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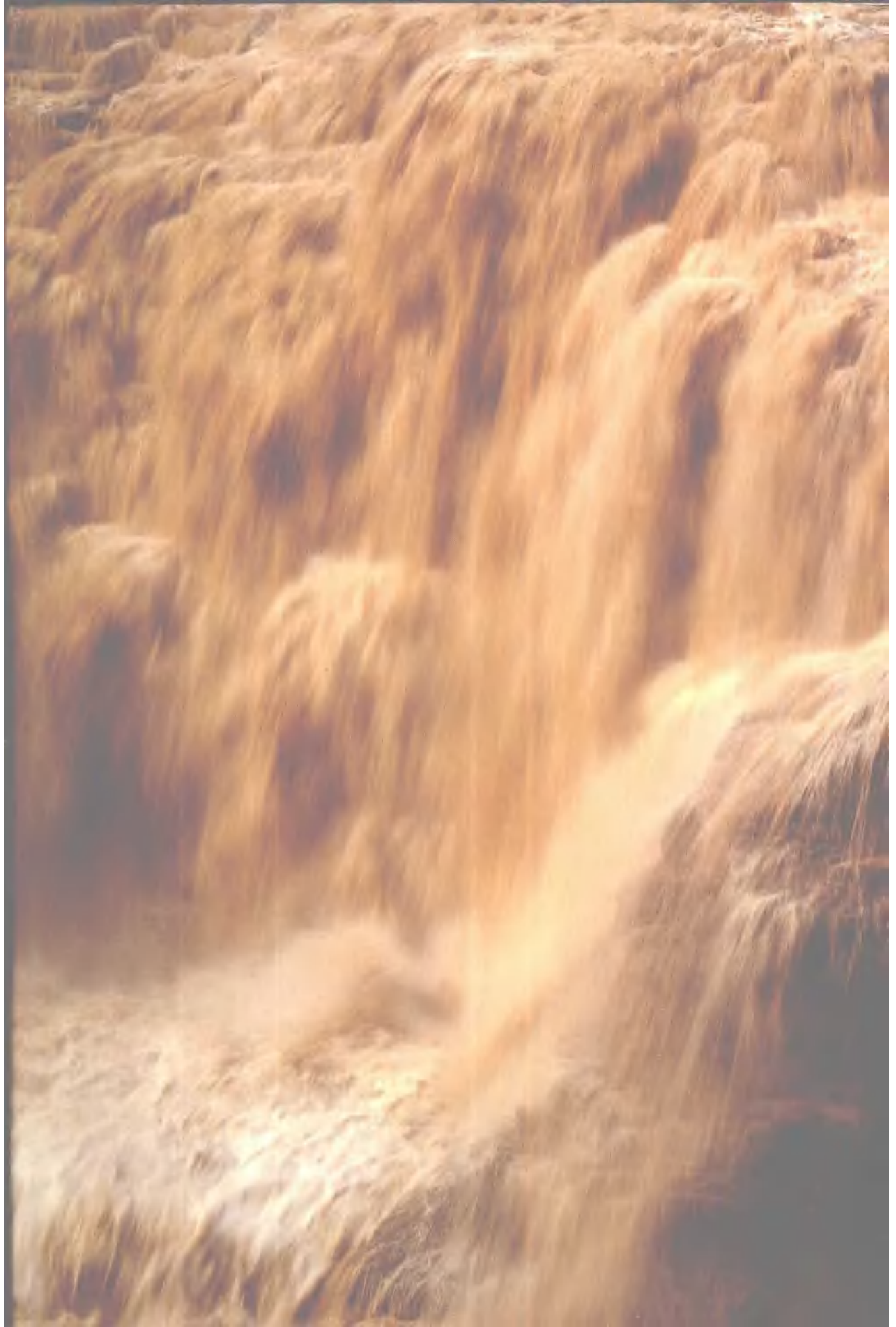
大中华文库

汉英对照

警世通言

STORIES TO CAUTION
THE WORLD

III



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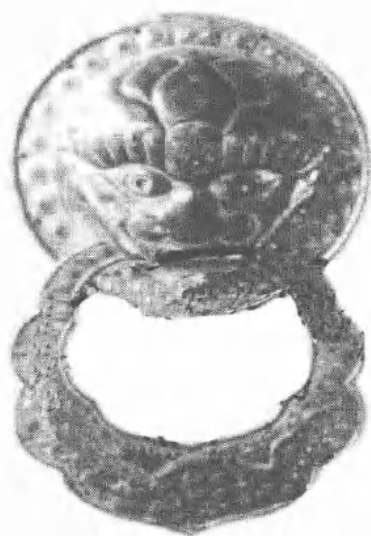
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Chinese-English

警世通言

Stories to Caution the World

III



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第二十四卷

玉堂春落难逢夫

与旧刻《王公子奋志记》不同

公子初年柳陌游，玉堂一见便绸缪。黄金数万皆消费，
红粉双眸枉泪流。财货拐，仆驹休，犯法洪同狱内囚。
按临驄马冤愆脱，百岁姻缘到白头。

话说正德年间，南京金陵城有一人，姓王，名琼，别号思竹，中乙丑科进士，累官至礼部尚书。因刘瑾擅权，劾了一本，圣旨发回原籍。不敢稽留，收拾轿马和家眷起身。王爷暗想：有几两俸银，都借在他人名下，一时取讨不及。况长子南京中书，次子时当大比，踌躇半晌，乃呼公子三官前来。那三官双名景隆，字顺卿，年方一十七岁。生得眉目清新，丰姿俊雅，读书一目十行，举笔即便成文，元是个风流才子。王爷爱惜胜如心头之气、掌上





Story 24

Yutangchun Reunites with Her Husband in Her Distress

(A different version of the traditional story
“Young Master Wang’s Assiduous Application of Himself”)

*In his youth, he toured the houses of pleasure;
At first sight, he lost his heart to Yutangchun.
All his heaps of gold went down the drain;
She shed bitter tears of grief in vain.*

*The jewelry taken, the page boys and horse gone,
She was thrown into Hongtong Prison.
Only when the inspector redressed her wrongs
Did they join in blissful, enduring marriage.*

Our story takes place during the Zhengde reign period [1506–22]. There was a man named Wang Qiong, courtesy name Sizhu, who was a native of Jinling, Nanjing. After passing the imperial civil service examinations as a *jinshi* in the year of *yichou* [1505], he rose through a series of promotions to be secretary of the Ministry of Rites. But because he wrote a memorial to the imperial court to demand impeachment of the power-abusing eunuch Liu Jin, the emperor ordered him to return to his native place, Nanjing. Not daring to remain in Beijing a moment longer, he packed and got the horses and carriages ready for his family. Before he set off on the journey, he thought, “I don’t have time to collect the small loans I made to others out of my salary.” Since his oldest son was occupied as a secretariat drafter in Nanjing and his second son was in the midst of the imperial examinations at the provincial level, he decided, after much hesitation, to summon his third son Jinglong, courtesy name Shunqing [to Beijing].

At seventeen years of age, the third young master had fresh features and a graceful deportment. He was able to read ten lines at one glance and write essays as fast as his brush-pen could go. A dashing young scholar he was. Mr. Wang Senior loved this son as he did the



之珍。当下王爷唤至，分付道：“我留你在此读书，叫王定讨帐，银子完日，作速回家，免得父母牵挂。我把这里帐目，都留与你。”叫王定过来，“我留你与三叔在此读书讨帐，不许你引诱他胡行乱为。〔眉批〕使王定可托，则三子不必留矣。若不可托，然又安能钳制三叔，使不胡行耶！吾若知道，罪责非小。”王定叩头说：“小人不敢。”次日收拾起程，王定与公子送别，转到北京，另寻寓所安下。公子谨依父命，在寓读书。王定讨帐。不觉三月有馀，三万银帐，都收完了。公子把底帐扣算，分厘不欠。分付王定，选日起身。公子说：“王定，我们事体俱已完了，我与你到大街上各巷口闲耍片时，来日起身。”王定遂即锁了房门，分付主人家用心看着生口。房主说：“放心，小人知道。”二人离了寓所，至大街观看皇都景致。但见：

人烟凑集，车马喧阗。人烟凑集，合四山五岳之音；车马喧阗，尽六部九卿之辈。做买做卖，总四方土产奇珍；闲荡闲



breath of his life and treasured him as he would a precious pearl in his palm.

As we were saying, Mr. Wang Senior summoned him and gave him these instructions: "I want you to stay here and continue with your studies while waiting for Wang Ding [a servant] to collect the debts. Return home as soon as the money is in, so that your mother and I won't worry. All the account books here I leave to you." He then called for Wang Ding and said to him, "You stay here with Third Young Master. He will be continuing with his studies while you collect the debts. Do not lure him into any wrongdoing. (*If Wang Ding is trustworthy, the third son need not stay. If Wang Ding is not trustworthy, how can he be expected to keep the young master from wrongdoings?*) If I find out about any mischief, you'll have much to answer for!"

Wang Ding said with a kowtow, "I would never dream of disobeying."

The next day, Wang Ding and the young master saw Mr. Wang Senior off on his journey before they returned to Beijing and moved to a temporary residence. Obeying his father's orders, the young master kept up his studies at his lodging while Wang Ding went about collecting debts. Before they knew it, three months had gone by, and Wang Ding had recovered all the debts, which came to thirty thousand taels of silver. Upon checking the amount collected against the amount recorded in the account books, the young master did not find the least discrepancy. He told Wang Ding to choose a day for departure, adding, "Wang Ding, now that our business is done, let's go out into the streets and have some fun before our departure tomorrow."

So Wang Ding locked the rooms and told the landlord to keep an eye on their draft animals. "Don't you worry!" said the landlord. "I'll take care of everything." Thereupon, the two ventured out to enjoy the sights and sounds of the capital. Behold:

*What a heaving mass of humanity,
 Speaking in the accents of all regions of the land!
 What a clatter the horse carriages make,
 Transporting officials of all the bureaus!*



游，靠万岁太平洪福。处处胡同铺锦绣，家家杯斝醉笙歌。

公子喜之不尽。忽然又见五七个宦家子弟，各拿琵琶、弦子，欢乐饮酒。公子道：“王定，好热闹去处！”王定说：“三叔，这等热闹，你还没到那热闹去处哩！”[眉批]王定惹事。二人前至东华门，公子睁眼观看，好锦绣景致。只见门彩金凤，柱盘金龙。王定道：“三叔，好么？”公子说：“真个好所在！”又走前面去，问王定：“这是那里？”王定说：“这是紫金城。”公子往里一视，只见城内瑞气腾腾，红光闪闪。看了一会，果然富贵无过于帝王，叹息不已。离了东华门往前，又走多时，到一个所在，见门前站着几个女子，衣服整齐。公子便问：“王定，此是何处？”王定道：“此是酒店。”乃与王定进到酒楼上，公子坐下。看那楼上有五七席饮酒的，内中一席有两个女子坐着同饮。公子看那女子，人物清楚，比门前站的更胜几分。公子正看中间，酒保将酒来，公子便问：“此女是那里来的？”酒保说：“这是一秤金家丫头翠香、翠红。”[眉批]酒保生事。三官道：“生得清气。”酒保说：“这等就说标致？他家里还有一个粉头，排行三姐，号玉堂春，有



*Traders deal in goods from all parts of the empire,
Idlers enjoy the bliss of those peaceful times.
The lanes and alleys are paved with brocade;
The houses echo with wine-induced singing.*

The young master was delighted beyond measure. Watching five or seven rich-looking young men merrily drinking, with stringed instruments in hand, he commented, "Wang Ding, what an exciting place this is!"

"Third Master," rejoined Wang Ding, "if you think this is exciting, you haven't seen anything yet!" (*What a troublemaker Wang Ding is!*) They wended their way to Donghua Gate, where the young master found himself dazzled by the sight of golden phoenixes and dragons carved on the gate and the columns.

"Third Master, do you like it?"

"Yes! This is wonderful!"

Farther down the street, he asked Wang Ding, "What's this place called?"

"This is the Forbidden City."

The young master looked inside and was impressed by the glittering red lanterns and auspicious air. He looked a while longer. Indeed, in terms of wealth and luxury, none exceeds the emperor. He sighed in admiration. After leaving Donghua Gate, they walked on and, a while later, came upon an establishment at the entrance of which stood several well-dressed women.

"Wang Ding," asked the young master. "What is this place?"

"This is a restaurant."

They went in. The young master took a seat and noticed that gathered around the tables, drinking, were five to seven groups of men, and one group included two girls even prettier than the ones who were standing in front. While he was staring at them, a waiter brought wine. "Where are these girls from?" he asked the waiter.

"They are Cuixiang and Cuihong. These girls are in Yichengjin's service." (*This waiter is another busybody.*)

"Pretty girls!" exclaimed Third Master.

"Well, if these two are pretty," said the waiter, "then you



十二分颜色。鸨儿索价太高，还未梳拢。”公子听说留心，叫王定还了酒钱，下楼去，说：“王定，我与你春院胡同走走。”王定道：“三叔不可去，老爷知道怎了！”公子说：“不妨，看一看就回。”乃走至本司院门首。果然是：

花街柳巷，绣阁朱楼。家家品竹弹丝，处处调脂弄粉。黄金买笑，无非公子王孙；红袖邀欢，都是妖姿丽色。正疑香雾弥天霭，忽听歌声别院娇。总然道学也迷魂，任是真僧须破戒。

公子看得眼花撩乱，心内踌躇，不知那是一秤金的门。正思中间，有个卖瓜子的小伙叫做金哥走来，公子便问：“那是一秤金的门？”金哥说：“大叔莫不是要耍？我引你去。”王定便道：“我家相公不嫖，莫错认了。”公子说：“但求一见。”那金哥就报与老鸨知道，老鸨慌忙出来迎接，请进待茶。王定见老鸨留茶，心下慌张，说：“三叔可回去罢！”老鸨听说，问道：“这位何人？”公子说：“是小价。”鸨子道：“大哥，你也进来吃茶去，



should see Third Sister, usually called Yutangchun, of the same house. Now that's a fine one to look at! But the madam asks too high a price for her, so she hasn't taken any clients yet."

The young master made a mental note of what he had just heard and had Wang Ding pay the bill. After going downstairs, he said, "Wang Ding, let's take a walk to the courtesans' quarters."

"No, no, Third Master! What if your father learns about this?"

"One quick look can't do any harm." And so, they walked to the entrance of the courtesans' quarters, which were registered with the Office of Music. Indeed,

*The streets are lined with flowers and willows
 Amid ornate houses and vermilion buildings.
 Music wafts from behind every door;
 Rouge and powder are applied to every face.
 Wealthy young men purchase laughter with gold;
 Coquettish women beckon with their red sleeves.
 As a fragrant mist spreads across the sky,
 Singing voices rise above the halls.
 Even moralists find themselves bewitched;
 Even the best monks break their vows.*

In a daze, the young master wondered which door was Yichengjin's. At this moment, a young melon-seed peddler called Jin'ge drew near. The young master asked him, "Which house is Yichengjin's?"

"So you want to have some fun, sir? I can take you there," offered Jin'ge.

"My young master is no patron of prostitutes," Wang Ding snapped. "Don't take him for that kind of man."

"But I do wish to visit," insisted the young master.

Promptly Jin'ge went to announce the visitor to the madam, who rushed out to greet the patron and invited him in for tea, an act of courtesy that horrified Wang Ding. "Third Master," he urged, "let's get out of here!"

Hearing this, the madam asked, "Who might this be?"

"He's my servant."



怎么这等小器！”公子道：“休要听他。”[眉批]王定真小器相，反令小主无颜。跟着老鸨往里就走。王定道：“三叔不要进去，俺老爷知道，可不干我事。”在后边自言自语。公子那里听他，竟到了里面坐下。老鸨叫丫头看茶。茶罢，老鸨便问：“客官贵姓？”公子道：“学生姓王，家父是礼部正堂。”老鸨听说，拜道：“不知贵公子，失瞻休罪。”公子道：“不碍，休要计较。久闻令爱玉堂春大名，特来相访。”老鸨道：“昨有一位客官，要梳梳小女，送一百两财礼，不曾许他。”公子道：“一百两财礼小哉！学生不敢夸大话，除了当今皇上，往下也数家父。就是家祖，也做过侍郎。”老鸨听说，心中暗喜。便叫：“翠红，请三姐出来见尊客！”翠红去不多时，回话道：“三姐身子不健，辞了罢。”老鸨起身带笑说：“小女从幼养娇了，直待老婢自去唤他。”王定在傍喉急，又说：“他不出来就罢了，莫又去唤。”老鸨不听其言，走进房中，叫：“三姐，我的儿，你时运到了！今有王尚书的公子特慕你而来。”玉堂春低头不语，慌得那鸨儿便叫：“我儿，王公子好个标



"Big Brother," said the madam, "please also come in for a cup of tea. Don't be a killjoy!"

"Just don't pay any attention to him," said the young master. (*Wang Ding is a killjoy. He makes his master lose face.*) With that remark, he followed the madam into the house.

"Third Master!" cried out Wang Ding. "Don't go in there! If your father finds out about this, I'll say I had no part in it!" And so he rattled on from behind. Turning a deaf ear to him, the young master marched straight in and sat down. The madam had a maid serve him tea, and after he drank it up, she asked, "What is your honorable surname?"

"My surname is Wang. My father is the secretary of the Ministry of Rites."

With a bow, the madam said, "I didn't know you were from such a distinguished family. Please forgive me for not showing you proper respect."

"That's all right. Don't take it to heart. I'm here because I've long heard of your daughter Yutangchun's fame and would like to see her."¹

"Yesterday, someone offered a hundred taels of silver to be her first patron, but I turned him down," said the madam.

"But a hundred taels is too little! I don't want to sound boastful, but apart from the emperor, my father is the richest man in the land. Even my grandfather was a vice-minister."

Concealing her delight at these words, the madam sent Cuihong the maid to escort Third Sister out to greet the honored guest. A short while later, Cuihong returned to say, "Third Sister is feeling indisposed and asks that she be excused."

The madam rose and said affably, "This little daughter of mine has been quite pampered since childhood. Let me go to get her myself."

Wang Ding off to one side was dismayed. He hastened to say, "It's all right if she doesn't come out. Don't bother to go and get her!"

Ignoring him, the madam went to the girl's room and called out, "Third Sister, my child! Your time has come! Secretary Wang's son is here expressly to see you!"

Yutangchun kept her head lowered and said nothing in response.



致人物，年纪不上十六七岁，囊中广有金银。你若打得上这个主儿，不但名声好听，也勾你一世受用。”玉姐听说，即时打扮，来见公子。临行，老鸨又说：“我儿，用心奉承，不要怠慢他。”玉姐道：“我知道了。”公子看玉堂春果然生得好：

鬓挽乌云，眉弯新月。肌凝瑞雪，脸衬朝霞。袖中玉笋尖尖，裙下金莲窄窄。雅淡梳妆偏有韵，不施脂粉自多姿。便数尽满院名姝，总输他十分春色。

玉姐偷看公子，眉清目秀，面白唇红，身段风流，衣裳清楚，心中也是暗喜。当下玉姐拜了公子。老鸨就说：“此非贵客坐处，请到书房小叙。”公子相让，进入书房，果然收拾得精致。明窗净几，古画古炉，公子却无心细看，一心只对着玉姐。鸨儿帮衬，教女儿推着公子肩下坐了，分付丫环摆酒。王定听见摆酒，一发着忙，连声催促三叔回去。老鸨丢个眼色与丫头：“请这大哥到房里吃酒。”[眉批]妙着。翠香、翠红道：“姐夫请进房里，我和



Exasperated, the madam cried, "My child, Mr. Wang is a handsome young man of only sixteen or seventeen, with deeply lined pockets. If you hang on to this patron, you'll not only build a nice reputation for yourself but also have enough money to last a lifetime."

Upon hearing these words, Sister Yu began to make herself up, so as to be ready to go and greet Young Master Wang. Before she left the room, the madam added, "My child, serve him well. Don't be negligent in any way."

"All right," said Sister Yu.

The young master found Yutangchun to be truly beautiful:

*She has dark clouds for hair, crescent moons for eyebrows;
 Her skin is like snow, her cheeks rosy clouds;
 Half-hidden in her sleeves, dainty bamboo-shoot hands;
 Underneath her skirt, tiny gold-lotus feet.
 An unassuming beauty with little makeup,
 Her charm needs no help from rouge and powder.
 None of the famed courtesans of the house
 Could in any way measure up to her.*

Stealing a glance at the young master, Sister Yu was secretly delighted to see that he was a well-dressed young man with refined features, a fair complexion, red lips, and a graceful bearing. After she bowed to the young master, the madam said, "This is no place for a distinguished guest. Let's go to the study for a little talk."

And so the young man let her take him into the study, which was, not surprisingly, an exquisitely furnished room, with bright windows, and clean tables, antique paintings, and incense burners. But Mr. Wang Junior was in no mood for admiring the furnishings. His heart was set on Sister Yu. To move matters along, the madam made the girl sit down by the young man's shoulder. She then ordered maids to set out wine. At the mention of wine, Wang Ding grew all the more alarmed. Over and over again, he urged Third Master to leave the place. Throwing the maids a significant look, the madam said, "Invite this gentleman to another room for a cup of wine." (*Wise move.*)

"Brother," said Cuixiang and Cuihong to Wang Ding, "let's go



你吃钟喜酒。”王定本不肯去，被翠红二人，拖拖拽拽扯进去坐了，甜言美语，劝了几杯酒。初时还是勉强，以后吃得热闹，连王定也忘怀了，索性放落了心，且偷快乐。

正饮酒中间，听得传语公子叫王定。王定忙到书房，只见杯盘罗列，本司自有答应乐人，奏动乐器，公子开怀乐饮。王定走近身边，公子附耳低言：“你到下处取二百两银子，四匹尺头，再带散碎银二十两，到这里来。”王定道：“三叔要这许多银子何用？”公子道：“不要你闲管。”王定没奈何，只得来到下处，开了皮箱，取出五十两元宝四个，并尺头、碎银，再到本司院说：“三叔，有了。”公子看也不看，都教送与鶺儿，说：“银两尺头，权为令爱初会之礼。这二十两碎银，把做赏人杂用。”王定只道公子要讨那三姐回去，用许多银子；听说只当初会之礼，吓得舌头吐出三寸。却说鶺儿一见许多东西，就叫丫头转过一张空桌。王定将银子、尺头，放在桌上，鶺儿假意谦让了一回，叫玉姐：“我儿，拜谢了公子。”又说：“今日是王公子，明日就是王姐夫



to another room for a cup of wine to celebrate the occasion.”

Over Wang Ding's objections, the two maids dragged him off. With sweet words, they plied him with one cup of wine after another. In the beginning, he complied grudgingly, but then, in the growing excitement, he threw all caution to the winds and gave himself up to the pleasures of the moment. In the course of the revelry, word came that Wang Ding was wanted by the young master. Wang Ding rushed to the study, where he saw a fine spread on the dinner table and a band of musicians provided by the house. Amid strains of music, the young master was drinking to his heart's content. When Wang Ding drew near him, he whispered into the servant's ear, "Go back to our lodging, take out two hundred taels of silver, four bolts of silk, and twenty taels of loose silver and bring them back here."

"Why do you need so much silver, Third Master?"

"That's none of your business."

Resignedly, Wang Ding went back to their lodging, opened a leather trunk, and took out four shoe-shaped ingots of silver weighing fifty taels each plus some silk fabric and loose silver. Upon returning to the courtesans' quarters, he announced to his master, "Third Master, what you asked for is all here."

Without even looking at what Wang Ding had brought, the young master ordered that everything be given to the madam. Then he said to her, "The silver and the fabric are a gift for your daughter, to mark the occasion of our first acquaintance. The twenty taels of loose silver are for you to use as tips and for miscellaneous purposes."

Wang Ding had thought that the young master needed all the silver so that he could bring the girl home as his wife. When he heard that it was simply to mark the occasion of their first acquaintance, he was so horrified that his tongue hung out three inches from his mouth. As for the madam, at the sight of the lavish gifts, she had the maids move over an empty table on which Wang Ding could put them down. After a show of demurrer, the madam said to Sister Yu, "My child, give Young Master Wang a bow of thanks." She then added, turning to the young man, "Today, I still call you Young Master Wang, but soon enough, you'll be known as Brother-in-law Wang!" After



了。”叫丫头收了礼物进去：“小女房中还备得有小酌，请公子开怀畅饮。”公子与玉姐肉手相换，同至香房，只见围屏小桌，果品珍羞，俱已摆设完备。公子上坐，鶯儿自弹弦子，玉堂春清唱侑酒。弄得三官骨松筋痒，神荡魂迷。[眉批]此第一日燥脾。王定见天色晚了，不见三官动身，连催了几次。丫头受鶯儿之命，不与他传。王定又不得进房，等了一个黄昏，翠红要留他宿歇，王定不肯，自回下处去了。公子直饮到二鼓方散。玉堂春殷勤伏侍公子上床，解衣就寝，真个男贪女爱，倒凤颠鸾，彻夜交情，不在话下。

天明，鶯儿叫厨下摆酒煮汤，自进香房，追红讨喜，叫一声：“王姐夫，可喜！可喜！”丫头、小厮都来磕头。公子分付王定，每人赏银一两。翠香、翠红各赏衣服一套，折钗银三两。王定早晨本要来接公子回寓，见他撒漫使钱，有不然之色。公子暗想：“在这奴才手里讨针线，好不爽利，索性将皮箱搬到院里，自家便当。”鶯儿见皮箱来了，愈加奉承。真个朝朝寒食，夜夜元宵，不



ordering the maids to take the gifts to the interior of the house, the madam said, "There's some more wine set out in my girl's room for the young master to enjoy."

Hand in hand, the young man and Sister Yu went to the latter's boudoir, where a small table, shielded by a folding screen, was laid out with fruit and delicacies. The young master took the seat of honor, and the madam played the *xianzi* [a three-stringed plucked instrument] while Yutangchun sang and kept refilling his wine cup, sending him into such raptures that his bones itched and his soul was transported with ecstasy. (*This is the first day his amorous desires are stirred.*)

The hour being late, Wang Ding grew anxious when the young master showed no signs of wishing to leave. By the madam's orders, the maids refused to relay to the young master his repeated pleas that they be on their way, nor did the women allow Wang Ding to enter the inner quarters. And thus he waited the whole evening. Cuihong offered to accommodate him for the night, but he refused and went back alone to his lodging. The young master kept on drinking until the second watch of the night. Yutangchun attended devotedly to his needs. She helped him take off his clothes and get into bed, where they indulged in sexual pleasures the whole night through, and there we shall leave them.

At daybreak, the madam had the kitchen staff set out wine and boil some hot water while she went into the boudoir with a reward in mind. "Brother-in-law Wang," she called out, "Congratulations!"

The maids and the page boys also went in to kowtow. Thereupon, the young master told Wang Ding who had returned early in the morning to escort the young master back to their lodging, to reward each one with a tael of silver. Cuixiang and Cuihong each also got a suit of clothes worth three taels of silver. Wang Ding was visibly displeased by such largesse. The young man thought to himself, "What a pain in the neck that flunky is! Why should I be begging him for money? I'd better have the leather trunk carried to this place so that I can do whatever I like with it."

The sight of the leather trunk further increased the madam's obse-



觉住了一个多月。老鸨要生心科派，设一大席酒，搬戏演乐，专请三官、玉姐二人赴席。鸨子举杯敬公子说：“王姐夫，我女儿与你成了夫妇，地久天长，凡家中事务，望乞扶持。”那三官心里只怕鸨子心里不自在，看那银子犹如粪土，凭老鸨说谎，欠下许多债负，都替他还。又打若干首饰酒器，做若干衣服，又许他改造房子。又造百花楼一座，与玉堂春做卧房。随其科派，件件许了。正是：

酒不醉人人自醉，色不迷人人自迷。

急得家人王定手足无措，三回五次，催他回去。三官初时含糊答应，以后逼急了，反将王定痛骂。王定没奈何，只得到求玉姐劝他。玉姐素知虔婆利害，也来苦劝公子道：“‘人无千日好，花有几日红？’你一日无钱，他番了脸来，就不认得你。”[眉批]玉姐劝，正自难得，然玉姐所以死守王生者，止念其不归之情耳。三官此时手内还有钱钞，那里信他这话。王定暗想：“心爱的人还不听他，我劝他则甚？”又想：“老爷若知此事，如何了得！不如回家报与



quiousness. Truly, every day was spent like a festival day, and quite unnoticeably, more than a month slipped by. With designs on more of Mr. Wang's money, the madam set out a grand feast, complete with music and theatrical performances, exclusively in honor of Third Master and Sister Yu. Raising her cup of wine, the madam offered a toast to the young patron, saying, "Brother-in-law Wang, now that my daughter and you have become husband and wife in an everlasting union, I'll be counting on you to help us with our household expenses."

Afraid of incurring the madam's displeasure, Third Master parted with his silver as if it were so much dung and dirt, paying all the debts the madam falsely claimed she owed, ordering jewelry, silverware, and clothes, renovating the house, and building a "Hundred Flowers Hall" for Yutangchun's private use. In short, he granted every request the madam made of him. Truly,

*Wine does not intoxicate;
 Men themselves fall ready prey.
 Beauty does not infatuate;
 Men themselves fall willing captives.*

At his wits' end, Wang Ding the servant repeatedly begged Third Master to go back to their lodging. In the beginning, Third Master fobbed him off with some evasive answer, but later, as the pressure grew, he turned the tables on Wang Ding and gave him a good tongue-lashing. Wang Ding saw nothing for it but to ask Sister Yu to intervene. Knowing all too well how unscrupulous the madam was, Sister Yu tried to talk some sense into the young man, saying, "As the proverb says, 'Whoever remains a saint after a thousand days? How long does a flower keep its color?' As soon as your money runs out, she'll turn against you. By then, don't expect mercy from her!" (*How unusual for someone in Sister Yu's position to say these words! Her devotion to him stems from gratitude for his determination to stay with her.*) Still well-stocked with silver at the time, Third Master turned a deaf ear to her admonitions.

Wang Ding thought, "He doesn't even listen to his beloved one, let alone me! Just imagine what will happen if his father finds out about this! I'd better go home and report it to the old master. Whatever



老爷知道，凭他怎么裁处，与我无干。”[眉批]此是良策，恨其晚也。王定乃对三官说：“我在北京无用，先回去罢！”三官正厌王定多管，巴不得他开身，说：“王定，你去时，我与你十两盘费，你到家中禀老爷，只说帐未完，三叔先使我来问安。”玉姐也送五两，鸨子也送五两。王定拜别三官而去。正是：

各人自扫门前雪，莫管他家瓦上霜。

且说三官被酒色迷住，不想回家。光阴似箭，不觉一年。亡八淫妇，终日科派。莫说上头、做生、讨粉头、买丫环，连亡八的寿坟都打得到，三官手内财空。亡八一见无钱，凡事疏淡，不照常答应奉承。又住了半月，一家大小作闹起来。老鸨对玉姐说：“‘有钱便是本司院，无钱便是养济院’。王公子没钱了，还留在此做甚！那曾见本司院举了节妇，你却呆守那穷鬼做甚！”玉姐听说，只当耳边之风。一日三官下楼往外去了，丫头来报与鸨子。鸨子叫玉堂春下来：“我问你，几时打发王三起身？”玉姐见话不



he decides to do, I won't be held accountable." (*Good move, but too late.*) To Third Master, Wang Ding said, "As I'm useless in Beijing, I'd better go home."

Third Master loathed Wang Ding for his meddlesomeness and couldn't wait to get rid of him. "Wang Ding, if you're going, let me give you ten taels of silver for your traveling expenses. Just tell Father that I haven't finished with business and that I sent you to pay my respects to him."

Sister Yu and the madam also gave Wang Ding five taels of silver each. Wang Ding bowed his farewell to Third Master and took himself off. Truly,

*Each sweeps the snow from his own doorstep
 And ignores the frost on his neighbor's roof.*

Wallowing in the pleasures of wine and sex, Third Master stayed on with never a thought of returning home.

Time flew by like an arrow. Quite unnoticeably, one year went by. The procurer and his wife the madam never ceased fleecing the young master, asking him to pay for the initiation of new girls, for birthday parties and wedding celebrations, for purchasing maidservants, and even for preparing the procurer's future grave site. At last, Third Master's resources ran out. As soon as he saw that Mr. Wang's means had been exhausted, the procurer's usual obsequiousness disappeared, and he turned his back on the young man. Two weeks later, a terrible racket broke out, led by the madam, who barked at Sister Yu, "You know what they say, 'The rich visit the brothels; the poor go to the poorhouses.' Mr. Wang has no money now. Why is he still hanging on here? Have you ever heard of a brothel supporting a paragon of virtue who maintains her loyalty to a miserable penniless wretch?"

Sister Yu treated these words like a puff of wind passing her ear. One day, while Third Master was out, a maidservant reported his absence to the madam, who then summoned Yutangchun downstairs and said to her, "Let me ask you something. When are you going to send that lowlife packing?"

Offended by the hostile tone, Sister Yu turned and went back



投机，复身向楼上便走。鸭子随即跟上楼来，说：“奴才，不理我么？”玉姐说：“你们这等没天理，王公子三万两银子，俱送在我家。若不是他时，我家东也欠债，西也欠债，焉有今日这等足用？”鸭子怒发，一头撞去，高叫：“三儿打娘哩！”亡八听见，不分是非，便拿了皮鞭，赶上楼来，将玉姐搡跌在楼上，举鞭乱打。打得髻偏发乱，血泪交流。

且说三官在午门外，与朋友相叙，忽然面热肉颤，心下怀疑，即辞归，径走上百花楼。看见玉姐如此模样，心如刀割，慌忙抚摩，问其缘故。玉姐睁开双眼，看见三官，强把精神挣着说：“俺的家务事，与你无干！”[眉批]可怜。三官说：“冤家，你为我受打，还说无干？明日辞去，免得累你受苦！”玉姐说：“哥哥，当初劝你回去，你却不依我。如今孤身在此，盘缠又无，三千馀里，怎生去得？我如何放得心？”[眉批]盘缠事小，还是不放心。你若不能还乡，流落在外，又不如忍气且住几日。”三官听说，闷倒在地。玉姐近前抱住公子，说：“哥哥，你今后休要下楼去，看那亡八、淫妇怎么样行来？”三官说：“欲待回家，难见父母兄嫂；



upstairs. The madam followed closely on her heels, saying, "You slave! Are you trying to cut me dead?"

Sister Yu shot back, "Don't you have any sense of decency? Mr. Wang spent thirty thousand taels of silver in this house. Had it not been for him, we would have been in debt here, there, and everywhere. How else could you ever have gotten where you are?"

In a transport of rage, the madam charged at her, head first, screaming, "Third One is beating up her mother!"

Upon hearing her cries, the procurer stormed up the stairs, a whip in hand. Without bothering to find out what had truly happened, he threw Sister Yu to the floor and flogged her until her hair came loose, and blood and tears flowed together.

In the meantime, Third Master was outside Wu Gate chatting with a friend. Suddenly, his face flushed red, and a shiver ran through him. Feeling apprehensive, he took leave of his friend. When he reached Hundred Flowers Hall and saw Yutangchun, he felt as if he had been stabbed with a knife. He rushed over and began stroking her, asking what had happened. Sister Yu opened her eyes. At the sight of Third Master, she said with forced cheerfulness, "This is a family matter. It doesn't concern you." (*Poor thing.*)

"My love, you were beaten because of me. How can you say this doesn't concern me? I'm leaving tomorrow so that you won't have to suffer so much!"

"My brother, I did advise you to go, but you didn't listen. And now, how are you going to make the three-thousand *li* journey without any money? How am I going to set my mind at rest? (*Money is less important than her peace of mind over his well-being.*) If you can't return home and will have to lead a vagrant life anyway, you're better off swallowing the insults and staying here for a few more days."

At these words, Third Master choked and collapsed. Sister Yu went over and held him in her arms, saying, "Brother, don't go downstairs any more. Let's wait and see what they are going to do about us."

Third Master lamented, "If I go home, I'll hardly be able to



待不去，又受不得亡八冷言热语，我又舍不得你；待住，那亡八、淫妇只管打你。”玉姐说：“哥哥，打不打你休管他，我与你是从小的儿女夫妻，你岂可一旦别了我！”看看天色又晚，房中往常时丫头秉灯上来，今日火也不与了。玉姐见三官痛伤，用手扯到床上睡了，一递一声长吁短气。三官与玉姐说：“不如我去罢！再接有钱的客官，省你受气。”玉姐说：“哥哥，那亡八、淫妇，任他打我，你好歹休要起身。哥哥在时，奴命在，你真个要去，我只一死。”二人直哭到天明。起来，无人与他碗水。玉姐叫丫头：“拿钟茶来与你姐夫吃。”鸨子听见，高声大骂：“大胆奴才，少打。叫小三自家来取。”那丫头、小厮都不敢来。玉姐无奈，只得自己下楼，到厨下盛碗饭，泪滴滴自拿上楼去，说：“哥哥，你吃饭来。”公子才要吃，又听得下边骂，待不吃，玉姐又劝。公子方才吃得一口，那淫妇在楼下说：“小三，大胆奴才，那有巧媳妇做出无米粥？”三官分明听得他话，只索隐忍。正是：

囊中有物精神旺，手内无钱面目惭。

却说亡八恼恨玉姐，待要打他，倘或打伤了，难教他挣钱；



face my parents, my brother, and my sister-in-law, but if I stay, the procurer's vicious words will be too much for me to take. I can't bear the thought of leaving you, and yet, with me here, they'll go on beating you."

"Brother, never mind about their beating me. You and I became husband and wife at such an early age, you can't abandon me and leave me here alone!"

Evening set in as they talked, but the maidservants had stopped bringing lamps up to them. Seeing Third Master so grief-stricken, Sister Yu pushed him to the bed to retire for the night. Heaving sigh after sigh, Third Master said to Sister Yu, "I'd better go, so that you can take on some rich clients and be spared more bullying."

"Brother, whatever the procurer and the madam do to me, don't leave me. If you're here, I'll go on living. If you go, I'll have to die."

The two of them wept until daybreak. After they got up, no one brought them anything, not even a bowl of water. Sister Yu called out to the maidservants, "Bring a cup of tea for your brother-in-law."

Upon hearing this, the madam shouted at the top of her voice, "The temerity of that slave! She's in for some more flogging! Let Third One come and get it herself!"

None of the maidservants dared go forward. Sister Yu saw nothing for it but to go downstairs to the kitchen herself, where she filled a bowl with rice and tearfully brought it upstairs.

"Brother," said she, "here's your bowl of rice."

The young master was about to start eating when he again heard curses from downstairs. He put the rice away, but Sister Yu insisted that he eat something. He had just taken a mouthful when the procuress screamed again from down below, "Third One, you slave, listen up! Have you ever heard of a clever housewife who could cook a meal without rice?"

The implication of these words certainly was not lost on Third Master, but he could do no more than swallow the humiliation. Truly,

High spirits come with a well-lined pocket;

Empty hands bring one nothing but shame.

Despite the procurer's annoyance with Sister Yu, he could not



待不打他，他又恋着王小三。十分逼的小三极了，他是个酒色迷了的人，一时他寻个自尽，倘或尚书老爷差人来接，那时把泥做也不干。左思右算，无计可施。鴛子说：“我自有妙法，叫他离咱们去。明日是你妹子生日，如此如此，唤做‘倒房计’。”亡八说：“到也好。”鴛子叫丫头楼上问：“姐夫吃了饭还没有？”鴛子上楼来说：“休怪！俺家务事，与姐夫不相干。”又照常摆上了酒。吃酒中间，老鴛忙陪笑道：“三姐，明日是你姑娘生日，你可禀王姐夫，封上人情，送去与他。”玉姐当晚封下礼物。第二日清晨，老鴛说：“王姐夫早起来，趁凉可送人情到姑娘家去。”大小都离司院，将半里，老鴛故意吃一惊，说：“王姐夫，我忘了锁门，你回去把门锁上。”公子不知鴛子用计，回来锁门不题。

且说亡八从那小巷转过来，叫：“三姐，头上吊了簪子。”哄的玉姐回头，那亡八把头口打了两鞭，顺小巷流水出城去了。三官回院，锁了房门，忙往外赶，看不见玉姐，遇着一伙人，公子



very well beat her again, because if she was injured in any way, she could hardly be a source of income for the house. But at the same time, if he spared her from beating, she would be glued to that Wang the Third, who, with a mind quite befuddled by wine and sex, was very likely to commit suicide. And if Secretary Wang should send for his son, they wouldn't be able to produce even a clay statue of the young man, completed and dry, at a moment's notice. So, turning his thoughts this way and that, he was not able to come up with a plan. The madam spoke up, "I have a wonderful idea that will make him clear out of here. Tomorrow being your sister's birthday, we can do thus and thus. This is known as the trick to 'shake the man off.'"

"All right," the procurer agreed.

At the madam's bidding, a maid went upstairs and asked if Brother-in-law had eaten. Then the madam herself went up. "Please don't take offense at what happened earlier. That was a family matter that doesn't concern Brother-in-law." Wine was laid out as before. In the course of the drinking, the madam said with an ingratiating smile, "Third Sister, tomorrow is your aunt's birthday. Please let Brother-in-law Wang know about this, so that he can go with us to offer her a birthday present."

Sister Yu prepared the present that very night. Early the next morning, the madam called out, "Brother-in-law Wang, get up! Let's go when it's still cool! We need to send the birthday present to the aunt's house!"

Everyone at the house set out on the journey. They had gone about half a *li* when the madam feigned alarm, saying, "Brother-in-law Wang, I forgot to lock the gate. Please go back and lock it." The unsuspecting young man did as he was told, but of him, more later.

At this point, the procurer appeared out of a small lane and called, "Third Sister, you dropped a hairpin!" Sister Yu fell for the trick and turned around to look. In the meantime, the procurer gave the animal she was riding two cracks of his whip, and it galloped with all speed out of the city gate.

After locking the gate, Third Master hastily continued on his



躬身便问：“列位曾见一起男女，往那里去了？”那伙人不是好人，却是短路的。见三官衣服齐整，心生一计，说：“才往芦苇西边去了。”三官说：“多谢列位。”公子往芦苇里就走。这人哄的三官往芦苇里去了，即忙走在前面等着。三官至近，跳起来喝一声，却去扯住三官，齐下手剥去衣服帽子，拿绳子捆在地上。三官手足难挣，昏昏沉沉，捱到天明，还只想了玉堂春，说：“姐姐，你不知在何处去，那知我在此受苦！”

不说公子有难，且说亡八、淫妇拐着玉姐，一日走了一百二十里地，野店安下。玉姐明知中了亡八之计，路上牵挂三官，泪不停滴。

再说三官在芦苇里，口口声声叫救命。许多乡老近前看见，把公子解了绳子，就问：“你是那里人？”三官害羞，不说是公子，也不说嫖玉堂春。浑身上下又无衣服，眼中吊泪说：“列位大叔，小人是河南人，来此小买卖，不幸遇着歹人，将一身衣服尽剥去了，盘费一文也无。”众人见公子年少，舍了几件衣服与他，又与了他一顶帽子。三官谢了众人，拾起破衣穿了，拿破帽子戴了。又不見玉姐，又没了一个钱，还进北京来，顺着房檐，低着头，从早至黑，水也没得口。三官饿的眼黄，到天晚寻宿，



way, but instead of seeing Sister Yu, he ran into a group of men. He asked them with a bow, "Did you see a group of people? Where did they go?"

Those men were by no means of the decent sort. In fact, they were bandits. Observing that Third Master was quite well dressed, they came up with a wicked plan. "They were going in a westerly direction toward the reed pond," they told him.

"Thank you all," said Third Master and started for the reed pond. Having tricked Third Master to go in that direction, the bandits hurried to get there before he did. And there they lay in ambush. When Third Master drew near, they jumped up with a shout and pounced on him. After stripping off his clothes and his hat, they trussed him up with ropes and threw him to the ground. Incapable of moving even a hand or a foot, Third Master lay there half-conscious until daybreak, thinking only of Yutangchun. "Sister," he moaned, "where are you? You have no idea what I'm going through!"

We shall leave the young master in his distress and come back to the procurer and the madam who had abducted Sister Yu. After covering a hundred and twenty *li* in a single day, they took up lodging at a wayside inn. Well aware by now that she had been tricked, Sister Yu wept as she went along, her thoughts on nothing but Third Master.

In the meantime, Third Master was still lying amid the reeds, crying out for help. Some local residents passing by saw him and untied the ropes. "Where are you from?" they asked.

Being completely naked, he was too ashamed to say he was from a distinguished family, or to admit he was a patron of the courtesan Yutangchun. Tearfully, he said, "Gentlemen, I'm a native of Henan, here on a trip for my small business. Unfortunately, I ran into some bandits, who stripped me of my clothes, and I don't have even one penny left."

The villagers gave the young man a few pieces of clothing and a hat. Thankfully, he rose and put on the rags and the tattered hat. With Sister Yu nowhere in sight and not a penny in his pocket, he made his way back to Beijing, walking under the eaves of the houses and keeping his head down. From morning to night, he had nothing to eat



又没人家下他。有人说：“想你这个模样子，谁家下你？你如今可到总铺门口去，有觅人打梆子，早晚勤谨，可以度日。”三官径至总铺门首，只见一个地方来雇人打更。三官向前叫：“大叔，我打头更。”地方便问：“你姓甚么？”公子说：“我是王小三。”地方说：“你打二更罢！失了更，短了筹，不与你钱，还要打哩！”三官是个自在惯了的人，贪睡了，晚间把更失了。地方骂：“小三，你这狗骨头，也没造化吃这自在饭，快着走。”三官自思无路，乃到孤老院里去存身。正是：

一般院子里，苦乐不相同。

却说那亡八、鴛子，说：“咱来了一个月，想那王三必回家去了，咱们回去罢。”收拾行李，回到本司院。只有玉姐每日思想公子，寝食俱废。鴛子上楼来，苦苦劝说：“我的儿，那王三已是往家去了，你还想他怎么？北京城内多少王孙公子，你只是想着王三不接客，你可知道我的性子，自讨分晓，我再不说你了。”



or drink, not even a drop of water. His eyes had turned yellow with hunger by nighttime, and when he tried to find lodging, no one wanted to put him up. A man said to him, "The way you look, who'd be willing to take you? But you might try the night patrol office. If they happen to need a night watchman, you'll be able to make a living if you work hard enough."

To the patrol office Third Master went. It just so happened that a local headman was there, looking for someone to strike the hours of the night. Third Master stepped forward and cried, "Uncle, let me strike the first watch of the night!"

The headman asked, "What's your name?"

"Wang the Third."

"I'll let you strike the second watch. If you miss the time, you'll get a beating instead of money."

Being a young man unaccustomed to discipline, he overslept and missed the watch that he was supposed to strike. The headman was furious. "Wang the Third!" he bellowed. "Your lazy bones are not meant for a nice job like this! Get out of my sight this instant!"

At his wits' end, the young man was reduced to seeking shelter in a poorhouse. Truly,

*From a house of pleasure to a house for the poor,
How these circumstances are worlds apart!*

Now back to the procurer and the madam. "We've been away for a month now," they conferring with each other. "That Wang the Third must have gone back to his hometown. Let's go home."

So they packed up and returned to the courtesans' quarters. But Sister Yu missed the young master so much that she could barely force herself to sleep and eat. The madam went upstairs and tried hard to change her mind, saying, "My child, that man Wang the Third is with his family now. Why do you still think about him? Goodness knows how many rich young men there are in Beijing, and yet you think only of him and refuse to see other patrons. Now, you know what kind of woman you're dealing with. You'd better come to your senses. I'm not going to have talks like this with you anymore." That said, the madam took herself off.



说罢自去了。玉姐泪如雨滴，想王顺卿手内无半文钱，不知怎生去了？“你要去时，也通个信息，免使我苏三常常挂牵。不知何日再得与你相见。”

不说玉姐想公子。且说公子在北京院讨饭度日。北京大街上有个高手王银匠，曾在王尚书处打过酒器。公子在虔婆家打首饰物件，都用着他。一日往孤老院过，忽然看见公子，唬了一跳，上前扯住，叫：“三叔！你怎么这等模样？”三官从头说了一遍，王银匠说：“自古狠心亡八！三叔，你今到寒家，清茶淡饭，暂住几日，等你老爷使人来接你。”三官听说大喜，随跟至王匠家中。王匠敬他是尚书公子，尽礼管待，也住了半月有馀。〔眉批〕少不得此口人。他媳妇见短，不见尚书家来接，只道丈夫说谎，乘着丈夫上街，便发说话：“自家一窝子男女，那有闲饭养他人！好意留吃几日，各人要自达时务，终不然在此养老送终。”三官受气不过，低着头，顺着房檐往外出来，信步而行。走至关王庙，猛省关圣最灵，何不诉他？乃进庙，跪于神前，诉以亡八、鸩儿负



Her tears falling like rain, Sister Yu could think only of Wang Shunqing struggling to survive without having even a penny. “Wherever you are,” she addressed him in her imagination, “you should have dropped me a message, so that I, Su San, wouldn’t have to worry so much. Oh, when will I ever see you again?”

Let us leave Sister Yu in her room, thinking of the young master, and return to the latter, who was living a beggar’s life in the poorhouse in Beijing. There was in the city a Mr. Wang, a very skilled silversmith, who had made some wine vessels for Secretary Wang as well as items of jewelry for Sister Yu’s madam. One day, walking past the poorhouse, he suddenly caught sight of the young master. Appalled, he stepped forward and grabbed the young man, exclaiming, “Third Master, why are you in such a state?”

Third Master told him the whole story, whereupon Silversmith Wang said, “Brothel procurers have always been known for their ruthlessness. Third Master, come with me to my humble home. You can share our simple food and stay with us for a few days until your father sends for you.”

Joyfully, Third Master followed Silversmith Wang home. Honoring him as Secretary Wang’s son, the silversmith treated him royally, and the better part of a month thus went by. (*Such a [Illegible] person can hardly be done without.*)

The silversmith’s small-minded wife, however, suspected her husband of lying because no one from Secretary Wang’s family had as yet shown up to claim the third son. While her husband was out one day, she set her bitter tongue to work. “We have our own family to take care of,” she said. “Where are we supposed to find the food to feed an extra mouth? Out of the goodness of our hearts, we offered him room and board for a few days, but one should be sensible. He can’t very well expect us to support him until he dies of old age.”

This insult was too much for Third Master. Keeping his head down, he left the house, walking under the eaves, and began to wander aimlessly. When his steps took him past Lord Guan’s temple, ²he suddenly recalled that the saintly Guan Yu was said to be most responsive to prayers. Why not pray to him? Into the temple he went.



心之事。[眉批] 无聊之极。拜祷良久，起来闲看两廊画的三国功劳。

却说庙门外街上，有一个小伙儿叫云：“本京瓜子，一分一桶；高邮鸭蛋，半分一个。”此人是谁？是卖瓜子的金哥。[眉批] 关圣有灵，遣金哥来也。金哥说道：“原来是年景消疏，买卖不济。当时本司院有王三叔在时，一时照顾二百钱瓜子，转的来，我父母吃不了。自从三叔回家去了，如今谁买这物？二三日不曾发市，怎么过？我到庙里歇歇再走。”[眉批] 此败子遗爱碑。金哥进庙里来，把盘子放在供桌上，跪下磕头。三官却认得是金哥，无颜见他，双手掩面，坐于门限侧边。金哥磕了头，起来，也来门限上坐下。[眉批] 情节好。三官只道金哥出庙去了，放下手来，却被金哥认出，说：“三叔！你怎么在这里？”三官含羞带泪，将前事道了一遍。金哥说：“三叔休哭，我请你吃些饭。”三官说：“我得了饭。”金哥又问：“你这两日，没见你三婶来？”三官说：“久不相见了！金哥，我烦你到本司院密密的与三婶说，我如今这等穷，看他怎么说，回来复我。”金哥应允，端起盘，往外就走。三



On his knees before Guan Yu's statue, he poured out an account of the treachery of the procurer and his wife. (*Silly! Silly!*) After much praying, he finally rose and idly examined the walls on which were painted scenes from stories about the Three Kingdoms period.

In the meantime, out on the street by the temple gate, a young lad was crying, "Beijing melon seeds! One penny a box! Gaoyou duck eggs! Half a penny each!" Who was this lad? He was none other than Jin'ge, peddler of melon seeds. (*It was Lord Guan, in his divine power, who sent Jin'ge along.*) "What a bad time for business!" Jin'ge thought to himself. "When Third Master was in the courtesans' quarters, he would buy my melon seeds for two hundred cash at a time, and I made more than enough to feed my parents. But ever since he went home, nobody has been buying from me. (*A tribute to that spendthrift.*) I haven't sold anything the last couple of days. How am I going to survive? Well, let me take a rest in the temple before moving on."

So thinking, Jin'ge stepped into the temple, put his tray on the altar, fell to his knees, and started kowtowing. Third Master recognized him but, too ashamed to greet him, sank down in one corner by the threshold, his hands covering his face. Jin'ge rose after finishing his kowtows and also sat down on the threshold. (*The plot thickens.*) Thinking that the lad must have left the temple by now, Third Master lowered his hands, only to be recognized by Jin'ge.

"Third Master!" the boy exclaimed. "Why are you in this place?"

Tearfully, a shamefaced Third Master told him what had happened.

"Don't cry, Third Master. Let me treat you to a meal."

"I've eaten."

"You haven't seen Third Sister-in-law these last couple of days?"

"No. In fact, I haven't seen her for a long time. Jin'ge, could you do me a favor? Please go to the courtesans' quarters and quietly tell Third Sister-in-law how poor I am now. And then come back here and let me know her reaction."

Jin'ge promised to do as he'd been told. He picked up his tray and made for the street, but Third Master added, "When you're



官又说：“你到那里看风色，他若想我，你便题我在这里如此。若无真心疼我，你便休话，也来回我。[眉批]学乖了，如今才省得。他这人家有钱的另一样待，无钱的另一样待。”金哥说：“我知道。”辞了三官，往院里来，在于楼外边立着。

说那玉姐手托香腮，将汗巾拭泪，声声只叫：“王顺卿，我的哥哥！你不知在那里去了？”金哥说：“呀，真个想三叔哩！”咳嗽一声，玉姐听见，问：“外边是谁？”金哥上楼来，说：“是我。我来买瓜子与你老人家嗑哩！”玉姐眼中吊泪，说：“金哥，纵有羊羔美酒，吃不下，那有心绪嗑瓜仁！”金哥说：“三婶！你这两日怎么淡了？”玉姐不理。金哥又问：“你想三叔，还想谁？你对我说，我与你接去。”玉姐说：“我自三叔去后，朝朝思想，那里又有谁来？我曾记得一辈古人。”金哥说：“是谁？”玉姐说：“昔有个亚仙女，郑元和为他黄金使尽，去打莲花落。后来收心勤读诗书，一举成名。那亚仙风月场中显大名。我常怀亚仙之心，怎得三叔他像郑元和方好。”金哥听说，口中不语，心内自思：



there, be sure to watch out for her reaction before you say anything. If she misses me, you can tell her about my situation. If she doesn't really care about me, don't tell her anything but just come back and let me know what she says. I say this because those who live in that place treat the rich and the poor differently." (*He has learned his lesson, though belatedly.*)

"I know," said Jin'ge.

After taking leave of Third Master, Jin'ge went to the courtesans' quarters and stood under Sister Yu's window. Sister Yu was there, resting her lovely chin on one hand and wiping away her tears with a handkerchief while crying over and over again, "Wang Shunqing, my brother! Where are you?"

Jin'ge thought, "So, she does miss Third Master!" He gave a cough. Hearing the cough, Sister Yu asked, "Who is it outside?"

Jin'ge went up the stairs and said, "It's me, here to offer you some melon seeds."

Tearfully, Sister Yu replied, "Jin'ge, I don't have the stomach for even the choicest mutton and the best wine, let alone melon seeds!"

"Third Sister-in-law, why have you lost weight?"

Sister Yu ignored the question.

"Apart from Third Master, what other person do you miss? Tell me, and I'll get him for you."

"Ever since Third Master left, he has never been absent from my thoughts. How can I think about anyone else? But I do recall the story about some people in the old days."

"Who are they?"

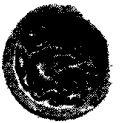
"In the old days, there was a girl called Li Yaxian.³ A man called Zheng Yuanhe spent all his money on her and was reduced to singing 'The Lotus Petals Fall,' a beggar's song, as a hired mourner. Later, he changed his ways and took up his studies. After he passed the examinations on the first try, Li Yaxian became a celebrated name in the courtesans' circle. I often imagine myself to be Li Yaxian, hoping that Third Master will go the way of Zheng Yuanhe."

Jin'ge did not say anything out loud but thought to himself,



“王三到也与郑元和相像了，虽不打莲花落，也在孤老院讨饭吃。”金哥乃低低把三婶叫了一声，说：“三叔如今在庙中安歇，叫我密密的报与你，济他些盘费，好上南京。”玉姐唬了一惊：“金哥休要哄我。”金哥说：“三婶，你不信，跟我到庙中看看去。”玉姐说：“这里到庙中有多少远？”金哥说：“这里到庙中有三里地。”玉姐说：“怎么敢去？”又问：“三叔还有甚话？”金哥说：“只是少银子钱使用，并没甚话。”玉姐说：“你去对三叔说，十五日在庙里等我。”金哥去庙里回复三官，就送三官到王匠家中，“倘若他家不留你，就到我家去。”幸得王匠回家，又留住了公子不题。

却说老鸨又问：“三姐！你这两日不吃饭，还是想着王三哩！你想他，他不想你。我儿好痴，我与你寻个比王三强的，你也新鲜些。”玉姐说：“娘！我心里一件事不得停当。”鸨子说：“你有甚么事？”玉姐说：“我当初要王三的银子，黑夜与他说话，指着城隍爷爷说誓，如今等我还了愿，就接别人。”老鸨问：“几时去还愿？”玉姐道：“十五日去罢！”老鸨甚喜，预先备下香烛纸马。等到十五日，天未明，就叫丫头起来：“你与姐姐烧下水洗



“Wang the Third is going the way of Zheng Yuanhe all right. He may not actually be singing as a hired mourner, but he’s not doing much better in a poorhouse.” In a low voice, he said, “Third Sister-in-law, Third Master has taken up lodging in a temple and wants me to ask you secretly to give him money for a trip to Nanjing.”

Sister Yu gave a start. “Jin’ge, you must be joking.”

“Third Sister-in-law, if you don’t believe me, follow me to the temple and see for yourself.”

“How far is it from here to the temple?”

“About three *li*.”

“I wouldn’t dare to go. But what more did Third Master say?”

“Just that he had no money. He didn’t say much else.”

“Go tell Third Master to wait for me in the temple on the fifteenth day of the month.”

Jin’ge went back to the temple to report to Third Master. He then took the latter to Silversmith Wang’s home. “If he doesn’t keep you,” he said to Third Master, “you can always come to my home.” Luckily, Silversmith Wang returned at this point and kept the young master in his house, and there we shall leave them.

In the meantime, the madam said to Sister Yu, “You’ve been refusing to eat the last couple of days. Are you still obsessed with that Wang the Third? Well, you may miss him, but he doesn’t miss you. What a foolish girl you are! I’ll find you someone better than him, and it’ll be a new experience for you, too.”

“Mother, there’s one thing that bothers me.”

“What is it?”

“Back when I was taking all that money from Wang the Third, in one of our conversations at night, I made a vow to the city god. So I must redeem my vow and take some offerings to the city god before I accept another patron.”

“When do you want to go?”

“Let’s make it the fifteenth.”

Merrily, the madam went about preparing the necessary incense, candles, and paper horses. When the fifteenth day of the month rolled around, she awakened a maidservant before dawn, saying, “Go heat



脸。”玉姐也怀心，起来梳洗，收拾私房银两，并钗钏首饰之类，叫丫头拿着纸马，径往城隍庙里去。进的庙来，天还未明，不见三官在那里。那晓得三官却躲在东廊下相等。先已看见玉姐，咳嗽一声。玉姐就知，叫丫头烧了纸马，“你先去，我两边看看十帝阎君。”玉姐叫了丫头转身，径来东廊下寻三官。三官见了玉姐，羞面通红。玉姐叫声：“哥哥王顺卿，怎么这等模样？”两下抱头而哭。玉姐将所带有二百两银子东西，付与三官，叫他置办衣帽，买骡子，再到院里来，“你只说是从南京才到，休负奴言。”二人含泪各别。玉姐回至家中，鸨子见了，欣喜不胜，说：“我儿还了愿了？”玉姐说：“我还了旧愿，发下新愿。”鸨子说：“我儿，你发下甚么新愿？”玉姐说：“我要再接王三，把咱一家子死的灭门绝户，天火烧了。”[眉批]好誓愿。鸨子说：“我儿这愿，忒发得重了些。”从此欢天喜地不题。

且说三官回到王匠家，将二百两东西，递与王匠。王匠大喜，随即到了市上，买了一身衲帛衣服，粉底皂靴，绒袜，瓦楞帽子，青丝绦，真川扇，皮箱，骡马，办得齐整。把砖头瓦片，用布包



up some water so your sister can wash her face.”

Her mind also preoccupied with this event, Sister Yu rose and did her toilette. After putting together her private savings and pieces of jewelry, she made straight for the temple of the city god, with the maid carrying the paper horses. The sky had not yet brightened when she arrived in the temple. Third Master was nowhere in sight, but he was in fact hiding in the eastern corridor. Seeing her first, he gave a cough. Sister Yu knew it was him and told the maid to burn the paper horses, adding, “You go ahead first. I want to look at the statues of the gods and the king of hell in the corridors on both sides.”

Having disposed of the maid, Sister Yu turned toward the eastern corridor to look for Third Master. At the sight of her, he reddened with shame. “Wang Shunqing my brother,” she exclaimed, “why are you in such a state?” They fell on each other’s shoulders and wept. Sister Yu gave him her two hundred taels of silver as well as other articles she had brought and told him to buy clothes, hats, and a mule and return to the courtesans’ quarters. “Just say that you have only recently come from Nanjing. Be sure to do as I say.” With that, they took tearful leave of each other.

The madam was beside herself with joy upon seeing Sister Yu returning to the quarters. “My child,” said she, “so you have redeemed your vow?”

“Yes. Not only that, I also made a new vow.”

“What’s the new vow, my child?”

“That if ever I receive that Wang the Third again, this whole family will die off, and the entire household will be burned by heavenly fire.” (*A good vow.*)

“Well, you’re certainly overstating it, my child.”

Let us leave the madam in her rapture and come back to Third Master, who returned to Silversmith Wang’s home and gave him the two hundred taels and other valuable items. The silversmith went joyfully to the marketplace and bought the young master a suit of clothes made of patterned silk, a pair of black boots with thick, white soles, a pair of woolen socks, a tile-shaped hat, a blue silk ribbon, a genuine Sichuan fan, a leather trunk, and a mule and a horse. After



裹，假充银两，放在皮箱里面。收拾打扮停当，雇了两个小厮跟随，就要起身。王匠说：“三叔！略停片时，小子置一杯酒饯行。”公子说：“不劳如此，多蒙厚爱，异日须来报恩。”三官遂上马而去。

妆成圈套入衙衙，鴛子焉能不强从。

亏杀玉堂垂念永，固知红粉亦英雄。

却说公子辞了王匠夫妇，径至春院门首，只见几个小乐工都在门首说话。忽然看见三官气象一新，唬了一跳，飞风报与老鸨。老鸨听说，半晌不言：“这等事怎么处！向日三姐说，他是宦家公子，金银无数，我却不信，逐他出门去了。今日到带有金银，好不惶恐人也！”左思右想，老着脸走出来见了三官，说：“姐夫从何而至？”一手扯住马头。公子下马唱了半个喏，就要行，说：“我伙计都在船中等我。”老鸨陪笑道：“姐夫好狠心也。就是寺破僧丑，也看佛面，纵然要去，你也看看玉堂春。”公子道：“向



these items were duly purchased, the silversmith set to wrapping bricks and tiles in pieces of cloth so they would pass as pieces of silver. They were then put into the leather trunk.

The packing done and his personal toilette finished, the young master hired two page boys to accompany him on his journey. He was about to depart when Silversmith Wang said, "Wait, Third Master! Let me offer you a farewell cup of wine."

"Oh, don't go to such trouble. I'm much indebted to you for your kindness. Some day, I'll come back to repay this debt of gratitude." So saying, he mounted the horse and rode off.

*Laying a trap, he rode into the lane;
 Madam could hardly resist the decoy.
 Applaud Sister Yu's constancy in love;
 What true heroines women can be!*

Now, having taken leave of the silversmith and his wife, the young master sallied forth to the courtesans' quarters, where several young musicians were chatting at the gate. Startled by Third Master's pomp and show, a far cry from the wretched state in which they had last seen him, they went with all speed to alert the madam.

At their report, the madam was at a loss for words for a good while. "What am I going to do about this?" she thought. "Third Sister had indeed said that he was from a distinguished official's family, with more gold and silver than they could count. I didn't believe her and kicked him out. And now he's coming back, loaded with money. How terrifying!" Turning her thoughts this way and that, she decided to brazen it out. Stepping outside, she called out, "Brother-in-law, where did you just come from?" So saying, she reached out and held his horse by the reins.

The young master dismounted, chanted a greeting, and made as if to leave again, saying, "My men are all waiting for me in the boat."

With an ingratiating smile, the madam said, "Brother-in-law, how heartless you are! As they say, even if the temple is run down and the monks are ugly, due respect should still be paid to the Buddha's statue. If you have to go, shouldn't you see Yutangchun first?"



日那几两银子值甚的，学生岂肯放在心上？我今皮箱内，见有五万银子，还有几船货物，伙计也有数十人，有王定看守在那里。”鸨子一发不肯放手了。公子恐怕掣脱了，将机就机，进到院门坐下。鸨儿分付厨下忙摆酒席接风。三官茶罢，就要走，故意拈出两锭银子来，都是五两头细丝。三官检起，袖而藏之。鸨子又说：“我到了姑娘家，酒也不曾吃，就问你，说你往东去了，寻不见你，寻了一个多月，俺才回家。”公子乘机便说：“亏你好心，我那时也寻不见你。王定来接我，我就回家去了。我心上也欠挂着玉姐，所以急急而来。”老鸨忙叫丫头去报玉堂春。丫头一路笑上楼来，玉姐已知公子到了，故意说：“奴才笑甚么？”丫头说：“王姐夫又来了。”玉姐故意唬了一跳，说：“你不要哄我！”不肯下楼。老鸨慌忙自来，玉姐故意回脸往里睡。鸨子说：“我的亲儿！王姐夫来了，你不知道么？”玉姐也不语，连问了四五声，只不答应。这一时待要骂，又用着他。扯一把椅子拿过来，一直坐



“Well, those few taels of silver that I spent here were such a pittance that I’m not going to give them a second thought. In that leather trunk of mine, I have fifty thousand taels of silver. And I’ve also got several boats filled with goods and tens of employees under Wang Ding’s supervision.”

The madam tightened her grip on the horse’s reins.

Afraid of losing his advantage, the young master decided to play into the madam’s hands. He passed through the gate and sat down. The madam quickly ordered the kitchen staff to set out a welcome feast. As soon as he finished his tea, he rose as if to go, but as he did, he deliberately dropped two ingots of silver, both of fine quality and weighing five taels each. He picked them up and slipped them up his sleeve.

“When I arrived at my sister-in-law’s house,” said the madam, “I asked about you before I even took a cup of wine. I was told that you had headed for the east, but you were nowhere to be found. We searched for you for more than a month before returning here.”

Seeing his chance, the young master said, “You do have a kind heart. What happened was that I also failed to find you anywhere in sight. But Wang Ding came for me, so I followed him home. However, Sister Yu is still on my mind. That’s why I came all the way in such haste.”

The madam promptly ordered a maid to take the news to Yutangchun. The maid giggled all the way up the stairs.

Sister Yu, knowing all too well that the young master was there, said with calculated innocence, “What are you giggling about, girl?”

“Brother-in-law Wang is back!”

Feigning surprise, Sister Yu said, “You’re trying to fool me!” and refused to go down. In alarm, the madam rushed upstairs, only to find Sister Yu lying in bed, facing the wall.

“My darling!” cried the woman. “Don’t you know that Brother-in-law Wang is here?”

Sister Yu remained silent and turned a deaf ear to the madam’s question, which was repeated four or five times. The madam would have liked to give Sister Yu a tongue-lashing but held back, for she



下，长吁了一声气。玉姐见他这模样，故意回过头起来，双膝跪在楼上，说：“妈妈！今日饶我这顿打。”老鸨忙扯起来说：“我儿！你还不知道，王姐夫又来了，拿有五万两花银，船上又有货物并伙计数十人，比前加倍。你可去见他，好心奉承。”玉姐道：“发下新愿了，我不去接他。”鸨子道：“我儿！发愿只当取笑。”一手挽玉姐下楼来，半路就叫：“王姐夫，三姐来了。”三官见了玉姐，冷冷的作了一揖，全不温存。老鸨便叫丫头摆桌，取酒斟上一钟，深深万福，递与王姐夫：“权当老身不是。[眉批]说得轻便。可念三姐之情，休走别家，教人笑话。”三官微微冷笑，叫声：“妈妈，还是我的不是。”老鸨殷勤劝酒，公子吃了几杯，叫声多扰，抽身就走。翠红一把扯住，叫：“玉姐，与俺姐夫陪个笑脸。”老鸨说：“王姐夫，你忒做绝了。丫头，把门顶了，休放你姐夫出去。”叫丫头把那行李抬在百花楼去。就在楼下重设酒席，笙琴细乐，又来奉承。吃了半更，老鸨说：“我先去了，让你夫妻二人叙话。”三官、玉姐正中其意，携手登楼。



had a use for the girl. Pulling over a chair, she sank down on it and heaved a deep sigh. Quite aware of the madam's movements, Sister Yu purposely turned around, rose from bed, and dropped to her knees, pleading, "Mother, please don't beat me!"

Hastily, the madam pulled her up and said, "My child! Listen! Brother-in-law Wang is back! He has brought along fifty thousand taels of silver, of fine quality, too. And he has boats laden with goods, and tens of employees. It's a much grander show than before! You must go greet him and serve him well."

"But I have made a new vow. I won't see him."

"My child! Just pretend that the vow was made in jest." With one swipe of her hand, she grabbed Sister Yu and dragged her along, crying out halfway down the stairs, "Brother-in-law Wang! Third Sister is here!"

At the sight of Sister Yu, Third Master clasped his hands in a gesture of greeting, icy and aloof, with none of his usual attentiveness. The madam had the maidservants set out a table, and, with a deep bow, she poured a cup of wine and offered it to Wang, saying, "Just put all the blame on me. (*Lightly said!*) But for the sake of Third Sister, please don't go to any other place. People will laugh."

With a slight, sardonic smile, Third Master said, "Mother, I am the one to blame." The madam busily plied him with wine, and he downed a few cups before rising as if to go, saying, "Sorry to have bothered you." With alacrity, the maidservant Cuihong grabbed him and cried, "Sister Yu, please give Brother-in-law a smile!"

"Brother-in-law Wang," ejaculated the madam, "you are being unreasonable!" To the maid, she said, "You, bolt the door. Don't let him out!" Then she had the young man's baggage carried to Sister Yu's quarters. Another feast was laid out downstairs, complete with an orchestra playing soft music. The madam continued to dance attendance on the young master as the feast progressed. About an hour later, she said, "I have to go. I'll leave you, husband and wife, to have a little talk between yourselves."

Her departure could not have suited the couple better. Hand in hand, Third Master and Sister Yu ascended the stairs. It was like



如同久旱逢甘雨，好似他乡遇故知。

二人一晚叙话，正是“欢娱嫌夜短，寞寂恨更长”。不觉鼓打四更，公子爬起来，说：“姐姐！我走罢！”玉姐说：“哥哥！我本欲留你多住几日，只是留君千日，终须一别。今番作急回家，再休惹闲花野草。见了二亲，用意攻书。倘或成名，也争得这一口气。”玉姐难舍王公子，公子留恋玉堂春。玉姐说：“哥哥，你到家，只怕娶了家小不念我。”三官说：“我怕你在北京另接一人，我再来也无益了。”玉姐说：“你指着圣贤爷说了誓愿。”两人双膝跪下。公子说：“我若南京再娶家小，五黄六月害病死了。”玉姐说：“苏三再若接别人，铁锁长枷永不出世。”就将镜子拆开，各执一半，日后为记。玉姐说：“你败了三万两银子，空手而回，我将金银首饰器皿，都与你拿去罢。”[眉批]路费足矣，要首饰器皿何用？三官说：“亡八、淫妇知道时，你怎打发他？”玉姐说：“你莫管我，我自有主意。”玉姐收拾完备，轻轻的开了楼门，送公子出去了。

天明，鸨儿起来，叫丫头烧下洗脸水，承下净口茶，“看你



*Having sweet rains after a long drought;
Meeting an old friend in an alien land.*

They spent the whole night talking. It was indeed a case of "In joy, the night slips by all too quickly; in loneliness, the hours drag on, dawn never comes." Before they knew it, it was already the fourth watch of the night. The young master rose from bed and said, "Sister, I have to go!"

"Brother, how I wish to keep you for a few more days, but no matter how long I keep you, even for a thousand days, we will have to part. Now, go home quickly and have no more amorous adventures. Once you are back with your parents, you should study hard. If you make a name for yourself, you'll be able to hold up your head."

Neither of them could bear to part with the other. Sister Yu said, "Brother, what I dread most is that once you're home, you'll get yourself a wife, start a family, and forget all about me."

"What I dread most is that *you* will take on another patron here in Beijing. There won't be any point in my coming again then."

"Why don't you make a vow to the gods?" suggested Sister Yu.

Both knelt down. The young master said, "I pledge that if ever I marry another woman in Nanjing, I shall die of illness at the height of summer."

"I, Su San," said Sister Yu, "pledge that if ever I take on another patron, I should be locked up under a long cangue and an iron padlock till the end of time."

That said, they took apart a double-mirror, and each kept one half as a token. Sister Yu said, "Now that you are going home empty-handed after squandering thirty thousand taels of silver, let me give you all my jewelry and other valuable items." (*Travel money should suffice. Why would he need jewelry and other items?*)

"But what are you going to do when the procurer and the madam find out about this?"

"Don't worry about me. I know what to do." After putting these valuables together, Sister Yu gently opened the door and saw the young master out.

At daybreak, the madam rose and ordered a maid to heat some



姐夫醒了时，送上楼去，问他要吃甚么，我好做去。若是还睡，休惊醒他。”丫头走上楼去，见摆设的器皿都没了，梳妆匣也出空了，撇在一边，揭开帐子，床上空了半边。跑下楼，叫：“妈妈罢了！”鴛子说：“奴才！慌甚么？惊着你姐夫。”丫头说：“还有甚么姐夫？不知那里去了。俺姐姐回脸往里睡着。”老鴛听说，大惊，看小厮、骡脚都去了。连忙走上楼来，喜得皮箱还在。打开看时，都是个砖头瓦片。鴛儿便骂：“奴才！王三那里去了？我就打死你！为何金银器皿他都偷去了？”玉姐说：“我发过新愿了，今番不是我接他来的。”鴛子说：“你两个昨晚说了一夜话，一定晓得他去处。”亡八就去取皮鞭，玉姐拿个首帕，将头扎了，口里说：“待我寻王三还你。”忙下楼来，往外就走。鴛子、乐工恐怕走了，随后赶来。玉姐行至大街上，高声叫屈：“图财杀命！”[眉批]意想得。只见地方都来了。鴛子说：“奴才，他到把我金银首饰尽情拐去，你还放刁！”亡八说：“由他，咱到家里算



water for the couple to wash their faces and prepare some water for them to rinse their mouths. "When your Brother-in-law wakes up," she said to the maid, "carry the water upstairs, and also ask him what he wants to eat, so that I know what to prepare. But don't disturb him if he's still asleep."

So the maid went upstairs, only to find the ornaments in the room missing and the jewelry box empty and discarded. Lifting the bed curtain, she found half of the bed unoccupied. She ran down the stairs, crying out, "Mother! The whole thing is off!"

"Slave!" snapped the madam. "What's all this excitement about? You'll be waking up Brother-in-law!"

"What Brother-in-law? He's gone! And goodness knows where! My sister is sleeping, facing the wall."

In consternation, the madam looked for the page boys and groom and found them gone, too. She hastened upstairs and was delighted to see the leather trunk still there, but, upon opening it, she found nothing but bricks and tiles. "Slave!" she yelled at Sister Yu. "Where is that Wang the Third? I'll have to beat you to death! So he's gone off with all the money and valuables!"

"You know the new vow I made. I certainly did not lead him in here."

"The two of you talked the whole night through. You must know where he's gone."

As the procurer went to get his whip, Sister Yu wrapped her head with a kerchief and said, "Let me go find Wang the Third and return him to you."

So saying, she hurried down the stairs and into the street. Afraid that she was trying to get away, the madam and the musicians gave chase. There, on the street, Sister Yu cried out at the top of her voice, "Murder! Murder for money!" (*A stroke of brilliance!*)

As the local headmen arrived, the madam said to Sister Yu, "You slave! He stole as much of my gold, silver, and jewelry as he could carry. How can you make a scene like this!"

"Let her be!" put in the procurer. "We'll settle this within the family when we go back home."



帐。”玉姐说：“不要说嘴，咱往那里去？那是我家？我同你到刑部堂上讲讲，恁家里是公侯宰相，朝郎驸马，你那里的金银器皿？万物要平个理。一个行院人家，至轻至贱，那有甚么大头面，戴往那里去坐席？王尚书公子在我家，费了三万银子，谁不知道？他去了，就开手，你昨日见他有了银子，又去哄到家里，图谋了他行李。不知将他下落在何处？列位做个证见。”说得鴛子无言可答。亡八说：“你叫王三拐去我的东西，你反来图赖我。”玉姐舍命，就骂：“亡八、淫妇，你图财杀人，还要说嘴？见今皮箱都打开在你家里，银子都拿过了。那王三官不是你谋杀了是那个？”鴛子说：“他那里有甚么银子？都是砖头瓦片哄人。”玉姐说：“你亲口说带有五万银子，如何今日又说没有？”两下厮闹。众人晓得三官败过三万银子是真，谋命的事未必，都将好言劝解。玉姐说：“列位，你既劝我不要到官，也得我骂他几句，出这口气。”众人说：“恁你骂罢！”玉姐骂道：

你这亡八是喂不饱的狗，鴛子是填不满的坑。不肯思量

“Now stop trying to sound nice!” retorted Sister Yu. “What do you mean — go back home? Where’s my home? Let’s settle this in the court of the Ministry of Justice! Mr. Wang is from a most distinguished family. What use could he have for those worthless trinkets of yours? Now, have some sense. What other profession can be lowlier and more base than owning a brothel? What valuable jewelry can you have? What grand social functions do you attend that you need to show them off? Secretary Wang’s son spent thirty thousand taels of silver in this house, and yet, as everyone knows, the moment he left, you began to bully me. Yesterday, you were so impressed by his money that you tricked him into the house and cheated him out of his things, and who knows what you did to him! Everyone here is my witness.”

The madam was speechless, but the procurer said, “*You* put Wang the Third up to the theft, and now you turn around and accuse us!”

Ready to risk everything, Sister Yu let out a stream of curses. “You filthy procurers! Murderers! You murdered Mr. Wang for his money, and yet you try to talk your way out of it! You opened up his trunk and took out all the silver. If you say you didn’t murder Mr. Wang, I’d like to know who did!”

“He had no silver!” the madam protested. “The trunk was filled with bricks and tiles to trick us!”

“You said yourself that he had brought fifty thousand taels of silver. And now you deny that?” As the quarrel went on, the onlookers, knowing that Third Master had indeed spent thirty thousand taels of silver in that place but not quite believing the murder story, tried to intervene and calm them down.

Addressing the crowd, Sister Yu said, “Since you all advise me not to bring charges to the authorities, I may drop the idea, but let me at least give these two a lecture, just to let off a little steam.”

“All right, go ahead!” the onlookers encouraged her. And so, Sister Yu unleashed a torrent of angry words:

“You, the procurer, are a dog that’s always hungry, however much you are fed. You, the procuress, are a bottomless pit, never



做生理，只是排局骗别人。奉承尽是天罗网，说话皆是陷人坑。只图你家长兴旺，那管他人贫不贫。八百好钱买了我，与你挣了多少银。我父叫做周彦亨，大同城里有名人。买良为贱该甚罪？兴贩人口问充军。哄诱良家子弟犹自可，图财杀命罪非轻！你一家万分无天理，我且说你两三分。

众人说：“玉姐，骂得勾了。”鴛子说：“让你骂许多时，如今该回去了。”玉姐说：“要我回去，须立个文书执照与我。”众人说：“文书如何写？”玉姐说：“要写‘不合买良为娼，及图财杀命’等话。”亡八那里肯写。玉姐又叫起屈来。众人说：“买良为娼，也是门户常事。那人命事不的实，却难招认。我们只主张写个赎身文书与你罢！”[眉批]众人会处分，做得公道。亡八还不肯。众人说：“你莫说别项，只王公子三万银子也勾买三百个粉头了。玉姐左右心不向你了，舍了他罢！”众人都到酒店里面，讨了一张



content, however much you are paid. You never go by the rules when conducting business but only scheme to pluck patrons clean. Your servileness is just a dragnet for catching your prey; everything you say is a trap to ensnare your victims. You care nothing for others but think only of your own family wealth. You bought me with eight hundred cash, but goodness knows how much more money you've made out of me. My father Zhou Yanheng was a highly respected man in Datong. What is the punishment for the crime of buying girls from decent families and forcing them into a life of filth? A trader in human beings should be banished. If you can get away with abducting people from decent families, you certainly won't when it comes to murdering for money. Of the ten thousand evil things you and other members of your family have done, I've mentioned only two or three."

The onlookers intervened, saying, "Sister Yu, you've gone on long enough."

"You've been at it for so long that you should be going back now," said the madam.

"If you want me back," said Sister, "you'll have to write a statement for me."

"What kind of statement?" asked the crowd.

"To say that you bought me wrongfully from a decent family and forced me into prostitution and that you have murdered with larcenous intent."

How would the procurer ever agree to write such a statement? Sister Yu again cried out her grievances. The onlookers commented, "It's true that brothels often do buy decent girls and force them into prostitution, but the charge of murder can hardly be substantiated. They won't admit to that. We suggest that they write you a statement of redemption." (*They certainly know how to solve a problem, and a fair solution it is.*)

The procurer still turned a deaf ear. The onlookers said to him, "Let's forget about the other things. Those thirty thousand taels from Mr. Wang alone are enough to buy three hundred girls. Sister Yu's heart has turned against you anyway. Why don't you just let her go?"

The crowd went into a wineshop, where they asked for a sheet



绵纸，一人念，一人写，只要亡八、鸭子押花。玉姐道：“若写得公道，我就扯碎了。”众人道：“还你停当。”写道：

立文书本司乐户苏准，同妻一秤金，向将钱八百文，讨大同府人周彦亨女玉堂春在家，本望接客靠老，奈女不愿为娼。

写到“不愿为娼”，玉姐说：“这句就是了。须要写收过王公子财礼银三万两。”亡八道：“三儿！你也拿些公道出来，这一年多费用去了，难道也算？”众人道：“只写二万罢。”又写道：

有南京公子王顺卿，与女相爱，准得过银二万两，凭众议作赎身财礼。今后听凭玉堂春嫁人，并与本户无干。立此为照。

后写“正德年月日，立文书乐户苏准同妻一秤金”，见人有十余人，众人先押了花。苏准只得也押了，一秤金也画个十字。玉姐收讫。又说：“列位老爹！我还有一件事，要先讲个明。”众人曰：“又是甚事？”玉姐曰：“那百花楼，原是王公子盖的，拨与



of paper. With one person dictating and one person drafting, they drew up a statement and asked the procurer and the procuress to sign it. "If the statement is not fair," announced Sister Yu, "I'm going to tear it up."

"It is quite fair to you," the crowd assured her. The statement read as follows:

This is to testify that I, Su Huai, owner of a registered entertainment house, and my wife Yichengjin bought Yutangchun, daughter of Mr. Zhou Yanheng of Datong Prefecture, for eight hundred cash, hoping that she would support us in our old age by serving patrons. However, this girl rejects a life of prostitution.

At this point, Sister Yu said, "That last line is a good one. Add also that you took thirty thousand taels of silver from Patron Mr. Wang as redemption money."

"Third Sister!" exclaimed the procurer. "Why don't you also show some fairness? Much of that money has gone for daily expenses over the last year. That money shouldn't count!"

"All right, write up twenty thousand, then," the onlookers suggested. The statement went on to say,

Mr. Wang Shunqing from Nanjing, who is in love with her, offered twenty thousand taels of silver, which, as decided by all the witnesses present, shall be used to redeem Yutangchun. Henceforth, she is free to marry, and we hereby dissociate ourselves from her.

Signed on the ___th day of the ___th month of the ___th year of the Zhengde reign period by Su Huai, owner of a registered entertainment house, and wife Yichengjin

The witnesses, of whom there were more than ten, affixed their signatures first, and then Su Huai reluctantly did the same. Yichengjin drew a cross by way of a signature. After putting away the statement, Sister Yu spoke up again. "Gentlemen! There's another thing that I have to make clear in advance."

"What is it now?" asked the onlookers.

"Mr. Wang built the Hundred Flowers Hall for me. The new



我住。丫头原是公子买的，要叫两个来伏侍我。以后米面、柴薪、菜蔬等项，须是一一供给，不许措勒短少，直待我嫁人方止。”众人说：“这事都依着你。”玉姐辞谢先回。亡八又请众人吃过酒饭方散。正是：

周郎妙计高天下，赔了夫人又折兵。

话说公子在路，夜住晓行，不数日，来到金陵自家门首下马。王定看见，唬了一惊。上前把马扯住，进的里面。三官坐下，王定一家拜见了。三官就问：“我老爷安么？”王定说：“安。”“大叔、二叔、姑爷、姑娘何如？”王定说：“俱安。”又问：“你听得老爷说我家来，他要怎么处？”王定不言，长吁一口气，只看看天。三官就知其意：“你不言语，想是老爷要打死我。”王定说：“三叔！老爷誓不留你，今番不要见老爷了。私去看看老奶奶和姐姐、兄嫂，讨些盘费，他方去安身罢！”公子又问：“老爷这二年，与何人相厚？央他来与我说个人情。”王定说：“无人敢



maidservants were also bought with Mr. Wang's money. I need two of them as personal attendants. Supplies of rice, flour, firewood, vegetables, and other food items should be duly provided to me. No skimping will be allowed. I'll stay there under these conditions until I marry."

"All right, it will be as you say," said the onlookers. Sister Yu thankfully took leave of all present and returned to her quarters. The procurer stayed behind and treated the witnesses to a meal and some wine before the crowd dispersed. Truly,

*Zhou Yu's clever plan — how it was shattered!
 He lost both — the lady and the battle.⁴*

Now let us continue with our story. Traveling by day and resting by night, Mr. Wang Junior arrived a few days later in Jinling and got off his horse in front of the Wang residence. At the sight of the young master, a much startled Wang Ding came forward and took over the reins of the horse. Once inside the house, Third Master sat down as Wang Ding and his family gave the young man their greetings.

"Is my father well?" asked the Third Master.

"Yes, he's well," replied Wang Ding.

"How are my two brothers, my brothers-in-law, and my sisters?"

"They're all fine."

"Have you ever heard my father mention me? What's he going to do with me?"

Instead of answering, Wang Ding heaved a deep sigh and looked up at the sky outside.

Third Master understood the implied message. "So, you'd rather not say anything, which means my father wants to have me beaten to death."

"Third Master! Your father has disowned you. Don't even try to see him. Just go pay a quiet visit to your mother, sisters, brothers, and sisters-in-law, ask for some traveling money, and go seek shelter somewhere else!"

"Who have been my father's close friends these last couple of years? I can have them put in a word for me."



说。只除是姑娘、姑爹，意思间稍题题，也不敢直说。”三官道：“王定，你去请姑爹来，我与他讲这件事。”王定即时去请刘斋长、何上舍到来。叙礼毕，何、刘二位说：“三舅，你在此，等俺两个与咱爷讲过，使人来叫你。若不依时，捎信与你，作速逃命。”

二人说罢，竟往潭府来见了王尚书。坐下，茶罢，王爷问何上舍：“田庄好么？”上舍答道：“好！”王爷又问刘斋长：“学业何如？”答说：“不敢，连日有事，不得读书。”王爷笑道：“‘读书过万卷，下笔如有神。’秀才将何为本？‘家无读书子，官从何处来？’今后须宜勤学，不可将光阴错过。”刘斋长唯唯谢教。何上舍问：“客位前这墙几时筑的？一向不见。”王爷笑曰：“我年大了，无多田产，日后恐怕大的二的争竞，预先分为两分。”二人笑说：“三分家事，如何只做两分？三官回来，叫他那里住？”
[眉批] 开谈好。王爷闻说，心中大恼：“老夫平生两个小儿，那里



“No one would ever dare to do that, except your sisters and brothers-in-law, but even they can only do it in a roundabout way. They don’t dare to be direct with him.”

“Wang Ding, go bring my brothers-in-law over. I want to talk with them about this.”

Wang Ding left right away on his errand and brought back Mr.Liu and Mr.He. After an exchange of greetings, Liu and He said, “Third Brother, wait here while we try to talk with Father. We’ll send for you if the talk goes well. But if he refuses to listen to us, we’ll just send you a message that you should run for your life.”

That said, the two men went straight to Secretary Wang at his quarters. After they had seated themselves and finished their tea, Mr. Wang Senior asked Mr.He, “How are things on your farmstead?”

“Oh, everything’s fine!”

Mr.Wang turned to Mr.Liu. “How are you getting along in your studies?”

“I’m sorry. I’ve been so occupied these days that I’ve been ignoring my studies.”

Mr.Wang said with a smile, “You know what they say, ‘Read ten thousand books before you can write inspired lines.’ What’s most important for a scholar? As another saying goes, ‘A family without a student is a family without an official.’ Remember to keep at your studies and not waste time.”

Mr. Liu humbly thanked him for the admonition.

“When did you have that wall put up?” asked Mr.He. “I haven’t seen it before.”

Mr.Wang replied, smiling, “With me getting on in years, I’m afraid that my two sons will fight over what little I own. So I had that wall put up to divide the estate into two portions in advance.”

The two men laughed. “Why do you divide the family property into two portions when there should in fact be three? After Third Master comes back, where’s he going to stay?” (*A good way to raise the subject.*)

These words irritated Mr.Wang. “This old man has only two sons,” he said. “How can there be a third one?”



又有第三个？”二人齐声叫：“爷，你如何不疼三官王景隆？当初还是爷不是，托他在北京讨帐，无有一个去接寻。休说三官十六七岁，北京是花柳之所，就是久惯江湖，也迷了心。”二人双膝跪下，吊下泪来。王爷说：“没下稍的狗畜生，不知死在那里了，再休题起了！”正说间，二位姑娘也到。众人都知三官到家，只哄着王爷一人。王爷说：“今日不请都来，想必有甚事情？”即叫家奴摆酒。何静庵欠身打一躬曰：“你闺女昨晚作一梦，梦三官王景隆身上蓝缕，叫他姐姐救他性命。三更鼓做了这个梦，半夜捶床捣枕哭到天明，埋怨着我不接三官，今日特来问问三舅的信音。”刘心斋亦说：“自三舅在京，我夫妇日夜不安，今我与姨夫凑些盘费，明日起身去接他回来。”王爷含泪道：“贤婿，家中还有两个儿子，无他又待怎生？”何、刘二人往外就走。王爷向前扯住问：“贤婿何故起身？”二人说：“爷撒手，你家亲生子还是如此，何况我女婿也？”大小儿女放声大哭，两个哥哥一齐下跪，女婿也跪在地上，奶奶在后边吊下泪来。引得王爷心动，亦哭起来。



The two sons-in-law cried out, "Sir, why don't you love your third son Wang Jinglong? Actually, it was all your fault, letting him collect debts in Beijing without sending anyone to bring him back. Beijing being such a dissolute place, even an experienced man of the world would be tempted, let alone a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old like Third Brother." So saying, the two men tearfully dropped to their knees.

"That swine! He'll come to no good end! He may well have died goodness knows where. Never ever bring his name up again!"

At this point, the two daughters arrived on the scene. Everyone except the father knew that Third Master was back at home.

"With all of you suddenly showing up without an invitation, there must be something afoot," said Mr. Wang.

As the servants set about laying out wine at Mr. Wang's bidding, He Jing'an said with a slight bow, "Last night, your daughter had a dream in which she saw her brother Wang Jinglong. He was in rags and cried out for her to save his life. She had this dream at the third watch of the night, and for the rest of the night until daybreak, she kept crying, pounding the bed, thumping the pillow, and blaming me for not going to bring him back home. So I came here today to ask for news about Third Brother."

Liu Xinzhai had this to say, "With Third Brother in Beijing, my wife and I can find no peace day and night. Now let me and my brother-in-law put together some traveling money and go tomorrow to Beijing to bring him back."

With tears standing in his eyes, Mr. Wang said, "My good sons-in-law, I have two other sons at home. Why can't I do without him?"

The two sons-in-law headed for the door. Mr. Wang stepped forward and grabbed them. "Why are you leaving, my good sons-in-law?"

"Please let us go. If you treat your own son like this, just imagine what you will do to us sons-in-law!"

All those present, old and young, burst into loud wails, and the two older sons and the two sons-in-law dropped to their knees in supplication. As Mrs. Wang broke down in sobs at the back of the room,



[眉批] 有许多帮衬手，不愁不收留矣。

王定跑出来说：“三叔，如今老爷在那里哭你，你好过去见老爷，不要待等恼了。”王定推着公子进前厅跪下说：“爹爹！不孝儿王景隆今日回了。”那王爷两手擦了泪眼，说：“那无耻畜生，不知死的往那里去了。北京城街上最多游食光棍，偶与畜生面庞厮像，假充畜生来家，哄骗我财物，可叫小厮拿送三法司问罪！”那公子往外就走。二位姐姐赶至二门首拦住，说：“短命的，你待往那里去？”三官说：“二位姐姐，开放条路与我逃命罢！”二位姐姐不肯撒手，推至前来双膝跪下，两个姐姐手指说：“短命的！娘为你痛得肝肠碎，一家大小为你哭得眼花，那个不牵挂！”众人哭在伤情处，王爷一声喝住众人不要哭，说：“我依着二位姐夫，收了这畜生，可叫我怎么处他？”众人说：“消消气再处。”王爷摇头。奶奶说：“凭我打罢。”王爷说：“可打多少？”众人说：“任爷爷打多少。”王爷道：“须依我说，不可阻我，要打一百。”大姐、二姐跪下说：“爹爹严命，不敢阻当，容你儿代

Mr. Wang was also moved to tears. (*With so many allies, the Third One needn't worry that his father will not accept him.*)

At this point, Wang Ding rushed out of the hall to the room where Third Master was waiting. "Third Master! Your father is crying for you. Go quickly to see him before he loses his temper again!"

With Wang Ding pushing him from behind, Third Master entered the main hall and knelt down. "Father! Your unworthy son Wang Jinglong is back."

Dabbing at his teary eyes, Mr. Wang Senior said, "That shameless swine has died goodness knows where. This man is surely one of the many loafers on the streets of Beijing. Because there happens to be a resemblance, he must be an imposter who's here to swindle me out of my money. Get the servants to march him off to the Bureau of Justice and let him have it!"

The young master turned around and headed for the door. The two older sisters rushed to the door and stopped him, saying, "You little devil! Where do you think you're going?"

"My sisters, please get out of my way and let me run for my life!"

Without loosening their grip, the two sisters pushed him back and made him drop to both knees. Pointing at him, the sisters said, "You little devil! Mother is heartbroken because of you, and all of us in the family have cried until we can barely see. Everyone here has missed you!"

