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A DREAM
OF RED MANSIONS



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Chinese-English

红楼梦

A Dream of Red Mansions

III



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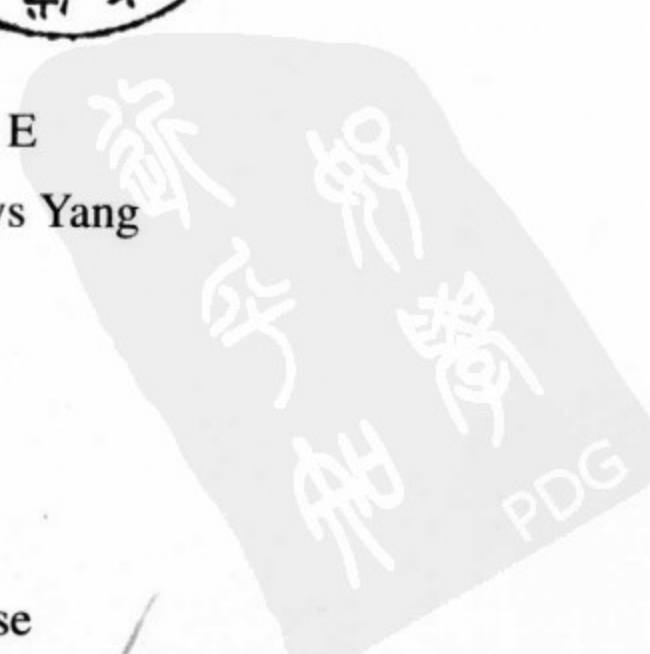
外文出版社

Foreign Languages Press

湖南人民出版社

Hunan People's Publishing House

RBE 43/03



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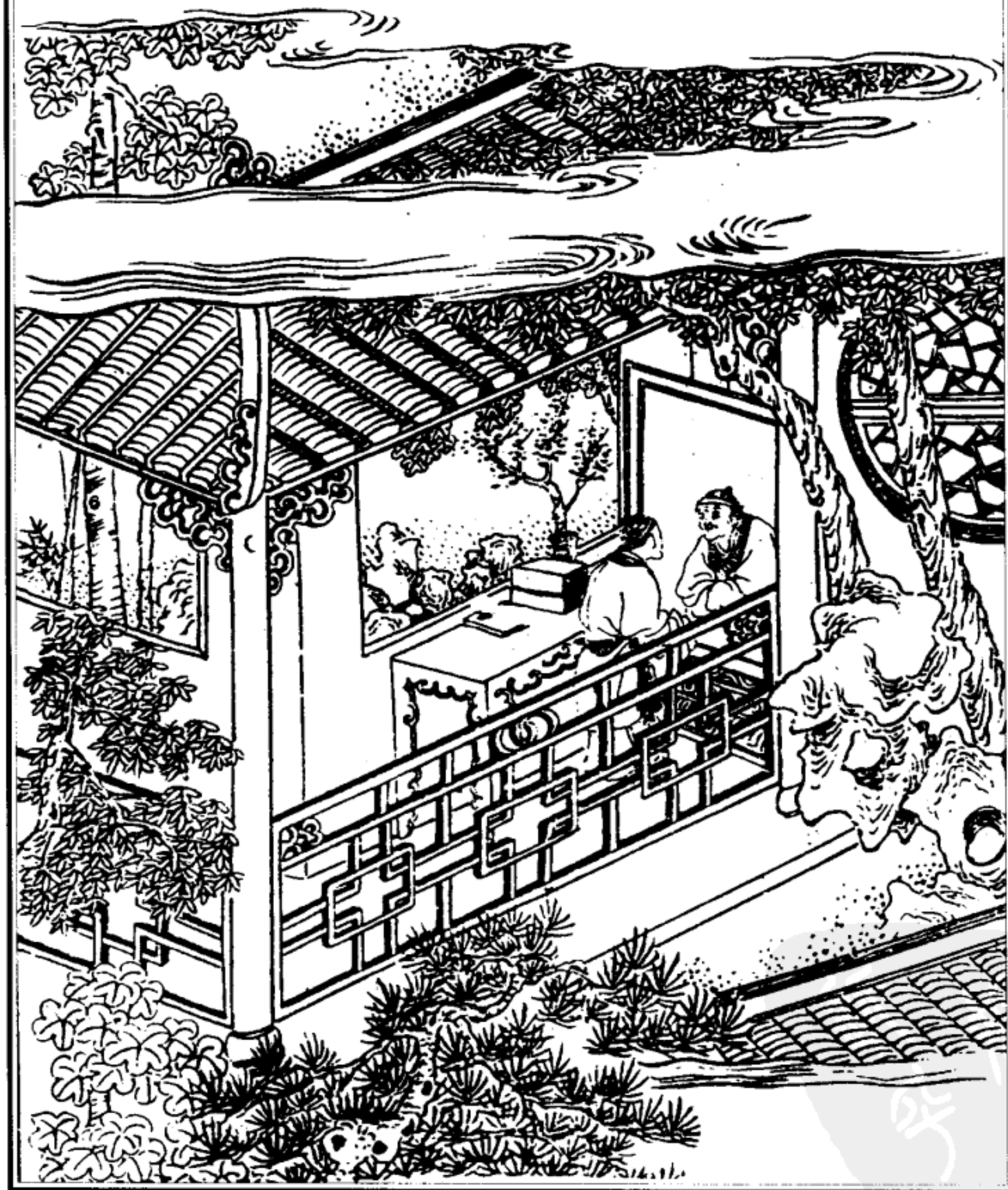


