妈你休如此说，姻缘之事，莫非天数。前日王店主请我到酒馆中饮酒，说陕西钱员外，愿出千金聘礼，求我女儿为继室。我因女儿执性，不曾统口。今日难得女儿自家心活，何不将机就机，把他许配钱员外，落得你我下半世受用。”刘姬道：“阿老见得是。那钱员外来雇我家船只，或者其中有意。阿老明日可往探之。”刘翁道：“我自有道理。”

次早，钱员外起身，梳洗已毕，手持破毡笠于船头上翻覆把玩。刘翁启口而问道：“员外，看这破毡笠则甚？”员外道：“我爱那缝补处，这行针线，必出自妙手。”刘翁道：“此乃小女所缝，有何妙处。前日王店主传员外之命，曾有一言，未知真否？”钱员外故意问道：“所传何言？”刘翁道：“他说员外丧了孺人，已将二载，未曾继娶，欲得小女为婚。”员外道：“老翁愿也不愿？”刘翁道：“老汉求之不得，但恨小女守节甚坚，誓不再嫁，所以不敢轻诺。”员外道：“令婿为何而死？”刘翁道：“小婿不



jump into the river,” put in Mrs. Liu. “Yet now you’re so impressed by this traveler’s wealth that you are quick to claim him as your husband. If you say he’s the man but he denies it, how embarrassing that would be!”

With shame written all over her face, Yichun dared not speak up again. Mr. Liu motioned his wife to a quiet corner and said to her, “Mother, don’t say such things. Marriages are made in heaven. The other day, Mr. Wang the innkeeper invited me to a wineshop for a cup of wine, saying that Squire Qian from Shaanxi would gladly offer a thousand pieces of silver as a wedding gift for our daughter. But knowing her stubbornness, I turned him down. Now that she herself is having second thoughts, why not grab the chance and marry her off to Squire Qian? That way, you and I can live well for the rest of our lives.”

“You’re right, old man. That Squire Qian may already have something in mind by coming over to hire our boat. Why don’t you sound him out tomorrow?”

“I know what to do,” said Mr. Liu.

The next morning, Squire Qian rose, washed, and combed his hair. He then went to the bow of the boat and toyed with the tattered hat with his hands. Mr. Liu spoke up. “Squire,” he said, “what’s there to see in this old hat?”

“I like the stitches on it. Such stitches must have been made by someone with remarkable sewing skills.”

“Oh, it’s just the work of my daughter. What’s so remarkable about it? Well, the other day, when Mr. Wang the innkeeper was relaying a message from you, he mentioned one thing, but I don’t know if it’s true.”

Squire Qian asked purposely, “What did he say?”

“He said you’ve been a widower for two years and that you wish to have my daughter for wife.”

“Would you be willing, sir?”

“I am more than willing, but it’s too bad that this daughter of mine is so determined to remain a widow that she has vowed never to marry again. So I dare not promise lightly.”



幸得了个痲瘵之疾，其年因上岸打柴未还，老汉不知，错开了船，以后曾出招帖寻访了三个月，并无动静，多是投江而死了！”〔眉批〕语有次第。员外道：“令婿不死，他遇了个异人，病都好了，反获大财致富，老翁若要会令婿时，可请令爱出来！”此时宜春侧耳而听，一闻此言，便哭将起来，骂道：“薄幸钱郎！我为你带了二年重孝，受了千辛万苦，今日还不说实话，待怎么？”宋金也堕泪道：“我妻！快来相见！”夫妻二人抱头大哭。刘翁道：“阿妈，眼见得不是什么钱员外了，我与你须索去谢罪！”刘翁、刘姬走进舱来，施礼不迭。宋金道：“丈人、丈母，不须恭敬，只是小婿他日有病痛时，莫再脱赚。”两个老人家羞惭满面。

宜春便除了孝服，将灵位抛向水中。宋金便唤跟随的童仆来与主母磕头。翁、姬杀鸡置酒，管待女婿，又当接风，又是庆贺筵席。安席已毕，刘翁叙起女儿自来不吃荤酒之意。宋金惨然下泪，亲自与浑家把盏，劝他开荤。随对翁、姬道：“据你们设心





“How did your son-in-law die?”

“Unfortunately, he came down with consumption, and that year he went ashore to chop some firewood and never came back. I didn’t realize he was not on board and so I turned the boat around and went back. And then I put up posters for him and waited for news for three months, but nothing came of it. Most likely he had thrown himself into the river and drowned.” (*Quite logical.*)

“No, your son-in-law did not die,” said the squire. “He met a god. Not only did he regain his health, but he has also come into possession of enormous wealth. If you would like to see your son-in-law, please call your daughter forward.”

At this point, Yichun, who had been listening intently to one side, started crying out loud. Furiously, she said, “How heartless you are, Mr. Qian! I’ve been in full mourning for you for three years. Goodness knows how much I’ve suffered! And yet, you still haven’t come out with the truth. What are you waiting for?”

Song Jin, for his part, also broke down in tears. “Wife! Step over here and let me look at you!” Husband and wife fell upon each other’s shoulders and wept their hearts out.

“Mother!” exclaimed Mr. Liu. “He’s not some Squire Qian, that’s for sure! There’s nothing for us to do but go and ask for forgiveness.” So saying, they stepped into the cabin and made one bow after another as though they would never stop.

“You don’t have to do this, my parents-in-law,” said Song Jin. “But next time I complain of some illness, don’t trick me again.” The old man and the old woman were overcome with shame.

Yichun took off her mourning clothes and tossed the spiritual tablet into the water. Song Jin summoned his servants to kowtow to their mistress. Mr. and Mrs. Liu had a chicken slaughtered and wine set out in honor of their son-in-law. It was a feast to welcome him home and to celebrate the reunion. After they took their seats at the table, Mr. Liu mentioned that his daughter had abstained from meat and wine. With sad tears rolling down his cheeks, Song Jin personally served his wife and advised her to resume her normal diet. To his parents-in-law, he said, “You deliberately tricked me, hoping for my



脱赚，欲绝吾命，恩断义绝，不该相认了。今日勉强吃你这杯酒，都看你女儿之面！”宜春道：“不因这番脱赚，你何由发迹？况爹妈日前也有好处，今后但记恩，莫记怨！”宋金道：“谨依贤妻尊命。[眉批]宜夫第一之人也。我已立家于南京，田园富足，你老人家可弃了驾舟之业，随我到彼，同享安乐，岂不美哉！”翁、姬再三称谢，是夜无话。

次日，王店主闻知此事，登船拜贺，又吃了一日酒。宋金留家童三人于王店主家发布取帐，自己开船先往南京大宅子，住了三日，同浑家到昆山故乡扫墓，追荐亡亲。宗族亲党各有厚赠。此时范知县已罢官在家，闻知宋小官发迹还乡，恐怕街坊撞见没趣，躲向乡里，有月馀不敢入城。宋金完了故乡之事，重回南京，阖家欢喜，安享富贵，不在话下。

再说宜春见宋金每早必进佛堂中拜佛诵经，问其缘故。宋金将老僧所传《金刚经》却病延年之事，说了一遍。宜春亦起信心，



death. By rights, I should sever all ties with people who bore me such malice. It's entirely for your daughter's sake that I accept this dinner against my better judgment."

"But," put in Yichun, "had you not been tricked, how could you have made such a fortune? What's more, Father and Mother treated you well before. You should remember only the kindnesses you have received and not think hard thoughts of people."

"All right, I'll do as my good wife says. (*None measures up to her as a good wife.*) Now that I've already acquired much land and property in Nanjing, wouldn't it be nice if you, my parents-in-law, could give up your business and follow me there to share my prosperity?"

Mr. and Mrs. Liu said their thanks over and over again. That night passed without further ado.