In the midst of the heartrending sobs, Mr. Wang Senior sharply ordered everyone to stop. "If I do as my sons-in-law say and accept this swine, how shall I punish him?"

"Try to calm down a little before you do it," someone suggested.

Mr. Wang shook his head. His wife suggested, "Let *me* beat him."

"How many strokes are you going to give him?"

"As many as you say," was the general response.

"In that case, do as I say and don't try to stop me. Give him one hundred strokes!"

The two elder sisters fell to their knees. "We would not dream of objecting to Father's orders, but let us take the beating on his behalf."



替罢！”大哥、二哥每人替上二十，大姐、二姐每人亦替二十。王爷说：“打他二十。”大姐、二姐说：“叫他姐夫也替他二十，只看他这等黄瘦，一棍打在那里？等他膘满肉肥，那时打他不迟。”

[眉批] 绝妙一出戏文，比《郑元和传》更近人情。王爷笑道：“我儿，你也说得是。想这畜生，天理已绝，良心已丧，打他何益？我问你：‘家无生活计，不怕斗量金。’我如今又不做官了，无处挣钱，作何生意以为糊口之计？要做买卖，我又无本钱与你。二位姐夫问他那银子还有多少？”何、刘便问：“三舅银子还有多少？”王定抬过皮箱打开，尽是金银首饰器皿等物。王爷大怒，骂：“狗畜生！你在那里偷的这东西？快写首状，休要玷辱了门庭。”三官高叫：“爹爹息怒，听不肖儿一言。”遂将初遇玉堂春，后来被鸨儿如何哄骗尽了，如何亏了王银匠收留，又亏了金哥报信，玉堂春私将银两赠我回乡，这些首饰器皿，皆玉堂春所赠，备细述了一遍。王爷听说，骂道：“无耻狗畜生！自家三万银子都花了，却要娼妇的东西，可不羞杀了人。”三官说：“儿不曾强要他的，是



The two elder brothers took twenty strokes each, and the two sisters also took twenty strokes each. Mr. Wang Senior said, "Now it's his turn to take the remaining twenty strokes."

The sisters interceded again, "Let his brothers-in-law take the twenty strokes for him. He's so bony and sallow. Where can the rod land? Let him gain some weight and put some flesh on his bones before beating him." (*What a wonderful scene! More filled to the brim with human kindness than even "The Story of Zheng Yuanhe."*)⁵

Mr. Wang Senior said laughingly, "That's a good point. The swine doesn't even have the slightest bit of decency and conscience left in him. What's the use of beating him anyway? Let me ask you something: As the saying goes, 'Without a means of livelihood, heaps of gold will vanish in a flash.' I no longer hold an official post and therefore have no income. How are you going to make a living? If you want to set up a business, I have no money to be put up as capital." Addressing the two brothers-in-law, he continued, "Ask him how much silver he has left," Whereupon Mr. He and Mr. Liu turned to Third Brother and asked, "How much silver do you have left?"

Wang Ding carried the leather trunk over and opened it, revealing an abundance of gold and silver jewelry and other ornaments. Mr. Wang Senior flew into a rage. "You cursed swine! Where did you steal these things? Write a statement of confession for the police this minute! Don't you dare tarnish this family's good name!"

Third Master cried at the top of his voice, "Father! Don't be so angry! Listen to your unworthy son!" He then gave a detailed account of how he had first met Yutangchun, how he had later been cheated out of all his money by the madam, how Silversmith Wang had kindly taken him in and given him a home, and how Jin'ge had brought him messages from Yutangchun. "She gave me her own silver for my journey home. These jewelry and ornaments are all gifts from her."

Mr. Wang Senior again lashed out, "Shameless dog! You spent thirty thousand taels of silver and then turned around and accepted money from a whore! How shameful!"



他情愿与我的。”王爷说：“这也罢了，看你姐夫面上，与你一个庄子，你自去耕地布种。”公子不言。王爷怒道：“王景隆，你不言怎么说？”公子说：“这事不是孩儿做的。”王爷说：“这事不是你做的，你还去嫖院罢！”三官说：“儿要读书。”王爷笑曰：“你已放荡了，心猿意马，读甚么书？”公子说：“孩儿此回笃志用心读书。”王爷说：“既知读书好，缘何这等胡为？”何静庵立起身来说：“三舅受了艰难苦楚，这下来改过迁善，料想要用心读书。”王爷说：“就依你众人说，送他到书房里去，叫两个小厮去伏侍他。”即时就叫小厮送三官往书院里去。两个姐夫又来说：“三舅久别，望老爷留住他，与小婿共饮则可。”王爷说：“贤婿，你如此乃非教子之方，休要纵他。”二人道：“老爷言之最善。”于是翁婿大家痛饮，尽醉方归。这一出父子相会，分明是：

月被云遮重露彩，花遭霜打又逢春。

却说公子进了书院，清清独坐，只见满架诗书，笔山砚海，



“I didn’t force her. She gave all this to me of her own free will.”

“All right, I’ll let the matter drop. Out of regard for your brothers-in-law, I’ll give you a farmstead. You can make a living as a farmer.”

Third Master said nothing. Angrily, Mr. Wang Senior demanded, “Wang Jinglong, what do you mean by your silence?”

“Farming is not for me.”

“Not for you indeed! So, go ahead and whore around in the brothels as before!”

“I want to study.”

His father said jeeringly, “With your dissolute ways, with a heart as wild as that of a monkey and a horse, how can you be talking about studying?”

“This time, I am determined to apply myself.”

“If you knew studying was a worthy pursuit, why did you do all those outrageous things?”

At this point, He Jing’an stood up and remarked, “Having gone through so many hardships, Third Brother is now determined to turn over a new leaf. I believe he will truly apply himself to his studies.”

“All right, as you say,” conceded the father. “I’ll send him off to the study. He’ll be attended by two page boys.” Then and there he summoned two page boys and told them to escort Third Master to the study.

The two sons-in-law spoke up again. “We haven’t seen Third Brother for a very long time. Please allow him to have a few drinks with us.”

“My good sons-in-law, that’s no way to bring up the young. Don’t ever spoil them.”

“How right you are!” they chanted.

And so, the father and the sons-in-law and everyone else fell to drinking. The party did not break up until everyone was quite inebriated. The reunion between father and son was indeed like

The moon shining again from behind the clouds;

Flowers blooming again in spring after the frost.

Sitting quietly alone in the study, the young master swept his



叹道：“书呵！相别日久，且是生涩。欲待不看，焉得一举成名，却不辜负了玉姐言语；欲待读书，心猿放荡，意马难收。”公子寻思一会，拿着书来读了一会，心下只是想着玉堂春。忽然鼻闻甚气，耳闻甚声，乃问书童道：“你闻这书里甚么气？听听甚么响？”书童说：“三叔，俱没有。”公子道：“没有？呀，原来鼻闻乃是脂粉气，耳听即是箏板声。”[眉批]心猿意马，终无了日；败子回头便作家，只要狠下一鞭。公子一时思想起来：“玉姐当初嘱付我，是甚么话来？叫我用心读书。我如今未曾读书，心意还丢他不下，坐不安，寝不宁，茶不思，饭不想，梳洗无心，神思恍惚。”公子自思：“可怎么处他？”走出门来，只见大门上挂着一联对子：

十年受尽窗前苦，一举成名天下闻。

“这是我公公作下的对联。他中举会试，官至侍郎。后来咱爹爹在此读书，官到尚书。我今在此读书，亦要攀龙附凤，以继前人之志。”又见二门上有一联对子：

不受苦中苦，难为人上人。



eyes over the shelves of books, the hills of brush-pens and the sea of ink slabs. "Books, o books!" he sighed. "I haven't seen you for so long that I feel quite a stranger to you. But if I leave you alone, how am I going to pass the examinations and make something of myself? And I would be letting Sister Yu down. And yet, if I do take you up, my heart is indeed as wild as that of a monkey or a horse, and quite untamable." After a few moments of reflection, he took a book and read for a while, but his thoughts were all on Yutangchun. Suddenly, an odor came to his nostrils, and a sound came to his ears. He asked a page boy, "What's this smell in the books? What sound do you hear?"

"Third Master, I smell and hear nothing."

"Nothing? Ah, so what I smell is the scent of face powder. What I hear is the music of the zither." (*One with a heart as wild as that of a monkey or a horse can never amount to anything. There is hope for the prodigal son only if he changes his ways. What he needs is a hard push.*) Then a thought struck him: "What words of admonition did Sister Yu give me? She told me to apply myself diligently in my studies. Now I'm certainly not applying myself. I miss her so much that I can scarcely sit still or go to sleep. I have no appetite for food and tea, nor any interest in combing my hair and bathing. I feel as if I'm in a trance. What am I going to do?" So thinking, he walked out the door, and, as he did so, his eyes came to rest upon a vertical couplet on both sides of the door frame:

*Ten years of painstaking study by the window
 Bring overnight fame that spreads far and wide.*

He thought to himself, "Grandfather is the author of this couplet. He passed the exams and rose through the official ranks until he became a vice-minister. Father did his studies in this room and rose to be secretary of a ministry. I should also be doing my studies here, attach myself to the flying dragons and the phoenixes, so to speak, and carry out my forefathers' behests." Then he caught sight of another couplet on the frame of the inner door:

*Without taking the greatest pains,
 One can never rise above the ranks.*



公子急回书房，看见《风月机关》、《洞房春意》，公子自思：“乃是此二书乱了我的心。”将一火而焚之。破镜分钗，俱将收了。心中回转，发志勤学。

一日书房无火，书童往外取火。王爷正坐，叫书童。书童近前跪下。王爷便问：“三叔这一会用功不曾？”书童说：“禀老爷得知，我三叔先时通不读书，胡思乱想，体瘦如柴。这半年整日读书，晚上读至三更方才睡，五更就起，直至饭后，方才梳洗，口虽吃饭，眼不离书。”王爷道：“奴才！你好说谎，我亲自去看他。”书童叫：“三叔，老爷来了。”公子从从容容迎接父亲，王爷暗喜。观他行步安详，可以见他学问。王爷正面坐下，公子拜见。王爷曰：“我限的书你看了不曾？我出的题你做了多少？”公子说：“爹爹严命，限儿的书都看了，题目都做完了，但有馀力旁观子史。”王爷说：“拿文字来我看。”公子取出文字。王爷看他所作文课，一篇强如一篇，心中甚喜，叫：“景隆，去应个儒士科举罢！”公子说：“儿读了几日书，敢望中举？”王爷说：



He hurried back into the study. As his eyes fell upon a book titled *The Secrets of Love* and another one titled *Spring Scenes in the Bedchamber*, he told himself, "It was those two books that led me astray. Let me feed them to the flames. Let me also put away my half of the mirror and the broken hairpin." And so he made a firm resolve to apply himself assiduously to his studies.

One day, there being no fire in the study, the page boy went out to get fuel. From his seat, Mr. Wang Senior called to him. The boy fell to his knees, and Mr. Wang asked, "Has Third Master been studying hard?"

"In the beginning, Third Master didn't study at all but just let his thoughts run wild, and he was so thin that he looked like a bag of bones. But in the last six months, he's been at the books from morning to night, going to bed at the third watch of the night and rising at the fifth watch. He doesn't comb his hair and wash until after breakfast. Even when he's eating, he keeps his eyes on the books."

"What a liar! Let me go and see for myself!"

The page boy called out, "Third Master! The old master's here!"

Calm and collected, the young master greeted his father. Mr. Wang Senior was inwardly pleased at the young man's poised manner, which bespoke a learned mind. The father sat down facing the son. After the son bowed in homage, the father asked, "Have you read the books I assigned you? How many of the essay questions I assigned you have you answered?"

"Father, in addition to having read all the books you assigned and answered all the essay questions you gave me, I have also been reading books on other schools of thought as well as history."

"Show me some of your writings."

Accordingly, the young man produced some of his essays. Mr. Wang Senior was quite impressed, finding each essay better than the last. "Jinglong!" he exclaimed, "you are ready for the civil service exams!"

"With so little learning, what chance do I have of passing at the provincial level?"



“一遭中了虽多，两遭中了甚广。出去观观场，下科好中。”王爷就写书与提学察院，许公子科举。竟到八月初九日，进过头场，写出文字与父亲看。王爷喜道：“这七篇，中有何难？”到二场三场俱完，王爷又看他后场，喜道：“不在散举，决是魁解。”

话分两头。却说玉姐自上了百花楼，从不下梯。是日闷倦，叫丫头：“拿棋子过来，我与你下盘棋。”丫头说：“我不会下。”玉姐说：“你会打双陆么？”丫头说：“也不会。”玉姐将棋盘、双陆一皆撇在楼板上。丫头见玉姐眼中吊泪，即忙掇过饭来，说：“姐姐，自从昨晚没用饭，你吃个点心。”玉姐拿过分为两半。右手拿一块吃，左手拿一块与公子。丫头欲接又不敢接。玉姐猛然睁眼见不是公子，将那一块点心掉在楼板上。丫头又忙掇过一碗汤来，说：“饭干燥，吃些汤罢！”玉姐刚呷得一口，泪如涌泉，放下了，问：“外边是甚么响？”丫头说：“今日中秋佳节，人人



“There’s no lack of people who succeed at the first attempt, and many more who make it the second time around. Why don’t you go and see what it’s like? You may make it in the next round of exams.” Thereupon, the father wrote a letter to the Bureau of Education, which then gave the young man permission to take part in the examinations.

On the ninth day of the eighth month, after the first session of the examinations was over, he reproduced from memory what he had written and showed it to his father, who said with delight, “Each one of these seven essays stands a good chance of passing!” After the second and third sessions were over, his father again inspected what he had written from memory, and predicted exultantly, “You’ll not only pass, but pass with high honors.”

Let us follow another thread of the story and turn our attention to Sister Yu, who, ever since her return to Hundred Flowers Hall, had not taken even one step down the stairs. One day, feeling listless and tired, she said to a maid, “Bring me the chessboard. Let’s play a game of chess.”

“But I don’t know how.”

“Do you know how to play horse chess?”

“No.”

Sister Yu flung the chessboard and the horse chess board onto the floor. Noticing tears in Sister Yu’s eyes, the maid quickly brought over some food, saying, “Sister, you haven’t eaten anything since last evening. Please take some refreshments.” Sister Yu took a piece and broke it in half. She took a bite of one half and held out the other half, as if to give it to the young master. While the maid was wondering whether she should accept it or not, Sister Yu looked up sharply and realized that it was not the young master. The piece of food fell from her outstretched hand onto the floor.

The maid quickly brought over a bowl of soup, saying, “Rice is too dry. Have some soup!” Sister Yu had scarcely swallowed one mouthful of the soup when she put the bowl down, tears gushing out of her eyes as from a fountain. “What’s that noise outside?” she asked.



玩月，处处笙歌，俺家翠香、翠红姐都有客哩！”玉姐听说，口虽不言，心中自思：“哥哥今已去了一年了。”叫丫头拿过镜子来照了一照，猛然唬了一跳：“如何瘦的我这模样？”把那镜丢在床上，长吁短叹，走至楼门前，叫丫头：“拿椅子过来，我在这里坐一坐。”坐了多时，只见明月高升，谯楼敲转，玉姐叫丫头：“你可收拾香烛过来，今日八月十五日，乃是你姐夫进三场日子，我烧一炷香保佑他。”玉姐下楼来，当天井跪下，说：“天地神明，今日八月十五日，我哥王景隆进了三场，愿他早占鳌头，名扬四海。”祝罢，深深拜了四拜。有诗为证：

对月烧香祷告天，何时得泄腹中冤。

王郎有日登金榜，不枉今生结好缘。

却说西楼上有个客人，乃山西平阳府洪同县人，拿有整万银子，来北京贩马。这人姓沈名洪，因闻玉堂春大名，特来相访。老鸨见他有钱，把翠香打扮当作玉姐，相交数日，沈洪方知不是，苦求一见。是夜丫头下楼取火，与玉姐烧香。小翠红忍不住多嘴，



The maid replied, "Today is the Mid-autumn Festival. Everybody is out to see the moon and play music. Even Sisters Cuixiang and Cuihong are accepting patrons!"

At these words, Sister Yu said to herself, "So, Brother has been gone for a year now." She had the maid bring her a mirror. After taking one look at herself, she gave a violent start. "What! I didn't know I look so emaciated!" she exclaimed.

Tossing the mirror onto the bed, she heaved sigh after sigh. She then went to the door and said to the maid, "Bring me a chair. I want to sit here for a while." After sitting for quite some time, watching the bright moon rise high in the sky and listening to the night watch drum of the drum tower, she said to the maid, "Bring me some joss sticks and candles. Today is the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the day your brother-in-law takes all three sessions of the exams. I want to burn incense and ask for blessings for him." She went downstairs and knelt down in the courtyard, praying, "Gods of heaven and earth, on this fifteenth day of the eighth month, please let my brother Wang Jinglong win first place in the exams and let his name be known throughout the four seas." With that, she bowed deeply four times. There is a poem that bears witness:

*She burned incense to the moon and prayed to heaven;
 When could she give vent to her grievances?
 If Young Master Wang wins honors in the exams,
 Her bond with him would not have been in vain.*

Now, in the West Tower, there was a patron named Shen Hong, who was from Hongtong County, Pingyang Prefecture, in Shanxi. Carrying tens of thousands of taels of silver with him, he was in Beijing for his horse-trading business but had come to the courtesans' quarters because of Yutangchun's fame. Impressed by his well-lined pocket, the madam dressed up Cuixiang and passed her off as Sister Yu, but, after a few days with her, Shen Hong learned that he had been given the wrong girl and had since been pestering the madam for a visit with the real Yutangchun.

That night, when Sister Yu's maid went downstairs to get a fire so that Sister Yu could burn incense, the urge to speak up got the



就说了：“沈姐夫！你每日间想玉姐，今夜下楼，在天井内烧香，我和你悄悄地张他。”沈洪将三钱银子买嘱了丫头，悄然跟到楼下，月明中，看得仔细。等他拜罢，趋出唱喏。玉姐大惊，问：“是甚么人？”答道：“在下是山西沈洪，有数万本钱，在此贩马，久慕玉姐大名，未得面睹。今日得见，如拨云雾见青天。望玉姐不弃，同到西楼一会。”玉姐怒道：“我与你素不相识，今当夤夜，何故自夸财势，妄生事端？”沈洪又哀告道：“王三官也只是个人，我也是个人。他有钱，我亦有钱。那些儿强似我？”说罢，就上前要搂抱玉姐，被玉姐照脸啐一口，急急上楼关了门，骂丫头：“好大胆，如何放这野狗进来？”沈洪没意思自去了。玉姐思想起来，分明是小翠香、小翠红这两个奴才报他。又骂：“小淫妇，小贱人，你接着得意孤老也好了，怎该来啰唆我？”骂了一顿，放声悲哭：“但得我哥哥在时，那个奴才敢调戏我！”又气又苦，越想越毒。正是：

可人去后无日见，俗子来时不待招。

却说三官在南京乡试终场，闲坐无事，每日只想玉姐。[眉批]



better of Little Cuihong. She blurted out, "Brother-in-law Shen! I know you've been thinking about Sister Yu every day. She's downstairs now in the courtyard, burning incense. Let me take you there so that you can see her without anyone else knowing about it."

Shen Hong bribed Sister Yu's maid with three maces of silver and followed her stealthily downstairs. In the bright moonlight, he got a clear view of Sister Yu. After she finished with her prayers, he walked up to her and chanted a greeting. In alarm, Sister Yu asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Shen Hong from Shanxi. I'm here with tens of thousands of silver for my horse-trading business. I have long heard of your fame but no chance to see you until this moment. Seeing you is like seeing the blue sky shining through the clouds and the fog. Would you be kind enough to follow me to my quarters in the West Tower?"

In anger, Sister Yu said, "You are a total stranger to me. What do you mean by bragging about your wealth in the middle of the night? Are you trying to make trouble?"

Shen Hong pleaded, "I am just as worthy a person as Third Master Wang, and just as wealthy. How is he better than me in any way?" With that, he stepped forward to hug Sister Yu, but she spit in his face and rushed up the stairs. Closing the door behind her, she lashed out at her maid, "How could you have let that wild dog in? The audacity!"

Thus rejected, Shen Hong went off. After reflecting on the matter, Sister Yu concluded that it must have been the doing of Little Cuixiang and Little Cuihong. "Little sluts!" she said. "Cheap girls! Couldn't you be happy enough with a rich patron and not drag me into it?" After a volley of curses, she burst into loud cries of grief. "If Brother Wang were here, no lowlife like that would have dared take such liberties with me!" In her anger and misery, she let her thoughts grow more and more bitter. Truly,

The loved one is gone, never to return;

The disgusting ones come, uninvited.

Let us turn our attention to Third Master Wang, who, after finishing the examinations at the provincial level in Nanjing, found



□□义夫。南京一般也有本司院，公子再不去走。到了二十九开榜之日，公子想到三更以后，方才睡着。外边报喜的说：“王景隆中了第四名。”三官梦中闻信，起来梳洗，扬鞭上马。前拥后簇，去赴鹿鸣宴。父母、兄嫂、姐夫、姐姐，喜做一团。连日做庆贺筵席。公子谢了主考，辞了提学，坟前祭扫了，起了文书：“禀父母得知，儿要早些赴京，到僻静去处安下，看书数月，好人会试。”父母明知公子本意牵挂玉堂春，中了举，只得依从。[眉批] 势利起于家庭，家法坏于富贵。叫大哥、二哥来：“景隆赴京会试，昨日祭扫，有多少人情？”大哥说：“不过三百馀两。”王爷道：“那只勾他人情的，分外再与他一二百两拿去。”二哥说：“禀上爹爹，用不得许多银子。”王爷说：“你那知道，我那同年门生，在京颇多，往返交接，非钱不行。等他手中宽裕，读书也有兴。”



himself quite idle. Not a day went by without his thinking about Sister Yu. (*What a loyal lover!*) Nanjing had its own courtesans' quarters, but he kept his distance from them.

On the twenty-ninth day of the month, the day scheduled for the posting of the results of the examinations, his mind was preoccupied only with Sister Yu. He did not fall asleep until after the third watch was struck and was then woken up from his dream by loud exclamations of congratulations from outside, "Wang Jinglong won fourth place in the examinations!" He rose promptly, washed himself, combed his hair, and, amid a jostling throng, mounted a horse, with a flourish of the whip, to go to the government-sponsored celebration feast. His parents, his brothers and sisters-in-law, and his brothers-in-law and sisters were beside themselves with joy and held grand celebration feasts for days on end. The young master thanked the chief examiner, bade the education superintendent farewell, paid his respects to the Wang family ancestors' graves, and got his documents ready. To his parents, he announced, "I wish to go to Beijing as soon as possible, so as to find a quiet place to stay and study for a few months to get ready for the palace exams."

The parents knew all too well that he wanted to be with Yutangchun, but now that he had passed the provincial examinations, they felt obliged to let him have his way. (*Snobbery begins at home, and wealth and high status are the ruin of domestic discipline.*) Mr. Wang Senior summoned the two older sons and said to them, "Now that Jinglong is going to Beijing for the Palace exams, I wonder how much he needs. How much gift money did we receive for the ceremonies at the family graveyard yesterday?"

"A little more than three hundred taels of silver," replied the oldest brother.

"That's only enough for him to give away as gifts," said the father. "Add another one or two hundred taels."

"Father," put in Second Brother, "he doesn't need that much."

"What do you know? He needs money to socialize with my many friends and students in Beijing. What's more, with enough money, he can concentrate more on his studies."



叫景隆收拾行装，有知心同年，约上两三位。分付家人到张先生家看了良辰。公子恨不的一时就到北京。邀了几个朋友，雇了一只船，即时拜了父母，辞别兄嫂。两个姐夫邀亲朋至十里长亭，酌酒作别。公子上的船来，手舞足蹈，莫知所之。众人不解其意，他心里只想着玉姐玉堂春。不则一日，到了济宁府，舍舟起岸，不在话下。

再说沈洪自从中秋夜见了玉姐，到如今朝思暮想，废寝忘餐，叫声：“二位贤姐！只为这冤家害的我一丝两气，七颠八倒，望二位可怜我孤身在外，举眼无亲，替我劝化玉姐，叫他相会一面，虽死在九泉之下，也不敢忘了二位活命之恩。”说罢，双膝跪下。翠香、翠红说：“沈姐夫！你且起来，我们也不敢和他说这话，你不见中秋夜骂的我们不耐烦。等俺妈妈来，你央浼他。”沈洪说：“二位贤姐！替我请出妈妈来。”翠香姐说：“你跪着我，再磕一百二十个大响头。”沈惊慌忙跪下磕头。[眉批]沈洪亦自可怜，是《西厢记》中郑恒也。翠香即时就去，将沈洪说的言语述与老鸨。老鸨到西楼见了沈洪，问：“沈姐夫唤老身何事？”沈洪说：“别



Jinglong was then told to pack up for his journey and to find two or three close friends who had also passed the provincial examinations to serve as travel companions. A servant of the family was sent to a fortune-teller named Mr. Zhang to pick an auspicious day. The young master could hardly wait to be in Beijing. He found a few traveling companions, hired a boat, and took leave of his parents, brothers, and sisters-in-law. His two brothers-in-law invited some friends and family to escort him as far as a wayside pavilion ten *li* from the city to offer him toasts of farewell. As soon as he boarded the boat, he started dancing about, quite forgetting himself in his excitement. Those who were there to see him off little knew that his mind was filled, to the exclusion of everything else, with thoughts of Third Sister Yutangchun. In a few days, he arrived in Jining Prefecture. How he left the boat and continued the journey by land need not be described here.

To pick up another thread of our story, ever since seeing Sister Yu that night of the Mid-autumn Festival, Shen Hong thought of her day and night and cared nothing for sleep and food. "My two good sisters!" he entreated Cuixiang and Cuihong, "That one, my nemesis, has all but taken my last breath and completely turned my head. Please take pity on a lonely man in a strange place. Talk to Sister Yu and make her agree to see me, if only for one time. Even after I get to the Nine Springs,⁶ I'll remember you for your kindness in giving me a new lease on life!" That said, he fell to both knees.

The maids said, "Brother-in-law Shen! Please rise. We don't dare to tell her that. Didn't you see how she yelled at us that night of the Mid-autumn Festival? Wait until the madam is here and ask *her* to help you out."

"My two good sisters! Please invite the madam here for me!"

Cuixiang said, "Kneel down and kowtow to me a hundred and twenty times."

Shen Hong dropped to his knees with alacrity and started busily kowtowing to the maid. (*Poor thing, that Shen Hong! A veritable Zheng Heng of The Story of the West Chamber.*) Promptly, Cuixiang went to report Shen Hong's words to the madam, who then took herself to the West Tower and said to Shen Hong, "Brother-in-law



无他事，只为不得玉堂春到手。你若帮衬我成就了此事，休说金银，便是杀身难保。”老鸨听说，口内不言，心中自思：“我如今若许了他，倘三儿不肯，教我如何？若不许他，怎哄出他的银子？”沈洪见老鸨踌躇不语，便看翠红。翠红丢了一个眼色，走下楼来，[眉批]翠红可传一秤金钵。沈洪即跟他下去。翠红说：“常言‘姐爱俏，鸨爱钞。’你多拿些银子出来打动他，不愁他不用心。他是使大钱的人，若少了，他不放在眼里。”沈洪说：“要多少？”翠香说：“不要少了！就把一千两与他，方才成得此事。”也是沈洪命运该败，浑如鬼迷一般，即依着翠香，就拿一千两银子来，叫：“妈妈！财礼在此。”老鸨说：“这银子，老身权收下，你却不要性急，待老身慢慢的俵他。”沈洪拜谢说：“小子悬悬而望。”正是：

请下烟花诸葛亮，欲图风月玉堂春。

且说十三省乡试榜都到午门外张挂，王银匠邀金哥说：“王三官不知中了不曾？”两个跑在午门外南直隶榜下，看解元是《书经》，往下第四个乃王景隆。王匠说：“金哥好了，三叔已中在第



Shen, what do you want me to do?"

"It's just that I have no way of getting Yutangchun. If you could help me do this, I'd be willing to repay you with my life, not to mention gold and silver!"

At these words, the madam thought, "If I make him a promise but Third One turns me down, what am I going to do? And yet, if I say no to him, how am I going to get any money from him?"

Noticing the madam's hesitation, Shen Hong turned his eyes to Cuihong, who gave him a meaningful look and headed downstairs. (*Cuihong can very well succeed the madam in this business.*) Shen Hong followed her. She offered this advice, "You know what they say, 'The girls love a good-looking face; the madam loves the sight of cash.' As long as you can use money to persuade her to help you, she'll surely put her mind to the job. She's a big spender and doesn't care for small sums of money."

"How much would be enough?"

At this point, Cuixiang put in, "You'd better not be stingy! Nothing less than one thousand taels will do."

Shen Hong was, after all, fated to meet his doom. As if possessed by some evil spirit, he followed Cuixiang's suggestion and took out a thousand taels of silver. "Madam!" he called out, "I've got money for you!"

"All right, I'll accept the money for now," said the madam, "but you've got to be patient. Let me slowly talk her around."

Bowing thankfully, Shen Hong said, "I'll be waiting eagerly to hear from you." Truly,

He engaged the master strategist

To entrap Yutangchun the courtesan.

Now, since the names of successful candidates at the examinations in all thirteen provinces had been posted on the wall by Wu Gate, Silversmith Wang suggested to Jin'ge the peddler, "Let's go check if Third Master has passed the exams!" They went to Wu Gate and saw on the Nanjing area list that the examinee with the highest honors was one who specialized in *The Book of History* and that the fourth name from the top was Wang Jinglong.



四名。”金哥道：“你看看的确，怕你识不得字。”王匠说：“你说话好欺人，我读书读到《孟子》，难道这三个字也认不得，随你叫谁看。”[眉批]若真正会读书人，还不消读到《孟子》。金哥听说大喜。二人买了一本乡试录，走到本司院里去报玉堂春说：“三叔中了。”玉姐叫丫头将试录拿上楼来，展开看了，上刊“第四名王景隆”，注明“应天府儒士，《礼记》”。玉姐步出楼门，叫丫头忙排香案，拜谢天地。起来先把王匠谢了，转身又谢金哥。唬得亡八、鸭子魂不在体。商议说：“王三中了举，不久到京，白白地要了玉堂春去，可不人财两失？三儿向他孤老，决没甚好言语，搬斗是非，教他报往日之仇，此事如何了？”鸭子说：“不若先下手为强。”亡八说：“怎么样下手？”老鸭说：“咱已收了沈官人一千两银子，如今再要了他一千，贱些价钱卖与他罢。”亡八道：“三



“Jin’ge!” exclaimed the silversmith, “How nice! Third Master has won fourth place!”

“You’d better be sure!” admonished Jin’ge. “I thought you couldn’t read.”

“What a bully you are! Are you saying that I, who have gotten as far as *Mencius* in my studies, don’t even know these three characters? Well, you go ahead and grab anyone you see and have them read the name for you.” (*A good student does not need to go as far as Mencius to find enlightenment.*)

Jin’ge was overjoyed. He and Silversmith Wang bought a copy of the descriptive listing of all successful candidates at the provincial level and went to the courtesans’ quarters to report to Yutangchun, “The Third Master has made it!”

Sister Yu had the maids bring the copy of the listing to her. She spread it out and saw written on it the words “Fourth place: Wang Jinglong, scholar from Yingtian Prefecture, specializing in *The Book of Rites*.”

Sister Yu went out through the gate and had the maids set out an altar where she could burn incense in gratitude to heaven and earth. Upon rising after completing this homage, she first thanked the silversmith and then turned around to thank Jin’ge.

The procurer and the procuress were frightened out of their wits. The procurer said to the madam, “Wang the Third has passed the exams and will be in Beijing any time now. If he reclaims Yutangchun without paying a penny, won’t we be losing both the girl and the money? The girl being so devoted to him, she won’t have a good word for us, that’s for sure. And what if she stirs up trouble and has him take revenge on us for what happened in the past? What are we going to do?”

The madam said, “Well, the one who strikes first gains the upper hand.”

“How do we strike?”

“We’ve already taken a thousand taels of silver from Mr. Shen. Let’s ask for another thousand from him and consider her sold at a cheap price.”



儿不肯如何？”老鸨说：“明日杀猪宰羊，买一桌纸钱，假说东岳庙看会，烧了纸，说了誓，合家从良，再不在烟花巷里。小三若闻知从良一节，必然也要往岳庙烧香。叫沈官人先安轿子，径抬往山西去。公子那时就来，不见他的情人，心下就冷了。”[眉批]真情越不见越热，此非鸨姬所知。亡人说：“此计大妙。”即时暗暗地与沈洪商议，又要了他一千银子。

次早，丫头报与玉姐：“俺家杀猪宰羊，上岳庙哩。”玉姐问：“为何？”丫头道：“听得妈妈说：‘为王姐夫中了，恐怕他到京来报仇，今日发愿，合家从良。’”玉姐说：“是真是假？”丫头说：“当真哩！昨日沈姐夫都辞去了，如今再不接客了。”玉姐说：“既如此，你对妈妈说，我也要去烧香。”老鸨说：“三姐，你要去，快梳洗，我唤轿儿抬你。”玉姐梳妆打扮，同老鸨出的门来。正见四个人，抬着一顶空轿。老鸨便问：“此轿是雇的？”这人说：“正是。”老鸨说：“这里到岳庙要多少雇价。”那人说：



“What if the girl refuses?”

“Tomorrow, let’s slaughter a pig and a lamb and buy enough paper coins for one altar. We’ll just say that we’re going to Eastern Mountain Temple for a fair, to burn the paper coins and take a vow that everybody in the household will give up this business once and for all. That girl, Third One, will surely want to join us on the trip to the temple as soon as she hears about giving up this business. We’ll have Mr. Shen prepare a sedan-chair and carry her off to his hometown in Shanxi. When that young Mr. Wang shows up and fails to see his lover, he’ll put her out of his mind. (*True lovers miss each other more the longer they stay apart. This is something procurers can never understand.*)

“What a brilliant idea!” exclaimed the procurer. Right away, they went for a secret consultation with Shen Hong and got another thousand taels of silver from him.

The next morning, the maids reported to Sister Yu, “We’ve slaughtered a pig and a lamb. The whole family’s going to Eastern Mountain Temple.”

“Why?” asked Sister Yu.

“I heard Mother say, ‘Now that Brother-in-law Wang has passed the exams, he’ll probably come to Beijing to take revenge against us. Let’s take a vow today that everyone in the household will give up the business.’”

“Is that true?” asked Sister Yu.

“Of course it’s true! Even Brother-in-law Shen left yesterday. No more patrons will be accepted from now on.”

“In that case,” said Sister Yu, “tell Mother that I’ll join you on the trip to the temple to offer incense.”

“Third Sister,” said the madam, “if you want to go, finish with your toilette quickly. I’ll call a sedan-chair for you.”

Her toilette done, Sister Yu went out the gate with the madam. Seeing four men carrying an empty sedan-chair, the madam asked, “Is this sedan-chair for hire?”

“Yes.”

“How much do you charge to go from here to Eastern Mountain



“抬去抬来，要一钱银子。”老鸨说：“只是五分。”那人说：“这个事小，请老人家上轿。”老鸨说：“不是我坐，是我女儿要坐。”玉姐上轿，那二人抬着，不往东岳庙去，径往西门去了。走有数里，到了上高转折去处，玉姐回头，看见沈洪在后骑着个骡子。
[眉批] 此景可厌。玉姐大叫一声：“吆！想是亡八、鸭子盗卖我了？”玉姐大骂：“你这些贼狗奴，抬我往那里去？”沈洪说：“往那里去？我为你去了二千两银子，买你往山西家去。”玉姐在轿中号啕大哭，骂声不绝。那轿夫抬了飞也似走。行了一日，天色已晚。沈洪寻了一座店房，排合香美酒，指望洞房欢乐。谁知玉姐题着便骂，触着便打。沈洪见店中人多，恐怕出丑，想道：“瓮中之鳖，不怕他走了，权耐几日，到我家中，何愁不从。”于是反将好话奉承，并不去犯他。玉姐终日啼哭，自不必说。

却说公子一到北京，将行李上店，自己带两个家人，就往王银匠家，探问玉堂春消息。王匠请公子坐下：“有见成酒，且吃三杯接风，慢慢告诉。”王匠就拿酒来斟上。三官不好推辞，连饮



Temple?"

"One mace of silver for a round trip."

"How about one half of a mace?"

"That little detail can be easily taken care of. Please get into the sedan-chair, madam."

"No, it's not for me, but for my daughter."

So Sister Yu mounted the sedan-chair. Instead of heading for the temple, the carriers hurried off in the direction of West Gate. After they had gone several *li*, at a high point where there was a turn in the road, Sister Yu looked back and saw none other than Shen Hong following behind on a mule! (*What a hateful sight!*)

Sister Yu let out a cry. "They must have sold me on the sly!" She shouted at the top of her voice, "You dogs! Where do you think you are taking me?"

"Where?" said Shen Hong. "To my home in Shanxi! I've paid two thousand taels of silver for you, you know."

Amid loud wails, Sister Yu poured out a ceaseless stream of curses while the sedan-chair carriers strode along with the speed of the wind. As the day drew to a close, Shen Hong found an inn, where he ordered fine food and wine in anticipation of the joys of the bridal chamber. As it turned out, Sister Yu burst into bitter curses as soon as he addressed her and slapped him the moment he tried to touch her. Afraid of making a scene in public, Shen Hong thought to himself, "She's like a turtle trapped in a jar. She won't be able to break herself free. Let me wait for a couple of days. Once she's in my house, she'll have to submit." So, changing his tone, he began to cajole her with sweet talk and held back from any move that she would find offensive. How Sister Yu wept day after day needs no description here.

In the meantime, Young Master Wang arrived in Beijing. After depositing his baggage at an inn, he took two servants and went straight to Silversmith Wang's home to inquire about Yutangchun. The silversmith asked him to sit down, saying, "I have some wine here. Let's drink three cups to celebrate your coming before I tell you everything."

So saying, the silversmith brought wine and served it to Third



了三杯。又问：“玉姐敢不知我来？”王匠叫：“三叔开怀，再饮三杯。”三官说：“勾了，不吃了。”王匠说：“三叔久别，多饮几杯，不要太谦。”公子又饮了几杯。问：“这几日曾见玉姐不曾？”王匠又叫：“三叔且莫问此事，再吃三杯。”公子心疑，站起来说：“有甚或长或短，说个明白，休闷死我也！”王匠只是劝酒。

却说金哥在门首经过，知道公子在内，进来磕头叫喜。三官问金哥：“你三婶近日何如？”金哥年幼多嘴说：“卖了。”三官急问说：“卖了谁？”王匠瞅了金哥一眼，金哥缩了口。公子坚执盘问，二人瞒不过，说：“三婶卖了。”公子问：“几时卖了？”王匠说：“有一个月了。”公子听说，一头撞在尘埃，二人忙扶起来。公子问金哥：“卖在那里去了？”金哥说：“卖与山西客人沈洪去了。”三官说：“你那三婶就怎么肯去？”金哥叙出“鸨儿假意从良，杀猪宰羊上岳庙，哄三婶同去烧香，私与沈洪约定，雇



Master, who, finding it hard to turn him down, drank three cups in a row before he spoke up again, "So, Sister Yu doesn't know I'd be coming?"

"Take it easy, Third Master. Have another three cups."

"That's enough. No more, please."

"It's been a long time since I saw you last, Third Master. Please drink some more. Don't stand on ceremony with me."

Young Master downed another few cups. "Have you seen Sister Yu these last few days?" he asked.

"Don't ask about this yet, Third Master. Drink another three cups!"

Growing suspicious, the young man stood up and said, "Whatever it is, tell me all about it. Don't keep me in the dark. I can't stand it." But the silversmith kept forcing more wine on him. It so happened that Jin'ge passed by the door. Learning that the young master was inside, he entered and offered his congratulations with a kowtow.

"How has Third Aunt been these last few days?" asked Third Master.

Lacking the caution of a grown-up, Jin'ge blurted out, "She's been sold."

Third Master was quick to ask, "To whom?"

Silversmith Wang gave Jin'ge a look that made him keep his mouth shut. But as the determined young master continued to bombard them with questions, the two knew that they could not keep the truth from him any longer. "Yes, she's been sold," they conceded.

"When?"

"About a month ago," replied Silversmith Wang.

At these words, the young master collapsed onto the floor. Quickly the silversmith and the boy helped him up. Third Master asked Jin'ge, "Who bought her?"

"A Shen Hong of Shanxi."

"Why was Third Aunt willing to go?"

Thereupon, Jin'ge told him the whole story. "The madam pretended to be giving up the business. She said they were going to East-



下轿子抬去，不知下落”。公子说：“亡八盗卖我玉堂春，我与他算帐！”那时叫金哥跟着，带领家人，径到本司院里，进的院门，亡八眼快，跑去躲了。公子问众丫头：“你家玉姐何在？”无人敢应。公子发怒，房中寻见老鸨，一把揪住，叫家人乱打。金哥劝住。公子就走在百花楼上，看见锦帐罗帏，越加怒恼，把箱笼尽行打碎，气得痴呆了。问：“丫头，你姐姐嫁那家去？可老实说，饶你打。”丫头说：“去烧香，不知道就偷卖了他。”公子满眼落泪，说：“冤家，不知是正妻，是偏妾？”丫头说：“他家里自有老婆。”公子听说，心中大怒，恨骂亡八、淫妇不仁不义！丫头说：“他今日嫁别人去了，还疼他怎的？”公子满眼流泪。

正说间，忽报朋友来访。金哥劝：“三叔休恼，三婶一时不在了，你纵然哭他，他也不知道。今有许多相公在店中相访，闻公子在院中，都要来。”公子听说，恐怕朋友笑话，即便起身回店。公子心中气闷，无心应举，意欲束装回家。朋友闻知，都来



ern Mountain Temple to offer a sacrificial pig and a sheep, and so she coaxed Third Aunt into going along to burn incense. But in fact she had made a secret arrangement with Shen Hong. Hired sedan-chair carriers took her off to goodness knows where.”

“So, the procurer stole my Yutangchun and sold her! I’ll make them pay for this!” Telling Jin’ge to follow him, the young master led his servants to the courtesans’ quarters. As soon as he appeared at the gate, the procurer, being swift of eye, dodged and hid himself. “Where’s Sister Yu?” the young master demanded of the maids. No one dared to venture an answer. Furious, the young man found the madam in a room, grabbed her with one swift movement of his hand and had his servants beat her, but Jin’ge stopped him with some placating words. As he walked through Hundred Flowers Hall, the sight of the brocade and silk curtains and the luxurious decor made him so much angrier that he had the trunks and cases all smashed up. In a blind rage, he yelled at the maids, “Who is the man who married Sister Yu? Tell me the truth, and I’ll spare you from a beating.”

“She went to offer incense and ended up being sold without her knowledge.”

His eyes brimming over with tears, the young master said, “Tell me, you wretched girl. Is she a wife or a concubine?”

“That man already has a wife.”

At these words, his rage flared up again. “Those filthy, treacherous procurers!” he cursed.

A maid commented, “Well, she’s married now. Why do you still care so much about her?”

Tears flowing from his eyes, the young man was about to reply when suddenly a messenger came to announce that he had visitors at his inn. Jin’ge said, “Come, come, don’t feel so bad. Third Aunt is not here. She doesn’t know anything about your grief. Some friends of yours are at the inn to see you. They’ll all come over here if they know you’re in a brothel.” Afraid that his friends would laugh at him, the young man promptly rose and returned to the inn.

In low spirits, he was in no mood for taking the next level of the examinations and decided to pack up and go back home. When they



劝说：“顺卿兄，功名是大事，表子是末节，那里有为表子而不去求功名之理？”公子说：“列位不知，我奋志勤学，皆为玉堂春的语言激我。冤家为我受了千辛万苦，我怎肯轻舍？”众人叫：“顺卿兄，你倘联捷，幸在彼地，见之何难？[眉批]语讫。你若回家，忧虑成病，父母悬心，朋友笑耻，你有何益？”三官自思言之最当，倘或侥幸，得到山西，平生愿足矣。数言劝醒公子。会试日期已到，公子进了三场，果中金榜二甲第八名，刑部观政。三个月，选了真定府理刑官。即遣轿马迎请父母兄嫂。父母不来，回书说：“教他做官勤慎公廉，念你年长未娶，已聘刘都堂之女，不日送至任所成亲。”公子一心只想玉堂春，全不以聘娶为喜。正是：

已将路柳为连理，翻把家鸡作野鸳。

且说沈洪之妻皮氏，也有几分颜色，虽然三十馀岁，比十八少年，也还风骚。平昔间嫌老公粗蠢，不会风流，又出外日多，



heard of this, his friends came to offer advice. Calling him by his courtesy name, they said, "Shunqing, your career is so much more important than a prostitute. How can you give up your career prospects because of a prostitute?"

"Let me tell you, it was actually Yutangchun who encouraged me to study hard. How can I give her up so easily after she has gone through all these hardships for my sake?"

"Shunqing," his friends said. "If you win honors in the next round of exams, maybe you'll be assigned a post in that region. You can easily see her then! (*A prophecy that would later turn out to be true.*) If you return home and fall ill from all the fretting and agonizing, you'll only make your parents worried and your friends contemptuous. What good will you get out of that?"

Third Master reflected on these words and realized they were quite true. If he should have the good luck to be assigned to Shanxi, that would fulfill his greatest desire in life. So those words of advice woke him up. When the day of the examinations came around, he took all three sessions and, sure enough, he won eighth place in the second category of successful candidates and was assigned to the Ministry of Justice as an intern.

Three months later, he was made the judge of Zhending Prefecture, whereupon he dispatched a horse carriage to his parents to invite them and his brothers and sisters-in-law to visit. His parents turned down his invitation, saying in reply, "Be hardworking, cautious, fair, and honest in discharging your duties as an official. Considering that you are still a bachelor at your age, we have betrothed Commander Liu's daughter to you. Soon, we'll be sending her to your duty station for the wedding ceremony." With his heart set on Yutangchun, the young man found little joy in the news about marriage. Truly,

*He treated a wayside willow as wife
 And a domestic hen as a wild duck.*

Now, let us turn our attention to Shen Hong. His wife, Pi-shi, was quite an attractive woman. Even though she was in her thirties, she was more captivating than a sixteen-year old. She had always



在家日少，皮氏色性太重，打熬不过。隔壁有个监生，姓赵名昂，自幼惯走花柳场中，为人风月。近日丧偶，虽然是纳粟相公，家道已在消乏一边。一日，皮氏在后园看花，偶然撞见赵昂，彼此有心，都看上了。赵昂访知巷口做歇家的王婆，在沈家走动识熟，且是利口，善于做媒说合。乃将白银二十两，贿赂王婆，央他通脚。皮氏平昔间不良的口气，已有在王婆肚里，况且今日你贪我爱，一说一上，幽期密约，一墙之隔，梯上梯下，做就了一点不明不白的事。赵昂一者贪皮氏之色，二者要骗他钱财。[眉批]都是事实。枕席之间，竭力奉承。皮氏心爱赵昂，但是开口，无有不从，恨不得连家当都津贴了他。不上一年，倾囊倒篋，骗得一空。初时只推事故，暂时挪借，借去后，分毫不还。皮氏只愁老公回来盘问时，无言回答。一夜与赵昂商议，欲要跟赵昂逃走他方。赵昂道：“我又不是赤脚汉，如何走得？便走了，也不免吃官司。只除暗地谋杀了沈洪，做个长久夫妻，岂不尽美。”皮氏点头不语。



resented her husband's uncouth and unromantic ways. Moreover, since her husband was away traveling more often than he was at home, Pi-shi, the lustful woman, found it difficult to withstand her desires. Next door there lived a man named Zhao Ang, a former student of the Imperial College and quite a libertine. His wife had died recently. Of the genteel class, he had bought his way into the Imperial College but was now reduced to straitened circumstances.

One day, Pi-shi was viewing the flowers in the backyard when she ran into Zhao Ang. Both being on the lookout for an affair, they were attracted to each other. Zhao Ang asked around and learned that Granny Wang, a go-between by profession, who lived at the mouth of the lane, knew the Shen family well and, with her glib tongue, was most adept at making matches and pairing off lovers. So, with twenty taels of silver, he bribed Granny Wang into pulling the strings for him. Granny Wang was not unaware of Pi-shi's reputation as a woman of easy virtue. And now, with both the man and the woman taking a fancy to each other, it took but a word from Granny Wang to establish the liaison and start a secret relationship.

With only a wall and a ladder between them, they did things that could not very well be done in the open. Partly out of desire for Pi-shi's charms and partly because he had designs on her money (*These are indeed the facts.*), Zhao Ang did his best to please the woman in bed. As for her, being quite infatuated with him, she granted his every request, all too ready to hand over to him everything she owned in the house. Within a year, all her boxes and trunks were empty. Each time he took money, he always claimed that it was just a loan to tide him over an emergency, but in truth, he never returned a single penny.

Worried about how to answer her husband's questions upon his return, Pi-shi said to Zhao Ang one night that she wished they could elope. Zhao Ang replied, "I'm not some homeless bachelor. How can I leave just like that? Even if I do, I can hardly escape the reach of the law. The only solution is to murder Shen Hong so that we can be lawfully wedded husband and wife. Wouldn't we be able to have it both ways?" Pi-shi nodded without saying anything.



却说赵昂有心打听沈洪的消息，晓得他讨了院妓玉堂春一路回来，即忙报与皮氏知道，故意将言语触恼皮氏，皮氏怨恨不绝于声。问：“如今怎么样对付他说好？”赵昂道：“一进门时，你便数他不是，与他寻闹，叫他领着娼根另住，那时凭你安排了。我央王婆赎得些砒霜在此，觑便放在食器内，把与他两个吃。等他双死也罢，单死也罢！”皮氏说：“他好吃的是辣面。”赵昂说：“辣面内正好下药。”两人圈套已定，只等沈洪入来。

不一日，沈洪到了故乡，叫仆人和玉姐暂停门外。自己先进门，与皮氏相见，满脸陪笑道：“大姐休怪，我如今做了一件事。”皮氏说：“你莫不是娶了个小老婆？”沈洪说：“是了。”皮氏大怒，说：“为妻的整年月在家守活孤孀，你却花柳快活，又带这泼淫妇回来，全无夫妻之情。你若要留这淫妇时，你自在西厅一带住下，不许来缠我。我也没福受这淫妇的拜，不要他来。”
[眉批] 说得像。昂然说罢，啼哭起来，拍台拍凳，口里“千亡八，万淫妇”骂不绝声。沈洪劝解不得，想道：“且暂时依他言语，



Now, Zhao Ang started making inquiries about Shen Hong and learned that he was on his way home, bringing with him a concubine called Yutangchun, a former prostitute. He reported the news promptly to Pi-shi, not without adding some inflammatory words to make Pi-shi's blood boil. Between bitter curses, Pi-shi lamented, "Now what's to be said to him?"

Zhao Ang offered this advice, "As soon as he steps into the house, you start yelling at him. Make a big scene and tell him to take that whore to live in a separate room, so that you can be in control. I've got here some arsenic that I asked Granny Wang to buy for me. When you get a chance, put it in some food and serve it to them. If both of them die, well and good; if one dies, it will be just as good!"

"He likes spicy hot noodles," said Pi-shi.

"Just the kind of food to put the poison in."

Having worked out the scheme, they waited for Shen Hong's return.

In a matter of days, Shen Hong arrived in his hometown. Telling the servant and Sister Yu to stay outside for the moment, he went into the house to greet Pi-shi. With an ingratiating smile, he said, "Don't get mad at me, Sister, for what I've done."

"You've got yourself a concubine?"

"Yes, that's it."

In a rage, Pi-shi lashed out at him, "I've been living like a widow for all these months and years while you enjoyed yourself, whoring around, and now, you even bring a whore back home, totally ignoring a wife's feelings. If you want to keep that slut, you go ahead and take the west wing of the house and leave me alone. I wasn't born to such a happy lot that I deserve a bow from that whore, so don't even let her get near me." (*Convincingly realistic.*) After this indignant outburst, she started wailing, pounding the tables and chairs, and keeping up a stream of curses against "the procurer" and "that whore."

Unable to calm her down, Shen Hong thought to himself, "Let me humor her for the time being and stay in the west wing for a cou-



在西厅住几日，落得受用。等他气消了时，却领玉堂春与他磕头。”沈洪只道浑家是吃醋，谁知他有了私情，又且房计空虚了，正怕老公进房，借此机会，打发他另居。正是：

你向东时我向西，各人有意自家知。

不在话下。

却说玉堂春曾与王公子设誓，今番怎肯失节于沈洪，腹中一路打稿：“我若到这厌物家中，将情节哭诉他大娘子，求他做主，以全节操。慢慢的寄信与三官，教他将二千两银子来赎我去，却不好。”及到沈洪家里，闻知大娘不许相见，打发老公和他往西厅另住，不遂其计，心中又惊又苦。沈洪安排床帐在厢房，安顿了苏三，自己却去窝伴皮氏，陪吃夜饭。被皮氏三回五次催赶，沈洪说：“我去西厅时，只怕大娘着恼。”皮氏说：“你在此，我反恼，离了我眼睛，我便不恼。”沈洪唱个淡喏，谢声“得罪”，出了房门，径望西厅而来。原来玉姐乘着沈洪不在，检出他铺盖撇在厅中，自己关上房门自睡了。任沈洪打门，那里肯开。却好皮氏叫小段名到西厅看老公睡也不曾。沈洪平日原与小段名有情，那时扯在铺上，草草合欢，也当春风一度。事毕，小段名自去了。



ple of days. That, in fact, is just as well, for I can enjoy myself more. After her anger dies down, I'll have Yutangchun kowtow to her."

He thought his wife was only jealous. Little did he know that she was having an affair, and, afraid that he would go into the bedchamber and find all her dowry gone, she was taking this opportunity to drive him out. Indeed,

*One goes east, one goes west;
Both with plans known only to themselves.*

But of this, we shall speak no further.

As for Yutangchun, having vowed loyalty to Mr. Wang, how would she ever compromise her chastity and yield to Shen Hong? All the time, she was thinking, "When I get to that disgusting thing's home, I'll tearfully complain to his wife and beg her to do right by me so as to preserve my chastity. Then I'll write to Third Master and have him come to redeem me with two thousand taels of silver. Wouldn't that be nice?"

But upon arrival at Shen Hong's home, she learned, much to her alarm and chagrin, that Mrs. Shen refused to see her and had ordered her and Shen Hong to take up quarters in the west wing. So much for her plan. Shen Hong made arrangements for bedding in the west chamber, helped Su San [Yutangchun]⁷ settle in and then went to play the companion at Pi-shi's dinner table. To Pi-shi, who repeatedly demanded that he get out of her sight, he said, "But if I really go to the west wing, I'm afraid I'll make you angry."

"My temper gets short only when you try to stay around me. It will improve as soon as you get out of my sight."

"My apologies," said Shen Hong. Sheepishly chanting a good-bye, he left the room and headed straight for the west wing. In the meantime, Sister Yu had taken advantage of his absence to throw his bedding out into the hallway, close the door of the bedchamber, and retire for the night. However hard Shen Hong knocked at the door, she turned a deaf ear. It so happened that Pi-shi sent a maid, Little Xiaming, to the west wing to see if Shen Hong had gone to sleep. As he had always been sweet on this maid, he pulled her up into his makeshift



沈洪身子困倦，一觉睡去，直至天明。

却说皮氏这一夜等赵昂不来，小段名回后，老公又睡了。番来复去，一夜不曾合眼。天明早起，赶下一轴面，煮熟分作两碗。皮氏悄悄把砒霜撒在面内，却将辣汁浇上，叫小段名送去西厅，“与你爹爹吃”。小段名送至西厅，叫道：“爹爹！大娘欠你，送辣面与你吃。”沈洪见是两碗，就叫：“我儿，送一碗与你二娘吃。”小段名便去敲门。玉姐在床上问：“做甚么？”小段名说：“请二娘起来吃面。”玉姐道：“我不要吃。”沈洪说：“想是你二娘还要睡，莫去闹他。”沈洪把两碗都吃了，须臾而尽。小段名收碗去了。沈洪一时肚疼，叫道：“不好了，死也，死也！”玉姐还只认假意，看看声音渐变，开门出来看时，只见沈洪九窍流血而死。正不知甚么缘故，慌慌的高叫：“救人！”只听得脚步响，皮氏早到，不等玉姐开言，就变过脸，故意问道：“好好的一个人，怎么就死了？想必你这小淫妇弄死了他，要去嫁人？”玉姐说：



bed and perfunctorily fulfilled his amorous desires with her. After it was over, Little Xiaming went her way. Feeling tired, Shen Hong fell asleep and did not wake up until daybreak.

Meanwhile, Pi-shi had been waiting in vain throughout the night for Zhao Ang. As her husband was also unavailable, having fallen asleep after Little Xiaming's departure, she kept tossing and turning in her bed, unable to so much as close her eyes all night long.

At the first light of dawn, she rose and began making noodles. After the noodles were cooked, she put them in two bowls. She sprinkled some arsenic in the noodles, quite unobserved, poured spicy hot sauce over them, and called out to Little Xiaming, "Send the noodles over to the west wing for the master."

Little Xiaming carried the bowls over to the west wing and called out, "Master! See how Mistress cares about you! She's made some spicy hot noodles for you!"

Seeing two bowls, Shen Hong said, "My child, send one bowl to Second Mistress."

When she heard Little Xiaming's knocks, Sister Yu called out from her bed, "What is it?"

"Second Mistress, please rise and have some noodles."

"I don't want any."

"Your Second Mistress hasn't had enough sleep. I believe," put in Shen Hong. "Don't disturb her." So he quickly ate up both bowls of noodles.

After Little Xiaming left with the bowls, Shen Hong felt a sharp pain in his stomach. "Oh no! I'm going to die! I'm going to die!" Sister Yu thought he was pretending, but noticing the gradual change in tone, she opened the door and looked out, only to find him dead, with blood flowing from all nine apertures. In alarm, she screamed, "Help!"

In a trice, footsteps were heard, and Pi-shi showed up. Before Sister Yu had a chance to speak, Pi-shi's face hardened. Purposefully, she said, "How could a perfectly healthy man have died so suddenly? You little whore, you must have killed him so that you can go off and marry again."



“那丫头送面来，叫我吃，我不要吃，并不曾开门，谁知他吃了，便肚疼死了，必是面里有些缘故。”皮氏说：“放屁！面里若有缘故，必是你这小淫妇做下的，不然，你如何先晓得这面是吃不得的，不肯吃？你说并不曾开门，如何却在门外？这谋死情由，不是你，是谁？”说罢，假哭起“养家的天”来。家中僮仆、养娘都乱做一堆。

皮氏就将三尺白布摆头，扯了玉姐往知县处叫喊。正值王知县升堂，唤进问其缘故。皮氏说：“小妇人皮氏，丈夫叫沈洪，在北京为商，用千金娶这娼妇叫做玉堂春为妾。这娼妇嫌丈夫丑陋，因吃辣面，暗将毒药放入，丈夫吃了，登时身死。望爷爷断他偿命。”王知县听罢，问：“玉堂春，你怎么说？”玉姐说：“爷爷，小妇人原籍北直隶大同府人氏，只因年岁荒旱，父亲把我卖在本司院苏家，卖了三年后，沈洪看见，娶我回家。皮氏嫉妒，暗将毒药藏在面中，毒死丈夫性命。反倚刁泼，展赖小妇人。”知县听玉姐说了一会，叫：“皮氏，想你见那男人弃旧迎新，你怀恨在心，药死亲夫，此情理或有之。”皮氏说：“爷爷！我与丈



Sister Yu said, "The maid sent over some noodles for me, but I didn't want any. I didn't even open the door. Who would have known that he ate it and died with a stomachache! There must have been something suspicious in the noodles."

"Rubbish!" Pi-shi snapped. "If there were something suspicious in the noodles, it must have been your doing, you little whore! Otherwise, how did you know that the noodles could not be touched and therefore refused to eat them? You said you didn't even open the door, but aren't you standing outside the door this very moment? If you didn't murder him, who did?!" With that, she burst into loud wails, calling her husband "the sky of protection over the family." The servants in the household, male and female, grew frantic. Pi-shi used a white cotton kerchief three feet long to drag Sister Yu all the way to the county magistrate's yamen, where she screamed at the top of her voice.

It so happened that the magistrate, a Mr. Wang, was holding a court session, and the women were summoned inside for questioning. Pi-shi said, in stating her case, "I am Pi-shi, and my husband was Shen Hong. On a business trip in Beijing, he bought that whore Yutangchun to be a concubine with a thousand taels of gold. That whore hated my husband for his ugliness and secretly put poison in his spicy hot noodles. My husband died as soon as he ate them. Your Honor, please make her pay with her life!"

After listening to this statement, Magistrate Wang turned to Sister Yu, "Yutangchun, what do you have to say?"

"Your Honor, I am a native of Datong Prefecture in the district under the direct jurisdiction of the imperial court. In a year of drought, my father sold me to a brothel owned by a Su family. Three years later, Shen Hong saw me and brought me to his home as a concubine. Out of jealousy, Pi-shi secretly put poison in the noodles and murdered her husband. But then she turns around and brazenly accuses me."

Thereupon, the magistrate exclaimed, "Pi-shi! You must have harbored a grudge against your husband for turning his back on you and getting himself another woman, and so you poisoned him. You



夫，从幼的夫妻，怎忍做这绝情的事。这苏氏原是不良之妇，别有个心上之人，分明是他药死，要图改嫁。望青天爷爷明镜。”知县乃叫苏氏：“你过来，我想你原系娼门，你爱那风流标致的人，想是你见丈夫丑陋，不趁你意，故此把毒药药死是实。”叫皂隶：“把苏氏与我夹起来。”玉姐说：“爷爷！小妇人虽在烟花巷里，跟了沈洪又不曾难为半分，怎下这般毒手？小妇人果有恶意，何不在半路谋害？既到了他家，他怎容得小妇人做手脚？这皮氏昨夜就赶出丈夫，不许他进房。今早的面，出于皮氏之手，小妇人并无干涉。”王知县见他二人各说有理，叫皂隶：“暂把他二人寄监，我差人访实再审。”二人进了南牢不题。

却说皮氏差人密密传与赵昂，叫他快来打点。赵昂拿着沈家银子，与刑房吏一百两，书手八十两，掌案的先生五十两，门子五十两，两班皂隶六十两，禁子每人二十两，上下打点停当。封了一千两银子，放在坛内，当酒送与王知县。知县受了。次日清晨升堂，叫皂隶把皮氏一起提出来。不多时到了，当堂跪下。知



may very well have done it.”

“Your Honor! I married my husband in my early youth. How could I have brought myself to do such a ruthless thing? That concubine Su-shi is a sinful woman with her heart set on other men. It’s all too clear that she’s the one who poisoned him to death, so that she can marry another man. Please do right by me, Your Honor!”

To Su-shi, the magistrate said, “Step forward. In my judgment, since you were a prostitute, you’re interested only in dashing young men and were so dissatisfied with your husband’s ugliness that you poisoned him to death. That, I believe, is what happened.” He ordered the lictors, “Apply the ankle-squeezers to Su-shi!”

“Your Honor!” Sister Yu protested. “I may have lived in a brothel, but how could I have done such a horrible thing to Shen Hong, who never did me the least bit of harm! If I did have evil intentions, why didn’t I murder him at some point along the journey? Once in his home, would he have allowed me any chance for foul play? Pi-shi drove away her husband last night and forbade him to enter the room, and she made the noodles this morning. I had nothing to do with the whole thing.”

Seeing that there was some truth in what both women said, Magistrate Wang had lictors put them both in jail for the time being, adding, “I’ll have detectives look further into the case.” And so, the women were put into the South Jail, and there we shall leave them for now.

From the jail, Pi-shi sent a secret message to Zhao Ang, asking him to come up quickly with bribes. Using silver that belonged to the Shen family, Zhao Ang gave the officer of the Bureau of Punishment a hundred taels, the scribe eighty taels, the file keeper fifty, the janitor fifty, the two groups of lictors sixty, and the prison wardens twenty each. Having thus bribed high and low, he put a thousand taels of silver in a jar, sealed it, and presented it as a jar of wine to Magistrate Wang. The magistrate accepted it.

Early next morning, after he opened his court session, the magistrate ordered the lictors to bring the two women forward. A few moments later, they made their appearance and knelt down in the court-



县说：“我夜来一梦，梦见沈洪说：‘我是苏氏药死，与那皮氏无干。’”玉堂春正待分辨，知县大怒，说：“人是苦虫，不打不招。”叫皂隶：“与我拶起着实打，问他招也不招？他若不招，就活活敲死。”玉姐熬刑不过，说：“愿招。”知县说：“放下刑具。”皂隶递笔与玉姐画供。知县说：“皮氏召保在外，玉堂春收监。”皂隶将玉姐手肘脚镣，带进南牢。禁子、牢头都得了赵上舍银子，将玉姐百般凌辱。只等上司详允之后，就递罪状，结果他性命。正是：

安排缚虎擒龙计，断送愁鸾泣凤人。

且喜有个刑房吏，姓刘名志仁，为人正直无私，素知皮氏与赵昂有奸，都是王婆说合。数日前撞见王婆在生药铺内赎砒霜，说：“要药老鼠。”刘志仁就有些疑心。今日做出人命来，赵监生使着沈家不疼的银子来衙门打点，把苏氏买成死罪，天理何在？踌躇一会，“我下监去看看。”那禁子正在那里逼玉姐要灯油钱。



room. The magistrate declared, "Last night, I had a dream in which Shen Hong said to me, 'I was poisoned by Su-shi. Pi-shi had nothing to do with this.'"

Yutangchun was about to protest when the magistrate forestalled her by yelling angrily, "Human beings don't have fur or scales to protect them and can be beaten to make them confess!" He ordered the lictors sharply, "Apply the ankle-squeezers and beat her. Then ask her if she will confess. If she won't, just beat her to death."

Breaking down under the torture, Sister Yu said, "I'll confess."

"Put down the instruments of punishment," ordered the magistrate.

The lictors brought a brush-pen to Sister Yu so she could sign her confession.

The magistrate announced, "My judgment is that Pi-shi shall be bailed out and Yutangchun sent to prison." Thereupon, the lictors took Sister Yu, shackled at the hands and chained at the feet, to the South Jail. The prison wardens, who had all taken bribes from Mr. Zhao, humiliated her in every way they could think of. As soon as their superiors gave them the go-ahead, they were going to submit a written indictment and finish her off. Indeed, they laid traps

*To capture the tiger and the dragon,
 To finish off the lamenting phoenix.*

Fortunately, there was in the Bureau of Justice a clerk named Liu Zhiren who was a fair-minded, selfless man. He had long been aware of the adulterous relationship between Pi-shi and Zhao Ang and knew that Granny Wang was the go-between. A few days before the case came up, he had run into Granny Wang, who was buying arsenic in a medicinal herb store, saying she needed it to kill mice. A slight suspicion crept into Liu Zhiren's mind at the time. And now, a man was dead, and Scholar Zhao was bribing high and low in the yamen, being all too generous with Shen's money, so that Su-shi ended up a convict awaiting execution. Where, he wondered, was divine justice? After hesitating for some time, he said to himself, "Let me pay her a visit in the jail."



志仁喝退众人，将温言宽慰玉姐，问其冤情。玉姐垂泪拜诉来历。志仁见四傍无人，遂将赵监生与皮氏私情及王婆赎药始末，细说一遍。分付：“你且耐心守困，待后有机会，我指点你去叫冤。日逐饭食，我自供你。”玉姐再三拜谢。禁子见刘志仁做主，也不敢则声。此话阁过不题。

却说公子自到真定府为官，兴利除害，吏畏民悦。只是想念玉堂春，无刻不然。一日正在烦恼，家人来报，老奶奶家中送新奶奶来了。公子听说，接进家小。见了新人，口中不言，心内自思：“容貌到也齐整，怎及得玉堂春风趣？”当时摆了合欢宴，吃下合卺杯，毕姻之际，猛然想起多娇，“当初指望白头相守，谁知你嫁了沈洪，这官诰却被别人承受了。”虽然陪伴了刘氏夫人，心里还想着玉姐，因此不快。当夜中了伤寒。又想当初与玉姐别时，发下誓愿，各不嫁娶。心下疑惑，合眼就见玉姐在傍。刘夫人遣人到处祈禳，府县官都来问安，请名药切脉调治。一月之外，



He arrived at a moment when the prison wardens were pressing Sister Yu for bribes. After ordering them sharply to go away, Li Zhiren comforted her with gentle words and asked her if any wrong had been done to her. Tearfully, she recounted what had happened. Seeing that the coast was clear, Liu Zhiren told her what he knew about the affair between Scholar Zhao and Pi-shi as well as his encounter with Granny Wang in the herbal shop, adding, "Now, you wait here patiently. I'll tell you when to go and raise a protest. In the meantime, I'll take care of your daily meals." Over and over again, Sister Yu bowed her thanks. Now that Li Zhiren had taken the matter into his hands, the wardens dared not say anything. Of this, no more for the time being.

Let us now come to Young Master Wang who, in his new post in Zhending Prefecture, was fostering good causes and doing away with what had been plaguing the people. The local officials held him in respect, and the populace rejoiced. As before, however, Yutangchun was never absent from his thoughts, not even for a brief moment.

One day, he was again feeling gloomy when a servant came to announce, "Her Old Ladyship has sent the bride over." Accordingly, the young master greeted the new arrivals and let them in. At the sight of the bride, he thought to himself, "She's good-looking enough, but she has none of Yutangchun's charm."

As he downed the groom's wine at the wedding banquet, marking the beginning of the marriage, Yutangchun suddenly came again to his mind. "I had hoped to be with you always, even unto hoary old age," he thought. "Who would have known that you'd be married off to a Shen Hong, yielding to another the title granted by the emperor?" Physically he was with his wife Liu-shi, but his mind was still with Sister Yu. In his misery, he came down with a fever that very night. Recalling how both he and sister Yu, when bidding each other farewell, had vowed not to marry another, he began to hallucinate and saw Sister Yu by his side as soon as he closed his eyes. Liu-shi had prayers said for him everywhere, officials from the prefectural and county yamens came to wish him recovery, and famous physicians



才得痊可。

公子在任年馀，官声大著，行取到京。吏部考选天下官员，公子在部点名已毕，回到下处，焚香祷告天地，只愿山西为官，好访问玉堂春消息。须臾马上人来报：“王爷点了山西巡按。”公子听说，两手加额：“趁我平生之愿矣。”次日领了敕印，辞朝，连夜起马，往山西省城上任讷。即时发牌，先出巡平阳府。公子到平阳府，坐了察院，观看文卷。见苏氏玉堂春问了重刑，心内惊慌，其中必有跷蹊。随叫书吏过来：“选一个能干事的，跟着我私行采访，你众人在内，不可走漏消息。”

公子时下换了素巾青衣，随跟书吏，暗暗出了察院，雇了两个骡子，往洪同县路上来。这赶脚的小伙，在路上闲问：“二位客官往洪同县有甚贵干？”公子说：“我来洪同县要娶个妾，不知谁会说媒？”小伙说：“你又说娶小，俺县里一个财主，因娶了个小，害了性命。”[眉批]说话好个由头。公子问：“怎的害了性命？”小伙说：“这财主叫沈洪，妇人叫玉堂春，他是京里娶来的。他



were engaged for diagnosis and treatment. It was not until a month later that he recovered.

In the more than one year of his term of office, he built such a good name for himself that he was recommended to take a post in the capital, as the Ministry of Personnel was in the process of conducting an appraisal of all officials throughout the land. After the roll call in the ministry was over, the young master returned to his inn, burned some incense, and prayed to heaven and earth that he be re-assigned to Shanxi so that he could make inquiries about Yutangchun. A moment later, an announcement came, saying that he had been appointed inspector of Shanxi. Raising both hands to his forehead in a gesture of jubilation, he said, "So, my dearest wish in life has been granted." The next day, equipped with his official seal and documents, he took leave of the court and rode posthaste to the seat of Shanxi province. Without delay, he issued an order and went to Pingyang Prefecture for the first stop on his tour of inspection.

As he sat examining the files in the office of the inspectorate of Pingyang Prefecture, he came upon a severe sentence passed on a certain Yutangchun with the surname Su. He was appalled but he felt sure that there must be something questionable about the case. Calling for the clerks, he said, "I need the most competent one among you to go on a secret inspection tour with me. Don't tell anyone else about this."

Right away, he changed into a blue robe and a white cap and, following the clerk he had chosen, left the inspectorate, quite unobserved. He then hired two mules and headed for Hongtong County. The young man driving the mules said, by way of making conversation, "Why are you two gentlemen going to Hongtong County?"

The young master replied, "To get a concubine. Do you know any matchmakers?"

"What? You're getting a concubine also? A rich man in our county died precisely because he got one for himself!" (*What a good way to introduce a story!*)

"How did he die?" asked Mr. Wang.

"Well, that rich man was called Shen Hong. The concubine is



那大老婆皮氏与那邻家赵昂私通，怕那汉子回来知道，一服毒药把沈洪药死了。这皮氏与赵昂反把玉堂春送到本县，将银买嘱官府衙门，将玉堂春屈打成招，问了死罪，送在监里。若不是亏了一个外郎，几时便死了。”公子又问：“那玉堂春如今在监死了？”小伙说：“不曾。”公子说：“我要娶个小，你说可投着谁做媒？”小伙说：“我送你往王婆家去罢，他极会说媒。”公子说：“你怎知道他会说媒？”小伙说：“赵昂与皮氏都是他做牵头。”公子说：“如今下他家里罢。”小伙竟引到王婆家里，叫声：“干娘！我送个客官在你家来，这客官要娶个小，你可与他说媒。”王婆说：“累你，我转了钱来，谢你。”小伙自去了。公子夜间与王婆攀话，见他能言快语，是个积年的马泊六了。到天明，又到赵监生前后门看了一遍，与沈洪家紧壁相通，可知做事方便。回来吃了早饭，还了王婆店钱，说：“我不曾带得财礼，到省下回来，再作商议。”公子出的门来，雇了骡子，星夜回到省城，到晚进了察院不题。

次早，星火发牌，按临洪同县。各官参见过，分付就要审录。王知县回县，叫刑房吏书即将文卷审册，连夜开写停当，明日送



called Yutangchun. He had brought her home from the capital. His wife Pi-shi was having an adulterous relationship with their neighbor Zhao Ang. They were afraid that the husband would find out about this after his return, so they poisoned him to death. And then, they turned around and delivered Yutangchun to the county authorities. They bribed the yamen and had Yutangchun beaten until she confessed. Now she's in prison under a death sentence. If it hadn't been for the help of a clerk, she would have died."

"Are you saying that Yutangchun has already died in prison?"

"No, no."

"If I want a concubine, which matchmaker would you recommend?"

"Let me take you to Granny Wang. She's the best go-between."

"How do you know that?"

"She's the go-between for Zhao Ang and Pi-shi."

"All right, let's go to her then."

The young driver led Mr. Wang straight into Granny Wang's home. "Godmother!" he called out. "I brought you a visitor who wants a concubine. He can use your services!"

"Thank you," said the woman. "I'll thank you properly when I get the money." The young man went off.

After conversing with Granny Wang in the evening, Mr. Wang concluded from her glib talk that she was nothing short of a procuress with many years of experience. At daybreak, he went to check Zhao's front and back doors and found that the house, being just a wall away from Shen Hong's, was most conveniently located for clandestine activities. He then went back, ate his breakfast, and, when settling the bill with Granny Wang, said, "I didn't bring any betrothal gifts. Let me take care of this after I return from a trip to the provincial seat."

He left Granny Wang's house, hired a mule, and rode posthaste to the provincial seat. By evening, he had arrived in the office of the inspectorate. The next morning, he issued urgent orders and went to Hongtong County, where, after being greeted respectfully by the assembly of county officials, he ordered a review of cases. Thereupon, Magistrate Wang returned to the county yamen and summoned the



审不题。

却说刘志仁与玉姐写了一张冤状，暗藏在身，到次日清晨，王知县坐在监门首，把应解犯人点将出来。玉姐披枷带锁，眼泪纷纷。随解子到了察院门首，伺候开门。巡捕官回风已毕，解审牌出。公子先唤苏氏一起。玉姐口称冤枉，探怀中诉状呈上。公子抬头见玉姐这般模样，心中凄惨，叫听事官接上状来。公子看了一遍，问道：“你从小嫁沈洪，可还接了几年客？”玉姐说：“爷爷！我从小接着一个公子，他是南京礼部尚书三舍人。”公子怕他说出丑处，喝声：“住了，我今只问你谋杀人命事，不消多讲。”玉姐说：“爷爷！若杀人的事，只问皮氏便知。”公子叫皮氏问了一遍。玉姐又说了一遍。公子分付刘推官道：“闻知你公正廉能，不肯玩法徇私，我来到任，尚未出巡，先到洪同县访得这皮氏药死亲夫，累苏氏受屈，你与我把这事情用心问断。”〔眉批〕亏得分付此数句，不然又碍知县面皮矣。说罢，公子退堂。



clerks of the Bureau of Justice to review the files. All documents necessary for the trial the following day were all drawn up before the night was out, but of this, we shall speak no further.

In the meantime, Liu Zhiren had written an appeal on behalf of Sister Yu and concealed it on his person. Early the next morning, as Magistrate Wang sat in front of the prison door, prisoners involved in cases that were to be reviewed were escorted out. Wearing chains and a cangue, her face awash with tears, Sister Yu followed the lictors all the way to the inspectorate and waited for the gate to open. After the police chief reported to the inspector that everything was ready for the court session to start, orders were issued for the prisoners to be escorted under guard into the court chamber. Young Master Wang called on Su-shi as the first case for retrial.

Protesting that she was being unjustly punished, Sister Yu took out her written appeal from her bosom. Lifting his head, the young master felt a stab of grief as he saw the state to which Sister Yu had been reduced. He had an attendant bring the paper to him and, after reading it, asked, "So, was Shen Hong your first husband? For how many years had you taken on patrons?"

"Your Honor, my first patron was a young gentleman from Nanjing, the third son of the secretary of the Ministry of Rites."

Afraid that she might reveal his identity and cause a scandal, he stopped her, saying curtly, "That's enough! I'm interested only in the murder case. Say nothing irrelevant."

"Your Honor, about the murder, you need only ask Pi-shi."

The young master had Pi-shi give her story, after which Sister Yu also stated her case. The young master said to a judge named Liu, "I've heard that you are a fair-minded, honest, and capable judge who never bends the law to serve personal interests. While I was here in Hongtong County, before my inspection duties have really started, I learned about this case in which Pi-shi poisoned her husband and falsely accused Su-shi. Please review it carefully for me." (*It's a good thing that he gives these instructions. Otherwise, the judge would have been afraid of hurting the county magistrate's feelings.*) At this, the inspector withdrew from the court.



刘推官回衙，升堂，就叫：“苏氏，你谋杀亲夫，是何意故？”玉姐说：“冤屈！分明是皮氏串通王婆，和赵监生合计毒死男子，县官要钱，逼勒成招。今日小妇拚死诉冤，望青天爷爷做主。”刘爷叫皂隶把皮氏采上来，问：“你与赵昂奸情可真么？”皮氏抵赖没有。刘爷即时拿赵昂和王婆到来面对。用了一番刑法，都不肯招。刘爷又叫小段名：“你送面与家主吃，必然知情！”喝教夹起。小段名说：“爷爷，我说罢！那日的面，是俺娘亲手盛起，叫小妇人送与爹爹吃。小妇人送到西厅，爹叫新娘同吃。新娘关着门，不肯起身，回道：‘不要吃。’俺爹自家吃了，即时口鼻流血死了。”刘爷又问赵昂奸情，小段名也说了。赵昂说：“这是苏氏买来的硬证。”刘爷沉吟了一会，把皮氏这一起分头送监，叫一书吏过来：“这起泼皮奴才，苦不肯招。我如今要用一计，用一个大柜，放在丹墀内，凿几个孔儿，你执纸笔暗藏在内，不要走漏消息。我再提来问他，不招，即把他们锁在柜左柜右，看



Judge Liu went back to the court and called the court session to order. "Su-shi," he thundered. "You murdered your husband. Why?"

"I'm not guilty!" cried out Sister Yu. "It was all too clearly the work of Pi-shi, Granny Wang and Scholar Zhao. They banded together and poisoned the man to death. The greedy county magistrate forced a confession from me. But now I wish to appeal even if it costs me my life. Please do right by me, Your Honor!"

Judge Liu had lictors bring up Pi-shi, and asked her, "Is it true that you have an adulterous relationship with Zhao Ang?"

Pi-shi denied it. Right away, Judge Liu summoned Zhao Ang and Granny Wang to be questioned in Pi-shi's presence. They were subjected to a round of physical punishment, but none admitted any wrongdoing.

To Little Xiaming, Judge Liu said, "Being the one who delivered the noodles to your master, you must have known the truth." And he ordered the ankle-squeezer applied to her.

"Your Honor! I'll confess!" said Little Xiaming "It was my mistress who put the noodles into the bowls and told me to serve them to the master. So I carried the bowls to the west wing. The master told my new mistress to eat with him, but she kept her door closed and refused to get up, saying, 'I don't want any.' So the master ate the noodles by himself, and he died on the spot, bleeding from the nose and the mouth."

Judge Liu then pressed her on the adulterous relationship between Pi-shi and Zhao Ang. She also came up with the truth.

"This girl is a false witness bribed by Su-shi," interjected Zhao Ang.

After a few moments of reflection, Judge Liu decided to have everyone involved in the case taken to jail. He then called for a clerk and said to him, "Those brazen lowlifes are not going to confess. Now I've come up with an idea. Put a big wardrobe on the red-lacquer steps and drill some holes in it. You will take along some paper and a pen and hide in the wardrobe. Don't let on about any of this to anyone. I'll then summon them for more questioning. If they still refuse to confess, I'll have them locked up somewhere near the wardrobe. And



他有甚么说话，你与我用心写来。”刘爷分付已毕，书吏即办一大柜，放在丹墀，藏身于内。刘爷又叫皂隶，把皮氏一起提来再审。又问：“招也不招？”赵昂、皮氏、王婆三人齐声哀告，说：“就打死小的，那里招？”刘爷大怒，分付：“你众人各自去吃饭来，把这起奴才着实拷问。把他放在丹墀里，连小段名四人锁于四处，不许他交头接耳。”皂隶把这四人锁在柜的四角，众人尽散。

却说皮氏抬起头来，四顾无人，便骂：“小段名！小奴才！你如何乱讲！今日再乱讲时，到家中活敲杀你。”小段名说：“不是夹得疼，我也不说。”王婆便叫：“皮大姐，我也受这刑杖不过，等刘爷出来，说了罢。”赵昂说：“好娘，我那些亏着你，倘捱出官司去，我百般孝顺你，即把你做亲母。”王婆说：“我再不听你哄我，叫我圆成了，认我做亲娘，许我两石麦，还欠八升；许我一石米，都下了糠秕；段衣两套，止与我一条蓝布裙；许我好房子，不曾得住。你干的事，没天理，教我只管与你熬刑受苦。”[眉批]前叙王婆牵头甚略，却于此补出。皮氏说：“老娘，这遭

your job is to be sure to write down whatever they say to each other.”

Thus instructed, the clerk had a big wardrobe placed on the steps and hid himself in it, after which Judge Liu had the lictors bring in Pi-shi and the others for another interrogation. “Are you going to confess or not?” he asked.

Zhao Ang, Pi-shi and Granny Wang pleaded in unison, saying, “We have nothing to confess even if you beat us to death.”

Enraged, Judge Liu gave these instructions to the lictors, “You go ahead and eat your meal. After you come back, torture these lowlifes. In the meantime, lock up the four of them, including Little Xiaming, in four separate places around the steps and make sure they don’t even whisper to each other.” Accordingly, the lictors locked up each one near a corner of the wardrobe and went their own separate ways.

Pi-shi raised her head and, seeing no one around, began to lash out at Little Xiaming: “You worthless wretch! Why did you have to shoot your mouth off like that? If you give any more such testimony, I’ll beat you to death when we get home.”

“I wouldn’t have told if I could stand the pain of the ankle-squeezer.”

“Sister Pi!” exclaimed Granny Wang. “I, too, can’t put up with the pain of the thrashings anymore. When Judge Liu comes out again, I’m going to tell!”

“My good godmother!” said Zhao Ang. “What have I ever done to hurt you? If we aren’t found guilty, I’ll be nice to you in every way I can think of and treat you as my own mother.”

“I’m not going to be fooled by you again. Imagine! Treating me as your own mother after I get you out of this mess, indeed! Well, you promised me two piculs of wheat, but you still owe me about eight pints. You promised me one picul of rice, but what I got was nothing but chaff. Of the promised two suits of clothes, you delivered only a blue cotton skirt. And I haven’t seen the nice house you said would be mine. Why should I be put to torture and suffer for the evil things you did?” (*Earlier in the story, there was but a brief mention of Granny Wang’s doings as a go-between, and this is the place to*



出去，不敢忘你恩。捱过今日不招，便没事了。”柜里书吏把他说的话尽记了，写在纸上。刘爷升堂，先叫打开柜子。书吏跑将出来，众人都唬软了。刘爷看了书吏所录口词，再要拷问，三人都不打自招。赵昂从头依直写得明白。各各画供已完，递至公案。刘爷看了一遍，问苏氏：“你可从幼为娼，还是良家出身？”苏氏将苏准买良为贱，先遇王尚书公子，挥金三万，后被老鸨一秤金赶逐，将奴赚卖与沈洪为妾，一路未曾同睡，备细说了。刘推官情知王公子就是本院，提笔定罪：

皮氏凌迟处死，赵昂斩罪非轻。王婆赎药是通情，杖责段名示警。王县贪酷罢职，追赃不恕衙门。苏准买良为贱合充军，一秤金三月立枷罪定。[眉批]断得妥。



fill in the details.)

“My godmother!” added Pi-shi. “If we get out of this mess, I’ll never forget my debt of gratitude to you. If we stick to our story and manage to make it through today, we’ll be off the hook.”

The clerk hidden in the wardrobe wrote down everything that had been said. When the court session was resumed, Judge Liu ordered the wardrobe to be opened and out stepped the clerk, to the consternation of one and all. So frightened were they that their legs gave way under them. Judge Liu read what the clerk had recorded. Before he could give orders for more torture, the three accused volunteered their confessions. Zhao Ang made a written statement recounting the entire background of the case, and when all three signatures were affixed to it, the paper was submitted to the judge. After he read it, Judge Liu asked Su-shi, “Did you grow up in a brothel or were you brought up in a decent family?”

Su-shi supplied a full account of how she had been bought from a decent family by Su Huai and placed in a brothel, how she had met the son of Secretary Wang, who was her first patron, how he had squandered thirty thousand taels of silver, how he had been ousted by the procuress, and how she had been cheated and sold as a concubine to Shen Hong with whom she had never shared a bed, even after they began the journey to Hongtong. Presuming that the said Mr. Wang was none other than the inspector, Judge Liu took up his brush-pen and wrote the following verdict:

Pi-shi is to die from a thousand cuts;

Decapitation will be Zhao Ang’s lot.

Woman Wang helped in the crime with the poison;

As a warning, Xiaming shall be beaten.

The corrupt and cruel Magistrate Wang

Shall be removed from his post.

The yamen will recover the bribes; expect no mercy!

Su Huai, for making prostitutes of decent girls,

Deserves to be banished.

Yichengjin shall stand for three months in a cangue. (Good settlement of the case.)



刘爷做完申文，把皮氏一起俱已收监。次日亲捧招详，送解察院，公子依拟。留刘推官后堂待茶，问：“苏氏如何发放？”刘推官答言：“发还原籍，择夫另嫁。”公子屏去从人，与刘推官吐胆倾心，备述少年设誓之意：“今日烦贤府密地差人送至北京王银匠处暂居，足感足感。”刘推官领命奉行，自不必说。

却说公子行下关文，到北京本司院提到苏淮、一秤金依律问罪。苏淮已先故了。一秤金认得是公子，还叫王姐夫，被公子喝教重打六十，取一百斤大枷枷号。不勾半月，呜呼哀哉！正是：

万两黄金难买命，一朝红粉已成灰。

再说公子一年任满，复命还京。见朝已过，便到王匠处问信。王匠说有金哥伏侍，在顶银胡同居住。公子即往顶银胡同，见了玉姐。二人放声大哭。公子已知玉姐守节之美，玉姐已知王御史就是公子，彼此称谢。公子说：“我父母娶了个刘氏夫人，甚是贤德，他也知道你的事情，决不妒忌。”当夜同饮同宿，浓如胶



After drawing up the document to be submitted to his superiors, Judge Liu ordered that Pi-shi and the others be taken back to jail. The next day, they were sent under guard to the inspectorate, with Judge Liu himself leading the way, holding the documents in his hand. The inspector approved of his judgment and invited the judge for tea in a back room. "What are you going to do with Su-shi?" asked Wang.

Judge Liu replied, "I'm going to send her back to her native place. She'll be free to marry."

Inspector Wang dismissed the attendants and confided to Judge Liu the vow he had taken years before, adding, "If you could quietly have someone escort her to Silversmith Wang in Beijing, where she may stay temporarily, I will be most grateful."

Judge Liu did as he was told, but we need not go into the details. In the meantime, by order of Young Master Wang, runners from the yamen went to Beijing to bring Su Huai and Yichengjin to justice. Su Huai had already died. When Yichengjin was taken to the inspectorate, she recognized the inspector and called out, "Brother-in-law Wang!" The inspector sharply ordered that she be given sixty heavy strokes and put in a big cangue weighing a hundred catties. In less than half a month, she gave up the ghost. Indeed,

*Ten thousand taels of gold can't prolong one's life;
 One fine day, she's reduced to a heap of ashes.*

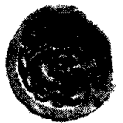
When his one-year term of office expired, Mr. Wang returned to the capital. After reporting to the court, he went to see Silversmith Wang and ask for news. The silversmith told him, "She's living in Dingyin Lane, with Jin'ge taking care of her." Immediately the young master headed for Dingyin Lane. Upon seeing each other, the young master and Sister Yu broke into loud cries of grief. The young master had learned about Sister Yu's chastity, and Sister Yu had learned that Inspector Wang was none other than Third Master Wang, so both showered each other with words of gratitude.

The young master said, "My parents arranged a marriage for me to Liu-shi, a very kind person. She knows about you and will never be jealous."

That night, they drank together and slept together, as inseparable



漆。次日，王匠、金哥都来磕头贺喜。公子谢二人昔日之恩，分付：本司院苏淮家当原是玉堂春置办的，今苏淮夫妇已绝，将遗下家财，拨与王匠、金哥二人管业，以报其德。上了个省亲本，辞朝，和玉堂春起马共回南京。到了自家门首，把门人急报老爷说：“小老爷到了。”老爷听说甚喜。公子进到厅上，排了香案，拜谢天地，拜了父母兄嫂，两位姐夫、姐姐都相见了。又引玉堂春见礼已毕。玉姐进房，见了刘氏说：“奶奶坐上，受我一拜。”刘氏说：“姐姐怎说这话？你在先，奴在后。”玉姐说：“奶奶是名门宦家之子，奴是烟花，出身微贱。”公子喜不自胜。当日正了妻妾之分，姊妹相称，一家和气。公子又叫：“王定，你当先在北京三番四复规谏我，乃是正理，我今与老老爷说，将你做老管家。”以百金赏之。后来王景隆官至都御史，妻妾俱有子，至今子孙繁盛。有诗叹云：



as lacquer and glue. The next day, Silversmith Wang and Jin'ge came to kowtow and offer their congratulations. The young master thanked them for their help and also gave these instructions: With Su Huai and his wife dead and gone, all of Su Huai's family belongings that had been purchased with Yutangchun's money were to be turned over to Silversmith Wang and Jin'ge, as compensation for their kindness. He then wrote a memorial requesting permission to go on leave, left the court, and rode on horseback with Yutangchun back to Nanjing.

Upon their arrival at the gate of the Wang residence, the janitor went quickly to announce to the master, "The young master's here!" Mr. Wang Senior was overjoyed. After entering the main hall, where an incense altar had been laid out, the young master made bows of gratitude to heaven and earth and to his parents, his brothers and sisters-in-law, and his two brothers-in-law and sisters. He then took Yutangchun to greet everyone. Upon entering the bedchamber, Sister Yu said to Liu-shi, "Madam, please accept a bow from this humble one."

"Sister," protested Liu-shi. "How can you say such a thing? You are actually the first wife. I came later."

"You, madam, are from a distinguished official's family, whereas I was but a courtesan from a humble background."

The young master was delighted beyond measure. That very day, the question of the two women's status was settled, with Liu-shi as the wife and Sister Yu as the concubine. The two women addressed each other as "Sister," and harmony reigned throughout the household.

To Wang Ding the servant, the young master said, "Wang Ding, you advised me time and again in Beijing to change my ways. You were absolutely right. I'll suggest to father that he make you the majordomo." He also rewarded Wang Ding with a hundred taels of silver.

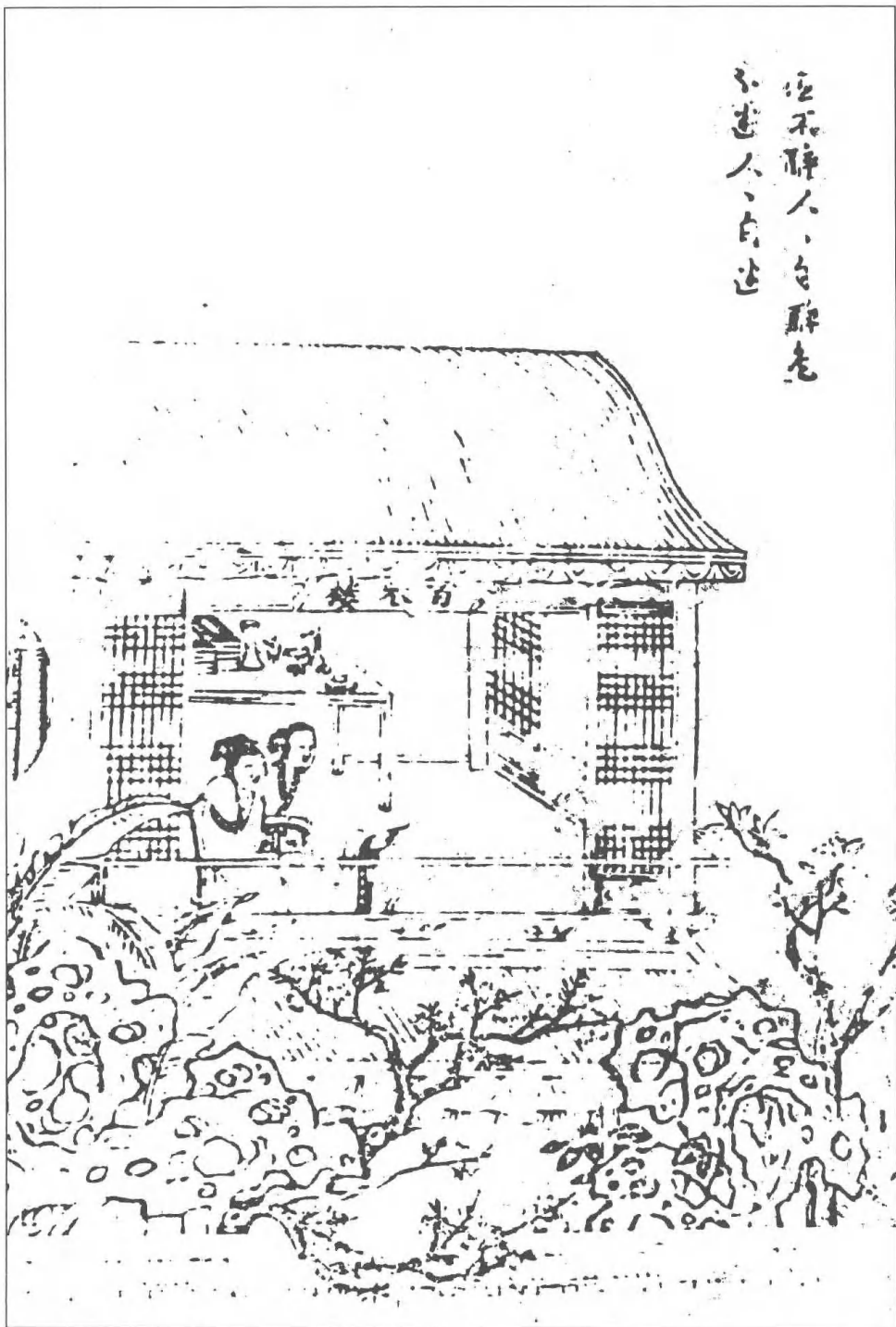
Later, Third Master Wang Jinglong rose to be an imperial inspector and was blessed with sons born to both his wife and his concubine. And the family line thrives even to this day. There is a poem that says in praise:

The story of Zheng Yuanhe is well-known;



郑氏元和已著名，三官嫖院是新闻。
风流子弟知多少，夫贵妻荣有几人？

位不静人，白静老
不迷人，白迷



*Third Master's romance makes the news.
Of all those wallowing in the world of love,
Few have attained wealth and rank, both husband and
wife.*

¹ It was the custom in brothels for the prostitutes to address the procuress as "Mother."