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劉醉怡院
老臥紅
二



第四十一回

贾宝玉品茶栊翠庵 刘姥姥醉卧怡红院

话说刘姥姥两只手比着说道：“花儿落了结个大倭瓜。”众人听了哄堂大笑起来。于是吃过门杯，又逗笑道：“实告诉说罢，我的手脚子粗笨，又喝了酒，仔细失手打了这瓷杯。有木头杯取个子来，便失手掉了地下也打不了。”众人听了，又笑将起来。凤姐听如此说，便忙笑道：“果真要木头的，我就取了来。可有一件先说下：这木头的可比不得瓷的，那都是一套，定要吃遍一套方使得。”刘姥姥听了，心下掂掇道：“我方才不过是趣话取笑儿，谁知他果真竟有。我时常在村庄乡绅大家子也赴过席，金杯银杯倒也都见过，从来没见过有木头的。哦，是了，想必是小孩子们使的木碗儿，不过诓我多吃两碗。别管他，横竖这酒蜜水儿似的，多喝点子也不怕。”想毕，便说：“取了来再商量。”凤姐乃命丰儿：“到前面里间屋，书架子上有十个竹根套杯取来。”丰儿听了，答应着才要去，鸳鸯笑道：“我知道你这十个杯还小些。况且你才说是木头的，这会子又拿了竹根子的来，倒不好看。不如把我们那里的黄杨根整捩的十个大套杯拿来，灌他十下子。”凤姐儿笑道：“更好了。”鸳鸯果命人取来。刘姥姥一看，又惊又喜：惊的是一连十个，挨次大小分下来，





Chapter 41

Baoyu Sips Tea in Green Lattice Nunnery Granny Liu Succumbs to Wine in Happy Red Court

Granny Liu's gestures and response, "A huge pumpkin forms when the flowers fall," caused a fresh glae of mirth. After tossing off the cup of wine, in the hope of wine, in the hope of raising another laugh she observed:

"To tell the truth, I'm clumsy. And now that I'm tipsy, unless I'm very careful, I may smash this porcelain cup. If you'd given me a wooden one it wouldn't matter even if I dropped it."

Once more everybody laughed.

"If you really prefer wooden cups I'll fetch some," offered Xifeng. "But first I must warn you that the wooden cups aren't like porcelain ones; they come in a set, and you must drink from every cup in the set."

The old woman thought: I was only trying to raise a laugh, but it seems they really do have them. When I've dined with the village gentry I've seen plenty of gold and silver cups, never any made of wood. I know! These must be wooden bowls that the children use. She just wants to fool me into drinking more. Never mind, this wine's no stronger than mead anyway, so I needn't be afraid of drinking a bit extra.

So she said, "Fetch them, and we'll see."

Xifeng told Fenger: "Bring that set of ten cups carved out of bamboo root on the bookshelf in the inner room."

The maid assented, but as she was about to go on this errand Yuanyang put in with a smile:

"I know that set, it's too small. Besides, you just said wood and it won't look right if now you produce bamboo. Better fetch from our place that large set of ten cups made out of boxwood roots. Let her drink from those."