The next day, upon hearing what had happened, Mr. Wang the innkeeper went to the boat to offer his congratulations, and another day was spent wining and dining. Song Jin had three of his servants stay with Mr. Wang to take care of the bolts of fabric and the bills, while he himself went by boat to his establishment in Nanjing. He stayed there for three days before going with his wife to Kunshan, their native town, to pay respects to his deceased parents at the family grave. They also sent generous gifts to members of their clans.

By this time, Magistrate Fan had returned to Kunshan to live in retirement. Hearing that Young Master Song had returned, a rich man, he took refuge in the countryside, afraid that it would be too awkward should he run into him on the street. He kept away from the town for more than a month.

After he had completed his business in his hometown, Song Jin went back to Nanjing, where the whole family's joy and delight in their lives of peace and comfort hardly need detailed description here.

In the meantime, Yichun noticed that Song Jin went every morning without fail to the Buddhist prayer hall to pay homage to the Buddha and intone the scriptures and asked him why he did so. Thereupon, Song Jin told her about the effectiveness of the Diamond Sutra, which the old monk had taught him, in curing illnesses and pro-



要丈夫教会了，夫妻同诵，到老不衰。[眉批]《金刚经》结束亦好。后享寿各九十馀，无疾而终。子孙为南京世富之家，亦有发科第者。后人评云：

刘老儿为善不终，宋小官因祸得福。

《金刚经》消除灾难，破毡笠团圆骨肉。



longing life. Yichun also embraced the Buddhist faith and had her husband teach her the scriptures. They intoned the scriptures together and maintained their youthful vigor until an advanced age. (*What a good idea to end the story by coming back to the sutra.*) Both of them lived into their nineties and died without ailments.

Their descendants became the richest people in Nanjing, some of whom also distinguished themselves in the imperial civil service examinations. A later poet had this to say,

*Old Man Liu failed to carry through with a good deed;  
Young Master Song's woes turned out to be a bliss.  
The scriptures drove away all misfortunes,  
The tattered hat saw the family reunite.*

This story has been translated as "The Tattered Felt Hat" in *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Tenth-Twelfth Centuries*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981).

<sup>1</sup> In imperial China, scrolls bearing emperors' decrees were wrapped in yellow cloth and carried on the backs of imperial messengers.

<sup>2</sup> Jizha of Yanling, prince of the state of Wu during the Warring States period, was traveling through the state of Xu when the king of Xu expressed much admiration for his sword. When Jizha passed by Xu again on his way back, he learned that the king had died, whereupon he hung his sword on a tree by the king's grave before returning home.

<sup>3</sup> The aristocrat Wu Zixu, reduced to poverty at one point in his life, eked out a living by playing the flute on the streets. For more on Wu Zixu, see note 10 of story 17.

<sup>4</sup> For the story of Han Xin and the woman washing clothes by the river, see note 11 of story 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cao Zhi (192–232) was a highly talented poet of the state of Wei in the Three Kingdoms period.

<sup>6</sup> Pan Yue (247–300), courtesy name Anren, popularly known as Pan An, was a man of letters in the Western Jin dynasty and reputedly very handsome.

<sup>7</sup> As told in *The Book of Poems*, after Gongbo died an early death, his widow Gongjiang vowed never to remarry.

<sup>8</sup> *Ruyi* (literally, "as you wish") is a symbol of good luck.



## 第二十三卷

### 乐小舍拚生觅偶

一名《喜乐和顺记》

怒气雄声出海门，舟人云是子胥魂。  
天排雪浪晴雷吼，地拥银山万马奔。  
上应天轮分晦朔，下临宇宙定朝昏。  
吴征越战今何在？一曲渔歌过晚村。

这首诗，单题着杭州钱塘江潮，元来非同小可。刻时定信，并无差错。自古至今，莫能考其出没之由。从来说道天下有四绝，却是：

雷州换鼓、广德埋藏、登州海市、钱塘江潮。

这三绝，一年止则一遍。惟有钱塘江潮，一日两番。自古唤做罗刹江，为因风涛险恶，巨浪滔天，常番了船，以此名之。南北两山，多生虎豹，名为虎林。后因虎字犯了唐高祖之祖父御讳，改名武林。又因江潮险迅，怒涛汹涌，冲害居民，因取名宁海军。

后至唐末五代之间，去那径山过来，临安邑人钱宽生得一子，



## Story 23

### Mr. Le Junior Searches for His Wife at the Risk of His Life

(Also titled “A Story of Joy and Harmony”)

*From Sea Gate, the roaring waves surge with fury;<sup>1</sup>  
It's Zixu's aggrieved soul,<sup>2</sup> the boatmen say.  
The whitecaps blot out the sky midst peals of thunder;  
The silvery peaks race like horses on land.  
They rise and ebb on preordained days of the month,  
At hours set by the laws of the universe.  
Where are the sites of the war of Wu against Yue?  
A fisherman's song rings through the village at dusk.*

The above lines are a description of the extraordinary bores of the Qiantang River in Hangzhou — bores that have never deviated from their cycle. Since ancient times, no one has been able to figure out the causes of their rising and falling. It has always been said that there are four wonders in the empire. They are:

*The changing of the thunder drums in Leizhou, the buried treasures of Guangde, the mirages of Dengzhou, and the bores of the Qiantang River.<sup>3</sup>*

The first three wonders occur only once a year, but the Qiantang bores rise and fall twice every day. The river used to be called the Rakshas<sup>4</sup> River because the perilous, wind-blown, surging waves all too often capsize boats. The mountains that flank the river used to be called the Hu [Tiger] Forest because they are infested with tigers and leopards. Later, the name was changed from Hu Forest to Wu Forest because the name of the grandfather of Emperor Gaozu of Tang happened to contain the character *hu* and the character therefore was regarded as taboo. The region came to be called the Ninghai [Pacifying the Sea] County in the hope of pacifying the rapid, surging bores that often wreaked havoc among the local residents.

Later, toward the end of the Tang dynasty and the beginning of the Five Dynasties, a baby son was born to a Mr. Qian Kuan, a



生时红光满室，里人见者，将谓火发，皆往救之。却是他家产下一男，两足下有青色毛，长寸馀，父母以为怪物，欲杀之。有外母不肯，乃留之，因此小名婆留。看看长大成人，身長七尺有馀，美容貌，有智勇，讳鏐，字巨美。幼年专作私商无赖，因官司缉捕甚紧，乃投径山法济禅师避难。法济夜闻寺中伽蓝云：“今夜钱武肃王在此，毋令惊动。”法济知他是异人，不敢相留，乃作书荐鏐往苏州投太守安绶，绶乃用鏐为帐下都部署，每夜在府中马院宿歇。时遇炎天酷热，太守夜起独步后园。至马院边，只见钱鏐睡在那里。太守方坐间，只见那正厅背后，一眼枯井，井中走出两个小鬼来，戏弄钱鏐，却见一个金甲神人，把那小鬼一喝都走了，口称道：“此乃武肃王在此，不得无礼。”太守听罢，大惊，急回府中，心大异之。以此好生看待钱鏐。后因黄巢作乱，钱鏐破贼有功，僖宗拜为节度使。后遇董昌作乱，钱鏐收讨平定，昭宗封为吴越国王。因杭州建都，治得国中宁静。只是地方狭窄，更兼长江汹涌，心常不悦。





native of Lin'an living at the foot of Mount Jing. At the time of the baby's birth, the room was suffused with red light. The neighbors thought the house was on fire and rushed over to help put it out, only to find that a baby boy with inch-long dark hair on the soles of his feet had been born to the family. Believing the child to be a monster, the parents wanted to kill him, but the maternal grandmother stopped them and kept the baby. Hence his nickname Poliu [Kept by Granny].