² Lord Guan (d. 220), or Guan Yu, a sworn brother of Liu Bei's in the Three Kingdoms period, is revered to this day as a central figure in the folk pantheon and is the embodiment of fidelity to commitments.

³ Li Yaxian and Zheng Yuanhe are characters in the Yuan *zaju* play *The Winding River* and the Ming romance "Story of the Embroidered Blouse," both of which are based on "The Story of Li Wa," by Bai Xingjian of the Tang dynasty.

⁴ According to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Zhou Yu (175–210), military adviser to Sun Quan of Wu, devised a plan to capture Liu Bei, Sun's rival, by offering him Sun's sister as wife so as to lure him to the Wu region to pick up the bride. But Liu Bei's military adviser, the great strategist Zhuge Liang, saw through the plot and beat Zhou Yu at his own game by having Liu Bei successfully take away the bride and return to his own territory safe and sound. Zhou Yu led his troops in a chase but was defeated by Liu Bei's general Zhang Fei. This story is invariably cited in reference to situations whereby one ends up suffering a double loss through actions intended to produce a gain.

⁵ On Zheng Yuanhe, see note 3.

⁶ "Nine Springs" is a term for the netherworld.

⁷ Yutangchun is the name Su San uses as a courtesan.



第二十五卷

桂员外途穷忏悔

交游谁似古人情？春梦秋云未可凭。
沟壑不援徒泛爱，寒暄有问但虚名。
陈雷义重逾胶漆，管鲍贫交托死生。
此道今人弃如土，岁寒惟有竹松盟。

话说元朝大顺年间，江南苏州府吴趋坊，有一长者，姓施名济，字近仁。其父施鉴字公明，为人谨厚志诚，治家勤俭，不肯妄费一钱。生施济时年已五十馀矣。鉴晚岁得子，爱惜如金。年八岁，送与里中支学究先生馆中读书。先生见他聪秀，与己子支德年齿相仿，遂令同桌而坐。那时馆中学生虽多，长幼不一，偏他两个聪明好学，文艺日进。后支学究得病而亡，施济禀知父亲，邀支德馆谷于家，彼此切磋，甚相契爱。未几，同游庠序，齐赴科场。支家得第为官，施家屡试不捷。乃散财结客，周贫恤寡，



Story 25

Squire Gui Repents at the Last Moment

*No friendship measures up to that among ancients;
 No spring dreams and autumn clouds are to be trusted.
 Expect no help from false friends when in need;
 Expect no solicitude from polite greetings.
 Of old, Chen and Lei were inseparable;¹
 In poverty, life, and death, Guan and Bao remained
 friends.²*

People of today scorn such fidelity;

Only pine trees make staunch friends on wintry days.

In the Dashun reign period of the Yuan dynasty,³ there lived in Wuqu Lane in Suzhou Prefecture south of the Yangzi River an elderly man named Shi Ji, courtesy name Jinren. His father Shi Jian, courtesy name Gongming, was a prudent, kindly, and honest man who ran his household thriftily, never failing to put every penny to good use. Already in his fifties when Shi Ji was born, he cherished this son as if the child were made of gold.

At eight years of age, the boy was sent to the school of a Scholar Zhi in the neighborhood. Impressed by his brilliance, Mr. Zhi made him share a desk with his own son Zhi De, who was about the same age. Among the many pupils of varying ages in the school, these two boys distinguished themselves by their intelligence and diligence and made rapid progress day by day in their studies. Later, when Schoolmaster Zhi died of an illness, Shi Ji invited Zhi De to live at his home at no charge for room and board, with the permission of his father. They compared notes in their studies, and loving friends they were indeed.

Soon afterward, they attended government-sponsored schools and, together, sat for the civil service examinations. Zhi De passed the examinations and became a government official, whereas Shi Ji failed time and again. Consequently, he began to spend money freely, making friends, helping the poor and the widowed, wishing



欲以豪侠成名于世。父亲施鉴是个本分财主，惜粪如金的，见儿子挥金不吝，未免心疼。惟恐他将家财散尽，去后萧索，乃密将黄白之物，埋藏于地窖中，如此数处，不使人知，待等天年，才授与儿子。从来财主家往往有此。正是：

常将有日思无日，莫待无时思有时。

那施公平昔若是常患头疼腹痛，三好两歉的，到老来也自判个死日；就是平昔间没病，临老来伏床半月或十日，儿子朝夕在面前奉侍汤药，那地窖中的话儿却也说了。只为他年已九十有馀，兀自精神健旺，饮啖兼人，步履如飞，不匡一夕五更睡去，就不醒了。虽唤做吉祥而逝，却不曾有片言遗嘱。常言说得好：

三寸气在千般用，一日无常万事休。

那施济是有志学好的人，少不得殡殓祭葬，务从其厚。

其时施济年逾四十，尚未生子，三年孝满，妻严氏劝令置妾。施济不从，发心持诵《白衣观音经》，并刊本布施，许愿生子之日，舍三百金修盖殿宇。期年之后，严氏得孕，果生一男。三朝



to make a name for himself as a man with a generous and bold spirit.

His father Shi Jian, being a frugal, albeit rich, man prone to keeping every drop of excrement as if it were a piece of gold, agonized over the young man's lavishness. Afraid that his son would fritter away all the family possessions and fall into poverty after his death, he secretly buried much gold and silver in the cellar and several other spots. Keeping the knowledge to himself, he planned to pass the money on to his son only upon his death. This is, in fact, a common practice among rich parents. Truly,

*In a fat year, think ahead to a lean one,
Or you'll miss the blessed days, come a rainy one.*

If Mr. Shi Senior had been afflicted with frequent headaches or stomachaches and felt indisposed every other day, he would have prepared for his death, now that he was advanced in years. Even if, being otherwise quite healthy, he had been bedridden for just half a month or ten days, with his son attending to him day and night, he would have told his son about his secret. However, as it was, he was still the picture of good health in his nineties with an appetite heartier than average and a step as springy as if he had wings. All too unexpectedly, he died in his sleep early one morning. It was a painless, blissful death, but he did not leave a last will and testament. There is a proverb that puts it well:

*Everything is done with the three inches of breath;
All is gone once the last breath goes out.*

Shi Ji, always eager to do the right thing, spared no expense with the funeral and burial ceremonies.

Shi Ji was now over forty years of age but yet without a son. After the three-year mourning period was over, his wife, Yan-shi, urged him to take on a concubine, but he turned a deaf ear to the advice. He began to intone the "White-robed Bodhisattva Sutra," made copies of it, and freely gave out alms. To the gods, he pledged: "If a son is born to me, I will donate three hundred taels of silver to renovate a temple." A year later, Yan-shi found herself pregnant and, sure enough, a son was born.

When shaving the baby's head three days after his birth, the hus-



剃头，夫妻说起还愿之事，遂取名施还。到弥月做了汤饼会。施济对浑家说，收拾了三百两银子，来到虎丘山水月观音殿上烧香礼拜。正欲唤主僧嘱托修殿之事，忽闻下面有人哭泣之声，仔细听之，其声甚惨。施济下殿走到千人石上观看，只见一人坐在剑池边，望着池水，呜咽不止。上前看时，认得其人姓桂，名富五，幼年间一条街上居住，曾同在支先生馆中读书。不一年，桂家父母移居胥口，以便耕种，桂生就出学去了。后来也曾相会几次，有十馀年不相闻了，何期今日得遇？施公吃了一惊，唤起相见，问其缘故。桂生只是堕泪，口不能言。施公心怀不忍，一手挽住，拉到观音殿上来，问道：“桂兄有何伤痛？倘然见教，小弟或可分忧。”桂富五初时不肯说，被再三盘诘，只得吐实道：“某祖遗有屋一所，田百亩，自耕自食，尽可糊口。不幸惑于人言，谓农夫利薄，商贩利厚，将薄产抵借李平章府中本银三百两，贩纱段往燕京。岂料运蹇时乖，连走几遍，本利俱耗。宦家索债，如狼似虎，利上盘利，将田房家私尽数估计。一妻二子，亦为其所有，



band and wife brought up the subject of fulfilling the pledge, whereupon they named the boy Shi Huan [Fulfill a Votive]. When the baby was one month old, a feast was laid out to mark the occasion. Then, after a talk with his wife, Shi Ji took three hundred taels of silver and went to Water Moon Bodhisattva Temple at Tiger Hill to make offerings of incense. He was on the point of asking the abbot about the renovation project when he suddenly heard the sound of weeping coming from below. Upon listening closely, he found the sobs heartrending. Down the steps he went until he came to the rocks by Sword Pond known as Thousand People Rocks and saw that by the pond sat a man looking into the water and sobbing uncontrollably.

Shi Ji stepped forward and recognized the man to be Gui Fuwu who, in his childhood, had lived on the same street as the Shi family and had also gone to Schoolmaster Zhi's class. After attending the school for a year or so, Gui Fuwu's parents took the family to Xukou to till the land, and Fuwu left the school. Shi Ji and Fuwu had met a few times afterward but not in the last ten years or so. Shi Ji had never expected to run into Fuwu like this. In surprise, he accosted Fuwu, had him rise to his feet, exchanged greetings with him, and asked what had happened to him. Gui Fuwu just kept weeping, unable to get a word out. His heart aching at the sight, Shi Ji pulled him into the main hall of the temple and asked, "My brother, what is it that pains you? If you let me know, I may be able to help you."

In the beginning, Gui Fuwu refused to tell, but after much pressing, he unburdened himself. "I had an inherited house and a hundred *mu* of land. By tilling the fields and growing our own food, we were quite self-sufficient. Unfortunately, I believed some wrong-headed opinions about merchants making more money than farmers do. So I mortgaged off what little land I had to Grand Councilor Li for three hundred taels of silver, which I used to purchase cotton yarn to be sold in Yanjing. But, as it turned out, luck ran against me. After several trips back and forth, I ended up losing all the profits along with the capital. Mr. Li has been after me like a wolf or a tiger, trying to get back his money plus the exorbitant interest. I've lost all my land, my house, my property, even my wife and two sons to him.



尚然未足，要逼某损害亲戚赔补。某情极，夜间逃出，思量无路，欲投涧水中自尽，是以悲泣耳。”施公恻然道：“吾兄勿忧，吾适带修殿银三百两在此，且移以相赠，使君夫妻、父子团圆何如？”

[眉批] 见在功德，胜如修殿。桂生惊道：“足下莫非戏言乎？”施公大笑道：“君非有求于我，何戏之有？我与君交虽不深，然幼年曾有同窗之雅。每见吴下风俗恶薄，见朋友患难，虚言抚慰，曾无一毫实惠之加；甚则面是背非，幸灾乐祸，此吾平时所深恨者。

[眉批] 施公疑非吴人。况君今日之祸，波及妻子。吾向苦无子，今生子仅弥月，祈佛保佑，愿其长成。君有子而弃之他人，玷辱门风，吾何忍见之！吾之此言，实出肺腑。”遂开篋取银三百两，双手递与桂生。桂生还不敢便接，说道：“足下既念旧情，肯相周济，愿留借券，倘有好日，定当报补。”施公道：“吾怜君而相赠，岂望报乎？君可速归，恐尊嫂悬悬而望也！”桂生喜出望外，做梦也想不到此，接银在手，不觉屈膝下拜，施济慌忙扶起。桂生垂泪



But even so, I haven't paid back everything I owe him. He's now demanding that I press my relatives for money so as to make up the full amount. In desperation, I escaped under the cover of the night. I've been crying because, with nowhere to go, I was about to throw myself into the ravine."

His heart going out to Fuwu, Shi Ji said, "Don't worry, my brother. I brought three hundred taels of silver for the temple, but let me give them to you instead, so that you can reclaim your family. What do you say?" (*This kind deed is better than renovating temples.*)

With a start, Gui Fuwu said, "You must be joking."

"Why should I try to fool you when you're not asking me for anything?" replied Shi with a hearty laugh. "I may not know you very well, but we did go to school together for a time in our childhood. Now, in our Suzhou region, morals are so low that one mouths empty words of comfort to friends in trouble, without offering even a penny's worth of a gift. In worse cases, one feigns sympathy while actually gloating over others' misfortunes. I find such people most repugnant. (*Mr. Shi is most probably not a native of the Suzhou region.*)⁴ Moreover, what you are going through also involves your wife and son. I had wanted a son for so long, and now that I am blessed with a son, who's only one month old, I pray that Buddha will protect him as he grows up. How could I have the heart to see you give up your son and bring shame to your family? These words are truly from the bottom of my heart." So saying, he opened his trunk and took out three hundred taels of silver, which he offered with both hands to Mr. Gui.

Thinking it presumptuous to take the silver right away, Mr. Gui said, "Please let me draw up a receipt, so that when my circumstances improve, I can repay you for your kindness in helping me out for old times' sake."

"I'm giving this to you out of sympathy. Why would I expect to be repaid? Please go home quickly. Your wife must be worried about you."

Beside himself with joy over this stroke of good fortune, which was beyond even his wildest dreams, Mr. Gui took the silver and in-



道：“某一家骨肉皆足下所再造；虽重生父母不及此恩。三日后，定当踵门叩谢。”又向观音大士前磕头说誓道：“某受施君活命之恩，今生倘不得补答，来生亦作犬马相报。”欢欢喜喜的下山去了。后人诗赞施君之德：

谊高矜厄且怜贫，三百朱提贱似尘；

试问当今有力者，同窗谁念幼时人？

施公对主僧说道：“带来修殿的银子，别有急用挪去，来日奉补。”主僧道：“迟一日不妨事。”施济回家，将此事述与严氏知道，严氏亦不以为怪。[眉批] 贤妇。次日另凑银三百两，差人送去水月观音殿完了愿心。到第三日，桂生领了十二岁的长儿桂高，亲自到门拜谢。施济见了他父子一处，愈加欢喜，殷勤接待，酒食留款。从容问其偿债之事。桂生答道：“自蒙恩人所赐，已足本钱，奈渠将利盘算，田产尽数取去，止落得一家骨肉完聚耳。”说罢，泪如雨下。施济道：“君家至亲数口，今后如何活计？”桂生道：“身居口食，一无所赖，家世衣冠，羞在故乡出丑，只得



stinctively sank to his knees. Shi Ji swiftly raised him to his feet. Tearfully, Mr. Gui said, "You've given my entire family a new lease on life. You are no less than a parent who has given us rebirth. In three days, we'll come to see you and offer our thanks." Turning to the image of the bodhisattva, he kowtowed and made this pledge: "Mr. Shi has saved my life, and I shall repay him for his act of kindness. If this can't be done in this life, let me serve him in my next life as a dog or a horse." And he went merrily down the mountain. A later poet had this to say in praise of Mr. Shi's act of kindness:

*Against friendship and compassion for the poor,
 The three hundred taels were as worthless as dust.
 Let me ask the high and mighty of our day:
 Would you likewise care for a childhood classmate?*

To the abbot of the temple, Mr. Shi said, "An emergency came up that demanded the three hundred taels I had brought you for the renovation of the temple. I'll give you the money tomorrow."

"One day doesn't make any difference," the abbot assured him.

Upon returning home, Shi Ji recounted what had happened to his wife Yan-shi. She did not take it amiss. (*Good woman.*) The next day, he put together another three hundred taels of silver and had them sent over to the Water Moon Bodhisattva Temple in fulfillment of his pledge.

On the third day, Gui showed up at Shi Ji's door with his eldest son, twelve-year-old Gui Gao, to offer his gratitude.

Pleased beyond measure at the sight of the father and son together, Shi Ji entertained them with great hospitality, treating them to wine and food and asking them to stay longer. In the course of the conversation, he casually brought up the subject of Gui's debt, to which Gui Fuwu responded, "Thanks to your generosity, the capital has been paid back in full, but the land and estate are gone to pay off the interest. The family is all we've got." With that, his tears flowed thick and fast.

"But what are you going to live on?" asked Shi Ji.

"With nothing left to live on, we have to move to another county to work for a living. Being genteel folks from a family of long



往他方外郡，佣工趁食。”施公道：“为人须为彻，胥门外吾有桑枣园一所，茆屋数间，园边有田十亩，勤于树艺，尽可度日。倘足下不嫌淡泊，就此暂过几时何如？”桂生道：“若得如此，免作他乡饿鬼。只是前施未报，又叨恩赐，深有未安。某有二子，长年十二，次年十一，但凭所爱，留一个服侍恩人，少尽犬马之意，譬如服役于豪宦也。”施公道：“吾既与君为友，君之子即吾之子，岂有此理？”当唤小厮取皇历看个吉日，教他入宅。一面差人分付看园的老仆，教他打扫房屋洁净，至期交割与桂家管业。桂生命儿子拜谢了恩人，桂高朝上磕头，施公要还礼，却被桂生扶住，只得受了。桂生连唱了七八个喏，千恩万谢，同儿子相别而去。到移居之日，施家又送些糕米、钱帛之类。分明是：

从空伸出拿云手，提起天罗地网人。

过了数日，桂生备了四个盒子，无非是时新果品，肥鸡巨鲫，教浑家孙大嫂乘轿亲到施家称谢，严氏备饭留款。那孙大嫂能言



standing, we would be ashamed to be seen fallen to such a lowly status in our home village.”

“Well, as they say, to help people out, you must go all the way. Outside of Xu Gate, I have a mulberry and date orchard on ten *mu* of land and a thatched cottage of several rooms. With diligent work, the orchard should yield enough for subsistence. If you don’t object to the tediousness of such a life, would you be willing to stay there for the time being?”

“If we are able to stay there, we won’t end up as hungry ghosts in some alien land! But I haven’t even repaid the previous debt of gratitude. I’ll feel too uneasy if I accept another favor. Now, I have two sons. The older one is twelve years old, and the younger one is eleven. Please choose the son you prefer and keep him as a servant, so that he can at least render some small service to you. He could have served in the establishment of some highly placed official anyway.”

“You and I being friends, your son is my son. How can you say a thing like that?” Then and there, he had a page boy bring over a lunar almanac and picked an auspicious day for Gui Fuwu’s son to move into the household. He also had a message sent to the old servant guarding the orchard, instructing him to clean up the rooms and prepare to hand over management of the orchard to the Gui family. Mr. Gui had his son Gui Gao make a bow of gratitude to his benefactor. As Gui Gao kowtowed, Mr. Shi tried to return the courtesy, but Mr. Gui Senior stopped him. Resignedly, Shi accepted the homage. Mr. Gui Senior chanted his words of good-bye seven or eight times and, with profuse thanks, departed with his son.

On the day scheduled for moving, the Shi family sent over cakes, rice, and money. It was truly a case of

*A helping hand appearing out of mid-air,
 To rescue the ones caught in the cosmic net.*

A few days later, Mr. Gui filled four gift boxes with the usual fare of fresh fruit, fat chickens, and large fish and asked his wife, Sister Sun, to go by sedan-chair to the Shi household to offer their thanks. Yan-shi, Mr. Shi’s wife, had the dinner table set and kept her



快语，谗谄面谀，严氏初相会便说得着，与他如姊妹一般。更有一件奇事，连施家未周岁的小官人，一见了孙大嫂也自欢喜，就赖在身上要他抱。[眉批] 前生结下丈母缘了。大嫂道：“不瞒姆姆说，奴家见有身孕，抱不得小官人。”原来有这个俗忌，大凡怀孕的抱了孩子家，那孩子就坏了脾胃，要出青粪，谓之“受记”，直到产后方痊。严氏道：“不知婶婶且喜几个月了？”大嫂道：“五个足月了。”严氏把十指一轮道：“去年十二月内受胎的，今年九月间该产。婶婶有过了两位令郎了，若今番生下女儿，奴与姆姆结个儿女亲家。”大嫂道：“多承姆姆不弃，只怕扳高不来。”当日说话，直到晚方别。大嫂回家，将严氏所言，述了一遍。丈夫听了，各各欢喜，只愿生下女儿，结得此姻，一生有靠。光阴似箭，不觉九月初旬，孙大嫂果然产下一女。施家又遣人送柴米，严氏又差女使去问安。其时只当亲眷往来，情好甚密，这话阁过不题。

却说桑枣园中有银杏一棵，大数十围，相传有福德五圣之神



for a meal. Sister Sun was a woman with a clever tongue, best at vicious gossip and fawning flattery. On their first meeting, Yan-shi took an instant liking to her and found her as endearing as a sister. There was another remarkable thing: Even Yan-shi's little baby son, not yet a year old, liked Auntie Sun so much upon first sight that he clung to her, wanting to be carried in her arms. (*He's indeed predestined to be her son-in-law.*)

"To be honest with you, Sister," said Sister Sun, "I'm pregnant. So I can't hold your baby." Indeed, according to a popular belief, if a pregnant woman held a child in her arms, that child would get sick in the stomach and bowels and have greenish stool. The sickness would last until after the woman gave birth.

"How many months along are you?" asked Yan-shi.

"Five full months."

Counting on her fingers, Yan-shi remarked, "So, you got pregnant in the twelfth month of last year, which means you should be giving birth in the ninth month of this year. You already have two sons. If it's a girl this time, I say that our two families should form a marriage alliance!"

"You are too kind! I'm only afraid that my family is not worthy enough for you!" And so the conversation went. They did not part company until evening set in.

Upon returning home, Sister Sun repeated Yan-shi's words to her husband. In exultation, both husband and wife wished for a daughter so that they could form a marriage alliance that would provide them with lifelong support.

Time flew by like an arrow. Soon, it was the beginning of the ninth month, and sure enough, Sister Sun gave birth to a daughter. The Shi family sent over firewood and rice. In addition, Yan-shi had a maidservant go over to convey her good wishes. The two families treated each other as cordially as if they were already relatives, but of this, no more need be said for the time being.

Now, in the mulberry and date orchard, there stood a ginkgo tree with a trunk that measured about ten arm spans around. It was said that the God of Five Blessings and Saintly Virtues dwelled on top



栖止其上。园丁每年腊月初一日，于树下烧纸钱奠酒。桂生晓得有这旧规，也是他命运合当发迹，其年正当烧纸，忽见有白老鼠一个，绕树走了一遍，径钻在树底下去，不见了。桂生看时，只见树根浮起处有个盍大的窍穴，那白老鼠兀自在穴边张望。桂生说与浑家，莫非这老鼠是神道现灵？孙大嫂道：“鸟瘦毛长，人贫就智短了。常听人说金蛇是金，白鼠是银，却没有神道变鼠的话。或者树下窖得有钱财，皇天可怜，见我夫妻贫苦，故教白鼠出现，也不见得。你明日可往胥门童瞎子家起一当家宅课，看财爻发动也不？”桂生平日惯听老婆舌的，[眉批]最误事。明日起早，真个到童瞎子铺中起课，断得有十分财采。夫妻商议停当，买猪头祭献藏神。二更人静，两口儿两把锄头，照树根下窍穴开将下去。约有三尺深，发起小方砖一块，砖下磁坛三个，坛口铺着米，都烂了，拨开米下边，都是白物，原来银子埋在土中，得了米便不走。夫妻二人叫声惭愧，四只手将银子搬尽，不动那磁坛，依旧盖砖掩土。



of it. On the first day of the first month every year, the gardener would make offerings of wine and burn paper coins under the tree, an old custom of which Gui Fuwu was aware. He was indeed destined for an upturn in his life, for, as he was burning the paper coins, he suddenly caught sight of a white mouse. It went around the tree once and then dived under the tree and disappeared. Gui took a closer look and found the white mouse peeping out from a cup-size hole under the roots of the tree.

Gui told his wife about it, wondering aloud if the mouse was the manifestation of that god. Sister Sun said, "As they say, a thin bird is long on feathers; a poor man is short on wits. I've often heard that a golden snake represents gold, and a white mouse represents silver, but I've never heard of a god assuming the shape of a mouse. Maybe there's money buried under the tree, and heaven, in its compassion for us in our poverty, made a white mouse appear to you. Why don't you go tomorrow to Blind Man Tong's house by Xu Gate and have him do a divination for us? Ask him if the star of wealth will be shining on us."

Being an obedient husband, Gui Fuwu rose bright and early the next morning and went accordingly to Blind Man Tong's house for a divination. (*Biggest mistake.*) And he was told that the star of wealth was indeed shining fully upon him.

After consulting with each other, the couple bought a pig's head to offer as a sacrifice to the god of buried treasures. In the stillness of the night, the two of them, each wielding a hoe, dug deep into the hole under the roots of the tree. When they reached a depth of about three feet, they came upon a small square tile, under which stood three porcelain jars. There was a layer of rice, all rotten now, at the top of each jar, and after they scraped aside the rice, they saw that the jars were filled with silver. The popular belief was that ingots of silver buried in the earth would somehow wander off by themselves unless covered by a layer of rice.

With a cry of joy, the husband and wife set to removing all the silver with their bare hands. After emptying the porcelain jars, the couple left them where they were, put the tile back on, and spread



二人回到房中，看那东西，约一千五百金。桂生算计要将三百两还施氏所赠之数，余下的将来营运。孙大嫂道：“却使不得！”桂生问道：“为何？”孙大嫂道：“施氏知我赤贫来此，倘问这三百金从何而得，反生疑心。若知是银杏树下掘得的，原是他园中之物，祖上所遗，凭他说三千四千，你那里分辨？和盘托出，还只嫌少，不惟不见我们好心，反成不美。”[眉批]近似有理，是故恶夫畏舌者。桂生道：“若依贤妻所见如何？”孙大嫂道：“这十亩田，几株桑枣，了不得你我终身之事。幸天赐藏金，何不于他乡私下置些产业，慢慢地脱身去，自做个财主，那时报他之德，彼此见好。”[眉批]若日后果能报德，未为不是。桂生道：“有智妇人，胜如男子，你说的是。我有远房亲族在会稽地方，向因家贫久不来往，今携千金而去，料不慢我。我在彼处置办良田美产，每岁往收花利，盘放几年，怕不做个大大财主。”商量已定，到来春，



the soil over it as before. Upon returning to their room, they found that the silver amounted to about fifteen hundred taels. Gui wanted to give the Shi family three hundred taels as repayment for the amount Shi had given them and keep the balance for future use.

“That won’t do,” objected Sister Sun.

“Why not?”

“The Shi family knows us to be poor. That’s why we came here in the first place. What if they ask how we came by the three hundred taels? They’d get suspicious. If they learn that the silver was dug out from under the ginkgo tree, they’ll say that the family inheritance buried in the yard rightfully belongs to them. And what if they claim that the silver amounts to three or four thousand taels? You’re in no position to argue. And so, even if we hand over the entire amount to them, they’ll still say it’s not enough. Our good intentions will be misconstrued, and that will only make things worse.” (*Specious reasoning. A vicious, fearsome tongue.*)

“So what does my good wife think?”

“These ten *mu* of land and the few mulberry and date trees won’t be enough to see us through our old age. Now that heaven has bestowed such a windfall on us, why don’t we secretly buy some property in another town, gradually shake ourselves free of this place, and start living as a family of independent means? If we can repay our debt of gratitude to them by then, that will be better for both families.” (*An idea that’s not all that bad if they really will repay the debt of gratitude.*)

“Just as the proverb says, ‘smart women are worthier than men.’ Your point is well taken. I have some distant relatives living in Huiji. We haven’t heard from each other for a long time because of my poverty. If we go there with a thousand taels of silver, I’m sure we won’t be snubbed. We can buy some fertile land and decent property there and go over every year to collect rent. With the interests we can make from loans, I guarantee we’ll be fabulously rich in several years.”

Their minds thus made up, Fuwu and Sister Sun took a trip to the middle Zhejiang region the following spring, ostensibly to visit



推说浙中访亲，私自置下田产，托人收放，每年去算帐一次。回时旧衣旧裳，不露出有钱的本相。[眉批]亦是大有心人，堪作财主。如此五年，桂生在绍兴府会稽县已做个大家事，住房都买下了，只瞒得施家不知。

忽一日，两家儿女同时出痘，施济请医看了自家儿子，就教去看桂家女儿，此时只当亲媳妇一般。大幸痘都好了。里中有个李老儿，号梅轩者，素在施家来往，遂邀亲邻醮钱与施公把盏贺喜，桂生亦与席。施济又题起亲事，李梅轩自请为媒，众人都玉成其美。桂生心下也情愿，回家与浑家孙大嫂商量。大嫂道：“自古说‘慈不掌兵，义不掌财’。施生虽是好人，却是为仁不富，家事也渐渐消乏不如前了。[眉批]文近理。我的人家都做在会稽地面，到彼攀个高门，这些田产也有个依靠。”桂生道：“贤妻说得是。只是他一团美意，将何推托？”大嫂道：“你只推门衰祚薄，攀陪不起就是。倘若他定要做亲，只说儿女年幼，等他长大行聘未迟。”古人说得好：“人心不足蛇吞象。”当初贫困之日，低门



relatives, but in fact, they bought land and property and engaged a rental agent. Once very year, they traveled there to settle the accounts. Upon returning, they changed back into their worn, old clothes and hid all signs that might betray their wealth. (*Schemers capable of becoming moneybags.*) After five years had gone by in this fashion, Gui had amassed quite a large fortune in Huiji County, Shaoxing Prefecture, including his own house. The Shis were the only ones kept in the dark.

One day, the children of both families came down with chicken pox at the same time. Shi Ji engaged a physician. After his own son had been seen, Shi had the physician go to attend to Gui's daughter, whom he treated as his very own daughter-in-law. To everyone's joy, the children recovered.

In the neighborhood, there lived an old man, Li, with the sobriquet Meixuan, who was a close friend of the Shi family. At his suggestion, some friends and neighbors put together some money and held a celebration feast for Mr. Shi, a feast that Mr. Gui also attended. When Shi Ji again brought up the subject of the betrothal, Li Meixuan volunteered to be the matchmaker, an offer that received hearty cheers. Gui was ready to accept the offer, but, upon returning home and discussing the matter with his wife Sister Sun, he was told: "You know the old saying, 'Those with kind hearts should not command the troops; those with high moral standards should not manage financial matters.' Shi is a good man all right, but good men don't get rich. He has come down in the world. His means are not what they were. (*Valid point.*) Since our possessions are all in Huiji, we can find a local family there with a higher social position, and we'll get to keep our landed property, too."

"You're right. But he's so full of good will. What excuse can we use to turn him down?"

"Just say that we're too lowly to claim the connection. If he insists, you can say that the children are still too young. The betrothal can wait until they've grown up. What's the hurry?"

The ancients put it well, "Greed makes a snake try to swallow an elephant." In their down-and-out days, a marriage alliance with a



扳高，求之不得，如今掘藏发迹了，反嫌好道歉起来。

只因上岸身安稳，忘却从前落水时。

施济是个正直之人，只道他真个谦逊，并不疑有他故。荏苒光阴，又过了三年。施济忽遭一疾，医治不痊，呜呼哀哉了！殓殓之事不必细说。桂富五的浑家擗掇丈夫，乘此机会早为脱身之计。乃具只鸡斗酒，夫妇齐往施家吊奠。桂生拜奠过了先回，孙大嫂留身向严氏道：“拙夫向蒙恩人救拔，朝夕感念，犬马之报尚未少申。今恩人身故，愚夫妇何敢久占府上之田庐？宁可转徙他方，别图生计，今日就来告别。”严氏道：“婶婶何出此言！先夫虽则去世，奴家亦可做主。孤苦中正要婶婶时常伴话，何忍舍我而去！”大嫂道：“奴家也舍不得姆姆，但非亲非故，白占寡妇田房，被人议论，日后郎君长大，少不得要吐还的。不如早达时务，善始善终，全了恩人生前一段美意。”[眉批]近理。严氏苦留不住，各各流泪而别。桂生挈家搬往会稽居住，恍似开笼放鸟，一去不回。

family of higher standing was more than anything they could have asked for, but now, having struck it rich thanks to some unearthed treasure, they turned around and began to pick and choose.

*Once on shore and out of danger,
They forget their struggle in the water.*

Being a straightforward man, Shi Ji assumed Mr. Gui's had declined as a gesture of genuine modesty. Never did the slightest suspicion cross his mind.

Time went by quickly. Another three years elapsed. Suddenly, Shi Ji came down with an illness. He failed to respond to treatment and passed away. We shall skip over the details of the funeral and burial and come to the point at which Gui Fuwu's wife urged her husband to take advantage of the opportunity and set themselves free. Carrying a chicken and a jar of wine, the couple went to the Shi household to offer their condolences.

Gui took the lead and bowed to the spiritual tablet of the deceased, while Sister Sun stayed behind and said to Yan-shi, "Not a day goes by that my unworthy husband is not mindful of his benefactor's kindness toward him. Now that the benefactor is gone and my husband hasn't rendered him any service, we dare not go on occupying your estate. We will have to move and try to make a living elsewhere. In fact, we're here today to bid you farewell."

"Sister, how can you say such a thing? Though my husband is gone, I am still here to make decisions! In my loneliness, I need your company. How can you be so hardhearted as to leave me at a time like this?"

"I do hate to leave you, but as we're not related to you in any way, we shouldn't be here, occupying the estate of a widow, because people will talk. After your son grows up, we'll have to return everything to him anyway. We might as well be sensible before it's too late, so that what started well will end well and fulfill the deceased benefactor's kind wishes." (*What she says does make sense.*)

Yan-shi's pleas for her to stay were to no avail, and they bade each other a tearful farewell. And so, the Gui family moved to Huiji. Like birds released from a cage, they were gone forever, never to return.



再说施家，自从施济存日，好施乐善，囊中已空虚了。又经这番丧中之费，不免欠下些债负。那严氏又是贤德有馀才干不足的，守着数岁的孤儿撑持不定，把田产逐渐弃了。不勾五六年，资财罄尽，不能度日，童仆俱已逃散。常言“吉人天相，绝处逢生”。恰好遇一个人从任所回来，那人姓支，名德，从小与施济同窗读书，一举成名，扬历外任，官至四川路参政。此时元顺帝至正年间，小人用事，朝政日紊，支德不愿为官，致政而归。闻施济故后，家日贫落，心甚不忍，特地登门吊唁。孤子施还出迎，年甫垂髫，进退有礼。支翁问：“曾聘妇否？”施还答言：“先人薄业已罄，老母甘旨尚缺，何暇及此！”支翁潜然泪下，道：“令先公忧人之忧，乐人之乐，此天地间有数好人，天理若不泯，子孙必然昌盛。[眉批] 小人逞目前，君子信天理。某忝在窗谊，因久宦远方，不能分忧共患，乃令先公之罪人也！某有爱女一十三岁，



As for the Shi family, Shi Ji had been so generous in performing charitable works that the family fortunes had dwindled away. And now, the funeral costs left the family in debt. Yan-shi was a kindhearted woman but not very good at getting things done. She found it too hard to take care of a fatherless child and manage the household at the same time, and so, she began to sell off the family's land. Within five or six years, the family resources were completely exhausted. The family had nothing left with which to eke out a living, and all the servants and page boys ran away.

As the proverb says, "With heaven looking after the virtuous, they find rescue when things get desperate." It so happened that at this time, there appeared on the scene a man named Zhi De, who had just come back to his hometown from his station of official post. A former schoolmate of Shi Ji's, he had passed the civil service examinations on his first attempt and was assigned to a post in another part of the country. Later, he rose to be vice-commissioner of Sichuan. It being the Zhizheng reign period [1341-68] under Emperor Shun of the Yuan dynasty, when evil men were in power, wreaking havoc in the imperial court, Zhi De had no wish to remain in office. He resigned and returned to his hometown.

Pained by news of Shi Ji's death and the family's reduced circumstances, he paid the Shi family a visit to offer his condolences. The son, Shi Huan, went out to greet the visitor. Although young, he fully observed proper decorum in every way. To Mr. Zhi's question as to whether he had been betrothed, Shi Huan said, "As my deceased father's few possessions are gone and my mother's subsistence is in jeopardy, my betrothal is not something we can afford to take care of at this time."

With tears trickling down his cheeks, Mr. Zhi said, "Your deceased father was a most compassionate man who readily shared other people's sorrows and joys. With such good people in the world, divine justice, if it still exists, will make sure that their descendants thrive. (*Evil men may carry the day for a while, but gentlemen believe in divine justice.*) I may have been a schoolmate of your father's, but I'm ashamed to say that I failed to share his worries and sufferings



与贤侄年颇相宜，欲遣媒妁与令堂夫人议姻，万望先为道达，是必勿拒！”施还拜谢，口称“不敢”。次日支翁差家人持金钱币帛之礼，同媒人往聘施氏子为养婿。严氏感其美意，只得依允。施还择日过门，拜岳父岳母，就留在馆中读书，延明师以教之。又念亲母严氏在家薪水不给，担柴送米，每十日令其子归省一次，严氏母子感恩非浅。后人评论世俗倚富欺贫，已定下婚姻犹有图赖者，况以宦家之爱女下赘贫友之孤儿，支翁真盛德之人也！这才是：

钱财如粪土，仁义值千金。

说那支翁虽然屡任，立意做清官的，所以宦囊甚薄。又添了女婿一家供给，力量甚是勉强。偶有人来说及桂富五在桑枣园搬去会稽县，造化发财，良田美宅，何止万贯，如今改名桂迁，外人都称为桂员外。支翁是晓得前因的，听得此言，遂向女婿说知：“当初桂富五受你家恩惠不一而足，别的不算，只替他偿债一主，就是三百两。如今他发迹之日不来看顾你，一定不知你家落薄如



from my post far away. Indeed, I have betrayed him! I have a beloved thirteen-year-old daughter, about the same age as you. I'd like to have a matchmaker make a marriage proposal to your mother. Please give this message to your mother first, and do not turn me down!"

Shi Huan bowed his thanks with a few words of demurral.

The next day, Mr. Zhi sent gift-bearing servants to go accompany a matchmaker, who proposed that Shi Huan move into the Zhi household as a live-in son-in-law. Grateful for his kindness, Yan-shi gave her consent. On a chosen day, Shi Huan joined the Zhi household and honored Mr. and Mrs. Zhi as his parents-in-law. A good teacher was engaged as his private tutor at home. Worrying about Yan-shi's lack of daily necessities, Mr. Zhi had firewood and rice sent over to her and made sure that the young man visited her once every ten days. Yan-shi and her son were grateful beyond measure. People of later times commented that in a world where marriage pledges were easily broken by those contemptuous of the poor, Mr. Zhi stood out as a man of integrity by marrying his beloved daughter well beneath her station in life to the son of a deceased poor friend. This was indeed a case of

Looking upon money as dung and dirt,

But upon kindness and justice as precious gold.

But the story goes on. Being an honest official committed to opposing corruption, Mr. Zhi had accumulated little savings even though he had served several consecutive terms of office. The added expense of supporting Shi Huan and Yan-shi further strained his budget. Quite by accident, he heard that Gui Fuwu had made his fortune after leaving the mulberry and date orchard for Huiji County and, with much fertile land and a grand mansion, he had wealth numbering in the tens of thousands of strings of cash. Now renamed Gui Qian, he was called Squire Gui by all and sundry.

Well aware of past events, Mr. Zhi suggested to his son-in-law after hearing the news, "Gui Fuwu benefited greatly from your family's kindness. Repayment of his debt alone, not to speak of other expenses, should amount to three hundred taels of silver. The fact that



此。贤婿若往会稽投奔他，必然厚赠，此乃分内之财，谅他家也巴不得你去的，可与亲母计议。”[眉批]以君子之心，度小人之腹。施还回家，对母亲说了。严氏道：“若桂家果然发迹，必不负我。但当初你尚年幼，不知中间许多情节，他的浑家孙大娘与我姊妹情分。我与你同去，倘男子汉出外去了，我就好到他内里说话。”施还回复了，支翁以盘费相赠，又作书与桂迁，自叙同窗之谊，嘱他看顾施氏母子二人。

当下买舟，径往绍兴会稽县来。问：“桂迁员外家居何处？”有人指引道：“在西门城内大街上，第一带高楼房就是。”施还就西门外下个饭店。次日严氏留止店中，施还写个通家晚辈的名刺，带了支公的书信，进城到桂迁家来。门景甚是整齐，但见：

门楼高耸，屋宇轩昂，花木点缀庭中，桌椅摆列堂上。一条甬道花砖砌，三尺高阶琢石成。苍头出入，无非是管屋管田；小户登门，不过是还租还债。桑枣园中掘藏客，会稽县里起家人。



he has made his fortune but hasn't come to offer you help must mean that he doesn't know your family has fallen on hard times. If you, my good son-in-law, were to go to Huiji and ask him for help, he'll surely be generous with you. You're quite entitled to whatever he'll offer you. I believe that he and his wife will be only too happy to see you. Why don't you talk with your mother about it?" (*He's using his own mind, that of a gentleman, to read the mind of a villain.*)

During a visit to his mother, Shi Huan told her about this. Yan-shi said, "If the Guis have indeed made their fortune, they will certainly not turn their backs on us. But you were too young at the time to know the details. Gui's wife, Sister Sun, and I were as close as sisters. Let me go with you, so that if the man of the house is away, I can talk with her in an inner room."

Shi Huan duly reported the conversation to Mr. Zhi, who then gave them money for travel expenses and wrote a letter to Gui Qian, reminding him of their days in the same school and asking him to take good care of Mrs. Shi and her son. Without a moment's delay, he rented a boat for them, and they set off on their journey to Huiji County in Shaoxing.

"Where does Squire Gui Qian live?" they asked.

Someone gave them directions: "He lives in the first tall sprawling mansion you'll see on the main street within West Gate."

Shi Huan and his mother took up lodging at an inn outside West Gate. The next day, Yan-shi stayed at the inn while Shi Huan, bearing Mr. Zhi's letter and his own visiting card, which specified his status as the son of a friend, went into the city, to Gui Qian's residence. An impressive sight the mansion was:

*A tall gate leads to an imposing mansion,
 Flowers and trees embellish the courtyard;
 Tables and chairs in neat rows in the halls.
 On a tile path and stone steps three-feet high,
 Servants come and go, tending to house and land,
 Humble farmers approach to pay debts and rents.
 He who dug up silver from the orchard
 Is now a leading figure in Huiji.*



施小官人见桂家门庭赫奕，心中私喜，这番投人投得着了。守门的问了来历，收了书帖，引到仪门之外一座照厅内坐下。厅内匾额题“知稼堂”三字，乃名人杨铁崖之笔。名帖传进许久，不见动静。伺候约有两个时辰，只听得仪门开响，履声阁阁，从中堂而出。施还料道必是主人，乃重整衣冠，鹄立于槛外，良久不见出来。施还引领于仪门内窥觑，只见桂迁峨冠华服，立于中庭，从者十余人环侍左右。桂迁东指西画，处分家事，童仆去了一辈又来一辈，也有领差的，也有回话的，说一个不了。约莫又有一个时辰，童仆方散。[眉批]描写骄态如画。管门的禀复有客候见，员外问道：“在那里？”答言：“在照厅。”桂迁不说请进，一步步踱出仪门，径到照厅来。施还鞠躬出迎，作揖过了。桂迁把眼一瞅，故意问道：“足下何人？”施还道：“小子长洲施还，号近仁的就是先父。因与老叔昔年有通家之好，久疏问候，特来



Finding the Gui family residence so impressive, Young Master Shi was inwardly delighted, for he thought he had come to the right people for help. The janitor asked who he was, took his visiting card and letter, and led him to a room opposite the main hall by the inner gate. From where he was seated, he could see that the inscription “Be Thankful for the Bounty” on the board hanging high up on the wall was by the famous calligrapher Yang Tieya.⁵

For a considerable time after the visiting card was delivered to the inner quarters of the house, there was no sign of anything astir. After waiting for approximately four hours, he heard the inner gate open and footsteps coming out of the main chamber. Believing that he would be seeing the master of the house, Shi Huan adjusted his clothes and his cap, crossed the threshold, and stood expectantly, but quite some time passed with no sign of anyone coming his way. He moved toward the inner gate for a furtive look. Lo and behold, there stood Gui Qian in all his finery in the middle of the courtyard, surrounded by more than ten attendants. Pointing to the east one moment and to the west the next, Gui was giving orders to the men. As soon as one group left, another group came in, some to receive orders, some to report to the master, and never had they any lack of things to say! The servants did not disperse for about another two hours. (*A vivid description of the man's superciliousness.*)

At the janitor's announcement of a visitor, the squire asked, “Where is he?”

“In the room opposite the main hall.”

Gui Qian did not instruct the janitor to invite the guest in but paced out the inner gate, taking his time in doing so, and headed for the room where Shi Huan was waiting. Shi Huan, his back bent respectfully, stepped forward and bowed in greeting. Casting a glance at him, Gui Qian asked, feigning nonrecognition, “Who might you be?”

“I am Shi Huan of Changzhou, my deceased father being the one with the courtesy name Jinren. The friendship between our two families goes back many years, but I have been negligent in sending over my greetings. So here I am, to pay my respects. Please take the



奉谒。请老叔上坐，小侄有一拜。”桂迂也不叙寒温，连声道：“不消，不消！”看坐唤茶已毕，就分付小童留饭，施还却又暗暗欢喜。施还开口道：“家母候老婶母万福，见在旅舍，先遣小子通知。”论起昔日受知深处，就该说：“既然老夫人在此，请到舍中与拙荆相会。”桂迂口中唯唯，全不招架。少停，童子报午饭已备，桂生就教摆在照厅内。只一张桌子，却是上下两桌嘎饭。施还谦让不肯上坐，把椅拖在傍边，桂迂也不来安正。桂迂问道：“舍人青年几何？”施还答道：“昔老叔去苏之时，不肖年方八岁。承垂吊赐奠，家母至今感激。今奉别又已六年，不肖门户贫落，老叔福祉日臻，盛衰悬绝，使人欣羨不已。”桂迂但首肯，不答一词。酒至三巡，施还道：“不肖量窄，况家母见在旅舍悬望，不敢多饮。”桂迂又不招架，道：“既然少饮，快取饭来！”吃饭已毕，并不题起昔日交情，亦不问及家常之事。施还忍不住了，只得微露其意道：“不肖幼时侍坐于先君之侧，常听得先君说，生



seat of honor, Uncle, and accept a bow from me.”

Dispensing with the usual exchange of amenities, Gui Qian said, “You don’t have to do this! You don’t have to do this!” After offering Shi Huan a seat and having tea served, Gui instructed a page boy to prepare a meal for the guest, much to Shi Huan’s inner delight.

“My mother sends her greetings to Aunt. She’s now at an inn and sent me over first to let you know about our visit.”

Considering how kindly he had been treated in the old days, Gui should have said, “Since your mother is here, please ask her to come and meet my wife.” But, as it was, he hemmed and hawed without saying anything in direct response to Shi’s remarks.

In a short while, the page boy came back to report that lunch was ready. Gui ordered that it be set in the room where they were sitting. Two sets of dishes were laid out on the only table in the room, one for the supposed guest of honor, one for the host. Declining the seat of honor, Shi Huan pulled his chair to one side, and Gui Qian did not offer to correct the position.

“How old are you?” asked Gui Qian.

“Uncle, when you left Suzhou, I was only eight. My mother is still grateful for the condolences that you kindly offered. And now, six years have passed since then. My family has fallen on hard times, but Uncle, your fortune has been on the rise day by day. What a sharp contrast! And how enviable your prosperity!”

Gui Qian nodded without a word. After three rounds of wine, Shi Huan said, “I don’t have much of a capacity for wine, and my mother is waiting for me back at the inn, so I’d better not drink too much.”

Without taking the cue, Gui Qian said, “Well, since you’re not going to drink much, let rice be served!” Nor did he bring up the old friendship or ask how the Shi family was faring, even after the meal was over.

Unable to restrain himself any longer, Shi Huan felt he had no choice but to hint at the purpose of his visit. “In my childhood, while sitting beside my now deceased father, I used to hear him say that of



平窗友只有老叔亲密，比时就说老叔后来决然大发的。家母亦常称老婶母贤德，有仁有义。幸而先年老叔在敝园暂居之时，寒家并不曾怠慢，不然今日亦无颜至此！”桂迂低眉摇手，嘿然不答。施还又道：“昔日虎丘水月观音殿与先君相会之事，想老叔也还记得？”桂迂恐怕又说，慌忙道：“足下来意，我已悉知，不必多言，[眉批]一边步步逼近，一边步步推开。恐他人闻之，为吾之羞也！”说罢，先立起身来。施还只得告辞，道：“暂别台颜，来日再来奉候！”桂迂送至门外，举手而退。正是：

别人求我三春雨，我去求人六月霜。

话分两头。却说严氏在旅店中悬悬而待，道：“桂家必然遣人迎我。”怪其来迟，倚闾而望，只见小舍人快快回来，备述相见时的态度言语，严氏不觉双泪交流，骂道：“桂富五，你不记得跳剑池的时节么？”正要数一数二的叫骂出来，小舍人急忙劝住道：“今日求人之际，且莫说尽情话。他既知我母子的来意，必然有个处法。当初曾在观音面前设誓犬马相报，料不食言。待孩



all his schoolmates, you, Uncle, were the closest to him. Even then, he predicted that Uncle Gui would surely experience a spectacular rise later on in life. My mother also often speaks highly of Aunt Sun's virtues and kindness. Luckily, when you, Uncle, were staying temporarily in my humble family's orchard, my parents did not fail to be generous with you. Otherwise, I would not have had the temerity to come here."

His eyes lowered, Gui Qian kept waving his hand without saying a word in reply.

Shi Huan went on, "I trust that Uncle still remembers how my father met you at the Water Moon Bodhisattva Temple in Huqiu?"

Afraid that Shi Huan would go on, Gui Qian stopped him short by saying, "I know the purpose of your visit. You need not say another word. (*One keeps pushing closer; the other keeps fending him off.*) People might hear you, and what an embarrassment that would be for me!" With that, he rose to his feet.

Shi Huan saw nothing for it but to take his leave. "Let me bid you goodbye for now, Uncle. I'll come again another day." Gui Qian saw him out the gate before starting back, his hand raised high in a polite gesture. Truly,

*What I give is much needed rain of early spring;
 What I get is icy frost, even in summer.*

In the meantime, Yan-shi was waiting expectantly in the inn, saying to herself, "The Gui family will surely send servants to escort me to their home." Wondering why it was taking so long, she leaned against the door and looked out. All that she saw was her son returning, looking dejected.

At his account of Gui's attitude and what he had said, Yan-shi was reduced to tears. "Gui Fuwu," she said bitterly, "how can you not remember the day when you were about to throw yourself into Sword Pond?"

Before she could launch into the details, her son hastened to forestall her, saying, "At this moment when we need help, please don't say things that will only hurt feelings. Since he knows the purpose of our visit, he'll surely come up with something. Didn't he



儿明日再往，看他如何？”严氏叹口气，只得含忍过了一夜。

次日，施还起早便往桂家门首候见。谁知桂迁自见了施小官人之后，却也腹中打稿，要厚赠他母子回去。其奈孙大嫂立意阻挡道：“‘接人要一世，怪人只一次。’揽了这野火上门，他吃了甜头，只管思想，惜草留根，到是个月月红了。就是他当初有些好处到我，他是一概行善，若干人沾了他的恩惠，不独我们一家。千人吃药，靠着一人还钱，我们当恁般晦气？若是有天理时，似恁地做好人的千年发迹，万年财主，不到这个地位了！如今的世界还是硬心肠的得便宜，贴人不富，连自家都穷了！”[眉批]虽是恶谈，却也说得有感慨。桂迁道：“贤妻说得是。只是他母子来一场，又有同窗支老先生的书，如何打发他动身？”孙大嫂道：“支家的书不知是真是假，当初在姑苏时不见有甚么支乡宦扶持了我，如今却来通书！”[眉批]扶持的也只如此。他既然怜贫恤寡，何不损己财？这样书一万封也休作准。你去分付门上，如今这穷鬼来时不



swear before the bodhisattva he would repay the debt of gratitude even if he had to serve my father as a dog or a horse in another life? Surely he can't go back on his own words. Let me go again tomorrow and see what he'll do." With a sigh, Yan-shi stifled her anger, and the night passed without further ado.

The next day, Shi Huan rose early, betook himself again to the Gui residence, and asked to see the master of the house.

As it turned out, after seeing Young Mr. Shi, Gui Qian did think of sending some handsome gifts to the young man and his mother before they returned home, but his wife, Sister Sun, firmly stopped him from doing so, saying, "To help the poor is a lifelong job, to be yelled at by them is a one-time thing. If we let that bastard have something from our home, he'll hang on to us, like grass that keeps growing from its roots and roses that bloom every month. Even if they once did something good for us, they did the same for everybody. We were not the only recipients of their generosity. Out of a thousand people who took the medicine, why should we alone pay back the money? Why should we be the unlucky ones? If there is divine justice, those who go out of their way to perform good deeds should enjoy wealth and good fortune for thousands of years. How could such people ever be reduced to such a state? In this world of ours, it's the hardhearted who get all the good deals. To help the poor is to let your money go down the drain. You'll end up a poor man yourself." (*Vicious words, but spoken with emotion that is not entirely unjustifiable.*)

"You're right, my good wife. But the mother and the son have already made this trip. Plus, they brought along a letter from my old schoolmate Mr. Zhi. How can we turn them away?"

"How do you know that the letter from that man Zhi isn't forged? When we were living in Suzhou, no official named Zhi offered us any help, and now, he is quick to write us a letter! (*Those who did help are not treated any better.*) Since he's so full of compassion for the poor and the widowed, why doesn't he reach into his own pocket? Even ten thousand such letters don't mean a thing! Go and tell the janitor to ignore that down-and-out wretch if he shows up again.



要招接他。等得兴尽心灰，多少赍发些盘费着他回去。‘头醋不酸，二醋不辣’，没什么想头，下次再不来缠了！”只一套话说得桂迂：

恶心孔再透一个窟窿，黑肚肠重打三重跣跣。

施还在门上候了多时，守门的推三阻四不肯与他传达。再催促他时，佯佯的走开去了。那小官人且羞且怒，揜衣露臂，面赤高声，发作道：“我施某也不是无因至此的。行得春风，指望夏雨！当初我们做财主时节，也有人求我来，却不曾恁般怠慢人！”骂犹未绝，只见一位郎君衣冠齐整，自外而入，问骂者何人？施还不认得那位郎君，整衣向前道：“姑苏施某……”言未毕，那郎君慌忙作揖道：“原来是故人，别来已久，各不相识矣。昨家君备述足下来意，正在措置，足下遽发大怒，何性急如此？今亦不难，当即与家君说知，来日便有设处。”施还方知那郎君就是桂家长子桂高，见他说话入耳，自悔失言。方欲再诉衷曲，那郎君不别，竟自进门去了。施还见其无礼，忿气愈加，又指望他来日设处，只得含泪而归，详细述于母亲严氏。严氏复劝道：“我母



Let him wait until all his hopes are dashed before we throw him some travel money. If new vinegar doesn't taste strong enough, it will lose all its pungency when water is added to it. So if he's given no reason to hope in the first place, he'll stop pestering us." For Gui Qian, this speech had the effect of

Adding malice to his already evil heart;

Making more vicious his already devious mind.

Shi Huan was made to wait a considerable time at the gate. Giving all sorts of excuses, the janitor refused to announce him. When Shi Huan reminded him, he pretended not to have heard and walked away. Smarting with the humiliation, the young man furiously rolled up his sleeves and, his face flushed crimson, yelled at the top of his voice, "I did not come here without a good reason. Spring winds expect summer rains to follow. When we were rich, we had people coming to us for help, and we never turned our backs on them like this!"

He was still carrying on when a well-dressed young man approached the gate from outside. "To whom do we owe this tirade?" asked he.

Seeing a stranger before him, Shi Huan adjusted his clothes and said, stepping forward, "I am from Suzhou. My name is Shi—"

Before he had finished, the newcomer hastened to bow, saying, "So we are old acquaintances. We haven't seen each other for so long that we don't recognize each other anymore. Yesterday, my father was talking about the purpose of your visit. He's doing something about it. Why be so impatient and work yourself into such an angry state? This is not something hard to do. Let me talk to my father. You'll get an answer tomorrow."

Only at this moment did Shi Huan realize that the young man was none other than Gui Gao, the eldest son of the Shi family. His pleasantness made Shi Huan regret having lashed out as he had. However, before he could say anything, the young man went through the gate and into the house without so much as a word of good-bye. The rudeness made Shi Huan flare up again, but hoping for an answer the following day, he could think of nothing else but to return to the inn,



子数百里投人，分宜谦下，常将和气为先，勿骋锐气，致触其怒。” [眉批] 前子劝其母，今母又劝其子，都只为求人之难，可怜，可怜！

到次早，严氏又叮嘱道：“此去须要谦和，也不可过有所求，只还得原借三百金回家，也好过日。”施还领了母亲教训，再到桂家，鞠躬屏气，立于门首。只见童仆出入自如，昨日守门的已不见了。小舍人站了半日，只得扯着一个年长的仆者问道：“小生姑苏施还，求见员外两日了，烦通报一声！”那仆者道：“员外宿酒未醒，此时正睡梦哩！”施还道：“不敢求见员外，只求大官人一见足矣。小生今日不是自来的，是大官人昨日面约来的。”仆者道：“大官人今早五鼓驾船往东庄催租去了。”施还道：“二官人也罢。”仆者道：“二官人在学堂攻书，不管闲事的。”那仆者一头说，一头就有人唤他说话，忙忙的奔去了。施还此时怒气填胸，一点无明火按纳不住，又想小人之言不可计较，家主未必如此，只得又忍气而待。须臾之间，只见仪门大开，桂迁在庭前乘马而



his eyes brimming with tears.

At his account of what had happened, his mother Yan-shi counseled, "Having traveled hundreds of *li* to seek help, we, mother and son, would do well to keep our tempers and be courteous at all times. Let's not get argumentative and stir up their anger." (*Before, it was the son pacifying his mother, and now it's the mother trying to pacify her son, all because of the hardships of seeking assistance. Pitiable! Pitiable!*)

The next morning, Yan-shi again reminded her son, "Now, this time when you go, be courteous. Don't ask for too much either, not more than the three hundred we lent them in the beginning. That will be enough for our needs."

Thus instructed, Shi Huan went to the Gui residence again. He stood politely at the gate, holding his breath and keeping his head bowed. The servants and page boys streamed in and out, but the janitor he had seen the day before was not there. After waiting in vain for a long time, the young man grabbed an older servant and said, "I am Shi Huan from Suzhou. I have been waiting for two days to see Squire Gui. Would you please announce my visit?"

"The squire is still sleeping off last night's wine," replied the servant.

"I wouldn't dream of disturbing him but will be content if I can see the young master. I'm not self-invited. I made an appointment with him yesterday."

"The young master left by boat at the fifth watch this morning to collect rent for the east farmstead."

"The second young master will do."

"The second young master is studying in class, and he never concerns himself with such things anyway."

While speaking, the servant heard someone call him and rushed off. Shi Huan fumed with rage. He was about to explode but then thought that he shouldn't give too much weight to a lackey's words because what he had said about the master might not be true. Resignedly, he swallowed his anger and continued to wait.

A moment later, the inner gate swung wide open. Gui Qian rode



出。施还迎住马头鞠躬致敬，迂慢不为礼，以鞭指道：“你远来相投，我又不曾担阁你半月十日，如何便使性气恶言辱骂？本欲从厚，今不能矣。”[眉批]反坐人罪。回顾仆者：“将拜匣内大银二锭，打发施生去罢！”又道：“这二锭银子也念你先人之面，似你少年狂妄，休想分文赍发。如今有了盘缠，可速回去！”施还再要开口，桂迁马上扬鞭如飞去了。正是：

蝮蛇口中草，蝎子尾后针；

两般犹未毒，最毒负心人。

那两锭银子只有二十两重，论起少年性子不希罕，就撇在地下去了。一来主人已去，二来只有来的使费，没有去的盘缠，没奈何，含着两眼珠泪，回店对娘说了。

母子二人，看了这两锭银子，放声大哭。店家王婆见哭得悲切，问其缘故，严氏从头至尾泣诉了一遍。王婆道：“老安人且省愁烦，老身与孙大娘相熟，时常进去的。那大娘最和气会接待人，他们男子汉辜恩负义，妇道家怎晓得？[眉批]此转更妙。既然老安人与大娘如此情厚，待老身去与老安人传信，说老安人在小



out from the courtyard on a horse. Shi Huan bowed respectfully in the direction of the horse, an act of courtesy that Gui Qian did not reciprocate. Pointing with his horsewhip at the young man, he said, "Granted, you came a long distance to seek help, but I didn't hold you up for ten days to half a month, did I? Why did you have to lose your temper and use foul language? I did mean to be generous with you, but now I can't do that any more." (*He turns the tables and puts the blame on the other party.*) Turning to a servant, he ordered, "Give Mr. Shi two ingots of silver in a gift box and send him away." To Shi Huan, he added, "I give you these two ingots of silver out of my regard for you deceased father. For you, with your youthful arrogance, I wouldn't have spared a penny. Now that you've got your traveling money, be off without delay!" Before Shi Huan could get a word out, Gui Qian flourished his whip and rode off with the speed of the wind. Truly,

The tongue in the viper's mouth,

The sting on the scorpion's tail;

Neither is venomous enough

To match the poison in the ingrate's heart.

The two ingots of silver being only twenty taels, the young man would have impulsively thrown them to the ground out of scorn. But, partly because the master of the house was already gone and partly because he had come with only enough money for the journey here but not for the return trip, he saw no alternative but to be reconciled to the situation.

Back at the inn, with tears in his eyes, he told his mother what had happened. Mother and son broke down in sobs at the sight of the two ingots of silver. Granny Wang, the innkeeper, asked them why they were crying their hearts out, whereupon Yan-shi gave her a tearful account of the whole story.

Granny Wang addressed them in the following words: "Please don't worry, madam. I know Sister Sun well. I often visit her. She's the kindest woman there is, and a perfect hostess, too. If her husband goes around treating former benefactors shabbily, she doesn't know it! (*Nice twist.*) Since you and Sister Sun are such good



店中，他必然相请。”严氏收泪而谢。又次日，王婆当一节好事，进桂家去报与孙大嫂知。孙大嫂道：“王婆休听他话，当先我员外生意不济时，果然曾借过他些小东西，本利都清还了。他自不会作家，把个大家事费尽了，却来这里打秋风。我员外好意款待他一席饭，送他二十两银子，是念他日前相处之情，别个也不能勾如此，他倒说我欠下他债负未还。王婆，如今我也莫说有欠无欠，只问他把借契出来看，有一百还一百，有一千还一千。”王婆道：“大娘说得是。”王婆即忙转身，孙大娘又唤转来，叫养娘封一两银子，又取帕子一方，道：“这些微之物，你与我送施家姆姆，表我的私敬，教他下次切不可再来，恐怕怠慢了，伤了情分。”王婆听了这话，到疑心严老安人不是，回家去说：“孙大嫂千好万好，教老身寄礼物与老安人。”又道：“若有旧欠未清，教老安人将借契送去，照契本利不缺分毫。”严氏说当初原没有契书。那王婆看这三百两银子，山高海阔，怎么肯信。母子二人凄惶了一夜，天明算了店钱，起身回姑苏而来。正是：



friends, let me send a message to her and tell her that you are at my inn. She'll surely invite you." Yan-shi restrained her tears and thankfully accepted Granny Wang's offer.

The next day, Granny Wang went to tell Sister Sun what she thought was happy news. Sister Sun said, "Granny, don't believe her. When my husband was having a bad time in business, he did indeed borrow some small items from them, but he has paid back the capital and the interest in full. She doesn't know how to manage her money and frittered away what was a large family fortune, and now she comes here to demand money from us. Out of the goodness of his heart, my husband treated her son to a meal and gave them twenty taels of silver, for old times' sake. Another man would not have been so kind. And yet she turns around and accuses us of refusing to pay off our debt. Granny Wang, I'm not going to quibble with her over whether I'm in debt or not. Just let her show me the receipt for the loan. Whatever amount the receipt says, a hundred or a thousand, I'll gladly pay it in full."

"Right! Right!" said Granny Wang. As she hurriedly turned away, Sister Sun called her back. She ordered that a maidservant wrap up and seal a packet containing one tael of silver along with a kerchief and said to Granny Wang, "Please take these things to Mrs. Shi as a small token of my regard for her, but tell her not to come again by any account, because I'm afraid our feelings will be hurt if she believes we shortchanged her."

These words made Granny Wang doubt Yan-shi's innocence. Back at home, she extolled the virtues of Sister Sun to Yan-shi and delivered the gift, adding, "If she hasn't paid the old debt in full, she wants you, madam, to send over the receipt of the loan, so that she can repay the capital and the interest to the last penny."

Yan-shi said that no receipt had ever been drawn up, words that Granny Wang found quite unbelievable, for three hundred taels was to her a mind-boggling amount, as momentous as a high mountain and the vast sea.

After a miserable night, Yan-shi and her son paid their bill at dawn and set off on their return journey to Suzhou. Truly,



人无喜事精神减，运到穷时落寞多。

严氏为桂家呕气，又路上往来受了劳碌，归家一病三月，施还寻医问卜，诸般不效，亡之命矣夫！衣衾棺槨，一事不办，只得将祖房绝卖与本县牛公子管业。那牛公子的父亲牛万户久在李平章门下用事，说事过钱，起家百万。公子倚势欺人，无所不至。他门下又有个用事的叫做郭刁儿，专一替他察访孤儿寡妇，便宜田产，半价收买。施还年幼，岳丈支公虽则乡绅，是个厚德长者，自己家事不屑照管，怎管得女婿之事。施小舍人急于求售，落其圈套，房产值数千金，郭刁儿于中议估，止值四百金。以百金压契，馀俟出房后方交。施还想营葬迁居，其费甚多，百金不能济事，再三请益，只许加四十金。还勉支葬事，丘垄已成，所馀无几。寻房子不来，牛公子雪片差人催促出屋。支翁看不过意，亲往谒牛公子，要与女婿说个方便。连去数次，并不接见。支翁道：“等他回拜时讲！”牛公子却蹈袭个阳货拜孔子之法，眈亡而往。



*The spirits sink when there's nothing to celebrate;
 Loneliness sets in when one's down on one's luck.*

With her grievances against the Gui family and physical exhaustion from the travel, Yan-shi fell ill as soon as she arrived at home. Her illness lasted three months. Shi Huan engaged physicians as well as fortune-tellers, but nothing worked, and she died. With no money for burial clothes and a coffin, the son had to permanently sell off his rights to the ancestral family property to a Young Master Niu in the same county. The young master's father, Commander Niu, had long served under Grand Councilor Li and had gotten rich by acting as the middleman in briberies. Emboldened by his father's power, Young Master Niu bullied people wherever he went. He had in his employ a certain Guo the Sly One, whose job was to seek out orphans and widows and buy their land and property at half price.

Shi Huan being as young as he was, and his father-in-law Mr. Zhi being a kindhearted country gentleman who thought it was undignified to bother about even his own family's affairs, let alone those of his son-in-law, Young Master Shi fell into Niu's trap in his eagerness to sell. The estate, which was worth thousands of taels of silver, was appraised by Guo the Sly One at only four hundred taels. Of this amount, Guo was willing to pay only one hundred as down payment, promising to pay the balance after the premises were vacated. Planning to relocate after the funeral, which was to cost much more than a mere hundred taels, Shi Huan repeatedly asked for a larger down payment but could secure a promise for only forty taels. Shi Huan barely managed to pay for the burial and the grave and then found he had little money left. While he was trying without success to look for housing, messages from Young Master Niu poured in like flakes of snow, urging him to vacate the premises.

Mr. Zhi could not stand any more of this and went to see Young Master Niu to put in a good word for his son-in-law. He went quite a few times in a row, but each time, he was denied a reception. Mr. Zhi thought, "Let me wait for him to pay a return call." But Niu adopted the strategy Yang Huo used when trying to visit Confucius and paid his return call only when he knew Mr. Zhi was not home.⁶ Upon



支翁回家，连忙又去，仍回不在家了。支翁大怒，与女婿说道：“那些市井之辈，不通情理，莫去求他。贤婿且就甥馆权住几时，待寻得房子时，从容议迁便了！”

施还从岳父之言，要将家私什物权移到支家。先拆卸祖父卧房装摺，往支处修理。于乃祖房内天花板上得一小匣，重重封固，还开看之，别无他物，只有帐簿一本，内开某处理银若干，某处若干，如此数处，未写“九十翁公明亲笔”。还喜甚，纳诸袖中，分付众人且莫拆动，即诣支翁家商议。支翁看了帐簿道：“既如此，不必迁居了！”乃随婿到彼先发卧房槛下左柱礲边，簿上载内藏银二千两，果然不谬。遂将银一百四十两与牛公子赎房。公子执定前言，勒措不许。支翁遍求公子亲戚往说方便，公子索要加倍，度施家没有银子。谁知藏镪充然，一天平兑足二百八十两，公子没理得讲，只得收了银子，推说文契偶寻不出，再过一日送还。哄得施还转背，即将悔产事讼于本府。幸本府陈太守正直无



returning and learning of Niu's visit, Mr. Zhi hastened to the Niu residence, only to be told, as before, that Niu was not home. Angrily, Mr. Zhi said to his son-in-law, "Let's not go begging for help from such unreasonable boors. My good son-in-law, why don't you just stay with me for a while until you find a place of your own? We can then talk about your moving out, and we can take our time doing it."

Shi Huan decided to follow his father-in-law's advice and to move his furniture and other belongings to the Zhi residence. He started by removing the furnishings in his grandfather's bedchamber and taking them to the Zhi residence for repairs. As he was doing so, he found in the ceiling a small, well-sealed box. He opened it and saw nothing else but an account book in which were written reminders of various locations where silver was buried. At the end was a line that read "In the handwriting of ninety-year old Gongming [Shi Jian's courtesy name]." Shi Huan was overcome with joy. He put the account book in his sleeve, told the servants to stop removing things from the room, and went to Mr. Zhi's house for a consultation.

Upon reading the account book, Mr. Zhi said, "In that case, there's no need for you to move." He then went with his son-in-law to check the left post by the window railing of Grandfather Shi's bedchamber and found two thousand taels of silver, just as described in the account book. They offered one hundred and forty taels to redeem the estate deeds, but Young Master Niu turned a deaf ear, insisting that the sale was already finalized. Mr. Zhi sought high and low for help from Niu's relatives, beseeching them to put in a good word for Shi Huan. Young Master Niu then demanded twice the amount, assuming that Shi could not come up with the money. To his surprise, a full two hundred and eighty taels were measured out on the scale, as Shi Huan was now a man with a well-stocked coffer. Left with no excuse, Young Master Niu could do nothing else but take the silver, but, claiming that he could not find the deeds on the spur of the moment, he said he needed a day to return them. Shi Huan believed his story, and as soon as Shi Huan let him go, Young Master Niu filed a complaint with the prefectural yamen, charging Shi with breach of contract. Luckily, Prefect Chen was an upright man without selfish



私，素知牛公子之为人，又得支乡宦替女婿分诉明白。断令回赎原价一百四十两，外加契面银一十四两，其余一百二十六两追出助修学宫，文契追还施小官人，郭刁儿坐教唆问杖。[眉批] 断得公道。牛公子羞变成怒，写家书一封差家人往京师，捏造施家三世恶单，教父亲讨李平章关节，托嘱地方上司官，访拿施还出气。谁知人谋虽巧，天理难容，正是：

下水拖人他未溺，逆风点火自先烧。

那时元顺帝失政，红巾贼起，大肆劫掠。朝廷命枢密使咬咬征讨。李平章私受红巾贼贿赂，主张招安，事发，坐同逆系狱。穷治党与，牛万户系首名，该全家抄斩，顷刻有诏书下来。家人得了这个凶信，连夜奔回说了。牛公子惊慌，收拾细软家私，带妻携妾，往海上避难。遇叛寇方国珍游兵，夺其妻妾金帛，公子刀下亡身，此乃作恶之报也。



motives. Knowing all too well what kind of a person Young Master Niu was, and convinced that Mr. Zhi's account on behalf of his son-in-law was true, he ruled that Niu was entitled only to the original one hundred forty taels plus fourteen taels as penalty for breach of contract on Shi's part. The balance of one hundred and twenty-six taels was to go toward the repair of schoolrooms. The deeds were to be returned to Young Master Shi and Guo Diao'er was to be beaten with the rod as a punishment for his role as an abettor. (*Good judgments.*)

Enraged by the humiliation, Young Master Niu wrote a letter to his father and had a servant dispatch it to the capital. In it, he falsely accused the three generations of the Shi family of nonexistent crimes and asked his father to have Grand Councilor Li use his influence to make local officials arrest Shi Huan so as to vent Young Master Niu's spleen. But in fact, however hard humans may scheme, divine justice will catch up with them. Truly,

*He drags another into the water,
 But fails to drown him;
 He lights a fire against the wind,
 And burns himself first.*

At the time, the empire was under the misrule of Emperor Shun of the Yuan dynasty. With the Red Turban rebels looting and wreaking havoc across the land, the imperial court ordered Military Affairs Commissioner Yao Yao to go on a punitive expedition against the rebels. Grand Councilor Li, heavily bribed by the Red Turbans, advocated amnesty. When his secret dealings with the rebels came to light, he was charged as an accomplice and thrown into prison. All of his adherents, with Commander Niu heading the list, were to be punished for their involvement, and all members of the Niu family were to be executed. Soon, the emperor issued an edict to that effect. Upon learning the horrible news, a Niu household employee ran back to the Niu residence posthaste for a report. In a panic, Young Master Niu packed up his valuables and fled to the sea with his wife and concubine, only to run into stragglers from the rebel Fang Guozhen's troops.⁷ They forcibly took the women and the money and killed him with a sword. This was retribution for his evil deeds.



却说施还自发了藏镪，赎产安居，照帐簿以次发掘，不爽分毫，得财巨万。只有内开桑枣园银杏树下埋藏一千五百两，止剩得三个空坛。只道神物化去，付之度外，亦不疑桂生之事。自此遍赎田产，又得支翁代为经理，重为富室。直待服阙成亲，不在话下。

再说桂员外在会稽为财主，因田多役重，官府生事侵渔，甚以为苦。近邻有尤生号尤滑稽，惯走京师，包揽事干，出入贵人门下。员外一日与他商及此事，尤生道：“何不入粟买官，一则冠盖荣身，二则官户免役，两得其便。”员外道：“不知所费几何？仗老兄斡旋则个！”尤生道：“此事吾所熟为，吴中许万户、卫千兵都是我替他干的，见今腰金衣紫，食禄千石。兄若要做时，敢不效劳，多不过三千，少则二千足矣！”桂生惑于其言，随将白金五十两付与尤生安家；又收拾三千馀金，择日同尤生赴京。一



After Shi Huan hit upon a pile of silver, he redeemed the estate and started a life of comfort. Then he began digging in the various locations described in the account book, and sure enough, he came upon tens of thousands of taels of silver, not even one penny short of the recorded amounts. The only amount missing was the fifteen hundred taels that were supposedly buried under the ginkgo tree in the mulberry and date orchard. Only three empty jars were found in that spot. Thinking that some divine beings must have taken them, he gave no thought to the matter. Not a shadow of a suspicion entered his mind that this could have anything to do with Mr. Gui. Henceforth, he bought land property everywhere, and with Mr. Zhi as his manager, he became immensely wealthy. Upon completing the period of mourning for his father, he married, but this is of no concern to us here.

To pick up another thread of the story, Squire Gui was having a difficult time being a rich man in Huiji, meeting corvée obligations on his plentiful land as well as extortionary demands from the local yamen. Among his neighbors was a Mr. You, nicknamed Funny Man You, who was a middleman of sorts by profession and frequented the residences of powerful officials in the capital.

One day, Squire Gui consulted this man about his plight. The man suggested, "Why don't you buy yourself an official title? You'll not only bring glory to your own name but also be exempted from corvée. Wouldn't that be nice on both counts?"

"I wonder how much it costs," said Squire Gui. "Would you help me do it?"

"Well, I'm quite experienced in this line of work," boasted Mr. You. "I'm the one who got titles for Commander Xu and Commander Wei of Wu County, Jiangsu. Now they are wallowing in wealth and richly paid by the government. If you want to do it, I will gladly offer you my services. The cost ranges from two thousand on the lower end to three thousand at most."

Taken in by these words, Mr. Gui gave Mr. You fifty taels of silver as a preliminary payment and, taking along more than three thousand taels, made the trip to the capital with Mr. You on a chosen



路上尤生将甜言美语哄诱桂生，桂生深信，与之结为兄弟。一到京师，将三千金唾手付之，恣其所用。

只要乌纱上顶，那顾白镫空囊。

约过了半年，尤生来称贺，道：“恭喜吾兄，旦夕为贵人矣！但时宰贪甚，凡百费十倍昔年，三千不勾，必得五千金方可成事。”桂迁已费了三千金，只恐前功尽弃，遂托尤生在势要家借银二千两，留下一半，以一千付尤生使用。又过了两三个月，忽有隶卒四人传命，新任亲军指使老爷请员外讲话。桂迁疑是堂官之流，问：“指使老爷何姓？”隶卒道：“到彼便知，今不可说！”桂迁急整衣冠，从四人到一大衙门，那老爷乌纱袍带，端坐公堂之上。二人跟定桂迁，二人先入报。少顷，闻堂上传呼唤进。桂迁生平未入公门，心头突突地跳。军校指引到于堂檐之下，喝教跪拜，那官员全不答礼，从容说道：“前日所付之物，我已便宜借用，侥幸得官，相还有日，决不相负。[眉批]是你待施还如何？但新任缺钱使用，知汝囊中尚有一千，可速借我，一并送还。”说



day. All along the way, Mr.You cajoled Gui with sweet words. Believing the man to be sincere, Mr.Gui pledged brotherhood with him. As soon as they arrived in the capital, Gui all too readily handed over the three thousand taels of silver, for Mr.You to use as he pleased.

*An official's cap was all he wanted,
 Even if he had to empty his pocket.*

About half a year later, Mr.You came to offer congratulations, "My brother, congratulations! You'll get to be a highly placed official any time now! But the prime minister is so greedy that all fees have increased ten-fold. Your three thousand taels are not enough. Anything less than five thousand won't do."

Afraid that the three thousand he had already paid would go to waste, Gui Qian had Mr.You borrow two thousand from one of his influential acquaintances. He then kept half of it for himself and gave one thousand to Mr.You.

Another two to three months passed. Suddenly, four lictors came one day to announce that the newly appointed commander wished to talk with the squire. Wondering if it was just a low-ranking official, Gui Qian asked, "What is the commander's surname?"

"You'll know when you get there. We're not supposed to say anything here."

Gui Qian hastily straightened his clothes and followed the four lictors to an impressive yamen. The commander, looking very important, was sitting in the tribunal, wearing a black gauze official's cap, an official's robe, and a belt. Two of the lictors stayed with Gui Qian while the other two went in to announce his arrival. Soon, he heard his name called in the hall. Having never visited a yamen before, he found himself in a state of great trepidation, his heart thumping violently. An officer led him to the hall and sharply ordered him to kneel and make obeisance. Without returning his courtesy, the commander said, all cool and collected, "I already made use of your contribution the other day. Now that I am an official by a stroke of luck, I will surely return the money to you some day. (*How does that compare with the way you treated Shi Huan?*) But, being new in my post, I am in need of funds. To my knowledge, you still have a thousand.



罢，即命先前四卒押到下处取银回话。如或不从，仍押来受罪，决不轻贷。桂迁被隶卒逼勒，只得将银交付去讫，敢怒而不敢言。明日，债主因桂生功名不就，执了文契取索原银。桂迁没奈何，特地差人回家变产，得二千馀，加利偿还。

桂迁受了这场屈气，没告诉处，羞回故里。又见尤滑稽乘马张盖，前呼后拥，眼红心热，忍耐不过，狠一声：“不是他，就是我！”往铁匠店里打下一把三尖利刀，藏于怀中，等尤生明日五鼓入朝，刺杀他了，便偿命也出了这口闷气。事不关心，关心者乱，打点做这节非常的事，夜里就睡不着了。看见月光射窗，只道天明，慌忙起身，听得禁中鼓才三下，复身回来，坐以待旦。又捱了一个更次，心中按纳不住，持刀飞奔尤滑稽家来。其门尚闭，旁有一窠，自己立脚不住，不觉两手据地，钻入窠中。堂上灯烛辉煌，一老翁据案而坐，认得是施济模样。自觉羞惭，又被施公看见，不及躲避，欲与拱揖，手又伏地不能起，只得爬向膝



You may lend it to me now. I'll return it to you along with the rest." That said, he ordered the four lictors, "Take him to his lodging and get the money. If he disobeys, bring him back to me for punishment. I won't go easy on him!"

Pressed by the lictors, Gui Qian had no choice but to hand the silver over to them, choking with silent fury. Soon thereafter, the creditor came to Gui Qian with a receipt demanding repayment of the debt because they saw that Gui Qian had no prospect of an official title. Gui, resigned, sent a messenger home, had some property sold off, and used the proceeds of the sale to repay the two thousand taels plus interest. Chafing at the injustice and frustrated that he had no one to turn to for vindication, he thought of returning home but felt too ashamed to do so. When he saw Funny Man You sitting majestically in a canopied carriage with many attendants all around him, his eyes grew bloodshot and his heart burned with rage. Furiously he said, "It's either him or me!"

He went to a blacksmith's shop and had a sharp knife made for him. Hiding the knife in his bosom, he said to himself, "When that man You goes to the court session tomorrow morning at the fifth strike of the watch drum, I'll stab him to death. Even if I have to pay with my life for it, I'll at least be avenged!"

The truth is, once you set your heart on doing something, you will know no peace of mind. Thinking about this big job, he stayed awake all night. Mistaking the moonlight shining on the windows for the first light of dawn, he scrambled out of bed, but when he heard the watchtower drum strike only three times, he sat down and waited for the day to break. About another two hours passed. Unable to calm himself, he picked up his knife and ran with the speed of the wind to the house of Funny Man You, only to find the door still closed. At this point, he stumbled and fell. Without knowing what he was doing, he crawled into an opening by the door. In the opening, which was brightly lit by candles, there was an old man sitting by a table. Recognizing the old man to be none other than Shi Ji, he was overcome with shame. It was too late to dodge, as he had already been seen by Mr. Shi, so he thought of bowing out but found himself un-



前，摇尾而言：“向承看顾，感激不忘。前日令郎远来，因一时手头不便，不能从厚，非负心也，将来必当补报！”只见施君大喝道：“畜生讨死吃，只管吠做甚么！”桂见施君不听其语，心中甚闷，忽见施还自内出来，乃衔衣献笑，谢昔怠慢之罪。施还骂道：“畜生作怪了！”一脚踢开。桂不敢分辨，俯首而行，不觉到厨房下，见施母严老安人坐于椅上，分派肉羹。桂闻肉香，乃左右跳跃良久，蹲足叩首，诉道：“向郎君性急，不能久待，以致老安人慢去，幸勿记怀！有馀肉幸见赐一块。”只见严老母唤侍婢：“打这畜生开去！”养娘取灶内火叉在手。桂大惊，奔至后园，看见其妻孙大嫂与二子桂高、桂乔，及少女琼枝，都聚一处。细认之，都是犬形，回顾自己，亦化为犬。乃大骇，不觉垂泪，问其妻：“何至于此？”妻答道：“你不记得水月观音殿上所言乎？‘今生若不能补答，来生誓作犬马相报！’冥中最重誓语，今负了



able to rise, his hands still down on the ground. Resigned, he crawled toward Mr. Shi, raised his head as high as the latter's knees, and said, wagging his tail, "I can never forget your kindness to me. When your son came from afar to see me the other day, I failed to offer him generous assistance, not because I'm an ingrate, but because I happened to be short of funds at the time. I'll surely pay your family back in future."

Mr. Shi said sharply, "What a horrible beast, barking nonstop like that!"

Wondering dejectedly why Mr. Shi would not listen to him, Gui suddenly saw Shi Huan coming outside. With an obsequious smile, he held a corner of Shi Huan's clothes in his mouth and begged to be forgiven for his rude treatment of the young man.

"What's this beast up to?" With that, Shi Huan kicked him aside.

Not daring to say anything in his own defense, Gui walked ahead, keeping his head down. Before he knew it, he found himself in the kitchen, where he saw Shi Huan's mother, Yan-shi, sitting in a chair, ladling out meat soup. Excited by the aroma of meat, Gui kept jumping up and down before he finally squatted on his heels, kowtowed, and said plaintively, "Your son was too impatient last time and refused to wait a little longer, and that led to your passing away. Please don't hold this against me anymore and kindly give me a piece of meat."

Madam Yan called a maid forward and ordered, "Drive this thing away," whereupon the maid picked up a stove poker. Alarmed, Gui ran to the backyard, where he saw his wife, Sister Sun, his two sons Gui Gao and Gui Qiao, and his young daughter Qiongzhi, all huddled together. Upon taking a closer look, he saw they were all in the shape of dogs. He looked down at himself and was appalled to find that he was also a dog. Tearfully, he asked his wife, "Why have we been reduced to such a state?"

"Don't you remember what you said in the hall of the Water Moon Bodhisattva Temple? You said, 'If I can't repay him in this life, let me serve him in my next life as a dog or a horse.' Vows are given the utmost importance in the netherworld. What is there to say



施君之恩，受此果报，复何说也！”桂抱怨道：“当初桑枣园中掘得藏镪，我原要还施家债负，都听了你那不贤之妇，瞒昧入己；及至他母子远来相投，我又欲厚赠其行，你又一力阻挡，今日之苦，都是你作成我的！”其妻也骂道：“男子不听妇人言。我是妇人之见，谁教你句句依我？”[眉批]说得是。二子上前劝解道：“既往不咎，徒伤和气耳。腹中馁甚，觅食要紧！”于是夫妻、父子相牵，同至后园，绕鱼池而走。见有人粪，明知齷齪，因饿极，姑嗅之，气息亦不恶。见妻与二儿攒聚先啖，不觉垂涎，试将舌舐，味觉甘美，但恨其少。忽有童儿来池边出恭，遂守其傍，儿去，所遗是干粪，以口咬之，误堕于池中，意甚可惜。[眉批]梦中已受过花报矣。忽闻庖人传主人之命，于诸犬中选肥壮者烹食，缚其长儿去，长儿哀叫甚惨。猛然惊醒，流汗浹背，乃是一梦，身子却在寓所，天已大明了。桂迁想起梦中之事，痴呆了半晌：“昔



at this retribution for our betrayal of Mr. Shi's kindness?"

Gui grumbled, "Way back when we dug up the silver in the mulberry and date orchard, I wanted to pay off our debt to the Shi family. It was all because I listened to an evil woman like you that I took the money against my conscience. When the mother and son came to ask for help, I again wanted to be generous with them, but you did everything you could to stop me. It was you who brought all this misery on me."

His wife retorted, "Don't you know the saying, 'A man should not listen to a woman?' My words are but the words of a woman. Why did you have to do everything I said?" (*Good point!*)

The two sons stepped forward to mediate, saying, "Why don't you two let bygones be bygones? Otherwise, you'll only hurt each other's feelings. We're hungry. Looking for food is more important than anything else."

Thereupon, the husband, wife, and two sons all huddled together and went to the backyard. While they were walking around the fishpond, their eyes chanced upon some human excrement. Even though they were aware of the filth, they were so starved that they did not find the smell repugnant.

At the sight of his wife and two sons gathered around and eating excrement, Gui Qian drooled in spite of himself and tentatively licked at it with his tongue. The taste turned out to be delicious. While he was wishing that there were more of it, he saw a child coming to the edge of the pond to empty his bowels and went to wait off to one side. After the child went away, leaving some excrement behind, he took a bite but missed, and it fell into the pond, much to his disappointment. (*This is retribution in a dream.*)

All of a sudden, a chef was heard transmitting the master's order, "Pick a fat dog and cook it." The next thing he knew, his older son was tied up with a rope and taken away.

In the midst of his son's heartbreaking screams, he woke up with a start, perspiring all over. It had been but a dream. He was still in his lodging, and it was already broad daylight. Recalling his dream, he stared blankly into the air for a considerable while, thinking, "I



日我负施家，今日尤生负我，一般之理。只知责人不知自责，天以此梦做醒我也！”叹了一口气，弃刀于河内，急急束装而归，要与妻子商议，寻施氏母子报恩。

只因一梦多奇异，唤醒忘恩负义人。

桂员外自得了这个异梦，心绪如狂，从京师赶回家来，只见门庭冷落，寂无一人。步入中堂，见左边停有二柩，前设供桌，桌上有两个牌位，明写长男桂高，次男桂乔。心中大惊，莫非眼花么？双手拭眼，定睛观看，叫声：“苦也，苦也！”早惊动了宅里，奔出三四个丫鬟、养娘出来，见了家主便道：“来得好！大娘病重，正望着哩！”急得桂迁魂不附体，一步一跌进房，直到浑家床前。两个媳妇和女儿都守在床边，啼啼哭哭，见了员外不暇施礼，叫公的叫爹的乱做一堆，都道：“快来看视！”桂迁才叫得一声“大娘”，只见浑家在枕上忽然倒插双眼，直视其夫，道：“父亲如何今日方回？”桂迁知谗语，急叫：“大娘苏醒，我在此！”女儿、媳妇都来叫唤，那病者睁目垂泪说：“父亲，我是你大儿子桂高，被万俟总管家打死，好苦呵！”桂迁惊问其故，又鸣



betrayed the Shi family, and now, that man You betrays me in the same way. Heaven gave me that dream to warn me not to be demanding with others but easy on myself." With a sigh, he tossed his knife into the river, packed his belongings, and set off posthaste for home, to consult with his wife about how to repay his debt of gratitude to the Shi mother and son.

A dream of the strangest kind

Woke up the one with an ungrateful heart.

That strange dream threw Squire Gui into such a frenzy that he rushed all the way home from the capital, but, when he arrived at the gate, he found the house looking quite deserted, without a single soul in sight. As he entered the main hall, his eyes fell upon two coffins against the left wall. Two tablets bearing the names of Gui Gao, the older son, and Gui Qiao, the younger son, stood on the altar table set in front. He was appalled. Could his eyes be playing tricks on him? Rubbing his eyes with both hands, he looked harder and cried out, "Woe is me!"

Upon hearing his cries, three or four maids and servants ran out from the inner quarters of the house. At the sight of their master, they said, "The very person we need is here! The mistress is critically ill. She's expecting you."

Scared out of his wits, Squire Gui staggered to his wife's bedchamber, where their daughter and two daughters-in-law were gathered, sobbing away. When they saw the squire, they called out, "Father-in-law!" "Father!" Without bothering to observe proper etiquette, they screamed frantically, "Come quickly and look at her!"

No sooner had Gui Qian managed to call out, "Wife!" than Sister Sun said, leaning against the pillow and staring at him with eyes that suddenly slanted upward toward the temples, "Father, why have you come back so late?"

Realizing that she was delirious, Gui Qian shouted, "Wake up! Look at me here!" The daughter and the daughters-in-law also took up his cries.

Sister Sun opened her eyes and said tearfully, "Father, I am your oldest son Gui Gao. I was beaten to death by Commissioner Mo-



呜咽的哭道：“往事休题了。冥王以我家负施氏之恩，父亲曾有犬马之誓，我兄弟两个同母亲于明日往施家投于犬胎，一产三犬，二雄者我兄弟二人，其雌犬背有肉瘤者，即母亲也。父亲因阳寿未终，当在明年八月中亦托生施家做犬，以践前誓。惟妹子与施还缘分合为夫妇，独免此难耳！”桂见言与梦合，毛骨悚然，方欲再问，气已绝了。举家哀恸，一面差人治办后事。

桂员外细叩女儿二儿致死及母病缘由，女儿答道：“自爹赴京后，二哥出外嫖赌，日费不资，私下将田庄陆续写与万俟总管府中，止收半价，一月前，病瘵瘵身死。大哥不知卖田之情，往东庄取租，遇万俟府中家人，与他争竞，被他毒打一顿，登时呕血，抬回数日亦死。母亲向闻爹在京中为人诓骗，终日忧郁，又见两位哥哥相继而亡，痛伤难尽，望爹不归，郁成寒热之症。三日前疽发于背，遂昏迷不省人事，遍请医人看治，俱说难救。天



qi. How I suffered!” In alarm, Gui Qian asked for details, and the woman continued between sobs, “I won’t go over with you what you’ve done in the past, but the King of Hell has ruled that, because our family betrayed the Shi family’s kindness and since father once vowed to repay their kindness as a dog or a horse in another life, my brother, my mother, and I will be reincarnated tomorrow in the Shi household as three puppies from the same litter. The two male ones will be my brother and I, and the female one with a tumor on her back will be Mother. You, Father, still have some time to go before your allotted life span expires, so you will die in the eighth month of next year and be reincarnated in the Shi family as a dog, in fulfillment of your vow. Only my sister will be spared this misfortune, because she is destined to be Shi Huan’s wife.”

These words bore out what the squire had seen in his dreams. Feeling his hair stand on end, he was about to ask further when his wife breathed her last. In deep sorrow, the family set about making arrangements for the funeral.

To Squire Gui’s questions about the causes of the two sons’ deaths and his wife’s illness, the daughter replied, “After you left for the capital, Second Brother took up whoring and gambling, squandering so much money every day that gradually, unknown to us, he wrote off much of our family estate to Commissioner Moqi for only half the money it was worth. About a month ago, he died of consumption. Big Brother, not knowing anything about the land sale, was on his way to East Farmstead to collect rent when he ran into Commissioner Moqi’s servants. He got into an argument with them and was beaten so badly that he coughed up blood right there on the spot. He died a few days after he was carried back home. Mother was already feeling none too happy because she had learned about Father’s unfortunate experience in the capital. With the deaths of my two brothers one right after the other, she was overwhelmed with grief and, while waiting in vain for your return, felt so dejected that she began to run a fever. Three days ago, an ulcer broke out on her back, and she went into a coma. Every physician who came said her case was beyond cure. By the grace of heaven, you returned in time



幸爹回，送了母亲之终。”桂迁闻言，痛如刀割，延请僧众作九昼夜功德拔罪救苦。家人连日疲倦，遗失火烛，厅房、楼房烧做一片白地，三口棺材尽为灰烬，不曾剩一块板头。桂迁与二媳一女仅以身免，叫天号地，唤祖呼宗，哭得眼红喉哑，昏绝数次。正是：

从前作过事，没兴一齐来。

常言道：“瘦骆驼强似象。”桂员外今日虽然颠沛，还有些馀房剩产，变卖得金银若干。念二媳少年难守，送回母家，听其改嫁。童婢或送或卖，止带一房男女自随，两个养娘服事女儿。唤了船只直至姑苏，欲与施子续其姻好，兼有所赠。想施子如此赤贫，决然未娶，但不知漂流何所？且到彼旧居，一问便知。船到吴趋坊河下，桂迁先上岸，到施家门首一看，只见焕然一新，比往日更自齐整。心中有疑，这房子不知卖与何宅？收拾得恁般华美！[眉批]□好。问邻舍家：“旧时施小舍人今在何处？”邻舍道：



to send Mother off on her way to the otherworld.”