Xifeng thought this a better idea, so Yuanyang sent someone to fetch



那大的足有小盆子大，第十个极小的还有手里的杯子两个大；喜的是雕镂奇绝，一色山水树木人物，并有草字图记。因忙说道：“拿了那小的来就是了，怎么这么些个？”凤姐儿笑道：“这个杯没有喝一个的理。我们家因没有这大量的，所以没人敢使他。姥姥既要使，好容易寻了出来，必定要挨次吃一遍才使得。”刘姥姥唬的忙道：“这可不敢。好姑奶奶，竟饶了我罢。”贾母、薛姨妈、王夫人知道他有年纪的人，禁不起，忙笑道：“说是说，笑是笑，不可多吃了，只吃这头一杯罢。”刘姥姥道：“阿弥陀佛！我还使小杯吃罢。把这大杯收着，我带了家去慢慢吃罢。”说的众人又笑起来。鸳鸯无法，只得命人满斟了一大杯，刘姥姥两手捧着喝。贾母薛姨妈都道：“慢些吃，不要呛了。”薛姨妈又命凤姐儿布了菜。凤姐笑道：“姥姥要吃什么，说出名儿来，我拣了喂你。”刘姥姥道：“我知什么名儿，样样都是好的。”贾母笑道：“你把茄胗拣些喂他。”凤姐听说，依言拣些茄胗送入刘姥姥口中，因笑道：“你们天天吃茄子，也尝尝我们的茄子弄的可口不可口。”刘姥姥笑道：“别哄我了，茄子跑出这个味儿来了，我们也不用种粮食，只种茄子罢了。”众人笑道：





them. These cups when brought filled Granny Liu with amazement and admiration. Amazement because all ten fitted into each other, the largest being the size of a small basin and even the smallest as big as the cup in her hand. Admiration at the fine landscapes, trees and figures carved on them, as well as the seals and inscriptions.

“Just give me that small one,” she said hastily. “I can’t use so many.”

“No, you can’t just have one,” chuckled Xifeng. “None of our family has ever ventured to use this set, not having a big enough capacity for it. As you asked for it, granny, and we went to all the trouble of fetching it, you must drink from each cup in turn.”

“I daren’t!” exclaimed Granny Liu in consternation. “Dear madam, do let me off.”

The Lady Dowager, Aunt Xue and Lady Wang, knowing that she was too old to stand this, made haste to intervene.

“She mustn’t drink too much,” they said. “It’ll do if she just empties the biggest cup.”

“Amida Buddha!” cried the old woman. “Let me use the small one, and put that big one aside. I’ll take it home to drink up little by little.”

All Yuanyang could do was to have one large cup filled, and Granny Liu raised this in both hands to her lips.

“Go easy,” warned both the Lady Dowager and Aunt Xue. “Mind you don’t choke.”

Aunt Xue urged Xifeng to give her some food with the wine.

“What would you like, granny?” Xifeng asked. “Just name it and I’ll feed you some.”

“How can I tell what these dishes are?” said Granny Liu. “They all look good to me.”

“Give her some fried egg-plant,” proposed the Lady Dowager with a smile.

Xifeng did so, picking up the food with her chopsticks and putting it into Granny Liu’s mouth.

“You must eat egg-plant every day,” she remarked. “Taste this of ours and see how you like it.”

“Don’t try to fool me,” cackled Granny Liu. “If egg-plant tasted like this, we’d stop growing other crops — just stick to egg-plant.”



“真是茄子，我们再不哄你。”刘姥姥诧异道：“真是茄子？我白吃了半日。姑奶奶你再喂我些，这一口细嚼嚼。”凤姐儿果又揀了些放入口内。刘姥姥细嚼了半日，笑道：“虽有一点茄子香，只是还不像是茄子。告诉我是什么方法弄的，我也弄着吃去。”凤姐笑道：“这也不难。你把四、五月里的新茄包儿摘下来，把皮和穰子去尽，只要净肉，切成头发细的丝儿，晒干了，拿一只肥母鸡，靠出老汤来，把这茄子丝上蒸笼蒸的鸡汤入了味，再拿出来晒干，如此九蒸九晒，必定晒脆了，盛在瓷罐子里封严了，要吃时拿出一碟子来，用炒的鸡瓜子一拌就是了。”刘姥姥听了，摇头吐舌道：“我的佛祖！倒是十几只鸡来配他，怪道这个味儿！”一面说笑，一面慢慢的吃完了酒，还只管细玩那杯。凤姐笑道：“还是不足兴，再喝一杯罢。”刘姥姥忙道：“了不得，那就醉死了。我因为爱这样儿，亏他怎么作来着。”鸳鸯笑道：“酒吃完了，这到底是什么木的？”刘姥姥笑道：“怨不得姑娘不认得的，你们在这金门绣户的，如何认得木头！我们成日家和树林子作街坊，困了枕着他睡，乏了靠着坐，荒年间饿了还吃他，眼睛里天天见他，耳朵里天天听他，口儿里天天讲他，所以好歹真假，我是认得的。让我认一认。”一面说，一面细细的端详了半日，道：“你们这样人家断没有那贱东西，那容易得的木头，你们也不收着了。我掂着这杯体沉，断乎不是杨木的，一定是黄松的。”众人听了，哄堂大笑起来。