The baby grew up to be a handsome, intelligent, and courageous man and stood more than seven feet tall. He was named Qian Liu, courtesy name Jumei. In his youth, he was a good-for-nothing ruffian, going about town smuggling goods and doing all sorts of mischief. When he was wanted by the police, he fled to Abbot Faji on Mount Jing for protection. That night, Faji heard a temple deity say, "King Qian of Wusu is here tonight. Do not let him come to harm." Realizing that this was no ordinary man, Faji dared not keep him but wrote a letter recommending Qian Liu to An Shou, Prefect of Suzhou, who took him on as a guard. And so, Qian Liu took up quarters in the horse stable in the prefect's establishment.

On a sweltering summer night, the prefect rose from bed and took a walk to the backyard. He approached the horse stable and saw Qian Liu asleep there. He was about to sit down when, lo and behold, two imps emerged from a dry well behind the main hall and began to tease Qian Liu. At this point, a god in gold armor appeared and sharply ordered the imps to go away, saying, "This is King of Wusu. Behave yourselves!" Much startled, the prefect hastened back into the house, marveling at what he had witnessed. Henceforth, he treated Qian Liu with great kindness.

Later, for his role in repressing the rebellion led by Huang Chao,<sup>5</sup> Qian Liu was promoted by Emperor Xizong to be a regional military commander. Some time later, he put down a rebellion by Dong Chang, for which Emperor Zhaozong granted him the title King of Wu and Yue.<sup>6</sup> King Qian made Hangzhou the capital and brought peace and stability to the kingdom, but he was often grieved by the raging waves of the Yangzi River that threatened the narrow confines of the city.



忽一日，有司进到金色鲤鱼一尾，约长三尺有馀，两目炯炯有光，将来作御膳。钱王见此鱼壮健，不忍杀之，令畜之池中。夜梦一老人来见，峨冠博带，口称小圣：“夜来孺子不肖，乘酒醉，变作金色鲤鱼，游于江岸，被人获之，进与大王作御膳，谢大王不杀之恩。今者小圣，特来哀告大王，愿王怜悯，差人送往江中，必当重报。”钱王应允，龙君乃退。钱王飒然惊觉，得了一梦。次早升殿，唤左右打起那鱼，差人放之江中。当夜，又梦龙君谢曰：“感大王再生之恩，将何以报？小圣龙宫海藏，应有奇珍异宝，夜光珠、盈尺璧，任从大王所欲，即当奉献。”钱王乃言：“珍宝珠璧，非吾好也。惟我国僻处海隅，地方无千里，更兼长江广阔，波涛汹涌，日夕相冲，使国人常有风波之患。汝能借地一方，以广吾国，是所愿也。”[眉批]大有王者气度。龙王曰：“此事甚易，然借则借，当在何日见还？”钱王曰：“五百劫后，仍复还之。”龙王曰：“大王来日，可铸铁柱十二只，各长一丈二尺，请大王自登舟，小圣使虾鱼聚于水面之上，大王但见处，可



One day, a local official acquired a golden carp. It was more than three feet long and had bright, sparkling eyes. The chef planned to cook it for the king's dinner, but King Qian could not bear the thought of killing such a vigorous-looking fish. He ordered that it be kept in a pond.

That night, an old man appeared to him in a dream. Wearing a tall hat and a broad waistband, the distinguished-looking old man said, "In a moment of drunkenness, my unworthy little son changed himself into a golden carp and played by the riverbank. He was then caught and offered to Your Highness' kitchen. I am much obliged to Your Highness for having spared his life. I am here to implore Your Highness to have him put back into the river as an act of compassion. I will surely repay you handsomely."

King Qian consented, and the Dragon King withdrew. When he woke with a start, King Qian realized he had been dreaming. Next morning, when he held his court session, he ordered his attendants to retrieve the fish from the pond and have it put back into the river.

That very night, the Dragon King again appeared to him in a dream, saying gratefully, "I cannot thank Your Highness enough for giving my son a new life. In my palace, I have stored some very exotic treasures, such as luminous pearls and jade disks more than a foot in diameter. Your Highness can have as many of them as you want."

King Qian responded, "I have no desire for treasures. But in my kingdom, which measures less than a thousand *li* but happens to lie right by the great Yangzi River, my people all too often fall victim to the daily ravages of the surging tides. My wish is for you to lend us a portion of your domain so as to enlarge my kingdom." (*Spoken like a sovereign.*)

"That can be easily done," said the Dragon King. "Yes, you may borrow it, but when should I expect to have it back?"

"You may have it back after five hundred kalpas."

"Tomorrow," said the Dragon King, "have twelve iron posts cast, each measuring twelve feet. Your Highness must board a boat. I'll have shrimp and fish gather on the surface of the water. Put an iron post



即下铁柱一只，其水渐渐自退，沙涨为平地。王可垒石为塘，其地即广也。”龙君退去，钱王惊觉。次日，令有司铸造铁柱十二只，亲自登舟，于江中看之，果见有鱼虾成聚一十二处，乃令人以铁柱沉下去，江水自退。王乃登岸，但见无移时，沙石涨为平地，自富阳山前直至海门舟山为止。钱王大喜，乃使石匠于山中凿石为板，以黄罗木贯穿其中，排列成塘。因凿石迟慢，乃下令：“如有军民人等，以百斤石板，将船装来，一船换米一船。”各处即将船载石板来换米。因此砌了江岸，石板有馀。后方始称为钱塘江。

至大宋高宗南渡，建都钱塘，改名临安府，称为行在。方始人烟臻集，风俗淳美。似此每遇年年八月十八，乃潮生日，倾城士庶，皆往江塘之上，玩潮快乐。亦有本土善识水性之人，手执十幅旗幡，出没水中，谓之弄潮，果是好看。至有不识水性深浅者，学弄潮，多有被泼了去，坏了性命。临安府尹得知，累次出



wherever Your Highness sees them. The water will gradually subside of its own accord, and the sand will harden into flat land. Your Highness may then build a stone dike along the bank to mark out your enlarged territory." With that, the Dragon King vanished, and King Qian woke up with a start.

The next day, King Qian ordered twelve iron posts made and rode out on a boat to check the surface of the water himself. Sure enough, he saw twelve spots where fish and shrimp had gathered. The water began to subside as soon as the iron posts were lowered into the water at his order. He went ashore and watched the sand harden quickly into flat land that stretched from Mount Fuyang all the way to Mount Zhou at Sea Gate.

Exultantly, King Qian ordered stonemasons to build a dike by chiseling rocks from the hills into slates and then piling up the slates and running wooden stakes through them. Since this was a time-consuming process, he commanded, "Soldiers and civilians who have new or old stone slates to offer shall be rewarded with a full boatload of rice for each boatload of slates they bring." Consequently, boats came from all directions, carrying so many stone slates to exchange for rice that after construction was completed, there were stone slates left over. That was how the river came to be called Qiantang [Qian's Dike] River.

Later, when Emperor Gaozong of the Song dynasty moved his court to the south, he established his capital at Qiantang but changed the name to Lin'an Prefecture [present-day Hangzhou], calling it his temporary place of residence. The population in the city began to grow, and a wholesome ethos and good customs came into being.