These words pained Gui Qian like stabs of a knife. He engaged monks for a prayer service that lasted nine days and nine nights so as to redeem the dead and spare their souls from misery. The servants were so tired after days of nonstop exertion that when they weren't paying attention, the mansion caught fire and burned to the ground. The three coffins also were reduced to ashes. Not even a plank of wood survived. Gui Qian, his two daughters-in-law, and his daughter were spared but were left with no possessions other than what they had on their backs. They cried out to heaven, earth, and their ancestors and wept until their eyes grew bloodshot, their throats went hoarse, and they fainted over and over again. Truly,

Things he did before

Came back to haunt him.

As the proverb says, “A thin camel may still be as strong as an elephant.” Though virtually homeless, Squire Gui still had some landed property, which he sold for some gold and silver. Out of consideration for his two daughters-in-law, who he thought were too young to observe widowhood, he sent them to their respective parents and gave them freedom to remarry. Of the page boys and maids, he gave away some, sold off a few, and kept only his own personal servants and two maidservants for his daughter.

He went to Suzhou on a hired boat, with the intention of fulfilling the promised marriage alliance with Shi Huan and offering some gifts to the Shi family. “Shi Huan being as poor as he is,” he thought to himself, “he's surely still a bachelor, but I wonder where he may have drifted to. Let me make some inquiries when I arrive at the Shi family's old residence, and I'll know soon enough.”

Upon arriving at Wuqu Lane, Gui Qian disembarked and went ashore. At the sight of the brand-new gate at the Shi residence, which looked more imposing than it had years ago, he said to himself, his heart full of misgivings, “I wonder who bought this house from them. Whoever bought it certainly did a fine job of renovation!” ([Illegible] *good*.) He asked a neighbor, “Where is Young Master Shi who used to live here?”



“大宅里不是！”又问道：“他这几年家事如何？”邻舍将施母已故，及卖房发藏始末述了一遍。“如今且喜娶得支参政家小姐，才德兼全，甚会治家，夫妻好不和顺，家道日隆，比老官儿在日更不同了。”桂迁听说，又喜又惊，又羞又悔。欲待把女儿与他，他已有妻了；欲待不与，又难以赎罪；欲待进吊，又恐怕他不理；若不进吊，又求见无辞。踌躇再四，乃作寓于闾门，寻相识李梅轩托其通信，愿将女送施为侧室。梅轩道：“此事未可造次，当引足下相见了小舍人，然后徐议之。”

明日，李翁同桂迁造于施门。李先入，述桂生家难，并达悔过求见之情。施还不允，李翁再三相劝，施还念李翁是父辈之交，被央不过，勉强接见。桂生羞惭满面，流汗沾衣，俯首请罪。施还问：“到此何事？”李翁代答道：“一来拜奠令先堂，二来求释罪于门下。”施还冷笑道：“谢固不必，奠亦不劳！”李翁道：



“He still lives here, right in this mansion!”

“How has the family been doing the last few years?”

The neighbor recounted to him how Shi Huan’s mother had died and the intended sale of the house had led to the discovery of buried treasure, adding, “How nice it is that Mr. Shi is now married to Vice-Commissioner Zhi’s daughter! She’s both talented and virtuous and good at managing the household as well. The couple get along perfectly, and with the family circumstances improving day by day, they’re doing much better than the Old Master ever did in his time.”

These words filled Gui Qian with feelings of mixed joy, alarm, shame, and regret. He had been thinking of marrying his daughter to Shi Huan, but the young man already had a wife. If he withdrew his offer, he most likely could not find another way to redeem himself. If he expressed condolences for Shi’s deceased mother, he was afraid he would be rejected. But if he did not do so, he would have no excuse to see the young man. After deliberating for the longest time, he turned away and found lodging by Chang Gate.

He then sought out an acquaintance, Li Meixuan, and asked him to convey a message to Shi, stating his wish to offer his daughter to Shi as a concubine. Meixuan said, “This thing is not to be done rashly. Let me take you to see the young master first before bringing up the matter.”

The next day, Mr. Li and Gui Qian paid a visit to the Shi residence. Mr. Li went in first and gave an account of the Gui family’s misfortunes as well as Gui’s remorse and his wish to see Shi Huan. Shi Huan refused to see Gui, but Mr. Li pleaded hard on Gui’s behalf. Considering the fact that Mr. Li was his father’s friend, Shi Huan gave in to his pleas and reluctantly agreed to see Gui Qian.

With shame written all over his face and his clothes dripping with sweat, Gui Qian made obeisance and asked for forgiveness.

“What brought you here?” asked Shi Huan.

Mr. Li answered for Gui, “Partly to pay respects to your deceased parents and partly to ask for your forgiveness.”

With a scornful smile, Shi Huan replied, “I wouldn’t dream of troubling him like this!”



“古人云‘礼至不争’。桂先儿好意拜奠，休得固辞。”施还不得已，命苍头开了祠堂，桂迁陈设祭礼，下拜方毕，忽然有三只黑犬，从宅内出来，环绕桂迁，衔衣号叫，若有所言。其一犬背上果有肉瘤隐起，乃孙大嫂转生，馀二犬乃其子也。桂迁思忆前梦，及浑家病中之言，轮回果报，确然不爽，哭倒在地。施还不知变犬之事，但见其哀痛，以为懊悔前非，不觉感动，乃彻奠留款，词气稍和。桂迁见施子旧憾释然，遂以往日曾与小女约婚为言。施还即变色入内，不复出来。桂迁返寓所与女儿谈三犬之异，父女悲恸。

早知今日都成犬，却悔当初不做人！

次日，桂迁拉李翁再往，施还托病不出。一连去候四次，终不相见。[眉批]桂生曾□（疑为“以”字）此待施。桂迁计穷，只得请李翁到寓，将京中所梦，及浑家病中之言，始末备述，就唤女儿出来相见了。指道：“此女自出痘时便与施氏有约，如今悔之无及！然冥数已定，吾岂敢违！况我妻男并丧，无家可奔，倘得收



Mr.Li continued, "As the ancients say, 'Do not reject those who are not remiss in civility.' Mr.Gui is paying this visit out of the best intentions. Do not reject him out of hand."

Much against his will, Shi Huan had a servant open the ancestral hall so Gui Qian could lay out sacrificial offerings to Shi Huan's deceased mother. Hardly had Gui Qian completed the ceremony than three black dogs dashed out from the interior of the house and, gathering around him, grasped his clothes with their mouths and barked at him, as if they wanted to say something. One of the dogs did indeed have a lump on its back, and so, it was the reincarnation of Sister Sun. The other two were his sons. Recalling what his wife had said on her deathbed about reincarnation and retribution, words that had turned out to be prophetic, he broke down in a fit of sobs and collapsed to the floor.

Knowing nothing about the reincarnations, Shi Huan was moved by Gui's grief, attributing it to remorse for the wrongs he had done. After the ritual was over, Shi Huan, in a softer tone, invited Gui to stay for dinner. Believing that Young Master Shi had put past grievances behind him, Gui Qian brought up the subject of the betrothal promised years before.

Shi Huan's face hardened. He went to the inner quarters of the house and did not reappear. Gui Qian returned to his lodging and told his daughter about his strange encounter with the three dogs. The father and daughter were filled with grief.

*Had they known they would become dogs,
 They would have behaved more like humans.*

The next day, Gui Qian dragged Mr.Li along for another visit, but Shi Huan refused to see them, pleading illness. They went four times but were denied reception each time. (*Hadn't Mr.Gui done the same thing to Shi?*) Left with no choice, Gui Qian invited Mr.Li to his lodging and told him about his dream and what his wife had said on her sick bed. He then called for his daughter, introduced her to the guest, and added, pointing to her, "This girl's betrothal with Shi has been in place ever since she had the chickenpox, and how I regret it now! But I wouldn't dare try to contradict what has been determined



吾女为婢妾，吾身杂童仆，终身力作，以免犬报，吾愿毕矣！”说罢，涕泪交下。李翁怜悯其情，述于施还，劝之甚力。施还道：“我昔贫困时仗岳父周旋，毕姻后又赖吾妻综理家政，吾安能负之更娶他人乎？且吾母怀恨身亡，此吾之仇家也，若与为姻眷，九泉之下何以慰吾母！此事断不可题起！”李翁道：“令岳翁诗礼世家，令阍必闲《内则》，以情告之，想无难色。况此女贤孝，昨闻祠堂三犬之异，彻夜悲啼，思以身赎母罪。取过门来，又是令阍一帮手，令先堂泉下闻之，必然欢喜。古人不念旧恶，绝人不欲已甚，郎君试与令岳翁商之！”施还方欲再却，忽支参政自内而出，道：“贤婿不必固辞，吾已备细闻之矣。此美事，吾女亦已乐从，即烦李翁作伐可也。”言未毕，支氏已收拾金珠币帛之类，教丫鬟、养娘送出以为聘资。李翁传命说合，择日过门。当初桂



by fate. What's more, as I've lost my wife and both sons and am homeless, I'm only asking for a chance for my daughter to be a maid and me a servant, so that we can devote ourselves to serving the Shi family for the rest of our lives and not have to do so as dogs." With that, he broke down in tears.

Out of sympathy for him, Mr.Li talked with Shi Huan again and tried his best to persuade the young man to change his mind. Shi Huan said in reply, "When I was poor, my father-in-law did me a great kindness in offering his daughter to me to be my wife. After we got married, I've been much indebted to my wife for her management of the household. How can I betray her and take another woman? Moreover, my mother died with grievances against him in her heart. So he's my enemy! With what shall I comfort my mother under the Nine Springs? Do not bring this matter up ever again!"

Mr.Li retorted, "Since your father-in-law is a scholar from an old genteel family, your wife must be well versed in *The Guidelines for Women in the Home* in *The Book of Rites*. So if you present her with the facts, she'll surely understand. Moreover, Miss Gui is most virtuous and filial. Yesterday, after she heard the extraordinary account of the three dogs in the ancestral hall, she wept the whole night through, wishing she could redeem her mother's sins. If you accept her, she'll be a big help to your wife. Your parents under the Nine Springs will surely be pleased when they learn of this. The ancients easily forgave one another their old grievances and never drove people into desperation. Please consult your father-in-law on this matter."

Shi Huan was about to say something again by way of refusal when Vice-Commissioner Zhi emerged from inside, saying, "My good son-in-law, do not reject the proposal out of hand like this. I have heard everything. This is reason to rejoice! My daughter has already consented gladly, so would Mr.Li be so kind as to serve as matchmaker?"

Even as he spoke, Zhi-shi, Shi Huan's wife, sent out a few maids and waiting women with some valuables that she had put together to offer as betrothal gifts. Mr.Li conveyed the message to the other side and, with mutual consent, a day was chosen for the wed-



生欺负施家，不肯应承亲事，谁知如今不为妻反为妾，虽是女孩儿命薄，也是桂生欺心的现报。分明是：

周郎妙计高天下，赔了夫人又折兵。

那桂女性格温柔，能得支氏的欢喜，一妻一妾甚说得着。桂迁罄囊所有，造佛堂三间，朝夕佞佛持斋，养三犬于佛堂之内。桂女又每夜烧香为母兄忏悔。如此年馀，忽梦母兄来辞：“幸仗佛力，已脱离罪业矣！”早起桂老来报，夜来三犬，一时俱死。桂女脱簪珥买地葬之，至今阊门城外有三犬冢。桂老逾年竟无恙，乃持斋悔罪之力。

却说施还亏妻妾主持家事，专意读书，乡榜高中。桂老相伴至京，适值尤滑稽为亲军指挥使，受赇枉法，被言官所劾，拿送法司究问。途遇桂迁，悲惭伏地，自陈昔年欺诳之罪。其妻子跟随于后，向桂老叩头求助。桂迁慈心忽动，身边带有数金，悉以



ding. When ill-using the Shi family in the past, Mr. Gui had refused to acknowledge the betrothal. Little did he know then that his daughter would end up being a concubine rather than a wife. True, the girl may have been born under the wrong star, but this was also an act of heavenly retribution for Mr. Gui's treachery, and it was a retribution in good time, too, while he was still alive. Indeed,

Zhou Yu's clever plan — how it was shattered!

He lost both — the lady and the battle!⁸

Miss Gui being of a gentle nature, Zhi-shi took quite a liking to her, and wife and concubine got along very well. With all the money still left to him, Gui Qian built three halls for Buddhist worship, where he kept the three dogs, observed the dietary laws, and paid homage to Buddha every day. Miss Gui burned incense every night in penitence for the sins of her mother and brothers. After more than a year had gone by in this fashion, her mother and brothers appeared before her in a dream one night to bid her farewell, saying, "Thanks to the grace of Buddha, we have been absolved of our sins." Early next morning, her father came to tell her that the three dogs had all died in the course of the night. Miss Gui exchanged her jewelry for a burial lot. The grave site for the three dogs still exists to this day outside Chang Gate. By observing the Buddhist dietary law in repentance of his sins, Gui Qian remained free of illness to a ripe old age.

With his wife and concubine taking care of household affairs, Shi Huan concentrated on his studies and won a high place in the imperial civil service examinations at the provincial level. Gui Qian accompanied him to the capital for the next level of the examinations.

This happened at a time when Funny Man You had just been impeached by officials of the Remonstrance Bureau on charges of seeking bribery as a commander of the imperial army, a violation of the laws of the land. On his way to the Bureau of Justice for interrogation, he ran into Gui Qian. Overcome with grief and shame, he prostrated himself and confessed that he had cheated Gui in years past. His wife, following behind, also kowtowed to Mr. Gui and asked for help. Moved to compassion, Gui Qian gave them what little money



相赠。尤生叩谢道：“今生无及，待来生为犬马相报！”桂老叹息而去。后闻尤生受刑不过，竟死于狱中。桂迁益信善恶果报，分毫不爽，坚心办道。是年，施还及第为官，妻妾随任，各生二子。桂迁养老于施家。至今施支二姓，子孙蕃衍，为东吴名族。有诗为证：

桂迁悔过身无恙，施济行仁嗣果昌。
奉劝世人行好事，皇天不佑负心郎！



he had with him. Mr. You said thankfully, "It's too late in this life, but let me repay you in my next life and serve you as a dog or a horse." With a sigh, Mr. Gui went his way. Later, he heard that Mr. You, unable to withstand torture, had died in prison. This further strengthened Gui Qian's belief in the never-failing principle of divine retribution. Firmly, he set his heart on practicing Buddhist virtues.

That very year, Shi Huan passed the civil service examinations and obtained an official post. His wife and concubine followed him to his duty station and later gave birth to two sons each. Gui Qian was well provided for by the Shi family, with whom he lived out the rest of his days. The Shi and Zhi clans prospered and multiplied and came to be leading clans of the East Wu region of our day. Truly,

*For his repentance, Gui Qian was free of illness;
For Shi Ji's good deeds, the family line prospered.
To all and sundry, this word of advice:
Heaven blesses not the ungrateful man!*

¹ Chen Zhong and Lei Yi of the Eastern Han dynasty were known for their devoted friendship that lasted throughout their lifetimes.

² On the friendship between Guan and Bao, see the first paragraph of story 1.

³ There was no Dashun reign period in the Yuan dynasty. There was only a Tianshun reign period that lasted less than a year (1328).

⁴ Feng Menglong himself was a native of Suzhou.

⁵ Yang Weizhen (1296–1370), sobriquet Tieya, was a famous calligrapher of the Yuan dynasty.

⁶ Yang Huo of the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn period wished to visit Confucius, but his request was denied. So, after making sure one day that Confucius was not at home, Yang Huo went ahead and left a steamed piglet at Confucius' home as a gift.

⁷ Fang Guozhen (1319–74) was a salt-smuggler who later bribed his way into officialdom during the Yuan dynasty. He surrendered to Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty.

⁸ On Zhou Yu's ruse, see note 4 of story 24.



第二十六卷

唐解元一笑姻缘

三通鼓角四更鸡，日色高升月色低；
时序秋冬又春夏，舟车南北复东西。
镜中次第人颜老，世上参差事不齐；
若向其间寻稳便，一壶浊酒一餐齏。

这八句诗乃吴中一个才子所作，那才子姓唐名寅，字伯虎，聪明盖地，学问包天，书画音乐，无有不通；词赋诗文，一挥便就。为人放浪不羁，有轻世傲物之志。生于苏郡，家住吴趋。做秀才时，曾效连珠体，做《花月吟》十馀首，句句中有花有月。如：“长空影动花迎月，深院人归月伴花”；“云破月窥花好处，夜深花睡月明中”等句，为人称颂。本府太守曹凤见之，深爱其才。值宗师科考，曹公以才名特荐。那宗师姓方，名志，鄞县人。



Story 26

Scholar Tang Gains a Wife after One Smile (Originally titled “Scholar Tang’s Remarkable Romance”)

*Roosters crow at the fourth strike of the night-watch drum;
The moon descends following the rise of the sun.
Autumn and winter bring spring and summer;
Boats and carts go one way and then another.
The mirror shows the aging of the face;
The world witnesses the ups and downs of life.
To get away for a moment of peace,
A flask of wine and an exquisite meal.*

The above eight lines were written by a talented scholar of the Wu region. Tang Yin [1470–1523] by name, courtesy name Bohu, he had a sharp mind that was unrivaled anywhere on earth and knew everything there was to know under the sun.¹ A master in the arts of calligraphy, painting, and music, he was also able to compose pieces of prose and verse at one go with never a pause. He was most unconventional in his social behavior and held the material world in disdain. Born in Su County, he later took up residence in Wuqu Street in the city of Suzhou.

After he passed the imperial examinations at the county level and became a *xiucaï*, he wrote more than ten poems on flowers and the moon, using a parallel rhythmic style, with each line containing the words “flowers” and “the moon.” For example, “Flowers greeting the moon cast shadows on the sky / I return home to flowers bathed in moonlight,” and “The moon peeks at flowers through cracks in the clouds / Flowers sleep in moonlight deep in the night.” These lines won much praise.

Cao Feng, the local prefect, was so impressed by his poems that, at the next provincial-level civil service examinations, he recommended that Tang Yin be admitted to the examinations without taking the screening examination on account of his talent. The examiner, Fang Zhi by name and a native of Yin County, was most ill-disposed



最不喜古文辞。[眉批]取当□只消□。闻唐寅恃才豪放，不修小节，正要坐名黜治。却得曹公一力保救，虽然免祸，却不放他科举。直至临场，曹公再三苦求，附一名于遗才之末，是科遂中了解元。伯虎会试至京，文名益著，公卿皆折节下交，以识面为荣。有程詹事典试，颇开私径卖题，恐人议论，欲访一才名素著者为榜首，压服众心，[眉批]还是良心公道。得唐寅甚喜，许以会元。伯虎性素坦率，酒中便向人夸说：“今年我定做会元了。”众人已闻程詹事有私，又忌伯虎之才，哄传主司不公，言官风闻动本，圣旨不许程詹事阅卷，与唐寅俱下诏狱问革。伯虎还乡，绝意功名，益放浪诗酒，人都称为唐解元。得唐解元诗文字画，片纸尺幅，如



toward literary compositions in ancient styles. ([Illegible.]) Upon hearing that Tang Yin was a man with a high opinion of his own talent and did not feel bound by conventional decorum, the examiner had a good mind to single him out for punishment. Thanks to Prefect Cao, who defended Tang to the best of his ability, no calamity befell Tang, but he was barred from the examinations. It was not until the exams had already started that, owing to the desperate pleas of Prefect Cao, he was granted permission to take the examinations, as the very last person on the add-on list of unscreened candidates. As it turned out, he came out first.

For the next level of the examinations, Tang Bohu traveled to the capital, where he built a name for himself as a man of literary talent. The lords and ministers set their dignity aside and took pride in making his acquaintance.

It so happened that the chief examiner, Imperial Tutor Mr. Cheng, who was known to have sold examination questions for personal gain, was on the lookout for a celebrated and talented scholar to put at the top of the list of successful candidates, so as to prevent tongues from wagging and silence his detractors. (*Public opinion, however, is most just.*) Much delighted upon making Tang Yin's acquaintance, he promised to let him win top honors.

Being a straightforward man by nature, Bohu boasted to his drinking companions, "This year, I'll place first in the exams, and that's for sure!"

Imperial Tutor Cheng's shady dealings were no secret to the public and Tang Bohu's talent was an object of jealousy, so rumors of the examiner's unfairness began to float around. When officials charged with remonstrating with the emperor got wind of this,² they wrote a memorial to the emperor, who then ruled that Imperial Tutor Cheng be barred from grading the papers and had Cheng and Tang Yin both thrown into jail for interrogation and demotion.

As a result, Tang Bohu was sent back to his hometown. He abandoned all interest in making his mark in the world through the examinations and indulged his love for poetry and wine. He came to be called by all and sundry "Tang, Provincial Graduate with the Highest



获重宝。其中惟画，尤其得意。平日心中喜怒哀乐，都寓之于丹青。[眉批] □□无聊□□。每一画出，争以重价购之。有《言志》诗一绝为证：

不炼金丹不坐禅，不为商贾不耕田。

闲来写幅丹青卖，不使人间作业钱。

却说苏州六门：葑、盘、胥、阊、娄、齐。那六门中只有阊门最盛，乃舟车辐辏之所。真个是：

翠袖三千楼上下，黄金百万水东西。

五更市贩何曾绝，四远方言总不齐。

唐解元一日坐在阊门游船之上，就有许多斯文中人慕名来拜，出扇求其字画。解元画了几笔水墨，写了几首绝句。那闻风而至者，其来愈多。解元不耐烦，命童子且把大杯斟酒来。解元倚窗独酌，忽见有画舫从旁摇过，舫中珠翠夺目，内有一青衣小鬟，眉目秀艳，体态绰约，舒头船外，注视解元，掩口而笑。[眉批] 具眼。须臾船过，解元神荡魂摇，问舟子：“可认得去的那只船么？”舟人答言：“此船乃无锡华学士府眷也。”解元欲尾其后，



Honor.” Those who obtained his writings in verse or prose, pieces of calligraphy, or paintings treasured them, even if they were done on small scraps of paper, as they would priceless objects of art. Painting being his forte, he used it as the means to express the joy, anger, grief, and exultation in his heart. (*What better way to relieve himself of boredom!*) Every time he finished a painting, buyers fought to outbid one another. There is in testimony a quatrain on his outlook of life:

*Daoist alchemy or Buddhist meditation,
 Trading or farming — all these pursuits, not for me.
 I paint and sell my art in moments of leisure,
 And keep my hands off ill-gotten money.*

Now, in Suzhou, there are six city gates — the gates of Feng, Pan, Xu, Chang, Lou, and Qi. Of these, Chang Gate saw the most hustle and bustle of the city and the most congested traffic. Truly,

*Well-dressed visitors swarm up and down the towers;
 Goods worth millions travel across the waters.
 Markets stay open late into the night;
 Dialects from all over echo in the air.*

One day, Tang Bohu was riding in a pleasure boat past Chang Gate when quite a number of men with a penchant for literature and the arts approached him out of admiration for his fame and spread out their folding fans for him to write or paint on them. So he wielded his brush-pen in the ink-and-wash style of painting and wrote a few quatrains. As word got around, more and more people came over. In irritation, Tang Bohu told his page boy to bring him a large flask of wine and positioned himself by his cabin window to enjoy the wine all by himself. Suddenly, he saw a painted boat passing by. Amid the glittering array of jewelry in the cabin, he noticed a young maid dressed in green, with beautiful features and a graceful deportment. With her head outside the cabin window, she was looking at Bohu and trying to hide her smile behind her hand. (*She is a good judge of men.*) In a trice, the boat overtook Bohu’s. As if in a trance, Bohu asked the boatman, “Do you happen to know who owns that boat?”

“It belongs to Academician Hua of Wuxi.”



急呼小艇不至，心中如有所失。正要教童子去觅船，只见城中一只船儿，摇将出来。他也不管那船有载没载，把手相招，乱呼乱喊。那船渐渐至近，舱中一人，走出船头，叫声：“伯虎，你要到何处去？这般要紧？”解元打一看时，不是别人，却是好友王雅宜。便道：“急要答拜一个远来朋友，故此要紧，兄的船往那里去？”雅宜道：“弟同两个舍亲到茅山去进香，数日方回。”解元道：“我也要茅山进香，正没有人同去。如今只得要趁便了。”雅宜道：“兄若要去，快些回家收拾，弟泊船在此相候。”解元道：“就去罢了，又回家做什么！”雅宜道：“香烛之类，也要备的。”解元道：“到那里去买罢！”遂打发童子回去。也不别这些求诗画的朋友，径跳过船来，与舱中朋友叙了礼，连呼：“快些开船。”舟子知是唐解元，不敢怠慢，即忙撑篙摇橹。行不多时，望见这只画舫就在前面。解元分付船上，随着大船而行。众人不知其故，只得依他。

次日到了无锡，见画舫摇进城里。解元道：“到了这里，若不取惠山泉也就俗了。”叫船家移舟去惠山取了水，原到此处停泊，明日早行。“我们到城里略走一走，就来下船。”舟子答应自



Wishing to follow the boat closely, Bohu called out for a small skiff, but none was to be had. He felt as if he had lost something precious and was about to have his page boy go out to find a boat when he saw one rowing out of the city in his direction. Without caring in the least whether or not there was a passenger in it, he waved and shouted until a man emerged from the cabin, walked to the bow, and said loudly, "Bohu, where are you going? Why all this rush?"

Upon a closer look, Tang Bohu recognized his good friend Wang Yayi. "I need to pay a return visit to a friend from afar. That's why I'm in such a rush. Where are you off to, my brother?"

"I'm going with two relatives to Mount Mao to offer incense.³ We'll be staying there for a few days."

"I've also been meaning to go to Mount Mao and offer incense but haven't been able to find a companion. Now, I can go with you."

"If you want to join me, go home quickly and pack. I'll moor the boat here and wait for you."

"I'm ready to go now. Why should I go home first?"

"But don't you need to prepare some incense and candles?"

"I'll buy them over there!" So Tang sent his page boy home, and without so much as a word of good-bye for those who were still waiting for his poems and paintings, he jumped into Wang Yayi's boat.

After greeting Wang's friends in the cabin, he shouted, "Let's get on our way!" Knowing this was Tang, Provincial Graduate with the Highest Honor, the boatman dared not ignore him but hastened to punt and scull. Some moments later, they came in sight of the painted boat. Tang Bohu told the boatman to follow the big boat. No one had any idea why he wanted to do so, but all felt obliged to humor him.

The next day, they arrived in Wuxi, the painted boat having preceded them and rowed its way into the city. Tang said, "Once in Wuxi, only the uncultured would fail to fetch water from Hui Mountain Spring." So saying, he asked the boatman to go to Hui Mountain to get some water and return to the mooring spot before they continued the journey the next day, adding, "We'll take a walk in the city



去。解元同雅宜三四人登岸，进了城，到那热闹的所在，撇了众人，独自一个去寻那画舫。却又不认得路径，东行西走，并不见些踪影。走了一回，穿出一条大街上来，忽听得呼喝之声。解元立住脚看时，只见十来个仆人前引一乘暖轿，自东而来，女从如云。自古道：“有缘千里能相会。”那女从之中，闾门所见青衣小鬟，正在其内。解元心中欢喜，远远相随，直到一座大门楼下，女使出迎，一拥而入。询之傍人，说是华学士府，适才轿中乃夫人也。解元得了实信，问路出城，恰好船上取了水才到。少顷，王雅宜等也来了。问：“解元那里去了？教我们寻得不耐烦！”解元道：“不知怎的，一挤就挤散了，又不认得路径，问了半日，方能到此。”并不题起此事。至夜半，忽于梦中狂呼，如魇魅之状。众人皆惊，唤醒问之。解元道：“适梦中见一金甲神人，持金杵击我，责我进香不虔。我叩头哀乞，愿斋戒一月，只身至山



and come back to the boat in good time.”

Thus instructed, the boatman set off on his errand. Tang Bohu, Wang Yayi, and a couple of the other passengers went ashore and onto the city streets. Amid the hustle and bustle, Tang abandoned his friends and commenced a one-man search for the painted boat. But as he was unfamiliar with the layout of the city, he wandered around for quite a while without seeing a trace of the boat. Eventually, he found himself on a major thoroughfare. Upon hearing cries to clear the street, he stopped in his tracks and saw a curtained sedan-chair led by about ten valets coming from an easterly direction. Following the sedan-chair was a procession of maidservants.

As the ancients put it, “Those with a predestined bond will meet, however great the distance between them.” Among the maidservants, he spotted the very girl in green whom he had seen when passing by Chang Gate. Joyfully he followed the procession at a distance until it stopped at the gate of a big mansion and was ushered in by some female servants who had come out to greet it. Upon inquiries of passers-by, he learned that this was the establishment of Academician Hua and that the person in the sedan-chair was the Academician’s wife. Having acquired this information, he asked for directions out of the city.

By a happy coincidence, the boatman had also just arrived with the spring water. Soon, Wang Yayi and the others came back, too. They asked Tang Bohu, “Where were you? We looked for you everywhere!”

“I don’t know what happened,” replied Tang, “but somehow I got pushed away from you in the jostling crowd, and without knowing my way around, I had a hard time getting back here.” Of what truly happened, he said not a word.

At midnight, he broke into frenzied cries, as if he were under an evil spell in a nightmare. His friends all woke up in alarm. To their questions, he replied, “In my dream just a moment ago, a god in gold armor hit me with a golden rod, scolding me for not being devout enough in my incense-offering trip. I kowtowed to him and asked for forgiveness, promising to observe a vegetarian diet for one month



谢罪！天明，汝等开船自去，吾且暂回，不得相陪矣！”雅宜等信以为真。

至天明，恰好有一只小船来到，说是苏州去的。解元别了众人，跳上小船。行不多时，推说遗忘了东西，还要转去。袖中摸几文钱，赏了舟子，奋然登岸。到一饭店，办下旧衣、破帽，将衣巾换讠，如穷汉之状。走至华府典铺内，以典钱为由，与主管相见。卑词下气，问主管道：“小子姓康，名宣，吴县人氏，颇善书，处一个小馆为生。近因拙妻亡故，[眉批] □作地。又失了馆，孤身无活，欲投一大家充书办之役，未知府上用得否？倘收用时，不敢忘恩！”因于袖中取出细楷数行，与主管观看。主管看那字，写得甚是端楷可爱，答道：“待我晚间进府禀过老爷，明日你来讨回话。”是晚，主管果然将字样禀知学士。学士看了，夸道：“写得好，不似俗人之笔，明日可唤来见我。”次早，解元便到典中，主管引进解元拜见了学士。学士见其仪表不俗，问过了姓名住居，又问：“曾读书么？”解元道：“曾考过几遍童生，不得进学，经书还都记得。”学士问是何经？解元虽习《尚书》，其



before I go to the temple alone to apologize. At daybreak, you can continue on your way, but I'll have to be excused."

Yayi and the others believed his story. At dawn, a small boat heading for Suzhou happened to appear, so Tang Bohu took leave of his friends and leaped into it. Some moments later, he told the boatman to turn back, saying that he had left something behind. He produced a few pennies from his sleeve, paid the boatman, and stepped ashore in high spirits.

Into a restaurant he went. There, he bought some worn, old clothes and a tattered hat and changed into them, making himself look like a pauper. He then proceeded to a pawnshop run by the Hua establishment and, claiming he had some items to pawn, asked to see the manager. In all humility, he said to the manager, "My name is Kang Xuan, a native of the Wu County. Being a good calligrapher, I used to run my own school, but recently my wife died (*A story spun on the spur of the moment.*), and I lost my school. Left on my own and without a means of support, I would like to serve as something of a scribe in a rich man's establishment. I wonder if your master is in need of my services? If so, I would be ever so grateful!" From his sleeve, he pulled out a scroll bearing several lines of his calligraphy in small script.

Impressed by the well-shaped and graceful characters, the manager replied, "Let me report to the master tonight. Come back tomorrow for a reply."

That very evening, the manager did indeed show the sample of Tang's calligraphy to the Academician, who said in praise, "Beautiful! Certainly not the work of some run-of-the-mill calligrapher. Bring him to me tomorrow."

The next morning, Tang Bohu showed up at the pawnshop again. The manager then led him into the presence of the Academician. Observing Tang's refined manners, the Academician asked him his name and where he lived. He also asked, "How much education have you had?"

"I've sat for the examinations several times in my youth without ever having had a chance for formal education, but I do remember

实五经俱通的，晓得学士习《周易》，就答应道：“《易经》。”学士大喜道：“我书房中写帖的不缺，可送公子处作伴读。”问他要多少身价？解元道：“身价不敢领，只要求些衣服穿。待后老爷中意时，赏一房好媳妇足矣！”学士更喜，就叫主管于典中寻几件随身衣服与他换了，改名华安。送至书馆，见了公子。公子教华安抄写文字，文字中有字句不妥的，华安私加改窜。[眉批] □□人善□□公子。公子见他改得好，大惊道：“你原来通文理，几时放下书本的？”华安道：“从来不曾旷学，但为贫所迫耳。”公子大喜，将自己日课教他改削。华安笔不停挥，真有点铁成金手段。有时题义疑难，华安就与公子讲解。若公子做不出时，华安就通篇代笔。

先生见公子学问骤进，向主人夸奖。学士讨近作看了，摇头道：“此非孺子所及，若非抄写，必是情人。”呼公子诘问其由，





the classics.”

“Which books of the classics?”

Though he specialized in *The Book of History*, Tang Bohu was in fact well versed in all five classics but, knowing that the Academician specialized in *The Book of Changes*, he said, “*The Book of Changes*.”

Much delighted, the Academician said, “I already have enough people doing calligraphy work for me in the study, but I could use you as my son’s study companion.”

When the Academician queried him as to wages, Tang replied, “I wouldn’t dare demand wages. Some clothes will suffice. Later, should the master be pleased with my service, I’ll be content if I’m given a good wife.”

Even more pleased, the Academician had the manager find a few pieces of clothing for Tang in the pawnshop and changed his name to Hua An. Hua An was then conducted into the study, where he greeted the young master. When the young master gave him some script to copy, he made corrections freely whenever he came upon an infelicitous choice of words. Much surprised by the stylistic improvements, the young master said, “So, you are quite an educated man. When did you abandon your studies?”

Hua An replied, “I’ve never been remiss in my studies. It’s just that poverty has reduced me to such a state.”

A delighted young master asked him to revise his daily homework. With never a pause, Hua An made corrections that veritably changed iron into gold.

Sometimes when the young master had difficulties understanding the essay questions, Hua An explained things to him. When the young master found himself baffled, Hua An wrote the essays on his behalf. The young master’s mentor, struck by the rapid progress, praised the young man to his father in glowing terms. The Academician asked for a sample of his son’s recent writing and, after reading it, said, shaking his head, “This is beyond my son. This is either copied from somewhere, or the work of a hired ghostwriter.”

When summoned for questioning, the young master dared not

公子不敢隐瞒，说道：“曾经华安改窜。”学士大惊，唤华安到来出题面试。华安不假思索，援笔立就，手捧所作呈上。学士见其手腕如玉，但左手有枝指。阅其文，词意兼美，字复精工，愈加欢喜，道：“你时艺如此，想古作亦可观也！”乃留内书房掌书记。一应往来书札，授之以意，辄令代笔，烦简曲当，学士从未曾增减一字。宠信日深，赏赐比众人加厚。华安时买酒食与书房诸童子共享，无不欢喜。因而潜访前所见青衣小鬟，其名秋香，乃夫人贴身伏侍，顷刻不离者。计无所出，乃因春暮，赋《黄莺调》以自叹：

风雨送春归，杜鹃愁，花乱飞，青苔满院朱门闭。孤灯半垂，孤衾半欹，萧萧孤影汪汪泪。忆归期，相思未了，春梦绕天涯。

学士一日偶到华安房中，见壁间之词，知安所题，甚加称奖。



hide the truth. "Hua An revised it," he admitted. ([Illegible].)

Astounded, the Academician summoned Hua An and gave him a topic on which to write an essay on the spot. Without a moment's hesitation, Hua An wrote the essay as fast as his brush-pen could go. When he had finished, he held it out in his hands for the Academician to examine, and the latter noticed that Hua An's wrist was as smooth as jade and that there was an extra thumb on his left hand. Upon reading the essay, the Academician found the diction so refined, the argument so well developed, and the calligraphy so graceful that he commented, "If you can write like this in the contemporary style, you must be proficient in the traditional style as well." Thereupon, he decided to keep Hua An in the study to take charge of all his correspondence. Henceforth, all letters going out of the Hua establishment were penned by Hua An according to oral instructions from the Academician. Whatever the length or complexity of the letters, the Academician never saw a need to add or delete one character.

As he rose higher and higher in the Academician's favor and received more rewards than any other employee in the establishment, Hua An often bought wine and food to share with the page boys on duty in the study, to their immense joy. Quietly, he asked around about the girl in green and found out that her name was Qiuxiang [Autumn Fragrance]. But, being Lady Hua's personal maid, she was never out of her mistress's presence. Unable to come up with a plan, he wrote a lyric poem to the tune of "Song of an Oriole," lamenting the imminent demise of spring:

*The wind and the rain send spring on its way,
 The cuckoos grieve; the flowers fly around,
 The yard overgrown with moss, the red gate closed;
 With the forlorn lampwick burning low,
 I lie sideways on my woebegone quilt,
 All by my lonely self, my face awash with tears.
 When am I returning to my much-missed one?
 My spring dreams vanish to the end of the sky.*

One day, the Academician went by chance to Hua An's room and saw the poem on the wall. Knowing it must be the work of Hua



但以为壮年鰥处，不无感伤，初不意其有所属意也。适典中主管病故，学士令华安暂摄其事。月馀，出纳谨慎，毫忽无私。学士欲遂用为主管，嫌其孤身无室，难以重托，乃与夫人商议，呼媒婆欲为娶妇。华安将银三两，送与媒婆，央他禀知夫人说：“华安蒙老爷夫人提拔，复为置室，恩同天地。但恐外面小家之女，不习里面规矩。倘得于侍儿中择一人见配，此华安之愿也！”媒婆依言禀知夫人，夫人对学士说了。学士道：“如此诚为两便。但华安初来时，不领身价，原指望一房好媳妇。今日又做了府中得力之人，倘然所配未中其意，难保其无他志也。不若唤他到中堂，将许多丫鬟听其自择。”[眉批]正中其怀。夫人点头道是。

当晚夫人坐于中堂，灯烛辉煌，将丫鬟二十余人各盛饰装扮，排列两边，恰似一班仙女，簇拥着王母娘娘在瑶池之上。夫人传命唤华安，华安进了中堂，拜见了夫人。夫人道：“老爷说你小心得用，欲赏你一房妻小。这几个粗婢中，任你自择。”叫老姆姆



An, he praised it with enthusiasm. As for the melancholy tone of the poem, he assumed that Tang, a man still in the prime of his life, must be heartbroken over the death of his wife. The Academician little knew that the poem had been written with someone else in mind.

The manager of the pawnshop happened to die of illness at this time, and the Academician had Hua An take over the shop. After more than a month, upon finding Hua An to be meticulous in his work with never a slightest error in the account books, the Academician had a mind to make him manager. However, as it would be awkward to entrust a bachelor with an important responsibility, the Academician consulted his wife and engaged a matchmaker to find a wife for Hua An.

Hua An gave the matchmaker three taels of silver and asked her to convey this message to Lady Hua: "Hua An is profoundly grateful to the master and the mistress for the promotion as well as the offer to find him a wife. But he's afraid that girls from ordinary families outside the establishment won't be able to adapt to the house rules here, so he's hoping to marry one of your maids." The matchmaker duly conveyed the message to Lady Hua, who then spoke to the Academician.

"That would be even better for both parties," said the Academician. "There's one thing, though. He said when he first came here that he was willing to forgo wages and wished only for a good wife. Now that he's become so useful to me, I'm afraid that he might pursue other ambitions if the girl we offer him is not to his liking. We'd better summon him to the main hall and let him take his pick among the many maids we'll present to him." (*That could not have suited Bohu better.*) Lady Hua nodded in agreement.

That very night, with Lady Hua sitting in the brightly lit main hall, more than twenty maids, all dressed up in finery, stood on both sides of her, not unlike the fairy maidens gathered around the Queen Mother of Fairyland by the Jasper Pool. At Lady Hua's order, Hua An entered the hall and greeted her with a bow.

Lady Hua announced, "The master wants to offer you a wife as a reward for your faithful service. You may take your pick among



携烛下去照他一照。华安就烛光之下，看了一回，虽然尽有标致的，那青衣小鬟不在其内。华安立于傍边，嘿然无语。夫人叫：“老姆姆，你去问华安：‘那一个中你的意？就配与你。’”华安只不开言。夫人心中不乐，叫：“华安，你好大眼孔，难道我这些丫头就没个中你意的？”华安道：“复夫人，华安蒙夫人赐配，又许华安自择，这是旷古隆恩，粉身难报。只是夫人随身侍婢还来不齐，既蒙恩典，愿得尽观。”夫人笑道：“你敢是疑我有吝啬之意。也罢！房中那四个一发唤出来与他看看，满他的心愿！原来那四个是有执事的，叫做：

春媚、夏清、秋香、冬瑞。

春媚，掌首饰脂粉；夏清，掌香炉茶灶；秋香，掌四时衣服；冬瑞，掌酒果食品。管家老姆姆传夫人之命，将四个唤出来。那四个不及更衣，随身妆束。秋香依旧青衣。老姆姆引出中堂，站立夫人背后。室中蜡炬，光明如昼，华安早已看见了，昔日丰姿，宛然在目。还不曾开口，那老姆姆知趣，先来问道：“可看中了谁？”华安心中明晓得是秋香，不敢说破，只将手指道：“若得穿



these maids." This said, she had an old housekeeper hold a candle so that Hua An could take a good look at the girls. By the light of the candle, Hua An inspected all the candidates and found most to be pretty, but the girl in green was not there. He stepped to one side of the hall and stood still in silence.

Lady Hua addressed the old housekeeper, "Go ask Hua An which one he likes. He can have whomever he fancies."

Hua An remained silent. Displeased, Lady Hua raised her voice, "Hua An! Are the pupils of your eyes not large enough to see all these maids of mine? Don't tell me none is to your liking!"

"Madam, I can never repay your immense kindness in offering me a wife and allowing me to choose her myself. Such kindness has never been known since time immemorial. I'll never be able to repay you. But Your Ladyship's personal maids are not all here yet. Since you are already doing me such a kindness, may I be granted the privilege of seeing all of them?"

Lady Hua replied with a smile, "So you suspect me of being stingy? All right, bring the four girls in my chamber and show them to him, just to make him happy."

These four girls were Chunmei [Spring Charm], Xiaqing [Summer Limpidity], Qiuxiang [Autumn Fragrance], and Dongrui [Winter Fortune]. Each had her own responsibilities: Chunmei was in charge of Her Ladyship's jewelry and cosmetics. Xiaqing's job was to tend to the incense-burner and the tea stove, Qiuxiang's responsibilities were to prepare clothes for all four seasons, and Dongrui took care of wine, fruit, and food. Acting on Lady Hua's orders, the old housekeeper summoned the four girls. Having been given no time to change, the four emerged in their daily casual wear, Qiuxiang still in green. The old housekeeper conducted them into the main hall and made them stand behind Her Ladyship. The hall was lit as bright as day, and Hua An easily saw the girl in all her grace and charm, just as he remembered her. Before he had a chance to speak, the housekeeper asked tactfully, "So, does any one of them strike your fancy?"

Knowing all too well that her name was Qiuxiang, Hua An said, pointing a finger, without daring to blurt out the name, "If I



青这一位小娘子，足遂生平。”夫人回顾秋香，微微而笑，叫华安且出去。华安回典铺中，一喜一惧，喜者机会甚好，惧者未曾上手，惟恐不成。偶见月明如昼，独步徘徊，吟诗一首：

徙倚无聊夜卧迟，绿杨风静鸟栖枝。

难将心事和人说，说与青天明月知。

次日，夫人向学士说了。另收拾一所洁净房室，其床帐家火，无物不备。又合家童仆奉承他是新主管，担东送西，摆得一室之中，锦片相似。择了吉日，学士和夫人主婚，华安与秋香中堂双拜，鼓乐引至新房，合卺成婚，男欢女悦，自不必说。夜半，秋香向华安道：“与君颇面善，何处曾相会来？”华安道：“小娘子自去思想。”又过了几日，秋香忽问华安道：“向日阊门游船中看见的可就是你？”华安笑道：“是也！”秋香道：“若然，君非下贱之辈，何故屈身于此？”华安道：“吾为小娘子傍舟一笑，不能忘情，所以从权相就。”秋香道：“妾昔见诸少年拥君，出素扇纷



could but have that young lady in green, I shall have nothing more to wish for throughout the rest of my life.”

Casting a glance at Qiuxiang over her shoulder, Lady Hua smiled ever so slightly and told Hua An to leave.

Back in the pawnshop, Hua An was filled with feelings of mixed joy and fear — joy because the opportunity could not have been better, and fear because she was not yet his and anything could still go wrong. As his eyes happened to rest upon the glorious moon, shining as bright as day, he paced up and down and intoned a poem:

*“Listless, I pace around in the deepening night;
Birds perch on green willows in the windless air.
With no one to share what weighs on my mind,
I tell it to the blue sky and the lambent moon.”*

The next day, Lady Hua recounted what had happened to the Academician. A room was cleaned and decorated, complete with bed curtains and all other furnishings imaginable. Eager to please the new manager, the servants and page boys of the entire establishment scurried around, fetching and carrying, until the bridal chamber looked like a piece of ornate embroidery.

On a chosen auspicious day, with the Academician and his wife officiating at the wedding ceremony, Hua An and Qiuxiang made their bows in the main hall before proceeding to the bridal chamber, led by a drum orchestra, for the consummation of their marriage. Let us spare the audience the details of the fulfillment of their love but come to the point where, at midnight, Qiuxiang asked Hua An, “I think I must have seen you before, but where?”

“Think hard, young lady!” replied Hua An.

A few days later, Qiuxiang suddenly asked Hua An, “Was it you I saw in the pleasure boat by Chang Gate some time ago?”

Smiling, Hua An said yes.

“If that was indeed you, you’re by no means of lowly status. Why do you degrade yourself by accepting employment in this place?”

“I saw you smile by your cabin window, and the memory of that smile stayed with me so vividly that I did all this scheming and plot-



求书画，君一概不理，倚窗酌酒，旁若无人。妾知君非凡品，故一笑耳！”[眉批]具眼。华安道：“女子家能于流俗中识名士，诚红拂、绿绮之流也！”秋香道：“此后于南门街上，似又会一次。”华安笑道：“好利害眼睛！果然，果然！”秋香道：“你既非下流，实是甚么样人？可将真姓名告我。”华安道：“我乃苏州唐解元也，与你三生有缘，得谐所愿。今夜既然说破，不可久留，欲与你图谐老之策，你肯随我去否？”秋香道：“解元为贱妾之故，不惜辱千金之躯，妾岂敢不惟命是从！”华安次日将典中帐目细细开了一本簿子，又将房中衣服首饰及床帐器皿另开一帐，又将各人所赠之物亦开一帐，纤毫不取。共是三宗帐目，锁在一个护书篋内，其钥匙即挂在锁上。又于壁间题诗一首：

拟向华阳洞里游，行踪端为可人留。
愿随红拂同高蹈，敢向朱家惜下流。
好事已成谁索笑？屈身今去尚含羞。
主人若问真名姓，只在康宣两字头。



ting, just to be with you.”

“I saw you drinking all by yourself at the cabin window, totally oblivious of those young men around you begging you to write and paint on their white fans. I smiled because I could see that you are not of the common run.” (*A good judge of character.*)

“As a woman who recognizes a man of worth from among the uncultured masses, you’re as remarkable as Hongfo and Zhuo Wenjun.”⁴

“But after that encounter, I believe we met once again on South Gate Street, didn’t we?”

Hua An said laughingly, “What sharp eyes you have! Yes, that is quite true, quite true.”

“If you’re not as lowly as you make yourself out to be, who *are* you? Tell me your real name.”

“I am Tang of Suzhou, Provincial Graduate with the Highest Honor. My wish has been fulfilled because I have with you a predestined bond that’s long enough to last three lifetimes. Now that you know who I am, I can’t stay here any longer. Would you be willing to follow me so that we can live out the rest of our lives together?”

“Since you didn’t hesitate to degrade your noble self for my sake, how can I not do what you want me to do?”

The next day, Hua An copied details of all pawnshop transactions into an account book. In another notebook, he listed all the articles of clothing, jewelry, and furnishings in the bridal chamber. Next, he made a record of all the gifts he had received. Without taking a fraction of a penny’s worth of anything, he locked the three documents in a book box and left the key in the lock. Then, he wrote a poem on the wall:

*I was on my way to the Huayang Cave⁵
When the beauty stopped me right in my tracks.
Hoping for a quiet life with Hong Fo, ⁶
Humbly I entered the service of Zhu Jia.⁷
Whoever would scoff at this happy event?
Sheepishly I take my leave, quite ashamed.
Should the master wish to know who I am,*



是夜雇了一只小船，泊于河下。黄昏人静，将房门封锁，同秋香下船，连夜望苏州去了。

天晓，家人见华安房门封锁，奔告学士。学士教打开看时，床帐什物一毫不动，护书内帐目开载明白。学士沉思，莫测其故。抬头一看，忽见壁上有诗八句，读了一遍，想：“此人原名不是康宣。”又不知甚么意故，来府中住许多时，若是不良之人，财上又分毫不苟。又不知那秋香如何就肯随他逃走，如今两口儿又不知逃在那里？“我弃此一婢，亦有何难。只要明白了这桩事迹。”便叫家童唤捕人来，出信赏钱，各处缉获康宣、秋香，杳无影响。过了年馀，学士也放过一边了。

忽一日学士到苏州拜客，从阊门经过。家童看见书坊中有一秀才坐而观书，其貌酷似华安，左手亦有枝指，报与学士知道。学士不信，分付此童再去看看个详细，并访其人名姓。家童复身到书坊中，那秀才又和着一个同辈说话，刚下阶头，家童乖巧，悄悄随之，那两个转湾向潼子门下船去了，仆从相随共有四五人。背后察其形相，分明与华安无二，只是不敢唐突。家童回转书坊，问店主：“适来在此看书的是什么人？”店主道：“是唐伯虎解元



In Kang Xuan is found my name.

That very evening, he hired a small boat and moored it by the riverbank. In the quiet of the evening, he locked his door, got into the boat with Qiuxiang, and set off posthaste for Suzhou.

At daybreak, a servant noticed the lock on Hua An's door and ran to report the matter to the Academician, who ordered the door to be opened. When all the furnishings were found intact and account books containing detailed entries were discovered in the book box, the Academician plunged into thought, wondering what could have led to this. Raising his head, he saw the eight lines on the wall and, after reading them, thought to himself, "Surely Kang Xuan isn't his name." But why, he wondered, would the man want to stay in his house for so long? If he had evil designs, why did he leave without taking a penny? Why was Qiuxiang willing to elope with him, and where could they be now? "Losing this maid is not important to me," he thought, "but I want to get to the bottom of this." Thereupon, he had servants summon the police. He wrote a note offering a reward for the capture of Kang Xuan and Qiuxiang and had posters put up everywhere. After more than a year had gone by without the slightest clue, the Academician put the matter aside.

One day, the Academician went to Suzhou to visit a friend. A page boy employed by the Academician was passing by Chang Gate and saw a scholar who bore a strong resemblance to Hua An sitting in a bookstore reading a book. The scholar's left hand also had an extra thumb. The Academician did not believe the page boy's report and told the boy to go back for a closer look and find out the man's name. So the boy went back. Upon entering the bookstore, he found the scholar in a conversation with another man of a similar age. As soon as they left the store and walked down the steps, the smart page boy followed stealthily behind, and saw that the two men made for Tongzi Gate, where they boarded a boat, followed by four or five servants. Viewed from behind, the scholar was the very image of Hua An, but the page boy dared not make a move that would be construed as presumptuous.

He returned to the bookstore and asked the storekeeper, "Who



相公。今日是文衡山相公舟中请酒去了。”家童道：“方才同去的那一位可就是文相公么？”店主道：“那是祝枝山，也都是一般名士。”家童一一记了，回复了华学士。学士大惊，想道：“久闻唐伯虎放达不羁，难道华安就是他？明日专往拜谒，便知是否。”

次日写了名帖，特到吴趋坊拜唐解元。解元慌忙出迎，分宾而坐。学士再三审视，果肖华安。及捧茶，又见手白如玉，左有枝指。意欲问之，难于开口。

茶罢，解元请学士书房中小坐。学士有疑未决，亦不肯轻别，遂同至书房。见其摆设齐整，啧啧叹羨。少停酒至，宾主对酌多时。学士开言道：“贵县有个康宣，其人读书不遇，甚通文理。先生识其人否？”解元唯唯。学士又道：“此人去岁曾佣书于舍下，改名华安。先在小儿馆中伴读，后在学生书房管书柬，后又在小典中为主管。因他无室，教他于贱婢中自择，他择得秋香成亲。数日后夫妇俱逃，房中日用之物一无所取，竟不知其何故？”



was the man reading here some moments ago?"

"That was Tang Bohu, Provincial Graduate with the Highest Honor. He's just been invited by Mr. Wen Hengshan⁸ to have a drink on his boat."

"So the man with him is Mr. Wen?"

"No, that's Zhu Zhishan,⁹ another celebrity."

The page boy made a mental note of the names and reported back to Academician Hua. The Academician was astounded. "I've long heard of the name of Tang Bohu and his unconventional behavior," he thought. "Can Hua An be the same man? Let me pay him a visit tomorrow, and I'll find out the truth."

The next day, he wrote up a visiting card and went to Wuqu Street to visit Tang. With alacrity, Tang went out to greet him, and they sat down as host and guest. Taking a good look at Tang, the Academician thought him to be indeed the very image of Hua An. When Tang offered a cup of tea, the Academician noticed that his host's hands were as white as jade, and there was an extra thumb on his left hand. He had a good mind to ask but found it hard to frame the words.

When they had finished their tea, Tang Bohu invited the Academician into the study. Unwilling to leave with the question in his mind unanswered, the Academician followed his host into the study. There, he burst into praises for the tasteful furnishings. Soon, wine was brought in. When they were well into their drinking, the Academician spoke up. "In your county, there is a man called Kang Xuan. He had no luck with the examinations but is quite a fine scholar. Do you, sir, happen to know him?"

Tang mumbled something noncommittal. The Academician continued, "Last year, he entered into service in my household and had his name changed to Hua An. He started out as a study companion for my son and then took charge of affairs in my study. Later, he rose to be the manager of my small pawnshop. He was a bachelor, so I let him choose a wife from among the maids of the household, and he picked Qiuxiang. Several days after the wedding, the couple slipped away without taking anything from the house. I wonder why they did



学生曾差人到贵处察访，并无其人，先生可略知风声么？”解元又唯唯。学士见他不明不白，只是胡答应，忍耐不住，只得又说道：“此人形容颇肖先生模样，左手亦有枝指，不知何故？”解元又唯唯。少顷，解元暂起身入内。

学士翻看桌上书籍，见书内有纸一幅，题诗八句，读之，即壁上之诗也。解元出来，学士执诗问道：“这八句诗乃华安所作，此字亦华安之笔，如何有在尊处？必有缘故，愿先生一言，以决学生之疑。”解元道：“容少停奉告。”学士心中愈闷道：“先生见教过了，学生还坐，不然即告辞矣！”解元道：“禀复不难，求老先生再用几杯薄酒。”学士又吃了数杯，解元巨觥奉劝。学士已半酣，道：“酒已过分，不能领矣！学生惓惓请教，止欲剖胸中之疑，并无他念。”解元道：“请用一箸粗饭。”饭后献茶，看看天晚，童子点烛到来。学士愈疑，只得起身告辞。解元道：“请老先生暂挪贵步，当决所疑！”命童子秉烛前引，解元陪学士随后共入后堂。

堂中灯烛辉煌，里面传呼：“新娘来！”只见两个丫鬟，伏侍



that. I sent investigators to your county, but they failed to locate this man. Have you, sir, heard anything about him?"

Tang again mumbled something unintelligible. His patience wearing thin at the man's evasiveness, the Academician continued, "That man bears a strong resemblance to you. He even has an extra thumb on his left hand, just as you do. I marvel at the coincidence."

Tang again gave a vague sound. Soon, he rose, excused himself for a short absence, and went to the inner quarters of the house. While he was away, the Academician flipped through the books on the desk. He came upon a scroll bearing an eight-line poem, read it, and found it to be the very same poem written on the wall of Hua An's room. When Tang Bohu returned, the Academician asked, holding the poem, "This eight-lined poem was written by Hua An, and in his own handwriting, too. How did it get here? There must be a reason behind this. Please tell me the truth and solve this mystery for me."

"Let me tell you everything in a while."

Feeling even more vexed, the Academician countered, "I'll stay if you will enlighten me. Otherwise, I must take my leave."

"The story can be easily told," said Tang. "Please have a few more cups of my watery wine, sir."

After the Academician did so, Tang Bohu plied him with more, using an oversize wine vessel. Half tipsy, the Academician said, "I've had more than enough. I shouldn't keep drinking. All I'm asking with such determination is simply that you shed light on this mystery that preys on my mind. Nothing more."

"Please stay just a little longer for a simple supper," pleaded Tang.

With supper over, tea was served. As evening began to set in, a page boy entered with lit candles. All the more disconcerted, the Academician felt obliged to rise and take his leave.

"Please don't go yet, sir. Your question will be duly answered." So saying, Tang had a page boy lead the way, bearing candles, while he and the Academician followed, until they entered the brightly illuminated back hall. As a shout announced the arrival of the



一位小娘子，轻移莲步而出，珠珞重遮，不露娇面。学士惶悚退避，解元一把扯住衣袖，道：“此小妾也，通家长者，合当拜见，不必避嫌。”丫鬟铺毡，小娘子向上便拜，学士还礼不迭。解元将学士抱住，不要他还礼。拜了四拜，学士只还得两个揖，甚不过意。拜罢，解元携小娘子近学士之旁，带笑问道：“老先生请认一认，方才说学生颇似华安，不识此女亦似秋香否？”学士熟视大笑，慌忙作揖，连称得罪！解元道：“还该是学生告罪！”二人再至书房。解元命重整杯盘，洗盏更酌。酒中学士复叩其详，解元将阆门舟中相遇始末细说一遍，各各抚掌大笑。学士道：“今日即不敢以记室相待，少不得行子婿之礼。”解元道：“若要甥舅相行，恐又费丈人妆奁耳。”二人复大笑。是夜，尽欢而别。

学士回到舟中，将袖中诗句置于桌上，反覆玩味：“首联道



bride, a young lady appeared, supported by two maids, her dainty feet moving gracefully, her lovely face covered with stringed beads hanging from her headdress.

Alarmed, the Academician tried to avoid the encounter, but Tang Bohu grabbed his sleeve and explained, "This is my wife. You need not try to remove yourself from this female presence because, being a venerable elder from the bride's family, you, sir, should by rights accept bows of greeting from her."

The maids having spread out a carpet, the young bride prostrated herself. Before the Academician could return the courtesy, eager as he was to do so, Tang Bohu held him fast and stopped him. The young lady prostrated four times. Feeling quite embarrassed, the Academician bowed slightly from the waist twice by way of a response. The greetings over, Tang led the young lady to the Academician and said with a smile, "Please take a good look, sir. You said that I bear a strong resemblance to Hua An. Perhaps you will find that this girl resembles Qiuxiang?"

The Academician looked closely at her and broke into hearty laughter. He hastened to bow and offer his apologies.

"No, I should be the one offering apologies," said Tang, whereupon the two men returned to the study. Tang Bohu ordered that tableware be laid out anew and the wine cups washed clean for another round of drinking. In the course of the drinking, the Academician inquired about the details, and Tang replied with an account of how he and Qiuxiang had first seen each other on their boats by Chang Gate. As both men roared with laughter, rubbing their hands, the Academician said, "I won't presume to salute you as an official, but at least, I should observe the decorum of a father to a son-in-law."

Tang replied, "If we are to formally celebrate our relationship as son-in-law and father-in-law, I'm afraid that I'll be putting you to the expense of a dowry!" Again, they erupted into laughter. That night, they did not part company until they had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

After returning to his boat, the Academician took out the scroll of poem from his sleeve and laid it on the desk. Pondering the mean-



‘拟向华阳洞里游’，是说有茅山进香之行了，‘行踪端为可人留’，分明为中途遇了秋香，担阁住了。第二联‘愿随红拂同高蹈，敢向朱家惜下流’，他屈身投靠，便有相挈而逃之意。第三联‘好事已成谁索笑？屈身今去尚含羞’。这两句明白。末联‘主人若问真名姓，只在康宣两字头’。康字与唐字头一般，宣字与寅字头无二，是影着唐寅二字，我自不能推详耳。他此举虽似情痴，然封还衣饰，一无所取，乃礼义之人，不枉名士风流也。”学士回家，将这段新闻向夫人说了，夫人亦骇然。于是厚具装奁，约值千金，差当家老姆姆押送唐解元家。从此两家遂为亲戚，往来不绝。至今吴中把此事传作风流话柄。

有唐解元《焚香默坐歌》，自述一生心事，最做得好！歌曰：

焚香嘿坐自省己，口里喃喃想心里。
心中有甚害人谋？口中有甚欺心语？
为人能把口应心，孝弟忠信从此始。
其余小德或出入，焉能磨涅吾行止。
头插花枝手把杯，听罢歌童看舞会。



ing of the lines, he said to himself, “As for the first couplet, the first line ‘I was on my way to Huayang Cave’ refers to the intended trip to offer incense at Mount Mao. ‘When the beauty stopped me right in my tracks’ says that the journey was abandoned for the sake of Qiuxiang, whom he encountered halfway. The second couplet, ‘Hoping for a quiet life with Hongfo / Humbly I entered the service of Zhu Jia’ means that he had plans to elope from the time he first entered my service, stooping below his station in life. The third couplet ‘Whoever would scoff at this happy event? / Sheepishly I take my leave, quite ashamed’ is clear enough in meaning. As for the last couplet, ‘Should the master wish to know who I am, / In Kang Xuan is found my name,’ the character *kang* has the same upper radical as the character *tang*, and the character *xuan* has the same upper radical as the character *yin*. I would never have been able to take that hint and figure out the name Tang Yin. He may have acted like a love-crazed man, but the fact that he left the clothes and jewelry behind shows that he fully deserves his fame as a romantically inclined man of worth with a profound sense of decency and decorum.”

Upon returning home, he related the story to his wife, to her utter astonishment. They prepared a generous dowry worth thousands of taels of silver and had the old housekeeper escort the gift-bearing procession to Tang’s residence. Henceforth, being related through marriage, the two families kept up an endless stream of mutual visits. To this day, this romantic story is still circulating in the Wu region. There is a most well-written song by Tang Bohu stating his philosophy of life. It says:

*Reflecting on my life while sitting by the incense,
I murmur to myself, voicing my thoughts.
Do I wish to do harm to others?
Have I evil thoughts that find their way to my mouth?
To speak from the heart is the beginning
Of filial piety, loyalty, and faith.
Lapses in virtues of a lesser nature
Do little harm to overall conduct.
A flower stem on my head, a wine cup in hand,
I listen to songs and watch the dances.*



食色性也古人言，今人乃以为之耻。
及至心中与口中，多少欺人没天理。
阴为不善阳掩之，则何益矣徒劳耳。
请坐且听吾语汝，凡人有生必有死。
死见阎君面不惭，才是堂堂好男子。

*Eating and sex are human nature, the ancients said,
But people of today regard them as a disgrace.
With a gap between the heart and the mouth,
Divine will is flouted all too often.
To cover up vice with moralist talks
Is but fruitless labor to no avail.
Sit still, and take this advice from me:
All human beings go through birth and death.
He who faces the King of Hell with a clear conscience
Is truly a man of dignity and honor.*

¹ Tang Yin was a great painter and calligrapher of the Ming dynasty.

² These were officials responsible for scrutinizing and criticizing policy decisions of the imperial court.

³ Mount Mao is in southwest Jiangsu Province.

⁴ Hong Fo, a maidservant, eloped with Li Jing (571–649), a guest in the home of her employer, and later helped Li Jing attain exalted status in the newly founded Tang dynasty.

Zhuo Wenjun, daughter of an immensely rich family of the Han dynasty, eloped with Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.E.), who was then a poverty-stricken young man but later rose to great prominence. For more about the elopement of Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru, see the prologue story of story 6.

⁵ The Huayang Cave in present-day Jiangsu Province is believed to be inhabited by Daoist immortals.

⁶ On Hongfo, see note 4 above.

⁷ Zhu Jia, a knight-errant in the Lu region at the beginning of the Han dynasty, sheltered Ji Bu when the new emperor Liu Bang put a price on Ji Bu's head. Only by working as a slave in Zhu Jia's household was Ji Bu, a former general under Xiangyu (Liu Bang's rival for the throne), able to avoid capture.

⁸ Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), sobriquet Resident of Hengshan, was a famous calligrapher and painter during the Ming dynasty.

⁹ Zhu Yunming (1460–1526), courtesy name Xizhe and sobriquet Zhishan, was a famous calligrapher during the Ming dynasty.



第二十七卷

假神仙大闹华光庙

欲学为仙说与贤，长生不老是虚传。
少贪色欲身康健，心不瞞人便是仙。

话说故宋时杭州普济桥有个宝山院，乃嘉泰中所建，又名华光庙，以奉五显之神。那五显？

- 一显，聪昭圣孚仁福善王；
- 二显，明昭圣孚义福顺王；
- 三显，正昭圣孚智福应王；
- 四显，直昭圣孚爱福惠王；
- 五显，德昭圣孚信福庆王。

此五显，乃是五行之佐，最有灵应。或言五显即五通，此谬言也。绍兴初年，丞相郑清之重修，添造楼房精舍，极其华整。遭元时兵火，道侣流散，房垣倒塌，左右民居，亦皆凋落。至正初年，道士募缘修理，香火重兴，不在话下。

单说本郡秀才魏宇，所居于庙相近，同表兄服道勤读书于庙旁之小楼。魏生年方一十七岁，丰姿俊雅，性复温柔，言语恂恂，



Story 27

Fake Immortals Throw Guanghua Temple into an Uproar

*Those trying to attain immortality,
Take first a lesson in morality;
Eternal life is nothing but a myth;
An immortal is he who has
Good health, few worldly desires,
And a pure heart open and frank.*

As the story goes, in the Song dynasty, there stood a Baoshan Temple by Puji Bridge in Hangzhou. Built in the Jiatai reign period [1201–05], it was also called Huaguang Temple and was dedicated to the Five Gods of Wuxian.¹ Which five?

First, the god of judiciousness, benevolence, and kindness;

Second, the god of wisdom, righteousness, and harmony;

Third, the god of integrity, sapience, and responsiveness;

Fourth, the god of probity, love, and largesse;

Fifth, the god of morality, trust, and joy.

These five deities corresponding to the five phases² are most responsive to prayers. Some say they are none other than the Five Gods of Wutong, but that is not true.³

In the first year of the Shaoding reign period [1228–34], Prime Minister Zheng Qingzhi had the temple renovated and expanded until it looked absolutely magnificent. During the wars of the Yuan dynasty, the priests fled and went their separate ways, the walls of the temple crumbled, and the houses of the local inhabitants around the temple also fell into decay. In the first years of the Zhizheng reign period [1341–68], priests solicited donations for repairs of the temple and worship services resumed, but of this, no more need be said.

Let us now concentrate our attention on a scholar named Wei Yu, who pursued his studies with his cousin Fu Daoqin in a small two-storied house in the vicinity of the temple. Mr. Wei was seventeen years of age and had the graceful deportment, gentle manners, and

宛如处子。每赴文会，同辈辄调戏之，呼为魏娘子。魏生羞脸发赤。自此不会宾客，只在楼上温习学业，惟服生朝夕相见。一日，服生因母病回家侍疾，魏生独居楼中读书。约至二鼓，忽闻有人叩门，生疑表兄之来也。开而视之，见一先生，黄袍蓝袖，丝拂纶巾，丰仪美髯，香风袭袭，有出世凌云之表。背后跟着个小道童，也生得清秀，捧着个朱红盒子。先生自说：“吾乃纯阳吕洞宾，遨游四海，偶尔经过此地。空中闻子书声清亮，殷勤嗜学，必取科甲，且有神仙之分。[眉批]人情好谀，故以谀人。吾与汝宿世有缘，合当度汝。知汝独居，特特奉访！”魏生听说，又惊又喜，连忙下拜，请纯阳南面坐定，自己侧坐相陪。洞宾呼道童，拿过盒子，摆在桌上，都是鲜异果品，和那山珍海错，馨香扑鼻。所用紫金杯、白玉壶，其壶不满三寸，出酒不竭，其酒色如琥珀，味若醍醐。洞宾道：“此仙肴仙酒，惟吾仙家受用。以子有缘，





soft speech of a virgin. At every literary gathering that he attended, his peers would make fun of him, calling him "Lady Wei." His cheeks burning with the humiliation, he decided never to be seen at social functions again. He shut himself up on the second floor of the house and devoted himself to his studies, with Mr. Fu his only companion day in and day out.

One day, Mr. Fu went home to take care of his sick mother, leaving Mr. Wei all alone at his studies. At about the second watch of the night, a knock was heard at the door. Thinking it was his cousin, he opened the door and saw a gentleman wearing a silk hat and a yellow robe with blue sleeves and carrying a horse-tail whisk in his hand. With a graceful bearing and elegant beard flowing in a soft, fragrant breeze, he had the air of an immortal flying over the clouds. Behind him stood a young, refined-looking Daoist acolyte holding a vermilion box in his hands.

The gentleman spoke up. "I am Lü Dongbin,⁴ also known as Chunyang [Pure Yang], and I am passing this place in my wanderings across the four seas. From up in the air, I heard your voice ringing clear when you were reading your text aloud. With your diligence, you will surely succeed in the civil service examinations. Moreover, you are fated to be an immortal. (*Resorting to flattery because mortal beings have a weakness for it.*) As I have a predestined bond with you, it is my duty to deliver you from this world. That's why I pay you this visit, knowing you now live by yourself."

These words came as such a pleasant surprise to Wei that he promptly sank to his knees and bowed. Then, after inviting the immortal to sit facing south in the seat of honor, he sat down to one side. Lü Dongbin had the acolyte bring over a box and lay its contents on the table. Soon, the table was covered with fresh exotic fruits and delicacies from the mountains and the seas, the aromas of which assailed the nostrils. There also stood gold wine cups and a white jade flask less than three inches tall from which flowed an unending stream of wine the color of amber and with the taste of the finest cream. Dongbin said, "This spread of food and wine is for the consumption of immortals. You are allowed to enjoy it because you have a predes-



故得同享。”魏生此时，恍恍惚惚，如已在十洲三岛之中矣！饮酒中间，洞宾道：“今夜与子奇遇，不可无诗。”魏生欲观仙笔，即将文房四宝列于几上。洞宾不假思索，信笔赋诗四首：

黄鹤楼前灵气生，蟠桃会上啜玄英。

剑横紫海秋光动，每夕乘云上玉京。其一

嵯峨栋宇接云烟，身在蓬壶境里眠。

一觉不知天地老，醒来又见几桑田。其二

一粒金丹羽化奇，就中玄妙少人知。

夜来忽听钧天乐，知是仙人跨鹤时。其三

剑气横空海月浮，遨游顷刻遍神州。

蟠桃历尽三千度，不计人间九百秋。其四

字势飞舞，魏生赞不绝口。洞宾问道：“子聪明过人，可随意作一诗，以观子仙缘之迟速也。”魏生亦赋二绝：

十二峰前琼树齐，此生何似蹶天梯。



tined bond with the world of the immortals.”

By this time, Wei was in a trance, feeling as if he were in a fairyland. In the course of the drinking, Dongbin said, “This remarkable encounter tonight is an occasion that calls for poems.” Wei was eager to see a poem by an immortal and laid out the four treasures of the scholar’s study on the table.⁵ Without pausing to reflect, Dongbin picked up the brush-pen and wrote four poems:

The first one said:

*The Yellow Crane Tower emits a divine aura;
At the Peach Feast, the immortals enjoy the nectar.
Their swords shining across the sea in the autumn sun,
They ride the clouds every dusk to the Lord’s abode.*

The second one said:

*Clouds and mist float around the tall towers;
I take a nap up in a fairyland.
The sky and the earth grow old as I sleep;
I wake up to a world beyond recognition.*

The third one said:

*One gold pill gives one immortality;
Few can ever fathom the mystery.
As night falls, the strains of celestial music
Mark the hour for immortals to ride the cranes.*

The fourth one said:

*The swords across the sky, the moon over the sea,
In an instant, I travel across the land.
The magic peaches ripen three thousand times,
While in the mortal world, nine hundred years go by.*

At the sight of the lively calligraphic flourishes, Wei was profuse in his praise.

Dongbin said, “With your outstanding talent, why don’t you improvise a poem? I’ll see how soon you’ll be fulfilling your destiny as an immortal.”

Wei composed two quatrains. The first one said:

*Over the jade trees tower the twelve peaks;
I spend this life climbing the ladder to the sky.*



消磨寰宇尘氛净，漫着霞裳礼玉枢。其一
天空月色两悠悠，绝胜飞吟亭上游。

夜静玉箫天宇碧，直随鹤驭到瀛洲。其二

洞宾览毕，目视魏生微笑道：“子有瀛洲之志，真仙种也！昔西汉大将军霍去病，祷于神君之庙，神君现形，愿为夫妇。去病大怒而去。后病笃，复遣人哀恳神君求救。神君曰：‘霍将军体弱，吾欲以太阴精气补之。霍将军不悟，认为淫欲，遂尔见绝。今日之病，不可救矣！’去病遂死。仙家度人之法，不拘一定，岂是凡人所知？惟有缘者信之不疑耳。[眉批]会说话。吾更赠子一诗。诗云：

相逢此夕在琼楼，酬酢灯前且自留。
玉液斟来晶影动，珠玑赋就峡云收。
漫将夙世人间了，且藉仙缘天上修。
从此岳阳消息近，白云天际自悠悠。

魏生读诗会意，亦答一绝句：

仙境清虚绝欲尘，凡心那杂道心真。



*In the clean air of the cosmos, free of dust,
 Draped in rosy clouds, to the Big Dipper I bow.*

The second one said:

*With the moon shining in the faraway sky,
 I find myself in Feiyin Pavilion.⁶
 In the moonlit quietness of the night,
 The crane takes me all the way to the fairyland.*

After reading the poems, Dongbin said, smiling at Wei, “So you have your heart set on fairyland. An immortal you are indeed meant to be. Back in the Western Han dynasty, General Huo Qubing [140–117 B. C.] was praying in a temple when the god of the temple appeared to him in the shape of a woman and asked to be his wife. Qubing was enraged and left in a huff. Later, he became critically ill and sent a follower to the temple to plead for help. The god said, ‘Since General Huo has such a feeble constitution, I meant to build up his health with the essence of the *yin* element in the universe, but the general, in his ignorance, rejected my offer, believing it to be motivated by lust. There’s no hope that he’ll recover from his illness now.’ Soon thereafter, the general died. So, the immortals have different means at their disposal for delivering mortal beings, means that are quite beyond mortal knowledge. Only those predestined to be immortals are free of doubt. (*What a clever tongue!*) I have another poem for you:”

*Meeting you tonight in this jade tower,
 The self-invited guest toasts you by the lamp.
 The flowing nectar glistens like crystal;
 The inspired poems travel to Mount Wu.⁷
 Bid farewell to this world of the mortals;
 Fulfill your destiny and rise to the sky.
 With that day approaching soon enough,
 You’ll roam, a free soul, among the white clouds.*

Wei read the poem, understood the message, and wrote a quatrain in response:

*The fairyland is free of earthly desires;
 The Way allows no worldly thoughts.*



后庭无树栽琼玉，空羨隋炀堤上人。

二人唱和之后，意益绸缪。洞宾命童子且去：“今夜吾当宿此。”又向魏生道：“子能与吾相聚十昼夜，当令子神完气足，日记万言！”魏生信以为然。酒酣，洞宾先寝，魏生和衣睡于洞宾之侧。洞宾道：“凡人肌肉相凑，则神气自能往来。若和衣各睡，吾不能有益于子也。”乃抱魏生于怀，为之解衣，并枕而卧。洞宾软款抚摩，渐至狎浪。魏生欲窃其仙气，隐忍不辞。至鸡鸣时，洞宾与魏生说：“仙机不可漏泄，乘此未明，与子暂别，夜当再会。”推窗一跃，已不知所在。魏生大惊，决为真仙。取夜来金玉之器看之，皆真物也，制度精巧可爱。枕席之间，馥香不散。魏生凝思不已。至夜，洞宾又来与生同寝。一连宿了十馀夜，情好愈密，彼此俱不忍舍。

一夕，洞宾与魏生饮酒，说道：“我们的私事，昨日何仙姑赴会回来知道了，大发恼怒，要奏上玉帝，你我都受罪责。我再三求告，方才息怒。他见我说你十分标致，要来看你。夜间相会



*The Rear Court should be bare of trees and flowers;⁸
 Envy not the lecherous Emperor Suiyang.⁹*

After this exchange, the two felt even more well disposed toward each other. To the acolyte, Dongbin said, "You may go. I'm staying here overnight." Turning to Wei, he said, "If you could meet with me for ten days and nights, I will surely give you such energy and agility of mind that you'll be able to memorize a ten-thousand-word essay every day." Wei believed him.

When they were quite tipsy with wine, Dongbin went to bed first. After Wei lay down by his side, fully clothed, Dongbin said, "It is only through physical contact that a mortal being receives divine energy. If you sleep fully clothed like this, I won't be of use to you at all." Thereupon, he held Wei in his arms, undid Wei's clothes, and made the young man share his pillow. He then started caressing Wei until he got quite carried away with his act of debauchery. In order to benefit from his divine energy, Wei put up with him.

At the first crowing of the roosters, Dongbin said to Wei, "You are not to divulge this celestial secret to anyone. I have to take my leave now, while it's still dark. Let's meet again tonight." So saying, he pushed open a window and was gone.

Mouth agape in astonishment, Wei was convinced that the visitor was a genuine immortal. He picked up the wine vessels and examined them and found them to be truly made of gold and jade, exquisitely carved and lovely in design. The fragrance from the pillow and the bed still lingered in the air, plunging Wei into dreamy thoughtfulness.

When evening set in, Dongbin appeared again to spend the night with Wei, and more than ten nights thereafter went by in like fashion. The two grew more and more fond of each other and came to hate the thought of parting.

One evening, in the midst of drinking, Dongbin said to Wei, "Yesterday, on her way back from an immortals' fair, He Xiangu learned about what's been happening between you and me.¹⁰ She's in a tearing rage and wants to report me to the Jade Emperor and have the two of us punished. It was only after my repeated pleas that her anger



时，你陪个小心，求服他，我自也在里面撺掇。倘得欢喜起来，从了也不见得。若得打做一家，这事永不露出来。得他太阴真气，亦能少助。”魏生听说，心中大喜。到日间，疾忙置办些美酒精饌果品，等候到晚。且喜这几日，服道勤不来，只魏生一个在楼上。魏生见更深人静了，焚起一炉好香，摆下酒果，又穿些华丽衣服，妆扮整齐，等待二仙。只见洞宾领着何仙姑径来楼上。看这仙姑，颜色柔媚，光艳射人，神采夺目。魏生一见，神魂飘荡，心意飞扬。那时身不由己，双膝跪下在仙姑面前。何仙姑看见魏生果然标致，心里真实欢喜，到假意做个恼怒的模样，说道：“你两个做得好事！扰乱清规，不守仙范，那里是出家读书人的道理！”虽然如此，嗔中有喜。魏生叩头讨饶，洞宾也陪着小心，求服仙姑。仙姑说道：“你二人既然知罪，且饶这一次！”说了，便要起身。魏生再三苦留，说道：“尘俗粗肴，聊表寸意。”洞宾又恳恳撺掇，说：“略饮数杯见意，不必固辞。若去了，便伤了仙家和气。”仙姑被留不过，只得勉强坐了，轮番把盏。洞宾又与仙姑说：“魏生高才能诗，今夕之乐，不可无咏！”仙姑说：“既然如



subsided. She was intrigued by my description of your good looks and wants to see you. So, when she does come one of these evenings, you must watch your every move and beg for mercy. I will, of course, also put in a good word for you along the way. If she takes a liking to you, she might even join in the fun. This will never leak out if we can get her on our side, and some divine *yin* vitality from her will also do you good.”

Wei's heart exulted. The next day, he busily prepared fine wine and exquisite refreshments and then waited for evening to fall.

Happily for him, Fu Daoqin continued to be absent day after day, leaving him alone on the second floor of the house. Having waited until the night was deep and all was quiet, Wei lit some incense of good quality, laid out the wine and refreshments, made himself up, and waited, dressed in all his finery, for the two immortals to appear.

Lo and behold! Dongbin came into view, leading into the house the female immortal He Xiangu, whose radiant beauty and elegance threw Wei into such raptures that he fell involuntarily to his knees at her feet. Pleased by Wei's good looks, which lived up to the descriptions she had been given, she feigned anger and snapped, “A fine thing the two of you did, violating the rules of the divine realm! This is hardly behavior of someone who's supposedly pursuing his studies and wants to join the Daoist order, too!” But those sharp words of rebuke were not spoken without a trace of delight. While Wei kowtowed, begging for forgiveness, Dongbin also pleaded for mercy, choosing his words carefully.

“Since both of you seem to be repentant,” said Xiangu, “I'll forgive you this time.” With that, she rose as if to go. Wei begged her to stay, saying, “I have prepared some coarse food of this mortal world for you as a small token of my respect.”

Dongbin also urged insistently, “Don't reject the offer of a few well-intended cups of wine. If you go, won't you, an immortal, be hurting human feelings?”

Unable to resist the pressure, Xiangu resignedly sat down.

While they were drinking, Dongbin said to Xiangu, “Mr. Wei



此，请师兄起句。”洞宾也不推辞。

每日蓬壶恋玉卮，暂同仙伴乐须斯。(洞宾)

一宵清兴因知己，几朵金莲映碧池。(仙姑)

物外幸逢环珮暖，人间亦许凤皇仪。(魏生)

殷勤莫为桃源误，此夕须调琴瑟丝。(洞宾)

仙姑览诗，大怒道：“你二人如何戏弄我？”魏生慌忙磕头谢罪。洞宾劝道：“天上人间，其情则一。洛妃解珮，神女行云，此皆吾仙家故事也。世上佳人才子，犹为难遇，况魏生原有仙缘，神仙聚会，彼此一家，何必分体别形，效尘俗兢兢之态乎？”说罢，仙姑低头不语，弄其裙带。洞宾道：“和议已成，魏字可拜谢仙姑俯就之恩也。”魏生连忙下拜。仙姑笑扶而起，入席再酌，尽欢而罢。是夜，三人共寝。魏生先近仙姑，次后洞宾举事，阳变阴阖，欢娱一夜。仙姑道：“我三人此会，真是奇缘。可于枕



writes good poems. We can't let this joyous occasion go by without a poem."

"All right," agreed Xiangü. "You are of a more senior rank. Why don't you begin with the first couplet?"

Dongbin did not bother with the polite pretense of declining.

*In the daily pleasure of the cup I wallow,
And make merry with fellow immortals. (Dongbin)
With close friends I spend a delightful night,
By the green pond with gold lotus flowers. (Xiangü)
Lucky the man who feels the warmth of the skirt;
A phoenix descends on the human world. (Wei)
Waste not time over the peach blossom creek;
This is the night for pleasure of the bed! (Dongbin)*

Upon reading the lines, Xiangü burst out indignantly, "How dare you two flirt with me?"

Wei promptly kowtowed in apology, while Dongbin reasoned with her in these words, "There is as much passion in heaven as on earth. Don't we immortals have stories about the goddess of the Luo River giving a lover her girdle pendant as a keepsake, and the Divine Maiden playing games of clouds and rain?¹¹ We rarely get to meet beautiful women and talented men in the mortal world. And this Mr. Wei is destined to be an immortal anyway, so he is actually one of us. But why draw such a line between us and them? Aren't you following the narrow-minded and opinionated ways of the mortal world?"

At these words, Xiangü lowered her head and quietly played with her skirt belt. Dongbin continued, "Now that an understanding has been reached, Wei Yu may bow his thanks to Xiangü for her condescension."

Wei promptly dropped to his knees and bowed. Affably, Xiangü raised him to his feet and the company of three sat down for more drinking. They did not leave the table until they had enjoyed themselves to the full. That night, the three of them slept together. Wei snuggled up to Xiangü first, and Dongbin's advances followed. With *yin* and *yang* intermingling, they made merry with one another the



上联诗一律。”仙姑首唱：

满目辉光满目烟，无情却被有情牵。(仙姑)

春来杨柳风前舞，雨后桃花浪里颠。(魏生)

须信仙缘应不爽，漫将好事了当年。(仙姑)

香销梦绕三千界，黄鹤栖迟一夜眠。(洞宾)

鸡鸣时，二仙起身欲别，魏生不舍，再三留恋，恳求今夜重会。仙姑含着羞说道：“你若谨慎，不向人言，我当源源而至。”自此以后，无夕不来。或时二仙同来，或时一仙自来。虽表兄服生，同寓书楼，一壁之隔，窗中来去，全不露迹。如此半载有馀。

魏生渐渐黄瘦，肌肤销铄，饮食日减。夜间偏觉健旺，无奈日里倦怠，只想就枕。服生见其如此模样，叩其染病之故，魏生坚不肯吐。服生只得对他父亲说知，魏公到楼上看了儿子，大惊，乃取镜子教儿自家照看。魏生自睹尪羸之状，亦觉骇然。魏公劝儿回家调理，儿子那里肯回，乃请医切脉，用药调理。是夜，二



whole night through.

Xiangu said, "A remarkable predestined bond has put us together. Let's make another poem, right here against the pillow." Xiangu took the lead in intoning the following poem:

*"Eyes dazzled by the light and the mist,
 To the passionate the reluctant yields."* (Xiangu)

*"The willow branches dance in the spring wind;
 Rain-washed peach blossoms bob up and down on the waves."* (Wei)

*"Doubt not your bond with the immortals,
 Fulfill your destiny with the joyful union."* (Xiangu)

*"Touring the universe in fragrant dreams,
 I mount the yellow crane, late after a night's sleep."*
 (Dongbin)

At the roosters' first crows, the two immortals rose to leave. Hating to see them go, Wei entreated them to stay a while longer and asked them to come again that evening. Xiangu said bashfully, "If you're cautious and not breathe a word of this to anyone, I'll come here often."

Henceforth, at least one of the two immortals came every evening. Sometimes they came together. Even though Wei's cousin Fu lived in the same house, he was totally unaware of the activities taking place on the other side of the partition wall, for the visitors used the window for their comings and goings.

About half a year went by in this fashion, and Wei gradually became emaciated and sallow, a shadow of his former self. His appetite declined, and he felt his spirits rise at night but sink in the daytime. Noticing his sleepiness, Mr. Fu asked what was ailing him, but Wei firmly refused to answer. Fu felt he had no choice but to inform Wei's father.

Mr. Wei Senior went for a visit and was flabbergasted. He took out a mirror so that his son could see himself. The young man was astounded to realize what a bag of bones he had been reduced to, yet he turned a deaf ear when his father advised him to return home and seek treatment. So Mr. Wei Senior engaged a physician to go to the



仙又来。魏生述容颜黄瘦，父亲要搬回之语。洞宾道：“凡人成仙，脱胎换骨，定然先将俗肌消尽，然后重换仙体，此非肉眼所知也。”魏生由此不疑，连药也不肯吃。

再过数日，看看一丝两气，魏公着了忙，自携铺盖，往楼上守着儿子同宿。到夜半，儿子向着床里说鬼话，魏公叫唤不醒，连隔房服道勤都起身来看。只见魏生口里说：“二位师父怕怎的！不要去！”伸出手来，一把扯住，却扯了父亲。魏公双眼流泪，叫：“我儿！你病势十死一生，尤自不肯实说！那二位师父是何人？想是邪魅。”魏生道：“是两个仙人来度我的，不是邪魅。”魏公见儿沉重，不管他肯不肯，顾了一乘小轿抬回家去将息。儿子道：“仙人与我紫金杯、白玉壶，在书柜里，与我检好。”开柜看时，那是紫金、白玉，都是黄泥、白泥捻就的。魏公道：“我儿，眼见得不是仙人是邪魅了！”魏生恰才心慌，只得将庙中初遇纯阳后遇仙姑始末叙了一遍。



young man's study, feel his pulses and diagnose the ailment, and prescribe medicine for a cure.

That very night, the two immortals appeared again. Wei recounted how his father wanted him to move back home after observing his haggard look, and Dongbin said, "For a mortal being like you to gain eternal life, you need to cast off your old physical form, which means that the flesh of your body must be completely worn away before you find yourself in an immortal's form. This change cannot be detected by the naked eye of a mortal being."

This was enough to convince Wei. He even refused to take the medicine. A few days later, there was not much breath left in him. In panic, Mr. Wei Senior brought his bedding to his son's study and kept him company overnight. At midnight, he noticed the young man talking deliriously, his face turned toward the other side of the bed. Mr. Wei Senior's efforts to wake him were to no avail. Even Fu Daoqin came in from the next room to take a look.

"What are you afraid of, my two venerable teachers?" exclaimed Wei. "Don't go!" So saying, he reached out for them, but his hands landed on none other than his father.

With tears flowing, Mr. Wei Senior cried, "My son! You're more dead than alive now, and still you hold back the truth! Who are the two venerable teachers? They must be evil demons."

"They're two immortals, here to deliver me. They're not evil demons."

Observing that his son was gravely ill, Mr. Wei Senior hired a small sedan-chair and, disregarding the young man's wishes, ordered that he be carried home for recuperation. The young man said, "They gave me some gold cups and a white jade flask. I put them in the bookcase. I want to take them with me." When the bookcase was opened, there for all to see were cups made of yellow clay and a flask made of white clay.

"My son, you should realize now that they are not immortals but evil demons!"

At this point, Wei Junior panicked and came up with a full account of how he had met Lü Dongbin in the temple and how Xiangu



魏公大惊，一面教妈妈收拾净房，伏侍儿子养病，一面出门访问个祛妖的法师。走不多步，恰好一个法师，手中拿着法环，摇将过来，朝着打个问讯。魏公连忙答礼，问道：“师父何来？”这法师说道：“弟子是湖广武当山张三丰老爷的徒弟，姓裴，法名守正，传得五雷法，普救人世。因见府上有妖气，故特动问。”魏公听得说话有些来历，慌忙请法师到里面客位里坐。茶毕，就把儿子的事，备细说与裴法师知道。裴道说：“令郎今在何处？”魏公就邀裴法师进到房里看魏生。裴道一见魏生，就与魏公说：“令郎却被两个雌雄妖精迷了。若再过旬日不治，这命休了！”魏公听说，慌忙下拜，说道：“万望师父慈悲，垂救犬子则个！永不敢忘！”裴法师说：“我今晚就与你拿这精怪！”魏公说：“如此甚好！或是要甚东西，吾师说来，小人好去治办。”裴守正说：“要一副熟三牲，和酒果、五雷纸马、香烛、朱砂、黄纸之类。”分付毕，又道：“暂且别去，晚上过来。”魏公送裴道出门，嘱咐道：“晚上准望光降。”裴法师道：“不必说。”照旧又来街上，



had appeared on the scene. Mr. Wei Senior was aghast. After asking his wife to get a clean room ready for their son and prepare to attend to the young man in his sick bed, he went out to find a Daoist priest who could perform an exorcism.

Before he had gone many steps, he ran into a Daoist priest coming straight toward him, shaking an announcement bell. The priest greeted him with folded hands, and Mr. Wei hastened to return the courtesy, saying, "Your Reverence, where, may I ask, are you going?"

"I am a disciple of Master Zhang Sanfeng of Mount Wudang in Huguang.¹² My surname is Pei, my Daoist name Shouzheng. My job is to save the people of the land with the Five Thunders method that I have learned. I greeted you, sir, because I noticed an evil aura hovering over your residence."

These words impressed Mr. Wei. He immediately invited the priest into the house and offered a seat reserved for an honored guest. After tea was served, Mr. Wei told Priest Pei what had happened to his son.

"Where is your son now?" asked Priest Pei, whereupon Mr. Wei conducted him to the young man's room. Upon first laying his eyes on the son, the priest said to Mr. Wei, "Your son has been bewitched by two evil spirits — one female, one male. Another ten days like this, and he'll be gone."

In terror, Mr. Wei got down on his knees and begged, "Your Reverence, please have compassion and save my unworthy son! I will never forget your kindness!"

"I will capture the evil spirits for you this very night."

"That would be wonderful! If you need anything, please let me know, and I'll get it for you."

"I need cooked meat of pig, sheep, and ox for sacrifice, wine, fruit, paper horses for the Five Thunder method, incense, candles, cinnabar, and some yellow paper." After giving these instructions, he added, "I'm taking leave of you now. I'll be back in the evening."

When he was seeing Priest Pei out the door, Mr. Wei said, "Be sure to come this evening."



摇着法环而去。

魏公慌忙买办合用物件，都齐备了，只等裴法师来捉鬼。到晚，裴法师来了，魏公接着法师，说：“东西俱已完备，不知要摆在那里？”裴道说：“就摆在令郎房里。”抬两张桌子进去，摆下三牲福物，烧起香来。裴道戴上法冠，穿领法衣，仗着剑，步起罡来，念动咒诀，把朱砂书起符来，正要烧这符去，只见这符都是水湿的，烧不着。裴法师骂道：“畜生，不得无礼！”把剑望空中斫将去。这口剑被妖精接着，拿去悬空钉在屋中间，动也动不得。裴道心里慌张，把平生的法术都使出来，一些也不灵。魏公看着裴道，说：“师父头上戴的道冠儿那里去了？”裴道说：“我不曾除下，如何便没了？又是作怪！”连忙使人去寻，只见门外有个尿桶，这道冠儿浮在尿桶面上。捞得起来时，烂臭，如何戴得在头上！裴道说：“这精怪妖气太盛，我的法术敌他不过。你自别作计较。”魏公见说，心里虽是烦恼，免不得把福物收了，请裴道来堂前散福，吃了酒饭。夜又深了，就留裴道在家安歇，彼此俱不欢喜。裴道也闷闷的，自去侧房里脱了衣服睡，才要合眼，只见三四个黄衣力士，找四五十斤一块石板，压在裴道身上。



“Of course,” promised Priest Pei, and he began walking down the street, shaking his announcement bell, as before.

Without a moment’s delay, Mr. Wei set about preparing the required items. Soon, everything was ready for Priest Pei’s exorcism. And the priest did return in the evening. Mr. Wei greeted him and said, “All the things you requested are ready, but where do you want to put them?”

“In your son’s room.”

Thereupon, two tables were carried in, the sacrificial meats and other items were laid out, and incense sticks were lit. Priest Pei put on his Daoist cap, donned his robe and, sword in hand, began moving around the room along the imagined outline of the Big Dipper, chanting incantations and drawing magic figures with cinnabar. He was about to burn a magic figure when he noticed that it was dripping with water and therefore not flammable.