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"It really is egg-plant," they assured her. "We're not fooling you."

"Really egg-plant, is it?" marvelled the old woman. "All this time I'd no idea. Give me some more, madam, to chew more carefully."

Xifeng accordingly fed her another mouthful.

After savouring it slowly Granny Liu said, "It does taste a little like egg-plant, but still it's quite different. Tell me how you prepared this, so that I can cook some for myself."

"It's quite simple," replied Xifeng, twinkling. "Pick some early egg-plant and peel it, keeping only the best part, which must be cut into small pieces and fried with chicken fat. Then get some chicken breast, fresh mushrooms, bamboo shoots, dried mushrooms, spiced dried beancurd and various kinds of preserved fruit. Dice these too and boil them with the egg-plant in chicken soup, then add sesame oil and pickles and store it in a tightly-sealed porcelain jar. That's all."

Granny Liu shook her head and stuck out her tongue in amazement.

"Gracious Buddha! No wonder it tastes so good, cooked with a dozen chickens."

While talking she had slowly finished the wine and now she started examining the cup.

"You haven't drunk enough yet," said Xifeng. "Have another cupful."

"Not on your life! It would kill me. It's just that I admire pretty things like this. What workmanship!"

"Now that you've finished drinking from it," put in Yuanyang, "tell us what wood it's made of."

"I'm not surprised you don't know, miss." Granny Liu smiled. "Living behind golden gates and embroidered screens, what should you know about wood? But we hobnob with wood all day long, sleep on wooden pillows, rest on wooden stools and even eat the bark of trees in time of a famine. Seeing it and hearing and talking about it all the time, I can naturally tell good wood from bad and true from false. Well now, let me see what this is." She was scrutinizing the cup carefully as she spoke. "Such a family as yours would certainly have nothing cheap, nor would you use any wood that's easily come by. Judging by the weight of this, it can't be fir, it must be pine wood."



只见一个婆子走来请问贾母，说：“姑娘们都到了藕香榭了，请老太太的示下，就演罢还是再等一会子？”贾母忙笑道：“可是倒忘了他们了，就叫他们演罢。”那婆子答应着去了。不一时，只听得箫管悠扬，笙笛并发。正值风清气爽之时，那乐声穿林度水而来，自然使人神怡心旷。宝玉先禁不住，拿起壶来斟了一杯，一口饮尽。复又斟上，才要饮，只见王夫人也要饮，命人换暖酒来，宝玉连忙将自己的杯捧了过来，送到王夫人的口边，王夫人便就他手内吃了两口。一时暖酒来了，宝玉仍旧归坐，王夫人提了自己的暖壶下席来，众人皆出了席，薛姨妈也立起来，贾母忙命李纨、凤姐二人接过壶来：“让你姑妈坐下，大家才方便。”王夫人见如此说，方将壶递与凤姐，自己归坐。贾母笑道：“大家吃上两杯，今日着实有趣。”说着拿杯让薛姨妈，又向湘云宝钗道：“你两个也吃一杯。你妹妹虽不大会吃，也别饶他。”说着自己径干了，湘云、宝钗、黛玉也都干了。当下刘姥姥听见这般音乐，且又有了酒，越发喜的手舞足蹈起来。宝玉因下席过来向黛玉笑道：“你瞧瞧刘姥姥的样子。”黛玉笑道：“当日圣乐一奏，百兽率舞，如今才一牛耳。”众姐妹都笑了。

须臾乐止，薛姨妈出席笑道：“大家的酒想也都有了，且出去散散再坐罢。”贾母也正要散散，于是大家出席，都随





The whole party had exploded in fits of mirth when a serving-woman came in to tell the old lady:

“The young actresses have all gone to Lotus Fragrance Anchorage and are waiting for Your Ladyship’s instructions. Should they start their performance now or wait a while?”