Every year, on the eighteenth day of the eighth month, when the bores were at their highest, all residents of the town, regardless of class, turned out in droves to amuse themselves at the dike. Those natives who were good at swimming repeatedly submerged themselves in the water and reemerged again, each holding ten banners above water level, in a game called "playing with the bores." An amazing sight it was. There were also poor swimmers who tried to imitate the feat but ended up being engulfed in the waves and drowned. When the



榜禁谕，不能革其风俗。有东坡学士看潮一绝为证：

吴儿生长押涛渊，冒险轻生不自怜。

东海若知明主意，应教破浪变桑田。

话说南宋临安府有一个旧家，姓乐名美善，原是贤福坊安平巷内出身，祖上七辈衣冠。近因家道消乏，移在钱塘门外居住，开个杂色货铺子，人都重他的家世，称他为乐大爷。妈妈安氏，单生一子，名和，生得眉目清秀，伶俐乖巧。幼年寄在永清巷母舅安三老家抚养，附在间壁喜将仕馆中上学，喜将仕家有个女儿，小名顺娘，少乐和一岁。两个同学读书，学中取笑道：“你两个姓名‘喜乐和顺’，合是天缘一对。”两个小儿女，知觉渐开，听这话也自欢喜，遂私下约为夫妇。这也是一时戏谑，谁知做了后来配合的讖语。正是：

姻缘本是前生定，曾向蟠桃会里来。

乐和到十二岁时，顺娘十一岁。那时乐和回家，顺娘深闺女



matter was brought to the attention of the prefect of Lin'an, he had notices put up banning the practice, but, despite the many times his order was repeated, the custom of playing with the bores continued to be observed. A poem titled "Watching the Bores," by Academician Su Dongpo,<sup>8</sup> bears witness:

*Men of Wu grow up playing with the waves,  
Light-heartedly putting their lives at risk.  
Had the East Sea God known what the king wanted,  
He would have turned the water into farmland.*

As the story goes, in Lin'an Prefecture during the Southern Song dynasty, there lived a man called Le Meishan, descendant of a distinguished family of long-standing. Due to recent straitened circumstances, he relocated from Anping Lane of Xianfu Ward, where seven generations of his forefathers had lived as eminent officials, to a house outside of Qiantang Gate, where he opened a general store. All and sundry called him "Uncle Le" out of respect for his family background.

His wife, An-shi, bore him only one son, whom they called Le He [Happy, Harmonious]. He was a fine-looking boy with wellformed eyebrows and bright eyes and was quick and clever by nature. In his childhood, he was placed in the care of his maternal uncle, An San-lao, on Yongqing Lane. There, he took lessons from Mr. Xi, a low-ranking civil official who lived next door. Mr. Xi had a daughter with the pet name of Xi Shunniang [Joyous, Congenial]. Being one year younger than Le He, she took her lessons with him. Classmates said in jest, "Your two names combined read 'happy, joyous, harmonious, congenial.' Doesn't that mean you are a couple made in heaven?" With growing consciousness of the ways of the world, the young boy and girl were pleased by these playful words and privately pledged to be husband and wife. This was said in a moment of jocularly, but it turned out to be a prophecy that was meant to be fulfilled in the future. Truly,

*Marriage bonds are determined in previous lifetimes  
At the immortals' annual peach parties.*

They stopped seeing each other when, at age twelve, Le He



工，各不相见。乐和虽则童年，心中伶俐，常想顺娘情意，不能割舍。又过了三年，时值清明将近，安三老接外甥同去上坟，就便游西湖。原来临安有这个风俗，但凡湖船，任从客便，或三朋四友，或带子携妻，不择男女，各自去占个座头，饮酒观山，随意取乐。安三老领着外甥上船，占了个座头，方才坐定，只见船头上又一家女眷入来。看时不是别人，正是隔壁喜将仕家母女二人，和一个丫头，一个奶娘。三老认得，慌忙作揖。又教外甥来相见了。此时顺娘年十四岁，一发长成得好了。乐和有三年不见，今日水面相逢，如见珍宝。虽然分桌而坐，四目不时观看，相爱之意，彼此尽知。只恨众人属目，不能叙情。船到湖心亭，安三老和一班男客，都到亭子上闲步，乐和推腹痛留在舱中，捱身与喜大娘攀话，稍稍得与顺娘相近。捉空以目送情，彼此意会。少顷众客下船，又分开了。傍晚，各自分散。安三老送外甥回家。乐和一心忆着顺娘，题诗一首：

嫩蕊娇香郁未开，不因蜂蝶自生猜。  
他年若作扁舟侣，日日西湖一醉回。





returned to his parents' home, and Shunniang, who was eleven years old in the same year, went back to the depths of her boudoir to learn needlework. Young as he was, Le He was more mature than his years, for he constantly recalled Shunniang's kindnesses to him and could not bear to put her out of his thoughts.

Three years went by. With the Clear and Bright Festival drawing near,<sup>9</sup> An Sanlao took his nephew along on a trip to the family cemetery, and on their way back, they took a tour of West Lake.

According to a Lin'an custom, all tourists on pleasure boats — whether with friends or family, whether male or female — were free to sit wherever they liked, to enjoy the hilly scenery over cups of wine. An Sanlao led his nephew onto a boat and had barely taken a seat at a table when they saw a group of women boarding the boat at the bow. Upon taking a closer look, they realized that the newcomers were Mr. An's neighbors, Mrs. Xi and her daughter, along with a maid and a maidservant. An Sanlao quickly bowed in greeting and had his nephew step forward to greet them as well. Now fourteen years old, Shunniang was prettier than before. Not having seen her in three years, Le He was as happy as if he had come upon some highly prized treasure. Even though they sat at different tables, they kept exchanging glances, well aware of the love between them and resentful of the many watchful eyes that prevented them from talking to each other.

When the boat got to Mid-lake Pavilion, An Sanlao and all the other men went to the pavilion for a walk, but Le He stayed behind in the cabin, pleading a stomachache. He moved closer to Mrs. Xi, ostensibly to strike up a conversation with her but, in fact, to be nearer to Shunniang. Whenever Mrs. Xi was not looking, the two exchanged meaningful glances. In a short while, the men returned to the boat, and Le He and Shunniang sat apart. At dusk, they all went their separate ways, and An Sanlao escorted his nephew home. His thoughts still on Shunniang, Le He wrote a poem:

*The tender petals not yet in full bloom,  
 They need not bees and butterflies to fall in love.  
 Should we join as a couple years from now,*



乐和将此诗题于桃花笺上，折为方胜，藏于怀袖，私自进城，到永清巷喜家门首伺候顺娘，无路可通。如此数次。闻说潮王庙有灵，乃私买香烛果品，在潮王面前祈祷，愿与喜顺娘今生得成鸳侣。拜罢，炉前化纸，偶然方胜从袖中坠地，一阵风卷出纸钱的火来烧了。急去抢时，止剩得一个侣字。乐和拾起看了，想道：“侣乃双口之意，此亦吉兆。”心下甚喜。忽见碑亭内坐一老者，衣冠古朴，容貌清奇，手中执一团扇，上写“姻缘前定”四个字。乐和上前作揖，动问：“老翁尊姓？”答道：“老汉姓石。”又问道：“老翁能算姻缘之事乎？”老者道：“颇能推算。”乐和道：“小子乐和，烦老翁一推，赤绳系于何处？”老者笑道：“小舍人年未弱冠，如何便想这事？”乐和道：“昔汉武帝为小儿时，圣母抱于膝上，问：‘欲得阿娇为妻否？’帝答言：‘若得阿娇，当以金屋贮之。’年无长幼，其情一也。”老者遂问了年月日时，在五



*We'll tour West Lake daily midst the joy of wine.*

After writing the poem on stationery paper adorned with peach blossom prints, he folded the paper into the shape of two overlapping diamonds, slipped it into his sleeve, and without telling anyone, went to Yongqing Lane. There, he waited at the door of the house where the Xi family lived, on the chance that he might encounter Shunniang. But there was no way he could communicate with her. He went several times, with no success.