“Vermin!” he thundered. “Don’t you try to get smart with me!” With that, he tossed his sword into the air, but the evil spirits caught the sword and fixed it there in the middle of the room. Nothing the priest did would budge it the least bit. Terrified, Priest Pei went through his entire repertoire of magic tricks, but none worked.

Eyeing the priest, Mr. Wei Senior asked, “Where’s Your Reverence’s cap?”

“I didn’t take it off. Why is it gone? How very strange!” Immediately he sent someone to look for it. It was found floating on top of the night soil bucket outside the door. Though the cap was retrieved, it had such a foul stench that it could not be worn. Priest Pei conceded, “These evil spirits are too powerful for me. I’m no match for them. You’ll have to find someone else.”

Despite his disappointment, Mr. Wei Senior felt obliged to have the priest distribute the sacrificial items to onlookers and to offer him some wine and food. As it was already well into the night, he put the priest up for the night. Both were in low spirits.

In a side room, a dejected Priest Pei took off his clothes, ready to go to sleep, but when he was about to close his eyes, he saw three or four muscular men clad in yellow lowering onto him a stone



口里说：“谢贼道的好法！”裴道压得动身不得，气也透不转，慌了，只得叫道：“有鬼，救人！救人！”原来魏公家里人正收拾未了，还不曾睡，听得裴道叫响，魏公与家人拿着灯火，走进房来。看裴道时，见裴道被块青石板压在身上，动不得。两三个人慌忙扛去这块石板，救起裴道来。将姜汤灌了一回，东方已明，裴道也醒了。裴道梳洗已毕，又吃些早粥，辞了魏公自去，不在话下。

魏公见这模样，夫妻两个，泪不曾干，也没奈何。次日，表兄服道勤来看魏生，魏公与服生备说夜来裴道着鬼之事，“怎生是好？”服生说道：“本庙华光菩萨最灵感，原在庙里被精了，我们备些福物，做道疏文烧了，神道正必胜邪，或可救得。”服生与同会李林等说了，这些会友，个个爱惜魏生，争出分子，备办福物，香烛、纸马、酒果，摆列在神道面前，与魏公拜献，就把疏文宣读：

惟神正气摄乎山川，善恶不爽；威灵布于寰宇，祸福无私。今魏宇者，读书本庙，祸被物精。男女不分，夤夜欢娱



slab weighing forty to fifty catties. They were saying, "This is to thank you for the nice job you did, you scoundrel of a priest!"

Choking and unable to move at all under the weight, Priest Pei cried out in consternation, "There are evil spirits around! Help! Help!"

It so happened that Mr. Wei Senior and some household staff were still at work, putting the house back in order. They heard the priest crying for help and went to his room, carrying lamps and candles in their hands. Finding him motionless under a stone slab, two or three men of the group rushed forward, removed the stone, and helped him up. They then fed him warm ginger soup. When it grew light in the east, Priest Pei woke up. After washing and combing his hair, he ate some porridge for breakfast, took leave of Mr. Wei, and went his way. But of him, no more. Thus left to their own devices, Mr. Wei and his wife could do no more than shed tears, and indeed, their cheeks were never dry even for a moment.

The next day, Cousin Fu Daoqin came to visit Wei Junior. Mr. Wei Senior told him about Priest Pei being defeated by demon spirits the night before. "What's to be done?" asked Mr. Wei Junior.

Fu answered, "The Huaguang Buddha of this very temple is most responsive to prayers. Since the evil spirits did their work here in this temple, let's prepare some sacrificial items, write up a prayer sheet, and burn it. I'm sure the gods will prevail over the demons. Your son may yet have a chance."

Fu told his friends Li Lin and others about the matter. Since all were well disposed toward Wei, they vied with one another in offering money and preparing sacrificial items, incense, candles, paper horses, wine, and fruit and laid them out on the altar. Together with Mr. Wei Senior, they made obeisances to the deity. Mr. Wei Senior then read aloud the prayer:

"Your divine righteous spirit permeates the mountains and rivers, rewarding the good and punishing the evil with never an error in judgment; your might extends across the universe, dispensing woe and weal with unfailing fairness. Wei Yu, who studies in this temple, has unfortunately been seduced by evil



于一席；阴阳无间，晨昏耽乐于两情。苟且相交，不顾逾墙之戒；无媒而合，自同钻穴之污。先假纯阳，比顽不已；后托何氏，淫乐无休。致使魏生形神摇乱，全无清爽之期；心志飞扬，已失永长之道。或月怪，或花妖，殛之以灭其迹；或山精，或木魅，祛之使屏其形。阳伸阴屈，物泰民安，万众皆钦，惟神是祷！李林等拜疏。

疏文念毕，烧化了纸，就在庙里散福。众人因论吕洞宾、何仙姑之事。李林道：“忠清巷新建一座纯阳庵，我们明早同去拈香，通陈此事。倘然吕仙有灵，必然震怒。”众人齐声道好。次日，同会十人，不约而齐都到纯阳祖师面前，拈香拜祷。转来回覆了魏公。从此夜为始，魏生渐觉清爽，但元神不能骤复，魏公心下已有三分欢喜。

过了数日，自备三牲祭礼，往华光庙，一则赛愿，二则保福。众友闻知，都来陪他拜神，礼毕，化纸，只见魏公双眸紧闭，大踏步向供桌上坐了，端然不动，叫道：“魏则优，你儿子的性命，亏我救了。我乃五显灵官是也！”众人知华光菩萨附体，都来参



spirits. Male and female intermingling, they made merry in the same bed night after night; yin and yang intermixing, they give themselves up to the pleasures of the flesh day after day. To indulge in fornication, they lawlessly sneak over walls. In their illicit union, they shamelessly commit debauchery. The first one, in his lasciviousness, pretends to be Lü Dongbin. The second one, in her lechery, presents herself as He Xiangtu. As a consequence, Mr. Wei Junior grows haggard in appearance and confused of mind, with never a moment of soberness. His will has dissolved, his ardor for life is gone. Whether they are demons of the moon or the flowers, please destroy them once and for all. Whether they are the spirits of mountain beasts or water monsters, please exterminate them so that they never appear again. We, Li Lin and others, pray that yang and yin be restored to their proper standing, that the land prosper, and that the populace thrive.”

With the prayer read and the paper burned, the service came to an end. In the ensuing discussion about the doings of Lü Dongbin and He Xiangtu, Li Lin said, “In Zhongqing Lane, there’s a newly built temple dedicated to the real Lü Dongbin. Let’s go there together tomorrow morning to offer incense and report the matter. If the real Lü Dongbin hears us from the divine realm, he will surely be enraged.” The suggestion won general approval.

On the morrow, the ten men all gathered in front of Patriarch Lü Dongbin’s image. With incense burning, they made their obeisances and said their prayers. Upon returning, they told Mr. Wei Senior about it. That very night, Wei Junior began to feel better, much to Mr. Wei Senior’s joy, although his strength was yet to be regained.

A few days later, Mr. Wei Senior went to Huaguang Temple, bringing along sacrificial items partly for votive offerings and partly to pray for blessings. Having heard of his intentions, his friends joined him on the trip. After the prayers were said and the papers burned, Mr. Wei Senior strode up to the altar, his eyes tightly closed. He sat down firmly and solemnly by the altar and exclaimed, “Wei Zeyou, I, God of Wuxian, saved your son’s life.”



拜，叩问：“魏宇所患何等妖精？神力如何救拔？病体几时方能全妥？”魏公口里又说道：“这二妖，乃是多年的龟精，一雌一雄，惯迷惑少年男女。吾神访得真了，先差部下去拿他。二妖神通广大，反为所败。吾神亲往收捕，他兀自假冒吕洞宾、何仙姑名色，抗拒不服。大战百合，不分胜败。恰好洞宾、仙姑亦知此情，奏闻玉帝，命神将、天兵下界。真仙既到，伪者自不能敌，二妖逃走，去乌江孟子河里去躲，吾神将火轮去烧得出来。又与交战，被洞宾先生飞剑斩了雄的龟精，雌的直驱在北海水阴中受苦，永不赦出。吾神与洞宾、仙姑奏覆上帝，上帝要并治汝子迷惑之罪。吾神奏道：‘他是年幼书生，一时被惑，父母朋友，俱悔过求忏。况此生后有功名，可以恕之。’上帝方准免罚。你看我的袍袖，都战裂了。那雄龟精的腹壳，被吾神劈来，埋于后园碧桃树下。你若要儿子速愈，可取此壳煎膏，用酒服之，便愈也。”



Realizing that Bodhisattva Huaguang was speaking through Wei Zeyou, all those present stepped forward to pay homage. They asked, "Exactly what demons were molesting Wei Yu? How are you, God of Wuxian, going to save him? And when will he recover fully from his illness?"

The following speech was heard from Mr. Wei Senior's lips: "Those two demons are age-old turtle spirits, one male and the other female. After establishing the fact that they are addicted to victimizing young boys and girls, I sent one of my subordinates to capture them, but the two demons possess such great magical powers that they outmaneuvered my subordinate. So I went myself to get them. Still claiming that they were Lü Dongbin and He Xiangu, they refused to surrender and put up resistance. After a hundred rounds of battle without a winner, the real Lü Dongbin and He Xiangu, who happened to have learned about the matter, reported on it to the Jade Emperor, who then dispatched celestial warriors to earth. In the presence of the real immortals, the impostors naturally found themselves overpowered. They fled to the Mengzi Tributary of the Black River. Using my fiery wheels, I set their hiding place on fire and forced them out for more fighting. The honorable Lü Dongbin tossed his sword into the air and finished off the male turtle. The female one was driven under the ice of the North Sea to suffer in eternity, with no possibility of redemption.

"When Lü Dongbin, He Xiangu and I reported back to the Lord on High, he ordered us to punish your son for his gullibility, but I said, 'He's just a young student under their spell, and his parents and friends are all praying in repentance on his behalf. Moreover, this young man is destined for success in the civil service examinations. Please forgive him.' It was then that the Lord on High agreed not to punish him.

"My sleeve got torn in battle. Look! I cut off the part of the male turtle's shell that covered his belly and buried it under the peach tree in the backyard. If you want your son to recover quickly, you may cook the shell in water until the soup thickens into a jelly and make your son take it with wine. He'll get well."



说罢，魏公跌倒在地下。众人扶起，唤醒，问他时，魏公并不晓得菩萨附体一事。众人向魏公说这备细，魏公惊异，就神帐中看神道袍袖，果然裂开。往后园碧桃树下，掘起浮土，见一龟板，约有三尺之长，犹带血肉。魏公取归，煎膏入酒，与魏生吃。一日三服，比及膏完，病已全愈。于是父子往华光庙祭赛，与神道换袍，又往纯阳庵烧香。后魏宇果中科甲。有诗为证：

真妄由来本自心，神仙岂肯蹈邪淫！
人心不被邪淫惑，眼底蓬莱便可寻。



That said, Mr. Wei Senior collapsed onto the floor. When he was raised to his feet and roused, he was unable to answer any questions about the bodhisattva's possession of his body. Shocked upon hearing what had happened, Mr. Wei Senior lifted the curtain and saw that, sure enough, there was a tear in the sleeve of the god's image.

When the surface soil was dug up from under the peach tree in the backyard, there, for all to see, lay a piece of turtle-shell. About three feet in length, it still had some blood and flesh on it. Mr. Wei Senior retrieved it, cooked it in water, and fed his son the jelly three times a day along with some wine. By the time the jelly was gone, the young man had fully regained his health.

Father and son went to Huaguang Temple, where they made sacrificial offerings and donned the god's stature in a new robe. They then went to the Temple of Lü Dongbin to offer incense. Later, Wei Yu did indeed win honor in the imperial civil service examinations. There is a poem in testimony:

*The real and the fake, the difference lies in the heart;
 How would immortals ever stoop to vice?
 Humans who withstand evil temptations
 Find the divine realm right before their eyes.*

¹ Feng Menglong may have made a mistake here. According to *Xihu youlan zhi* (Travel notes about the West Lake), the temple dedicated to the Five Gods of Wuxian was built on the old site of the temple dedicated to Bodhisattva Huaguang. But toward the end of this story, the Five Gods of Wuxian merge into one single god, the God of Wuxian, who, in turn, becomes Bodhisattva Huaguang.

² The five phases (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth) represent a theory by which ancient Chinese philosophers explained the origin of the world.

³ The Five Gods of Wutong are five brothers and are believed to be evil spirits according to folk mythology in areas south of the lower reaches of the Yangzi River.

⁴ Lü Dongbin, of a scholarly bent, is one of the Eight Immortals in Daoist mythology.

⁵ The four treasures of the scholar's study are brush-pen, ink stick, ink slab, and rice paper.

⁶ It was in Feiyin Pavilion in Yueyang, Hunan, that Lü Dongbin was inducted as an immortal by Han Zhongli, another immortal in Daoist mythology.

⁷ "Mount Wu" here is a reference to the goddess of Mount Wu, the mythical figure that gave rise to the expression "clouds and rain," a metaphor for sexual encounters.

⁸ This is a reference to Chen Shubao (553-604), king of Chen during the Southern dynasties, who was known for his debauchery and his erotic songs such as "Jade Trees and Flowers



in the Rear Court.”

⁹ Yang Guang (569–618), Emperor Suiyang in the Sui dynasty, was one of the most notorious despots in Chinese history.

¹⁰ He Xiang is the only female among the Eight Immortals in Daoist mythology.

¹¹ The goddess of the Luo River is said to have made love with Cao Zhi (On Cao Zhi, see note 5 of story 22) and then given him her girdle pendant as a keepsake. “Clouds and rain” is a metaphor for sexual encounters.

¹² Zhang Sanfeng was a famous Daoist priest of the Ming dynasty.





第二十八卷

白娘子永镇雷峰塔

山外青山楼外楼，西湖歌舞几时休？
暖风薰得游人醉，直把杭州作汴州。

话说西湖景致，山水鲜明。晋朝咸和年间，山水大发，汹涌流入西门。忽然水内有牛一头见浑身金色。后水退，其牛随行至北山，不知去向。哄动杭州市上之人，皆以为显化。所以建立一寺，名曰金牛寺。西门，即今之涌金门，立一座庙，号金华将军。当时有一番僧，法名浑寿罗，到此武林郡云游，玩其山景，道：“灵鹫山前小峰一座忽然不见，原来飞到此处。”当时人皆不信。僧言：“我记得灵鹫山前峰岭，唤做灵鹫岭，这山洞里有个白猿，看我呼出为验。”果然呼出白猿来。山前有一亭，今唤做冷泉亭。又有一座孤山，生在西湖中。先曾有林和靖先生在此山隐居，使人搬挑泥石，砌成一条走路，东接断桥，西接栖霞岭，因此唤作孤山路。又唐时有刺史白乐天，筑一条路，南至翠屏山，北至栖



Story 28

Madam White Is Kept Forever under Thunder Peak Tower

*Hill beyond green hill, tower beyond tower;
When will songs and dances by West Lake ever cease?
Enchanted by the warm breezes,
The sightseers take Hangzhou for Bianzhou.¹*

Our story takes place by beautiful West Lake amid green hills and clear waters. In the Xianhe reign period [326–34] during the Jin dynasty, when a raging mountain flood swept past West Gate, an ox was suddenly seen in the water, glittering all over with the color of gold. The ox then followed the receding flood all the way to North Hill and was gone none knew whither. The event caused quite a stir throughout the city of Hangzhou, for the residents believed that the ox was an apparition of some deity. Thus, a temple was built and named Jinniu [Golden Ox] Temple. At West Gate, now called Yongjin [Golden Flood] Gate, a temple dedicated to General Jinhua [Golden Splendor] still stands.

At the time, a foreign monk with the Buddhist name Hunshouluo commented when viewing the hills of Wulin County on one of his wandering journeys: “A little peak in front of Spirit Vulture Hill [Grdrakuta] has suddenly disappeared. So, here’s where it has flown to.” Reacting to the disbelief these words generated among his audience, he continued, “As far as I remember, that little peak is called Spirit Vulture Peak. It has a cave in which lives a white ape. Let me try to call the ape out by way of proof.” And indeed, a white ape emerged in response to his calls.

At the foot of the hill was a pavilion, now called Cold Fountain Pavilion. In the middle of West Lake stands a solitary hill. When the poet Lin Hejing² was living as a hermit on that hill, he had stones and earth carried over and a walkway built between Broken Bridge to the east and Sunset Peak to the west. The walkway thus came to be called Solitary Hill Road. During the Tang dynasty, Prefect Bai Juyi³ also had a causeway built, reaching from Green Screen Hills to the



霞岭，唤做白公堤，不时被山水冲倒，不只一番，用官钱修理。后宋时苏东坡来做太守，因见有这两条路被水冲坏，就买木石，起人夫筑得坚固。六桥上朱红栏杆，堤上栽种桃柳，到春景融和，端的十分好景，堪描入画，后人因此只唤做苏公堤。又孤山路畔，起造两条石桥，分开水势，东边唤做断桥，西边唤做西宁桥。真乃：

隐隐山藏三百寺，依稀云锁二高峰。

说话的，只说西湖美景，仙人古迹。俺今日且说一个俊俏后生，只因游玩西湖，遇着两个妇人，直惹得几处州城，闹动了花街柳巷。有分教才人把笔，编成一本风流话本。单说那子弟，姓甚名谁？遇着甚般样的妇人？惹出甚般样事？有诗为证：

清明时节雨纷纷，路上行人欲断魂。

借问酒家何处有，牧童遥指杏花村。

话说宋高宗南渡，绍兴年间，杭州临安府过军桥黑珠巷内，有一个宦家，姓李名仁。见做南廊阁子库募事官，又与邵太尉管钱粮。家中妻子有一个兄弟许宣，排行小乙。他爹曾开生药店，自幼父母双亡，却在表叔李将仕家生药铺做主管，年方二十二岁。



south and Sunset Peak to the north, and it came to be called the Bai Causeway. The two roads were often damaged by mountain floods, and money had to be withdrawn from government coffers each time to pay for repairs. Then, during the Song dynasty, Su Dongpo,⁴ who was prefect of Hangzhou, bought timber and stones, hired laborers, and had the two water-damaged roads repaired and reinforced. Railings on the six bridges were painted vermilion, and peach and willow trees were planted all along the causeway. In the balmy days of spring, the scenery is most picturesque. Later, it came to be known as the Su Causeway. Two stone bridges were built by Solitary Hill Road to part the flow of the water. The one to the east is called Broken Bridge and the one to the west Xiling Bridge. Truly,

*Three hundred temples half hidden in the hills;
 Two tall peaks locked in faint, fluffy clouds.*

But, storyteller, you may well object, why talk only about the scenery of West Lake, men of immortal fame, and sites of historic interest? Well, let me now launch into the story proper and tell of a dashing young man who, because of his encounter with two women while touring West Lake, caused quite a sensation throughout the romance-filled streets of the region's cities and towns, providing material for a love story from the writer's pen. Now what was the young man's name? What manner of women did he encounter? What did he do to cause a sensation? There is a poem in testimony:

*In the dismal rain of the Qingming season,⁵
 The wayfarer on the road is stricken with grief.
 "Where, pray, might I find a wineshop?"
 The herdboy points to Apricot Village afar.*

The story goes that in the Shaoxing reign period [1132-62], after Emperor Gaozong of Song moved to the south, there lived, in Black Pearl Lane by the Reward the Troops Bridge in Lin'an Prefecture, Hangzhou, a certain Li Ren. He served as a petty official in the treasury of the Southern Song court while doubling as bursar for a Marshal Shao. His wife had a younger brother Xu Xuan, who was the oldest son of the family. Xu's father used to own an herbal medicine store, but both parents had died when Xu Xuan was still a



那生药店开在官巷口。忽一日，许宣在铺内做买卖，只见一个和尚来到门首，打个问讯，道：“贫僧是保叔塔寺内僧，前日已送馒头并卷子在宅上。今清明节近，追修祖宗，望小乙官到寺烧香，勿误。”许宣道：“小子准来。”和尚相别去了。许宣至晚归姐夫家去。原来许宣无有老小，只在姐姐家住。当晚与姐姐说：“今日保叔塔和尚来请烧卷子，明日要荐祖宗，走一遭了来。”次日早起买了纸马、蜡烛、经幡、钱垛一应等项，吃了饭，换了新鞋袜、衣服，把卷子、钱马使条袱子包了，径到官巷口李将仕家来。李将仕见了，问许宣，何处去？许宣道：“我今日要去保叔塔烧卷子，追荐祖宗，乞叔叔容暇一日。”李将仕道：“你去便回。”

许宣离了铺中，入寿安坊，花市街，过井亭桥，往清河街后钱塘门，行石函桥，过放生碑，径到保叔塔寺。寻见送馒头的和尚，忏悔过疏头，烧了卷子，到佛殿上看众僧念经。吃斋罢，别



boy. Now twenty-two years old, Xu Xuan worked as an assistant in an herb store owned by a distant uncle, Squire Li. The store was situated at the corner of Officials Street.

One day, Xu Xuān was attending to his business in the store when a monk appeared at the door and said after a greeting, "This poor monk is from Baoshu Pagoda Monastery. I sent some steamed buns and twisted rolls to your house the other day. Now that the Clear and Bright Festival is drawing near, I hope that you, Master Xiaoyi [Oldest Son], will come to our monastery to offer incense in memory of your ancestors. Please do remember to come."

"I'll surely be there," promised Xu Xuan. The monk took his leave.

In the evening, Xu Xuan returned to his brother-in-law's house. Being a bachelor, he lived with his older sister's family. That evening, he told his sister, "A monk from Baoshu Monastery came today and asked me to go and burn sacrificial straw baskets.⁶ So, I'll make the trip tomorrow to honor our ancestors."

He rose bright and early the next morning and bought some paper horses, candles, sutra streamers, and strings of paper coins. Afterwards he ate breakfast, changed into new clothes, socks, and shoes, wrapped the baskets and the offerings in a piece of cloth, and went to Squire Li's house on Officials Street. When Squire Li asked where he was off to, Xu Xuan replied, "I'm going to Baoshu Pagoda to offer incense in memory of my ancestors. Please let me take the day off, Uncle."

"All right, but come back as soon as possible."

Xu Xuan left the store. He took Peaceful Longevity Lane and Flower Market Street, crossed Well Pavilion Bridge, went through Qiantang Gate behind Clear River Street, crossed Stone Box Bridge, and passed the Monument to the Release of Captured Living Creatures.

Once he arrived at the monastery, he sought out the monk who had brought him steamed buns and made his confession. He then burned the baskets containing the paper offerings and went up to the main hall to watch the monks recite the scriptures. After a vegetarian



了和尚，离寺迤邐闲走，过西宁桥、孤山路、四圣观，来看林和靖坟，到六一泉闲走。不期云生西北，雾锁东南，落下微微细雨，渐大起来。正是清明时节，少不得天公应时，催花雨下，那阵雨下得绵绵不绝。许宣见脚下湿，脱下了新鞋袜，走出四圣观来寻船，不见一只。正没摆布处，只见一个老儿摇着一只船过来。许宣暗喜，认时，正是张阿公。叫道：“张阿公，搭我则个。”老儿听得叫，认时，原来是许小乙。将船摇近岸来，道：“小乙官，着了雨，不知要何处上岸？”许宣道：“涌金门上岸。”

这老儿扶许宣下船，离了岸，摇近丰乐楼来。摇不上十数丈水面，只见岸上有人叫道：“公公，搭船则个。”许宣看时，是一个妇人，头戴孝头髻，乌云畔插着些素钗梳，穿一领白绢衫儿，下穿一条细麻布裙。这妇人肩下一个丫鬟，身上穿着青衣服，头上一双角髻，戴两条大红头须，插着两件首饰，手中捧着一个包儿，要搭船。那老张对小乙官道：“因风吹火，用力不多，一发



meal, he bade the monk good-bye and left to take a leisurely walk around.

He crossed West Peace Bridge and Solitary Hill Road and went to the Temple of the Four Sages, meaning to continue on to Lin Hejing's grave and Six Ones Spring. But all of a sudden, clouds gathered in the northwestern sky, and a fog closed in from the southeast. The drizzle that followed soon grew into a steady rain. As it happened to be around the Clear and Bright Festival, the Lord of Heaven, in observance of the laws of nature, lent a determined insistence to the rain so as to speed the growth of flowers. Seeing that the ground outside was wet, Xu Xuan took off his new socks and shoes and stepped out of the temple to look for a boat. There being none in sight, he wasn't sure what to do, when suddenly, he was overjoyed to see an old man rowing a boat in his direction. A closer look revealed the boatman to be Grandpa Zhang. "Grandpa Zhang!" cried Xu Xuan, "please take me on board!"

At the cry, the old man looked around and saw that it was Master Xiaoyi. Rowing his boat toward the shore, he said, "Master Xiaoyi, so you're caught in the rain! How far do you want me to take you?"

"I'll get off at Golden Flood Gate."

The old man helped him into the boat and rowed away from the bank toward Harvest Joy Tower. Before they had gone more than a hundred feet, they heard a cry from the shore, "Grandpa, would you give us a ride, please?"

Xu Xuan turned to look and saw a woman wearing a white silk blouse, a fine flaxen skirt, and white hairpins in her jet-black hair, which was arranged in a chignon covered in mourning white. By her side stood her maid, dressed all in green. Her hair was fastened in two knots, each tied with a bright red string and adorned with a piece of jewelry. She was carrying a package in her hand. Both appeared eager to get on the boat.

Old Man Zhang remarked to Xu Xuan, "As the saying goes, 'When there's a wind blowing, you need do nothing to keep the fire going.' Since we don't have to do anything extra, why don't we take them on board?"



搭了他去。”许宣道：“你便叫他下来。”[眉批]祸本。老儿见说，将船傍了岸边，那妇人同丫鬟下船，见了许宣，起一点朱唇，露两行碎玉，向前道一个万福。许宣慌忙起身答礼。那娘子和丫鬟舱中坐定了，娘子把秋波频转，瞧着许宣。许宣平生是个老实之人，见了此等如花似玉的美妇人，傍边又是个俊俏美女样的丫鬟，也不免动念。[眉批]偏是老实人着魔便深。那妇人道：“不敢动问官人，高姓尊讳？”许宣答道：“在下姓许名宣，排行第一。”妇人道：“宅上何处？”许宣道：“寒舍住在过军桥黑珠儿巷，生药铺内做买卖。”那娘子问了一回，许宣寻思道：“我也问他一问。”起身道：“不敢拜问娘子高姓？潭府何处？”那妇人答道：“奴家是白三班白殿直之妹，嫁了张官人，不幸亡过了，见葬在这雷岭。为因清明节近，今日带了丫鬟，往坟上祭扫了方回。不想值雨，若不是搭得官人便船，实是狼狈。”又闲讲了一回，迤迳船摇近岸。只见那妇人道：“奴家一时心忙，不曾带得盘缠在身边，万望官人处借些船钱还了，并不有负。”[眉批]口脚眼。许宣道：“娘子自便，不妨，些须船钱，不必计较。”还罢船钱，那雨越不住，许宣晚了上岸。那妇人道：“奴家只在箭桥双茶坊巷口，若



“Have them come down, then,” said Xu Xuan. (*The beginning of all the troubles to come.*)

So the old man drew the boat up to the shore, and the woman and her maid stepped on board. At the sight of Xu Xuan, the woman flashed a smile, revealing dainty white teeth between red lips, and dropped a curtsy. Xu Xuan rose with alacrity and returned the greeting. After the woman and the maid were seated in the cabin, the woman kept casting significant glances at Xu Xuan, who found his desires stirring, despite his prudishness, at the sight of such an enchanting beauty accompanied by a flower of a maid. (*It so happens that prudish ones tend to be the easiest to catch.*)

“May I ask your name, sir?” said the woman.

“I am Xu Xuan, the oldest son in the family.”

“Where do you live?”

“I live in Black Pearl Lane by Reward the Troops Bridge and work in an herbal medicine store.”

Now that the woman had asked her questions, Xu Xuan thought it was his turn. Rising from his seat, he inquired, “May I ask your name, madam? And where do you live?”

“I am the younger sister of Officer White [Bai] of the imperial guards. My husband, Zhang, has unfortunately passed away and is buried here on Thunder Peak. The Clear and Bright Festival being near, I took my maid to sweep his grave and make some offerings today. We were on our way back when we got caught in the rain. If you hadn’t taken us on board, we would have been in quite a sorry state.”

After they had chatted for a while, the boat approached the shore. The woman said, “I left home in such haste that I didn’t bring enough travel money. Could you please lend me some money so that I can pay the boatman? I’ll surely pay you back.” (*An excuse for continuing the association.*)

“As you wish, madam, but don’t worry about such a trivial amount,” Xu Xuan assured her.

After the boatman was paid, the rain came down even harder. As Xu Xuan helped her go ashore, the woman said, “My house is at the entrance to Double Tea Lane by Arrow Bridge. If it’s not beneath



不弃时，可到寒舍拜茶，纳还船钱。”许宣道：“小事何消挂怀。天色晚了，改日拜望。”说罢，妇人共丫鬟自去。

许宣入涌金门，从人家屋檐下到三桥街，见一个生药铺，正是李将仕兄弟的店。许宣走到铺前，正见小将仕在门前。小将仕道：“小乙哥，晚了那里去？”许宣道：“便是去保叔塔烧卷子，着了雨，望借一把伞则个。”将仕见说，叫道：“老陈，把伞来与小乙官去。”不多时，老陈将一把雨伞撑开，道：“小乙官，这伞是清湖八字桥老实舒家做的，八十四骨，紫竹柄的好伞，不曾有一些儿破，将去休坏了！仔细，仔细！”[眉批]冷话，趣。许宣道：“不必分付。”接了伞，谢了将仕，出羊坝头来，到后市街巷口。只听得有人叫道：“小乙官人。”许宣回头看时，只见沈公井巷口小茶坊屋檐下，立着一个妇人，认得正是搭船的白娘子。许宣道：“娘子如何在此？”白娘子道：“便是雨不得住，鞋儿都踏湿了。教青青回家取伞和脚下。又见晚下来，望官人搭几步则个。”许宣和白娘子合伞到坝头，道：“娘子到那里去？”白娘子道：“过桥投箭桥去。”许宣道：“小娘子，小人自往过军桥去，路又近了，



you, please follow me to my humble home for some tea, so that I can repay the money.”

“Oh, don’t worry about such a trifle. It’s getting late now. I’ll come for a visit another time,” said Xu Xuan. And so, the woman and her maid took leave of him.

Xu Xuan then went through Golden Flood Gate and wended his way under the eaves of the houses to Three Bridges Street, where Squire Li’s brother’s herb store was located. Xu Xuan walked up and saw the younger Squire Li at the door.

“Brother Xiaoyi,” said Li, “where are you going at this late hour?”

“I went to Baoshu Pagoda on an incense-offering trip and got caught in the rain. Could you lend me an umbrella?”

“Old Chen!” cried out Li. “Get Master Xiaoyi an umbrella!”

Soon, Old Chen emerged with an umbrella. Opening it, he said, “Master Xiaoyi, this umbrella is the work of Honest Shu by Character Eight Bridge on Clear Lake, and a fine umbrella it is, with its eighty-four ribs and purple bamboo handle. It’s not torn anywhere, either. So don’t ruin it! Be sure to take good care of it!” (*Remarks quite unexpected. A comic touch.*)

“Of course, don’t worry,” said Xu Xuan as he took the umbrella. After some words of thanks to Squire Li, he left, heading in the direction of Sheep Dike. As he approached Rear Market Street, he heard someone call, “Master Xiaoyi!” Turning to look, he saw a woman standing under the eaves of the small teahouse at the entrance to Shen’s Well Street, the very Madam White who had been his companion on the boat.

“Why are you here, madam?”

“With the rain pouring like that, my shoes became wet, so I had Little Green go home to fetch an umbrella and my galoshes. Now that it’s getting dark, may I share your umbrella for part of the way?”

So they walked as far as the dike, sharing one umbrella. “Now where do you want to go, madam?”

“To Arrow Bridge after crossing that bridge.”

“Well, I’m heading for Reward the Troops Bridge, which is



不若娘子把伞将去，明日小人自来取。”[眉批]□身入港，自取烦恼。凡多情多□者，必白娘子哉。白娘子道：“却是不当，感谢官人厚意！”许宣沿人家屋檐下冒雨回来，只见姐夫家当直王安拿着钉靴雨伞来接不着，却好归来。到家内吃了饭。当夜思量那妇人，翻来覆去睡不着。梦中共日间见的一般，情意相浓。不想金鸡叫一声，却是南柯一梦。正是：

心猿意马驰千里，浪蝶狂蜂闹五更。

到得天明起来，梳洗罢，吃了饭，到铺中，心忙意乱，做些买卖也没心想。到午时后，思量道：“不说一谎，如何得这伞来还人？”当时许宣见老将仕坐在柜上，向将仕说道：“姐夫叫许宣归早些，要送人情，请暇半日。”将仕道：“去了，明日早些来！”许宣唱个喏，径来箭桥双茶坊巷口寻问白娘子家里。问了半日，没一个认得。正踌躇间，只见白娘子家丫鬟青青，从东边走来。许宣道：“姐姐，你家何处住？讨伞则个。”青青道：“官人随我来。”许宣跟定青青，走不多路，道：“只这里便是。”许宣看时，



quite close by. You might just as well take the umbrella. I'll come to get it tomorrow." (*Volunteering to continue the relationship and inviting trouble. There's no one more tender, affectionate and [Illegible] than Madam White.*)

"You're too kind. Thank you so much," said Madam White.

Keeping under the eaves, Xu Xuan walked on in the rain. Upon arriving, he ran into Wang An, his brother-in-law's servant, who had just returned after looking vainly for him to deliver his galoshes and umbrella.

Xu Xuan ate supper at home and spent a wakeful night, tossing and turning, thinking about the woman. When he finally fell asleep, the events of the day reappeared in a dream, stirring up amorous passion. At the roosters' crow, he woke up and realized that it had all been but a dream. Truly,

*His heart as wild as a fast-running ape or horse,
 His amorous desires kept him awake till dawn.*

When it grew light at last, he rose, washed, did his hair, ate breakfast, and went to the store. With his mind in a fluster, he could hardly concentrate on his job. In the early afternoon, he thought, "How am I going to get the umbrella back and return it without having to tell a lie?" Addressing the older Squire Li, who was sitting by the counter, he said, "My brother-in-law wants me to go home earlier than usual today to deliver a present for him. May I take the rest of the afternoon off?"

"All right, go ahead, but come in earlier tomorrow!"

After chanting his goodbye, Xu Xuan headed straight for Double Tea Lane by Arrow Bridge and asked for directions to Madam White's house, but no one knew where it was. He was wondering what to do when Little Green, Madam White's maid, appeared, coming from an easterly direction.

"Sister!" exclaimed Xu Xuan. "Where exactly do you live? I've come to get my umbrella."

"Follow me, sir."

And so he did. A few moments later, she announced, "Here we are!"



见一所楼房，门前两扇大门，中间四扇看街榻子眼，当中挂顶细密朱红帘子，四下排着十二把黑漆交椅，挂四幅名人山水古画。对门乃是秀王府墙。那丫头转入帘子内，道：“官人请人里面坐。”许宣随步入到里面，那青青低低悄悄叫道：“娘子，许小乙官人在此。”白娘子里面应道：“请官人进里面拜茶。”许宣心下迟疑，青青三回五次催许宣进去。许宣转到里面，只见四扇暗榻子窗，揭起青布幕，一个坐起，桌上放一盆虎须菖蒲，两边也挂四幅美人，中间挂一幅神像，桌上放一个古铜香炉花瓶。那小娘子向前深深的道一个万福，道：“夜来多蒙小乙官人应付周全，识荆之初，甚是感激不浅！”许宣道：“些微何足挂齿。”白娘子道：“少坐拜茶。”茶罢，又道：“片时薄酒三杯，表意而已。”许宣方欲推辞，青青已自把菜蔬、果品流水排将出来。许宣道：“感谢娘子置酒，不当厚扰。”饮至数杯，许宣起身道：“今日天色将晚，路远，小子告回。”娘子道：“官人的伞，舍亲昨夜转借去了，再饮几杯，着人取来。”许宣道：“日晚，小子要回。”娘



He saw that the house was two-storied with a double door flanked by four long, latticed windows, two to each side. A finely woven vermilion curtain hung in the middle of the door. The main hall was lined with twelve black lacquer armchairs and decorated with four landscape paintings by famous artists of olden times. Opposite the house stood the mansion of Prince Xiu, father of Emperor Xiaozong of Song.

Disappearing behind the curtain, the maid said, "Please come in and take a seat, sir!"

Xu Xuan followed her to the inner section of the house. Little Green then whispered, "Ma'am, Master Xiaoyi is here!"

"Invite him in for tea," said Madam White from inside.

Xu Xuan had not made up his mind what to do, but Little Green kept urging him to go in, and so he did. There came into view four veiled latticed windows. When the blue cotton portiere was raised, he saw a small parlor with a table on which stood a pot of bearded calamus. Two paintings of beautiful women hung on either side, and on the central wall was a picture of a deity. On another table was a bronze vase in the shape of an incense-burner.

Madam White stepped forward and said with a deep bow, "I'm much indebted to you, Master Xiaoyi, for having taken such good care of us upon our first encounter yesterday. How can I ever thank you enough?"

"Oh, it's hardly worth mentioning."

"Please sit and have some tea," said Madam White. After they finished the tea, she continued, "Let me serve you some wine as a token of my gratitude."

Before Xu Xuan could decline the offer, Little Green had laid out a fine spread of vegetables and fruits.

"I thank you, madam, for your hospitality, but I really shouldn't be imposing on you like this." After drinking a few cups of wine, he rose and said, "It's getting late. As I have quite a long way to go, I beg to take leave of you now."

"A relative of mine borrowed your umbrella from me last night," said Madam White. "Please have a few more cups while I try to have



子道：“再饮一杯。”许宣道：“饮饌好了，多感，多感！”白娘子道：“既是官人要回，这伞相烦明日来取则个。”〔眉批〕又拖一脚，情节委婉。许宣只得相辞了回家。

至次日，又来店中做些买卖，又推个事故，却来白娘子家取伞。娘子见来，又备三杯相款。许宣道：“娘子还了小子的伞罢，不必多扰。”那娘子道：“既安排了，略饮一杯。”许宣只得坐下。那白娘子筛一杯酒，递与许宣，启樱桃口，露榴子牙，娇滴滴声音，带着满面春风，告道：“小官人在上，真人面前说不得假话。奴家亡了丈夫，想必和官人有宿世姻缘，一见便蒙错爱。正是你有心，我有意。烦小乙官人寻一个媒证，与你共成百年姻眷，不枉天生一对，却不是好？”许宣听那妇人说罢，自己寻思：“真个好一段姻缘，若取得这个浑家，也不枉了。我自十分肯了，只是一件不谐，思量我日间在李将仕家做主管，夜间在姐夫家安歇，虽有些少东西，只好办身上衣服，如何得钱来娶老小？”自沉吟不答。只见白娘子道：“官人何故不回言语？”许宣道：“多感过爱，实不相瞒，只为身边窘迫，不敢从命。”娘子道：“这个容



it sent back.”

“It’s getting late. I really must be going.”

“Just one more cup!”

“But I’ve had enough. I’m much obliged!”

“If you insist on leaving now, please be good enough to come back tomorrow for the umbrella.” (*Trying again to continue the relationship. Another twist in the plot.*) There was nothing Xu Xuan could do but take leave of her and return home.

The next day, after working in the store for a little while, he got away again on some excuse and went to Madam White’s house to reclaim his umbrella. Again, she kept him for wine.

“Please give me back my umbrella,” said Xu Xuan. “I don’t want to impose myself on you like this.”

“But since the wine is ready, please take just one little cup,” the woman insisted. Xu Xuan felt he had no choice but to sit down. Madam White filled a cup, handed it to Xu Xuan, and said, her cherry-red lips moving, her pearly teeth glistening, her voice sweet and coquettish, her face radiant with joy, “My respects to you, sir. As they say, ‘To an honest person, be honest.’ The fact is, my husband has died. Judging from your kindness to me the first time we met, I believe that I must have a predestined marriage bond with you and that the feeling is mutual. Wouldn’t it be nice if you could find a matchmaker and we two who are made for each other can join in blissful marriage?”

These words set Xu Xuan thinking. “That would indeed be a good match. To have such a wife wouldn’t be a bad deal at all. I am more than willing, but there’s one matter to consider. Working during the day for Squire Li and lodging at night at my brother-in-law’s house, I have saved a little money, but it’s just enough for my own clothes. How can I afford to have a family?”

As he sat there, pensively silent, Madam White asked, “Why don’t you answer me?”

“I’m very honored, but the fact of the matter is, I don’t have the means to comply with your wish.”

“That problem can be easily solved,” replied Madam White. “I



易，我囊中自有馀财，不必挂念。”便叫青青道：“你去取一锭白银下来。”只见青青手扶栏杆，脚踏胡梯，取下一个包儿来，递与白娘子。娘子道：“小乙官人，这东西将去使用，少欠时再来取。”亲手递与许宣。许宣接得包儿，打开看时，却是五十两雪花银子。藏于袖中，起身告回。青青把伞来还了许宣，许宣接得相别，一径回家，把银子藏了。当夜无话。

明日起来，离家到官巷口，把伞还了李将仕。许宣将些碎银子，买了一只肥好烧鹅、鲜鱼、精肉、嫩鸡、果品之类，提回家来。又买了一樽酒，分付养娘、丫鬟安排整下。那日却好姐夫李募事在家，饮饌俱已完备，来请姐夫和姐姐吃酒。李募事却见许宣请他，到吃了一惊，道：“今日做甚么子坏钞？日常不曾见酒盏儿面，今朝作怪！”三人依次坐定饮酒。酒至数杯，李募事道：“尊舅，没事教你坏钞做甚么？”许宣道：“多谢姐夫，切莫笑话，轻微何足挂齿。感谢姐夫、姐姐管雇多时，一客不烦二主人，许宣如今年纪长成，恐虑后无人养育，不是了处。今有一头亲事在此说起，望姐夫、姐姐与许宣主张，结果了一生，终身也好。”姐夫、姐姐听得说罢，肚内暗自寻思，道：“许宣日常一毛不拔，今日坏得些钱钞，便要我替他讨老小？”夫妻二人，你我相看，只



have money to spare. You needn't worry on that score." To Little Green, she said, "Go up and get an ingot of silver for me."

Holding on to the railing, Little Green went up and down the stairs and handed a package to Madam White. "Master Xiaoyi," said the woman, "Take this. When in need, come here again for more." So saying, she gave the package to Xu Xuan with her own hands. Xu Xuan opened the package and saw inside fifty taels of snow-white silver. He put it in his sleeve and rose to go. Little Green returned his umbrella to him. Umbrella in hand, Xu Xuan took his leave, went straight home, and hid the silver. The night passed without further ado.

In the morning, he rose and went to Officials Street to return the umbrella to Squire Li. With some loose pieces of silver, he bought a fat and juicy roast goose, fresh fish, lean meat, a young chicken, fruit, and a jar of wine and carried them home. He gave everything to the housekeeper and the maids for them to take care of.

His brother-in-law, Officer Li, happened to be at home that day, and Xu Xuan invited him and his sister to sit down around the dinner table with the fine spread on it. Much taken aback at the invitation, Officer Li said to himself, "Why is he going to so much expense today? I've never seen him with a wine cup. Something's wrong here!"

The three sat down in order of seniority. After a few rounds of wine, Officer Li said, "My honored brother-in-law, why are you going to so much expense when there's nothing special happening?"

"I'm much obliged to you, Brother-in-law, but please don't make fun of me. This is really not worth mentioning. I am very grateful to you and Sister for taking care of me all these years. But, as they say, one guest should not impose himself on two hosts. I'm a grown man now and should make sure I'll have support in my old age. I've had a marriage offer. Could you, my brother-in-law and sister, please make the necessary arrangements on my behalf so that I can settle down once and for all?"

At these words, his brother-in-law and sister thought, "This is a man who hardly ever parts with a penny. And now, with what little he has spent, he expects us to get a wife for him?" Exchanging



不回话。吃酒了，许宣自做买卖。过了三两日，许宣寻思道：“姐姐如何不说起？”忽一日，见姐姐问道：“曾向姐夫商量也不曾？”姐姐道：“不曾。”许宣道：“如何不曾商量？”姐姐道：“这个事不比别样的事，仓卒不得，又见姐夫这几日面色心焦，我怕他烦恼，不敢问他。”许宣道：“姐姐，你如何不上紧？这个有甚难处？你只怕我教姐夫出钱，故此不理。”许宣便起身到卧房中，開箱取出白娘子的银来，把与姐姐，道：“不必推故，只要姐夫做主。”姐姐道：“吾弟多时在叔叔家中做主管，积攒得这些私房，可知道要娶老婆！你且去，我安在此。”

却说李募事归来，姐姐道：“丈夫，可知小舅要娶老婆，原来自攒得些私房，如今教我倒换些零碎使用，我们只得与他完就这亲事则个。”李募事听得说道：“原来如此，得他积得些私房也好。拿来我看！”做妻的连忙将出银子，递与丈夫。李募事接在手中，番来覆去，看了上面凿的字号，大叫一声：“苦！不好了，全家是死！”那妻吃了一惊，问道：“丈夫，有甚么利害之事？”李募事道：“数日前邵太尉库内封记锁押俱不动，又无地穴得人，平空不见了五十锭大银。见今着落临安府提捉贼人，十分紧急，



glances, the husband and wife refrained from answering. After the meal was over, Xu Xuan went back to work.

A couple of days later, Xu Xuan wondered, "Why does Sister still keep silent about the matter?" He asked his sister, "Have you consulted Brother-in-law about what I said the other day?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Well, unlike other things, this isn't something that should be done in a rush. Also, your brother-in-law has been looking worried these last couple of days, so I haven't dared ask him, so as to avoid adding another burden to his mind."

"Sister, why are you dragging your feet? What's so difficult about it? You're ignoring me only because you're afraid I'll be making a demand on my brother-in-law's pocket!" With that, he rose, went to his bedroom, opened his trunk, and took out Madam White's silver. Handing the ingot to his sister, he said, "Now, no more excuses. I need Brother-in-law to make the arrangements for me."

"So, you've saved up quite a tidy sum all these years while working for Uncle! No wonder you are talking about getting married! You go along now and leave the money here with me."

When Officer Li returned, Xu Xuan's sister told him, "Husband, you know why my brother is talking about marrying? The fact is, he has saved up quite a tidy sum for himself and has offered some to me. It looks like we'll have to take care of this matchmaking business."

"So that's what it is!" exclaimed Officer Li. "Well, it's a good thing he has some private savings. Show me the money." Promptly, his wife handed the silver to him. He turned the ingot over and over in his hand, examining the characters engraved on it. "We're in trouble!" he burst out in alarm. "This means death for the whole family!"

Seized with fear, his wife asked, "What can be so terrible?"

"A few days ago, fifty large ingots of silver disappeared from Marshal Shao's treasury. The seal and lock on the door are intact, and there is no underground tunnel that leads to it. And now, Lin'an Prefecture has been given the urgent task of hunting down the thief, but



没有头路得获，累害了多少人。出榜缉捕，写着字号、锭数，‘有人捉获贼人、银子者，赏银五十两；知而不首及窝藏贼人者，除正犯外，全家发边远充军。’这银子与榜上字号不差，正是邵太尉库内银子。即今捉捕十分紧急。正是火到身边，顾不得亲眷，自可去拨。明日事露，实难分说。不管他偷的、借的，宁可苦他，不要累我。只得将银子出首，免了一家之害。”老婆见说了，合口不得，目瞪口呆。

当时拿了这锭银子，径到临安府出首。那大尹闻知这话，一夜不睡。次日，火速差缉捕使臣何立。何立带了伙伴，并一班眼明手快的公人，径到官巷口李家生药店提捉正贼许宣。到得柜边，发声喊，把许宣一条绳子绑缚了，一声锣，一声鼓，解上临安府来。正值韩大尹升厅，押过许宣，当厅跪下，喝声：“打！”许宣道：“告相公，不必用刑，不知许宣有何罪？”大尹焦躁道：“真赃正贼，有何理说！还说无罪？邵太尉府中不动封锁，不见了一号大银五十锭，见有李募事出首，一定这四十九锭也在你处。想不动封皮，不见了银子，你也是个妖人！不要打……”喝教：



there's no clue whatsoever. Goodness knows how many people have been implicated! Bulletins have been posted, complete with the serial numbers of the missing ingots. The bulletin says, 'Whoever captures the thief and finds the silver shall receive a reward of fifty taels. Anyone who withholds information or gives shelter to the thief shall be duly punished, and all members of his family shall be banished to remote regions.' Now, the serial number on this ingot is exactly the same as the one in the bulletin, which means that the silver comes from Marshal Shao's treasury, and there's a big hue and cry after it! Indeed, 'In a spreading fire, you can't afford to take care of all your relatives.' If this theft is discovered, I won't be able to talk my way out of trouble. I don't care whether he stole it or borrowed it, but it's far better to have him punished than to be implicated myself. I'll have to take the silver to the authorities, so as to protect our family." His wife was so stunned at these words that her jaw dropped and she stared at him, her eyes unblinking.

And so, off he went to the prefectural yamen to surrender the ingot of silver. His report deprived the prefect of a whole night's sleep.

The next day, He Li, the arrest officer, was summoned posthaste. Taking a few assistants and a team of lictors keen of eye and swift of movement, Officer He Li went straight to Squire Li's store on Officials Street to apprehend the thief Xu Xuan. At the store counter, the men gave a shout and bound Xu Xuan with rope. Beating a drum and a gong along the way, they took him to the yamen of Lin'an Prefecture, where Prefect Han happened to be holding court. Xu Xuan was taken to the middle of the hall and made to kneel down.

"Beat him!" roared the prefect.

"Hold the torture for now, Your Honor," protested Xu Xuan. "First, let me know the charge against me."

Furiously the magistrate thundered, "What does a thief have to say for himself when the evidence is there? How dare you try to claim innocence! Fifty of the largest ingots of silver have disappeared from Marshal Shao's treasury, with the seal and lock intact. Officer Li has brought in one of the ingots, and the other forty-nine ingots must be in your possession. If you are able to steal without touching



“拿些秽血来！”许宣方知是这事，大叫道：“不是妖人，待我分说！”大尹道：“且住！你且说这银子从何而来？”许宣将借伞、讨伞的上项事，一一细说一遍。大尹道：“白娘子是甚么样人？见住何处？”许宣道：“凭他说，是白三班白殿直的亲妹子，如今见住箭桥边双茶坊巷口，秀王墙对黑楼子高坡儿内住。”那大尹即便叫缉捕使臣何立押领许宣，去双茶坊巷口捉拿本妇前来。

何立等领了钧旨，一阵做公的径到双茶坊巷口秀王府墙对黑楼子前看时，门前四扇看阶，中间两扇大门，门外避藉陞，坡前却是垃圾，一条竹子横夹着。何立等见了这个模样，到都呆了！当时就叫捉了邻人，上首是做花的丘大，下首是做皮匠的孙公。那孙公摆忙的吃他一惊，小肠气发，跌倒在地。众邻舍都走来，道：“这里不曾有甚么白娘子，这屋不五六年前有一个毛巡检合家时病死了，青天白日常有鬼出来买东西，无人敢在里头住。几日前，有个疯子立在门前唱喏。”何立教众人解下横门竹竿，里面冷清清地，起一阵风，卷出一道腥气来。众人都吃了一惊，倒退几步。许宣看了，则声不得，一似呆的。做公的数中，有一个能



the seal, you must be a sorcerer as well as a thief! All right, hold the beating for now, but bring me some animal blood! ”7

Now realizing what this was all about, Xu Xuan shouted at the top of his voice, “I’m not a sorcerer! Let me explain!”

“All right, go ahead and tell me where you got the silver.”

Thereupon, Xu Xuan gave a detailed account of how he had lent his umbrella and had gotten it back.

“What manner of woman is Madam White?” the prefect demanded. “And where does she live?”

“She says she’s the younger sister of Officer White of the imperial guards. She lives in the black house on the slope opposite Prince Xiu’s mansion at the entrance to Double Tea Lane by Arrow Bridge.”

Right away, the prefect ordered Arrest Officer He Li to escort Xu Xuan to Double Tea Lane to apprehend the woman and bring her to court.

Thus ordered, He Li and his men hurried to the black house opposite Prince Xiu’s mansion on Double Tea Lane. When they got there, all they saw were four windows looking out onto the street, a big double door, a heap of garbage on the steps leading up to the door, and a bamboo pole across the door. The men stood astounded. Then they set out to search for some neighbors and came back from one end of the street with a Mr. Qiu Da, a maker of artificial flowers, and from the other end of the street a Mr. Sun, a cobbler. The latter was so overwhelmed by the shock that he had a rupture and collapsed to the ground. Other neighbors came over and told the officers, “There isn’t any Madam White around here. About five or six years ago, an Inspector Mao who used to live there died in an epidemic, as did all other members of his family. Since then, because ghosts have often been seen coming out of the house in broad daylight to buy things, no one has dared to live in it. A few days ago, a mad man was seen standing in front of the door chanting greetings.”

By He Li’s order, the bamboo pole barring the door was removed. As the door opened, a gust of foul-smelling wind sprang up from the deserted interior of the house. Astounded, the men staggered back, while Xu Xuan stood speechless.



胆大，排行第二，姓王，专好酒吃，都叫他做“好酒王二”。王二道：“都跟我来。”发声喊，一齐哄将人去，看时，板壁、坐起、桌凳都有。来到胡梯边，教王二前行，众人跟着，一齐上楼。楼上灰尘三寸厚。众人到房门前，推开房门一望，在上挂着一张帐子，箱笼都有，只见一个如花似玉穿着白的美貌娘子，坐在床上。众人看了，不敢向前。众人道：“不知娘子是神是鬼？我等奉临安大尹钧旨，唤你去与许宣执证公事。”那娘子端然不动。“好酒王二”道：“众人都不敢向前，怎的是了？你可将一坛酒来，与我吃了，做我不着，捉他去见大尹。”众人连忙叫两三个下去，提一坛酒来与王二吃。王二开了坛口，将一坛酒吃尽了，道：“做我不着！”将那空坛望着帐子内打将去。不打万事皆休，才然打去，只听得一声响，却是青天里打一个霹雳，众人都惊倒了！起来看时，床上不见了那娘子，只见明晃晃一堆银子。众人向前看了，道：“好了。”计数四十九锭。众人道：“我们将银子去见大尹也罢。”扛了银子，都到临安府。何立将前事禀覆了大尹。大尹道：“定是妖怪了。也罢，邻人无罪宁家。”差人送五十锭银子与邵太尉处，开个缘由，一一禀覆过了。许宣照“不应得为而为之



Among the officers was a stout-hearted Mr. Wang, the second son in his family, better known as Wino Wang the Second because of his weakness for wine. "Follow me!" shouted Wino Wang the Second as he led the men in.

The walls, the parlor, and the table and chairs were all there as Xu Xuan had described them. When they came to the staircase, Wino Wang was made to go up first, and the rest of the men followed. They found the upper floor covered with a layer of dust three inches thick. Continuing on to a bedchamber, they pushed open the door and saw that, on a canopied bed surrounded by trunks and cases, sat a woman in white, as pretty as a flower and as fair as jade. Lacking the courage to step forward, the men said, "Are you, madam, a goddess or a ghost? We are ordered by the prefect of Lin'an to summon you to court to bear out Xu Xuan's testimony." The woman did not move.

"It won't do if none of us dares to go forward!" exclaimed Wino Wang. "Bring me a jar of wine. She can't hurt me after I drink, and I'll be able to take her to the prefect."

Two or three men promptly hurried downstairs and came back with a jar of wine. Wang the Second broke the seal over the mouth of the jar and drank up the wine. "She can't hurt me now!" With that, he hurled the empty jar at the bed curtains. It would have been a different story had he not done so, but as he did, they heard an ear-splitting crack, like a bolt out of the blue. Everyone collapsed to the floor in shock. By the time they scrambled to their feet to look around, the woman had vanished. All they saw was a heap of glittering silver. Moving closer for a better view, they exclaimed, "Good!" They counted forty-nine ingots in all.

"Oh well, at least we can take the silver to the prefect," they said, and they returned to the Lin'an prefectural yamen carrying the silver.

After hearing He Li's report, the prefect concluded, "This must have been the work of a demon spirit. Very well, then, the neighbors are innocent and can go home." He then dispatched a messenger to take the fifty ingots of silver to Marshal Shao along with a report



事”，理重者决杖，免刺，配牢城营做工，满日疏放。牢城营乃苏州府管下，李募事因出首许宣，心上不安，将邵太尉给赏的五十两银子，尽数付与小舅作为盘费。李将仕与书二封，一封与押司范院长，一封与吉利桥下开客店的王主人。许宣痛哭一场，拜别姐夫、姐姐，带上行枷，两个防送人押着，离了杭州，到东新桥，下了航船。不一日，来到苏州。先把书去见了范院长并王主人。王主人与他官府上下使了钱，打发两个公人去苏州府，下了公文，交割了犯人，讨了回文，防送人自回。范院长、王主人保领许宣不入牢中，就在王主人门前楼上歇了。许宣心中愁闷，壁上题诗一首：

独上高楼望故乡，愁看斜日照纱窗。
平生自是真诚士，谁料相逢妖媚娘！
白白不知归甚处？青青岂识在何方？
抛离骨肉来苏地，思想家中寸断肠！

有话即长，无话即短。不觉光阴似箭，日月如梭，又在王主人家住了半年之上。忽遇九月下旬，那王主人正在门首闲立，看



containing detailed explanations. Xu Xuan was charged with “having committed an improper act” and was given a few thrashings of the rod. Though spared the disgrace of a facial tattoo, he was sentenced to hard labor in a Suzhou Prefecture prison camp until his term expired.

Feeling guilty for having informed on Xu Xuan, Officer Li gave Marshal Shao’s fifty taels reward to Xu Xuan for use on his journey. The squire wrote two letters on behalf of Xu Xuan, one addressed to Warden Fan and the other to Mr.Wang, owner of an inn by Lucky Bridge. After a violent fit of sobbing, Xu Xuan bade farewell to his brother-in-law and his sister and was put into a cangue. Escorted by two guards, he left Hangzhou and embarked on a boat at East New Bridge.

In a matter of days, the party arrived in Suzhou. The first thing Xu Xuan did upon arrival was to present the letters to Warden Fan and Mr.Wang. On his behalf, Mr.Wang bribed high and low throughout the yamen. The two guards were then sent on to the Suzhou prefectural yamen to deliver the official documents as well as the convicted man. Once they got a return message, they went back. Warden Fan and Mr.Wang managed to get Xu Xuan released on bail. After settling down in a room on the upper floor of Mr.Wang’s inn, Xu Xuan gloomily wrote a poem on the wall:

*Alone in a tower, I look toward home;
 Sadly, I watch the setting sun by the window.
 A man of honesty throughout my life,
 I was doomed when I met the bewitching one.
 Where could the one in white have gone?
 And where could the one in green be now?
 Here, in Suzhou, away from kith and kin,
 I’m overwhelmed with nostalgia for home.*

Only when there is a lot to say will the story be a long one, but at this point in our narration, there being little to tell, let us skip over the more than six months that flitted by like an arrow amid the busy risings and settings of the sun and the moon. During all this time, Xu Xuan continued to stay with Mr.Wang. Now, toward the



街上人来人往，只见远远一乘轿子，傍边一个丫鬟跟着，道：“借问一声：此间不是王主人家么？”王主人连忙起身，道：“此间便是。你寻谁人？”丫鬟道：“我寻临安府来的许小乙官人。”主人道：“你等一等，我便叫他出来。”这乘轿子便歇在门前。王主人便入去，叫道：“小乙哥，有人寻你。”许宣听得，急走出来，同主人到门前看时，正是青青跟着，轿子里坐着白娘子。许宣见了，连声叫道：“死冤家！自被你盗了官库银子，带累我吃多少苦，有屈无伸，如今到此地位，又赶来做甚么？可羞死人！”那白娘子道：“小乙官人，不要怪我，今番特来与你分辨这件事。我且到主人家里面与你说。”白娘子叫青青取了包裹下轿。许宣道：“你是鬼怪，不许人来。”挡住了门不放他。那白娘子与主人深深道了个万福，道：“奴家不相瞒，主人在上，我怎的是鬼怪？衣裳有缝，对日有影。不幸先夫去世，教我如此被人欺负！做下的事是先夫日前所为，非干我事。如今怕你怨畅我，特地来分说明白了，我去也甘心。”主人道：“且教娘子入来，坐了说。”那娘子道：“我和你到里面，对主人家的妈妈说。”门前看的人自



end of the ninth month, Mr. Wang was standing idly at the door of his inn, watching the goings-on in the street, when he saw, coming from afar, a sedan-chair with a maid servant walking by its side.

“Might this be Mr. Wang’s inn?” asked the maid upon drawing near.

Mr. Wang hastened to reply with a bow, “Yes. Are you looking for someone?”

“We’re looking for Mr. Xu Xiaoyi from Lin’an.”

“Just a moment. Let me have him come out.”

The sedan-chair parked in front of the door, while Mr. Wang went inside and cried out, “Brother Xiaoyi! You have visitors!”

Xu Xuan hurried out to the door with the innkeeper. Who should be there but Madam White in the sedan-chair, attended by Little Green!

“Oh, you’ll be the death of me yet!” burst out Xu Xuan. “You stole silver from an official’s treasury and got me into goodness knows how much trouble, and there’s no one who can right the wrong done to me. Now that I’ve come to such a pass, why do you have to run after me like this? I’m ashamed to death!”

“Don’t blame me, Master Xiaoyi,” pleaded Madam White. “I’m here today to explain. Let me go in first.” So saying, she had Little Green take the luggage and got down from the sedan-chair.

“Since you’re an evil spirit, you cannot come in,” announced Xu Xuan. With that, he blocked the door and refused to let her enter.

With a deep curtsy to the innkeeper, Madam White said, “I’m not trying to hide anything. You, sir, can see that I am not an evil spirit. Look at the seams in my clothes and the shadow I cast in the sun. Unfortunately for me, my husband died and left me a victim of such abuses! Whatever was done was my husband’s doing. I had nothing to do with it. I came all this way just to explain to you because I was afraid you might bear a grudge against me. After I’ve said what I came to say, I’ll happily take my leave.”

“Please go in and be seated while you talk,” said Mr. Wang.

“Yes, let’s go inside and speak to the mistress of the house,” said Madam White, whereupon the onlookers who had gathered at



都散了。许宣入到里面，对主人家并妈妈道：“我为他偷了官银子事，如此如此，因此教我吃场官司。如今又赶到此，有何理说？”白娘子道：“先夫留下银子，我好意把你，我也不知怎的来的。”许宣道：“如何做公的捉你之时，门前都是垃圾？就帐子里一响，不见了你？”白娘子道：“我听得人说，你为这银子捉了去，我怕你说出我来，捉我到官，妆幌子羞人不好看。我无奈何，只得走去华藏寺前姨娘家躲了。使人担垃圾堆在门前，把银子安在床上，央邻舍与我说谎。”许宣道：“你却走了去，教我吃官事！”白娘子道：“我将银子安在床上，只指望要好，那里晓得有许多事情？我见你配在这里，我便带了些盘缠，搭船到这里寻你。如今分说都明白了，我去也。敢是我和你前生没有夫妻之分！”那王主人道：“娘子许多路来到这里，难道就去？且在此间住几日，却理会。”青青道：“既是主人家再三劝解，娘子且住两日。当初也曾许嫁小乙官人。”白娘子随口便道：“羞杀人！终不成奴家没人要？只为分别是非而来。”[眉批]故意反说，使人不疑。王主人道：



the door went their separate ways.

Once inside, Xu Xuan addressed the innkeeper and his wife. "I've been punished by the law because of her theft. I wonder what she has to say for herself, rushing all the way here like this."

"I meant well when I gave you the silver my deceased husband left behind," explained Madam White. "I had no idea how he had come by it."

"But when the officers went to arrest you, why was there so much garbage at the door? And why is it that we heard one loud bang behind the bed curtain and then you disappeared?"

"When I heard that you had been arrested because of the silver, I was afraid you might name me. How embarrassing it would be if I were brought to the authorities and had to show my face in public! So I saw nothing for it but to seek refuge in my aunt's house by Splendid Treasure Temple. Then I arranged to have garbage piled up at the door and silver placed on the bed. I also asked the neighbors to lie on my behalf."

"So you got away free and left me behind to be caught up by the law!"

"I put the silver on the bed because I thought that would close the case. How was I to know that so many things would happen? After learning your whereabouts, I brought some money and came all this way by boat to look you up. And now that everything has been explained, I'm leaving. You and I are not predestined to be husband and wife after all!"

"Madam," put in Mr. Wang, "you can't leave like this after such a long journey. Stay here for a few days before you decide what to do next."

Little Green urged, "Since the host is offering to keep you, why don't you stay here for a couple of days, madam? You did once promise to marry Master Xiaoyi."

Without missing a beat, Madam White said, "How humiliating! I can't be as unwanted and eager to be married off as that! I came only to set the record straight." (*Calculatedly going the other way, to throw off suspicions.*)



“既然当初许嫁小乙哥，却又回去！且留娘子在此。”打发了轿子，不在话下。

过了数日，白娘子先自奉承好了主人的妈妈，那妈妈劝主人与许宣说合，选定十一月十一日成亲，共百年谐老。光阴一瞬，早到吉日良时。白娘子取出银两，央王主人办备喜筵，二人拜堂结亲。酒席散后，共入纱厨，白娘子放出迷人声态，颠鸾倒凤，百媚千娇，喜得许宣如遇神仙，只恨相见之晚。正好欢娱，不觉金鸡三唱，东方渐白。正是：

欢娱嫌夜短，寂寞恨更长。

自此日为始，夫妻二人如鱼似水，终日在王主人家快乐昏迷缠定。

日往月来，又早半年光景。时临春气融和，花开如锦，车马往来，街坊热闹。许宣问主人家道：“今日如何人人出去闲游，如此喧嚷？”主人道：“今日是二月半，男子妇人都去看卧佛。你也好去承天寺里闲走一遭。”许宣见说，道：“我和妻子说一声，也去看一看。”许宣上楼来，和白娘子说：“今日二月半，男女、妇人都去看卧佛，我也看一看就来。有人寻说话，回说不在家，不可出来见人。”白娘子道：“有甚好看，只在家中却不好，看他



“Since you promised to marry him,” said Mr. Wang, “why do you have to go? Stay!” And he dismissed the sedan-chair carrier, but of this, no more.

Several days later, Madam White having done her best to win Mrs. Wang’s heart, the old lady persuaded Mr. Wang to use his powers of persuasion on Xu Xuan and make the match. The eleventh day of the eleventh month was then chosen for the wedding ceremony, to mark the beginning of a long and blissful marriage.

In the twinkling of an eye, the auspicious day rolled around. Madam White took out some silver and asked Mr. Wang to prepare the wedding feast. After the bride and the groom made their wedding bows in the main hall and partook of the wedding feast, they retired to the curtained bed in their bedchamber. Madam White used such charms on Xu Xuan that he was thrown into as much ecstasy as if he had met a divine being. How he wished he could have known her earlier! They were still sporting joyfully when the roosters crowed three times and the eastern sky began to brighten. Truly,

In joy, the night slips by all too quickly;

In loneliness, the hours drag on, dawn never comes.

Henceforth, the two spent all their time in delirious pleasure at Mr. Wang’s inn, as inseparable as fish and water. The days grew to months. Soon, six months had slipped by, bringing in the balmy days and blooming flowers of spring. Noticing the hustle and bustle in the streets, Xu Xuan asked his host, “Why is everybody out on the street? What’s all this excitement about?”

“Today being the fifteenth day of the second month, men and women are going out to see the image of the Reclining Buddha,” explained Mr. Wang. “Why don’t you also go to Chengtian Monastery for some fun?”

“Right! I’ll go, but let me tell my wife about it first.” So Xu Xuan went upstairs and said to his wife, “Since today is the fifteenth day of the second month, there are lots of men and women out to see the Reclining Buddha. I want to go and take a look, too, but I’ll be back soon enough. If anyone asks for me, just say I’m not at home. Now, you must not go out to be seen in public.”



做甚么？”许宣道：“我去闲耍一遭就回，不妨。”

许宣离了店内，有几个相识同走，到寺里看卧佛。绕廊下各处殿上观看了一遭。方出寺来，见一个先生，穿着道袍，头戴逍遥巾，腰系黄丝绦，脚着熟麻鞋，坐在寺前卖药，散施符水。许宣立定了看。那先生道：“贫道是终南山道士，到处云游，散施符水，救人病患灾厄，有事的向前来。”那先生在人丛中看见许宣头上一道黑气，必有妖怪缠他，叫道：“你近来有一妖怪缠你，其害非轻。我与你二道灵符，救你性命。一道符三更烧，一道符放在自头发内。”许宣接了符，纳头便拜，肚内道：“我也八九分疑惑那妇人是妖怪，真个是实。”谢了先生，径回店中。

至晚，白娘子与青青睡着了。许宣起来道：“料有三更了。”将一道符放在自头发内，正欲将一道符烧化，只见白娘子叹一口气道：“小乙哥和我许多时夫妻，尚兀自不把我亲热，却信别人言语，半夜三更，烧符来压镇我！你且把符来烧看！”就夺过符来，一时烧化，全无动静。白娘子道：“却如何？说我是妖怪！”



“But what’s there to see? What’s so bad about just staying at home?” protested Madam White. “Why do you have to go?”

“I’ll just go and have a little fun. I’ll be back soon. No harm can come of it.”

So saying, Xu Xuan left the inn. In the company of a few acquaintances, he went to the monastery to see the Reclining Buddha. After touring all the halls along the corridors, he was on his way out when he saw a priest wearing a Daoist robe, a casual head wrap, a yellow silk waistband, and a pair of hemp shoes sitting in front of the monastery gate, selling medicine and distributing charms and holy water. Xu Xuan stopped to watch.

“This poor priest is from the Zhongnan Mountains,” announced the priest. “I dispense charms and holy water everywhere I go in my travels, to cure diseases and dispel disasters. Those afflicted with ailments, please come forward.” Espying a column of black vapor over Xu Xuan’s head, the priest immediately concluded that this man was being haunted by an evil spirit. “You there!” he called out. “An evil spirit has been haunting you for some time now, and it’s doing you no little harm! Let me give you two charms to save your life. One is for you to burn at the third watch of the night, and the other is to put in your hair.”

Xu Xuan took the charms with a deep bow, thinking to himself, “I do have the feeling that she’s most probably an evil spirit. So it’s true.” Thankfully, he took leave of the priest and returned to the inn.

At night, while Madam White and Little Green were asleep, Xu Xuan rose and said to himself, “It should be the third watch of the night by now.”

With that, he put one of the two charms in his hair and was about to burn the other when Madam White spoke up with a sigh, “Brother Xiaoyi, we’ve been husband and wife for quite some time now, and yet, instead of showing me affection, you believed some stranger and try to burn a charm in the middle of the night to exorcise me! Well, go ahead and burn it!” So saying, she grabbed the charm and burned it up. Nothing happened.

“Are you convinced now?” said Madam White. “Imagine accus-



许宣道：“不干我事，卧佛寺前一云游先生知你是妖怪。”白娘子道：“明日同你去看他一看，如何模样的先生。”

次日，白娘子清早起来，梳妆罢，戴了钗环，穿上素净衣服，分付青青看管楼上。夫妻二人来到卧佛寺前。只见一簇人团团围着那先生，在那里散符水。只见白娘子睁一双妖眼，到先生面前喝一声：“你好无礼！出家人枉在我丈夫面前说我是一个妖怪，书符来捉我！”那先生回言：“我行的是五雷天心正法，凡有妖怪，吃了我的符，他即变出真形来。”那白娘子道：“众人在此，你且书符来我吃看。”那先生书一道符，递与白娘子；白娘子接过符来，便吞下去。众人都看，没些动静。众人道：“这等一个妇人，如何说是妖怪？”众人把那先生齐骂，那先生骂得口睁眼呆，半晌无言，惶恐满面。白娘子道：“众位官人在此，他捉我不得，我自小学得个戏术，且把先生试来与众人看。”只见白娘子口内喃喃的不知念些甚么，把那先生却似有人擒的一般，缩做一堆，悬空而起。众人看了，齐吃一惊。许宣呆了。娘子道：“若不是众位面上，把这先生吊他一年。”白娘子喷口气，只见那先生依然放下，只恨爹娘少生两翼，飞也似走了。众人都散了。夫妻依旧回



ing me of being an evil spirit!”

“It wasn’t my idea,” protested Xu Xuan. “A mendicant priest in front of Reclining Buddha Monastery said that you are.”

“All right, let me go with you tomorrow and see what manner of priest he is.”

The next morning, Madam White rose bright and early. After she had completed her toilette, put on her jewelry and her white outfit, and instructed Little Green to look after their rooms on the second floor of the inn, husband and wife made their way to Reclining Buddha Monastery. There, they saw a crowd gathered around the priest, who was distributing charms and holy water. Her bewitching eyes wide open, Madam White walked up to the priest and shouted at the top of her voice, “How dare you, a priest, tell my husband that I am an evil spirit and write up a charm to subdue me!”

The priest shot back, “With my Five Thunders heaven-centered orthodox method, I can make any demon reveal its true shape as soon as it swallows my charm.”

“In the presence of everyone here, why don’t you make me eat one of those charms of yours?” challenged Madam White. Accordingly, the priest drew a charm and gave it to Madam White, who took it and swallowed it up. The onlookers watched intently, but nothing happened.

They commented, “How can you accuse such a nice lady of being an evil spirit?” And they went on berating the priest while he stood there stupefied, fear written all over his face.

Madam White addressed the crowd, “You all witnessed how he failed to trap me. Now, let me try something on him that I learned as a child. Watch!” As she murmured something quite incomprehensible, the priest huddled up and rose in the air as if clutched by an invisible hand. The onlookers stood aghast. Xu Xuan was dumbfounded.

“If it were not out of respect for all of you,” said Madam White, “I would keep him up there in the air for a year.” She blew a puff of air, and the priest came down to the ground. How he wished his parents had given him two wings at birth! As he raced off, the crowd dispersed.



来。不在话下。日逐盘缠，都是白娘子将出来用度。正是：

夫唱妇随，朝欢暮乐。

不觉光阴似箭，又是四月初八日，释迦佛生辰。只见街市上人抬着柏亭浴佛，家家布施。许宣对王主人道：“此间与杭州一般。”只见邻舍边一个小的，叫做铁头，道：“小乙官人，今日承天寺里做佛会，你去看一看。”许宣转身到里面，对白娘子说了。白娘子道：“甚么好看，休去！”许宣道：“去走一遭，散闷则个。”娘子道：“你要去，身上衣服旧了，不好看，我打扮你去。”叫青青取新鲜时样衣服来。许宣着得不长不短，一似像体裁的，戴一顶黑漆头巾，脑后一双白玉环，穿一领青罗道袍，脚着一双皂靴，手中拿一把细巧百摺描金美人珊瑚坠上样春罗扇。打扮得上下齐整，那娘子分付一声，如莺声巧啭，道：“丈夫早早回来，切勿教奴记挂！”许宣叫了铁头相伴，径到承天寺来看佛会。人人喝采：“好个官人！”只听得有人说道：“昨夜周将仕典当库内，不见了四五千贯金珠细软物件，见今开单告官挨查，没捉人处。”

Needless to say, the husband and wife went back home together. With Madam White paying for the daily expenses, theirs was truly a harmonious conjugal life in which:

*The husband sings, the wife follows;
The mornings delightful, the nights joyous.*

Time flew by like a darting arrow. Again, the eighth day of the fourth month, Sakyamuni's birthday, rolled around. On the streets, people were seen taking donations from door to door and carrying cypress shrines to the monasteries where statues of Buddha were to be washed. To Mr. Wang, Xu Xuan commented, "The customs here are the same as in Hangzhou."

At this point, a young neighbor called Iron Head remarked, "Brother Xiaoyi, there's a Buddhist gathering at Chengtian Monastery today. Why don't you go and take a look?"

Xu Xuan went inside and told Madam White about it. "What's there to see?" said she. "Don't go!"

"It'll just be a harmless little trip to kill some time," insisted Xu Xuan.

"If you're determined to go, let me dress you up. Your clothes are too old and ugly." So saying, she had Little Green bring over a few fashionable pieces of clothing, which turned out to fit him so well that they seemed to have been tailor-made for him. They included a black hat with a pair of white jade rings dangling at the back, a blue silk robe, and a pair of black boots. Carrying in his hand an exquisite folding silk fan bearing gold-traced portraits of women and adorned with a coral pendant, Xu Xuan looked the very picture of elegance from head to foot. In a voice as sweet as that of an oriole, the woman admonished him, "Come back early, husband! Don't make me worry about you!"

Accompanied by Iron Head, Xu Xuan went to Chengtian Monastery to watch the Buddhist gathering. Everyone who saw him gave a cheer, for he was a marvel to the eye. A man was heard saying, "Last night, some jewelry and other valuables worth four to five thousand strings of cash disappeared from Squire Zhou's pawnshop. They reported the case to the authorities, along with a list of the



许宣听得，不解其意，自同铁头在寺。其日烧香官人、子弟、男女人等，往往来来，十分热闹。许宣道：“娘子教我早回，去罢。”转身，人丛中不见了铁头，独自个走出寺门来。只见五六个人似公人打扮，腰里挂着牌儿，数中一个看了许宣，对众人道：“此人身上穿的，手中拿的，好似那话儿。”数中一个认得许宣的道：“小乙官，扇子借我一看。”许宣不知是计，将扇递与公人。那公人道：“你们看这扇子扇坠，与单上开的一般！”众人喝声：“拿了！”就把许宣一索子绑了，好似：

数只皂雕追紫燕，一群饿虎啖羊羔。

许宣道：“众人休要错了，我是无罪之人。”众公人道：“是不是，且去府前周将仕家分解！他店中失去五千贯金珠细软，白玉绦环，细巧百摺扇，珊瑚坠子，你还说无罪？真赃正贼，有何分说！实是大胆汉子，把我们公人作等闲看成。见今头上、身上、脚上，都是他家物件，公然出外，全无忌惮！”许宣方才呆了，半晌不则声。许宣道：“原来如此！不妨，不妨，自有人偷得。”众人道：“你自去苏州府厅上分说。”

次日大尹升厅，押过许宣见了。大尹审问：“盗了周将仕库



missing items. The search is on, but the thief hasn't been found yet."

Xu Xuan heard these words, but not seeing their significance, he continued to tour the monastery with Iron Head amid the bustling crowds of men and women who had come to offer incense. Then he told himself, "She wants me to be home early, so I'd better go." But, when he turned around, he didn't see Iron Head anywhere. As he went out the gate alone, he ran into a group of five or six men who looked like yamen officers, with identification badges hanging at their waists. Upon taking one look at Xu Xuan, one of the men commented to the others, "What this man wears and holds in his hand look like you know what."

Another officer, who happened to know Xu Xuan, accosted him, saying, "Master Xiaoyi, would you please show me your fan?"

An unsuspecting Xu Xuan handed the fan to him.

"Look!" the man exclaimed, "the pendant of this fan exactly fits the descriptions on the list!"

All shouting "Get him!" the men threw a rope over Xu Xuan and tied him up, much like

Black vultures chasing a baby swallow;

Hungry tigers devouring a lamb.

"This is a mistake," protested Xu Xuan. "I'm innocent!"

"Whether you are or not, we shall see when we get to Squire Zhou's house in front of the prefect's tribunal! They lost jewelry and other valuables worth five thousand strings of cash, a pair of white jade rings, and an exquisite folding fan with a coral pendant. How can you protest your innocence, with the actual stolen objects right here on you? And a reckless fellow you are, too, coming out into the open and showing them off from head to foot! What do you take us for?"

Xu Xuan was petrified. It was quite a while before he was able to speak. "So that's what happened," he said. "Yes, yes, there is indeed a thief."

"You can tell that to the Suzhou prefectural yamen," said the men.

The next day, the prefect called the court to order, and Xu Xuan



内金珠宝物在于何处？从实供来，免受刑法拷打。”许宣道：“禀上相公做主，小人穿的衣服物件皆是妻子白娘子的，不知从何而来，望相公明镜详辨则个！”大尹喝道：“你妻子今在何处？”许宣道：“见在吉利桥下王主人楼上。”大尹即差缉捕使臣袁子明押了许宣，火速捉来。差人袁子明来到王主人店中，主人吃了一惊，连忙问道：“做甚么？”许宣道：“白娘子在楼上么？”主人道：“你同铁头早去承天寺里，去不多时，白娘子对我说道：‘丈夫去寺中闲耍，教我同青青照管楼上。此时不见回家，我与青青去寺前寻他去也，望乞主人替我照管。’出门去了，到晚不见回来。我只道与你去望亲戚，到今日不见回来。”众公人要王主人寻白娘子，前前后后，遍寻不见。袁子明将王主人捉了，见大尹回话。大尹道：“白娘子在何处？”王主人细细禀覆了，道：“白娘子是妖怪。”大尹一一问了，道：“且把许宣监了。”王主人使用了些钱，保出在外，伺候归结。

且说周将仕正在对门茶坊内闲坐，只见家人报道：“金珠等物都有了，在库阁头空箱子内。”周将仕听了，慌忙回家看时，果



was led into his presence. "Where are the valuables that you stole from Squire Zhou's treasury?" The prefect began. "Out with the truth, or you'll be put under the rod!"

"Your Honor, please do right by me! These clothes and everything else I'm wearing were given to me by my wife, Madam White. I have no idea where they're from, and that is the truth, as Your Honor will surely see in your wisdom!"

"Where is your wife?" thundered the prefect.

"She's on the upper floor of Mr. Wang's inn by Lucky Bridge."

Right away, the prefect ordered Arrest Officer Yuan Ziming to escort Xu Xuan there and bring the woman to court posthaste.

Stunned by the sight of Arrest Officer Yuan Ziming, the innkeeper, Mr. Wang, asked, "What is this all about?"

"Is Madam White upstairs?" asked Xu Xuan.

"Soon after you and Iron Head left for Chengtian Monastery, she said to me, 'My husband is off to the monastery for some fun. He told Little Green and me to take care of things upstairs, but he's been gone for so long that we're going to the monastery to look for him. Could you please keep an eye on our rooms?' And so they left. They did not return that night, and they still haven't shown up so far. I thought you had all three gone to visit some relatives."

By order of the officers, Mr. Wang searched for Madam White throughout the house, back and front, but to no avail, whereupon Yuan Ziming brought Mr. Wang to see the prefect.

"Where is Madam White?" asked the prefect.

Mr. Wang gave a detailed account of what he knew and added, "Madam White must be an evil spirit."

After further questioning, the prefect announced, "Put Xu Xuan in jail for now!"

Through bribery, Mr. Wang managed to have himself released on bail to wait for a settlement of the case.

Now, Squire Zhou was sitting idly in the teashop opposite his house when a servant came to report, "The jewelry and the valuables have all been found! They are right there in the treasury, in a trunk that used to be empty."



然有了。只不见了头巾、绦环、扇子并扇坠。周将仕道：“明是屈了许宣，平白地害了一个人，不好。”暗地里到与该房说了，把许宣只问个小罪名。

却说邵太尉使李募事到苏州干事，来王主人家歇。主人家把许宣来到这里，又吃官事，一一从头说了一遍。李募事寻思道：“看自家面上亲眷，如何看做落？”只得与他央人情，上下使钱。[眉批] 好个李募事。一日，大尹把许宣一一供招明白，都做在白娘子身上，只做“不合不出首妖怪”等事，杖一百，配三百六十里，押发镇江府牢城营做工。李募事道：“镇江去便不妨。我有一个结拜的叔叔，姓李名克用，在针子桥下开生药店。我写一封书，你可去投托他。”许宣只得问姐夫借了些盘缠，拜谢了王主人并姐夫，就买酒饭与两个公人吃，收拾行李起程。王主人并姐夫送了一程，各自回去了。

且说许宣在路，饥餐渴饮，夜住晓行，不则一日，来到镇江。先寻李克用家，来到针子桥生药铺内。只见主管正在门前卖生药，老将仕从里面走出来，两个公人同许宣慌忙唱个喏道：“小人是杭州李募事家中人，有书在此。”主管接了，递与老将仕。老将仕



Upon hearing this, Squire Zhou rushed home and saw that the items were indeed there, with only the cap, the jade rings, the fan, and the pendant still missing. "All too clearly, they've wronged Xu Xuan, an innocent man," said he to himself, "and that's not right." Secretly, he approached the officials in charge of the case and pleaded with them to charge Xu Xuan for a minor offense only.

Now, Officer Li, who had been sent on a mission by Marshal Shao, went to Suzhou and took up lodging at Mr. Wang's inn. Upon hearing Mr. Wang's account of how Xu Xuan had first come to him and then been charged with a crime, Officer Li thought, "Now I can't very well stand by and do nothing. He's a member of the family, after all." So he felt obliged to seek help from acquaintances and pay bribes high and low. (*Good for him, Officer Li!*) Finally, the prefect settled Xu Xuan's case after a thorough interrogation, attributing the offense squarely to Madam White, and convicting Xu Xuan only on the charge of "failure to report the presence of an evil spirit to the authorities." He was given a hundred lashings and sentenced to a labor camp in Zhenjiang Prefecture, three hundred and sixty *li* away.

"Going to Zhenjiang is not bad," remarked Officer Li. "I have a sworn uncle, Li Keyong, who owns a medicinal herb store there by Needle Bridge. I'll write a letter for you to present to him." Left with no other choice, Xu Xuan borrowed travel money from his brother-in-law, took grateful leave of Mr. Wang and his brother-in-law, bought wine and a meal for the two yamen guards, and packed his belongings for the journey. Mr. Wang and his brother-in-law accompanied him for some distance before they returned home separately.

On the road, Xu Xuan and the guards ate and drank when necessary, traveling by day and resting at night. In a matter of days, they arrived in Zhenjiang. Xu Xuan's first priority was to seek out Li Keyong, so he found his way to the herb store by Needle Bridge, where he saw an assistant at the door, tending to his business. As Squire Li emerged from inside, the two guards and Xu Xuan hastened to chant their greetings. "I am a relative of Officer Li of Hangzhou," said Xu Xuan. "I have a letter from him."

The assistant took the letter and handed it to Squire Li, who



拆开看了，道：“你便是许宣？”许宣道：“小人便是。”李克用教三人吃了饭，分付当直的同到府中，下了公文，使用了钱，保领回家，防送人讨了回文，自归苏州去了。

许宣与当直一同到家中，拜谢了克用，参见了老安人。克用见李募事书，说道：“许宣原是生药店中主管。”因此留他在店中做买卖，夜间教他去五条巷卖豆腐的王公楼上歇。克用见许宣药店中十分精细，心中欢喜。原来药铺中有两个主管，一个张主管，一个赵主管。赵主管一生老实本分，张主管一生克剥奸诈，倚着自老了，欺侮后辈。见又添了许宣，心中不悦，恐怕退了他；反生奸计，要嫉妒他。忽一日，李克用来店中闲看，问：“新来的做买卖如何？”张主管听了，心中道：“中我机谋了！”应道：“好便好，只有一件……”克用道：“有甚么一件？”老张道：“他大主买卖肯做，小主儿就打发去了，因此人说他不好。我几次劝他，不肯依我。”老员外说：“这个容易，我自分付他便了，不怕他不依。”[眉批]女（疑为“妾”字）扯淡。赵主管在傍听得此言，私对张主管说道：“我们都要和气，许宣新来，我和你照管他才是。有不是，宁可当面讲，如何背后去说他？他得知了，只道我



opened and read it. "So, you are Xu Xuan, I presume?" asked the old gentleman.

"Yes, I am."

Li Keyong ordered that a meal be served to the three men. He then had a clerk take them to the prefectural yamen, where they delivered the official documents and paid to have Xu Xuan released on bail. The guards returned to Suzhou with the yamen's letter of reply, while Xu Xuan followed the clerk back to Squire Li's house, where Xu Xuan thanked Li Keyong and paid his respects to Mrs. Li. Li Keyong said to her, having reading Officer Li's letter, "Xu Xuan used to work in a medicinal herb store." Thereupon, he hired him to work in his store. At night, Xu Xuan slept on the upper floor of Mr. Wang's tofu shop on Fifth Lane. Li Keyong came to be impressed by Xu Xuan's meticulous work.

The store already had two managers, a Manager Zhang and a Manager Zhao. The latter was by nature an honest and law-abiding man, whereas the former was a crafty and treacherous one who took advantage of his seniority to bully younger men. Displeased by the arrival of a newcomer because he feared his services might no longer be needed, he thought up an evil plan to give vent to his jealousy.

One day, Li Keyong paid a visit to the store and asked, "How's the newcomer doing?"

Manager Zhang thought to himself, "Here he falls into my trap!" Aloud, he said, "He's all right, except for one thing."

"What one thing?"

"He's interested only in the bigger transactions and turns away clients who don't bring much profit. That's why he's not popular among our clients. I've tried several times to talk some sense into him, but he just won't listen."

"I can easily take care of that," said old Squire Li. "Let me talk to him. He'll surely listen to me." (*The whole story is a fabrication.*)

Having overheard the conversation, Manager Zhao said privately to Manager Zhang, "We should all be nice to one another. Since Xu Xuan is a newcomer, you and I should by rights be taking good care of him. If he does anything wrong, we should tell him face-to-face



们嫉妒。”[眉批]张主管可□□矣。老张道：“你们后生家，晓得甚么！”天已晚了，各回下处。赵主管来许宣下处，道：“张主管在员外面前嫉妒你，你如今要愈加用心，大主、小主儿买卖，一般样做。”许宣道：“多承指教！我和你去闲酌一杯。”二人同到店中，左右坐下。酒保将肴饭果碟摆下，二人吃了几杯。赵主管说：“老员外最性直，受不得触。你便依随他生性，耐心做买卖。”许宣道：“多谢老兄厚爱，谢之不尽！”又饮了两杯，天色晚了。赵主管道：“晚了路黑难行，改日再会。”许宣还了酒钱，各自散了。

许宣觉道有杯酒醉了，恐怕冲撞了人，从屋檐下回去。正走之间，只见一家楼上推开窗，将熨斗播灰下来，都倾在许宣头上。立住脚，便骂道：“谁家泼男女不生眼睛，好没道理！”只见一个妇人慌忙走下来，道：“官人休要骂，是奴家不是，一时失误了，休怪！”许宣半醉，抬头一看，两眼相观，正是白娘子。许宣怒从



rather than criticize him behind his back. If he hears about this, he'll say we are jealous." (*Manager Zhang* [Illegible.])

"What does a young man like you know!" snapped Manager Zhang.

The hour being late, they went back to their respective lodgings.

Later, Manager Zhao went to Xu Xuan's place and offered him this advice, "Manager Zhang spoke ill of you to the squire out of jealousy; so you should be more careful. In future, just remember to treat clients alike, regardless of the volume of the sales."

"It's so kind of you to give me this advice," said Xu Xuan gratefully. "Let's go for a drink!"

The two men went to a wineshop and took their seats. After the waiter set out the dishes they had ordered, they drank a few cups of wine.

"The old squire is a straightforward man who can't stand being contradicted, so you'd do well to humor him and be patient in your work," admonished Zhao.

"Many thanks for your kindness! How can I ever thank you enough!" exclaimed Xu Xuan.

After another couple of drinks, Zhao said, noticing that it was quite dark, "It's late. We'd better go before the roads are too dark for walking. We'll do this again some other time."

Xu Xuan paid the bill, and they went their separate ways. Feeling the influence of the wine, Xu Xuan was afraid that he might inadvertently bump into people and chose to make his way home under the eaves of the houses along the street. As he was walking, a window above him opened, and down onto his head came a stream of ashes from charcoal used to heat irons. He stopped in his tracks and cursed, "What swine did that? Don't you have eyes? What a thing to do!"

A woman hurried downstairs and apologized, "Please don't be angry, sir! I shouldn't have been so careless, but I meant no offense!"

In his half-drunken state, Xu Xuan raised his eyes and saw that the woman was none other than Madam White. Rage seized him. With



心上起，恶向胆边生，无明火焰腾腾高起三千丈，掩纳不住，便骂道：“你这贼贱妖精！连累得我好苦，吃了两场官事！”恨小非君子，无毒不丈夫。正是：

踏破铁鞋无觅处，得来全不费工夫。

许宣道：“你如今又到这里，却不是妖怪？”赶将入去，把白娘子一把拿住，道：“你要官休，私休？”白娘子陪着笑面，道：“丈夫，一夜夫妻百夜恩，和你说来事长。你听我说，当初这衣服都是我先夫留下的，我与你恩爱深重，教你穿在身上。恩将仇报，反成吴越。”许宣道：“那日我回来寻你，如何不见了？主人都说你同青青来寺前看我，因何又在此间？”白娘子道：“我到寺前，听得说你被捉了去，教青青打听不着，只道你脱身走了。怕来捉我，教青青连忙讨了一只船，到建康府娘舅家去。昨日才到这里。我也道连累你两场官事，也有何面目见你！你怪我也无用了，情意相投，做了夫妻，如今好端端，难道走开了？我与你情似泰山，恩同东海，誓同生死。可看日常夫妻之面，取我到下处，和你百年谐老，却不是好！”许宣被白娘子一骗，回嗔作喜，沉吟了半



the flames of fury leaping three thousand feet high, he burst out, "You foul evil spirit! A fine mess you got me into! I've been punished twice by the law because of you!" As the saying goes, he who harbors no indignation is no gentleman; he who is free of venom is not destined for greatness. Truly,

*Iron boots are worn out in the hunt for her;
But here she is; you need not have searched.*

"Why do you always appear wherever I am? If you are not an evil spirit, I don't know what is!" So saying, Xu Xuan lunged forward and held Madam White in a firm grip. "Do you want to settle this in or out of court?"

"Husband," Madam White said with a placating smile, "as they say, husband and wife for one night, tender lovers for a hundred nights. I have a long story to tell you. Listen to me. The clothes were left behind by my deceased husband. It was out of my deep love for you that I asked you to put them on. How could you repay my kindness with such hostility and turn me into an enemy?"

"But why did you disappear when I came back that day to look for you? Mr. Wang said that you and Little Green went to the monastery to look for me. And how is it you managed to be here now?"

"I did go to the monastery, where I heard that you had been captured and taken away. I had Little Green make inquiries but she wasn't able to find out anything more. We thought that you must have escaped. I was afraid they would be after me next, so I had Little Green hire a boat and we hurried to my uncle's home in Jiankang Prefecture. I arrived here only yesterday. I know that I got you in trouble with the law twice, and I wondered how I would ever have the nerve to face you! Scolding me won't serve any purpose now. But since we were a loving wedded couple, we can't very well end the relationship just like that, can we? After all, you and I had vowed to live the rest of our lives together in a love as eternal as Mount Tai and the East Sea. For the sake of old times, could you take me to your lodging? Wouldn't it be nice if you and I could grow old together until the end of our days?"



响，被色迷了心胆，留连之意，不回下处，就在白娘子楼上歇了。次日，来上河五条巷王公楼家，对王公说：“我的妻子同丫鬟从苏州来到这里。”一一说了，道：“我如今搬回来一处过活。”王公道：“此乃好事，如何用说。”当日把白娘子同青青搬来王公楼上。次日，点茶请邻舍。第三日，邻舍又与许宣接风，酒筵散了，邻舍各自回去，不在话下。第四日，许宣早起梳洗已罢，对白娘子说：“我去拜谢东西邻舍，去做买卖去也。你同青青只在楼上照管，切勿出门！”分付已了，自到店中做买卖，早去晚回。

不觉光阴迅速，日月如梭，又过一月。忽一日，许宣与白娘子商量，去见主人李员外妈妈家眷。白娘子道：“你在他家做主管，去参见了他，也好日常走动。”到次日，雇了轿子，径进里面，请白娘子上了轿，叫王公挑了盒儿，丫鬟青青跟随，一齐来到李员外家。下了轿子，进到里面，请员外出来。李克用连忙来见，白娘子深深道个万福，拜了两拜，妈妈也拜了两拜，内眷都



Upon hearing these honeyed words, Xu Xuan felt his anger turn to joy. He lapsed into silence, but lust took possession of him, and thoughts of being with her began to stir in him. Instead of returning to his lodging, he spent the night with Madam White at her place upstairs.