“Yes, we’d forgotten them,” chuckled the Lady Dowager. “Tell them to start.”

Soon after the serving-woman left on this errand they heard the lilting strains of flutes and pipes. The breeze was light, the air clear, and this music coming through the trees and across the water refreshed and gladdened their hearts. Baoyu could not resist filling his cup with wine, which he tossed straight off. He had just poured himself another cup when he saw his mother, who also wanted a drink, send for freshly-heated wine. He promptly took his cup over and held it to her lips. She took two sips.

When presently the heated wine arrived, Baoyu returned to his place while Lady Wang rose from her seat, holding the wine-pot. At this all the rest, including Aunt Xue, stood up. At once the Lady Dowager told Li Wan and Xifeng to take the pot.

“Make your aunt sit down,” she said. “Let’s not be so formal.”

Lady Wang relinquished the pot then to Xifeng and resumed her seat.

“How pleasant it is today,” remarked the Lady Dowager cheerfully. “Let’s all have a couple of drinks.” Having urged Aunt Xue to drink she said to Xiangyun and Baochai, “You two must drink a cup too. And even though your cousin Daiyu can’t take much, we won’t let her off either.”

With that she drained her own cup so that Xiangyun, Baochai and Daiyu had to follow suit.

Now the music, on top of the wine, set Granny Liu waving her arms and beating time with her feet for sheer delight. Baoyu slipped across to whisper in Daiyu’s ear:

“Look at Granny Liu!”

“When the sage king of old played music, all the hundred beasts started dancing,” quipped Daiyu. “Today we’ve just this one cow.”

The others tittered.

Presently the music stopped and Aunt Xue rising from her seat suggested, “We’ve all had enough to drink, haven’t we? Let’s go for a



着贾母游玩。贾母因要带着刘姥姥散闷，遂携了刘姥姥至山前树下盘桓了半晌，又说与他这是什么树，这是什么花，这是什么石。刘姥姥一一的领会，又向贾母道：“谁知城里不但人尊贵，连雀儿也是尊贵的。偏这雀儿到了你们这里，他也变俊了，也会说话了。”众人不解，因问什么雀儿变俊了，会说话。刘姥姥道：“那廊下金架子上站的绿毛红嘴是鹦哥儿，我是认得的。那笼子里黑老鸽子怎么又长出凤头来，也会说话呢。”众人听了又都笑将起来。

一时，只见丫鬟们来请用点心。贾母道：“吃了两杯酒，也就不饿了。也罢，就拿了这里来，大伙儿随便吃些罢。”丫鬟便去抬了两张高几来，又端了两个小捧盒来。揭开看时，每个盒内两样：这盒内是两样蒸食，一样是藕粉桂糖糕，一样是松穰鹅油卷；那盒内是两样炸的，一样是只有一寸来大的小饺儿，贾母因问什么馅儿，婆子们忙回是螃蟹的。贾母听了，皱眉说道：“这会子腻腻的，谁吃这个！”又看那一样是奶油炸的各色小面果，也不喜欢吃。因让薛姨妈吃，薛姨妈只拣了一块糕；贾母拣了一个卷子，只尝了一尝，剩的半个递与丫鬟了。刘姥姥因见那小面果子都玲珑剔透，各式各样，便拣了一朵牡丹花样的笑道：“我们乡里最巧的姐儿们，拿剪子也不能铰出这么个纸的来。我又爱吃，又舍不得吃，包些家去给他们做花样子去倒好。”众人都笑





stroll before sitting down again.”

As this suited the Lady Dowager, they all got up and she led the way outside. In the hope of some fresh diversion, she took Granny Liu to a grove at the foot of a hill and led her to and fro, telling her the names of the different trees, flowers and rocks.

After digesting all this information the old woman remarked, “Fancy, in town it’s not only the people who have class, the birds are high-class too. Why, when they come to this place of yours, they grow so clever they can even talk.”

Baffled by this the others asked, “What birds have grown so clever they can talk?”

“I know that green bird with the red beak on the golden perch in the corridor,” she said. “He’s a parrot. But how come that black crow in the cage has grown a phoenix-like crest and learned to talk too?”

This provoked a fresh burst of laughter.

Soon some maids came to ask if they would take some refreshments.

“After all that wine, we’re not hungry,” replied the Lady Dowager. “Still, bring the things here and those who want to can help themselves.”