Hearing that the God of the Bores was most responsive to prayers, he secretly bought some incense, candles, and fruit for sacrificial purposes, and prayed in the Temple of the God of the Bores, "Please make Xi Shunniang and me a married couple in this life." The obeisances over, he began burning paper in the incense burner. All of a sudden, the piece of folded paper fell out of his sleeve, and a gust of wind blew it into the flames. With alacrity, he retrieved it from the fire, but only the character "couple" [lǚ] remained legible. Le He looked at it and thought, "That this character, which means 'a married couple,' survived the fire must be a good omen." His heart exulted. At this point, he saw an old man with unearthly refined looks sitting inside a stone monument pavilion. Wearing clothes and a hat of the simple style of olden times, he held a round fan on which was written "Marriages are predestined."

Le He stepped forward and bowed. "May I ask your honorable name, Grandfather?"

"This old man's surname is Shi [stone]" was the reply.

"Can you make predictions in matters of matrimony?"

"Yes, I certainly can."

"My name is Le He. Could you please do me a favor and tell me where the red thread of marriage will lead me?"<sup>10</sup>

The old man replied with a smile, "You're not yet even twenty. Why are you already thinking of this?"

"Well, when Emperor Wudi of Han was a little boy, the queen mother held him on her knees and asked him, 'Would you want to have Ajiao as your wife?' He replied, 'If I can have Ajiao, I'll keep her in a house of gold.' So, you see, love knows no age."



指上一轮道：“小舍人佳眷，是熟人，不是生人。”乐和见说得合机，便道：“不瞒老翁，小子心上正有一熟人，未知缘法何如？”老者引至一口八角井边，教乐和看井内，有缘无缘便知。乐和手把井栏张望，但见井内水势甚大，巨涛汹涌，如万顷相似，其明如镜，内立一个美女，可十六七岁，紫罗衫、杏黄裙，绰约可爱。仔细认之，正是顺娘。心下又惊又喜，却被老者望背后一推，刚刚的跌在那女子身上，大叫一声，猛然惊觉，乃是一梦，双手兀自抱定亭柱。正是：

黄粱犹未熟，一梦到华胥。

乐和醒将转来，看亭内石碑，其神姓石名瑰，唐时捐财筑塘捍水，死后封为潮王。乐和暗想：“原来梦中所见石老翁，即潮王也。此段姻缘，十有九就。”回家对母亲说，要央媒与喜顺娘议亲。那安妈妈是妇道家，不知高低，便向乐公撺掇其事。乐公道：“姻亲一节，须要门当户对。我家虽曾有七辈衣冠，见今衰微，经纪营活。喜将仕名门富室，他的女儿，怕没有人求允，肯与我家



The old man asked him for the hour, the day, the month, and the year of his birth and then, after calculating a while on his fingers, said, "The one destined for you is someone you already know."

Encouraged by this prediction, Le He said, "To be frank, sir, I do have in mind someone I already know. I wonder how the marriage destiny will work itself out."

The old man led him to an octagonal well and told him he could find out by looking into the well. With his hands on the railings, Le He looked into the well. Behold: In the well were huge waves rolling over what looked like thousands of acres of land and, underneath the water, as clear as a mirror, stood a beautiful girl about sixteen or seventeen years old, wearing a purple silk blouse and an apricot yellow skirt. A graceful and lovely girl she was. Looking closer, Le He recognized her to be none other than Shunniang. In his state of happy astonishment, he was pushed from behind by the old man and fell right onto the girl. Uttering a loud cry, he awoke with a start and realized that it had been a dream, but still, he reached for one of the columns in the pavilion and put his arms around it. Indeed,

*While the yellow millet was cooking,<sup>11</sup>*

*He reached fairyland in his dream.*

Now wide awake, Le He saw that the stone monument in the pavilion was dedicated to a Shi [Stone] Gui of the Tang dynasty who had donated money for the dike for water control and, after death, was granted the title King of the Bores and assumed god status. Le He thought to himself, "So, that Mr. Shi of my dream is none other than the King of the Bores. The odds are nine to one that I'll get to marry her."

Upon returning home, he asked his mother to have a matchmaker approach Xi Shunniang's mother with a marriage proposal. Being a woman without much sense, Mrs. Le urged her husband to take action. Mr. Le said, "Husband and wife should be well matched in status. Even though our clan has produced officials for seven generations in a row, we've fallen on hard times and have to make a living as petty traders. The Xi family is so rich and distinguished that the parents will get plenty of marriage proposals for the girl. Why would they



对亲？若央媒往说，反取其笑。”乐和见父亲不允，又教母亲央求母舅去说合。安三老所言，与乐公一般。乐和大失所望，背地里叹了一口气。明早将纸裱一牌位，上写“亲妻喜顺娘生位”七个字，每日三餐，必对而食之。夜间安放枕边，低唤三声，然后就寝。每遇清明三月三，重阳九月九，端午龙舟，八月玩潮，这几个胜会，无不刷鬓修容，华衣美服，在人丛中挨挤。只恐顺娘出行，侥幸一遇。同般生意人家有女儿的，见乐小舍人年长，都来议亲。爹娘几遍要应承，到是乐和立意不肯。立个誓愿，直待喜家顺娘嫁出之后，方才放心，再图婚配。事有凑巧，这里乐和立誓不娶，那边顺娘却也红鸾不照，天喜未临，高不成，低不就，也不曾许得人家。光阴似箭，倏忽又过了三年。乐和年一十八岁，顺娘一十七岁了。男未有室，女未有家。

男才女貌正相和，未卜姻缘事若何？

且喜室家俱未定，只须灵鹊肯填河。



ever stoop to a match with our family? If we have a matchmaker approach them, we'll only be inviting ridicule."

His father having rejected the idea, Le He asked his mother to seek help from his maternal uncle, but An Sanlao's response was the same as Mr. Le's. Grievously disappointed, Le He sighed to himself throughout a wakeful night.

The next morning, he covered a tablet with a piece of paper on which he had written "In honor of my dear wife Xi Shunniang." At every meal, three times a day, he ate facing the tablet. At night, he put the tablet by his bedside and gently called her name three times before going to sleep. On every Clear and Bright Festival on the third day of the third month, the Double Ninth Festival on the ninth day of the ninth month, the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth day of the fifth month, and the Festival of Playing with the Bore in the eighth month, he would, without exception, comb his hair well, wash, dress up, and make his way through the crowds on the chance that he might see Shunniang, should she also be on an outing to the same places. Those business associates of the Le Family who had marriageable daughters, seeing that Young Master Le was now of a suitable age, came forward with propositions. Several times, Mr. and Mrs. Le were quite ready to accept the offers, but each time, Le He firmly turned them down. He vowed not to give up his hopes until Xi Shunniang married first.

As coincidence would have it, while Le He was under a vow not to marry, Shunniang was not favored by the heavenly bliss of marriage either.

Not quite a match for candidates of higher status, but unwilling to stoop lower than her own, she remained unbetrothed.

Time flew by like an arrow. Three years elapsed in the twinkling of an eye, and we now find Le He at eighteen years of age and Shunniang at seventeen, both unmarried.