The next day, upon returning to Mr. Wang's inn on Fifth Lane, he announced to Mr. Wang, "My wife and maid have come from Suzhou." After explaining further, he added, "I'd like to have them move in here and join me."

"How nice! You needn't have asked!" exclaimed Mr. Wang.

That very day, Madam White and Little Green moved into Mr. Wang's inn and took up lodging on the upper floor. The following day, they held a tea party for the neighbors, and the day after that, the neighbors reciprocated in Xu Xuan's honor. The feast over, the neighbors dispersed and went their separate ways, but of this, no more need be said.

On the fourth day, Xu Xuan rose early and, after combing his hair and washing himself, said to Madam White, "I'm going to see the neighbors and thank them and then go to work. You and Little Green just stay where you are and keep an eye on the place. Don't, on any account, go out the door!" After this admonition, he went to the store to tend to the business, and henceforth, he left early for work and came home late in the evening.

Time flashed by, and the sun and moon shot back and forth like a busy shuttle on a loom. Another month went by.

One day, Xu Xuan asked Madam White if she could visit his employer Squire Li and the squire's wife and family. Madam White said, "Since you're working for him, it's only right that I should go to see him, so that there will be more mutual visits in the future."

The next day, a hired sedan-chair was brought to the house for Madam White. With Mr. Wang carrying gift boxes on a pole over his shoulder and Little Green bringing up the rear, they went to Squire Li's house. Madam White got out of the sedan-chair, went into the house, and asked to see the squire. Li Keyong emerged with alacrity from the interior of the house to greet her. Madam White curtsied



参见了。原来李克用年纪虽然高大，却专一好色，见了白娘子有倾国之姿，正是：

三魂不附体，七魄在他身。

那员外目不转睛看白娘子。当时安排酒饭管待，妈妈对员外道：“好个伶俐的娘子！十分容貌，温柔和气，本分老成。”员外道：“便是，杭州娘子生得俊俏。”饮酒罢了，白娘子相谢自回。李克用心中思想：“如何得这妇人共宿一宵？”眉头一簇，计上心来，道：“六月十三是我寿诞之日，不要慌，教这妇人着我一个道儿。”

不觉乌飞兔走，才过端午，又是六月初间。那员外道：“妈妈，十三日是我寿诞，可做一个筵席，请亲眷朋友闲耍一日，也是一生的快乐。”当日亲眷、邻友、主管人等，都下了请帖。次日，家家户户都送烛、面、手帕物件来。十三日都来赴筵，吃了一日，次日，是女眷们来贺寿，也有廿来个。且说白娘子也来，十分打扮，上着青织金衫儿，下穿大红纱裙，戴一头百巧珠翠金银首饰。带了青青，都到里面，拜了生日，参见了老安人，东阁下排着筵席。原来李克用吃虱子留后腿的人，因见白娘子容貌，



deeply and bowed twice to Mr. and then twice to Mrs. Li before presenting herself to the other women of the family.

Now, this Li Keyong, albeit advanced in years, was a lustful man. At the sight of Madam White's ravishing beauty, truly,

His three souls took leave of his body;

His seven spirits gave him the slip.

The squire gazed raptly at Madam White. As dinner was served in honor of the guests, Mrs. Li commented to her husband, "What a nice young woman! She's not only beautiful but also gentle, courteous, meek, and well behaved."

"Hangzhou women are indeed pretty," the squire remarked. After the meal, Madam White thanked the hosts and returned home.

Li Keyong thought, "What must I do to spend a night with that woman?" As he knitted his brows, he hit on a plan. "My birthday is coming up on the thirteenth day of the sixth month. I can take my own sweet time and make her fall into my trap that day!"

Time flew by. Soon after the Dragon Boat Festival was over, the sixth month began. The squire said to his wife, "Mother, the thirteenth being my birthday, let's set out a feast and invite relatives and friends for an entire day of fun. It will be a joyous day to remember for the rest of my life."

That very day, invitations were sent to relatives, neighbors, friends, and the assistants of Squire Li's store. The next day, all the invited guests came to offer gifts of candles, noodles, and handkerchiefs. On the thirteenth, the [male] guests attended the feast, which was an all day affair. On the following day, the women came to offer their congratulations. About twenty women arrived, including Madam White, who was extravagantly arrayed in a blue blouse woven with golden thread, and a scarlet red gauze skirt and her head glittered with hairpins of silver, gold, pearl, and jade. Taking Little Green with her, she went inside to offer birthday wishes to Squire Li and pay her respects to the hostess.

A feast was laid out in the east hall. In point of fact, Li Keyong was a miser who, if he were to eat a flea, would save a hind leg for later. It was out of his lust for Madam White's beauty and for the pur-



设此一计，大排筵席。[眉批]女色能为人破怪，所□□□。各各传杯弄盏，酒至半酣，却起身脱衣净手。李员外原来预先分付腹心养娘道：“若是白娘子登东，他要进去，你可另引他到后面僻净房内去。”李员外设计已定，先自躲在后面。正是：

不劳钻穴逾墙事，稳做偷香窃玉人。

只见白娘子真个要去净手，养娘便引他到后面一间僻净房内去，养娘自回。那员外心中淫乱，捉身不住，不敢便走进去，却在门缝里张。不张万事皆休，则一张，那员外大吃一惊，回身便走，来到后边，望后倒了。

不知一命如何，先觉四肢不举！

那员外眼中不见如花似玉体态，只见房中蟠着一条吊桶来粗大白蛇，两眼一似灯盏，放出金光来。[眉批]妖必露相了，露相可并收李员外，岂妖怪亦守贞节耶！惊得半死，回身便走，一绊一跤。众养娘扶起看时，面青口白。主管慌忙用安魂定魄丹服了，方才醒来。老安人与众人都来看了，道：“你为何大惊小怪做甚么？”李员外不说其事，说道：“我今日起得早了，连日又辛苦了些，头风病发晕倒了。”扶去房里睡了。众亲眷再入席，饮了几杯，酒筵散罢，

pose of trapping her that he set this grand feast. (*Feminine beauty can change a miser's ways. [Illegible.]*) The wine cups were passed around the feast table, and in the midst of the drinking, Madam White rose to go to the lavatory. Squire Li had already instructed his most trusted maidservant to lead Madam White to a secluded room behind the house should she need to relieve herself. Having thus drawn up his plans, he hid himself there in anticipation. Truly,

He need not scale walls or crawl into holes

But steals the fragrant jade, risk-free.

So when Madam White rose to relieve herself, the maidservant led her to the secluded room behind the house, as instructed. After the maidservant left, the squire, finding it hard to suppress his lustful longings and yet afraid to go straight in, peeked through a chink in the door. Everything would have been all right had he not taken that peek, but he did, and what he saw gave him such a shock that he turned on his heels and ran. As soon as he gained the rear section of the house, he collapsed on his back.

Dead or alive, no one could be sure,

But his limbs were not moving at all.

What the squire had seen was no pretty woman but a coiled-up white snake, its body as thick as a water bucket and its eyes as large as lanterns, emitting golden rays. (*The evil spirit is showing its true shape at last, but by choosing this moment to do so, it scares off Squire Li. How remarkable that an evil spirit should also know the importance of chastity!*)

So, scared half to death, he turned on his heels and ran, but stumbled and fell. When the maidservants helped him up, they saw that his face was green and his lips were white. Terrified, a store assistant fed him pills to pacify his spirits. When he came to, his wife and the guests who had joined the crowd around him asked, "What happened to frighten you like that?"

Instead of telling the truth, Squire Li replied, "I got up too early this morning, and I've been working too hard these last few days. All this brought on a headache so bad that I passed out." After he was taken to his own room to lie down in bed, the guests resumed





众人作谢回家。

白娘子回到家中思想，恐怕明日李员外在铺中对许宣说出本相来。便生一条计，一头脱衣服，一头叹气。许宣道：“今日出去吃酒，因何回来叹气？”白娘子道：“丈夫，说不得！李员外原来假做生日，其心不善。因见我起身登东，他躲在里面，欲要奸骗我，扯裙扯裤来调戏我。欲待叫起来，众人都在那里，怕妆幌子。被我一推倒地，他怕羞没意思，假说晕倒了。这惶恐那里出气！”许宣道：“既不曾奸骗你，他是我主人家，出于无奈，只得忍了这遭，休去便了。”白娘子道：“你不与我做主，还要做人？”许宣道：“先前多承姐夫写书教我投奔他家，亏他不阻，收留在家做主管，如今教我怎的好？”白娘子道：“男子汉，我被他这般欺负，你还去他家做主管？”许宣道：“你教我何处去安身？做何生理？”白娘子道：“做人家主管也是下贱之事，不如自开一个生药铺。”许宣道：“亏你说，只是那讨本钱！”白娘子道：“你放心，这个容易。我明日把些银子，你先去赁了间房子，却又说话。”且说今是古，古是今，各处有这般出热的，间壁有一个人，



their seats at the table and drank a few more cups of wine before thankfully taking their leave when the feast came to an end.

Back at home, Madam White gave herself up to thinking, for she was afraid that Squire Li would tell Xu Xuan her true form the next day when they met in the store. An idea came to her. While she was taking off her clothes, she heaved a sigh.

“Why are you sighing? Didn’t you have fun at the feast?”

“Husband, you won’t believe this! Squire Li was in fact using the birthday celebrations to cover up his evil designs. When I went to the lavatory, I had no idea that he was already hiding there. He tried to force himself on me, tugging at my skirt and pants. I almost screamed but was afraid to alarm all the people there. So I knocked him down. He was too ashamed to admit the truth and told them that he had fainted. Curse my luck! If only I could get back at him!”

“Since he didn’t have his way with you in the end, we’ll just have to put up with it because he’s my employer. We have no other choice. Just don’t accept his next invitation, and that will be it.”

“What? How are you going to face the world if you don’t take my side and do something about it?”

“Well, my brother-in-law wrote to him on my behalf asking for his help, and he was kind enough to take me on as a manager of his store. What do you want me to do now?”

“What kind of man are you? He took liberties with me, and you’ll continue working for him?”

“But where do you want me to go? How am I going to make a living?”

“A store manager is a lowly position. It would be better if we could have an herb store of our own.”

“It’s all very well for you to say, but where’s the money?”

“You needn’t worry. That can be easily taken care of. I’ll give you some silver tomorrow so you can rent a house first, and we’ll go from there.”

As the saying goes, “What’s true today was true in olden times, and what was true in olden times is true today.” Everywhere, there are, and have always been, people who go out of their way to help



姓蒋名和，一生出热好事。次日，许宣问白娘子讨了些银子，教蒋和去镇江渡口马头上赁了一间房子，买下一付生药厨柜，陆续收买生药。十月前后，俱已完备，选日开张药店，不去做主管。那李员外也自知惶恐，不去叫他。

许宣自开店来，不匡买卖一日兴一日，普得厚利。正在门前卖生药，只见一个和尚将着一个募缘簿子，道：“小僧是金山寺和尚，如今七月初七日，是英烈龙王生日，伏望官人到寺烧香，布施些香钱。”许宣道：“不必写名，我有一块好降香，舍与你拿去烧罢。”即便开柜取出，递与和尚。和尚接了，道：“是日望官人来烧香。”打一个问讯去了。白娘子看见，道：“你这杀才，把这一块好香与那贼秃去换酒肉吃！”许宣道：“我一片诚心舍与他，花费了也是他的罪过。”[眉批]都说得是。

不觉又是七月初七日，许宣正开得店，只见街上闹热，人来人往。帮闲的蒋和道：“小乙官，前日布施了香，今日何不去寺内闲走一遭？”许宣道：“我收拾了，略待略待，和你同去。”蒋和道：“小人当得相伴。”许宣连忙收拾了，进去对白娘子道：



others. Living next door to them was a man called Jiang He, who, throughout his life, was given to altruistic deeds. The next day, equipped with Madam White's silver, Xu Xuan asked Jiang He to rent a house by the Zhenjiang ferry pier and buy a set of drawered cabinets in which he could gradually lay up a stock of medicinal herbs. By the tenth month of the year, with all the necessary preparations completed, a day was chosen for the opening of the store, and Xu Xuan quit his job. Troubled by an uneasy conscience, Squire Li knew better than to call him back.

After he opened the store, Xu Xuan found to his surprise that his business prospered day by day and was yielding substantial profits. He was selling medicinal herbs at the door one day when a monk approached with a register of alms, saying, "I'm a monk from Golden Hill Monastery. The seventh day of the seventh month is the birthday of Yinglie the Dragon King. I humbly ask you to offer incense and make donations at the monastery for the occasion."

"You don't have to record my name in your book, but I have here a piece of fine fragrant wood⁸ that you can burn as incense." So saying, Xu Xuan opened a cabinet, took out the wood, and handed it to the monk. The monk accepted the piece of wood, saying, "Please be at the monastery that day!" With a bow, he left.

Having witnessed the scene, Madam White remarked, "How foolish of you to give that lousy bald one such a good piece of wood! He's only going to buy wine and meat with it!"

"I gave it to him in good faith. If he squanders it, that's his problem." (*Both are right.*)

All too quickly, it was again the seventh day of the seventh month. Xu Xuan opened up the shop and saw that the street was a scene of bustling traffic. Jiang He, who was helping out, suggested, "Master Xiaoyi, since you made a donation the other day, why don't you take a trip to the monastery today just for fun?"

"Let me get my things in order and then we can go together. Wait for me a little while."

"All right, I'll go with you."

Xu Xuan hastily put things in order and went to the interior of



“我去金山寺烧香，你可照管家里则个。”白娘子道：“无事不登三宝殿，去做甚么？”许宣道：“一者不曾认得金山寺，要去看一看；二者前日布施了，要去烧香。”白娘子道：“你既要去，我也挡你不得，只要依我三件事。”许宣道：“那三件？”白娘子道：“一件，不要去方丈内去；二件，不要与和尚说话；三件，去了就回。来得迟，我便来寻你也。”许宣道：“这个何妨，都依得。”当时换了新鲜衣服鞋袜，袖了香盒，同蒋和径到江边，搭了船，投金山寺来。先到龙王堂烧了香，绕寺闲走了一遍，同众人信步来到方丈门前。许宣猛省道：“妻子分付我休要进方丈内去。”立住了脚不进去。蒋和道：“不妨事。他自在家中，回去只说不曾去便了。”[眉批]黄片腔。说罢，走入去看了一回，便出来。

且说方丈当中座上，坐着一个有德行的和尚，眉清目秀，圆顶方袍，看了模样，的是真僧。一见许宣走过，便叫侍者：“快叫那后生进来。”侍者看了一回，人千人万，乱滚滚的，又不记得他，回说：“不知他走那边去了？”和尚见说，持了禅杖，自出方丈来，前后寻不见。复身出寺来看，只见众人都在那里等风浪静



the house, where he said to Madam White, "I'm going to Golden Hill Monastery to burn some incense. You look after the house."

Madam White replied, "As the saying goes, 'One doesn't go to the temple without a reason.' Now, what's your reason for going?"

"First, I've never been there, so I want to see it. Second, having given a donation the other day, I'd like to offer some incense."

"If you're so determined to go, I can't stop you, but you have to promise me three things."

"What three things?"

"First, don't go into the abbot's cell. Second, don't talk with the monks. Third, come back as soon as possible. If you don't, I'll have to come and get you."

"Fair enough. I'll do as you say." He changed into clean clothes, shoes, and stockings and slipped his incense box into his sleeve. Then, together with Jiang He, he went to the riverside, got on a boat, and went to Golden Hill Monastery.

They started their tour from Dragon King Hall, where they burned incense. Afterward, they took a leisurely walk around the monastery. Xu Xuan followed the crowd and was approaching the door of the abbot's cell when he suddenly recalled his wife's admonition. "My wife warned me not to enter the abbot's cell," he said. He stopped in his tracks and stayed outside.

"It's all right," said Jiang He. "She's at home, so she won't know. Just tell her you didn't go in." (*What a liar!*) With that, they went in, took a look around, and came out.

Sitting in the center seat in the cell was a monk of great moral integrity. With finely marked eyebrows, bright eyes, a round head, and a monk's robe, he did indeed possess the looks of a truly great master. At the sight of Xu Xuan passing by, he called out to his attendant, "Bring me that young man, quick!"

The attendant looked around, but unable to recall the young man's features as he stared at the masses of people before him, he said to the abbot, "I have no idea where he's gone."

At these words, the abbot picked up his cane and left the cell to search on his own. He didn't see Xu Xuan anywhere and went out-



了落船。那风浪越大了，道：“去不得。”正看之间，只见江心里一只船，飞也似来得快。许宣对蒋和道：“这般大风浪，过不得渡，那只船如何到来得快？”正说之间，船已将近。看时，一个穿白的妇人，一个穿青的女子来到岸边。仔细一认，正是白娘子和青青两个。许宣这一惊非小。白娘子来到岸边，叫道：“你如何不归？快来上船！”许宣却欲上船，只听得有人在背后喝道：“业畜！在此做甚么？”许宣回头看时，人说道：“法海禅师来了！”禅师道：“业畜，敢再来无礼，残害生灵！老僧为你特来。”白娘子见了和尚，摇开船，和青青把船一翻，两个都翻下水底去了。许宣回身看着和尚便拜：“告尊师，救弟子一条草命！”禅师道：“你如何遇着这妇人？”许宣把前项事情从头说了一遍。禅师听罢，道：“这妇人正是妖怪，汝可速回杭州去。如再来缠汝，可到湖南净慈寺里来寻我。有诗四句：

本是妖精变妇人，西湖岸上卖娇声。

汝因不识遭他计，有难湖南见老僧。

许宣拜谢了法海禅师，同蒋和下了渡船，过了江，上岸归家。白



side, where a crowd was waiting for the stormy waves to subside before boarding the boats. But the tempest rose higher. Amid laments of "This is no time to go," there, for all to see, came a boat speeding toward them as if on wings.

Xu Xuan commented to Jiang He, "This big storm has stranded all of us here. How come that boat can go so fast?" Even as he spoke, the boat drew near. Two women, one in white and one in green, were seen coming to shore. What was Xu Xuan's astonishment when, upon a closer look, he found them to be Madam White and Little Green!

As they gained the shore, Madam White called out, "Why didn't you come back earlier? Get on the boat, quick!"

Xu Xuan was about to board when a voice was heard shouting from behind, "What is that foul beast doing here?"

As Xu Xuan turned around, he heard voices saying, "Abbot Fahai is here!"

"You foul beast!" continued the abbot. "This old monk is here to make sure you won't dare come again and do harm to people!"

At the sight of the monk, Madam White rowed the boat away from the shore. Then, she and Little Green tipped the boat over and disappeared into the water.

Xu Xuan bowed to the abbot, saying, "Your Reverence, please save this worthless life of mine!"

"How did you meet that woman?" asked the abbot, whereupon Xu Xuan recounted all that had happened.

After listening to his story, the abbot said, "That woman is an evil spirit. Now, go back to Hangzhou as soon as possible. If she comes to pester you again, you can find me at Clear Mercy Monastery south of the lake. Let me give you a quatrain:

*"An evil spirit in the shape of a woman,
Her voice rings sweet by West Lake.
Unsuspecting, you fell into her trap;
When in distress, come to me south of the lake."*

Thankfully, Xu Xuan took leave of Abbot Fahai and embarked on a ferry boat with Jiang He. After crossing the river, he went



娘子同青青都不见了，方才信是妖精。到晚来，教蒋和相伴过夜，心中昏闷，一夜不睡。

次日早起，叫蒋和看着家里，却来到针子桥李克用家，把前项事情告诉了一遍。李克用道：“我生日之时，他登东，我撞将去，不期见了这妖怪，惊得我死去。我又不敢与你说这话。既然如此，你且搬来我这里住着，别作道理。”许宣作谢了李员外，依旧搬到他家。不觉住过两月有馀。

忽一日，立在门前，只见地方总甲分付排门人等，俱要香花灯烛，迎接朝廷恩赦。原来是宋高宗策立孝宗，降赦通行天下，只除人命大事，其余小事，尽行赦放回家。许宣遇赦，欢喜不胜，吟诗一首，诗云：

感谢吾皇降赦文，网开三面许更新。
死时不作他邦鬼，生日还为旧土人。
不幸逢妖愁更甚，何期遇宥罪除根？
归家满把香焚起，拜谢乾坤再造恩。

许宣吟诗已毕，央李员外衙门上下打点，使用了钱，见了大尹，给引还乡。拜谢东邻西舍，李员外、妈妈、合家大小、二位主管，



ashore and returned home, but Madam White and Little Green were not there. Now convinced that they were evil spirits, he had Jiang He spend the night with him to keep him company. He felt so miserable that he did not sleep a wink throughout the night. The next morning, he rose early and had Jiang He take care of the house while he went to Li Keyong's house by Needle Bridge and told the squire everything that had happened.

Squire Li said, "On that day during my birthday celebrations, I ran into her accidentally when she went to the lavatory and saw her in her true beastly form. I was scared to death, but I didn't dare tell you about it. Now that things have come to this, why don't you move into my house while you decide what to do next?"

Xu Xuan thanked Squire Li and moved in. Quite unnoticeably, two months slipped by.

One day, he was standing by the door when he saw the local headman going from door to door, soliciting donations of incense, flowers, lanterns, and candles to celebrate the imperial court's amnesty. Emperor Gaozong had designated his heir apparent, who was later to be Emperor Xiaozong, and an amnesty was granted to mark the occasion. Except those convicted of homicide, all prisoners throughout the land were released and allowed to return home. Jubilantly, Xu Xuan intoned a poem:

*"The emperor be praised for this act of mercy!
 The freed convict gains a new lease on life.
 I am not fated to die in an alien land,
 But will resume my life in my hometown.
 My ill-starred meeting with the demon brought me woe;
 I never dreamed that I'd be cleared of all charges.
 On my return, I shall fill the house with incense,
 To thank the cosmos for a life reborn.*

After intoning the poem, he asked Squire Li to present gifts of money to those high and low throughout the yamen. He then had an audience with the prefect and was given a pass for his return journey to his hometown. He offered his thanks to the neighbors, Squire Li's wife and other members of the Li family, old and young, as well as



俱拜别了。央帮闲的蒋和买了些土物，带回杭州。

来到家中，见了姐夫、姐姐，拜了四拜。李募事见了许宣，焦躁道：“你好生欺负人，我两遭写书教你投托人，你在李员外家娶了老小，不直得寄封书来教我知道，直恁的无仁无义！”许宣说：“我不曾娶妻小。”姐夫道：“见今两日前，有一个妇人，带着一个丫鬟，道是你的妻子。说你七月初七日去金山寺烧香，不见回来，那里不寻到。直到如今，打听得你回杭州，同丫鬟先到这里，等你两日了。”教人叫出那妇人和丫鬟，见了许宣。许宣看见，果是白娘子、青青。许宣见了，目瞪口呆，吃了一惊。不在姐夫、姐姐面前说这话本，只得任他埋怨了一场。李募事教许宣共白娘子去一间房内去安身。许宣见晚了，怕这白娘子，心中慌了，不敢向前，朝着白娘子跪在地下，道：“不知你是何神何鬼？可饶我的性命！”白娘子道：“小乙哥，是何道理？我和你许多时夫妻，又不曾亏负你，如何说这等没力气的话！”许宣道：“自从和你相识之后，带累我吃了两场官司。我到镇江府，你又来寻我。前日金山寺烧香，归得迟了，你和青青又直赶来，见了禅师，便跳下江里去了。我只道你死了，不想你又先到此。望乞可怜见，饶我则个！”白娘子圆睁怪眼，道：“小乙官，我也只是为好，谁



the two managers. Carrying with him some local products that the ever helpful Jiang He had bought for him at his request, he made his way back to Hangzhou.

As he bowed four times to his brother-in-law Officer Li and his sister, his brother-in-law said in irritation, "How arrogant you can be! Twice I wrote letters of recommendation on your behalf, but you never even bothered to write and tell me that you were married at Squire Li's place. What a false-hearted scoundrel you are!"

"But I'm not married."

"Two days ago, a woman who claimed to be your wife came here with her maid, saying that you couldn't be found anywhere after your trip to Golden Hill Monastery on the seventh day of the seventh month. After learning that you were returning to Hangzhou, they came here and have been waiting for you for two days." So saying, the brother-in-law had a servant summon the woman and the maid. Who should appear but Madam White and Little Green! Xu Xuan was flabbergasted. Not wishing to give a detailed explanation to his brother-in-law and sister, he listened resignedly to a harsh lecture, after which Officer Li told him to retire with Madam White to a room assigned to them.

Seeing that it was now getting dark, Xu Xuan grew afraid of Madam White. Nervously, he fell to his knees, facing her but not daring to go near her, and pleaded, "Please spare my life, whoever you are, goddess or evil spirit!"

"What are you doing, Brother Xiaoyi?" said Madam White. "In all our married years, I've never done you any wrong. Why are you saying such absurd things?"

"Since I've known you, you've twice gotten me in trouble with the law. I went to Zhenjiang Prefecture, and you came after me. The other day, I was just a little late returning from a trip to Golden Hill Monastery, and you had to run after me with Little Green. When you jumped into the river at the sight of the abbot, I thought you had died. What a surprise when you turned up again here, and before I arrived, too! Please have mercy!"

Her fiendish eyes wide open, Madam White said, "Brother Xiaoyi,



想到成怨本！我与你平生夫妇，共枕同衾，许多恩爱。如今却信别人闲言语，教我夫妻不睦。我如今实对你说，若听我言语，喜喜欢欢，万事皆休。若生外心，教你满城皆为血水，人人手攀洪浪，脚踏浑波，皆死于非命。”惊得许宣战战兢兢，半晌无言可答，不敢走近前去。青青劝道：“官人，娘子爱你杭州人生得好，又喜你恩情深重。听我说，与娘子和睦了，休要疑虑。”许宣吃两个缠不过，叫道：“却是苦耶！”只见姐姐在天井里乘凉，听得叫苦，连忙来到房前，只道他两个儿厮闹，拖了许宣出来。白娘子关上房门自睡。许宣把前因后事，一一对姐姐告诉了一遍。却好姐夫乘凉归房，姐姐道：“他两口儿厮闹了，如今不知睡了也未，你且去张一张了来。”李募事走到房前看时，里头黑了，半亮不亮，将舌头咭破纸窗。不张万事皆休，一张时，见一条吊桶来大的蟒蛇，睡在床上，伸头在天窗内乘凉，鳞甲内放出白光来，照得房内如同白日。[眉批]看武后事，焉知此白蛇非美妇耶？或白蛇能变美妇耶？吃了一惊，回身便走。来到房中，不说其事。道：“睡了，



I did everything out of the best of intentions, little knowing that I would turn out to be the cause of such resentment! We were a loving couple, sharing the same pillow and the same quilt, and yet you had to believe some vicious gossip meant to sow dissension between us. Let me tell you something frankly. If you do as I say, everybody will be happy, and every grudge forgotten. But if you betray me, I'll drench the whole town in a bloodbath and toss everyone from wave to wave in the river until all die violent deaths."

Xu Xuan trembled with fear and was speechless for quite a while, nor did he dare take a step forward. Then Little Green spoke in a pacifying tone, "Madam loves you because of your Hangzhou native's good looks and your deep affection for her. Now listen to me and make up with her. Have no more suspicions."

Thus under pressure from both of them, Xu Xuan cried out, "Woe is me!"

Upon hearing the cry, his sister, who was enjoying the cool air in the courtyard, rushed to their door. Believing it to be just another conjugal fight, she dragged Xu Xuan out of the room, whereupon Madam White closed the door and went to sleep alone.

When Xu Xuan was giving his sister a detailed account of everything that had happened, his brother-in-law returned from the courtyard. The sister told him, "They just had a fight. I wonder if she has gone to sleep or not. Could you go take a look?"

Accordingly, Officer Li went up to Madam White's room, but since the lamp had gone out, there was only a faint glimmer inside. So, he wetted the window paper with his tongue and looked in through the hole. Everything would have been all right had he not looked, but he did, and he saw a python with a body as thick as a water bucket sleeping in bed, its head resting against the skylight so it could take in fresh air. Its shining white scales made the room as light as day. (*Judging from the case of Empress Wu, how do we know that this white snake is not a beautiful woman? Who is to say that a white snake can't change into a beautiful woman?*) In shock, he turned on his heels and fled.

Back in his own room, instead of telling anyone what he had



不见则声。”许宣躲在姐姐房中，不敢出头，姐夫也不问他。

过了一夜，次日，李募事叫许宣出去，到僻静处，问道：“你妻子从何娶来？实实的对我说，不要瞒我！自昨夜亲眼看见他是一条大白蛇，我怕你姐姐害怕，不说出来。”许宣把从头事，一对姐夫说了一遍。李募事道：“既是这等，白马庙前一个呼蛇戴先生，如法捉得蛇，我同你去接他。”二人取路来到白马庙前，只见戴先生正立在门口。二人道：“先生拜揖。”先生道：“有何见谕？”许宣道：“家中有一条大蟒蛇，相烦一捉则个！”先生道：“宅上何处？”许宣道：“过军将桥黑珠儿巷内李募事家便是。”取出一两银子道：“先生收了银子，待捉得蛇，另又相谢。”先生收了道：“二位先回，小子便来。”李募事与许宣自回。

那先生装了一瓶雄黄药水，一直来到黑珠儿巷内，问李募事家。人指道：“前面那楼子内便是。”先生来到门前，揭起帘子，咳嗽一声，并无一个人出来。敲了半晌门，只见一个小娘子出来问道：“寻谁家？”先生道：“此是李募事家么？”小娘子道：“便是。”先生道：“说宅上有一条大蛇，却才二位官人来请小子



seen, he said, "She's gone to bed. There isn't a sound." But Xu Xuan still hid himself in his sister's room, not daring to show his face, nor did his brother-in-law question him. The night passed without further ado.

The next day, Officer Li took Xu Xuan outside to a secluded spot and asked, "Where did you get this wife of yours? Tell me the truth! Don't hide anything from me! Last night, I saw with my own eyes that she is a big white snake. I didn't say anything at the time because I didn't want to frighten your sister."

Upon learning the entire story, Officer Li said, "In that case, let's go to Mr. Dai the snake charmer in front of White Horse Temple. He's good at catching snakes."

The two men proceeded to White Horse Temple and saw Mr. Dai standing right there by the gate. "Greetings to you, sir!" they called out.

"What can I do for you?"

"There's a big python in our house," said Xu Xuan. "Could you please go and catch it?"

"Where is your house?"

"It's Officer Li's house on Black Pearl Lane by Reward the Troops Bridge." Taking out a tael of silver, Xu Xuan added, "Please take this for now. We'll have more to offer you by way of thanks after the snake is caught."

Mr. Dai took the silver and said, "You can go home now, gentlemen. I'll come right away." So Officer Li and Xu Xuan returned home by themselves.

Armed with a bottle of medicated wine,⁹ Mr. Dai headed straight for Black Pearl Lane and asked for directions to Officer Li's house. Upon being told that it was the very two-storied house up ahead, he went to the door, lifted the portiere, and coughed, but no one came to answer. He kept knocking on the door until a young woman emerged. "Which family are you looking for?" she asked.

"Is this Officer Li's home?"

"Yes."

"I heard that there's a big snake in the house. Two gentlemen just



捉蛇。”小娘子道：“我家那有大蛇？你差了。”先生道：“官人先与我一两银子，说捉了蛇后，有重谢。”白娘子道：“没有，休信他们哄你。”先生道：“如何作耍？”白娘子三回五次发落不去，焦躁起来，道：“你真个会捉蛇？只怕你捉他不得！”戴先生道：“我祖宗七八代呼蛇捉蛇，量道一条蛇有何难捉！”娘子道：“你说捉得，只怕你见了要走！”先生道：“不走，不走！如走，罚一锭白银。”娘子道：“随我来。”到天井内，那娘子转个弯，走进了。那先生手中提着瓶儿，立在空中地上。不多时，只见刮起一阵冷风，风过处，只见一条吊桶来大的蟒蛇，速射将来。正是：

人无害虎心，虎有伤人意。

且说那戴先生吃了一惊，望后便倒。雄黄罐儿也打破了。那条大蛇张开血红大口，露出雪白齿，来咬先生。先生慌忙爬起来，只恨爹娘少生两脚，一口气跑过桥来，正撞着李募事与许宣。许宣道：“如何？”那先生道：“好教二位得知。”把前项事从头说了一遍。取出那一两银子，付还李募事道：“若不生这双脚，连性命都没了。二位自去照顾别人。”急急的去了。许宣道：“姐



came to ask me to catch it for them.”

“How can there be a snake in our house? You’re quite mistaken.”

“The gentlemen gave me one tael of silver, saying that they’ll have a handsome reward for me after the snake is caught.”

“But there is no snake,” insisted Madam White. “Don’t believe the nonsense they told you.”

“Why would they play tricks on me?”

Her repeated attempts to drive him away unavailing, Madam White grew impatient. “Do you really know how to catch snakes? I’m afraid you won’t be able to get this one!”

“We’ve had seven or eight generations of snake charmers in our family. Why wouldn’t I be able to get this particular snake?”

“You may very well say so,” retorted Madam White, “but I’m afraid you’ll want to get out of here as soon as you see it!”

“I won’t! If I do, I’ll let you fine me one ingot of silver.”

“Follow me, then.”

When they got to the courtyard, the woman turned a corner and disappeared into the house. Bottle of wine in hand, Mr. Dai stood in the empty courtyard. Soon, a chilly wind sprang up. As it blew past, a python with a body as thick as a water bucket thrust fiercely at him. Truly,

The human means no harm to the tiger;

The tiger is bent on harming the human.

A terrified Mr. Dai fell backwards, smashing his bottle of medicated wine. The python lunged forward as if to bite him, its bloody-red mouth wide open, showing its snow-white fangs. He scrambled desperately to his feet and, regretting that his parents had not given him two extra legs, ran all the way across the bridge in one breath. There, he bumped into Officer Li and Xu Xuan.

Xu Xuan asked, “How did it go?”

“Let me tell you what happened.” After recounting the event, he took out the tael of silver and returned it to Officer Li, adding, “Had I not been blessed with these two legs of mine, I would have died. Now, you gentlemen save this for someone else.” With that, he scurried off.



夫，如今怎么处？”李募事道：“眼见实是妖怪了，如今赤山埠前张成家欠我一千贯钱，你去那里静处讨一间房儿住下。那怪物不见了你，自然去了。”许宣无计可奈，只得应承。同姐夫到家时，静悄悄的，没些动静。李募事写了书帖，和票子做一封，教许宣往赤山埠去。只见白娘子叫许宣到房中，道：“你好大胆，又叫甚么捉蛇的来！你若和我好意，佛眼相看；若不好时，带累一城百姓受苦，都死于非命！”许宣听得，心寒胆战，不敢则声。将了票子，闷闷不已。来到赤山埠前，寻着了张成，随即袖中取票时，不见了。只叫得苦，慌忙转步，一路寻回来时，那里见！正闷之间，来到净慈寺前。忽地里想起那金山寺长老法海禅师曾分付来：“倘若那妖怪再来杭州缠你，可来净慈寺内来寻我。如今不寻，更待何时！”急入寺中，问监寺道：“动问和尚，法海禅师曾来上刹也未？”那和尚道：“不曾到来。”许宣听得说不在，越闷。折身便回来长桥堍下，自言自语道：“‘时衰鬼弄人’，我要性命何用？”看着一湖清水，却待要跳！正是：

阎王判你三更到，定不容人到四更。



“Brother-in-law, what are we going to do now?” asked Xu Xuan.

“Well, we know for sure that she’s an evil spirit. Now, Zhang Cheng of Red Hill Town owes me a thousand strings of cash. You go there, wait patiently, and rent a room. With you out of its sight, that monster will surely leave.”

Xu Xuan saw no alternative but to agree. Upon arriving at home with his brother-in-law, he found the house quiet with nothing astir. Officer Li wrote a letter and put it in an envelope, along with the receipt of the loan, for Xu Xuan to take with him to Red Hill Town.

At this point, Madam White called Xu Xuan to her room. “The audacity!” she said. “Hiring a snake charmer to get me! If you are good to me, I’ll be as kind to you as a Buddha to you. Otherwise, I’ll have to make the entire population of the town suffer and die violent deaths!”

Shaking with fright, Xu Xuan dared not utter a word. In low spirits, he took the envelope and went to Red Hill Town, where he found Zhang Cheng. When he tried to take the loan receipt out of his sleeve, he realized it was gone. Groaning in dismay, he turned back and looked for it along the way, but without success. Dejected, he found himself in front of Clear Mercy Monastery, which suddenly reminded him that Abbot Fahai of Golden Hill Monastery had told him that if that evil spirit followed him to Hangzhou to pester him again, he could find the monk at Clear Mercy Monastery. He said to himself, “Now is the time to do that. What am I waiting for?” Without a moment’s delay, he entered the monastery and asked the head monk, “Your Reverence, is Abbot Fahai here?”

“No, he’s not here.”

These words made him feel even more miserable. He turned around and proceeded to Long Bridge. Stopping at the foot of the bridge, he said to himself, “As the proverb goes, ‘When down and out, one falls easy victim to the devil.’ Why would I want to hang on to life?” Gazing at the clear water, he prepared to jump into the lake. Truly,

*If King Yama¹⁰ wants you at the third watch,
 He won’t let you live till the fourth watch.*



许宣正欲跳水，只听得背后有人叫道：“男子汉何故轻生！死了一万口，只当五千双，有事何不问我？”许宣回头看时，正是法海禅师，背驮衣钵，手提禅杖，原来真个才到。也是不该命尽，再迟一碗饭时，性命也休了。许宣见了禅师，纳头便拜，道：“救弟子一命则个！”禅师道：“这业畜在何处？”许宣把上项事一一诉了，道：“如今又直到这里，求尊师救度一命。”禅师于袖中取出一个钵盂，递与许宣，道：“你若到家，不可教妇人得知，悄悄的将此物劈头一罩，切勿手轻，紧紧的按住，不可心慌。你便回去。”

且说许宣，拜谢了禅师回家。只见白娘子正坐在那里，口内喃喃的骂道：“不知甚人挑拨我丈夫和我做冤家，打听出来，和他理会！”正是有心等了没心的，许宣张得他眼慢，背后悄悄的望白娘子头上一罩，用尽平生气力纳住，不见了女子之形，随着钵盂慢慢的按下，不敢手松，紧紧的按住。只听得钵盂内道：“和你数载夫妻，好没一些儿人情！略放一放！”许宣正没了结处，报道：“有一个和尚，说道：‘要收妖怪。’”许宣听得，连忙教李



He was about to throw himself into the water when he heard a voice behind him calling out, "Why would a grown man want to kill himself? Don't you know that ten thousand deaths can be easily written off as only five thousand when you count them in pairs? Don't you see the worthlessness of death? Why don't you ask for my help when you find yourself in trouble?"

Xu Xuan turned around and whom did he see but Abbot Fahai! His cassock and alms bowl on his back, his cane in his hand, he had indeed just arrived. Xu Xuan was not destined to die at this hour after all, for if the abbot had tarried for as long as it takes to eat a bowl of rice, Xu Xuan would have perished. At the sight of the abbot, he bowed deeply, saying, "Please save my life!"

"Where is that cursed beast?"

Xu Xuan told him what had happened, adding, "She's after me again. Please save me, Your Reverence."

The abbot produced an alms bowl from his sleeve and handed it to Xu Xuan, saying, "After you get home, don't let her know you're back, and place the bowl firmly over her head. Press it down hard. Don't panic. You may go home now."

Xu Xuan thankfully took leave of the abbot and returned home. There, he saw Madam White, seated and muttering to herself, "I wonder who poisoned my husband's mind against me. I'll have it out with him when I find out!"

Now, just as a person with a plan waits for the right moment to pounce on the unsuspecting party, Xu Xuan sneaked up on Madam White from behind and put the bowl over her head. As he applied all his weight on the bowl, the woman disappeared, but he kept pushing the bowl down without ever letting up. A voice from inside the bowl pleaded, "How can you be so heartless after we have lived together as husband and wife for all these years? Release the bowl just a little bit!"

Xu Xuan was wondering what to do when he heard the announcement, "There's a monk here who says he's come to subdue an evil spirit."

Xu Xuan immediately asked Officer Li to invite the abbot into



募事请禅师进来。来到里面，许宣道：“救弟子则个！”不知禅师口里念的甚么，念毕，轻轻的揭起钵盂，只见白娘子缩做七八寸长，如傀儡人像，双眸紧闭，做一堆儿伏在地下。禅师喝道：“是何业畜妖怪，怎敢缠人？可说备细！”白娘子答道：“禅师，我是一条大蟒蛇，因为风雨大作，来到西湖上安身，同青青一处。不想遇着许宣，春心荡漾，按纳不住，一时冒犯天条，却不曾杀生害命，望禅师慈悲则个！”[眉批] 难得！禅师又问：“青青是何怪？”白娘子道：“青青是西湖内第三桥下潭内千年成气的青鱼，一时遇着，拉他为伴。他不曾得一日欢娱，并望禅师怜悯！”[眉批] 难中尚照顾青青，白娘子真仁义之妖也。禅师道：“念你千年修炼，免你一死，可现本相！”白娘子不肯。禅师勃然大怒，口中念念有词，大喝道：“揭谛何在？快与我擒青鱼怪来，和白蛇现形，听吾发落！”须臾，庭前起一阵狂风，风过处，只闻得豁刺一声响，半空中坠下一个青鱼，有一丈多长，向地拨刺的连跳几跳，缩做尺馀长一个小青鱼。看那白娘子时，也复了原形，变了三尺长一条白蛇，兀自昂头看着许宣。禅师将二物置于钵盂之内，扯下褊衫一幅，封了钵盂口，拿到雷峰寺前，将钵盂放在地下，令人搬



the house. "Please save me!" pleaded Xu Xuan.

After muttering goodness knows what words to himself, the abbot gently lifted the bowl and, there for all to see was Madam White, reduced to a length of only seven or eight inches, looking like a puppet, her eyes tightly closed and her body huddled up on the floor. The abbot shouted, "What are you? How dare you pester human beings? Tell me everything!"

"Abbot, I am a python. In a raging storm of wind and rain one day, I went to West Lake to find shelter and joined Little Green there. And then, something unanticipated happened. I met Xu Xuan. Unable to control my desires, I violated the heavenly rules, but I never took a life. Please have mercy on me, Abbot!" (*One can hardly find her equal anywhere!*)

"And what exactly is Little Green?" the abbot persisted.

"She's a carp from the pond under the third bridge in West Lake. She acquired immortality after a thousand years of spiritual cultivation. I met her quite by accident and made her my companion. She hasn't had any fun, not even for one day. Please have pity on her, Abbot!" (*In such a desperate situation, she still remembers to put in a good word for Little Green. A truly kind evil spirit she is!*)

"I'll spare your lives, considering the thousand years of spiritual cultivation that you have undertaken. Now show your true selves!"

Madam White refused. In a rage, the abbot intoned an incantation and shouted, "Guardian of the Buddha-truth [*lokapala*]! Where might you be? Get me the carp, and make it and the white snake show their true forms so that I may render judgment on them!"

In a trice, a fierce wind sprang up in the yard. After the wind had swept past, a carp more than ten feet long fell from mid-air with a heavy thud. It bounced on the ground a few times before shrinking into a small carp one foot in length. By this time, Madam White had also been reduced to her true form as a three-foot-long white snake, staring at Xu Xuan, its head raised high. The abbot put the snake and the carp in the bowl, sealed it with a piece of cloth torn from his cassock, and took it to Thunder Peak Monastery. He laid the bowl on the ground in front of the monastery and ordered men to transport



砖运石，砌成一塔。后来许宣化缘，砌成了七层宝塔。千年万载，白蛇和青鱼不能出世。

且说禅师押镇了，留偈四句：

西湖水干，江湖不起。

雷峰塔倒，白蛇出世。

法海禅师言偈毕，又题诗八句，以劝后人：

奉劝世人休爱色，爱色之人被色迷。

心正自然邪不扰，身端怎有恶来欺。

但看许宣因爱色，带累官司惹是非。

不是老僧来救护，白蛇吞了不留些。

法海禅师吟罢，各人自散。惟有许宣情愿出家，礼拜禅师为师，就雷峰塔披剃为僧。修行数年，一夕坐化去了。众僧买龕烧化，造一座骨塔，千年不朽。临去世时，亦有诗四句，留以警世，诗曰：

祖师度我出红尘，铁树开花始见春。

化化轮回重化化，生生转变再生生。

欲知有色还无色，须识无形却有形。



bricks and stones to the site to build a pagoda. Later, Xu Xuan sought donations and with the money thus raised made it into a magnificent seven-story pagoda. For tens of thousands of years, the white snake and the carp were not to be freed from that spot.

Let us retrace our steps and come back to the moment when the abbot laid the bowl on the ground. He intoned the following quatrain:

*“When West Lake is drained of its water,
When all the rivers and the lakes run dry,
When Thunder Peak Pagoda falls down,
The white snake will then see the light of day.”*

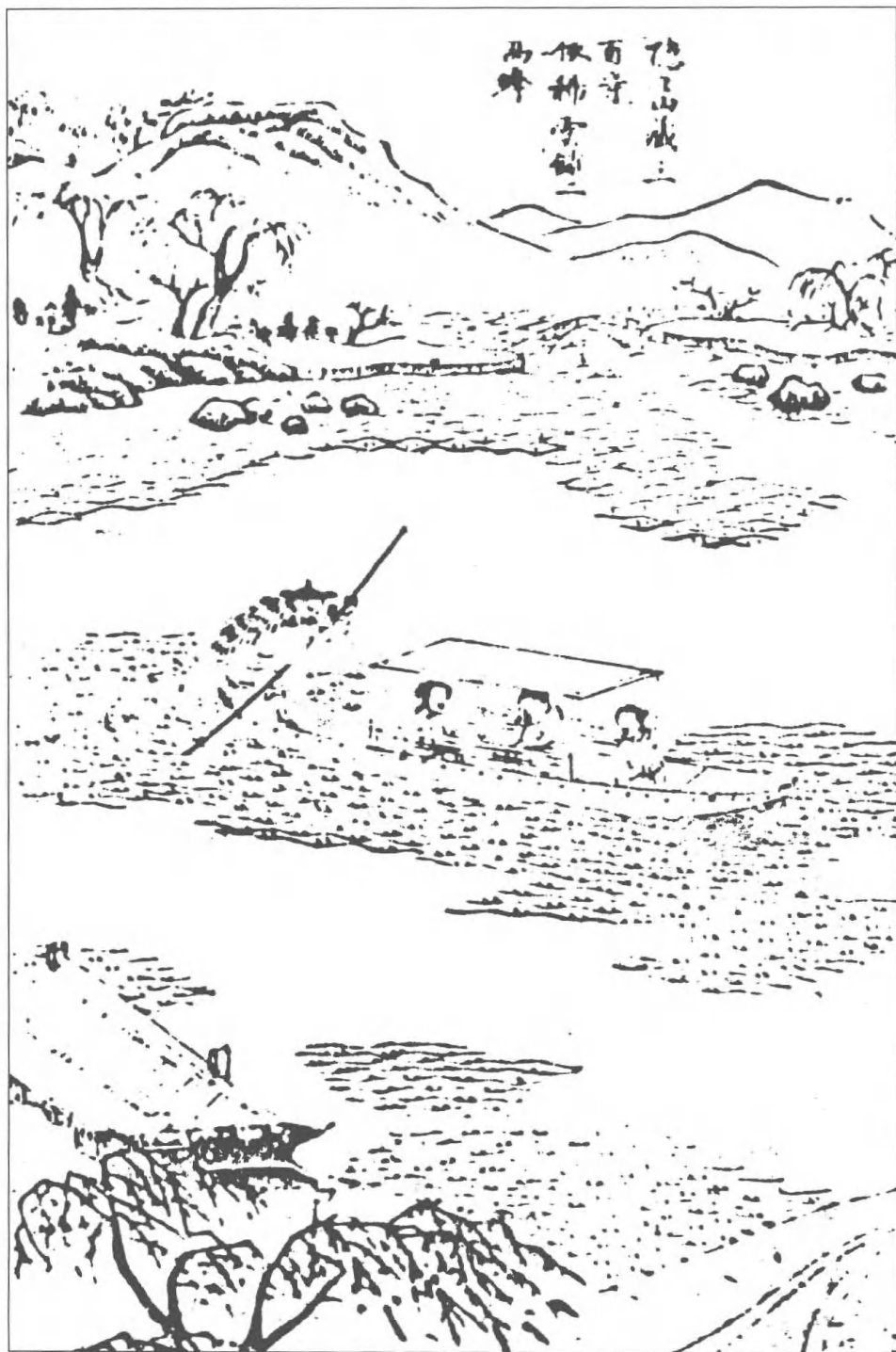
Abbot Fahai then intoned another eight lines as a warning to posterity:

*“Be advised! Do not abandon yourselves to lust;
Those who do will be held under its spell.
Evil eschews the pure in heart;
Bane visits not the virtuous.
Consider how Xu Xuan, a victim to his lust,
Found himself in trouble with the law.
Had it not been for this old monk’s succor,
The white snake would have swallowed him whole.”*

After the abbot finished intoning this poem, the crowd dispersed, but Xu Xuan stayed behind to ask to join the Buddhist order. Honoring the abbot as his mentor, he took the tonsure right there by Thunder Peak Pagoda and became a monk. After several years of spiritual cultivation, he willed his death while sitting in his seat one evening. The assembly of monks in the monastery bought a monk’s coffin for him, had his body cremated, and built a tower for his ashes as a monument to his eternal memory. Before he died, he also wrote a poem by way of an admonition to posterity:

*The abbot delivered me from the mortal world;
The iron tree burst into spring blossoms.
The wheel of life and death goes round and round;
Reincarnation occurs life after life.
The phenomenal world is elusive,
The formless, in fact, is not lacking in form.*

色即是空空即色，空空色色要分明。





*The Form is the Void; the Void is the Form;
Yet the two should be clearly set apart.*

This story has been translated by Diana Yu as “Eternal Prisoner under the Thunder Peak Pagoda” in *Traditional Chinese Stories; Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) and also by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang as “The White Snake” in *Chinese Literature* (July 1959): 103–139.

¹ Bianzhou, or Bianjing, present-day Kaifeng in Henan Province, was the capital of the Song dynasty before the court moved south to Hangzhou.

² Lin Bu (967–1029), courtesy name Junfu, was a Song dynasty poet, posthumously given the title Hejing.

³ Bai Juyi (772–846) was a well-known Tang dynasty poet. He is featured in story 10.

⁴ Su Shi (1037–1101), also called Su Dongpo, was a famous scholar of the Song dynasty. For more on Su Shi, see story 3.

⁵ The Qingming Festival is the Clear and Bright Festival, a day on which people visit their ancestors’ graves.

⁶ These baskets hold paper coins, paper horses, and other items for the deceased to use in the underworld.

⁷ Animal blood is believed to have the power to combat sorcery.

⁸ *Jiangxiang*, rendered here as “fragrant wood”, is *Acronychia pedunculata*, a small forest tree in the Rutaceae family.

⁹ This is wine seasoned with *xionghuang* (realgar), which is usually drunk at the Dragon Boat Festival, the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, to detoxify the body.

¹⁰ King Yama is the ruler of hell.



第二十九卷

宿香亭张浩遇莺莺

闲向书斋阅古今，生非草本岂无情。
佳人才子多奇遇，难比张生遇李莺。

话说西洛有一才子，姓张名浩，字巨源，自儿曹时清秀异众。既长，才摘蜀锦，貌莹寒冰，容止可观，言词简当。承祖父之遗业，家藏镪数万，以财豪称于乡里。贵族中有慕其门第者，欲结婚姻，虽媒妁日至，浩正色拒之。人谓浩曰：“君今冠矣，男子二十而冠，何不求名家令德女子配君，其理安在？”浩曰：“大凡百岁姻缘，必要十分美满。[眉批]是亦一道。某虽非才子，实慕佳人。不遇出世娇姿，宁可终身鳏处。且俟功名到手之日，此愿或可遂耳！”缘此至弱冠之年，犹未纳室。浩性喜厚自奉养，所居连檐重阁，洞户相通，华丽雄壮，与王侯之家相等，浩犹以为隘窄。又于所居之北，创置一园。中有：

风亭月榭，杏坞桃溪，云楼上倚晴空，水阁下临清泚。
横塘曲岸，露偃月虹桥；朱槛雕栏，叠生云怪石。烂熳奇花



Story 29

Zhang Hao Meets Yingying at Lingering Fragrance Pavilion

*I read books old and new in moments of leisure;
 Unlike grass or trees, humans are born with feelings.
 Of all intriguing stories of romance,
 None matches that about Zhang Hao and Li Ying.*

Our story took place in Luoyang, where there lived a gifted young man, Zhang Hao by name, Juyuan by courtesy name. Endowed since his earliest years with unusually refined looks, he had delicate features, a graceful deportment, and a cultured style of conversation. He was also a brilliant scholar. Left with an inheritance worth tens of thousands of taels of silver from his grandfather, he was widely known throughout the region for his immense wealth. Some local leading families, coveting his status, sent matchmakers every day with marriage proposals, which he sternly rejected. People said to him, "You are twenty now. Why don't you want to marry some nice girl from a good family?"

To such words he retorted, "A lifelong marriage must be a flawless one. (*Valid point.*) I may not be a talented scholar, but I am an admirer of beauty. If I can't have a wife of ravishing beauty, I'd rather be a bachelor all my life. My wish is more likely to be fulfilled if I pass the civil service examinations." For this reason, he remained unbetrothed at the age of twenty.

A man of expensive tastes, he lived in a spacious mansion with covered arcades connecting the many halls, in splendor the match of royal residences. But the mansion still was not big enough for him. To its north, he had another garden built. It contained:

*Pavilions in which to enjoy the moon and breezes;
 A dock, a creek, flanked by apricot and peach trees.
 The towers rise into the blue sky;
 The gazebos stand on the edge of clear waters.
 Spanning the ponds, connecting the curving banks,
 Fly crescent-shaped, rainbow bridges.*



艳蕊，深沉竹洞花房。飞异域佳禽，植上林珍果。绿荷密锁寻芳路，翠柳低笼斗草场。

浩暇日，多与亲朋宴息其间。西都风俗，每至春时，园圃无大小，皆修葺花木，洒扫亭轩，纵游人玩赏，以此递相夸逞，士庶为常。浩间巷有名儒廖山甫者，学行俱高，可为师范，与浩情爱至密。浩喜园馆新成，花木茂盛，一日，邀山甫闲步其中。行至宿香亭共坐。〔眉批〕亭名亦好。时当仲春，桃李正芳，牡丹花放，嫩白妖红，环绕亭砌。浩谓山甫曰：“淑景明媚，非诗酒莫称韶光。今日幸无俗事，先饮数杯，然后各赋一诗，咏目前景物。虽园圃消疏，不足以当君之盛作，若得一诗，可以永为壮观。”山甫曰：“愿听指挥。”浩喜，即呼小童，具饮器、笔砚于前。酒三行，方欲索题，忽遥见亭下花间，有流莺惊飞而起。山甫曰：“莺语堪听，何故惊飞？”浩曰：“此无他，料必有游人偷折花耳。



*Vermilion balustrades and carved railings
Next to ornamental rocks in the forms of clouds.
The exotic flowers a riot of colors;
The greenhouses embowered by bamboo groves.
Fowl from alien lands flutter about;
Fruit trees worthy of the royal garden thrive here.
The footpaths are overgrown with green lotus leaves;
Weeping willows shroud the amusement grounds.*

In his leisure time, Zhang Hao often entertained relatives and friends in the new garden. As was the custom in Luoyang, when spring came around, flowers and trees were pruned and clipped and pavilions and verandas swept clean for the enjoyment of visitors in gardens of all sizes. The rich as well as the poor vied with one another to show off their gardens.

In Haolü Lane lived a celebrated scholar, Liao Shanfu, of exemplary moral conduct and scholarship, who was a dear friend of Zhang Hao's. Proud of his new garden, aglow with thriving flowers and trees, Zhang Hao invited Shanfu to take a leisurely walk on the grounds. Upon reaching Lingering Fragrance Pavilion, they sat down. (*Good name for a pavilion.*) It was the height of spring, with the peach and plum trees flowering and the soft white and bright red peonies in full bloom all around the pavilion.

Zhang Hao suggested to Shanfu, "On such a glorious spring day, nothing but poems and wine can make the happiness complete. Luckily, we have no mundane chores to perform today, so let's drink a few cups and come up with a poem each in praise of the scenery around us. Even though my humble garden is not worthy of your poetic talent, a few lines from you will lend it everlasting glory."

"At your service," said Shanfu.

Delighted, Zhang Hao had his page boy bring wine and writing implements for his guest. After three rounds of wine, Shanfu was about to have Zhang Hao designate a title for the poem when he saw an oriole rise into the air from the flowers around a pavilion some distance away, fluttering its wings in alarm. "Why would a sweet-voiced oriole be so alarmed?" Shanfu wondered aloud.



邀先生一往观之。”遂下宿香亭，径入花阴，蹑足潜身，寻踪而去。过太湖石畔，芍药栏边，见一垂鬟女子，年方十五，携一小青衣，倚栏而立。但见：

新月笼眉，春桃拂脸，意态幽花未艳，肌肤嫩玉生光。
莲步一折，着弓弓扣绣鞋儿；螺髻双垂，插短短紫金钗子。
似向东君夸艳态，倚栏笑对牡丹丛！

浩一见之，神魂飘荡，不能自持。又恐女子惊避，引山甫退立花阴下，端详久之，真出世色也。告山甫曰：“尘世无此佳人，想必上方花月之妖！”山甫曰：“花月之妖，岂敢昼见？天下不乏美妇人，但无缘者自不遇耳。”浩曰：“浩阅人多矣，未常见此殊丽。使浩得配之，足快平生。兄有何计，使我早遂佳期，则成我之恩，与生我等矣！”山甫曰：“以君之门第才学，欲结婚姻，易如反掌，何须如此劳神！”浩曰：“君言未当，若不遇其人，宁可终身不娶。今既遇之，即顷刻亦难捱也。媒妁通问，必须岁月，将无已在枯鱼



“Perhaps some sightseers are stealing flowers. Let’s go and find out.”

They left the pavilion and, bending low, tiptoed along a flower-lined path in search of the intruders. As they rounded a Lake Tai rock that adorned the pond, they saw, leaning against the railing in front of the peonies, a girl about fifteen years of age accompanied by a young maid. Behold:

*Her eyebrows the shape of the crescent moon,
Her face a ripe peach in spring.
With the charm of a bud not yet in bloom,
She had soft skin that glowed like jade.
Her lotuslike feet in embroidered shoes;
Her two topknots adorned with gold hairpins.
Flaunting her beauty to the god of spring,
She smiled at the peonies, leaning on the railing.*

The sight of the girl threw Zhang Hao into such raptures that he could scarcely contain himself. Afraid that she would recoil in fright, he led Shanfu back into the shadow of the flowers and studied her for a long time, marveling at her unmatched beauty. To Shanfu he commented, “Such a beauty can’t belong to this mortal world. She must be a fairy of the flowers and the moon!”

“How could a fairy be seen in broad daylight? There’s no lack of beauties in this world. It’s just that people who are not destined for each other don’t meet.”

“I know a precious lot of women,” claimed Zhang Hao, “but such beauty is hard to come by. If I could have her for wife, I’d ask for nothing more the rest of my life. Please, think of a way to make this match for me as soon as possible. I’ll be as indebted to you as I am to my parents.”

“With your talent and family status, forming a marriage alliance should be as easy as turning over a hand. Why go to all this trouble?”

“That’s no way to talk. If I don’t marry the right woman, I’d rather be celibate to the end of my life. Now that I’ve seen the right one, I can hardly wait another moment! It takes months and years for a match to go through the usual channels. Wouldn’t I be like a fish



之肆乎！”[眉批]登徒子非好色者，此真好色也。山甫曰：“但患不谐，苟得谐，何患晚也。请问其踪迹，然后图之。”浩此时情不自禁，遂整巾正衣，向前而揖。女子敛袂答礼。浩启女子曰：“贵族谁家？何因至此？”女子笑曰：“妾乃君家东邻也。今日长幼赴亲族家会，惟妾不行。闻君家牡丹盛开，故与青衣潜启隙户至此。”浩闻此语，乃知李氏之女莺莺也，与浩童稚时曾共扶栏之戏。再告女子曰：“敝园荒芜，不足寓目，幸有小馆，欲备肴酒，尽主人接邻里之欢，如何？”女曰：“妾之此来，本欲见君。若欲开樽，决不敢领。愿无及乱，略诉此情。”浩拱手鞠躬而言曰：“愿闻所谕！”女曰：“妾自幼年慕君清德，缘家有严亲，礼法所拘，无因与君聚会。今君犹未娶，妾亦垂髻，若不以丑陋见疏，为通媒妁，使妾异日奉箕帚之末，立祭祀之列，奉侍翁姑，和睦亲族，成两姓之好，无七出之玷，此妾之素心也。不知君心还肯从否？”[眉



dying in a fish store?" (*Mr. Dengtu¹ was a lecherous man, but this one is a true admirer of feminine beauty.*)

"Lack of conjugal harmony is what one should worry about. But if that's not a concern, why begrudge the length of time leading up to the marriage? You need to find out about her background before you do anything."

Overcome by his amorous desires, Zhang Hao adjusted his cap and his clothes, stepped forward, and bowed. The young woman returned the greeting with a curtsy.

"Which distinguished family are you from?" asked Zhang Hao. "Why are you here?"

Affably she replied, "I am a neighbor, from the house east of yours. Today, everyone in my family, old and young, went to a family gathering. I'm the only one who stayed behind. Having heard about your blooming peonies, I slipped through the doors, along with my maid, to take a look at them."

Only then did Zhang Hao realize that she was his childhood playmate Yingying, daughter of Mr. Li. He continued, "This humble garden of mine is not much to look at. Luckily, I have a small dining hall. What would you say to my setting out food and wine and playing host to a neighbor?"

"I did intend to see you on this visit, but I wouldn't dare accept the honor of being treated to wine. I only wish to say something to you without breaking any rules."

With his hands folded respectfully across his chest, Zhang Hao said, "I'm all ears."

"I have admired your fine qualities ever since childhood, but, my parents being strict observers of established codes of behavior, I've never had a chance to meet you. Now, as you are a bachelor and I'm still unbetrothed, why don't we get married, as long as you don't find me too ugly? I shall perform my wifely duties around the house, stand in line to offer sacrifices to the ancestors, serve my parents-in-law, promote harmonious relations between the two clans, and avoid the seven offenses that constitute grounds for divorce. Such have been my wishes all along. I hope you won't find them objection-



批] 此女大有心人。浩闻此言，喜出望外，告女曰：“若得与丽人偕老，平生之乐事足矣。但未知缘分何如耳？”女曰：“两心既坚，缘分自定。君果见许，愿求一物为定，使妾藏之异时，表今日相见之情。”浩仓卒中无物表意，遂取系腰紫罗绣带，谓女曰：“取此以待定议。”女亦取拥项香罗，谓浩曰：“请君作诗一篇，亲笔题于罗上，庶几他时可以取信。”浩心转喜，呼童取笔砚，指栏中未开牡丹为题，赋诗一绝于香罗之上，诗曰：

沉香亭畔露凝枝，敛艳含娇未放时。

自是名花待名手，风流学士独题诗。

女见诗大喜，取香罗在手，谓浩曰：“君诗句清妙，中有深意，真才子也。此事切宜缄口，勿使人知，无忘今日之言，必遂他时之乐。父母恐回，妾且归去。”道罢，莲步却转，与青衣缓缓而去。浩时酒兴方浓，春心淫荡，不能自遏，自言：“下坡不赶，次后难逢。争忍弃人归去？杂花影下，细草如茵，略效鸳鸯，死



able.” (*This is a girl with a mind of her own.*)

Overjoyed upon hearing these words, Zhang Hao said, “If I could spend the rest of my life with a beauty like you, what more would I ask for? But I wonder if there is indeed a predestined bond between us.”

“If both hearts are set firmly on the other, that means a predestined bond does exist. If you agree, I would like to ask for a token of our commitment. I’ll keep it with me as a reminder of our meeting today.”

In his haste to produce something by way of a token, Zhang Hao took off his embroidered purple silk waistband and said to her, “Please keep this until the match is settled.”

The young woman took off her silk scarf and gave it to Zhang Hao, saying, “Please write a poem on the scarf, so that it will serve as a token.”

Delighted, Zhang Hao had a page boy bring over the writing implements. After indicating a peony bud behind the railing as the inspiration for his poem, he wrote a quatrain on the silk scarf:

*On a dewy stem by Lingering Fragrance,
 It stands in all its demure charm and grace.
 The prized flower deserves a master poet,
 The dashing scholar offers it a poem.*

Delighted upon reading the poem, the young woman said, scarf in hand, “What an exquisite poem! And there’s much unsaid between the lines, too. You are really a talented poet! Please keep this a secret by all means. Do not tell anyone anything. If you don’t forget what has been said today, you will surely be visited by happiness in the future. Now I’ll have to go because I’m afraid my parents may have returned.” With that, she turned and, with tiny, delicate steps, slowly went off with her maid.

Under the influence of the wine he had drunk with Shanfu, Zhang Hao found his amorous yearnings hard to contain. He said to himself, “If I don’t run after her now, I may never have another chance. How can I let her go? If I could make love with her on the soft grass in the shadow of the flowers, I’d have no regrets, even if I



亦无恨！”遂奋步赶上，双手抱持。女子顾恋恩情，不忍移步绝裾而去，正欲启口致辞，含羞告免。忽自后有人言曰：“相见已非正礼，此事决然不可！若能用我一言，可以永谐百岁。”浩舍女回视，乃山甫也。女子已去。山甫曰：“但凡读书，盖欲知礼别嫌。今君诵孔圣之书，何故习小人之态？若使女子去迟，父母先回，必询究其所往，则女祸延及于君。岂可恋一时之乐，损终身之德。请君三思，恐成后悔！”[眉批] 毕竟理长须眉也。浩不得已，怏怏复回宿香亭上，与山甫尽醉散去。

自此之后，浩但当歌不语，对酒无欢，月下长吁，花前偷泪。俄而绿暗红稀，春光将暮。浩一日独步闲斋，反覆思念，一段离愁，方恨无人可诉。忽有老尼惠寂自外而来，乃浩家香火院之尼也。浩礼毕，问曰：“吾师何来？”寂曰：“专来传达书信。”浩问：“何人致意于我？”寂移坐促席请浩曰：“君东邻李家女子莺莺，再三申意。”浩大惊，告寂曰：“宁有是事，吾师勿言！”寂



were to die.”

Striding after her, he caught up with her and pulled her into his arms. Loath to be parted from the one she loved, the young lady could not bring herself to break free from his embrace. Before she could speak up and shyly ask to be released, a voice suddenly was heard from behind, “To meet like this already violates decorum, and what you’re about to do is absolutely out of the question! If you listen to my advice, I guarantee you a lifelong blissful marriage.”

Zhang Hao and the young woman turned around and saw that it was Shanfu. After the young woman left, Shanfu admonished Zhang Hao in these words: “One who has studied the classics should know what constitutes proper behavior and avoid doing anything that might arouse suspicions. Now, being a scholar well versed in the Confucian classics, how can you debase yourself like that? If you had detained the girl and her parents returned home before she did, they would surely have interrogated her as to her whereabouts, and you would have been implicated. It will never do to compromise one’s lifelong integrity by indulging in momentary pleasure. Please think well before you do anything that might cause you regret later in life.” (*The older are wiser, after all.*)

Crest-fallen, Zhang Hao returned, against his will, to Lingering Fragrance Pavilion. There, he and Shanfu drank until they were quite tipsy before they parted company.

Henceforth, Zhang Hao found no joy in singing and drinking. To the moon, he heaved deep sighs. To the flowers, he shed furtive tears. All too soon, the colors of spring began to fade.

One day, Zhang Hao was pacing pensively alone in his study, fretting that there was no one to listen to his sad story, when in came Huiji, the old nun from the Zhang family’s private shrine. After greeting her, Zhang Hao asked, “What brought Your Reverence here?”

“I’m here to deliver a message.”

“A message from whom?”

The nun sat down near him and said, “From Yingying of the Li family, your neighbor to the east of the house. Time and again, she has asked me to convey her sentiments to you.”



曰：“此事何必自隐？听寂拜闻：李氏为寂门徒二十馀年，其家长幼相信。今日因往李氏诵经，知其女莺莺染病，寂遂劝令勤服汤药。莺屏去侍妾，私告寂曰：‘此病岂药所能愈耶？’[眉批]真有心人也。寂再三询其仔细，莺遂说及园中与君相见之事，又出罗巾上诗，向寂言：‘此即君所作也。’令我致意于君，幸勿相忘，以图后会。盖莺与寂所言也，君何用隐讳耶？”浩曰：“事实有之，非敢自隐。但虑传扬遐迩，取笑里闾。今日吾师既知，使浩如何而可？”寂曰：“早来既知此事，遂与莺父母说及莺亲事。[眉批]□□非孟□者。答云：‘女儿尚幼，未能干家。’观其意在二三年后，方始议亲。更看君缘分如何？”言罢，起身谓浩曰：“小庵事冗，不及款话，如日后欲寄音信，但请垂谕！”遂相别去。

自此香闺密意，书幌幽怀，皆托寂私传。光阴迅速，倏忽之间，已经一载，节过清明，桃李飘零，牡丹半折。浩倚栏凝视，睹物思人，情绪转添。久之，自思去岁此时，相逢花畔，今岁花

Alarmed, Zhang Hao said, "That can't be true, Your Reverence!"

"Why try to conceal it? Listen, Mrs. Li has been my disciple for more than twenty years. Actually, everyone in the Li family, old and young, is a Buddhist. Earlier today, I was there intoning the scriptures for Mrs. Li when I learned that her daughter Yingying was ill. When I advised Yingying to take medicine more frequently, she dismissed her maidservants and whispered to me, 'My illness is not something medicine can cure.' (*Truly a woman with a mind of her own.*) When I pressed her, she told me about the encounter with you in your garden and produced the silk scarf bearing the poem that she said had been written by you. She then asked me to convey her sentiments to you and tell you not to forget her, so that another meeting might be worked out in the future. All this she confided to me. Why deny it?"

"I have no wish to deny the facts. It's just that the neighbors will laugh at me if the story spreads around. Now that Your Reverence knows all about it, what do you suggest that I do?"

The nun continued, "As soon as I learned about this, I raised the subject of Yingying's marriage with her parents. (*It is not unseemly for a nun to offer services as a matchmaker.*) Their answer was, 'Our daughter is still too young to be managing a household.' Judging from their tone, I believe that the subject is not to be brought up for another two to three years. And it also depends on whether or not there's a predestined bond between you two." With that, she rose and added, "As I have other engagements, I can't stay for a good talk, but if there are any messages you want me to deliver for you, just let me know." And so they bid each other farewell. Henceforth, the nun served as a courier, delivering clandestine love letters between the boudoir and the study.

Time sped by. In a trice, one year had elapsed. As Zhang Hao leaned against the railing and gazed upon the scattering peach and pear blossoms and the withered peonies in the days after the Clear and Bright Festival, his thoughts dwelled sadly upon his loved one. Long he tarried, reminiscing about this time the previous year when he had



又重开，玉人难见。沉吟半晌，不若折花数枝，托惠寂寄莺莺同赏。遂召寂至，告曰：“今折得花数枝，烦吾师持往李氏，但云吾师所献。若见莺莺，作浩起居：去岁花开时，相见于西栏畔；今花又开，人犹间阻。相忆之心，言不可尽。愿似叶如花，年年长得相见。”寂曰：“此事易为，君可少待。”遂持花去。逾时复来，浩迎问：“如何？”寂于袖中取彩笺小柬，告浩曰：“莺莺寄君，切勿外启！”寂乃辞去。浩启封视之，曰：

妾莺莺拜启：相别经年，无日不怀思忆。前令乳母以亲事白于父母，坚意不可。事须后图，不可仓卒。愿君无忘妾，妾必不负君！姻若不成，誓不他适。其他心事，询寂可知。昨夜宴花前，众皆欢笑，独妾悲伤。偶成小词，略诉心事。君读之，可以见妾之意。读毕毁之，切勿外泄！词曰：

红疏绿密时喧，还是困人天。相思极处，凝睛月下，洒

met her by the flowers. And now, the flowers were blooming again, but she was nowhere to be seen. After much thought, he decided to pick some flowers and send them to Yingying through the nun, so that she could share the joy with him. So he summoned Huiji the nun and said to her, "I picked some flowers today. Could you do me a favor and take them to Mrs. Li? Just say that they are a gift from you. If you see Yingying, please give her my regards. Last year, when the flowers were blossoming, I met her by the western railing. And now, the flowers have bloomed again, but we are so far apart. Words cannot convey my longing for her. I only wish we could see each other often, like the flowers and leaves that are able to stay together year after year."

"This can be easily done," promised Huiji. "Wait here for me. I'll be back soon." So saying, she left with the bouquet.

Upon her return, Zhang Hao stepped forward and said eagerly, "Well?"

Taking out a daintily folded letter written on flower-patterned stationery, the nun said, "This is from Yingying to you. Be sure not to let anyone else see it!" With that, she went off.

Zhang Hao opened the seal. The letter said:

"From Yingying, with respect:"

It has been a year since we met last, but not a day has gone by without my thinking of you. At my request, my nurse raised the subject of my marriage to my parents, but they are firmly against the idea. We must not be hasty but wait for the right opportunity to arise. My only wish is that you will not forget me. As for me, I shall never fail you! If I can't marry you, I vow never to marry. Ask Huiji, and she will tell you what else is on my mind. Last evening, a feast was laid out by the flowers, but I was torn with grief among the jovial company. I wrote a little lyric poem to give some expression to my feelings. Upon reading it, you will gain an idea of my feelings. Please destroy the letter after reading it. Be sure not to let anyone else see it!

Amid all the mirth by the riot of colors;

Grief and misery still hang heavy.





泪花前。 誓约已知俱有愿，奈目前两处悬悬！鸾凰未偶，清宵最苦，月甚先圆。

浩览毕，敛眉长叹，曰：“好事多磨，信非虚也！”展放案上，反覆把玩，不忍释手。感刻寸心，泪下如雨。又恐家人见疑，询其所因，遂伏案掩面，偷声潜泣。良久，举首起视，见日影下窗，暝色已至。浩思适来书中言“心事讯（询）寂可知”，今抱愁独坐，不若询访惠寂，究其仔细，庶几少解情怀。遂徐步出门，路过李氏之家。时夜色已阑，门户皆闭，浩至此，想象莺莺，心怀爱慕，步不能移，指李氏之门曰：“非插翅步云，安能入此？”方徘徊未进，忽见旁有隙户半开，左右寂无一人。浩大喜曰：“天赐此便，成我佳期。远托惠寂，不如潜入其中，探问莺莺消息。”浩为情爱所重，不顾礼法，蹑足而入。既到中堂，匿身回廊之下，左右顾盼，见：



*Longing for my love, I stare at the moonlight,
And shed many a tear on the flowers.*

*The vows exchanged, all wishes known,
Yet we find ourselves far apart.
The phoenix still without a mate finds
Most painful a clear night with a round moon.*

After reading it, Zhang Hao knit his brows and heaved a deep sigh. "How true is the saying 'The road to happiness never runs smooth,'" he lamented. He spread the stationery out on the table and then held it in his hands as if he would never let it go. With his heart full of grief, he burst into tears. Afraid that other members of the household might become suspicious and ask for explanations, he bent over the table and covered his face with his arms to muffle his sobs.

After a considerable time, he raised his head and looked around to find that the window had darkened and dusk had set in. Recalling the line "Ask Huiji, and she will tell you what else is on my mind," he thought that rather than sitting gloomily all alone, it would relieve his sadness somewhat if he paid Huiji a visit and heard what she had to say. He walked slowly out of the house.

By the time he passed by the Li house, the doors on the streets had all closed in the gathering darkness. He was so overwhelmed with longing for Yingying that he stopped in his tracks and said, pointing at the door of the Li house, "How am I ever going to enter this house without wings?"

He was pacing around when he suddenly noticed a side door standing ajar and no one anywhere in sight. He rejoiced to himself, "Heaven is giving me this opportunity to fulfill my wish. Rather than seek help from Huiji, I might just as well slip into the house and find out where Yingying is."

His love for Yingying made him throw all concerns about decorum to the winds. He tiptoed to the main hall of the house and from there stealthily turned down a winding corridor. Looking all around him, he saw:

A courtyard quiet, dark, and deep;



闲庭悄悄，深院沉沉。静中闻风响丁当，暗里见流萤聚散。更筹渐急，窗中风弄残灯；夜色已阑，阶下月移花影。香闺想在屏山后，远似巫阳千万重。

浩至此，茫然不知所往。独立久之，心中顿省。自思设若败露，为之奈何？不惟身受苦楚，抑且玷辱祖宗，此事当款曲图之。不期隙户已闭，返转回廊，方欲寻路复归，忽闻室中有低低而唱者。浩思深院净夜，何人独歌？遂隐住侧身，静听所唱之词，乃《行香子》词：

雨后风微，绿暗红稀。燕巢成蝶绕残枝，杨花点点，永日迟迟。动离怀，牵别恨，鹧鸪啼。 辜负佳期，虚度芳时。为甚褪尽罗衣？宿香亭下，红芍栏西。当时情，今日恨，有谁知！

但觉如雏莺啭翠柳阴中，彩凤鸣碧梧枝上。想是清夜无人，调韵转美。浩审词察意，若非莺莺，谁知宿香亭之约？但得一见其面，死亦无悔。方欲以指击窗，询问仔细，忽有人叱浩曰：“良士非



*Except for the wind chimes, there was not a sound;
 In the darkness, the fireflies flew about.
 As the night deepened, the lamp flickered in the wind;
 In the growing darkness, the shadows of flowers
 Moved with the moon across the terrace steps.
 Her boudoir must be behind that hill of a screen,
 Farther away than the distant Wushan Mountains.²*

Zhang Hao stood there alone for the longest time, not knowing which way to turn. Suddenly, he realized the folly of his actions. If he was caught, he thought, what would happen next? Undoubtedly punishment and misery for himself, and disgrace for his ancestors. He decided he should be cautious and devise a better plan. However, since the side door had already been closed by this time, he had to go back to the corridor. He was looking for a way out when he heard a voice singing softly in one of the rooms. Who could be singing in this secluded place at this time of the night? He hid in the shadows, turned sideways, and strained his ears to listen. It was a lyric poem to the tune of “Xingxiangzi”:

*After the rain, the wind dies down, the colors fade;
 The swallows' nests dot the remaining boughs,
 The late sun shines on the willow catkins,
 The partridges' chirps evoke the grief of parting.*

*The tryst to no avail, my best years gone to waste;
 My silk clothes fade in color, and all for what?
 At the pavilion, by the red peonies,
 The feelings, the sorrows—who would ever care?*

As he listened, he saw in his mind's eye a young oriole singing in the foliage of green willows and a colorful phoenix chirping on a leafy bough of a parasol tree. The silence of the night intensified the beauty of the melody. Reflecting on the lyrics, Zhang Hao concluded that the author must be Yingying, for who else would refer to their rendezvous at Lingering Fragrance Pavilion? If he could see her, if only for once, he could leave this world with no regrets. He was about to tap on the window and ask a few questions when he heard a



媒不聘，女子无故不婚。今女按板于窗中，小子逾墙到厅下，皆非善行，玷辱人伦。执诣有司，永作淫奔之戒。”浩大惊退步，失脚堕于砌下，久之方醒。开目视之，乃伏案昼寝于书窗之下，时日将晡矣。浩曰：“异哉梦也！何显然如是？莫非有相见之期，故先垂吉兆告我！”方心绪扰扰未定，惠寂复来，浩讯其意。寂曰：“适来只奉小柬而去，有一事偶忘告君。莺莺传语，他家所居房后，乃君家之东墙也，高无数尺。其家初夏二十日，亲族中有婚姻事，是夕举家皆往，莺托病不行。令君至期，于墙下相待，欲逾墙与君相见，君切记之。”惠寂且去，浩欣喜之心，言不能尽。

屈指数日，已至所约之期。浩遂张帷幄，具饮馔，器用玩好之物，皆列于宿香亭中。日既晚，悉逐僮仆出外，惟留一小鬟。反闭园门，倚梯近墙，屏立以待。未久，夕阳消柳外，暝色暗花间，斗柄指南，夜传初鼓。浩曰：“惠寂之言岂非谗我乎？”语犹



voice speaking in a reproachful tone: "A gentleman does not take a wife without a matchmaker; a decent woman does not marry without a good reason. Now, with the woman singing inside and the man trespassing outside, both are guilty of indecent conduct that violates the code of proper human behavior. Any yamen official would use you as an example with which to warn all potential sinners of the flesh."

Horrified, Zhang Hao stepped backward but lost his footing and fell down the flight of steps. After a prolonged interval, he opened his eyes and found he was waking up from a nap, his head on his elbow, which rested on the table next to the window of his study. It was late afternoon. "What a strange dream!" he said to himself. "How come it was so real? Could it be that we are destined to meet after all, hence this good omen?"

He was in this perturbed state of mind when Huiji the nun appeared again. When he questioned her as to the purpose of her visit, she replied, "In my haste to deliver the letter, I forgot to tell you one thing: Yingying wants me to let you know that behind her house is your eastern wall, which measures only a few feet high. On the twentieth day after the summer solstice, her whole family will be away for the night attending a wedding in the clan, but Yingying will plead illness and stay at home. She wants you to wait for her by the wall that evening. She'll climb over the wall to meet you. Remember this well!" With that, Huiji departed, leaving him more jubilant than words can describe.

He counted off the days on his fingers, and the appointed day finally arrived. He had curtains put up and wine utensils and art objects laid out in Lingering Fragrance Pavilion, and when the day came to an end, he sent all the servants away except for one young maidservant. After closing the garden gate from the outside, he propped a ladder against the wall and waited with bated breath.

Soon, the westering sun sank below the branches of the weeping willow, and the shadow of the night cast its shroud over the flowers. The Big Dipper's handle pointed to the south, and the first drumbeats of the night echoed through the air. "Could Huiji have been playing a trick on me?" Zhang Hao wondered, but before he could quite finish



未绝，粉面新妆，半出短墙之上，浩举目仰视，乃莺莺也。[眉批]莺莺跳墙，翻案甚奇。急升梯扶臂而下，携手偕行，至宿香亭上。明烛并坐，细视莺莺，欣喜转盛。告莺曰：“不谓丽人果肯来此！”莺曰：“妾之此身，异时欲作闺门之事，今日宁肯诳语！”浩曰：“肯饮少酒，共庆今宵佳会可乎？”莺曰：“难禁酒力，恐来朝获罪于父母。”浩曰：“酒既不饮，略歇如何？”莺笑倚浩怀，娇羞不语。浩遂与解带脱衣，入鸳帏共寝。但见：

宝炬摇红，麝裯吐翠。金缕绣屏深掩，绀纱斗帐低垂。

并连鸳枕，如双双比目同波；共展香衾，似对对春蚕作茧。

向人尤殢春情事，一搦纤腰怯未禁！

须臾，香汗流酥，相偎微喘。虽楚王梦神女，刘、阮入桃源，相得之欢，皆不能比。少顷，莺告浩曰：“夜色已阑，妾且归去。”



his thought, a powdered and rouged face appeared over the top of the low wall. He raised his eyes and saw that it was none other than Yingying. (*What a reversal of roles for Yingying to be the one scaling the wall!*)³ Quickly, he climbed up the ladder and helped her down, supporting her by an arm. Hand in hand, they went to the pavilion, where they sat side by side in the bright candlelight. All the more delighted upon examining her face closely, he said, "I never expected that you would indeed come here!"

"Wasn't I on the point of committing myself to the act of the boudoir the other day?" she rejoined. "Why would I play a trick on you?"

"Are you willing to drink a little bit of wine to celebrate our rendezvous tonight?"

"I'm afraid that I won't be able to hold the wine. I don't want to incur my parents' anger tomorrow."

"Well, if you won't have wine, how about taking a little rest?"

Giggling, she leaned bashfully against Zhang Hao's chest but gave no answer, whereupon he took off her belt and clothes and brought her to the bed behind the curtains. Behold:

*By the flickering flames of the red candles,
On the sweet-smelling mattress,
Behind the gold-traced and embroidered screen,
Shielded by the gauze bed curtains,
They joined their pillows, side by side,
Like a pair of mandarin ducks on water.
They spread out their fragrant quilts, side by side,
Like the cocoons of two spring silkworms.
The raptures of a game of clouds and rain
Might just be too much for the narrow waist!*

Before long, they had broken into a sweat. They clung to each other, panting for breath, their joy greater than the bliss experienced by the King of Chu in his dream encounter with the Divine Maiden and by Liu and Ruan in the Cave of Peach Blossoms.⁴

A few moments later, Yingying said to Zhang Hao, "The night is deep. I have to go."



浩亦不敢相留，遂各整衣而起。浩告莺曰：“后会未期，切宜保爱！”莺曰：“去岁偶然相遇，犹作新诗相赠，今夕得侍枕席，何故无一言见惠？岂非猥贱之躯，不足当君佳句？”浩笑谢莺曰：“岂有此理！谨赋一绝：

华胥佳梦徒闻说，解佩江皋浪得声。

一夕东轩多少事，韩生虚负窃香名。

莺得诗，谓浩曰：“妾之此身，今已为君所有，幸终始成之。”遂携手下亭，转柳穿花，至墙下，浩扶策莺升梯而去。

自此之后，虽音耗时通，而会遇无便。经数日，忽惠寂来告曰：“莺莺致意，其父守官河朔，来日挈家登程，愿君莫忘旧好。候回日，当议秦晋之礼！”惠寂辞去。浩神悲意惨，度日如年，抱恨怀愁，俄经二载。一日，浩季父召浩语曰：“吾闻不孝以无嗣为大，今汝将及当立之年，犹未纳室，虽未至绝嗣，而内政亦不可缺。此中有孙氏者，累世仕宦，家业富盛，其女年已及笄，幼奉家训，习知妇道。我欲与汝主婚，结亲孙氏。今若失之，后无



Zhang Hao dared not try to keep her. As they straightened their clothes and got out of bed, he said to her, "We'll meet again. Please keep me in your heart!"

"Last year when we met by chance, you made a poem for me, and now that we've shared the same bed, don't you have a few lines to give me? Can it be that my humble self is not worthy of your talent?"

Zhang Hao countered, laughing, "What a thing to say!" Gratefully, he continued, "Now, here's a poem dedicated to you:

"The lovely dream about Huaxu is but hearsay; ⁵

The gift of jade by the river is but fiction.⁶

So much happened in the night by the east window!

Han the incense stealer pales in comparison."⁷

The poem in hand, Yingying announced to him, "All of me henceforth belongs to you. I'm glad we were able to be together this time." Hand in hand, they left the pavilion. After threading their way through the willows and the flowers, they came to the wall, and Zhang Hao helped Yingying mount the ladder.

From then on, they managed to communicate with each other frequently, but the opportunity for another rendezvous did not present itself. Some days later, Huiji came to say, "Yingying wants to tell you that her father has been transferred to Heshuo. The whole family is leaving tomorrow. She hopes that you will not forget her. Upon her return, she'll bring up the subject of marriage." After Huiji departed, Zhang Hao's spirits sank. With each day as long as a year to him, two miserable years went by.

One day, Zhang Hao's uncle sent for him and gave him these words of admonition: "As they say, of all offenses against filial piety, the lack of male issue is the worst. You are approaching thirty but are still unbetrothed. I'm not saying that you are already the end of the family line, but you simply must get a wife. Now, there's a rich Sun family that comes from a long line of officials. They have a daughter of marriageable age who has received a fine education at home since childhood and is well trained in the feminine virtues. I wish to make this match for you. If you lose this chance, you won't



令族。”浩素畏季父赋性刚暴，不敢抗拒，又不敢明言李氏之事，
[眉批] 男子不如妇人，其张浩李莺乎？遂通媒妁，与孙氏议姻。择日将
成，而莺莺之父任满方归。浩不能忘旧情，乃遣惠寂密告莺曰：
“浩非负心，实被季父所逼，复与孙氏结亲，负心违愿，痛彻心
髓！”莺谓寂曰：“我知其叔父所为，我必能自成其事。”寂曰：
“善为之！”遂去。

莺启父母曰：“儿有过恶，玷辱家门，愿先启一言，然后请
死！”父母惊骇，询问：“我儿何自苦如此？”莺曰：“妾自幼岁慕
西邻张浩才名，曾以此身私许偕老。曾令乳母白父母欲与浩议姻，
当日尊严不蒙允许。今闻浩与孙氏结婚，弃妾此身，将归何地？
然女行已失，不可复嫁他人，此愿若违，含笑自绝！”[眉批] □父
母一□不是。父母惊谓莺曰：“我止有一女，所恨未能选择佳婿。若
早知，可以商议。今浩既已结婚，为之奈何！”莺曰：“父母许以
儿归浩，则妾自能措置。”父曰：“但愿亲成，一切不问。”莺曰：



receive another offer from a family as distinguished as the Suns!”

Zhang Hao had always been afraid of his uncle's hot temper and dared not contradict him, nor did he have the courage to bring up the name of Li Yingying. (*Women are better than men. Zhang Hao and Li Yingying serve as but one example.*) Consequently, a matchmaker was sought to present the marriage proposal to the Sun family. But before the chosen day for the wedding ceremony arrived, Yingying's father returned when his term of duty expired. Hardly forgetting his love for Yingying, Zhang Hao sent Huiji the nun to Yingying with this message: “It's not that I betrayed you, but my uncle drove me to it. This betrothal with Miss Sun is truly against my wishes. My heart is torn by grief!”

Yingying said to the nun, “I do believe this was the work of his uncle. I will come up with a way to work things out.”

“Be sure you know what you are doing!” admonished Huiji before she took her leave.

Yingying said to her parents, “Your daughter has committed a sin and brought disgrace to the family name. I have something to say before I ask for permission to die.”

In horror, her parents said, “What could possibly have happened to drive you to such desperation?”

“Ever since childhood, I have admired Zhang Hao, who lives in the house west of ours, for his talent. I have secretly committed the rest of my life to him. I had asked my nurse to talk to you about marriage, but Father rejected the proposal then and there. I just heard today that Zhang Hao will be married to a Miss Sun. Now where am I, an abandoned woman, to end up? Having already lost my chastity, I cannot marry another man. Since this wish of mine is to be denied, I'll have to take my own life, and do it gladly, too.” (*The parents [Illegible].*)

The panic-stricken parents said, “We do regret not having chosen a good husband earlier for you, our only daughter. Had we known this, we could have talked about it. But now that Zhang Hao is already betrothed, what can be done?”

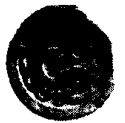
“If you betroth me to him, I'll think of a way to make every-



“果如是，容妾诉于官府。”遂取纸作状，更服旧妆，径至河南府讼庭之下。

龙图阁待制陈公方据案治事，见一女子执状向前。公停笔问曰：“何事？”莺莺敛身跪告曰：“妾诚诳妄，上读高明，有状上呈。”公令左右取状展视云：

告状妾李氏：切闻语云：“女非媒不嫁。”此虽至论，亦有未然，何也？昔文君心喜司马，贾午志慕韩寿，此二女皆有私奔之名，而不受无媒之谤。盖所归得人，青史标其令德，注在篇章，使后人继其所为，免委身于庸俗。妾于前岁慕西邻张浩才名，已私许之偕老。言约已定，誓不变更。今张浩忽背前约，使妾呼天叩地，无所告投！切闻律设大法，礼顺人情。若非判府龙图明断，孤寡终身何恃！为此冒耻渎尊，



thing work out.”

“We’ll consider anything, as long as the marriage can be accomplished,” said her father.

“If so, please allow me to appeal to the yamen.” So saying, Yingying took a piece of paper and wrote an appeal. She then changed her clothes and went directly to the court of appeals in Henan Prefecture.

While he was working at his desk, Judge Chen noticed a woman advancing toward him with a scroll in her hand. He put down his brush-pen and asked, “What complaint do you have?”

Falling on her knees, Yingying said, “In my audacity, I have a complaint to submit to Your Honor.”

The judge had an attendant take the scroll and spread it out to read:

This is a complaint from plaintiff Miss Li:

It is said, “Women should not marry without going through the proper matchmaking procedures.” This may be most wise, but it may not always hold true. For example, in the olden days, Zhuo Wenjun, out of her love for Sima Xiangru,⁸ and Jia Wu, out of her admiration for Han Shou,⁹ both eloped with their lovers, and yet no one has ever accused them of not availing themselves of matchmaking services, because the men they chose earned their places in history with their great accomplishments, and their examples can be freely followed without fear of being accused of debauchery. Last year, out of admiration for the literary talent of Zhang Hao, my next-door neighbor, I secretly committed the rest of my life to him. An agreement once made should not be reversed. But Zhang Hao has suddenly breached the agreement, leaving me crying out in anguish to heaven and earth, wishing for vindication. I have heard that the law has strict codes for enforcing justice and that the rules of decorum follow the dictates of human sensibilities. If Your Honor does not make the right ruling, to whom should this forlorn abandoned woman turn for help ever again for the rest of my life? At the risk of offending Your Honor, I plead that Your



幸望台慈，特赐予决！谨状。

陈公读毕，谓莺莺曰：“汝言私约已定，有何为据？”莺取怀中香罗并花笺上二诗，皆浩笔也。陈公命追浩至公庭，责浩与李氏既已约婚，安可再婚孙氏？浩仓卒但以叔父所逼为辞，实非本心。再讯莺曰：“尔意如何？”莺曰：“张浩才名，实为佳婿。使妾得之，当克勤妇道。实龙图主盟之大德。”陈公曰：“天生才子佳人，不当使之孤另，我今曲与汝等成之。”[眉批]好官府。遂于状尾判云：

花下相逢，已有终身之约；中道而止，竟乖偕老之心。

在人情既出至诚，论律文亦有所禁。宜从先约，可断后婚。

判毕，谓浩曰：“吾今判合与李氏为婚。”二人大喜，拜谢相公恩德，遂成夫妇，偕老百年。后生二子，俱擢高科。话名《宿香亭张浩遇莺莺》：



Honor judge in my favor out of compassion!

After reading the complaint, Judge Chen asked Yingying, "You said you had a secret agreement with Zhang Hao, but do you have any evidence of it?"

Yingying produced from her bosom the silk scarf bearing Zhang Hao's poem and another poem written by Zhang Hao on the flower-patterned stationery. Accordingly, Judge Chen ordered that Zhang Hao be brought to court. As the judge lashed out at Zhang Hao for planning to marry Miss Sun when he was already betrothed, Zhang Hao hastened to defend himself, saying that he had not meant to do so but that his uncle had driven him to it. The judge asked Yingying, "What is your opinion?"

"With his literary talent, Zhang Hao will truly make an ideal husband. Should I marry him, I will assiduously perform my wifely duties out of gratitude for Your Honor's great kindness."