*His talent and her beauty make a perfect match,  
 But is there a marriage bond between them?  
 Luckily, both remain yet unbetrothed,  
 Waiting for the magpies to come and form a bridge.<sup>12</sup>*



话分两头。却说是时，南北通和。其年有金国使臣高景山来中国修聘。那高景山善会文章，朝命宣一个翰林范学士接伴。当八月中秋过了，又到十八潮生日，就城外江边浙江亭子上，搭彩铺毡，大排筵宴，款待使臣观潮。陪宴官非止一员。都统司领着水军，乘战舰，于水面往来，施放五色烟火炮。豪家贵戚沿江搭缚彩幕，绵亘三十馀里，照江如铺锦相似。市井弄水者，共有数百人，蹈浪争雄，出没游戏。有蹈滚木、水傀儡，诸般伎艺。但见：

迎潮鼓浪，拍岸移舟。惊湍忽自海门来，怒吼遥连天际出。何异地生银汉，分明天震春雷。遥观似匹练飞空，远听如千军驰噪。吴儿勇健，平分白浪弄洪波；渔父轻便，出没江心夸好手。果然是万顷碧波随地滚，千寻雪浪接云奔。

北朝使臣高景山见了，毛发皆耸，嗟叹不已，果然奇观。范学士道：“相公见此，何不赐一佳作？”即令取过文房四宝来。高





Our story forks at this point. At the time, China was on good terms with its neighbors to the north. In the year of which we speak, Gao Jingshan, an envoy from the Jin state, undertook a friendly visit to China. As Gao Jingshan was quite a scholar, the imperial court appointed Academician Fan of the Hanlin Academy to escort him.

The Mid-autumn Festival was over, and the Bore Festival rolled around. On the eighteenth day of the eighth month, when the bore was at its highest, a sumptuous feast was set out in the extravagantly embellished Zhejiang Pavilion, located outside of the city by the river. The feast was in honor of the Jin envoy, who had been invited to watch the bores. Quite a few Chinese officials had also been invited to help entertain the guest of honor. A naval warship under the command of the military commissioner sailed up and down the river, setting off multicolored fireworks. The leading rich families of the city erected colorful tents for more than thirty *li* along the riverbank, and the surface of the water glittered like brocade. Hundreds of local people went into the water, treading the waves and vying with one another in performing feats on water, including dances on lumber logs and puppet shows. Behold:

*Slapping against the banks and tossing boats,  
The waves sweep in from Sea Gate,  
Their thunderous roars reaching the sky.  
On earth, a Milky Way, from heaven, spring thunders.  
From afar, they look like silk scarves flying through air  
And sound like a mighty army galloping.  
Brave swimmers bob up and down on the white waves;  
Agile fishermen ply their boats in mid-river.  
Indeed, the endless green waves roll along;  
Their snowy spray reaches high into the clouds.*

Gao Jingshan, the envoy of Jin, was so thrilled that his hair stood on end. He heaved one sigh of amazement after another at such a spectacular sight. Academician Fan suggested, "Why don't you write a poem for us on viewing such a sight?" So saying, he ordered that the four treasures of the scholar's study be brought over.<sup>13</sup> After many demurrals, Gao Jingshan composed a lyric poem to the tune of "The



景山谦让再三，做《念奴娇》词：

云涛千里，泛今古绝致，东南风物。碧海云横初一线，忽尔雷轰苍壁。万马奔天，群鹅扑地，汹涌飞烟雪。吴人勇悍，便竞踏浪雄杰。想旗帜纷纭，吴音楚管，与胡笳俱发。人物江山如许丽，岂信妖氛难灭。况是行宫，星缠五福，光焰窥毫发。惊看无语，凭栏姑待明月。

高景山题毕，满座皆赞奇才。只有范学士道：“相公词做得甚好，只可惜‘万马奔天，群鹅扑地’，将潮比得来轻了，这潮可比玉龙之势。”学士遂做《水调歌头》，道是：

登临眺东渚，始觉太虚宽。海天相接，潮生万里一毫端。滔滔怒生雄势，宛胜玉龙戏水，尽出没波间。雪浪番云脚，



Charms of Niannu”:

*Wave upon wave of clouds stretch for a thousand li;  
The world has never seen a sight so majestic,  
A sight unknown except in the Southeast.  
Green waters merge with clouds at the horizon;  
A sudden roar of thunder shakes the earth.  
Ten thousand horses gallop toward the sky,  
Flocks of geese flutter to the ground,  
Kicking up spray and mist that spout high.  
Men of the Wu region, brave souls they are,  
Treading the waves in games of competition.  
Flags and banners dot the scene;  
Music from Wu, wind instruments from Chu,  
Play forth together with Tartar pipes.  
Blessed with such people, such rivers and hills,  
This is a land where demons have no chance.  
This city, where the emperor resides,  
Enjoys the five blessings from the stars,  
So brightly lit by the blazing flames.  
In speechless awe, I lean against the railings,  
And wait for the lambent moon to rise in the sky.*

Upon finishing, Gao Jingshan was showered with praise from everyone present, but Academician Fan commented, “A nicely written poem, except for one flaw: The lines ‘Ten thousand horses gallop toward the sky; / Flocks of geese flutter to the ground’ do not do full justice to the bores. In fact, the bores can well be likened to jade dragons.” Right away, the Academician composed a lyric poem to the tune of “Prelude to Water Music”:

*Looking far out at the islet down below,  
One marvels at the vastness of the universe.  
The water meets the sky at the far horizon;  
One ripplet swells into ten thousand li of waves.  
Majestically they surge ahead,  
Like jade dragons playing with the water,  
Going under the waves one moment and out the next.*



波卷水晶寒。    扫方涛，卷圆峤，大洋番。天垂银汉，壮观江北与江南。借问子胥何在？博望乘槎仙去，知是几时还？上界银河窄，流泻到人间！

范学士题罢，高景山见了，大喜道：“奇哉佳作，难比万马争驰，真是玉龙戏水。”不题各官尽欢饮酒。

且说临安大小户人家，闻得是日朝廷款待北使，陈设百戏，倾城士女都来观看。乐和打听得喜家一门也去看潮，侵早便妆扮齐整，来到钱塘江口，趲来趲去，找寻喜顺娘不着。结末来到一个去处，唤做“天开图画”，又叫做“团围头”。因那里团团围转，四面都看见潮头，故名“团围头”。后人讹传，谓之“团鱼头”。这个所在，潮势阔大，多有子弟立脚不牢，被潮头涌下水去，又有豁湿了身上衣服的，都在下浦桥边搅挤教干。有人做下《临江仙》一只，单嘲那看潮的：

自古钱塘难比，看潮人成群作队。不待中秋，相随相趁，



*Snowy whitecaps spout high under the clouds;  
The spray sparkles like beaded crystal portieres.*

*Engulfing the choppy waves of the sea,  
Whisking off the Fairy Mountain midst the waters,  
They churn up the torrents of the oceans.  
The heavenly stars have come down to earth,  
Adding splendor to both sides of the river.  
Where, may I ask, can Wu Zixu be found?<sup>14</sup>  
The Duke of Bowang's raft—when will it be back?<sup>15</sup>  
The Milky Way, all too narrow,  
Flows down to the human world.*

Upon reading Academician Fan's poem, Gao Jingshan exclaimed in delight, "What a wonderful poem! They are indeed more like jade dragons playing with water than ten thousand galloping horses."