"I am not going to tear apart a talented young scholar and a beautiful maiden who are meant for each other by heaven's will. Let me make this match for you." (*Good judge.*) At the end of the letter of complaint, he wrote his judgment:

*An encounter by the flowers
 Led to a betrothal.
 To bring it to an end
 Is to betray the everlasting devotion.
 Human sensibilities favor loyalty;
 The codes of law dispense justice.
 The first betrothal prevails;
 The second one is hereby nullified.*

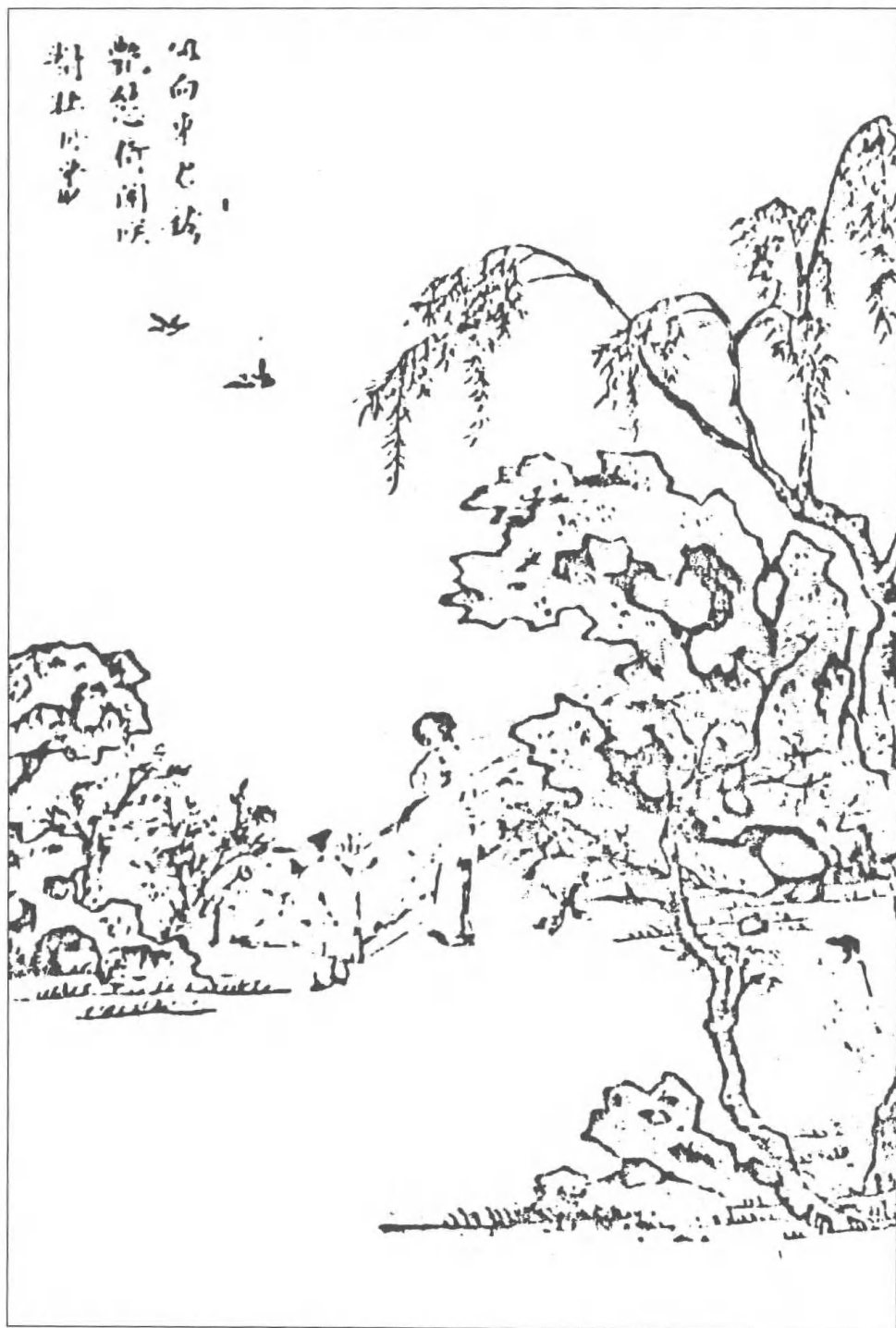
Having done so, the judge announced to Zhang Hao, "My judgment is for you to be married to Miss Li."

Overjoyed, the couple bowed to the judge and thanked him for his kindness. They married and lived happily ever after. Their two sons both won high honors on the imperial civil service examinations. This story is known as "Zhang Hao Meets Yingying at Lingering Fragrance Pavilion."

Cui Yingying of old had Zhang to save the day; ¹⁰



当年崔氏赖张生，今日张生仗李莺。
同是风流千古话，西厢不及宿香亭。





*Zhang of today is delivered by Li Yingying.
Of these two eternal stories of romance,
The latter outshines the former.*

¹ Dengtu is the title character in the poem “Mr. Dengtu,” by Song Yu (ca. 290–ca. 223 B. C.E.).

² The Wushan Mountains are associated with the goddess who gave rise to the expression “clouds and rain,” a metaphor for sexual encounters.

³ This story is a parody of the Tang dynasty’s “The Biography of Yingying” and *The West Chamber* by Wang Shifu of the Yuan dynasty. In both works, it is the man, Zhang Junrui, who scales a wall to see his lover Cui Yingying. Hence the reference to the reversal of roles.

⁴ The Divine Maiden is the goddess of the Wushan Mountains. See note 2 above.

Legend has it that during the Eastern Han dynasty, when Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao were on a trip to collect medicinal herbs, they had an amorous encounter with two fairy maidens in the Cave of Peach Blossoms on the Tiantai Mountains.

⁵ It is said that the Yellow Emperor had a dream in which he toured the legendary country of Huaxu. Thus, “Huaxu” came to be synonymous with “dream.”

⁶ According to legend, two goddesses of the Han River encountered a man called Zheng Jiaofu at the foot of the Hangao Mountains (in present-day Hubei Province) and gave him their jade pendants as tokens of love.

⁷ Jia Wu, daughter of Jia Chong, a court minister of the Western Jin dynasty, fell in love with Han Shou, a subordinate of her father’s, and surreptitiously gave Han the incense that her father had received as a gift from the emperor.

⁸ Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru (179–117 B.C.E.), one of China’s most celebrated prose poets, eloped after their first meeting. For more on Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru, see the prologue story of story 6.

⁹ On Jia Wu and Han Shou, see note 7 above.

¹⁰ Cui Yingying and Zhang Junrui are characters in “The Biography of Yingying” and *The West Chamber*. See note 3 above.



第三十卷

金明池吴清逢爱爱

朱文灯下逢刘倩，师厚燕山遇故人。
隔断死生终不泯，人间最切是深情。

话说大唐中和年间，博陵有个才子，姓崔名护，生得风流俊雅，才貌无双。偶遇春榜动，选场开，收拾琴剑书箱，前往长安应举。时当暮春，崔生暂离旅舍，往城南郊外游赏。但觉口燥咽干，唇焦鼻热。一来走得急，那时候也有些热了。这崔生只为口渴，又无溪涧取水。只见一个去处：

灼灼桃红似火，依依绿柳如烟。竹篱、茅舍、黄土壁、白板扉。啾啾犬吠桃源中，两两黄鹂鸣翠柳。

崔生去叩门，觅一口水。立了半日，不见一人出来。正无计结，忽听得门内笑声，崔生鹰觑鹞望，去门缝里一瞧：元来那笑的，却是一个女孩儿，约有十六岁。那女儿出来开门，崔生见了，口一发燥，咽一发干，唇一发焦，鼻一发热。连忙叉手向前道：“小娘子拜揖！”那女儿回个娇娇滴滴的万福，道：“官人宠顾茅



Story 30

Wu Qing Meets Ai'ai by Golden Bright Pond

*Zhu Wen encounters Liu Qian by the lamp;¹
Han Shihou meets his deceased wife's ghost in Mount Yan.²
Even death does not part them;
Love, the deepest of all emotions.*

The story goes that in the Zhonghe reign period [881–84] of the great Tang dynasty, there lived in Boling a talented and dashing scholar named Cui Hu who had no equal in ability or in appearance. As the date of the spring imperial civil service examinations approached, he collected his zither, sword, and books and went to Chang'an to sit for the examinations. He secured lodging at an inn and then went for a walk in the suburbs south of the city to see the sights of late spring. Partly because of his vigorous walking and partly because of the warm weather, Cui Hu felt his mouth and throat dry, his lips parched, and his nose burning. While he searched for a mountain brook at which to alleviate his thirst, he came upon a place with

*Fiery peach blossoms among misty green willows,
Bamboo fences, thatched huts, yellow mud walls, white
gates,*

*A veritable haven of peace, with
A dog-bark or two, an oriole chirp here and there.*

Cui Hu went up to a door and knocked, meaning to ask for a drink of water, but he stood for a considerable time without anyone showing up. As he was wondering what to do, he heard laughter from behind the door. Quick of eye, he peeked through a chink in the door and saw that the laughter came from a girl about sixteen years old. As she emerged to answer the door, Cui Hu felt his mouth and throat even drier, his lips more parched, and his nose burning worse than before. With his hands folded respectfully across his chest, he hastened forward and said, "Please accept a greeting from me, young lady."

Coyly, the girl dropped a curtsy and asked, "What can I do for



舍，有何见谕？”崔生道：“卑人博陵崔护，别无甚事，只因走远气喘，敢求勺水解渴则个！”女子听罢，并无言语，疾忙进去，用纤纤玉手，捧着磁瓿，盛半瓿茶，递与崔生。崔生接过，呷入口，透心也似凉，好爽利。只得谢了自回，想着功名，自去赴选。谁想时运未到，金榜无名，离了长安，匆匆回乡去了。

倏忽一年，又遇开科。崔生又起身赴试。追忆故人，且把试事权时落后，急往城南，一路上东观西望，只怕错认了女儿住处。顷刻到门前，依旧桃红柳绿，犬吠莺啼。崔生至门，见寂寞无人，心中疑惑。还去门缝里瞧时，不闻人声。徘徊半晌，去白板扉上题四句诗：

去年今日此门中，人面桃花相映红。

人面不知何处去，桃花依旧笑春风。

题罢，自回。明日放心不下，又去探看。忽见门儿呀地开了，走出一个人来。

生得须眉皓白，鬓发稀疏。身披白布道袍，手执斑竹拄杖。堪为四皓商山客，做得磻溪执钓人。



you, sir, honored as I am by your visit to this humble hut?"

"I am Cui Hu from Boling. I'm thirsty and short of breath from all the walking I've been doing and came just to ask for a drink of water."

Upon hearing these words, the girl rushed into the house without a word and returned bearing a porcelain jar, half filled with tea, in her soft and delicately shaped hands. Cui accepted the jar and took a sip. What a cooling effect it had on his body! Now totally refreshed, he thanked her and continued on his way to the examinations, for his mind was filled with desire for rank and title. However, not being in luck at this time of his life, he failed the examinations and hurriedly left Chang'an for home.

All too quickly, another year elapsed. It was again time for the examinations, and Cui Hu set out once more for the capital to sit for the examinations. Recalling the girl he had met a year ago, he pushed the examinations to the back of his mind and hastened to the south of the city, looking all around as he went, afraid that he might miss the girl's house. Before long, he found himself at the right door. As before, the peach blossoms were in bloom amid the green willow trees, and he heard the same dog barks and oriole chirps. Wondering why there was no trace of a human being around as he approached the door, he again peeked through a chink in the door but saw and heard no one inside. After pacing up and down for a good while, he stopped to write the following quatrain on the white wooden door:

*This very day last year by this door,
Peach blossoms were in bloom against her blushing cheeks.
But where, pray, is she now, while the peach blossoms
Are still there, smiling in the spring breezes?*

After writing the poem, he left, but the next day, still unable to calm his mind, he went back to the house for another look. All of a sudden, the door opened with a creak, and out came an old man with

*Hoary eyebrows, thin beard and hair,
A white cloth robe, a speckled bamboo cane.
He could well be one of the four Shang hermits,³*



那老儿对崔生道：“君非崔护么？”崔生道：“丈人拜揖，卑人是也。不知丈人何以见识？”那老儿道：“君杀我女儿，怎生不识？”惊得崔护面色如土，道：“卑人未尝到老丈宅中，何出此言？”老儿道：“我女儿去岁独自在家，遇你来觅水。去后昏昏如醉，不离床席。昨日忽说道：‘去年今日曾遇崔郎，今日想必来也。’[眉批]心灵一至。走到门前，望了一日，不见。转身抬头，忽见白板扉上诗，长哭一声，瞥然倒地，老汉扶入房中，一夜不醒。早间忽然开眼道：‘崔郎来了，爹爹好去迎接！’今君果至，岂非前定？且请进去一看。”谁想崔生入得门来，里面哭了一声。仔细看时，女儿死了。老儿道：“郎君今番真个偿命！”崔生此时，又惊又痛。便走到床前，坐在女儿头边，轻轻放起女儿的头，伸直了自家腿，将女儿的头放在腿上，亲着女儿的脸道：“小娘子，崔护在此！”[眉批]好医生。顷刻间，那女儿三魂再至，七魄重生，须臾就站起来。老儿十分欢喜，就赔妆奁，招赘崔生为婿。后来崔生发迹为官，夫妻一世团圆。正是：

月缺再圆，镜离再合。

花落再开，人死再活。



Or the one who angled at Pan Creek.⁴

The old man said, "Might you be Cui Hu?"

"Please accept a bow from me, sir. Yes, I am Cui Hu, but how did you know?"

"You are killing my daughter. How could I not know?"

Turning pale, Cui Hu said in horror, "I have never even set foot in your house. How can you say such a thing?"

"Last year, my daughter was at home alone when you came to ask for a drink of water. After you were gone, she fell into a trance as if drunk and was confined to bed. Yesterday, she suddenly said, 'This very day last year I met Mr. Cui. I believe he'll be here again today.' (*A meeting of the minds.*) She walked to the door and stayed at this spot for the longest time, watching for you in vain. When she turned around, she looked up and saw the poem on the door. With a long drawn-out cry, she collapsed to the ground. I helped her to her room, where she lay unconscious throughout the night. This morning, she suddenly opened her eyes and said, 'Mr. Cui is here. Please go and greet him, Father.' And sure enough, here you are. Isn't this something predestined to happen? Please come inside and see."

But as soon as Cui entered the house, a sob was heard and, as it turned out, the girl was dead.

The old man shrieked, "You owe me my daughter's life!"

Overcome by shock and grief, Cui walked to the bed and sat down next to the girl's head. Gently, he moved her head onto his outstretched legs and, kissing her cheeks, said, "Young lady, Cui Hu is here." (*Good physician.*) In a trice, the girl's three souls and seven spirits returned to her body, and she rose to walk.

Overjoyed beyond measure, the old man offered a dowry and had Cui Hu stay on as a live-in son-in-law. Later, Cui Hu rose considerably in life and became an official. The husband and wife lived happily to the end of their days. Indeed,

*The moon wanes but waxes again;
The mirror comes apart but joins again.
The flowers fall but bloom again,
Humans die but come back to life again.*



为甚今日说这段话？这个便是死中得活。有一个多情的女儿，没兴遇着个子弟，不能成就，干折了性命，反作成别人洞房花烛。正是：

有缘千里能相会，无缘对面不相逢。

说这女儿遇着的子弟，却是宋朝东京开封府有一员外，姓吴名子虚，平生是个真实的人，止生得一个儿子，名唤吴清。正是爱子娇痴，独儿得惜。那吴员外爱惜儿子，一日也不肯放出门。那儿子却是风流博浪的人，专要结识朋友，觅柳寻花。忽一日，有两个朋友来望，却是金枝玉叶，凤子龙孙，是宗室赵八节使之子，兄弟二人，大的讳应之，小的讳茂之，都是使钱的勤儿。两个叫院子通报，吴小员外出来迎接，分宾而坐。献茶毕，问道：“幸蒙恩降，不知又何使令？”二人道：“即今清明时候，金明池上，士女喧阗，游人如蚁。欲同足下一游，尊意如何？”小员外大喜道：“蒙二兄不弃寒贱，当得奉陪。”小员外便教童儿挑了酒樽食爨，备三匹马，与两个同去。迤迤早到金明池。陶谷学士有首诗道：

万座笙歌醉后醒，绕池罗幕翠烟生。
云藏宫殿九重碧，日照乾坤五色明。



Why did I tell this story? Because it is about a resurrection from death. Now, what follows is a story about a passionate but luckless girl who met a young profligate. Her love unrequited, she died needlessly and, if anything, helped to bring about the wedding of the man and another girl. Truly,

*Those with predestined bonds will meet,
However far apart they are.
Those without will miss each other,
Face-to-face though they may be.*

Now, the young man whom our girl met was the only son of Squire Wu Zixu of Kaifeng Prefecture, east capital of the Song dynasty. Squire Wu, an honest man, loved his only son Wu Qing to the point of foolhardiness, so much so that he forbade the boy to go out the door, not even for one day. However, the son turned out to be a profligate bent on making friends and embarking on amorous adventures.

One day, two friends of his, Zhao Yingzhi and his younger brother Zhao Maozhi, came to visit. Being sons of Prince and Regional Commander Zhao and therefore descendants of the royal family, they were prodigal spendthrifts. When their arrival was announced, Young Master Wu went out to greet them. After they had taken their seats as host and guests and tea was served, Young Master Wu asked, "To what do I owe this visit?"

"It being the season of the Clear and Bright Festival, Golden Bright Pond is swarming with sightseers, male and female. Would you be willing to go there with us?"

Delighted, Wu said, "Since you do not disdain my lowly status, I'll surely be happy to oblige." Accordingly, he had a page boy carry a load of wine and food utensils and prepare three horses for the outing. And so, they followed the many twists and turns in the road and wended their way to Golden Bright Pond. I present the poem by Academician Tao Gu⁵ to provide a description of the pond:

*Amid drunken singing from the ten thousand seats,
A mist rises to shroud the pond like a curtain.
The clouds hide the palace in the sky,*



波面画桥天上落，岸边游客鉴中行。

驾来将幸龙舟宴，花外风传万岁声。

三人绕池游玩，但见：

桃红似锦，柳绿如烟。花间粉蝶双双，枝上黄鹂两两。

踏青士女纷纷至，赏玩游人队队来。

三人就空处，饮了一回酒。吴小员外道：“今日天气甚佳，只可惜少个侑酒的人儿。”二赵道：“酒已足矣，不如闲步消遣，观看士女游人，强似呆坐。”三人挽手同行。刚动脚不多步，忽闻得一阵香风，绝似麝兰香，又带些脂粉气。吴小员外迎这阵香风上去。忽见一簇妇女，如百花斗彩，万卉争妍。内中一位小娘子，刚刚十五六岁模样，身穿杏黄衫子，生得如何：

眼横秋水，眉拂春山，发似云堆，足如莲蕊，两颗樱桃分素口，一枝杨柳斗纤腰。未领略遍体温香，早已睹十分丰韵。



*The sun shines on the multicolored universe.
The painted bridge over the waves comes from heaven,
Sightseers by the shore walk in the mirror.
The emperor joins the dragon-boat feast
Amid cheers carried by the flower-scented wind.*

As the threesome toured the lake, they saw:

*Peach blossoms as bright as brocade,
Green willows as hazy as mist.
Among flowers, butterflies flit in pairs;
On tree branches, orioles perch in twos.
Young men and women swarm to the site;
Sightseers descend in an endless stream.*

Stopping for a round of drink in a quiet spot, Young Master Wu commented, "What a glorious day! Too bad we don't have a nice girl to serve us wine."

The Zhao brothers said, "We've had enough to drink. How about taking a leisurely walk to watch the sightseers, male and female? Wouldn't that be better than sitting here with nothing to do?"

Hand in hand, the three set off, but before they had gone more than a few steps, a whiff of fragrant wind swept past, assailing their nostrils with an aroma that could not have been anything else but musk mixed with the scent of rouge and powder. As Young Master Wu moved in the direction of the fragrance's source, he saw a group of women as delightful to the eye as a cluster of brightly colored flowers vying to outshine one another in beauty. Among them was a girl in an apricot yellow blouse, no more than fifteen or sixteen years of age. How did she look?

*Her eyes two pools of autumn water;
Her brows the shape of rolling verdant hills.
Her hair done up like a cloud,
Her feet dainty as lotus petals.
Her unrouged lips as red as cherries;
Her waist as narrow as a willow twig.
The sweetness of her body not easily judged,
Her charm and grace were evident from afar.*



吴小员外看见，不觉遍体苏麻，急欲捱身上前。却被赵家两兄弟拖回，道：“良家女子，不可调戏。恐耳目甚多，惹祸招非。”
[眉批] 道学语，用得着。小员外虽然依允，却似勾去了魂灵一般。那小娘子随着众女娘自去了。小员外与二赵相别自回。一夜不睡，道：“好个十相具足的小娘子，恨不曾访问他居止姓名。若访问得明白，央媒说合，或有三分侥幸。”

次日，放心不下，换了一身整齐衣服，又约了二赵，在金明池上寻昨日小娘子踪迹。

分明昔日阳台路，不见当时行雨人。

吴小员外在游人中，往来寻趁，不见昨日这位小娘子，心中闷闷不悦。赵大哥道：“足下情怀少乐，想寻春之兴未遂。此间酒肆中，多有当垆少妇。愚弟兄陪足下一行，倘有看得上眼的，沽饮三杯，也当春风一度，如何？”小员外道：“这些老妓夙娼，残花败柳，学生平日都不在意。”赵二哥道：“街北第五家，小小一个酒肆，到也精雅。内中有个量酒的女儿，大有姿色，年纪也只好二八，只是不常出来。”小员外欣然道：“烦相引一看！”三



At the sight, Young Master Wu melted all over with desire. He was about to approach the young lady when the Zhao brothers pulled him back, saying, "You can't take liberties with a girl from a decent family! Besides, there are too many eyes and ears around. You'll only get yourself into trouble." (*The argument of moralists. Quite useful.*)

Wu did not object, but he felt as if his soul had been snatched away. The young lady went away with her group, and Young Master Wu parted company with the Zhao brothers and returned home. As he lay awake the whole night through, he said to himself, "What a beauty she is! I should have asked for her address and her name. If I can find out what they are, I'll have a matchmaker propose to her. I may have a chance."

The next day, preoccupied with thoughts about the young woman, he changed into nicer clothes and asked the Zhao brothers to go with him to Golden Bright Pond again in search of the young lady he had seen the day before.

It's the same old path to the balcony,⁶

But where's the one in the rain from the other day?

Young Master Wu searched in vain among the sightseers for the young lady of yesterday. To a dejected Young Master Wu, Elder Brother Zhao remarked, "As far as I can tell, you are in none too good a mood because you've been let down in your quest for romance. Well, there's no lack of young wineshop waitresses in this area. Let's take you to them. If you see a girl who strikes your fancy, go ahead and drink three cups and count that as a romantic experience of sorts. What do you say?"

"I never pay any attention to those faded flowers and withered willows. They are all past the prime of their lives."

"But in the fifth house from the northern end of this street, there's an exquisite little wineshop," put in Second Brother Zhao. "And in that wineshop, the one who measures out the wine is a very attractive girl. She's only about sixteen, and she doesn't come out to the front of the shop very often."

That information cheered up Young Master Wu. "Take me



人移步街北，果见一个小酒店，外边花竹扶疏，里面杯盘罗列。赵二哥指道：“此家就是。”三人入得门来，悄无人声。不免唤一声：“有人么？有人么？”须臾之间，似有若无，觉得娇娇媚媚，妖妖娆娆，走一个十五六岁花朵般多情女儿出来。那三个子弟，见了女儿，齐齐的三头对地，六臂向身，唱个喏道：“小娘子拜揖。”那多情的女儿，见了三个子弟，一点春心动了，按捺不下，一双脚儿出来了，则是麻麻地进去不得。紧挨着三个子弟坐地，便教迎儿取酒来。那四个可知道喜！四口儿并来，没一百岁。[眉批]人不可以不仁。方才举得一杯，忽听得驴儿蹄响，车儿轮响，却是女儿的父母上坟回来。三人败兴而返。

迤邐春色凋残，胜游难再，只是思忆之心，形于梦寐。转眼又是一年。三个子弟不约而同，再寻旧约。顷刻已到，但见门户萧然，当垆的人不知何在。三人少歇一歇问信，则见那旧日老儿和婆子走将出来，三人道：“丈丈拜揖，有酒打一角来。”便问：



there!" he said.

The three young men went up the street and saw that there was indeed a small wineshop with well-spaced flowers and bamboos growing in front of the door and cups and plates displayed in neat rows inside. "This is it!" exclaimed Second Brother Zhao, pointing a finger. They entered and found the house dead quiet.

"Anybody here?" they called out.

In a trice, an imperceptible movement disturbed the air, and a fifteen-or sixteen-year-old girl emerged in all her charm and coquettishness, pretty as a flower and romantically inclined by nature. At the sight of the girl, the three young men bowed deeply and, as if coordinating their movements, bent their three heads toward the ground, folded their six arms across their chests, and chanted, "Greetings to you, young lady!"

Overcome by irrepressible passion at the sight of the three young men, the flirtatious girl found it hard to take her feet back to the interior of the house. Instead, she sat shoulder to shoulder with the young men and called out for Ying'er to serve wine. What a good time they thought they were going to have, these four, whose age added together totaled less than one hundred! (*One should never fail to observe decorum.*) But they had barely raised their first cup of wine when they heard the clip-clop of a donkey's hooves and the rumble-tumble of carriage wheels. The girl's parents had returned from a trip to the family's ancestral grave. Bitterly let down, the three young men returned home.

As time went by, the colors of spring faded and the scenic spots attracted hardly any sightseers, but thoughts of the lovely one kept recurring in dreams. In the twinkling of an eye, another year elapsed. As if by prior agreement, the three young men again set out on a trip together to the same wineshop. They arrived a short time later and found the shop bleak and unattended. After resting, the three were just about to make inquiries when the elderly couple they had seen last year came out.

"Greetings to you, sir," the three young men said. "A flask of wine, please." Then they continued, "Sir, when we were here



“丈丈，去年到此，见个小娘子量酒，今日如何不见？”那老儿听了，簌地两行泪下：“覆官人，老汉姓卢名荣。官人见那量酒的就是老拙女儿，小名爱爱。去年今日合家去上坟，不知何处来三个轻薄厮儿，和他吃酒，见我回来散了，中间别事不知。老拙两个薄薄罪过他两句言语，不想女儿性重，顿然悒悒，不吃饮食，数日而死。这屋后小丘，便是女儿的坟。”说罢，又簌簌地泪下。三人噤口不敢再问，连忙还了酒钱，三个马儿连着，一路伤感不已。回头顾盼，泪下沾襟，怎生放心得下！正是：

夜深喧暂息，池台惟月明。

无因驻清景，日出事还生。

那三个正行之际，恍惚见一妇人，素罗罩首，红帕当胸，颤颤摇摇，半前半却，觑着三个，低声万福。那三个如醉如痴，罔知所措。道他是鬼，又衣裳有缝，地下有影；道是梦里，自家掐着又疼。只见那妇人道：“官人认得奴家，即去岁金明池上人也。官人今日到奴家相望，爹妈诈言我死，虚堆个土坟，待瞒过官人们。奴家思想前生有缘，幸得相遇。如今搬在城里一个曲巷小楼，且是潇洒，倘不弃嫌，屈尊一顾。”三人下马齐行。瞬息之间，便



last year, there was a young lady serving at the counter, measuring out wine, but we don't see her today."

At these words, the old man burst into tears. "I am Lu Rong. The girl you saw was my daughter Ai'ai. This very day last year, while we were out paying our respects at the family's ancestral grave, three frivolous young men came and drank wine with her. They went away when they saw us coming back, and I have no idea what happened between them. My wife and I said a few reproachful words to our girl — nothing harsh — but, being of a sensitive nature, she became sulky and refused to eat or drink. She died a few days later. The little mound behind the house is her grave." At this point, the tears trickled down his cheeks again.

The three young men were dumbstruck. They didn't dare to ask anything more, but hastened to pay the bill. On their way back, riding their horses in a straight line, they kept looking back at the shop, their gowns stained with tears, their hearts heavy with grief. Truly,

In the depths of the now silent night,

The moon shines on the ponds and terraces.

The tranquility remains undisturbed

Till sunrise, when unforeseen events come to pass.

As they were traveling, they became vaguely aware of the presence of a woman. She wore a white head-wrap and a red vest and walked with shaky, hesitant steps. Casting a coy glance at the three young men, she chanted a greeting in a subdued voice. The young men, feeling as if they were in a trance, didn't know what to do. She could have been a ghost, but her clothes were properly sewed, and she was casting a shadow on the ground. They could have been dreaming, but a pinch caused a twinge of pain.

The woman spoke, "You know who I am. I am the one you met last year by Golden Bright Pond. When you were in my home earlier today, my parents lied to you in saying that I was dead. That grave is nothing but a mound of earth piled up to deceive you. I believe it is our predestined bond that makes our paths cross. I've moved to a small house in a secluded lane in the city. It's quite a nice place. If you don't think it's beneath your dignity, would you be kind enough



到一个去处。人得门来，但见：

小楼连苑，斗帐藏春。低檐浅映红帘，曲阁遥开锦帐。

半明半暗，人居掩映之中；万绿万红，春满风光之内。

上得楼儿，那女儿便叫：“迎儿，安排酒来，与三个姐夫贺喜。”无移时，酒到痛饮。那女儿所事熟滑，唱一个娇滴滴的曲儿，舞一个妖媚媚的破儿，搯一个紧飏飏的箏儿，道一个甜甜嫩嫩的千岁儿。那弟兄两个饮散，相别去了。吴小员外回身转手，搭定女儿香肩，搂定女儿细腰，捏定女儿纤手，醉眼乜斜，只道楼儿便是床上，火急做了一班半点儿事。端的是：

春衫脱下，绣被铺开。酥胸露一朵雪梅，纤足启两弯新月。未开桃蕊，怎禁他浪蝶深偷；半折花心，忍不住狂蜂恣采！潏然粉汗，微喘相偎。

睡到天明，起来梳洗，吃些早饭，两口儿絮絮叨叨，不肯放手。吴小员外焚香设誓，啣臂为盟。那女儿方才掩着脸，笑了进去。吴小员外自一路闷闷回家。见了爹妈，道：“我儿，昨夜宿



to follow me there?"

The three young men dismounted and followed her. In an instant, they found themselves at the door of a house. When they stepped in, this was what they saw:

*A garden connected to the small house;
 A curtain for concealing amorous games.
 The low eaves cast shadows on the red shade;
 The deep boudoir had its brocade canopy drawn.
 The feeble light blurred the bodies' contours;
 The gaudy colors matched the fiery passion.*

As soon as they were upstairs, Ai'ai called out, "Ying'er! Serve wine to wish the three gentlemen joy!" In no time, they set to drinking to their hearts' content. There was nothing the girl was not good at. She sang a song in a coquettish tone, performed a passionate dance in a suggestive way, played a heady tune on the zither, and chanted most sweetly a salute to the three young men, addressing them as "Your Highnesses." The Zhao brothers departed after having their fill of wine, but Young Master Wu stayed behind. He turned toward the girl, put his arm around her soft shoulders, held her to him by her narrow waist, squeezed her delicate hands, and, his eyes heavy with wine, had his way with her in all his eagerness, as if they were in a bedchamber. Truly,

*Her blouse taken off, the embroidered quilt spread out;
 Her chest a plum blossom against the snow,
 Her tiny feet the shape of crescent moons.
 The peach blossom bud could hardly withstand
 The advances of the amorous butterfly.
 The flower pistils were too tender
 For the thrusts of the brutal bee;
 In each other's arms, they sweated and panted.*

At daybreak, they rose, washed, and combed their hair. With breakfast over, they still had much to say to each other, hating the thought of parting. Young Master Wu lit some incense and made a vow, biting his own arms until they bled. Ai'ai covered her face and went merrily to the interior of the house. Young Master Wu returned



于何处？教我一夜不睡，乱梦颠倒。”小员外道：“告爹妈，儿为两个朋友是皇亲国戚，要我陪宿，不免依他。”爹妈见说是皇亲，又曾来望，便不疑他。谁想情之所钟，解释不得。有诗为证：

划平荆棘盖楼台，楼上笙歌鼎沸开。

欢笑未终离别起，从前荆棘又生来。

那小员外与女儿两情厮投，好说得着。可知哩，笋芽儿般后生，遇着花朵儿女娘，又是芳春时候，正是：

佳人窈窕当春色，才子风流正少年。

小员外只为情牵意惹，不隔两日，少不得去伴女儿一宵。只一件，但见女儿时，自家觉得精神百倍，容貌胜常；才到家便颜色憔悴，形容枯槁，渐渐有如鬼质，看看不似人形，饮食不思，药饵不进。父母见儿如此，父子情深，顾不得朋友之道，也顾不得皇亲国戚，便去请赵公子兄弟二人来，告道：“不知二兄日前带我豚儿何处非为？今已害得病深。若是医得好，一句也不敢言；万一有些不测，不免击鼓诉冤，那时也怪老汉不得。”那兄弟二人听罢，切切



home in low spirits.

“Son,” said his parents upon seeing him, “where did you spend the night? You made us lose a whole night’s sleep. Such nightmares we had!”

“Father, Mother, it was because those two friends of mine, who are members of the royal family, wanted me to stay overnight, so I had to do as they wished.”

At the mention of the royal family members, who had visited their son before, the parents relented. No suspicion crossed their minds. Little did they know that their son was conducting a romance that was hard for him to explain. There is a poem in testimony:

*The thistles were cleared away, a tower appeared,
 In which songs and music came to reign.
 By farewell time, the merrymaking at an end,
 The rampant thistles took over again.*

Young Master Wu and the girl became a most loving couple, and this was only natural, for he was a tender bamboo shoot and she a blooming flower in the height of spring. Truly,

*The beauty is in the spring of her years;
 The dashing young man in the prime of his life.*

His heart filled with his passion for the girl, the young man would not let two days go by without spending a night with her. However, there was one remarkable thing about these visits: The moment he saw her, he felt more vigorous and handsome than usual, but as soon as he got home, he appeared sallow and haggard. As time wore on, he began to look more like a ghost than a human. He lost his appetite, nor would he take any medicine.

His parents were alarmed at his condition. There being a deep bond between father and son, the father, casting aside all scruples about friendship and connections with royalty, invited the Zhao brothers to visit and addressed them in the following words: “I’d like to know where you took my son some time ago and what mischief he got himself into. He’s critically ill now. If he recovers, I won’t say a word against you, but if something happens to him, I’ll have to press charges against you at court. Don’t blame me if it comes to that.”



偶语：“我们虽是金枝玉叶，争奈法度极严，若子弟贤的，一般如凡人叙用；若有些争差的，罪责却也不小。万一被这老子告发时，毕竟于我不利。”疾忙回言：“丈丈，贤嗣之疾，本不由我弟兄。”遂将金明池酒店上遇见花枝般多情女儿始末叙了一遍。老儿大惊，道：“如此说，我儿着鬼了！二位有何良计可以相救？”二人道：“有个皇甫真人，他有斩妖符剑，除非请他来施设，退了这邪鬼，方保无恙。”老儿拜谢道：“全在二位身上。”二人回身就去。却是：

青龙共白虎同行，吉凶事全然未保。

两个上了路，远远到一山中，白云深处，见一茅庵：

黄茅盖屋，白石垒墙。阴阴松暝鹤飞回，小小池晴龟出曝。翠柳碧梧夹路，玄猿白鹤迎门。

顷刻间庵里走出个道童来，道：“二位莫不是寻师父救人么？”二人道：“便是，相烦通报则个！”道童道：“若是别患，俺师父不去，只割情欲之妖。却为甚的？情能生人，亦能死人。生是道家



Upon hearing these words, the brothers whispered to each other, "We may be members of the royal family, but the law is the law. At best, well-behaving descendants of the royal family are assigned to official posts just as commoners are, but when something happens, we aren't spared in the least. If this old man does press charges against us, we'll be in for trouble." More loudly, they replied, "Sir, your son's illness has nothing to do with us." Thereupon, they gave an account of their encounter with the flirtatious pretty girl at the wineshop by Golden Bright Pond.

The old man was appalled. "So, my son is involved with a ghost! What do you think we can do to save him?"

"There is a Daoist sage, Huangfu, who is equipped with magic figures and a sword that subdues demons. The only course of action now would be to have him exorcise that evil ghost and thus ensure your son's well-being."

Bowing thankfully, the old man said, "Then I'll count on your help." So the two brothers immediately set out to accomplish the mission. Truly,

*A green dragon and a white tiger⁷
Bring either joy or woe, when together.*

The Zhao brothers took to the road. After a long journey, they came to a mountain, where they saw amid the white clouds a temple with a thatched roof.

*A yellow thatched roof,
A white stone wall.
Cranes fly among the pine trees;
Turtles bask in the sun by a small pond.
Green willows and planes flank the path;
Black apes and white cranes greet guests at the gate.*

Soon after they had stopped at the gate, a Daoist acolyte emerged from the temple, saying, "Are you two gentlemen here to seek my master's help to save a human life?"

"Yes! Please announce us to your master."

"My master takes only cases involving the demon of lust. Why? Because lust gives life but also takes life away. In the Daoist belief,



之心，死是道家之忌。”二人道：“正要割情欲之妖，救人之死！”小童急去，请出皇甫真人。真人见道童已说过了，“吾可一去！”迤迤同到吴员外家。才到门首，便道：“这家被妖气罩定，却有生气相临。”却好小员外出见，真人吃了一惊，道：“鬼气深了！九死一生，只有一路可救！”惊得老夫妻都来跪告真人：“俯垂法术，救俺一家性命！”真人道：“你依吾说，急往西方三百里外避之。若到所在，这鬼必然先到。倘若满了一百二十日，这鬼不去，员外拼着一命，不可救治矣！”员外应允。备素斋，请皇甫真人斋罢，相别自去。老员外速教收拾担仗，往西京河南府去避死。正是：

曾观《前定录》，生死不由人。

小员外请两个赵公子相伴同行。沿路去时，由你登山涉岭，过涧渡桥，闲中闹处，有伴无人，但小员外吃食，女儿在旁供菜；



giving life is of central importance, but killing is the number one taboo.”

“We are here precisely to ask your master to subdue a demon of lust and save a human being from death.”

Without a moment’s delay, the acolyte went back inside and soon returned with Sage Huangfu. The acolyte having already explained the situation, the sage said readily, “I will go,” and followed the Zhao brothers all the way to Squire Wu’s house.

He had hardly reached the door when he commented, “This house is wrapped in a demonic aura, but there is still a breath of life.”

At this point, Young Master Wu happened to come to the door. In alarm, the sage exclaimed, “This is a serious case! The odds are nine to one that you’re going to die. There’s only one way to save you.”

The panic-stricken old couple came to plead on their knees, saying, “Please be so kind as to use your magic and save everyone in our family.”

“Do as I say,” ordered the sage. “Go quickly in a westerly direction and take shelter somewhere a good three to four hundred *li* away. Nevertheless, wherever you go, you’ll surely find the ghost already there. If she’s not gone after a hundred and twenty days, your life, Young Squire Wu, will be beyond salvation.”

The young man agreed to this course of action. After being treated to a vegetarian meal, Sage Huangfu bade his hosts farewell and departed. Squire Wu Senior quickly ordered servants to pack for his son to go to Luoyang, the Western Capital in Henan Prefecture, to get him out of harm’s way. Truly,

Those who’ve read The Record of Previous Lives

Know that men have no control over life and death.

The young master asked the two Zhao brothers to accompany him. All along the way, whether climbing mountains or crossing bridges over ravines, whether in quiet spots or places bustling with activity, whether with company or not, every time the young master ate, the girl was by his side, serving him, and every time he went



员外临睡，女儿在傍解衣，若员外登厕，女儿拿着衣服。处处莫避，在在难离。不觉在洛阳几日。忽然一日屈指算时，却好一百二十日。如何是好？那两个赵公子和从人守着小员外，请到酒楼散闷，又愁又怕，都阁不住泪汪汪地，又怕小员外看见，急急拭了。小员外目睁口呆，罔知所措。正低了头倚着栏干，恰好皇甫真人骑个驴儿过来。赵公子看见了，慌忙下楼，当街拜下，扯住真人，求其救度。吴清从人都一齐跪下拜求。真人便就酒楼上结起法坛，焚香步罡，口中念念有词。行持了毕，把一口宝剑，递与小员外道：“员外本当今日死！且将这剑去，到晚紧闭了门。黄昏之际，定来敲门。休问是谁，速把剑斩之。若是有幸，斩得那鬼，员外便活；若不幸误伤了人，员外只得纳死。总然一死，还有可脱之理。”分付罢，真人自骑驴去了。小员外得了剑，巴到晚间，闭了门。渐次黄昏，只听得剥啄之声。员外不露声息，悄然开门，便把剑斫下，觉得随手倒地。员外又惊又喜，心窝里突突地跳，连叫：“快点灯来。”众人点灯来照，连店主人都来看。



to bed, she stayed with him and helped him undress. When he went to the lavatory, she held his clothes for him. There was no way he could get away from her, anywhere, anytime.

Before they realized it, they had been in Luoyang for quite a few days. Suddenly, one day, he counted up on his fingers and realized that it was exactly one hundred and twenty days since he had left home. What was to be done? The Zhao brothers and the servants escorted him to a wineshop to cheer him up, but in their worry and fear, they could barely refrain from weeping. And yet, afraid that the young master would see their tears, they quickly wiped them away.

The young master was perplexed and had not the least idea of what to do. He was leaning against the railing, his head down, when Sage Huangfu approached on a donkey. Upon seeing him, one of the Zhao brothers rushed down the stairs and fell to his knees right there on the street. He caught the sage by his clothes, imploring him to help. Young Master Wu and everyone in his entourage got down on their knees in supplication.

Right there in the wineshop, the sage set up an altar, lit some incense, and walked along the imagined outline of the Big Dipper, all the while muttering an incantation. When the ritual was over, the sage handed a sword to Wu, saying, "You are supposed to die today. Now take this sword. In the late afternoon, close your door tightly. At sundown, you'll surely hear a knock at the door. Don't ask who it is. Just use this sword to quickly cut down the person outside. If you're lucky, you'll kill the demon and you'll live. If luck goes against you and you kill an innocent person, you'll have to die, but you were going to die anyway. And now, at least you have a chance." After giving these words of instruction, the sage rode off on his donkey.

Sword in hand, the young master waited eagerly for the afternoon to draw to a close. He shut the door when evening began to set in. A knock came on the door. Quietly, he pulled the door open and brought down the sword. He felt something fall to the ground at his strike. Startled but delighted, he called out, his heart pumping violently, "Bring me a lamp!" A lamp was soon brought to him.



不看犹可，看时，众人都吃了一大惊：

分开八片顶阳骨，倾下半桶冰雪水。

店主人认得砍倒的尸首，却是店里奔走的小厮阿寿，十五岁了，因往街上登东，关在门外，故此敲门，恰好被剑砍坏了。当时店中嚷动，地方来，见了人命事，便将小员外缚了。两个赵公子也被缚了。等待来朝，将一行人解到河南府。大尹听得是杀人公事，看了辞状，即送狱司勘问。吴清将皇甫真人斩妖事，备细说了。狱司道：“这是荒唐之言。见在杀死小厮，真正人命，如何抵释！”喝教手下用刑。却得跟随小员外的在衙门中使透了银子。狱卒禀道：“吴清久病未痊，受刑不起。那两个宗室，止是干连小犯。”狱官借水推船，权把吴清收监，候病痊再审，二赵取保在外。一面着地方将棺木安放尸首，听候堂上吊验，斩妖剑作凶器驻库。

却说吴小员外是夜在狱中垂泪叹道：“爹娘止生得我一人，



Even the innkeeper joined the crowd to look. It would have been all right if they had not looked, but as they did, all those present stood aghast.

*The eight pieces of his skull bones opened up,
And half a bucket of ice and snow poured in.*

The innkeeper recognized the corpse as that of Ashou, a fifteen-year-old page boy who had served at the inn. He had gone out to the street to use the lavatory and, finding himself locked out upon his return, had knocked on the door and been cut down. The commotion at the inn drew the attention of the local headman. Upon arriving at the scene, he saw that he had a case of homicide on his hands and had Young Master Wu as well as the Zhao brothers tied up.

The next morning, the suspects were taken under guard to Henan Prefecture. When told there had been a homicide, the prefectural magistrate read the complaint and sent the suspects to the inspector for questioning. There, the young master recounted how Sage Huangfu had instructed him to cut down the demon.

“How absurd!” snapped the inspector. “How can a story like that explain away the death of the page boy, a flesh-and-blood human being?”

He then ordered that torture be applied. As the young master’s followers had bribed people left and right at the yamen, a prison warden declared, “Wu Qing, who has not yet recovered from a prolonged illness, is too weak to withstand torture, and the two members of the royal clan are involved only in a minor way.” The chief prison warden, pushing the boat with the current, so to speak, ordered that Wu Qing be detained for the time being, to be tried again after his recovery. The two Zhao brothers were set free on bail. At the same time, the local headman was ordered to have the corpse placed in a coffin to await a forensic examination in court. The demon-subduing sword, being the weapon used in the homicide, was put away in the yamen storehouse.

Let us turn our attention to Young Master Wu in his prison cell that night. He said to himself with a tearful sigh, “Since I’m the only child, my parents never left my side since my earliest years, never



从小寸步不离，何期今日死于他乡！早知左右是死，背井离乡，着甚么来！”又叹道：“小娘子呵，只道生前相爱，谁知死后缠绵，恩变成仇，害得我骨肉分离，死无葬身之地，我好苦也！我好恨也！”嗟怨了半夜，不觉睡去。梦见那花枝般多情的女儿，妖妖娆娆，走近前来，深深道个万福，道：“小员外休得怅恨奴家。奴自身亡之后，感太元夫人空中经过，怜奴无罪早夭，授以太阴炼形之术，以此元形不损，且得游行世上。感员外隔年垂念，因而冒耻相从。亦是前缘宿分，合有一百二十日夫妻。今已完满，奴自当去。前夜特来奉别，不意员外起其恶意，将剑砍奴。今日受一夜牢狱之苦，以此相报。阿寿小厮，自在东门外古墓之中，只教官府覆验尸首，便得脱罪。奴又与上元夫人求得玉雪丹二粒，员外试服一粒，管取百病消除，元神复旧；又一粒员外谨藏之，他日成就员外一段佳姻，以报一百二十日夫妻之恩。”[眉批]不枉叫做多情儿女。说罢，出药二粒，如鸡豆般，其色正红，分明是两粒火珠。那女儿将一粒纳于小员外袖内，一粒纳于口中，叫声：“奴去也，还乡之日，千万到奴家荒坟一顾，也表员外不忘故旧之



dreaming that I would die in an alien place! If I'm meant to die at this time, why let me die away from my native town?" Then he continued, addressing himself to the young lady, "I never anticipated that our love in this life would turn into rancor after death! You are the one who brought me into all this suffering, separating me from my parents and leaving me to die without even a proper burial place. How wretched I am! Oh, the misery of it all!" After lamenting for a good part of the night, he drifted into sleep.

In a dream, he saw Ai'ai, pretty as a flower and full of tenderness, walking up to him flirtatiously. Dropping a deep curtsy, she said, "Young Master, please don't hold it against me. When I died, the Goddess of the Universe, who happened to be passing in the sky, took pity on me because I died without being guilty of any wrongdoing and taught me the secrets of keeping my corpse alive. That was how I preserved my human form and was able to move around in the world of mortals. Out of gratitude to you for still thinking about me the second year after we met, I shamelessly offered myself to you. We are indeed predestined to be husband and wife for one hundred and twenty days, but now that the bond is completed, I should be leaving you.

"The other night, I came to say goodbye, little expecting that you would wish me harm and cut me down with a sword. Your misery tonight in prison is repayment of that debt to me. As for Ashou the page boy, he's in the ancient cemetery outside East Gate. If you can get the authorities to do a forensic examination, you'll be exonerated. I've obtained two Jade Snow pills from Goddess Shangyuan.⁸ Take one, and you'll be free of all illnesses and regain your vital forces. The other one is for you to keep. It will bring you a good marriage as repayment of the debt of gratitude I owe you for our one hundred and twenty days as husband and wife." (*Truly a young woman of tender feelings.*)

Thereupon, she produced two pills the size of chickpeas. Of a brightly red color, they looked like two beads of fire. Putting one pill in the young master's sleeve and the other in his mouth, she said, "Off I go now. After you return home, be sure to visit my deserted



情。”小员外再欲叩问详细，忽闻钟声聒耳，惊醒将来。口中觉有异香，腹里一似火团展转，汗流如雨。巴到天明，汗止，身子顿觉健旺。摸摸袖内，一粒金丹尚在，宛如梦中所见。小员外隐下馀情，只将女鬼托梦说阿寿小厮见在，请覆验尸首，便知真假。狱司禀过大尹，开棺检视，原来是旧笊帚一把，并无他物。寻到东门外古墓，那阿寿小厮如醉梦相似，睡于破石椁之内。众人把姜汤灌醒，问他如何到此，那小厮一毫不知。狱司带那小厮并笊帚到大尹面前，教店主人来认，实是阿寿未死，方知女鬼的做作，大尹即将众人赶出。皇甫真人已知斩妖剑不灵，自去入山修道去了。二赵接得吴小员外，连称恭喜，酒店主人也来谢罪。三人别了主人家，领着仆从，欢欢喜喜回开封府来。

离城还有五十馀里，是个大镇，权歇马上店，打中火。只见间壁一个大户人家门首，贴一张招医榜文：

本宅有爱女患病垂危，人不能识。倘有四方明医，善能



grave, just for old times' sake."

Young Master Wu was about to ask for more details when suddenly the chime of bells came to his ears, and he woke up with a start. A most unusual fragrance filled his mouth, and his stomach burned as if a ball of fire was rolling around in it. He broke into a heavy sweat. When daybreak finally came, the sweating stopped, and all of a sudden, he felt his old healthy self again. Groping in his sleeve, he found one pill, just like the one he had seen in his dream.

The young master told the authorities what the female ghost had said about the whereabouts of Ashou the page boy and requested that a forensic examination be made so as to uncover the truth, but he kept the rest of the dream to himself. After obtaining permission from the prefectural magistrate, the prison warden had the coffin opened. Inside, there was nothing but an old broom. A search party went to the ancient cemetery outside East Gate and found Ashou the page boy in a broken stone coffin, as if in a wine-induced sleep. After being wakened with some ginger soup forced down his throat, he professed total ignorance as to how he had ended up in this place. The prison warden brought the boy and the broom to the magistrate and summoned the innkeeper to make an identification. It was definitely Ashou.

Only then did it become known that this had all been the work of the female ghost. The magistrate had everyone driven out of the court. Knowing how ineffective his demon-subduing sword had turned out to be, Sage Huangfu betook himself to the mountains to seek perfection of his skills. The Zhao brothers went to greet Young Master Wu and bring him home, showering words of congratulations upon him. The innkeeper also came, to ask for forgiveness. The three young men took leave of the innkeeper and, followed by the servants, set out merrily on their journey back to Kaifeng Prefecture.

About fifty *li* from the city, they came upon a large town and stopped at a wineshop for lunch. On the gate of an imposing mansion, they saw a poster seeking the services of a physician. It said:

"The beloved daughter of this family is critically ill with an affliction that none has been able to name. Any skilled physician with a



治疗者，奉谢青蚨十万，花红羊酒奉迎，决不虚示。

吴小员外看了榜文，问店小二道：“间壁何宅？患的是甚病？没人识得？”小二道：“此地名褚家庄，间壁住的，就是褚老员外，生得如花似玉一位小娘子，年方一十六岁。若干人来求他，老员外不肯轻许。一月之间，忽染一病，发狂谵语，不思饮食。许多太医下药，病只有增无减。好一主大财乡，没人有福承受得。可惜好个小娘子，世间难遇。如今看看欲死，老夫妻两口儿昼夜啼哭，只祈神拜佛，做好事保福，也不知费了若干钱钞了。”小员外听说，心中暗喜，道：“小二哥，烦你做个媒，我要娶这小娘子为妻。”小二道：“小娘子十生九死，官人便要讲亲，也待病痊。”小员外道：“我会医的是狂病，不愿受谢，只要许下成婚，手到病除。”小二道：“官人请坐，小人即时传语。”须臾之间，只见小二同着褚公到店中来，与三人相见了。问道：“那一位先生善医？”二赵举手道：“这位吴小员外。”褚公道：“先生若医得小女病痊，帖上所言，毫厘不敢有负。”吴小员外道：“学生姓吴名清，本府城内大街居住。父母在堂，薄有家私，岂希罕万钱之赠！”



cure will be rewarded with a hundred thousand in cash plus red silk, lamb, and wine. There will be absolutely no retraction of this offer.”

After reading the poster, Young Master Wu asked a waiter at the inn, “What family lives next door? What kind of illness is it? Is it really something no one recognizes?”

“This place is Chu Manor. Squire Chu’s family lives next door. Old Squire Chu has a sixteen-year-old daughter who’s as pretty as a flower and as fair as jade. They’ve had no lack of marriage proposals, but the old squire is not one to give his consent lightly. Less than a month ago, the girl suddenly came down with an illness. She became delirious and refused to eat or drink. One physician after another wrote prescriptions for her, but she got worse instead of better. What a pity there’s no qualified candidate fortunate enough to inherit the vast family fortune, and she’s such a rare girl, too! How sad! It looks as if she’s going to die any time now. The old couple are weeping day and night, praying to the gods, paying homage to the Buddha’s images, and doing good deeds. Goodness knows how much they’ve spent.”

Concealing his delight, Young Master Wu said, “Second Brother, would you do me a favor? Please serve as my matchmaker. I want this young lady to be my wife.”

The waiter replied, “Ten to one she’s going to die. If you want to propose, at least wait until she recovers from her illness.”

“I know how to cure such illnesses of the mind. I’ll forgo all rewards. As long as the family agrees to a betrothal, I guarantee that the illness will be gone the moment I take on the case.”

“Please sit, sir. Let me convey your message to them.”

In a trice, the waiter brought Mr. Chu into the wineshop. After exchanging greetings with the three young men, Mr. Chu asked, “Which gentleman is the physician?”

Raising their hands, the Zhao brothers said, “Young Master Wu here is the physician.”

“If you could cure my daughter, I promise that I will not hold back the least fraction of a penny from the amount of reward announced in the poster.”

“My name is Wu Qing. I live with my parents on Main Street



但学生年方二十，尚未婚配。久慕宅上小娘子容德俱全，倘蒙许谐秦晋，自当勉效卢扁。”二赵在傍，又帮衬许多好言，夸吴氏名门富室，又夸小员外做人忠厚。褚公爱女之心，无所不至，不由他不承了。便道：“若果然医得小女好时，老汉赔薄薄妆奁，送至府上成婚。”吴清向二赵道：“就烦二兄为媒，不可退悔！”褚公道：“岂敢。”当下褚公连三位都请到家中，设宴款待。

吴清性急，就教老员外：“引进令爱房中，看病下药。”褚公先行，吴清随后。也是缘分当然，吴小员外进门时，那女儿就不狂了。吴小员外假要看脉，养娘将罗帏半揭，帏中但闻金钏索琅的一声，舒出削玉团冰的一只纤手来。正是：

未识半面花容，先见一双玉腕。

小员外将两手脉俱已看过，见神见鬼的道：“此病乃邪魅所侵，非学生不能治也。”遂取所存玉雪丹一粒，以新汲井花水，令其送下。那女子顿觉神清气爽，病体脱然。褚公感谢不尽。是日，三人在褚家庄欢饮。至夜，褚公留宿于书斋之中。次日，又安排早



within the city gate. I'm reasonably well off, so the reward doesn't mean anything to me. But, being yet unbetrothed at the age of twenty and a long-time admirer of the beauty and virtues of your daughter, I will offer my services as a physician only if you agree to marry your daughter to me."

The Zhao brothers praised Young Master Wu profusely, testifying to his family's exalted status and immense wealth and extolling his virtues as an honest man. As there was nothing he would not do for the love of his daughter, Mr. Chu readily accepted the offer. "If you can indeed cure my daughter, I will not fail to send a modest dowry to your house and marry my daughter to you."

To the Zhao brothers, Wu Qing said, "Please be my match-makers and make sure that they don't break off the engagement."

"How would I ever dream of breaking it off?" protested Mr. Chu.

Mr. Chu promptly invited the three young men into the house and treated them to dinner. In his eagerness, Wu Qing said to the old squire, "Please take me to your daughter's room. I'll see what ails her and write a prescription." Mr. Chu obliged. There being a predestined bond between Young Master Wu and the girl, she came out of her delirious state the moment he entered the room. Purposefully, he said he wanted to feel her pulse, so the nurse lifted the bed curtain just enough for the girl to stretch out an arm. With a tinkling sound of golden bracelets, a hand as delicately shaped as one sculpted out of jade or ice appeared. Truly,

*Before her lovely face could be seen,
 His eyes fell on her jade-smooth wrist.*

After feeling the pulse on both wrists, he said with feigned seriousness, "Evil spirits have taken possession of the patient. I am the only one who can cure her."

So saying, he produced the remaining Jade Snow pill and made the girl swallow it with fresh well water. Immediately, she felt relieved, and all her symptoms were gone. Mr. Chu's heart overflowed with gratitude. Later that day, the three young men were treated to a sumptuous dinner in the Chu manor, and they drank to their hearts'



酒相请。二赵道：“扰过就告辞了。只是吴小员外姻事，不可失信！”褚公道：“小女蒙活命之恩，岂敢背恩忘义。所谕敢不如命！”小员外就拜谢了岳丈。褚公备礼相送，为程仪之敬。三人一无所受，作别还家。吴老员外见儿子病好回来，欢喜自不必说。二赵又将婚姻一事说了，老员外十分之美。少不得择日行聘，六礼既毕，褚公备千金嫁装，亲送女儿过门成亲。吴小员外在花烛之下，看了新妇，吃了一惊：好似初次在金明池上相逢这个穿杏黄衫的美女。

过了三朝半月，夫妇厮熟了，吴小员外叩问妻子，去年清明前二日，果系探亲入城，身穿杏黄衫，曾到金明池上游玩。正是人有所愿，天必从之。那褚家女子小名，也唤做爱爱。吴小员外一日对赵氏兄弟说知此事，二赵各各称奇：“此段姻缘乃卢女成就，不可忘其功也！”吴小员外即日到金明池北卢家店中，述其女儿之事，献上金帛，拜认卢荣老夫妇为岳父母，求得开坟一见，愿买棺改葬。卢公是市井小人，得员外认亲，无有不从。小员外



content. Mr. Chu then put them up in the study for the night. The next morning, after breakfast, the Zhao brothers said, "After putting you to so much trouble, we should be on our way, but don't go back on your word about the marriage."

"My daughter owes her life to him. Why would I ever betray such a benefactor and fail to do as you say?"

At these words, Young Master Wu bowed thankfully to his future father-in-law. Mr. Chu presented them with a prodigious amount of gifts as a token of his high regard, but the three young men declined all of the offerings, took their leave, and went home.

Squire Wu Senior's joy at his son's return in good health need not be described here. When the Zhao brothers told him about the marriage, Squire Wu Senior was delighted beyond measure. Naturally, a day was chosen for the wedding. When all the six preliminaries had been completed,⁹ Mr. Chu escorted his daughter to the Wu establishment for the wedding, bringing along a dowry worth a thousand taels of gold. By the light of the wedding candles, Young Squire Wu took a look at his bride and gave a start, for she resembled the very beauty in an apricot yellow blouse whom he had seen by Golden Bright Pond.

About half a month later, when the husband and wife had gotten to know each other better, Young Master Wu asked his wife the question he had on his mind. She replied that she had indeed been in the city last year to visit relatives two days before the Clear and Bright Festival, wearing an apricot yellow blouse, and that she had toured Golden Bright Pond. Truly, if there is a wish, Heaven will never fail to grant it. Miss Chu's pet name happened to be Ai'ai as well.

One day, Young Master Wu told the Zhao brothers about this, much to their amazement. "So, you owe this marriage to Miss Lu," they commented. "You mustn't forget what she did for you."

That very day, Young Master Wu went to Mr. Lu's wineshop north of Golden Bright Pond. He gave the Lu couple an account of what had happened to their daughter and, offering lavish gifts, honored them as his parents-in-law. He then asked them to dig up the grave so that he could see the corpse, adding that he would buy a



央阴阳生择了吉日，先用三牲祭礼浇奠，然后启土开棺。那爱爱小娘子面色如生，香泽不散，乃知太阴炼形之术所致，吴小员外叹羨了一回。改葬已毕，请高僧广做法事七昼夜。其夜又梦爱爱来谢，自此踪影遂绝。后吴小员外与褚爱爱百年谐老。卢公夫妇亦赖小员外送终，此小员外之厚德也。有诗为证：

金明池畔逢双美，了却人间生死缘。
世上有情皆似此，分明火宅现金莲。



new coffin for the reburial. Being of a lowly status, Mr. Lu was only too happy to be connected with a rich squire. After a fortune-teller had chosen an auspicious day, the young master performed a ritual complete with sacrificial offerings of wine and all three animals before the grave was dug open and the coffin uncovered.¹⁰ Ai'ai's corpse had a complexion as fresh as if she were alive, and the fragrance from the body permeated the air. This, he realized, was the result of her having perfected her art in retaining her human form. After some emotional sighs of admiration, Young Master Wu commenced the reburial ceremony and engaged celebrated monks for a prayer service that lasted seven days and nights. On the last night of the service, Ai'ai appeared to him in a dream to offer her thanks, and that was the last he saw of her.

Young Master Wu and Chu Ai'ai remained a devoted couple to the end of their lives. He also took care of the burial rites of Mr. and Mrs. Lu, such was the extent of his kindness. There is a poem in testimony:

*He met two beauties by Golden Bright Pond;
In life and death, he fulfilled the predestined bonds.
If all lovers were as devoted,
From the flames of fire would emerge gold lotuses.*

¹ This is a reference to the story about the love between Zhu Wen, a scholar in the Eastern Capital of the Song dynasty, and a female ghost.

² For the story about Han Shihou (or Han Sihou) meeting the ghost of his deceased wife, see story 24 in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: a Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang & Yunqin Yang (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2007).

³ These were the four wise old men with white hair and eyebrows who lived in the Shang Mountains toward the end of the Qin dynasty and into the early Han dynasty.

⁴ This is a reference to Lü Wang, popularly known as Taigong Wang or Jiang Taigong, of the Zhou dynasty. He rose to eminence when he was about eighty years old.

⁵ Tao Gu, courtesy name Xiushi, of the Song dynasty served successively as secretary of the Bureaus of Rite, Justice, and Revenue.

⁶ "The balcony" is a metaphor for a lovers' tryst. It was first used in the prose poem "Gao tang fu" attributed to Song Yu (c.290–c.223 B.C.E.).

⁷ A green dragon symbolizes luck, and a white tiger misfortune.

⁸ In Daoist myth, Goddess Shangyuan is the youngest daughter of the Queen Mother of the West.

⁹ The six preliminaries are that the groom's family 1) give presents to the prospective bride's



family to make the offer of marriage; 2) obtain written documentation of the prospective bride's name and date of birth; 3) secure through divination a good omen endorsing the marriage; 4) send betrothal gifts to the bride's family; 5) seek approval from the bride's family of an auspicious date for the wedding; and 6) send the groom in person to bring the bride home.

¹⁰ The three animals are the ox, sheep, and pig.





第三十一卷

赵春儿重旺曹家庄

东邻昨夜报吴姬，一曲琵琶荡客思。
不是妇人偏可近，从来世上少男儿。

这四句诗是夸奖妇人的。自古道：“有志妇人，胜如男子。”且如妇人中，只有娼流最贱，其中出色的尽多。有一个梁夫人，能于尘埃中识拔韩世忠。世忠自卒伍起为大将，与金兀术四太子相持于江上，梁夫人脱簪珥犒军，亲自执桴，擂鼓助阵，大败金人。后世忠封蕲王，退居西湖，与梁夫人谐老百年。又有一个李亚仙，他是长安名妓，有郑元和公子嫖他，吊了稍，在悲田院做乞儿，大雪中唱《莲花落》。亚仙闻唱，知是郑郎之声，收留在家，绣襦裹体，剔目劝读，一举成名，中了状元，亚仙直封至一品夫人。这两个是红粉班头，青楼出色：

若与寻常男子比，好将巾幗换衣冠。

如今说一个妓家故事，虽比不得李亚仙、梁夫人恁般大才，



Story 31

Zhao Chun'er Restores Prosperity to the Cao Farmstead

*Last night, a singing girl in the next room
 Stirred the traveler's thoughts with her pipa.¹
 Not that women are the only friends to make,
 But the world has always lacked good men.*

These four lines are in praise of women. It has always been said since ancient times: "Worthy women are superior to men." No woman is lowlier than a prostitute, and yet, even a good many prostitutes stand out as women of great merit. There was Lady Liang [a former prostitute], who saw Han Shizhong's estimable qualities before he rose from a humble foot soldier to become a general.² When he was leading forces in a battle by a river against Jin Wuzhu, the fourth son of the Jurchen king, Lady Liang rewarded the soldiers with her jewelry and, by beating the battle drum to bolster the soldiers' morale, helped put the Jurchens to rout. Later, Han Shizhong, granted the title Prince of Qi, retired to West Lake, where he lived out the rest of his life with her. Another example is Li Yaxian, a celebrated courtesan in Chang'an. One of her clients, a Zheng Yuanhe, used up all his money and was reduced to living in a poorhouse. One snowy day, he was singing the beggars' song "Lotus Petals Fall" when Li Yaxian heard him and, upon recognizing his voice, took him into her house. She gave him an embroidered jacket to keep him warm and urged him to study, going as far as to injure her own eyes because their beauty distracted him from his studies. Later, on his first attempt at taking the imperial civil service examinations, Zheng won first honors as a *zhuangyuan*, and Li Yaxian also received titles until she became a Lady of the First Rank. These are two examples of worthy prostitutes who,

*Compared with commonplace men,
 Should replace their headdresses with men's hats.*

Let me now tell of another prostitute who may not be as remarkable as Li Yaxian and Lady Liang but who endured all manner of



却也在千辛百苦中熬炼过来，助夫成家，有个小小结果，这也是千中选一。话说扬州府城外，有个地名，叫曹家庄。庄上曹太公是个大户之家。院君已故，止生一位小官人，名曹可成。那小官人人材出众，百事伶俐。只有两件事非其所长，一者不会读书，二者不会作家。常言道：“独子得惜。”因是个富家爱子，养骄了他；又且自小纳粟入监，出外都称相公，一发纵荡了。专一穿花街，串柳巷，吃风月酒，用脂粉钱，真个满面春风，挥金如土，人都唤他做“曹呆子”。太公知他浪费，禁约不住，只不把钱与他用。他就瞒了父亲，背地将田产各处抵借银子。

那败子借债，有几般不便宜处：第一，折色短少，不能足数，遇狠心的，还要搭些货物；第二，利钱最重；第三，利上起利，过了一年十个月，只倒换一张文书，并不催取，谁知本重利多，便有铜斗家计，不够他盘算；第四，居中的人还要扣些谢礼，他把中人就自看做一半债主，狐假虎威，需索不休；第五，写借票时，只拣上好美产，要他写做抵头，既写之后，这产业就不许你卖与他人，及至准算与他，又要减你的价钱，准算过，便有几两赢馀，要他找绝，他又东扭西捏，朝三暮四，没有得爽利与你。



hardships and helped her husband establish a career and attain a measure of success. She was also truly one in a thousand.

As the story goes, outside the city gate of Yangzhou Prefecture, there was a Cao Farmstead headed by the wealthy but widowed Mr. Cao Senior. His only son, Cao Kecheng, was a handsome youth, quick and clever in everything except studying and managing his finances. As the proverb says, "An only son gets all the love." Being a beloved only son from a rich family, he was spoiled rotten. Moreover, he was addressed by all and sundry outside family circles as "Young Master" after he had been admitted early on as a paying student at the National College, which only added to his impudence. He did little but frequenting houses of ill repute, drinking with the prostitutes and squandering money on amorous adventures. His high spirits and extravagance earned him the nickname "Cao the Featherbrain." Knowing his lavish spending habits but unable to keep him under control, his father cut off his allowance. Consequently, he used family property as collateral with which to borrow money left and right without his father being any the wiser.

Now, a prodigal son who resorts to borrowing is inevitably shortchanged in the following ways: First, the silver is usually of poor quality and therefore is worth less. A heartless lender might even palm off goods in kind to make the full amount. Second, the interest is as high as it can possibly be. Third, with compounded interest, even though the loan does not have to be repaid in a year or ten months but only renewed, the substantial principal plus the heavy interest will add up to be more than the borrower can ever repay, whatever the worth of his family property. Fourth, middlemen take deductions for their services. A middleman, considering himself half a creditor, presses aggressively for repayment of the loan, flaunting his connections with creditors like a fox walking in the company of a tiger. Fifth, when drawing up the contract, the lender picks the best landed estate to serve as the pledge. Once the documents are signed, the property cannot be sold to another client. By the time it is sold, the lender will try to reduce the price. If the sale should result in a profit of a few taels of silver for the borrower and the borrower tries



有此五件不便宜处，所以往往破家。为尊长的只管拿住两头不放，却不知中间都替别人家发财去了。十分家当，实在没用得五分。这也是只顾生前，不顾死后。左右把与他败的，到不如自眼里看他结束了，也得明白。

明识儿孙是下流，故将锁钥用心收。

儿孙自有儿孙算，枉与儿孙作马牛。

闲话休叙。却说本地有个名妓，叫做赵春儿，是赵大妈的女儿。真个花娇月艳，玉润珠明，专接富商巨室，赚大主钱财。曹可成一见，就看上了，一住整月，在他家撒漫使钱。两下如胶似漆，一个愿讨，一人愿嫁，神前罚愿，灯下设盟。争奈父亲在堂，不敢娶他入门。那妓者见可成是慷慨之士，要他赎身。原来妓家有这个规矩：初次破瓜的，叫做梳梳孤老。若替他把身价还了鸨儿，由他自在接客，无拘无管，这叫做赎身孤老。但是赎身孤老要歇时，别的客只索让他，十夜五夜，不论宿钱，后来若要娶他进门，别不费财礼。又有这许多脾胃处。曹可成要与春儿赎身，



to claim it, the lender will drag his feet and play fast and loose, refusing to yield the money readily.

In most cases, these five disadvantages lead to bankruptcy. The head of the household hangs on tightly to what he believes are the key family possessions, little knowing that the lion's share has gone to line someone else's pocket. Of all his possessions, he is able to enjoy less than half. He would do well to focus on life here and now rather than care about what will happen after his death. If you have a prodigal son who is going to wipe out the family wealth anyway, you may as well watch him do it before you die so that you won't be left in suspense!

*Knowing your heir to be an unworthy sort,
You try to keep him under lock and key.
Your children will draw up plans for themselves;
Why slave for them as if you were a horse or an ox?*

Let me not encumber this story with any more of these idle comments but come to tell of Zhao Chun'er, daughter of Madam Zhao, and a courtesan well known in the region. As lovely as a flower and the moon, as fair as jade and a lustrous pearl, she accepted only clients of immense wealth, whether merchants or otherwise, and made liberal amounts of money out of them. She struck Cao Kecheng's fancy the moment he laid eyes upon her. He stayed with her for a whole month, spending lavishly. They grew to be as inseparable as lacquer and glue. Both were willing to marry each other and took an oath by lamplight before images of the gods. However, with his father still the head of the family, Cao Kecheng dared not bring her into the house as a concubine. Aware of his free-spending generosity, the courtesan asked that he redeem her with money.

In the parlance of brothels, clients who are given virgins are called "first-timers." Those who redeem the girls from the procurress and free them from her control are called "redeemers." When redeemers want to stay in the brothel overnight, other clients must yield to them, be it for five or ten nights at a stretch and free of charge, too. If a redeemer wants to take a girl for a wife, no extra money is demanded of him. With so much to be gained from an act of redemption,



大妈索要五百两，分文不肯少。可成各处设法，尚未到手。忽一日，闻得父亲唤银匠在家倾成许多元宝，未见出笏。用心体访，晓得藏在卧房床背后复壁之内，用帐子掩着。可成觑个空，趲进房去，偷了几个出来。又怕父亲查检，照样做成贯铅的假元宝，一个换一个，大模大样的，与春儿赎了身，又置办衣饰之类。以后但是要用，就将假银换出真银，多多少少都放在春儿处，凭他使费，并不检查。真个来得易，去得易，日渐日深，换个行云流水，也不曾计个数目是几锭几两。春儿见他撒漫，只道家中有馀，亦不知此银来历。

忽一日，太公病笃，唤可成夫妇到床头叮嘱道：“我儿，你今三十馀岁，也不为年少了。‘败子回头便作家！’你如今莫去花柳游荡，收心守分。我家当之外，还有些本钱，又没第二个兄弟分受，尽够你夫妻受用。”遂指床背后说道：“你揭开帐子，有一层复壁，里面藏着元宝一百个，共五千两。这是我一生的精神。向因你务外，不对你说，如今交付你夫妻之手，置些产业，传与子孙，莫要又浪费了！”又对媳妇道：“娘子，你夫妻是一世之



Cao Kecheng announced his intention to redeem Chun'er, but the madam demanded five hundred taels of silver, to be paid in full, and not the slightest fraction of a tael less. Kecheng sought help everywhere without success.

Suddenly, one day, he heard that his father had hired a silversmith to forge many shoe-shaped ingots of silver, none of which had been put to use. He began poking around and found out that all the ingots were hidden in the curtained double wall behind the bed in his father's bedchamber. He waited until the coast was clear, slipped quietly into the room, and stole a few. Afraid that his father would check the ingots, he had fake ones made. Having replaced each stolen ingot with a fake one filled with lead, he redeemed Chun'er with much ostentatious display and bought her clothes and jewelry aplenty. Henceforth, whenever he felt the need, he replaced the real ingots with fake ones and put the silver at Chun'er's disposal. She had a free hand with the money and there was never a question asked. Truly, it was a case of "Easy come, easy go." As the days wore on, the silver flowed out in a steady stream, and the young man never bothered to keep track of the amounts. Chun'er thought his lavish spending was well within his family's means, little knowing how he had come by all the silver.

One day, Mr. Cao Senior fell critically ill. He called Kecheng and his daughter-in-law to his bedside and uttered these words of admonition: "My son, you are in your thirties now. You are not a young man any more. As they say, 'A prodigal son, once returned, knows best how to be frugal.' Now, stop visiting brothels and settle down to a quiet domestic life. In addition to the family property, I also have some money put aside. Since you don't have to share it with a brother, there should be enough for you and your wife to enjoy." Pointing toward the back of the bed, he continued, "Lift the curtain, and you'll see a double wall. Hidden there are one hundred shoe-shaped ingots of silver, five thousand taels in all. This is my life's savings. I never told you about it before because of your dissipate ways. But now, I give it to both of you so that you can buy some property and pass it on to your children and grandchildren. Don't squander every-



事，莫要冷眼相看，须将好言谏劝丈夫，同心合胆，共做人家。我九泉之下，也得瞑目。”说罢，须臾死了。可成哭了一场，少不得安排殡葬之事。暗想复壁内，正不知还存得多少真银？当下搬将出来，铺满一地，看时，都是贯铅的假货，整整的数了九十九个，刚剩得一个真的。五千两花银，费过了四千九百五十两。可成良心顿萌，早知这东西始终还是我的，何须性急！如今大事在身，空手无措，反欠下许多债负，懊悔无及，对着假锭放声大哭。浑家劝道：“你平日务外，既往不咎，如今现放着许多银子，不理正事，只管哭做甚么？”可成将假锭偷换之事，对浑家叙了一遍。浑家平昔间为老公务外，谏劝不从，气得有病在身。今日哀苦之中，又闻了这个消息，如何不恼，登时手足俱冷。扶回房中，上了床，不彀数日，也死了。这的是：

从前作过事，没兴一齐来。

可成连遭二丧，痛苦无极，勉力支持。过了七七四十九日，各债主都来算帐，把曹家庄祖业田房，尽行盘算去了。因出房与人，



thing again!”

To his daughter-in-law, he said, “My daughter-in-law, a marriage lasts forever. Don’t treat him with contempt. Give him sound advice and manage the household together, with one heart and one mind. If you do, I’ll rest content under the Nine Springs.”

Soon after saying these words, he passed away. Kecheng shed many a tear.

After the necessary arrangements for the burial were made, he wondered how much real silver was still left inside the double wall. Right away, he removed the ingots and spread them out on the floor to count. Of the one hundred ingots, ninety-nine were fake ones filled with lead. Only one was real. Of the five thousand taels of high-quality silver, four thousand nine hundred and fifty were gone. He suddenly realized that if he had known all this would be his sooner or later, he could have taken his time spending it. Now, with virtually nothing to pay for the cost of burial rites, not to speak of the debts he had run up, he was overcome with such remorse that he burst out wailing over the fake ingots of silver.

Trying to pacify him, his wife said, “I forgive your past dissipate ways. But now, with so much silver here, why are you crying like this instead of doing things you’re supposed to be doing?”

At this point, Kecheng came clean about what he had done on the sly, replacing the real ones with fake ones. His wife, whose words of admonition had always fallen on deaf ears, was already ill from the vexation, and in this moment of bereavement, knowledge of the fake silver only added to her despair. In an instant, her hands and feet went cold. She had to be escorted back to her room and helped onto her bed. A few days later, she died. Truly,

The wicked things he had done in the past

All came back to haunt him at the same time.

The double bereavement left Kecheng aching with grief, and he had to struggle to keep himself alive. After the forty-nine-day mourning period was over, the pack of creditors descended upon him, demanding repayment. The ancestral estates of the Cao Farmstead ended up in the hands of new owners. What with the sale of the house and



上紧出殡。此时孤身无靠，权退在坟堂屋内安身。不在话下。

且说赵春儿久不见可成来家，心中思念。闻得家中有父丧，又浑家为假锭事气死了，恐怕七嘴八张，不敢去吊问。后来晓得他房产都费了，搬在坟堂屋里安身，甚是凄惨，寄信去请他来。可成无颜相见，回了几次。连连来请，只得含羞而往。春儿一见，抱头大哭，道：“妾之此身，乃君身也。幸妾尚有馀资可以相济，有急何不告我！”乃治酒相款，是夜留宿。明早，取白金百两，赠与可成，嘱付他拿回家省吃省用：“缺少时，再来对我说。”可成得了银子，顿忘苦楚，迷恋春儿，不肯起身。就将银子买酒买肉，请旧日一班闲汉同吃。春儿初次不好阻他，到第二次，就将好言苦劝，说：“这班闲汉，有损无益。当初你一家人家，都是这班人坏了。如今再不可近他了，我劝你回去是好话。且待三年服满之后，还有事与你商议。”一连劝了几次。可成还是败落财主的性子，疑心春儿厌薄他，忿然而去。春儿放心不下，悄地教人打听



the demanding funeral schedule, Kecheng could find no shelter but the hut beside the grave, and there, alone and forlorn, we shall leave him.

In the meantime, Zhao Chun'er, worried about Kecheng's prolonged absence, heard about the deaths of his father and his wife, who had died of her shock over the fake silver. But Chun'er thought it prudent not to go and offer condolences for fear of setting gossipy tongues wagging. Later, upon learning that he had sold all the family's landed property and was reduced to living in a hut by the grave, she was so saddened that she wrote a letter inviting him to stay with her. Kecheng at first was too ashamed to accept the offer, but in spite of his repeated refusals, Chun'er persisted. He eventually went to her, swallowing his shame.

When she saw him, Chun'er fell on his shoulders and wept, saying, "Everything I have is yours. Luckily, I've still got some money that I can use to help you. Why didn't you tell me you were in trouble?" She had wine set out for him and kept him there for the night.

The next morning, she gave him a hundred taels of silver, telling him to go home and begin living a frugal life, adding, "When the money runs out, come to me again."

As soon as he laid hands on the silver, Kecheng forgot all about his wretched circumstances and was so enraptured by Chun'er that he refused to get out of bed. When he did, he went out to buy wine and meat and shared them with his good-for-nothing friends of the old days. Chun'er felt she couldn't very well stop him the first time, but the second time it happened, she counseled him with these well-chosen words, "To have such good-for-nothings as friends is not at all to your advantage. They are the ones who brought your family to ruin. You mustn't associate with them again. My advice is for you to go back, if you know what's good for you. I'll have more to talk about with you after your three-year mourning period expires."

She repeated her words of advice several times, but Kecheng the impoverished moneybags remained unchanged in his ways. Suspecting that Chun'er looked down on him, he left her place in a huff. Feeling



他，虽然不去跳槽，依旧大吃大用。春儿暗想，他受苦不透，还不知稼穡艰难，且由他磨炼去。过了数日，可成盘缠竭了，有一顿，没一顿，却不伏气去告求春儿。春儿心上虽念他，也不去惹他上门了。约莫十分艰难，又教人送些柴米之类，小小周济他，只是不敷。

却说可成一般也有亲友，自己不能周济，看见赵春儿家担东送西，心上反不乐，到去撺掇可成道：“你当初费过几千银子在赵家，连这春儿的身子都是你赎的。你今如此落莫，他却风花雪月受用，何不去告他一状，追还些身价也好。”可成道：“当初之事，也是我自家情愿，相好在前。今日重新番脸，却被子弟们笑话。”又有嘴快的，将此话学与春儿听了，暗暗点头：“可见曹生的心肠还好。”又想道：“‘人无千日好，花无百日红。’若再有人撺掇，怕不变卦？”踌躇了几遍，又教人去请可成到家，说道：“我当初原许嫁你，难道是哄你不成？一来你服制未满，怕人议论；二来知你艰难，趁我在外寻些衣食之本。你切莫听人闲话，坏了夫妻之情。”可成道：“外人虽不说好话，我却有主意，你莫



uneasy, Chun'er secretly made inquiries about him and was told that although he did not seek the company of other women, he was living just as extravagantly before. Chun'er thought, "He has not suffered enough to realize how hard life can be. Let him go through more."

Some days later, Kecheng's money ran out. Despite not knowing where his next meal was coming from, he refused to swallow his pride and seek help from Chun'er, nor was Chun'er inclined to invite him over, however much she missed him. Yet, she guessed that he must be in desperate straits and had some firewood, rice, and such things sent to him. However, these small favors were not enough to lift him out of poverty.

Now, Kecheng had some relatives and friends who, instead of helping him, were quite offended when they saw packages from Zhao Chun'er being delivered to him now and then. To Kecheng they said viciously, "You spent thousands of taels of silver in the Zhao establishment. You even redeemed that girl, Chun'er. Look at how far you've fallen, but she's still living well. Why don't you file a complaint against her with the authorities? Any amount you can get from the redemption money will be better than nothing."

"Whatever I did before, I did willingly. We were lovers. If I turn against her now, my friends will laugh at me."

Some busybody with a loose tongue repeated these words to Chun'er, who then said to herself with an imperceptible nod, "So he's all right, deep down." Then again, she thought, "As they say, 'No one remains a saint after a thousand days; no flower stays in bloom after a hundred days.' If someone prods him again, he may yet change his mind." After much hesitation, she sent for Kecheng and addressed him in these words: "Didn't I promise to marry you? That wasn't something I said in jest. But you're still in mourning, so I'm afraid of what people will say. Also, knowing the difficulties you're going through, I think it would be better if I can make some more money before we marry, so we'd have something to live on in future. Don't let idle gossip ruin our love as husband and wife."

"Others may not have nice things to say," responded Kecheng, "but I know what to do. Don't you have any doubts about me!" He



疑我。”住了一二晚，又赠些东西去了。

光阴似箭，不觉三年服满。春儿备了三牲祭礼，香烛纸钱，到曹氏坟堂拜奠，又将钱三串，把与可成做起灵功德。可成欢喜，功德完满，可成到春儿处作谢，春儿留款。饮酒中间，可成问从良之事。春儿道：“此事我非不愿，只怕你还想娶大娘！”可成道：“我如今是什么日子，还说这话？”春儿道：“你目下虽如此说，怕日后挣得好时，又要寻良家正配，可不枉了我一片心机。”可成就对天说起誓来。春儿道：“你既如此坚心，我也更无别话。只是坟堂屋里不好成亲。”可成道：“在坟边左近，有一所空房要卖，只要五十两银子，若买得他的，到也方便。”春儿就凑五十两银子，把与可成买房。又与些另碎银钱，教他收拾房室，置办些家火。择了吉日。至期，打叠细软，做几个箱笼装了。带着随身伏侍的丫鬟，叫做翠叶，唤个船只，蓦地到曹家，神不知，鬼不觉，完其亲事。

收将野雨闲云事，做就牵丝结发人。

毕姻之后，春儿与可成商议过活之事。春儿道：“你生长富



stayed for a couple of nights and then left, laden with gifts.

Time flew like an arrow. Quite unnoticeably, the three-year mourning period came to an end. Bringing along sacrificial items, joss sticks, candles, and paper coins, Chun'er went to the Cao family grave to pay her respects, after which she gave Kecheng three strings of cash so that he could hold a prayer service for the removal of his father's spiritual tablet. Kecheng was overjoyed. After the prayer service, he went to thank Chun'er, who then invited him to stay for some wine. During the course of their drinking, Kecheng brought up the subject of marriage.

Chun'er said, "It's not that I'm unwilling. I'm just afraid you may want another wife and put her above me!"

"In my wretched circumstances? What a thing to say!" protested Kecheng.

"You may be saying this now, but in the future, when things get better, you'll seek a good match through the proper channels. Won't that be quite a disappointment for me?"

Thereupon, Kecheng took a vow, calling upon heaven as a witness.

"Since you're so determined," said Chun'er, "there's nothing more for me to say. But a wedding ceremony can hardly be held in a hut next to a grave."

"To the left of the grave, there's an empty house for sale. The asking price is only fifty taels of silver. Wouldn't it be nice if we could buy it?"

So Chun'er scraped together fifty taels of silver and gave the money to Kecheng so that he could make the purchase. With some loose pieces of silver, she had him fix the rooms and buy furniture. On the chosen auspicious day, she filled several trunks with her valuables and personal belongings and, accompanied by Green Leaf, her chambermaid, hired a boat and went with all speed to Cao's house for the wedding ceremony, quite unobserved by god or ghost.

*She bade farewell to a dissolute life,
And became a lawfully wedded wife.*

With the ceremony over, Chun'er consulted Kecheng on their



室，不会经营生理，还是赎几亩田地耕种，这是务实的事。”可成自夸其能，说道：“我经了许多折挫，学得乖了，不到得被人哄了。”春儿凑出三百两银子，交与可成。可成是散漫惯了的人，银子到手，思量经营那一桩好？往城中东占西卜。有先前一班闲汉遇见了，晓得他纳了春姐，手中有物。都来哄他，某事有利无利，某事利重利轻，某人五分钱，某人合子钱。不一时，都哄尽了。空手而回，却又去问春儿要银子用。气得春儿两泪交流道：“‘常将有日思无日，莫待无时思有时。’你当初浪费以有今日，如今是有限之物，费一分没一分了。”初时硬了心肠，不管闲事。以后夫妻之情看不过，只得又是一五一十担将出来，无过是买柴余米之类。拿出来多遍了，觉得渐渐空虚，一遍少似一遍。可成先还有感激之意，一年半载，理之当然，只道他还有多少私房，不肯和盘托出，终日闹吵逼他拿出来。春儿被逼不过，别口气，将箱笼上钥匙一一交付丈夫，说道：“这些东西，左右是你的，如今都交与你，省得欠挂。我今后自和翠叶纺绩度日，我也不要你养活，



means of livelihood. She said, "Since you grew up wallowing in wealth, you don't know how to run a business. So I think the most practical way is to rent a few *mu* of land to farm."

Boastfully, Kecheng said, "But all these adversities have made me a wiser man. I'm no longer one who can be easily cheated."

Chun'er put together three hundred taels of silver and gave them to Kecheng, a man addicted to a life without discipline. Wondering how he should invest this money, he consulted fortune-tellers in the city. While thus loitering around, he ran into his good-for-nothing friends again. Upon learning that he had taken Chun'er as his wife and was in possession of a tidy sum, they set to work, trying to cheat him out of his money, offering him deals that carried interest and deals that didn't, some with more interest and some with less, some at fifty percent interest and some at one hundred percent interest. Soon enough, they had relieved him of all his silver.

He returned empty-handed and asked Chun'er for more. With tears of exasperation, she said, "You know what the proverb says, 'It is better to prepare for a lean year in a fat one than to look back sadly on your good days, come a rainy one.' It was your wastefulness that brought you to this pass. And my money is not unlimited. One penny spent is one penny fewer."

In the beginning, Chun'er hardened her heart and refused to do anything more for Kecheng. But as time wore on, her wifely feelings gained the upper hand. Unable to watch him suffer, she had no choice but to withdraw money, a little at a time, to pay for firewood, rice, and other necessities. With each withdrawal, her savings dwindled, and she made a great many withdrawals. Kecheng was somewhat grateful at first, but as the days and months passed, he began to take things for granted. Believing that she was still sitting on sizable savings, he began to accuse her of refusing to give him all that she had. Day in and day out, he made violent scenes and demanded to see the money. Worn out by the harassment, Chun'er succumbed to a fit of temper, gave him the keys to the trunks, and said, "These things will be yours sooner or later anyway, so take them all and stop thinking about them! From now on, I'll make a



你也莫缠我。”春儿自此日为始，就吃了长斋，朝暮纺绩自食。可成一时虽不过意，却喜又有许多东西。暗想道：“且把来变买银两，今番赎取些恒业，为恢复家缘之计，也在浑家面上争口气。”虽然腹内踌躇，却也说而不作。

常言“食在口头，银在手头”，费一分，没一分，坐吃山空。不上一年，又空言了。更无出没，瞒了老婆，私下把翠叶这丫头卖与人去。春儿又失了个纺绩的伴儿。又气又苦，从前至后，把可成诉说一场。可成自知理亏，懊悔不迭，禁不住眼中流泪。又过几时，没饭吃了，对春儿道：“我看你朝暮纺绩，到是一节好生意。你如今又没伴，我又没事做，何不将纺绩教会了，也是一只饭碗。”春儿又好笑又好恼，忍不住骂道：“你堂堂一躯男子汉，不指望你养老婆，难道一身一口，再没个道路寻饭吃？”可成道：“贤妻说得是。‘鸟瘦毛长，人贫智短。’你教我那一条道路寻得饭吃的，我去做。”春儿道：“你也曾读书识字，这里村前村后少个训蒙先生，坟堂屋里又空着，何不聚集几个村童教学，得些学俸，好盘用。”可成道：“‘有智妇人，胜如男子’，贤妻说得



living by weaving, together with Green Leaf. I won't need you to support me. Just don't bother me anymore!" From that very day, Chun'er went on a vegetarian diet and wove at the loom from morning till night to support herself.

For a short time, Kecheng felt contrite, but then, delight with his material possessions got the better of him. He thought, "Let me make some more money with them and buy some landed property, both to regain my family's past wealth and to salvage my pride in front of my wife." But these plans remained thoughts that were never put into action. As the proverb says, "Food that goes into your mouth is money that goes out of your hand." One penny spent is one penny fewer. When a person sits idle, he eats away a mountain of a fortune.

In less than a year, he was broke again. As he had nothing else to sell, he sold Green Leaf the maid, without his wife's knowledge. The loss of her companion at the weaving loom so exasperated Chun'er that she gave him a good talking-to and, while she was at it, brought up old grievances as well. Knowing he was in the wrong, Kecheng was overcome with remorse, and the tears flowed from his eyes.

Some time later, he again found himself starving. He said to Chun'er, "As I see it, weaving, which is what you do from morning till night, is not a bad way to make a living. Now, you don't have a companion, and I don't have anything to do to keep myself busy, so why don't you teach me how to weave? That will put rice into my bowl."

Amused but infuriated at the same time, Chun'er burst into angry words. "Surely I'm not expecting a perfectly healthy man like you to support your wife, but don't tell me there's no other way for an able-bodied man to make a living!"

"Well said, well said, my good wife. As the proverb goes, 'A thin bird is long on feathers; a poor man is short on wits.' Tell me the best way to make a living. I'll do whatever you say."

"You're an educated man. They need a schoolteacher in the village, and the hut next to the graveyard is vacant. Why don't you gather a few village children into a class? The tuition will be enough for



是。”当下便与乡老商议，聚了十来个村童，教书写仿，甚不耐烦，出于无奈。过了些时，渐渐惯了，枯茶淡饭，绝不想分外受用。春儿又不时牵前扯后的诉说他，可成并不敢回答一字，追思往事，要便流泪。想当初偌大家私，没来由付之流水，不须题起；就是春儿带来这些东西，若会算计时，尽可过活，如今悔之无及！

如此十五年。忽一日，可成入城，撞见一人，豸补银带，乌纱皂靴，乘舆张盖而来，仆从甚盛。其人认得是曹可成，出轿施礼。可成躲避不迭。路次相见，各问寒暄。此人姓殷名盛，同府通州人。当初与可成同坐监、同拨历的，近选得浙江按察使经历，在家起身赴任，好不热闹。可成别了殷盛，闷闷回家，对浑家说道：“我的家当已败尽了，还有一件败不尽的，是监生。今日看见通州殷盛选了三司首领官，往浙江赴任，好不兴头！我与他是



you to live on.”

“As they say, ‘Wise women are superior to men.’ Your idea makes perfect sense.”

Right away, he consulted the more venerable elders of the village and recruited about ten children. The teaching and supervising their calligraphy practice bored him, but he saw no alternative. With the passage of time, he grew used to the plain living, subsisting on inferior tea and simple fare, with never a thought of seeking what lay beyond his reach. Moreover, every so often, Chun'er would lecture him, reminding him of what had led to the current state of affairs. Each time she did so, Kecheng dared not say a single word in retort. Memories of the past invariably brought tears to his eyes. Consider how, in the old days, he had squandered the family's spectacular wealth! But even without the family fortune, Chun'er's contributions alone should have been enough to live on, with proper planning. Regrets were too late now.

Fifteen years went by in like fashion. One day, on a trip to town, Kecheng ran into an acquaintance. The man was wearing an official's robe embroidered with the legendary *xiezhi*,³ a silver belt, a black gauze cap, and a pair of black shoes and was riding in a canopied sedan-chair followed by a great procession of servants. The man recognized Cao Kecheng and stepped out of the sedan-chair to greet him. Since it was too late to try to get away, Kecheng had to stop right there on the street and exchange greetings.

Yin Sheng — for such was the man's name — was native of Tongzhou, which was in the same prefecture as Kecheng's hometown, and had been a fellow student at the National University. The two had been selected at the same time to serve as interns at official posts. Yin Sheng had just recently been appointed registrar of the surveillance commission of Zhejiang and was on his way to his new duty station. A jovial procession it was.

After bidding Yin Sheng farewell, Kecheng gloomily went home and said to his wife, “All my possessions are gone except one: my title as a student of the National University. Today I ran into Yin Sheng of Tongzhou. He was on his way to Zhejiang to take up his



同拨历的，我的选期已透了，怎得银子上京使用！”春儿道：“莫做这梦罢，见今饭也没得吃，还想做官。”过了几日，可成欣羨殷监生荣华，三不知又说起。春儿道：“选这官要多少使用？”可成道：“本多利多，如今的世界，中科甲的也只是财来财往，莫说监生官。使用多些，就有个好地方，多趁得些银子；再肯营干时，还有一两任官做；使用得少，把个不好的缺打发你，一年二载，就升你做王官，有官无职，监生的本钱还弄不出哩。”春儿道：“好缺要多少？”可成道：“好缺也费得千金。”春儿道：“百两尚且难措，何况千金？还是训蒙安稳。”可成含着双泪，只得又去坟堂屋里教书。正是：

渐（惭）无面目辞家祖，剩把凄凉对学生。

忽一日，春儿睡至半夜醒来，见可成披衣坐于床上，哭声不止。[眉批]其志犹可取。问其缘故，可成道：“适才梦见得了官职，在广东潮州府。我身坐府堂之上，众书吏参谒。我方吃茶，有一



post as head of all the bureaus of military affairs, civil administration, and justice. How impressive! We were both selected at the same time to serve as interns, so I should be up for an assignment as well, but where am I going to get the money for a trip to the capital?"

"Don't you start dreaming! How can someone who doesn't even have enough to eat think of becoming an official!"

A few days later, envious of Yin's glory, Kecheng abruptly brought up the subject again. Chun'er asked, "How much do you need for an assignment?"

"The larger the capital, the higher the interest. These days, even those who pass the imperial examinations, not to mention those selected from the National University, use money to secure their posts. The more money you spend, the better your assignment, and therefore, the more money you make. If you are willing to offer more bribes, you'll be reappointed for another term or two. If you spend too little, you'll be given some unenviable post and, a couple of years later, promoted to some prince's mansion where the position doesn't carry any power. You won't even get back what you invested in your studies at the National University."

"How much do you need for a good post?"

"A thousand taels of silver."

"A hundred taels is hard to get, let alone a thousand! Teaching is at least a steady source of income."

With tears in his eyes, Kecheng had no other choice but to go back to teaching in the hut beside the graveyard. Truly,

*Ashamed that he brought no honor to his ancestors,
He went back in sorrow to his face his students.*

One midnight, Chun'er awoke to find Kecheng sitting up in bed, his clothes draped around his shoulders, weeping as if he would never stop. When she asked why he was weeping, he explained, "I just had a dream in which I was assigned an official post in the Chaozhou Prefecture of Guangdong. (*It's a good thing he still has some ambition in him.*) I was sitting in the main hall, accepting obeisances from the clerks. I had just raised my teacup when a tall, thin clerk with a



吏，瘦而长，黄须数茎，捧文书至公座，偶不小心，触吾茶瓯，翻污衣袖，不觉惊醒，醒来乃是一梦。自思一贫如洗，此生无复冠带之望，上辱宗祖，下玷子孙，是以悲泣耳！”春儿道：“你生于富家，长在名门，难道没几个好亲眷，何不去借贷，为求官之资。倘得一命，偿之有日。”可成道：“我因自小务外，亲戚中都以我为不肖，摈弃不纳。今穷困如此，枉自开口，人谁托我？便肯借时，将何抵头？”春儿道：“你今日为求官借贷，比先前浪费不同，或者肯借也不见得。”可成道：“贤妻说得是。”次日真个到三亲四眷家去了一巡，也有闭门不纳的，也有回说不在的，就是相见时，说及借贷求官之事，也有冷笑不答的，也有推辞没有的，又有念他开口一场，少将钱米相助的。可成大失所望，回复了春儿。

早知借贷难如此，悔却当初不作家。

可成思想无计，只是啼哭。春儿道：“哭恁么？没了银子便哭，有了银子又会撒漫起来。”可成道：“到此地位，做妻子的还信我不过，莫说他人！”哭了一场：“不如死休！只可惜负了赵氏



sparse yellowish beard approached me with documents in his hands. Inadvertently, he knocked over my teacup and wet my sleeve. At this point, I woke up with a start and realized that it had been a dream. It made me think that, as poor as I am, there's no hope of my ever putting on an official's robe. Disgrace is the only thing I have to offer to my ancestors and my offspring. That's why I cry."

"Having grown up in a rich family of distinction, don't you have a couple of kind-hearted relatives from whom to borrow money for the trip? If you do indeed land a post, you'll surely be able to pay them back."

"I've always been such a prodigal son that all the relatives rejected me out of contempt for my unworthiness. And now, when I'm in such a sorry state, who would be willing to help? All my pleas will be in vain. And even if someone agrees to give me a loan, what shall I offer as a pledge?"

"But this time, the loan is for a trip to seek an official post, not for some frivolous purpose as in the past. Maybe they will help. You never know."

"You do have a point, my good wife."

Accordingly, he called on his relatives the very next day, but he was refused admission by some and told in other cases that the masters were not home. Even those who did see him either responded only with a scornful smile to his request or declined because they did not have the money. There were also some who, out of consideration for the humiliation he must have suffered in having to ask for a loan, offered small gifts in the form of money or rice. Bitterly disappointed, he returned home and reported to Chun'er.

*Had he known how hard it was to borrow,
 He would not have thrown away his fortune.*

At his wits' end, Kecheng wept and wept unceasingly. Chun'er remarked, "What's the use of crying? You cry when there's no money, but the moment you lay your hands on some silver, you start squandering it in grand style!"

"When I'm reduced to such a state, even my wife doesn't trust me, much less other people!" After another outburst of sobbing, he



妻十五年相随之意，如今也顾不得了。”可成正在寻死，春儿上前解劝道：“‘物有一变，人有千变，若要不变，除非三尺盖面。’天无绝人之路，你如何把性命看得恁轻？”可成道：“蝼蚁尚且贪生，岂有人不惜死？只是我今日生而无用，到不如死了干净，省得连累你终身。”春儿道：“且不要忙，你真个收心务实，我还有个计较。”可成连忙下跪道：“我的娘，你有甚计较？早些救我性命！”春儿道：“我当初未从良时，结拜过二九一十八个姊妹，一向不曾去拜望。如今为你这冤家，只得忍着羞去走一遍。一个姊妹出十两，十八个姊妹，也有一百八十两银子。”可成道：“求贤妻就去。”春儿道：“初次上门，须用礼物，就要备十八副礼。”可成道：“莫说一十八副礼，就是一副礼也无措。”春儿道：“若留得我一两件首饰在，今日也还好活动。”可成又啼哭起来。春儿道：“当初谁叫你快活透了，今日有许多眼泪！你且去理会起送文书，待文书有了，那京中使用，我自去与人讨面皮。若弄不来文书时，可不枉了。”可成道：“我若起不得文，誓不回家。”一时间说了大话，出门去了。暗想道：“要备起送文书，府县公门也得些使用。”不好又与浑家缠帐，只得自去，向那几个村童学生



said, "I'd be better off dead! I'm sorry to have to let you down after you've given me fifteen years of your life, but I can't concern myself about that now!"

He was looking for a way to kill himself when Chun'er stepped up and said in a placating tone, "You know the saying: 'For every change in objects, humans change a thousand times until they die.' Heaven never seals off all the exits. Why do you treat life so lightly?"

"Even mole crickets and ants love life, not to mention human beings. It's just that it would be better for a useless man like me to be dead so as not to sponge off you for the rest of my life."

"There's no rush yet. If you can truly turn over a new leaf and keep your feet on the ground, I have an idea."

Kecheng quickly fell to his knees and pleaded, "Mother! What idea do you have? Please save me, quick!"

"Before I married, I pledged sisterhood with eighteen friends. I've never visited them, but for your sake, my sweet foe, I'll swallow my pride and go to see them and ask for favors. If one sister offers ten taels, that amount from all eighteen will add up to one hundred eighty taels of silver."

"Please go right away!"

"But I need eighteen sets of gifts, because it will be my first visit to them."

"Eighteen sets of gifts! I can't come up with even one!"

"If you had only spared me one or two pieces of jewelry, that would have come in handy now." Kecheng began sobbing again. Chun'er continued, "You did have your day, didn't you? And now the tears come down in torrents! Why don't you go get the papers required for a government appointment? You'll need them in the capital. Once you have the papers, I'll muster up the nerve to approach my sisters. Without the papers, won't all my efforts be pointless?"

"I swear not to return home without the papers!" With this boast, Kecheng sallied out into the street, saying to himself, "To get the papers, I need money now, so that I can deal with the prefectural and county yamen." But he couldn't very well nag his wife for money again, so he had no choice but to venture forth to the



的家里告借。一钱五分的凑来，好不费力。若不是十五年折挫到如今，这些须之物把与他做一封赏钱，也还不彀，那个看在眼里。正是彼一时此一时。

可成凑了两许银子，到江都县干办文书。县里有个朱外郎，为人忠厚，与可成旧有相识，晓得他穷了，在众人面前，替他周旋其事，写个欠票，等待有了地方，加利寄还。可成欢欢喜喜，怀着文书回来，一路上叫天地，叫祖宗，只愿浑家出去告债，告得来便好。走进门时，只见浑家依旧坐在房里绩麻，光景甚是凄凉。口虽不语，心下慌张，想告债又告不来了，不觉眼泪汪汪，又不敢大惊小怪。怀着文书立于房门之外，低低的叫一声“贤妻”。[眉批]如画，一出绝妙戏文。春儿听见了，手中擘麻，口里问道：“文书之事如何？”可成便脚揣进房门，在怀中取出文书，放于桌上道：“托赖贤妻福荫，文书已有了。”春儿起身，将文书看了，肚里想道：“这呆子也不呆了。”相着可成问道：“你真个要做官？只怕为妻的叫奶奶不起！”可成道：“说那里话？今日可成前程，全赖贤妻扶持挈带，但不识借贷之事如何？”春儿道：“都



homes of his pupils and borrow from them. What an uphill struggle it was, collecting a few pennies here and a few pennies there! If he had not been reduced to such poverty over the last fifteen years, he would have turned up his nose at such a paltry amount which was in fact less than what he would have given as a tip. How times had changed!

Having scraped together about one tael of silver, he betook himself to the Jiangdu county yamen to ask for his appointment papers. In the yamen, there was a Vice Director Zhu, who was a most kindly man and an old acquaintance of Kecheng's. Aware that Kecheng had come down in the world, Mr. Zhu collected from various officials and put together a loan on Kecheng's behalf. He had a receipt drawn up, pledging that Kecheng would repay the loan with interest as soon as he obtained a post. Merrily, Kecheng turned homeward, carrying the documents in his bosom. All along the way, he prayed to heaven, earth, and his ancestors that his wife would take the trip to borrow money and that she would not be turned down.

He walked into the house and saw his wife sitting in her chamber as before, working at the loom. This sad scene frightened him. He thought that she might have gone on her mission but failed. The tears gushed out before he realized it, but he dared not make a fuss. With the documents in his bosom, he stood outside the chamber door and called gently, "My good wife!" (*What a vivid scene for a painting as well as for the stage!*)

Chun'er heard him and asked, even as her hands continued moving on the hempen threads, "Have you got the papers?"

Kecheng stepped into the room, took out the papers from his bosom, and laid them on the table, saying, "Thanks to your lucky star, here they are."

Chun'er rose, read the papers, and thought, "This idiot is certainly coming along!" Looking Kecheng in the face, she said, "So you really want to be an official? But I doubt I have the good fortune to be called a lady!"

"What kind of talk is that? If I ever amount to anything, it will be thanks to your support and guidance. But were you able to get a



已告过，只等你有个起身日子，大家送来。”可成也不敢问借多借少，慌忙走去肆中，择了个吉日，回复了春儿。

春儿道：“你去邻家借把锄头来用用。”须臾锄头借到。春儿拿开了绩麻的篮儿，指这搭地说道：“我嫁你时，就替你办一顶纱帽埋于此下。”可成想道：“纱帽埋在地下，却不朽了？莫要拗他，且锄着看怎地。”运起锄头，狠力几下，只听得当的一声响，翻起一件东西。可成到惊了一跳，检起看，是个小小磁坛，坛里面装着散碎银两和几件银酒器。春儿叫丈夫拿去城中倾兑，看是多少。可成倾了裸儿，兑准一百六十七两，拿回家来，双手捧与浑家，笑容可掬。春儿本知数目，有心试他，见分毫不曾苟且，心下甚喜。叫再取锄头来，将十五年常坐下绩麻去处，一个小矮凳儿搬开了，教可成再锄下去，锄出一大磁坛，内中都是黄白之物，不下千金。原来春儿看见可成浪费，预先下着，悄地埋藏这许多东西，终日在上面坐着绩麻，一十五年并不露半字，真女中丈夫也。[眉批]春儿有用之才，不枉做奶奶。可成见了许多东西，掉下



loan?"

"I visited them all. They'll send the money as soon as you settle on a date of departure."

Kecheng did not have the courage to ask how much money she was talking about, but he scurried off to a fortune-teller and picked an auspicious day. He reported back to Chun'er and she said, "Go borrow a hoe from a neighbor." When he promptly brought in the hoe, Chun'er moved the basket containing her hempen threads and said, pointing at the ground, "When I married you, I buried an official's gauze cap for you in this very spot."

Kecheng thought, "Wouldn't a buried gauze cap have disintegrated by now? But I'd better not contradict her and first see what I dig up." After swinging the hoe up and down a few times with all his strength, he heard a clang and was startled to see that an object had come up with the soil. He picked it up and saw that it was a small porcelain jar. Inside were some loose pieces of silver and several silver wine utensils.

Chun'er told him to take the contents of the jar into the city and have the silver melted and recast, so it could be weighed for its actual worth. Kecheng did as she'd said and had it made into ingots, which came to one hundred and sixty-seven taels. Upon returning home, radiant with smiles, he handed the ingots to his wife with both hands. Chun'er, well aware of the exact figure, had just been testing him. Pleased at his honesty, down to the last fraction of a tael, she told him to get the hoe again. She had him remove her small stool from the very spot where she had sat weaving for the past fifteen years and dig into the ground. As he dug, a large porcelain jar was exposed to view. It contained gold and silver that could not have weighed less than a thousand taels. What had happened was this: after observing Kecheng's extravagant style of living, Chun'er planned ahead and quietly buried all the treasure she had saved and then sat at the very spot for fifteen years, working at her loom day in and day out without ever breathing one word about the secret. A truly worthy character among women! (*Being such a useful person, Chun'er well deserves to be a lady.*)



泪来。春儿道：“官人为甚悲伤？”可成道：“想着贤妻一十五年，勤劳辛苦，布衣蔬食，谁知留下这一片心机。都因我曹可成不肖，以至连累受苦！今日贤妻当受我一拜！”说罢，就拜下去。春儿慌忙扶起道：“今日苦尽甘来，博得好日，共享荣华。”可成道：“盘缠尽有，我上京听选，留贤妻在家，形孤影只。不若同到京中，百事也有商量。”春儿道：“我也放心不下，如此甚好。”当时打叠行李，讨了两房童仆，雇下船只，夫妻两口，同上北京。正是：

运去黄金失色，时来铁也生光。

可成到京，寻个店房，安顿了家小，吏部投了文书。有银子使用，就选了出来。初任是福建同安县二尹，就升了本省泉州府经历，都是老婆帮他做官，宦声大振。又且京中用钱谋为，公私两利，升了广东潮州府通判。适值朝覲之年，太守进京，同知、推官俱缺，上司道他有才，批府印与他执掌，择日升堂管事。吏



At the sight of so much wealth, Kecheng was all tears. Chun'er said, "What makes you grieve so?"

Kecheng replied, "My good wife, you've been working so hard for the last fifteen years, eating nothing but vegetables and dressing only in coarse cloth. Who would have guessed that you had taken such precautions! It is Cao Kecheng, my unworthy self, who has brought you all this suffering! Now, my good wife, please accept a bow from me!" With that, he sank to his knees.

Chun'er quickly raised him up and said, "Now that our days of misery have come to an end and a happy life begins, let's enjoy ourselves!"

"As we have more than enough for travel expenses, I can't leave you all by yourself at home while I go to the capital to wait for an appointment. It would be far better if you joined me, and I'd have the benefit of your advice, too, if need be."

"That's a good idea. If I stay behind, I'll worry too much," said Chun'er. Right away, the husband and wife packed up their belongings, engaged a couple of servants, hired a boat, and started for Beijing. Truly,

*When one's luck runs out, even gold glitters no more;
When one's time comes, even iron takes on luster.*

Once in the capital, Kecheng found lodging at an inn and submitted his documents to the Ministry of Personnel. With a liberal supply of silver at his disposal, he succeeded in receiving his very first appointment, as deputy magistrate of Tong'an County, Fujian. Later, he rose to be prefect of Quanzhou in the same province. His wife assisted him in the performance of his duties, and his fame spread far and wide. Owing to his generous bribery as well as his competence, he was promoted to assistant prefect of Chaozhou Prefecture in Guangdong.

While the prefect was away in the capital for reappointment, there happened to be vacancies for the posts of vice prefect and prefectural judge. Kecheng's superior believed in his ability and handed over the prefect's official seal of authority to him. On a chosen day, Kecheng mounted the prefect's seat and opened his court session for



书参谒已毕，门子献茶。方才举手，有一外郎，捧文书到公座前，触翻茶瓿，淋漓满袖。可成正欲发怒，看那外郎瘦而长，有黄须数茎。猛然想起数年之前，曾有一梦，今日光景，宛然梦中所见。始知前程出处，皆由天定，非偶然也。那外郎惊慌，磕头谢罪。可成好言抚慰，全无怒意，合堂称其大量。是日退堂，与奶奶述其应梦之事。春儿亦骇然说道：“据此梦，量官人功名止于此任。当初坟堂中教授村童，衣不蔽体，食不充口。今日三任为牧民官，位至六品大夫，太学生至此足矣。常言：‘知足不辱。’官人宜急流勇退，为山林娱老之计。”可成点头道是。坐了三日堂，就托病辞官。上司因本府掌印无人，不允所辞。勉强视事，分明又做了半年知府。新官上任，交印已毕，次日又出致仕文书。上司见其恳切求去，只得准了。百姓攀辕卧辙者数千人，可成一一抚慰，夫妻衣锦还乡。三任宦资约有数千金，赎取旧日田产房屋，重在



the business of the day. After the clerks had paid their respects to him, a valet brought him tea. He had barely raised his hand when an official approached to offer him documents and, in doing so, knocked over the teacup and spilled tea all over his sleeve. Kecheng was about to flare up when he noticed that the official had a tall, lean figure and a sparse yellow beard. All of a sudden, he recalled his dream of some years back in which he had seen the very man who now stood before him. He came to realize that one's career and future were dictated not by chance but by the will of heaven. In consternation, the official kowtowed in apology, but Kecheng consoled him with kind words, showing not the slightest trace of irritation. All those present were impressed by his graciousness. That very day, after the court session adjourned, he told his wife about seeing the man who had once appeared in his dream. Chun'er was also aghast.

"That dream," said she, "means that your career as an official should end with this term of office. In the old days, when you were teaching village children in the hut by the family grave, you did not have enough clothes to cover your body, or enough food to fill up your stomach. Now, having served three terms of office and attained the sixth rank, you, with your background as a student of the National University, have risen as high as you can. As they often say, 'Be content, and you shall not be humiliated.' You would do well to retire at the height of your career to enjoy a life of leisure in the hills and among the woods." Kecheng nodded in agreement.

So, after only three days in his new office, he resigned, pleading illness. As there was no one else to whom they could entrust the prefectural seal, his superiors declined his request. Much against his will, Kecheng continued to perform his duties as a prefect for half a year until the new prefect arrived. After he handed over the seal, he again submitted his letter of resignation the very next day. Moved by his sincerity, his superiors agreed to let him go. Thousands of local inhabitants who wanted him to stay went out into the street to block his carriage. To one and all, he offered words of consolation.

Kecheng and his wife returned in glory to their hometown. Having accumulated thousands of taels of silver during his three terms of

曹家庄兴旺，为宦门巨室。这虽是曹可成改过之善，却都亏赵春儿赞助之力也。后人诗赞云：

破家只为貌如花，又仗红颜再起家。
如此红颜千古少，劝君还是莫贪花。



office, Kecheng was able to buy back the family's landed estate. The Cao Farmstead regained its former splendor and achieved impressive status as an ex-official's residence. Granted, all this was made possible because Cao Kecheng mended his ways, but it was Zhao Chun'er's support that sustained him. A later poet had this to say in praise of her:

*Her beauty reduced him to poverty,
But she helped him regain his fortune.
Such women being all too few throughout the ages,
Be advised: lust not for beauty nonetheless!*

¹ A *pipa* is a four-stringed lute.

² Lady Liang was Liang Hongyu, a former prostitute who married Han Shizhong before he became a general.

Han Shizhong (1089–1151), a famous general, is remembered for repelling the attacks of invading Jurchen troops.

³ The *Xiezhi* is a legendary animal said to be capable of distinguishing right from wrong. Hence its adoption as a symbol to adorn the robes of government officials.





第三十二卷

杜十娘怒沉百宝箱

扫荡残胡立帝畿，龙翔凤舞势崔嵬。
左环沧海天一带，右拥太行山万围。
戈戟九边雄绝塞，衣冠万国仰垂衣。
太平人乐华胥世，永永金瓯共日辉。

这首诗，单夸我朝燕京建都之盛。说起燕都的形势，北倚雄关，南压区夏，真乃金城天府，万年不拔之基。当先洪武爷扫荡胡尘，定鼎金陵，是为南京。到永乐爷从北平起兵靖难，迁于燕都，是为北京。只因这一迁，把个苦寒地面，变作花锦世界。自永乐爷九传至于万历爷，此乃我朝第十一代的天子。这位天子，聪明神武，德福兼全，十岁登基，在位四十八年，削平了三处寇乱。那三处？

日本关白平秀吉，西夏唃承恩，播州杨应龙。
平秀吉侵犯朝鲜，唃承恩、杨应龙是土官谋叛，先后削平。远夷莫不畏服，争来朝贡。真个是：



Story 32

Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger

*With the Mongols wiped out, the new capital was born
Midst the grandeur of dragon- and phoenix-shaped hills.
On its east, the vast sea joins the sky;
On its west, the Taihang Mountains stretch afar.
The frontiers well guarded by the nine garrisons,
The emperor revered by all countries,
Peace reigns throughout the blissful land;
The empire shines forever with the sun.*

This is a poem in praise of the magnificence of Yanjing, capital of this dynasty. The city is so situated that it is protected by an impregnable mountain pass to the north and is poised for a descent on the central plains to the south. It is indeed a richly endowed and indestructible city, destined to last for ten thousand years.

The dynasty began when Emperor Taizu of the Hongwu reign period [1368–98] wiped out the Mongols and founded the capital in Jinling, which became Nanjing, or the Southern Capital. Later, Emperor Chengzu of the Yongle reign period [1403–24] raised an army from Beiping, put down a rebellion, and moved the capital to Yanjing, which became Beijing, or the Northern Capital. This move transformed the desolate region into a world of opulence and prosperity. After the Yongle reign, the throne passed through nine successions to Emperor Shenzong of the Wanli reign [1573–1620], the eleventh emperor of this dynasty. With sharp intelligence, an impressive bearing, and a virtuous nature, and richly blessed by fate, he ascended the throne at the age of ten. During the forty-eight years of his reign, he had one invasion repelled and two rebellions suppressed. Which ones? An invasion of Korea by the Japanese *kanpaku* Hideyoshi¹ and two rebellions by Bo Cheng'en of Xixia and Yang Yinglong of Bozhou, both local officials of non-Han origin.² They were all wiped out, one after another. In awe, distant tribes vied with one another in coming to offer tributes. Truly,



一人有庆民安乐，四海无虞国太平。

话中单表万历二十年间，日本国关白作乱，侵犯朝鲜。朝鲜国王上表告急，天朝发兵泛海往救。有户部官奏准：目今兵兴之际，粮饷未充，暂开纳粟入监之例。原来纳粟入监的，有几般便宜：好读书，好科举，好中，结末来又有个小小前程结果。以此宦家公子，富室子弟，到不愿做秀才，都去援例做太学生。自开了这例，两京太学生，各添至千人之外。内中有一人，姓李名甲，字干先，浙江绍兴府人氏。父亲李布政所生三儿，惟甲居长。自幼读书在庠，未得登科，援例入于北雍。因在京坐监，与同乡柳遇春监生同游教坊司院内，与一个名姬相遇。那名姬姓杜，名嫩，排行第十，院中都称为杜十娘，生得：

浑身雅艳，遍体娇香。两弯眉画远山青，一对眼明秋水



*Divine blessings on one brought joy to all;
 The four seas tranquil, the empire at peace.*

Our story begins with the twentieth year of the Wanli reign period [1592], when the *kanpaku* of Japan invaded Korea. In response to an emergency appeal for help from the king of Korea, our Heavenly Court dispatched troops across the sea to go to his aid. With endorsement of the emperor, the Ministry of Revenue announced that the National University would be open, for the time being, to any student who could offer tribute, to make up for the shortfall in army provisions. Now, status as a tribute student at the National University had the following advantages: the opportunity to study, eligibility for the imperial civil service examinations and greater chance of passing them, and, when all's said and done, a none-too-shabby career. Therefore, the sons of officials and rich families gave up attempts to sit for the examinations even at the preliminary level, and once a precedent was set, they all followed suit and bought their way into the National University. The number of tribute students increased to more than a thousand on each campus of the university in the two capitals.³

Among the new tribute students was a certain Li Jia, courtesy name Ganxian. A native of Shaoxing Prefecture, Zhejiang, he was the oldest of the three sons of a Provincial Commissioner Li. He started his formal education at an early age but had not yet achieved success at the examinations. He took advantage of the new practice and was admitted to the National University in Beijing. While in the capital, he toured the courtesans' quarters with a fellow student from his hometown, Liu Yuchun, and, there, he met a celebrated courtesan by the name of Du Mei. Being tenth in seniority among the courtesans of the house, she was called by all and sundry Du Shiniang [Tenth Girl].

*Her body full of grace and charm,
 Her skin soft and fragrant.
 Her brows the color and shape of distant hills,
 Her eyes as limpid as autumn water.
 Her cheeks as lovely as lotus petals,*



润。脸如莲萼，分明卓氏文君；唇似樱桃，何减白家樊素。

可怜一片无瑕玉，误落风尘花柳中。

那杜十娘自十三岁破瓜，今一十九岁，七年之内，不知历过了多少公子王孙，一个个情迷意荡，破家荡产而不惜。院中传出四句口号来，道是：

坐中若有杜十娘，斗筲之量饮千觞；

院中若识杜老嫩，千家粉面都如鬼。

却说李公子，风流年少，未逢美色，自遇了杜十娘，喜出望外，把花柳情怀，一担儿挑在他身上。那公子俊俏庞儿，温存性儿，又是撒漫的手儿，帮衬的勤儿，与十娘一双两好，情投意合。十娘因见鸨儿贪财无义，久有从良之志。又见李公子忠厚志诚，甚有心向他。奈李公子惧怕老爷，不敢应承。虽则如此，两下情好愈密，朝欢暮乐，终日相守，如夫妇一般，海誓山盟，各无他志。真个：

恩深似海恩无底，义重如山义更高。

再说杜妈妈女儿被李公子占住，别的富家巨室，闻名上门，求一见而不可得。初时李公子撒漫用钱，大差大使，妈妈胁肩谄



*She was the very image of Zhuo Wenjun.⁴
Her lips the shape of a cherry,
She was a veritable Fan Su.⁵
How sad that such a piece of flawless jade
Has fallen by misfortune into the world of lust!*

Now age nineteen, Du Shiniang had lost her virginity when she was thirteen. In those seven years, she had taken on goodness knows how many young men from rich and noble families, who were, one and all, so enamored of her that they were ready to throw away their family fortunes for her sake. There came into circulation among the courtesans' quarters a four-line song that says,

*With Du Shiniang at the dining table,
Those who hardly drink drain a thousand cups.
He who gets to see Du Mei the beauty
Turns up his nose at a thousand powdered faces.*

Now, young Mr. Li was a romantically inclined young man who had never before encountered a real beauty. Acquaintance with Du Shiniang threw him into such ecstasy that he lavished on her all the love he had in him. With his handsome face, gentle temperament, free-spending habits, and eager attentiveness, he won her heart, and the two grew deeply attached to each other. Having observed the madam's greed and treachery, Shiniang had long wished to leave the brothel and get married, and now, impressed by Mr. Li's kindly disposition and his devotion to her, she was quite inclined to marry him. However, Mr. Li stood in such fear of his father that he dared not commit himself. Even so, their love deepened. They gave themselves up to pleasure from morning till night, spending as much time together as if they were a lawfully wedded couple and swearing eternal love and fidelity. Truly,

*Their love was deeper than the sea,
Their devotion higher than the mountains.*

Now, as Madam Du's girl was thus occupied with Mr. Li, other patrons with well-lined pockets were denied access to the one whose reputation had drawn them to the establishment. When Mr. Li spent extravagantly in the beginning, the madam wore an ingratiating



笑，奉承不暇。日往月来，不觉一年有馀，李公子囊篋渐渐空虚，手不应心，妈妈也就怠慢了。老布政在家闻知儿子嫖院，几遍写字来唤他回去。他迷恋十娘颜色，终日延挨。后来闻知老爷在家发怒，越不敢回。古人云：“以利相交者，利尽而疏。”那杜十娘与李公子真情相好，见他手头愈短，心头愈热。妈妈也几遍教女儿打发李甲出院，见女儿不统口，又几遍将言语触突李公子，要激怒他起身。公子性本温克，词气愈和。[眉批]就是没有志气的朽东西。妈妈没奈何，日逐只将十娘叱骂道：“我们行户人家，吃客穿客，前门送旧，后门迎新，门庭闹如火，钱帛堆成垛。自从那李甲在此，混帐一年有馀，莫说新客，连旧主顾都断了，分明接了个钟馗老，连小鬼也没得上门。弄得老娘一家人家，有气无烟，成什么模样！”杜十娘被骂，耐性不住，便回答道：“那李公子不是空手上门的，也曾费过大钱来。”妈妈道：“彼一时，此一时，你只教他今日费些小钱儿，把与老娘办些柴米，养你两口也好。[眉批]也怪不得妈儿。别人家养的女儿便是摇钱树，千生万活；偏我家晦气，养了个退财白虎，开了大门，七件事般般都在老身上。



smile, humbly bent her shoulders, and busily danced attendance on him. With the sun and the moon exchanging places day after day, all too quickly, more than a year went by. Mr. Li's funds began to run out. As his payments dwindled, much against his wishes, the madam began to give him the cold shoulder. Provincial Commissioner Li, having heard about his son's involvement with a house of ill repute, wrote the young man one letter after another, demanding that he return home, but Li Junior was so enamored of Shiniang's beauty that he postponed his return again and again. Reports of his father's outbursts at home only added to his fear of returning.

The ancients said, "Friendship based on profit falls apart when the money runs out." But since Du Shiniang's feelings for the young man were genuine, the less he had in his pocket, the more passionate her love became. Time and again, the madam urged Shiniang to put Li Jia out, and when her words fell on deaf ears, she turned on the young man herself, hurling insults at him, in attempts to provoke him into leaving. But, being of a gentle nature, he grew even meeker in his responses. (*A good-for-nothing with no pride in him!*) In exasperation, the madam screamed at Shiniang day after day, saying, "In this line of business, we depend on our patrons for a living, sending the old ones out the front door and greeting the new ones at the back. The more activity there is in the house, the higher our pile of money. With that Li Jia making a nuisance of himself here for more than a year now, old patrons are not coming, not to speak of new ones! The way he scares away every soul with any money to offer, he's a veritable incarnation of Zhong Kui!⁶ Now look at this house! There may still be breath left in us, but there's certainly no kitchen fire going. How low have we sunk because of him!"

Unable to put up with such abuse, Du Shiniang shot back, "Mr. Li didn't come with empty hands. He's been quite generous."

"How times have changed! Just tell him to spare a little money so I can buy firewood and rice to keep the two of you alive. (*The madam does have a point.*) In other houses like ours, the girls are like money-growing trees. They are living in luxury while I have to be the unlucky one, feeding a white tiger that keeps money out of the



到替你这小贱人白白养着穷汉，教我衣食从何处来？你对那穷汉说：有本事出几两银子与我，到得你跟了他去，我别讨个丫头过活却不好？”十娘道：“妈妈，这话是真是假？”妈妈晓得李甲囊无一钱，衣衫都典尽了，料他没处设法，便应道：“老娘从不说谎，当真哩。”十娘道：“娘，你要他许多银子？”妈妈道：“若是别人，千把银子也讨了，可怜那穷汉出不起，只要他三百两，我自去讨一个粉头代替。只一件，须是三日内交付与我。左手交银，右手交人。若三日没有银时，老身也不管三七二十一，公子不公子，一顿孤拐，打那光棍出去。那时莫怪老身！”十娘道：“公子虽在客边乏钞，谅三百金还措办得来。只是三日忒近，限他十日便好。”妈妈想道：“这穷汉一双赤手，便限他一百日，他那里来银子。没有银子，便铁皮包脸，料也无颜上门。那时重整家风，嫩儿也没得话讲。”答应道：“看你面，便宽到十日。第十日没有银子，不干老娘之事。”十娘道：“若十日内无银，料他也无颜再见了。只怕有了三百两银子，妈妈又翻悔起来。”妈妈道：



house!⁷ From the moment the door is open every morning, I busy myself preparing the seven necessities of life [firewood, rice, cooking oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, and tea] for the household. Now, where am I supposed to get food and clothes to support that pauper of yours, you little hussy? You tell that pauper: If he's still a man, why doesn't he scrape together a few taels of silver and take you away from here? I'll be happy to get myself another girl."

"Mother, do you mean it?"

Knowing that it was impossible for the penniless Li Jia, who had pawned everything he owned, to come up with any money, the madam said, "I never lie. Of course I mean it."

"Mother, how much do you want from him?"

"If it were anyone else, I'd ask for a thousand taels of silver. But in the case of that penniless wretch, I'll be merciful and ask for only three hundred taels, so that I can find a replacement for you. But there's one condition: he has to pay me within three days. When he gives me the money, I'll give him his girl. He may be a gentleman, but if he can't pay up within three days, whatever the circumstances, I'll beat him and kick him out. When it comes to that, don't hold me to blame!"

Shiniang pleaded, "He doesn't have money with him because he's away from home, although he should be able to raise three hundred taels. But three days is not enough. Could you make it ten days?"

The madam thought, "That miserable wretch has nothing left now but his bare hands. Even if I allow him a hundred days, he won't be able to do anything. Without the money, he won't dare show his face around here again, however cheeky he may be. And by that time, the girl should have no objection to starting over again." Aloud, she promised, "For your sake, I'll allow him ten days. But if I don't see the money on the tenth day, don't blame me for anything I do!"

"If he can't come up with anything on the tenth day, I don't think he'll ever have the nerve to come here again. But if he does deliver the money, you, Mother, wouldn't back out of the deal,



“老身年五十一岁了，又奉十斋，怎敢说谎？不信时与你拍掌为定。若翻悔时，做猪做狗。”

从来海水斗难量，可笑虔婆意不良。

料定穷儒囊底竭，故将财礼难娇娘。

是夜，十娘与公子在枕边，议及终身之事。公子道：“我非无此心，但教坊落籍，其费甚多，非千金不可。我囊空如洗，如之奈何！”十娘道：“妾已与妈妈议定只要三百金，但须十日内措办。郎君游资虽罄，然都中岂无亲友可以借贷？[眉批]穷之以见德。倘得如数，妾身遂为君之所有，省受虔婆之气。”公子道：“亲友中为我留恋行院，都不相顾。明日只做束装起身，各家告辞，就开口假贷路费，凑聚将来，或可满得此数。”[眉批]果然侥幸成事，后来活计如何，亦是不终日之计。李甲蠢物，不知十娘何以养之？起身梳洗，别了十娘出门。十娘道：“用心作速，专听佳音。”公子道：“不须分付。”

公子出了院门，来到三亲四友处，假说起身告别，众人到也欢喜。后来叙到路费欠缺，意欲借贷。常言道：“说着钱，便无缘。”亲友们就不招架。他们也见得是，道李公子是风流浪子，迷



would you?"

"I'm already fifty-one years old, and I follow the Buddhist diet ten days out of the month. How would I even dream of lying? If you don't trust me, let's clap our hands on the deal. If ever I should back out of it, let me become a pig or a dog in my next life!"

The sea is not to be measured in scoops;

How laughable the evil crone!

Knowing the student to be penniless,

She demands payment to smash the girl's hopes.

That night, with their heads against the pillows, Shiniang consulted Li about her marital future. He said, "It's not that I'm not disinclined, but it takes at least a thousand taels to get your name deleted from the courtesans' registry book. My pocket being as empty as it is, what can I do?"

"I have talked with Mother. She asks only for three hundred taels, but they have to be paid in ten days. Your own means may be exhausted, but don't you have relatives and friends in the capital you can borrow from? (*Poverty is a test of compassion.*) If you can raise the amount, I'll be yours, and we won't have to take the old witch's abuses any longer!"

"All my relatives and friends have forsaken me because I refuse to leave this place. Tomorrow, I'll go and tell them I'm packing for the journey home and have come to say good-bye. And then I'll ask for travel money. I may even be able to collect the whole amount." (*If, by a stroke of luck, he does manage to get the money, what next? He still doesn't have a plan for the future. I fail to see what Shiniang sees in this good-for-nothing Li Jia.*)

The next morning, Li rose, washed, combed his hair, and took leave of Shiniang. "Be sure to come back soon," she admonished, "I'll be waiting for good news."

"Don't worry," said he. He left the house and called on friends and relatives. They were delighted to hear that he was there to bid them farewell before starting his journey home. Then he mentioned his lack of funds and asked for a loan. As the proverb puts it, "Talk of money drives friends away." His relatives ignored his request, and



恋烟花，年许不归，父亲都为他气坏在家。他今日抖然要回，未知真假。倘或说骗盘缠到手，又去还脂粉钱，父亲知道，将好意翻成恶意，始终只是一怪，不如辞了干净。便回道：“目今正值空乏，不能相济，惭愧！惭愧！”人人如此，个个皆然，并没有个慷慨丈夫，肯统口许他一二十两。李公子一连奔走了三日，分毫无获，又不敢回决十娘，权且含糊答应。到第四日又没想头，就羞回院中。〔眉批〕不出妈儿所料。平日间有了杜家，连下处也没有了，今日就无处投宿，只得往同乡柳监生寓所借歇。柳遇春见公子愁容可掬，问其来历。公子将杜十娘愿嫁之情，备细说了。遇春摇首道：“未必，未必。那杜嫩曲中第一名姬，要从良时，怕没有十斛明珠，千金聘礼，那鸨儿如何只要三百两？想鸨儿怪你无钱使用，白白占住他的女儿，设计打发你出门。那妇人与你相处已久，又碍却面皮，不好明言。明知你手内空虚，故意将三百两卖个人情，限你十日。若十日没有，你也不好上门。便上门时，他会说你笑你，落得一场褻渎，自然安身不牢，此乃烟花逐



not without reason, for they saw him as a dissolute prodigal who had been away from home, wallowing in vice in a brothel for more than a year, while his father was fuming with rage. And now, all of a sudden, he claimed he was going home, but who could be sure he was telling the truth? Should it be but a trick so he could use the supposed travel money to pay the brothel again, his father would surely misconstrue their good intentions when he heard of it. If his father was going to blame them anyway, they'd be well advised not to get involved in the first place. Without exception, everyone said, "I happen to be short of money at this moment. I'm really sorry I'm not able to help you out." No one was generous enough to part with so much as ten or twenty taels.

Li ran around for three days straight without raising the slightest fraction of a tael. He did not dare tell Shiniang the truth. Instead, he put her off with evasive answers. When the fourth day also failed to bring him any hope, he felt too ashamed to return to her. (*Just as the madam had predicted.*) But, having made the Du house his home, he had no other place to stay. He had no choice but to ask Liu Yuchun, the fellow student from his hometown, to put him up for the night. Concerned by the miserable look on Li's face, Liu Yuchun asked what was wrong, whereupon Li told Liu all about Du Shiniang's offer of marriage.

Yuchun shook his head and said, "I doubt it, I doubt it. Du Mei is the number one courtesan. If she wants to get out of the business and marry, the madam would ask for no less than ten pecks of pearls and betrothal gifts worth a thousand taels of silver. Why is she asking for only three hundred taels? My guess is that the madam resents the fact that you are keeping her girl without paying anything. This is her way of driving you out. As for the girl, having known you for so long, she can't very well tell you to leave outright, for fear of hurting your feelings. Knowing all too well that you're penniless, she purposely sets the price at three hundred taels as a favor to you and gives you ten days to come up with the money. If you can't deliver, you can't show up at her door any more. If you do, she'll ridicule you and laugh at you and make you feel too humiliated to stay on. Brothels



客之计。足下三思，休被其惑。据弟愚意，不如早早开交为上。”公子听说，半晌无言，心中疑惑不定。遇春又道：“足下莫要错了主意。你若真个还乡，不多几两盘费，还有人搭救。若是要三百两时，莫说十日，就是十个月也难。如今的世情，那肯顾缓急二字的。那烟花也算定你没处告债，故意设法难你。”公子道：“仁兄所见良是。”口里虽如此说，心中割舍不下。依旧又往外边东央西告，只是夜里不进院门了。公子在柳监生寓中，一连住了三日，共是六日了。

杜十娘连日不见公子进院，十分着紧，就教小厮四儿街上去寻。四儿寻到大街，恰好遇见公子。四儿叫道：“李姐夫，娘在家里望你。”公子自觉无颜，回复道：“今日不得功夫，明日来罢。”四儿奉了十娘之命，一把扯住，死也不放，道：“娘叫咱寻你，是必同去走一遭。”李公子心上也牵挂着表子，没奈何，只得随四儿进院。见了十娘，嘿嘿无言。十娘问道：“所谋之事如何？”公子眼中流下泪来。十娘道：“莫非人情淡薄，不能足三百之数么？”公子含泪而言，道出二句：

“不信上山擒虎易，果然开口告人难。”

一连奔走六日，并无铢两，一双空手，羞见芳卿，故此这几日不



often use this trick to drive out unwanted clients. Now think carefully. Don't be fooled. In my humble opinion, the best thing to do is to make a clean break with them as soon as possible."

Li lapsed into silence, unable to make up his mind. After a good while, Yuchun continued, "Don't make a wrong move. If you do decide to go back home, the travel expenses won't amount to much. There will surely be people willing to help you out. But if you ask for three hundred taels, you're not likely to get it even in ten months, let alone ten days. You know how the world is today. Who will bother to care about other people's troubles? The brothel is deliberately making things difficult for you because they are sure you won't be able to get a loan."

"Right you are, my good brother." Even as he mouthed these words of agreement, Li could not bear the thought of parting with Shiniang. Again, he set about begging for loans here and there, though he did stop going back to the brothel at night. For three days in a row, he stayed with Tribute Student Liu. Six days passed.

Deeply worried by Li's continued absence, Du Shiniang had Si'er, a page boy, go out to look for him, and it so happened that Si'er ran into Li on a main street. "Brother-in-law Li!" called out Si'er. "Mistress is expecting you at home!"

Feeling ashamed, Li answered, "I'm too busy today. I'll come tomorrow."

Determined not to fail Shiniang, Si'er grabbed him and, holding him tightly, said, "Mistress told me to look for you. You must come with me!"

His heart longing for Shiniang, Li submitted and followed Si'er. When he saw Shiniang, he could think of nothing to say.

"How are you coming along in what you set out to do?" asked she. As tears flowed down his cheeks, she continued, "Can there be so little human kindness that you haven't been able to put together three hundred taels?"

Tearfully, Li intoned a couplet, "'It's easier to catch a tiger in the hills / Than to open your mouth and beg for favors.' I've been running around for six days and haven't gotten even one cent. I felt so



敢进院。今日承命呼唤，忍耻而来，非某不用心，实是世情如此。”十娘道：“此言休使虔婆知道。郎君今夜且住，妾别有商议。”十娘自备酒肴，与公子欢饮。睡至半夜，十娘对公子道：“郎君果不能办一钱耶？妾终身之事，当如何也？”公子只是流涕，不能答一语。渐渐五更天晓，十娘道：“妾所卧絮褥内藏有碎银一百五十两，此妾私蓄，郎君可持去。三百金，妾任其半，郎君亦谋其半，庶易为力。限只四日，万勿迟误。”十娘起身将褥付公子，公子惊喜过望，唤童儿持褥而去。径到柳遇春寓中，又把夜来之情与遇春说了。将褥拆开看时，絮中都裹着零碎银子，取出兑时果是一百五十两。遇春大惊道：“此妇真有心人也。既系真情，不可相负。吾当代为足下谋之。”公子道：“倘得玉成，决不有负。”当下柳遇春留李公子在寓，自出头各处去借贷。两日之内，凑足一百五十两交付公子道：“吾代为足下告债，非为足下，实怜杜十娘之情也。”

李甲拿了三百两银子，喜从天降，笑逐颜开，欣欣然来见十娘，刚是第九日，还不足十日。十娘问道：“前日分毫难借，今



ashamed to come back to you with empty hands that I stayed away these last few days. It was only because you sent for me that I came in all humiliation. It's not that I haven't tried hard, but such are the ways of the world."

"Don't let Madam know about any of this. Why don't you stay here tonight? I need to talk to you about something."

Shiniang prepared food and wine, and she and Li enjoyed a hearty meal before they went to bed.

When they awoke in the middle of the night, Shiniang asked him, "So are you truly unable to come up with even a cent? What's to be done about my marital future?"

The young man continued to shed tears, unable to speak.

Gradually, it began to grow light, and the fifth watch struck. Shiniang said, "I've hidden one hundred and fifty taels of loose silver inside my mattress. This is my private savings. Take it. So that's half of the three hundred taels. Now that you only need the other half, you may stand a better chance. There are only four days left. You've got no time to lose." So saying, she rose and gave the mattress to Li.

Beside himself with joy, Li had a page boy carry the mattress for him and follow him all the way to Liu Yuchun's place. There, he told Liu all that had happened during the night. The mattress was then torn open to reveal pieces of loose silver all wrapped up in the padding. They weighed exactly one hundred fifty taels. Yuchun was astounded. "So, she does mean it! In that case, her sincerity must not be betrayed. Let me try to raise the money for you."

"If this turns out well for us, I'll never forget your kindness."

So Liu Yuchun kept Li Jia at his place, while he went everywhere to borrow money. In two days, he raised one hundred and fifty taels. Handing the money to Li, he said, "I went into debt on your behalf, not for your sake, but because of Du Shiniang's devotion to you."

With the three hundred taels in his possession, Li Jia rejoiced at this heaven-sent good fortune. All smiles, he went merrily to see Shiniang, one day before the ten-day limit was to expire.

"You didn't have one cent the other day," said Shiniang. "How



日如何就有一百五十两？”公子将柳监生事情，又述了一遍。十娘以手加额道：“使吾二人得遂其愿者，柳君之力也。”两个欢天喜地，又在院中过了一晚。次日，十娘早起，对李甲道：“此银一交，便当随郎君去矣。舟车之类，合当预备。妾昨日于姊妹中借得白银二十两，郎君可收下为行资也。”公子正愁路费无出，但不敢开口，得银甚喜。说犹未了，鸨儿恰来敲门叫道：“嫩儿，今日是第十日了。”公子闻叫，启户相延道：“承妈妈厚意，正欲相请。”便将银三百两放在桌上。鸨儿不料公子有银，嘿然变色，似有悔意，十娘道：“儿在妈妈家中八年，所致金帛，不下数千金矣。今日从良美事，又妈妈亲口所订，三百金不欠分毫，又不曾过期。倘若妈妈失信不许，郎君持银去，儿即刻自尽。恐那时人财两失，悔之无及也。”鸨儿无词以对，腹内筹画了半晌，只得取天平兑准了银子，说道：“事已如此，料留你不住了。只是你要去时，即今就去。平时穿戴衣饰之类，毫厘休想。”说罢，将公子



did you come by these one hundred and fifty taels?"

After listening to Li's account of what Tribute Student Liu had done, Shiniang said, her hand raised to her forehead in a gesture of great delight, "So Mr. Liu is the one who has gotten us what we want."

Happy beyond measure, they spent the night together in the house.

The next morning, Shiniang rose bright and early and said to Li Jia, "As soon as the silver is delivered, I'll be free to go with you, but we need to arrange for transportation. Yesterday, I borrowed twenty taels of silver from my sisters. Take them to pay for our travel expenses."

This news was most welcome because Li had been worrying about the lack of travel funds but had not dared to bring up the subject. While they were talking, the madam knocked on the door. "My girl Mei," she called out. "It's the tenth day today!"

Upon hearing this, Li opened the door and said invitingly, "Thank you for coming here, Mother. I was just going to ask you over." With that, he laid the three hundred taels of silver on the table.

The madam, who had not expected him to produce any money, was dumbstruck. Her face hardened, and she looked as if she was going to back out of the deal. Shiniang said, "In the eight years I've been living here, I've made thousands of taels of silver for you. Today is the happy day I leave and get married, and you have given me your word. The three hundred taels are all here, not a fraction of a tael less, nor have we exceeded the ten-day limit. If you go back on your promise, Mr. Li will walk out with the money, and I will immediately kill myself. If that happens, you will lose both me and the money, and regrets will be too late."

Not knowing what to say in reply, the madam fell silent. After much thinking, she resignedly took up a scale and weighed out the silver. "Since things have come to this," said she, "I guess I won't be able to keep you. But if you must go, be off this very instant. Don't even think of taking any of the jewelry and clothes you wear ev-



和十娘推出房门，讨锁来就落了锁。此时九月天气，十娘才下床，尚未梳洗，随身旧衣，就拜了妈妈两拜。李公子也作了一揖。一夫一妇，离了虔婆大门。

鲤鱼脱却金钩去，摆尾摇头再不来。

公子教十娘且住片时：“我去唤个小轿抬你，权往柳荣卿寓所去，再作道理。”十娘道：“院中诸姊妹平昔相厚，理宜话别。况前日又承他借贷路费，不可不一谢也。”乃同公子到各姊妹处谢别。姊妹中惟谢月朗、徐素素与杜家相近，尤与十娘亲厚。十娘先到谢月朗家。月朗见十娘秃髻旧衫，惊问其故，十娘备述来因。又引李甲相见，十娘指月朗道：“前日路资，是此位姐姐所贷，郎君可致谢。”李甲连连作揖。月朗便教十娘梳洗，一面去请徐素素来家相会。十娘梳洗已毕，谢、徐二美人各出所有，翠钿金钏，瑶簪宝珥，锦袖花裙，鸾带绣履，把杜十娘装扮得焕然一新，备酒作庆贺筵席。月朗让卧房与李甲、杜嫩二人过宿。次日，又大排筵席，遍请院中姊妹。凡十娘相厚者，无不毕集，都与他夫妇



ery day." With that, she pushed the two of them out, asked for a padlock, and locked the door.

It was the ninth lunar month of the year, and the weather was growing chilly. Since she had just risen from bed, Shiniang had not yet dressed and groomed herself. In her old clothes, she bowed twice in the madam's direction. Li also bowed. That done, they left the madam's house as husband and wife.

*The carp broke free from the golden hook;
 Flicking its tail, shaking its head, it's gone for good.*

Li told Shiniang to stop for a moment, adding, "I'll get a small sedan-chair for you. Let's go first to Mr. Liu's place before deciding on the next thing to do."

"My sisters have always been very kind to me. I ought to say good-bye to them. Moreover, they loaned me money for travel expenses. I can't leave without thanks." Accompanied by Li, she went to bid her sisters a thankful farewell.

Of the sisters, Xie Yuelang and Xu Susu lived nearest to the Du house and were Shiniang's most intimate friends, so Shiniang went to Xie Yuelang's house first. Surprised to see Shiniang with her hair unadorned and her clothes old and worn, Yuelang asked her what had happened. Shiniang told Yuelang the whole story and introduced Li Jia to her. Pointing at Yuelang, Shiniang said, "This is the sister who helped us out with travel money. You should thank her." Accordingly, Li Jia gave her one bow after another.

Yuelang let Shiniang do her toilette and, in the meantime, invited Xu Susu to come over for a reunion. After Shiniang had finished, the two beauties Xie and Xu offered her their kingfisher-feather hair ornaments, gold bracelets, jade hairpins, earrings inlaid with jewels, a brocade blouse, a floral-patterned skirt, a phoenix belt, and a pair of embroidered shoes. With Du Shiniang now aglow in all her splendor, a farewell celebration feast was laid out. When the feast was over, Yuelang offered her own bedchamber to Li Jia and Du Mei for the night.

The next day, another feast, a grand one, was set out, to which all the courtesans of the quarters were invited. Everyone who



把盏称喜，吹弹歌舞，各逞其长，务要尽欢，直饮至夜分。十娘向众姊妹一一称谢。众姊妹道：“十姊为风流领袖，今从郎君去，我等相见无日。何日长行，姊妹们尚当奉送。”月朗道：“候有定期，小妹当来相报。但阿姊千里间关，同郎君远去，囊篋萧条，曾无约束，此乃吾等之事，当相与共谋之，勿令姊有穷途之虑也。”众姊妹各唯唯而散。

是晚，公子和十娘仍宿谢家。至五鼓，十娘对公子道：“吾等此去，何处安身？郎君亦曾计议有定着否？”[眉批]此等计议，在院中该早定，何待今日。公子道：“老父盛怒之下，若知娶妓而归，必然加以不堪，反致相累。展转寻思，尚未有万全之策。”十娘道：“父子天性，岂能终绝。既然仓卒难犯，不若与郎君于苏杭胜地，权作浮居。郎君先回，求亲友于尊大人面前劝解和顺，然后携妾于归，彼此安妥。”[眉批]亦妥帖。公子道：“此言甚当。”次日，二人起身辞了谢月朗，暂往柳监生寓中，整顿行装。杜十娘见了柳遇春，倒身下拜，谢其周全之德：“异日我夫妇必当重



had warm feelings for Shiniang came to toast and congratulate the couple. The guests played musical instruments, sang, and danced, offering the best of their talents for the joyous occasion, and the drinking and merrymaking lasted until midnight. When Shiniang offered words of thanks, they replied, "Now that you, the very best of us, are going away with your husband, we might never see you again. Let us know when you're going to set out on your journey, and we'll come to see you off."

Yuelang said, "When the date is decided, I'll surely let all of you know. But Sister Shiniang's journey with her husband will be a long and arduous one that they can ill afford. We sisters are duty bound to do something so that she won't have anything to worry about."

The sisters all agreed to the proposal before dispersing. That night, Li and Shiniang again stayed in Yuelang's room.

At the fifth strike of the night watch drum, Shiniang said to Li, "Where shall we settle down after leaving this place? Do you have any definite ideas?" (*These things should have been worked out before they left the brothel. Why wait until this moment?*)

Li said, "My father, as angry as he is, will surely raise hell if he knows I'm returning home married to a courtesan, and that will make things even worse for you. I've been racking my brains over the matter but haven't come up with a surefire plan."

"The natural bond between father and son can't be broken. But if this is not yet the right time to approach him, why don't we take up temporary residence in a scenic city like Suzhou or Hangzhou? That way, you can go back to your hometown and ask relatives and friends to mediate on your behalf and pacify your father. Only then can you take me to your parents. That would be better for both sides." (*Yes, that is indeed a felicitous solution.*)

"Well said," Li agreed.

The next morning, Li and Shiniang took leave of Xie Yuelang and set out for Tribute Student Liu's place, where they were to stay for a while and pack for their journey. As soon as she saw Liu Yuchun, Du Shiniang fell to her knees and made obeisance. Thanking



报。”遇春慌忙答礼道：“十娘钟情所欢，不以贫窶易心，此乃女中豪杰。仆因风吹火，凉区区何足挂齿！”三人又饮了一日酒。次早，择了出行吉日，雇倩轿马停当。十娘又遣童儿寄信，别谢月朗。临行之际，只见肩舆纷纷而至，乃谢月朗与徐素素拉众姊妹来送行。月朗道：“十姊从郎君千里间关，囊中消索，吾等甚不能忘情。今合具薄贶，十姊可检收，或长途空乏，亦可少助。”说罢，命从人挈一描金文具至前，封锁甚固，正不知什么东西在里面。十娘也不开看，也不推辞，但殷勤作谢而已。须臾，舆马齐集，仆夫催促起身。柳监生三杯别酒，和众美人送出崇文门外，各各垂泪而别。正是：

他日重逢难预必，此时分手最堪怜。

再说李公子同杜十娘行至潞河，舍陆从舟，却好有瓜洲差使船转回之便，讲定船钱，包了舱口。比及下船时，李公子囊中并无分文馀剩。你道杜十娘把二十两银子与公子，如何就没了？公子在院中嫖得衣衫蓝缕，银子到手，未免在解库中取赎几件穿着，



him for his help in bringing about the marriage, she said, "My husband and I will surely return your kindness."

Yuchun promptly bowed in return and said, "You, madam, are indeed an exceptional woman, who does not let poverty stand in the way of your love. I did nothing more than fan the fire when the wind was favorable. Such a trivial thing is hardly worth mentioning."

The three spent the day at the wine table. On the morrow, they chose an auspicious day for the couple's departure and hired sedan-chairs and horses. Shiniang then had a page boy dispatch a letter to Xie Yuelang, thanking her and bidding her farewell.

As the hour of their departure drew near, there came a stream of sedan-chairs. It was Xie Yuelang and Xu Susu leading all the sisters to see them off. Yuelang addressed Shiniang in the following words: "We cannot bear the thought of letting you follow your husband on a thousand-*li* journey with an empty purse. We have put together a modest gift. Please accept it. It may come in handy on your long journey." So saying, she had a servant give Shiniang a gold-traced jewel box locked so securely that there was no clue as to its contents. Shiniang neither opened it nor declined the gift but busied herself in saying thanks.

A short while later, the sedan-chairs and horses were ready, and the footmen urged them to be on their way. Tribute Student Liu offered three cups of farewell wine and, along with the beauties, escorted the couple as far as Chongwen Gate, where everyone tearfully said farewell. Truly,

*They knew not when they would meet again,
 At this sad moment of farewell.*

To continue with our story. Li Jia and Du Shiniang proceeded to the Lu River, where they were to board a boat. There happened to be a government courier boat returning to Guazhou, so they negotiated the fare and paid for the cabin. Once on board, Mr. Li found that he had already spent the last cent in his pocket. Now you may wonder, didn't Du Shiniang give him twenty taels of silver? They couldn't all be gone, could they? Well, having spent all his money in the brothel until he was in rags, Li could hardly resist the temptation of re-



又制办了铺盖，剩来只勾轿马之费。公子正当愁闷，十娘道：“郎君勿忧，众姊妹合赠，必有所济。”乃取钥開箱。公子在傍自觉惭愧，也不敢窥覷箱中虚实。只见十娘在箱里取出一个红绢袋来，掷于桌上道：“郎君可开看之。”公子提在手中，觉得沉重，启而观之，皆是白银，计数整五十两。十娘仍将箱子下锁，亦不言箱中更有何物。但对公子道：“承众姊妹高情，不惟途路不乏，即他日浮寓吴越间，亦可稍佐吾夫妻山水之费矣。”公子且惊且喜道：“若不遇恩卿，我李甲流落他乡，死无葬身之地矣！此情此德，白头不敢忘也。”自此每谈及往事，公子必感激流涕。十娘亦曲意抚慰，一路无话。

不一日，行至瓜洲，大船停泊岸口。公子别雇了民船，安放行李。约明日侵晨，剪江而渡。其时仲冬中旬，月明如水，公子和十娘坐于舟首。公子道：“自出都门，困守一舱之中，四顾有人，未得畅语。今日独据一舟，更无避忌。[眉批]尚非关怀之时，宜其不永。且已离塞北，初近江南，宜开怀畅饮，以舒向来抑郁之气，



deeming a few articles of clothing from the pawnshop once he laid his hands on some silver. He had also bought bedding, and the remainder of the silver was just enough to pay for the sedan-chairs and horses.

Noticing his woebegone look, Shiniang said, "Don't worry. My sisters' gift should be of some use."

With that, she took out the key and opened the box.

Li was standing beside her, but he felt too ashamed to look into the box. All he saw was a red silk purse, which Shiniang took out. She threw the purse on the table and said, "Won't you open it and see what's inside?"

When he picked it up, Li thought it was quite heavy. He opened it and found it was filled with pieces of silver amounting to fifty taels. Shiniang locked the box again without mentioning what else it contained. Instead, she said to him, "Thanks to the kindness of my sisters, we have not only enough money for this journey but also some to spare for our stay south of the river."

At this pleasant surprise, Li said, "If it were not for you, I would have been stranded in an alien land and died without even a burial place. I'll never forget your kindness to me."

Henceforth, every time past events came up in conversation, Li would shed tears of gratitude and Shiniang would go out of her way to console him with soothing words. And nothing else of note occurred as they continued their journey.

In a few days, they came to Guazhou. After the courier boat had anchored by the shore, Li hired a passenger boat, transferred their luggage to it, and arranged to set sail early the next morning. It was the middle of the eleventh month of the year, and the moon was as bright as sparkling water.

Sitting at the bow with Shiniang by his side, Li said, "Ever since we left the capital, we've been cooped up in a cabin with people all around us and never had a chance for a good talk. Now, with a boat to ourselves, we can finally disregard all scruples. (*This is not yet the right time for endearments. Small wonder that the relationship was not fated to last long.*) Since we've left the north and are approaching the south side of the Yangzi River, let's drink to our hearts'



恩卿以为何如？”十娘道：“妾久疏谈笑，亦有此心，郎君言及，足见同志耳。”公子乃携酒具于船首，与十娘铺毡并坐，传杯交盏。饮至半酣，公子执卮对十娘道：“恩卿妙音，六院推首。某相遇之初，每闻绝调，辄不禁神魂之飞动。心事多违，彼此郁郁，鸾鸣凤奏，久矣不闻。今清江明月，深夜无人，肯为我一歌否？”十娘兴亦勃发，[眉批]都不老成。遂开喉顿嗓，取扇按拍，呜呜咽咽，歌出元人施君美《拜月亭》杂剧上“状元执盏与婵娟”一曲，名《小桃红》。真个：

声飞霄汉云皆驻，响入深泉鱼出游。

却说他舟有一少年，姓孙名富，字善賚，徽州新安人氏。家资巨万，积祖扬州种盐。年方二十，也是南雍中朋友。生性风流，惯向青楼买笑，红粉追欢，若嘲风弄月，到是个轻薄的头儿。事有偶然，其夜亦泊舟瓜洲渡口，独酌无聊。忽听得歌声嘹亮，凤吟鸾吹，不足喻其美。起立船头，伫听半晌，方知声出邻舟。正



content to shake off the gloom of the last few days. What do you say?"

"I was thinking along the same lines, because I, too, miss having a good talk and a good laugh. Your bringing this up shows that we are truly of the same mind."

Li fetched wine utensils, spread out a rug on the bow, and sat down shoulder to shoulder with Shiniang. They began passing the cups back and forth. When well warmed with wine, he said to Shiniang, wine vessel in hand, "Your voice is the very best in the courtesans' quarters. When I first met you, my soul took flight every time I heard you sing. With all the troubles we've gone through, we've been in such low spirits that I haven't heard your divine singing in a long time. Now, with the moon shining brightly on the clear water and no one around us in the depths of the night, would you be willing to sing for me?"

Shiniang was so carried away that she cleared her throat and, beating time with her fan, started singing. (*She, too, lacks prudence.*) Set to the tune of "Small Red Peaches," the song was about a scholar offering wine to the moon, from the play *Moon Pavilion* by Shi Junmei⁸ of the Yuan dynasty. Truly,

*Her voice rose into the sky and stopped the clouds,
 Dived down into the deep spring and brought out the fish.*

Now, in another boat, there was a young man called Sun Fu, courtesy name Shanlai, a native of Xin'an, Huizhou, who was from a fabulously rich family that had been in the salt business in Yangzhou for generations. He was twenty years of age and also a tribute student at the National University in Nanjing. A licentious and frivolous man, he frequented houses of ill repute and was a master in matters relating to the pleasures of the flesh.

As coincidences would have it, his boat was also anchored at the Guazhou ferry that night. Drinking alone and feeling bored, he suddenly heard a clear voice singing so beautifully that metaphors of phoenixes' songs were not enough to capture its beauty. He stood up in the bow and listened for a good while before deciding that its source was the very next boat. He was about to pay a visit when the



欲相访，音响倏已寂然。乃遣仆者潜窥踪迹，访于舟人。但晓得是李相公雇的船，并不知歌者来历。孙富想道：“此歌者必非良家，怎生得他一见？”展转寻思，通宵不寐。挨至五更，忽闻江风大作。及晓，彤云密布，狂雪飞舞。怎见得，有诗为证：

千山云树灭，万径人踪绝。

扁舟蓑笠翁，独钓寒江雪。

因这风雪阻渡，舟不得开。孙富命艄公移船，泊于李家舟之傍。孙富貂帽狐裘，推窗假作看雪。值十娘梳洗方毕，纤纤玉手，揭起舟傍短帘，自泼盂中残水，粉容微露，却被孙富窥见了，果是国色天香。魂摇心荡，迎眸注目，等候再见一面，杳不可得。沉思久之，乃倚窗高吟高学士《梅花诗》二句，[眉批]施君美一只曲，高学士两句诗，断送了杜十娘一生，可恨，可恨。道：

雪满山中高士卧，月明林下美人来。

李甲听得邻舟吟诗，舒头出舱，看是何人。只因这一看，正中孙富之计。孙富吟诗，正要引李公子出头，他好乘机攀话。



singing stopped, whereupon he told a servant to slip out and ask the boatman who the singer was. When he was told that the boat had been hired by a Mr. Li but nothing was known about the singer, Sun Fu thought, "Obviously, the singer is not from a decent family. How shall I get to see her?" These thoughts kept him awake throughout the night.

When the fifth watch of the night finally came, he heard a wind-storm spring up on the river. By dawn, the sky was overcast with ominous clouds, and flakes of snow whirled frantically in the air. How do we know this? There is a poem in testimony:

*Trees vanish into the clouds from hill to hill;
 All footprints disappear from path to path.
 An old man with a straw hat sits in a small boat,
 Fishing all alone on the river clad in snow.*

Since he was stuck in the snowstorm and unable to continue with his journey anyway, Sun Fu ordered his boatman to move closer to Li's boat. Sun Fu put on his sable hat and fox-fur coat and pushed open the window as if to watch the snow. At this very moment, Shiniang, having finished her toilette, raised the short curtain of the cabin window with her delicate hands and emptied her basin into the river. As she did so, Sun Fu caught a partial glimpse of her face. Just as he had thought, the woman was a ravishing beauty. He was thrown into such raptures that he kept his eyes fixed upon the same spot, waiting for her to appear again, but to no avail. After reflecting a good while, he leaned against his window and intoned aloud two lines from the poem "Plum Blossoms," by Academician Gao Qi⁹: (*Shi Junmei's song and Academician Gao's poem are the ruin of Du Shiniang's life. Outrageous! Outrageous!*)

*"On the snow-clad hill sleeps the hermit;
 In the moon-lit woods walks the beauty."*

Upon hearing someone intoning a poem in a neighboring boat, Li Jia craned his neck out the cabin window to look. With that one glimpse, he fell victim to Sun Fu's scheme. Sun's very purpose in chanting the poem was to entice Mr. Li to show his face so that he could take the chance to strike up a conversation. With alacrity, he



当下慌忙举手，就问：“老兄尊姓何讳？”李公子叙了姓名乡贯，少不得也问那孙富，孙富也叙过了。又叙了些太学中的闲话，渐渐亲熟。孙富便道：“风雪阻舟，乃天遣与尊兄相会，实小弟之幸也。舟次无聊，欲同尊兄上岸，就酒肆中一酌，少领清海，万望不拒。”公子道：“萍水相逢，何当厚扰？”孙富道：“说那里话！‘四海之内，皆兄弟也’。”喝教艄公打跳，童儿张伞，迎接公子过船，就于船头作揖。然后让公子先行，自己随后，各各登跳上涯。行不数步，就有个酒楼，二人上楼，拣一副洁净座头，靠窗而坐。酒保列上酒肴。孙富举杯相劝，二人赏雪饮酒。先说些斯文中套话，渐渐引入花柳之事。二人都是过来之人，志同道合，说得入港，一发成相知了。孙富屏去左右，低低问道：“昨夜尊舟清歌者何人也？”李甲正要卖弄在行，[眉批]机事不密，总由不老成之故。遂实说道：“此乃北京名姬杜十娘也。”孙富道：“既系曲中姊妹，何以归兄？”公子遂将初遇杜十娘，如何相好，后来



raised his hands in greeting and asked, "What is your honorable name?"

After saying his name and where he was from, Li directed the same question to Sun Fu, who readily answered. After some small talk about the National University, they gradually warmed to each other. Sun Fu said, "To be stranded here in the snowstorm is a god-sent opportunity for me to have the honor of meeting you, my honorable brother. As there's little to do on the boat, I'd like to invite you to go ashore and have a drink or two in a wineshop, so that I may have the benefit of your conversation. I hope you won't turn me down."

"I've just met you as a total stranger. How can I put you to such trouble?"

"What kind of talk is this? As they say, 'All men within the four seas are brothers.'" With that, Sun Fu had his boatman put down the gangplank, and his page boy held out an umbrella for Mr. Li to cross over to his boat. After an exchange of greetings at the bow, Sun asked Li to precede him as they went ashore.

Before they had gone many paces, a wineshop came into view. They went upstairs, chose a clean table by the window, and sat down. After the waiter laid out a fine spread of wine and food on the table, Sun Fu raised his cup and plied Li with wine. While they were drinking and viewing the snowy scenery, their conversation, polite and innocuous enough at first, gradually turned to houses of ill fame. Being frequenters of such places, they found that they shared the same tastes and, in the excitement of the conversation, became the closest of friends.

Sun Fu dismissed the waiters and said in a subdued voice, "Who is the girl who was singing so beautifully last night in your boat?"

In his eagerness to show off his connoisseurship, Li Jia told him the truth (*His lack of prudence makes him unable to keep a secret*): "That's Du Shiniang, a celebrated courtesan in Beijing."

"But why does a courtesan now belong to you alone?"

Thereupon, Li acquainted him with all the details of the first



如何要嫁，如何借银讨他，始末根由，备细述了一遍。孙富道：“兄携丽人而归，固是快事，但不知尊府中能相容否？”公子道：“贱室不足虑。所虑者，老父性严，尚费踌躇耳！”孙富将机就机，便问道：“既是尊大人未必相容，兄所携丽人，何处安顿？亦曾通知丽人，共作计较否？”公子攒眉而答道：“此事曾与小妾议之。”孙富欣然问道：“尊宠必有妙策。”公子道：“他意欲侨居苏杭，流连山水。使小弟先回，求亲友宛转于家君之前。俟家君回嗔作喜，然后图归，高明以为何如？”孙富沉吟半晌，故作愀然之色，道：“小弟乍会之间，交浅言深，诚恐见怪。”公子道：“正赖高明指教，何必谦逊？”孙富道：“尊大人位居方面，必严帷薄之嫌，平时既怪兄游非礼之地，今日岂容兄娶不节之人。况且贤亲贵友，谁不迎合尊大人之意者？兄枉去求他，必然相拒。就有个不识时务的进言于尊大人之前，见尊大人意思不允，他就转口了。兄进不能和睦家庭，退无词以回复尊宠。即使留连山水，亦非长久之计。万一资斧困竭，岂不进退两难！”[眉批]小人说来，偏近道理。公子自知手中只有五十金，此时费去大半，说到资斧困



time he had met Du Shiniang, how they had fallen in love, her desire to marry him, and how he had borrowed money to redeem her.

Sun Fu said, "To take a beautiful woman home is a happy event, to be sure, but I wonder if your family will accept her?"

"I'm not worried so much about my wife as about my father. He's very strict. I need to think well before I approach him."

Seeing his chance, Sun Fu pressed further, "If your father refuses to take her in, where are you going to put her? Have you worked out any plans with her?"

With a frown, Li replied, "I have indeed talked about it with her."

"So, your beloved one must have come up with a wonderful idea," said Sun Fu lightheartedly.

"Well, she wants to take up temporary residence in Suzhou and Hangzhou to enjoy the hills and the waters. I'll return home first and ask relatives and friends to put in a good word for me with my father. When my father comes around, I'll take her home. What do you think?"

After reflecting for a good while, Sun Fu assumed a concerned expression and said, "I'm afraid you might take amiss any advice coming from someone you've only just met."

"I do need your advice. Please don't hesitate."

"As an important official in the region, your father must be firmly against improper love affairs. Since he's already scolded you for frequenting places of ill repute, he's not likely to let you marry a loose woman. As for your relatives and friends, who among them would not try to play up to your father? Your pleas to them will surely be rejected. Even if there's someone who doesn't know better and puts in a good word on your behalf with your father, that person will change his tune as soon as he finds out what your father thinks. On the one hand, you'll sow discord in the clan; on the other, you'll disappoint your beloved one. And to enjoy the hills and the waters is not a viable, long-term solution either. What if you run out of money? Wouldn't you find yourself in a dilemma?" (*Rogues like him do have a way with words.*)



竭，进退两难，不觉点头道是。孙富又道：“小弟还有句心腹之谈，兄肯俯听否？”公子道：“承兄过爱，更求尽言。”孙富道：“疏不间亲，还是莫说罢。”公子道：“但说何妨。”孙富道：“自古道妇人水性无常，况烟花之辈，少真多假。他既系六院名姝，相识定满天下。或者南边原有旧约，借兄之力，挈带而来，以为他适之地。”公子道：“这个恐未必然。”孙富道：“即不然，江南子弟，最工轻薄，兄留丽人独居，难保无逾墙钻穴之事。若挈之同归，愈增尊大人之怒。为兄之计，未有善策。况父子天伦，必不可绝。若为妾而触父，因妓而弃家，海内必以兄为浮浪不经之人。异日妻不以为夫，弟不以为兄，同袍不以为友，兄何以立于天地之间？兄今日不可不熟思也！”[眉批]若非故意，竟是忠告。

公子闻言，茫然自失，移席问计：“据高明之见，何以教我？”孙富道：“仆有一计，于兄甚便。只恐兄溺枕席之爱，未必能行，使仆空费词说耳！”公子道：“兄诚有良策，使弟再睹家园



Knowing all too well that the bulk of his fifty taels of silver was already gone, Li involuntarily nodded in agreement when Sun Fu got to that last part.

Sun Fu continued, "I have something more to say, and it's from the bottom of my heart, but you may not want to hear it."

"You are too kind. Please say whatever you want to say."

"Well, I'd better shut up, because as the proverb goes, 'An outsider shouldn't come between those near and dear to each other.'"

"Please go ahead. It's quite all right!"

"Well, as the ancients said, 'Women are as fickle as water.' Prostitutes are much more so. Those who feel true love are greatly outnumbered by those who don't. Since she was celebrated among the courtesans' quarters, she must have lovers everywhere. She may have an old flame south of the Yangzi River and is using you to take her there, so as to be reunited with him."

"I don't think that's the case."

"Even if it's not, young men south of the river are known for their ways with women. If you let her live by herself, you can't say for sure if a man won't climb over the wall or sneak in through some hole, so to speak. And yet, if you take her home, you'll only add to your father's anger. I don't have a good plan for you, but the natural bond between father and son should never be broken for any reason. If you turn against your father and abandon your family because of a prostitute, you'll be considered a debauched and wayward person by all and sundry. In due course, you will be forsaken by your wife, brothers, and friends. How will you be able to justify your existence on earth and under the sky? You'll have to do some solid thinking now!" (*Had these words not been said with an ulterior motive, they would have been good advice.*)

Li was so dismayed upon hearing these words that he hitched his chair closer to Sun and said, "So, what's your advice?"

Sun Fu replied, "I do have an idea. It will be very much in your favor, but I'm afraid you might be too deeply infatuated with her to follow my advice. In that case, wouldn't I have wasted my breath?"

"If you really have a plan to help me rejoin my family, you'll be



之乐，乃弟之恩人也。又何惮而不言耶？”孙富道：“兄飘零岁馀，严亲怀怒，闺阁离心，设身以处兄之地，诚寝食不安之时也。然尊大人所以怒兄者，不过为迷花恋柳，挥金如土，异日必为弃家荡产之人，不堪承继家业耳。兄今日空手而归，正触其怒。[眉批]刺心。兄倘能割衽席之爱，见机而作，仆愿以千金相赠。兄得千金以报尊大人，只说在京授馆，并不曾浪费分毫，尊大人必然相信。从此家庭和睦，当无间言。须臾之间，转祸为福，兄请三思。仆非贪丽人之色，实为兄效忠于万一也。”李甲原是没主意的人，本心惧怕老子，被孙富一席话，说透胸中之疑，起身作揖道：“闻兄大教，顿开茅塞。但小妾千里相从，义难顿绝，容归与商之。得其心肯，当奉复耳。”孙富道：“说话之间，宜放婉曲。彼既忠心为兄，必不忍使兄父子分离，定然玉成兄还乡之事矣。”[眉批]又下说词。二人饮了一回酒，风停雪止，天色已晚。孙富教家僮算还了酒钱，与公子携手下船。正是：

逢人且说三分话，未可全抛一片心。

却说杜十娘在舟中，摆设酒果，欲与公子小酌，竟日未回，挑灯以待。公子下船，十娘起迎，见公子颜色匆匆，似有不乐之意，乃满斟热酒劝之。公子摇首不饮，一言不发，竟自床上睡了。



nothing less than my savior. Why are you afraid to speak?"

"You've been away from home for more than a year. Your father is angry, and your wife is estranged from you. If I were you, I'd be hardly able to eat or sleep. Your father is angry with you because your philandering ways and lavish spending habits have made him afraid that you will surely squander everything once you come into your inheritance. By returning empty-handed now, you'll only make him angrier. (*A stab at Li's heart.*) If you give up your woman and do the right thing under the circumstances, I'll offer you a thousand taels of silver for her. You may present the thousand taels to your father and say that you have been teaching in the capital and saved every possible cent. He will surely believe you. Henceforth, you'll enjoy domestic peace with never a harsh word said against you. In a trice, your woes will change to bliss. Please think carefully. I say all this not because I covet the woman's beauty but because I wish to help you in any small way I can."

Li Jia being a man without a mind of his own and in mortal fear of his father, Sun Fu's words struck a deep chord in his heart and dispelled all his worries. He rose and said with a bow, "You have made me see the light. But I can't very well break my ties with her after she has followed me this far on such a long journey. Please let me consult her first. I'll report back to you if she agrees."

"Put it gently to her. If she's really devoted to you, she won't have the heart to cut the ties between you and your father and will surely help you return home." (*Another attempt to poison Li's mind.*)

They continued drinking a while longer. The wind subsided, and the snow stopped when dusk set in. Sun Fu had his servant settle the bill, and, hand in hand, they returned to their boats. Truly,

*Never disclose everything on your mind,
 Never pour out all of your heart.*

In the meantime, Du Shiniang had laid out wine and fruit in anticipation of a good time with Li and, after waiting for him in vain throughout the day, was sitting by the light of the lamp when he stepped onto the boat. Shiniang rose to greet him, noticing that he looked preoccupied and slightly irritated. She filled a cup with warm



十娘心中不悦，乃收拾杯盘，为公子解衣就枕。问道：“今日有何见闻，而怀抱郁郁如此？”公子叹息而已，终不启口。问了三四次，公子已睡去了。十娘委决不下，坐于床头而不能寐。到夜半，公子醒来，又叹一口气。十娘道：“郎君有何难言之事，频频叹息？”公子拥被而起，欲言不语者几次，扑簌簌掉下泪来。十娘抱持公子于怀间，软言抚慰道：“妾与郎君情好，已及二载，千辛万苦，历尽艰难，得有今日。然相从数千里，未曾哀戚。今将渡江，方图百年欢笑，如何反起悲伤，必有其故。夫妇之间，死生相共，有事尽可商量，万勿讳也。”公子再四被逼不过，只得含泪而言道：“仆天涯穷困，蒙恩卿不弃，委曲相从，诚乃莫大之德也。但反覆思之，老父位居方面，拘于礼法，况素性方严，恐添嗔怒，必加黜逐。你我流荡，将何底止？夫妇之欢难保，父子之伦又绝。日间蒙新安孙友邀饮，为我筹及此事，寸心如割。”十娘大惊道：“郎君意将如何？”公子道：“仆事内之人，当局而迷。



wine and offered it to him with some soothing words, but he shook his head in refusal and went to bed without speaking. None too pleased, Shiniang put away the cups and plates and helped him take off his clothes and lie down against the pillow. "What did you hear today that makes you so upset?"

Li sighed but didn't utter a word. Shiniang repeated the question three or four times but found he had fallen asleep. Full of misgivings, she sat down at the head of the bed, unable to sleep. At midnight, Li woke up with another sigh.

"What is it that you find so hard to say? Why so many sighs?" asked Shiniang.

Gathering the quilt around him, Li sat up and, after several futile attempts to speak, began to weep. Shiniang held him to her bosom and said gently, "It's been two years since I fell in love with you. We've gone through all kinds of difficulties together to get where we are. Along the thousands of *li* we've covered on our journey, you never felt sad, but now that we're on the point of crossing the Yangzi River to start a happy life, why are you suddenly looking so miserable? There must be a reason behind this. Husband and wife are supposed to share life and death. You can tell me whatever's on your mind. Don't hide anything from me."

Yielding to her insistence, he said, with tears in his eyes, "When I was penniless and stranded away from home, you, in your kindness, chose to be with me. No favor can be greater than that. But I've been giving the matter a lot of thought. You see, my father, being an important official in the region, is a man who clings to conventions, and he's a very rigid and demanding person, too. I'm afraid that he'll be so angry that he'll drive us out of the house. If so, when will our itinerant life ever come to an end? Our love will not last, and the bond between father and son will be destroyed. Earlier today, a friend, Mr. Sun from Xin'an, invited me to drink with him and discussed this with me. My heart aches as if it's been stabbed with a knife!"

Alarmed, Shiniang asked, "So, what are you going to do?"

"Since I'm the one involved, I don't see the situation as clearly



孙友为我画一计颇善，但恐恩卿不从耳！”十娘道：“孙友者何人？计如果善，何不可从？”公子道：“孙友名富，新安盐商，少年风流之士也。夜间闻子清歌，因而问及。仆告以来历，并谈及难归之故，渠意欲以千金聘汝。我得千金，可藉口以见吾父母；而恩卿亦得所天。但情不能舍，是以悲泣。”说罢，泪如雨下。十娘放开两手，冷笑一声道：“为郎君画此计者，此人乃大英雄也。郎君千金之资，既得恢复，而妾归他姓，又不致为行李之累，发乎情，止乎礼，诚两便之策也。那千金在那里？”公子收泪道：“未得恩卿之诺，金尚留彼处，未曾过手。”十娘道：“明早快快应承了他，不可挫过机会。但千金重事，须得兑足交付郎君之手，妾始过舟，勿为贾竖子所欺。”

时已四鼓，十娘即起身挑灯梳洗道：“今日之妆，乃迎新送旧，非比寻常。”于是脂粉香泽，用意修饰，花钿绣袄，极其华艳，香风拂拂，光采照人。装束方完，天色已晓。孙富差家童到船头候信。十娘微窥公子，欣欣似有喜色，乃催公子快去回话，



as an onlooker would. Mr. Sun has come up with a good plan for me, but you may not go along with it.”

“Who’s this Mr. Sun? If his idea is as good as you say, why wouldn’t I go along with it?”

“He’s Sun Fu, a salt merchant from Xin’an and a dashing young man. He heard you sing last night. That’s why he asked about you. I told him your background as well as the reason for our not going home. He offered me a thousand taels of silver if you would marry him, so that I’ll have something to give my parents and you’ll have a husband. But the thought of leaving you makes me want to cry.” With that, his tears fell like rain.

Shiniang withdrew her hands from him. With a scornful laugh, she said, “What a great hero, the fellow who designed this plan for you! You get one thousand taels of silver and rejoin your family, and I get a man, and both of us will be spared the hardships of a life on the road. What a perfect plan — what began as an affair of passion now ends in proper decorum! All right, where’s the money?”

Holding back his tears, Li answered, “The money’s still with him because I didn’t have your consent.”

“Go give him my consent first thing tomorrow morning. Don’t miss the chance! But a thousand taels of silver being quite a handsome amount of money, they must be weighed out and handed to you before I step over to the other boat. Don’t let that brute of a merchant take advantage of you.”

The night drum struck the fourth watch. Shiniang rose, lit the lamp, and began her toilette. “Today,” said she, “I’m sending off the old and greeting the new. This is a special occasion!” She applied powder, rouge, and fragrant hair oil with great care and put on hair ornaments and an embroidered gown. There she stood in all her radiance, her perfume sweetening the air, her beauty dazzling to behold.

By the time she had finished her toilette, the sky was beginning to brighten. A page boy sent by Sun Fu stood at the bow of the boat, waiting for a reply. Glancing quickly at Li, Shiniang saw a faint glow of joy on his face. She urged him to go quickly and give his reply and reminded him to have the silver weighed out as soon as possible. (*If*



及早兑足银子。[眉批]若真心不舍十娘，必更有说。公子亲到孙富船中，回复依允。孙富道：“兑银易事，须得丽人妆台为信。”公子又回复了十娘，十娘即指描金文具道：“可便抬去。”孙富喜甚，即将白银一千两，送到公子船中。十娘亲自检看，足色足数，分毫无爽。乃手把船舷，以手招孙富。孙富一见，魂不附体。十娘启朱唇、开皓齿道：“方才箱子可暂发来，内有李郎路引一纸，可检还之也。”孙富视十娘已为瓮中之鳖，即命家童送那描金文具，安放船头之上。十娘取钥开锁，内皆抽替小箱。十娘叫公子抽第一层来看，只见翠羽明珰，瑶簪宝珥，充牣于中，约值数百金。十娘遽投之江中。李甲与孙富及两船之人，无不惊诧。又命公子再抽一箱，乃玉箫金管。又抽一箱，尽古玉紫金玩器，约值数千金。十娘尽投之于大江中。岸上之人，观者如堵，齐声道：“可惜！可惜！”正不知什么缘故。最后又抽一箱，箱中复有一匣。开匣视之，夜明之珠，约有盈把。其他祖母绿、猫儿眼，诸般异宝，目所未睹，莫能定其价之多少。众人齐声喝采，喧声如雷。十娘又欲投之于江。李甲不觉大悔，抱持十娘恸哭，那孙富也来劝解。



he really could not bear the thought of leaving her, he would have acted otherwise.)

So Li Jia went to Sun Fu's boat and replied in the affirmative. Sun Fu said, "Weighing out the silver is not a problem, but I need her jewel box as a pledge."

Li reported back to Shiniang, who said, pointing at her gold-traced jewel box, "Take it."

A jubilant Sun Fu immediately sent the thousand taels of silver to Li's boat. Shiniang personally inspected them and found them to be of standard purity and not the slightest fraction of a mace short in weight. With one hand holding on to the side of the boat, she beckoned to Sun Fu with the other, a sight that sent him to raptures. Then she said, revealing pearly white teeth between her ruby lips, "May I have the jewel box back for just a moment? Mr. Li's travel permit is in it. I must return it to him."

Believing that he had already caught Shiniang in his trap, Sun Fu had his page boy put the jewel box on the bow. Shiniang took out her key and unlocked it to reveal a stack of small drawers. At Shiniang's bidding, Li drew out the first drawer. Lo and behold, it was filled with pieces of expensive jewelry worth hundreds of taels of silver. She picked them up and tossed them into the river, to the astonishment of Li Jia, Sun Fu, and everyone else on the two boats.

She then told Li to pull out another drawer, which was seen to contain jade flutes and golden pipes. Yet another drawer was filled with jade and gold objects of art worth thousands of taels of silver. Shiniang tossed them all into the water in full view of the wall of spectators now gathered on the shore. "What a pity!" they exclaimed in unison, wondering what on earth could have made this woman do such a thing.

The last drawer was pulled out to reveal a small box. When it was opened, there, for all to see, was a large handful of luminous pearls as well as emeralds, cat's-eyes, and other precious objects, the likes of which none had ever seen and the value of which none could determine. Amid thunderous cheers from the onlookers, Shiniang was about to throw them into the river when Li Jia, overcome with bitter



十娘推开公子在一边，向孙富骂道：“我与李郎备尝艰苦，不是容易到此。汝以奸淫之意，巧为谗说，一旦破人姻缘，断人恩爱，乃我之仇人。我死而有知，必当诉之神明，尚妄想枕席之欢乎！”又对李甲道：“妾风尘数年，私有所积，本为终身之计。自遇郎君，山盟海誓，白首不渝。前出都之际，假托众姊妹相赠，箱中韞藏百宝，不下万金。将润色郎君之装，归见父母，或怜妾有心，收佐中馈，得终委托，生死无憾。谁知郎君相信不深，惑于浮议，中道见弃，负妾一片真心。今日当众目之前，开箱出视，使郎君知区区千金，未为难事。妾篋中有玉，恨郎眼内无珠。命之不幸，风尘困瘁，甫得脱离，又遭弃捐。今众人各有耳目，共作证明，妾不负郎君，郎君自负妾耳！”于是众人聚观者，无不流涕，都唾骂李公子负心薄幸。公子又羞又苦，且悔且泣，方欲向十娘谢罪。十娘抱持宝匣，向江心一跳。众人急呼捞救。但见云暗江心，波涛滚滚，杳无踪影。可惜一个如花似玉的名姬，一旦



remorse, flung his arms around her and broke down in wails of grief. When Sun Fu came over to try to calm her, Shiniang pushed Li aside and unleashed an explosion of furious words on Sun Fu. "Mr. Li and I went through a lot together before we got here. But you cajoled him with clever words out of lecherous motives and destroyed a marriage of love in one day. You are my worst enemy. If my spirit survives my death, I'll certainly bring a complaint against you to the gods. As for the pleasures of the pillow, you don't have a ghost of a chance!"

Turning to Li Jia, she went on, "In my years as a courtesan, I put away some private savings to support myself in the future. After we met, you and I took many a vow of lifelong love and fidelity. Before we left the capital, I had my sisters give me what were in fact my own possessions. The treasures hidden in the jewel box were worth no less than ten thousand taels of silver. I meant to add some grandeur to your return, so that your parents might act out of compassion and accept me as a member of the family. With the remainder of my life committed to you, I would have no regrets in life and in death. Little did I know that you trusted me so little that you followed some evil advice and abandoned me before the journey was even completed. You have betrayed my devotion to you. I opened the box and showed its contents in public so that you'll know that a mere thousand taels of silver are of little importance to me. I am not unlike a jewel box that contains precious jade, but you have eyes that fail to recognize value. Alas, I was not born under a lucky star. Having just freed myself from the tribulations of a courtesan's life, I find myself abandoned again. All those present will testify, by the evidence of their eyes and ears, that I have not failed you in any way. It's you who have betrayed me!"

There was not a dry eye among the onlookers, all of whom cursed Li for being the fickle ingrate that he was. Ashamed and exasperated, Li shed tears of remorse and was about to apologize to Shiniang when she threw herself into the middle of the current, the jewel box in her arms. The horrified onlookers cried out for her rescue, but with a heavy mist hanging over the raging waves, not the slightest trace of her could be seen. How tragic that a celebrated cour-



葬于江鱼之腹。

三魂渺渺归水府，七魄悠悠入冥途。

当时旁观之人，皆咬牙切齿，争欲拳殴李甲和那孙富。慌得李、孙二人，手足无措，急叫开船，分途遁去。李甲在舟中，看了千金，转忆十娘，终日愧悔，郁成狂疾，终身不痊。孙富自那日受惊，得病卧床月馀，终日见杜十娘在傍诟骂，奄奄而逝。人以为江中之报也。

却说柳遇春在京坐监完满，束装回乡，停舟瓜步。偶临江净脸，失坠铜盆于水，觅渔人打捞。及至捞起，乃是个小匣儿。遇春启匣观看，内皆明珠异宝，无价之珍。遇春厚赏渔人，留于床头把玩。是夜梦见江中一女子，凌波而来，视之，乃杜十娘也。近前万福，诉以李郎薄幸之事。又道：“向承君家慷慨，以一百五十金相助，本意息肩之后，徐图报答，不意事无终始。然每怀盛情，悒悒未忘。早间曾以小匣托渔人奉致，聊表寸心，从此不复相见矣。”言讫，猛然惊醒，方知十娘已死，叹息累日。



tesan as pretty as a flower and as fair as jade fell prey to the fish of the river!

*Her three souls returned to the Water Palace,
Her seven spirits wafted to the underworld.*

Gnashing their teeth and raising their fists, the crowd swarmed menacingly toward Li Jia and Sun Fu. In fear, Li and Sun called for their boats to get under way and fled in different directions. For Li Jia, Sun Fu's thousand taels of silver were a constant reminder of Shiniang, and he was haunted day and night by guilt and shame. His depression worsened into mental derangement, from which he never recovered. For his part, Sun Fu had sustained such a shock that he fell ill and, while confined in his bed, saw Du Shiniang at his side. She gave him tongue-lashings day and night for more than a month until he gave up the ghost. His death was generally explained as retribution for what had happened on the river.

In the meantime, Liu Yuchun finished his studies at the National University in the capital, packed up his belongings, and started his journey home by boat. When he reached the town of Guabu, he stopped and was washing his face by the side of the boat when his brass basin fell into the water. He sought out a fisherman to retrieve it, but what came up was a small box.

Yuchun opened it and saw that it was filled with bright pearls and other priceless jewelry. He gave the fisherman a handsome reward and kept the box by his bed so that he could examine the contents and admire them at his leisure. That very night, he dreamed he saw a woman approaching him, treading upon the waves of the river. He looked closely at her and recognized her to be Du Shiniang.

When she had drawn near, she curtsied and told him about Li's act of treachery, adding, "You generously helped me out with one hundred and fifty taels. I meant to repay you for your kindness after I settled down. Little did I expect that things would not turn out that way, but I haven't forgotten my debt of gratitude to you. This morning, I gave you that little box through the fisherman as a small token of my gratitude. I shall never see you again." At this point, Yuchun woke up with a start and realized that Shiniang had died. For days on



后人评论此事，以为孙富谋夺美色，轻掷千金，固非良士。李甲不识杜十娘一片苦心，碌碌蠢才，无足道者。独谓十娘千古女侠，岂不能觅一佳侣，共跨秦楼之凤，乃错认李公子，明珠美玉，投于盲人，以致恩变为仇，万种恩情，化为流水，深可惜也！有诗叹云：

不会风流莫妄谈，单单情字费人参。
若将情字能参透，唤作风流也不惭。



end, he heaved one sigh after another.

In later times, when commenting on the account we have given above, people had this to say: Sun Fu, in scheming to gain a beauty and lightly throwing away a thousand taels of silver, was by no means a decent sort; Li Jia, in failing to appreciate Du Shiniang's devotion, was nothing but an imbecile on whom it was not worth wasting one's breath. But Shiniang was a true heroine of all time. She could very well have found a worthy husband and had a blissful marriage, and yet, she picked Li, whose character she misjudged. As a result, a bright pearl, a piece of fine jade, was thrown in front of a blind man. How tragic that love turned to hate and went into the flowing river! There is a poem that says in lament,

*Those who don't know what love is, hold your tongue!
"Love" is a word too deep to understand.
If its meaning can be grasped in full,
Feel no shame when you're called a lover.*

This story has been translated as "The Courtesan's Jewel Box" in *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Tenth-Twelfth Centuries*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), and as "Tu Shih-niang Sinks the Jewel Box in Anger" in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

¹ Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), *kanpaku* (prime minister) of Japan, invaded Korea during the Chinese Wanli reign period under Emperor Shenzong and was defeated by Ming troops.

² Bo Cheng'en, deputy commander of Xixia in northwestern China, rebelled in 1592, together with his father. The rebellion was put down later in the same year.

Yang Yinglong, pacification commissioner of Bozhou (present-day Zunyi, Guizhou Province), rebelled in 1597. The rebellion was suppressed in 1600.

³ In the Ming dynasty, the "two capitals" were Beijing and Nanjing.

⁴ Zhuo Wenjun was renowned for her beauty, intelligence, and musical talent. For her elopement with the celebrated writer Sima Xiangru (179-117 B.C.E.), see the prologue story of story 6.

⁵ Fan Su was a maid employed in the household of the famous Tang dynasty poet Bai Juyi (772-846), who wrote the line "Fan Su's cherry of a mouth."

⁶ Zhong Kui (formerly translated as Chung Kuei) is a deity who can drive away evil spirits in Chinese folklore.

⁷ A white tiger symbolizes bad luck.

⁸ Shi Hui, courtesy name Junmei, a native of Hangzhou, is believed to be the author of



the play *Bai yue ting* (Moon Pavilion).

° Gao Qi (1336–74), courtesy name Jidi, was a poet and a historian who was put to death by the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang.