Now, let us leave the officials at their wining and dining and turn our attention to the residents, rich and poor, of Lin'an. At the news that entertainment of every description was being presented that day in honor of an envoy from the north who was a guest of the imperial court, all the people in town, male and female, turned out to watch. Le He, having learned upon inquiry that the entire Xi family was going to watch the bores, dressed himself up early the next morning and went to the mouth of the Qiantang River, where he searched diligently for Xi Shunniang, without success. Then he be-took himself to a spot called variously "Panorama" and "Spin-around"—"Spin-around" because one sees the bores wherever one turns. With the passage of time, "Spin-around" was corrupted and became "Fish-around." This is a spot where the bores are at their fiercest. There has been no lack of people who slipped and were swallowed up by the surging water, and, at the same time, there were others wringing their clothes under Xiapu Bridge. There is a lyric poem to the tune of "Immortal at the River" that ridicules bore watchers:

*Since ancient times, there has been no place like Qiantang;  
In groups, in crowds, the bore watchers jostle their way  
To the riverside before Mid-autumn Festival.*



尽往江边游戏。沙滩畔，远望潮头，不觉侵天浪起。头巾如洗，斗把衣裳去挤。下浦桥边，一似奈何池畔，裸体披头似鬼。入城里，烘好衣裳，犹问几时起水？

乐和到“团围头”寻了一转，不见顺娘，复身又寻转来。那时人山人海，围拥着席棚彩幕。乐和身材即溜，在人丛里捱挤进去，一步一看，行走多时。看见一个妇人，走进一个席棚里面去了。乐和认得这妇人，是喜家的奶娘，紧步随后，果然喜将仕一家男女，都成团聚块的坐下饮酒玩赏。乐和不敢十分逼近，又不舍得十分骂远。紧紧的贴着席棚而立，觑定顺娘目不转睛，恨不得走近前去，双手搂抱，说句话儿。那小娘子抬头观看，远远的也认得是乐小舍人，见他趋前退后，神情不定，心上也觉可怜。只是父母相随，寸步不离，无由相会一面。[眉批]此番甚是难为情。正是：

两人衷腹事，尽在不言中。

却说乐和与喜顺娘正在相视凄惶之际，忽听得说潮来了。道犹未绝，耳边如山崩地坼之声，潮头有数丈之高，一涌而至。有诗为证：

银山万叠耸巍巍，蹴地排空势若飞。

信是子胥灵未泯，至今犹自奋神威。

那潮头比往年更大，直打到岸上高处，掀翻锦幕，冲倒席棚，众



*On the sandy beach, they look far out for the bores;  
Before they know it, the waves burst as high as sky.*

*Their caps all wet, they try wringing their clothes dry.  
By Xiapu Bridge, a veritable scene of hell;  
Crowds of ghosts, naked, with hair hanging loose.  
Back in the city, the clothes dried over a fire,  
They ask when the bores will rise again.*

After searching in vain for Shunniang at Spin-around, Le He turned back, keeping an eye out for her as he went along. Being nimble of limb, he threaded his way through huge crowds around makeshift tents, looking around with each step. Quite some time later, he caught sight of a woman walking into one of the tents. Le He recognized her to be a maidservant of the Xi family. He followed closely behind her and did indeed find the Xi family sitting together, drinking wine and enjoying themselves. He dared not get too close, nor could he bear the thought of staying too far from her, so he stood closely by the tent and fixed his eyes on her. How he wanted to walk up to her, hold her in his arms, and say a few tender words! The girl, who was looking around, her head raised, recognized Young Master Le from afar. Pity swelled in her heart as she watched him pace nervously back and forth. But with her parents never more than an inch away wherever she went, meeting him face-to-face was out of the question. (*An awkward moment.*) Truly,

*The secret in their hearts  
They shared in wordless passion.*

While Le He and Xi Shunniang were gazing despairingly at each other, a sudden cry was heard: "The bore is here!" The voices were still in the air when, with an earth-splitting roar, waves tens of feet high came sweeping in, as this poem testifies:

*The soaring silver mountains roll forward,  
Rising from the ground, they fly through the air.  
It must be the soul of Wu Zixu,  
Showing its divine power even to this day.*

Choppier than in years past, the waves broke against the higher



人发声喊，都退后走。顺娘出神在小舍人身上，一时着忙不知高低，反向前几步，脚儿把滑不住，溜的流入波浪之中。[眉批]一对多情种，非得潮神撮合，且为情死矣。

可怜绣阁金闺女，翻做随波逐浪人。

乐和乖觉，约莫潮来，便移身立于高阜去处。心中不舍得顺娘，看定席棚，高叫：“避水！”忽见顺娘跌在江里去了。这惊非小，说时迟，那时快，就顺娘跌下去这一刻，乐和的眼光紧随着小娘子下水，脚步自然留不住，扑通的向水一跳，也随波而滚。他那里会水，只是为情所使，不顾性命。这里喜将仕夫妇见女儿坠水，慌急了，乱呼：“救人！救人！救得吾女，自有重赏。”那顺娘穿着紫罗衫、杏黄裙，最好记认。[眉批]潮王庙梦中人。有那一班弄潮的子弟们，踏着潮头，如履平地，贪着利物，应声而往。翻波搅浪，去捞救那紫罗衫、杏黄裙的女子。

却说乐和跳下水去，直至水底，全不觉波涛之苦，心下如梦中相似。行到潮王庙中，见灯烛辉煌，香烟缭绕。乐和下拜，求潮王救取顺娘，度脱水厄。潮王开言道：“喜顺吾已收留在此，今交付你去。”说罢，小鬼从神帐后，将顺娘送出。乐和拜谢了潮



ground of the bank, tore open the brocade sheets, and knocked down the tents. With a cry, the crowd began to run away from the waves, but Shunniang, her mind entirely on Young Master Le, did not know what she was doing and took a few steps forward instead. Losing her foothold, she disappeared into the waves. (*Had the King of the Bores not intervened, the devoted lovers would have perished for the sake of love.*)

*How sad that the girl from a well-adorned boudoir  
Now floats along with the currents!*

Alert to the danger, Le He had run to higher ground before the bore could get him and, his thoughts still on Shunniang, cried out toward the tent, "Get away from the water!"

Suddenly, to his great alarm, he saw Shunniang fall into the water. In less time than it takes to narrate, the very moment Shunniang fell, Le He followed her into the water, first with his eyes and then with his feet. With a splash, he jumped into the water and was also caught in the current, for he was no swimmer. He did this out of love and at the risk of his life.

Witnessing their daughter's fall, Mr. and Mrs. Xi cried out frantically, "Help! Help! A generous reward for whoever saves my daughter!" Wearing a purple blouse and an apricot yellow skirt, Shunniang was easy to see. (*The very clothes he had dreamt about in the Temple of the King of the Bores.*) Lured by the promise of a reward, many a young man who could swim as easily as walking on land readily came forward, parting the waves in search of a girl in a purple blouse and an apricot yellow skirt.

After throwing himself into the water, Le He sank all the way to the bottom of the river, but instead of being overwhelmed by the water, he felt he had experienced all of this in his dream. Presently, he found himself in the Temple of the King of the Bores, which was ablaze with candlelight and fragrant with swirling wisps of incense. Le He prostrated himself on the floor. To his prayers that Shunniang be saved from drowning, the King of the Bores replied, "Xi Shunniang is here with me. Let me deliver her to you." That said, an attendant escorted Shunniang out from behind the curtains. Le He bowed his





王，领顺娘出了庙门。彼此十分欢喜，一句话也说不出，四只手儿紧紧对面相抱，觉身子或沉或浮，余出水面。那一班弄潮的看见紫罗衫、杏黄裙在浪中现出，慌忙去抢。及至托出水面，不是单却是双。四五个人，扛头扛脚，抬上岸来，对喜将仕道：“且喜连女婿都救起来了。”喜公、喜母、丫环、奶娘都来看时，此时八月天气，衣服都单薄，两个脸对脸，胸对胸，交股叠肩，且是假抱得紧，分拆不开，叫唤不醒，体尚微暖，不生不死的模样。父母慌又慌，苦又苦，正不知什么意故。喜家眷属哭做一堆。众人争先来看，都道从古来无此奇事。

却说乐美善正在家中，有人报他儿子在“团鱼头”看潮，被潮头打在江里去了。慌得一步一跌，直跑到“团围头”来。又听得人说打捞得一男一女，那女的是喜将仕家小姐。乐公分开人众，捱入看时，认得是儿子乐和，叫了几声：“亲儿！”放声大哭道：“儿呵！你生前不得吹箫侣，谁知你死后方成连理枝！”喜将仕问其缘故，乐公将三年前儿子执意求亲，及誓不先娶之言，叙了一遍。喜公、喜母到抱怨起来道：“你乐门七辈衣冠，也是旧族，



thanks to the King of the Bores and led Shunniang out of the temple. Such was their joy that speech was quite beyond them. Holding each other tightly in a face-to-face embrace, they rose, after some ups and downs, to the surface of the water.

At the sight of a purple blouse and an apricot yellow skirt emerging from the waves, the many swimmers rushed to the rescue. They retrieved from the water not one body but two. Four or five men carried them to shore holding each by the head and feet and said to Mr. Xi, "Luckily, we saved your son-in-law, too."

When Mr. and Mrs. Xi, the maidservants, and the nurse drew closer, they saw the two, thinly clad in the warm weather of the eighth month, face to face, chest to chest, shoulder to shoulder, thighs to thighs, in an embrace so tight that no one could pull them apart. However hard those around tried to wake them up, they gave no response. But the bodies were still slightly warm, looking neither dead nor alive. Mr. and Mrs. Xi were so panic-stricken that they had not the slightest idea what to do, and those members of the Xi clan who were at the scene collapsed in a heap, weeping. The onlookers, contending for a better view, commented that they had never seen anything so remarkable.

In the meantime, Le Meishan was at home when someone came to tell him that his son had been swallowed up by the waves while watching the bore at Fish-around. Horrified, Mr. Le Senior dragged himself to Spin-around, stumbling every step of the way. There, he heard that a man and a woman had been retrieved from the water and that the woman was Mr. Xi's daughter. Pushing through the crowd, Mr. Le reached the bodies and recognized his son Le He. "My child! My very own!" he cried. Bursting into loud sobs, he said, "My child! You couldn't have the one you loved, but who would have known that you would be reunited with her only after death!"

Mr. Xi asked him why he said such things. At Mr. Le's account of how, three years before, his son had stubbornly asked him to present a marriage proposal to the Xi family and then had vowed not to marry before Shunniang did, Mr. and Mrs. Xi said with displeasure, "With seven generations of officials in your family history, yours is a



况且两个幼年，曾同窗读书。有此说话，何不早说！如今大家叫唤，若唤得醒时，情愿把小女配与令郎。”两家一边唤女，一边唤儿，约莫叫唤了半个时辰，渐渐眼开气续，四只胳膊，兀自不放。乐公道：“我儿快苏醒，将仕公已许下，把顺娘配你为妻了。”说犹未毕，只见乐和睁开双眼道：“岳翁休要言而无信！”跳起身来，便向喜公、喜母作揖称谢。喜小姐随后苏醒。两口儿精神如故，清水也不吐一口。喜杀了喜将仕，乐杀了乐大爷。[眉批]全是潮王弄人。两家都将干衣服换了，顾个小轿抬回家里。

次日，到是喜将仕央媒来乐家议亲，愿赘乐和为婿，媒人就是安三老。乐家无不应允。择了吉日，喜家送些金帛之类，笙箫鼓乐，迎娶乐和到家成亲。夫妻恩爱，自不必说。满月后，乐和同顺娘备了三牲祭礼，到潮王庙去赛谢。喜将仕见乐和聪明，延名师在家，教他读书，后来连科及第。至今临安说婚姻配合故事，还传“喜乐和顺”四字。有诗为证：

少负情痴长更狂，却将情字感潮王。



distinguished family of long standing. What's more, the two of them studied together when they were children. Why didn't you tell us earlier what you said just now? Now let's try to revive them. If they come to, we'll be only too glad to marry our daughter to your son."

And so, Mr. and Mrs. Xi tried to wake their daughter, and Mr. Le tried to revive his son. After about an hour, the two youngsters gradually opened their eyes and began to breathe, but their four arms remained locked as firmly as before. Mr. Le Senior said, "My son, wake up! Mr. Xi has promised to marry Shunniang to you."

Before he had quite finished, Le He opened his eyes wide. "My father-in-law, you must not go back on your word!" So saying, he jumped up and bowed his thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Xi. Miss Xi also came to. The young couple looked as spirited as ever, nor did they need to spit out any water as those rescued from drowning usually do. Mr. Xi and Uncle Le were delighted beyond measure. (*This was all the work of the playful King of the Bores.*) The two families had the young couple change into dry clothes and hired small sedan-chairs to carry them home.

The next day, Mr. Xi took the initiative and sent a matchmaker to the Le family with the message that he would be glad to have Le He as a live-in son-in-law. The matchmaker was none other than An Sanlao. The Le family readily agreed to all the terms.

On a chosen auspicious day, the Xi family sent over lavish gifts, and amid the festive music of flutes and drums, a wedding procession escorted Le He to the Xi residence for the ceremony. The young couple's love for each other hardly needs more description here. One month later, Le He and Shunniang went to the Temple of the King of the Bores to make sacrificial offerings as a token of their gratitude.

Impressed by Le He's intelligence, Mr. Xi engaged a celebrated scholar to tutor him at home. Later, Le He passed the imperial civil service examinations at all levels. To this day, storytellers in Lin'an still use the four-character phrase "happy, joyous, harmonious, congenial" to describe blissful marriages. There is a poem in witness:

*His love for her grew with the years —  
 A love that moved the King of the Bores.*



钟情若到真深处，生死风波总不妨。





*...n love reaches the deepest depths,  
...ns of life and death can do it no harm.*

...aimen) in Zhejiang Province is where the Qiantang River flows into the sea. ...ng and Autumn period, Wu Zixu, a member of the aristocracy in the state of ...d by Fuchai, King of Wu, to take his own life as punishment for his remon- ...the king's policies. Legend has it that his remains, cast into the Qiantang River ...t, became the god of the bores. Hence the association of his angry soul with the ...s of the rising bores.

...ou (Thunder Prefecture), in Guangdong, is known for its frequent thunderstorms. ...erstorms of late spring were believed to be the ritual in which the Thunder God ...his drums.

...gends about the huge Changle Cave in Guangde, in present-day Anhui, have become ...udging from the first line in the next paragraph ("The first three wonders occur only once ..."), this must be a reference to a unique natural phenomenon associated with the cave.

Dengzhou is present-day Penglai, in Shandong Province.

<sup>4</sup> Rakshas are malignant spirits in Hindu mythology.

<sup>5</sup> Huang Chao (d.884) led a major peasant rebellion toward the end of the Tang dynasty.

<sup>6</sup> Qian Liu (852–932), a native of Hangzhou, was king of Wu and Yue from 907 to 932. For another, slightly different version of Qian Liu's life, see story 21 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> In Hinduism, a kalpa is the length of time of a complete cosmic cycle, from the origina- tion to the destruction of a world system.

<sup>8</sup> Su Shi (1037–1101), or Su Dongpo, is one of the greatest men of letters in the history of Chinese literature. See also story 3.

<sup>9</sup> During the Clear and Bright Festival, which usually falls in early April, people visit the graves of their ancestors.

<sup>10</sup> On the red thread of marriage, see note 2 of story 2.

<sup>11</sup> This is a reference to the story in *Stories about the Pillow*, by Shen Jiji of the Tang dy- nasty. In it, a man, while sleeping on a porcelain pillow given to him by an old man, dreams of a life of fame and fortune. When he wakes up, the yellow millet on the stove is still cooking.

<sup>12</sup> According to legend, every year, on the seventh day of the seventh month, magpies form a bridge across the Milky Way so that the Herdboy and Weaving Maiden stars can cross the sky and meet.

<sup>13</sup> The four treasures of the scholar's study are brush-pen, ink slab, ink stick, and rice paper.

<sup>14</sup> See note 2 of this story.

<sup>15</sup> The Duke of Bowang is Zhang Jian (d.114 B.C.), famous for his diplomatic missions a- long the Silk Road. Legend has it that on one of his expeditions, his raft took him to the Milky Way, where he met the Weaving Maiden star.