The maids fetched two teapots and also two small hampers. These when opened were seen to contain two different confections each. In one were cakes made of ground lotus-foot flavoured with fragrant osmanthus, and pine-kernel and goose-fat rolls. In the other were tiny fried dumplings no more than one inch long.

“What’s the stuffing in these?” asked the Lady Dowager.

Some servants told her, “Crab-meat.”

The old lady frowned. “Who wants anything so greasy?”

The other confection, small coloured pastries fried with cream, did not appeal to her either. Aunt Xue took a roll when she was pressed, but after one bite she handed it to a maid.

Granny Liu was struck by the daintiness and variety of the small pastries. Selecting one shaped like a peony she said:

“The cleverest girls in our village couldn’t make scissor-cuts as good as this. I’m longing to try one, but it seems a shame to eat them. It would be nice to take some back as patterns for the folk at home.”

Everyone laughed.



了。贾母笑道：“等你家去时，我送你一坛子。你先趁热吃这个罢。”别人不过拣各人爱吃的吃了一两点就罢了；刘姥姥原不曾吃过这些东西，且都作的小巧，不显堆盘的，他和板儿每样吃了些，就去了半盘子。剩的，凤姐又命攒了两盘子并一个攒盒，拿与文官等吃去。

忽见奶子抱了大姐儿来，大家哄他玩了一会。那大姐儿因抱着个大柚子玩的，忽见板儿抱着个佛手，便也要佛手。丫鬟哄他取去，大姐儿等不得，便哭了。众人忙把柚子与了板儿，将板儿的佛手哄过来与他才罢。那板儿因玩了半日佛手，此刻又两手抓着些面果子吃，又忽见这柚子又香又圆，更觉好玩，且当球踢着玩去，也就不要那佛手了。

当下贾母等吃过茶，又带了刘姥姥至栊翠庵来。妙玉忙接了进去。至院中，只见花木繁盛，贾母笑道：“到底是他们修行的人，没事常常修理，比他处的越发好看了。”一面说，一面便往东禅堂来。妙玉笑往里让，贾母道：“我们才都吃了酒肉，你这里头有菩萨，冲了罪过。我们在这里坐坐罢，把你的好茶拿来，我们吃一杯就是了。”妙玉听了，忙去烹了茶来。宝玉留神看他怎么行事，只见妙玉亲自捧了一个海棠花式雕漆填金云龙献寿的小茶盘，里面放一个成窑五彩泥金小盖钟，奉与贾母。贾母道：“我不吃六安茶。”妙玉





“When you go,” promised the Lady Dowager, “I’ll give you a jarful to take back with you. First try some while they’re hot.”

The others simply picked out one or two titbits which took their fancy, but Granny Liu had never tasted anything of the sort before. It hardly seemed possible that these small dainty objects could be very filling, and so she and Baner sampled some of each until presently half were gone. Xifeng had the remainder put on two plates and sent in a hamper to the actresses.

Now Dajie’s nurse brought her along and they played with her for a while. The child was amusing herself with a pomelo when she noticed Baner’s Buddha’s-hand and wanted it. Although the maids promised to fetch her one too, she was unwilling to wait and burst into tears. At once they gave the pomelo to Baner and induced him to part with his Buddha’s-hand. He had played with it long enough by then and now had both hands full with the cakes he was eating; besides, this fragrant round pomelo seemed more amusing; so, kicking it about like a ball, he cheerfully relinquished the Buddha’s-hand.

As soon as they had finished this collation the Lady Dowager took Granny Liu to Green Lattice Nunnery. Miaoyu promptly ushered them into the courtyard, luxuriant with trees and flowers.

“It’s those who live the ascetic life, after all, who have time to improve their grounds,” observed the Lady Dowager. “These look better-kept than other places.”

As she spoke, they were walking towards the hall for meditation on the east side, and Miaoyu invited them to go in.

“We’ve just been having wine and meat,” said the old lady. “As you’ve an image of Buddha inside, it would be sacrilege. We’ll just sit in the outside room for a while and have a cup of your good tea.”

Miaoyu at once went to make tea.

Baoyu watched the proceedings carefully. He saw Miaoyu bring out in her own hands a carved lacquer tea-tray in the shape of crab-apple blossom, inlaid with a golden design of the “cloud dragon offering longevity.” On this was a covered gilded polychrome bowl made in the Cheng Hua period,¹ which she offered to the Lady Dowager.

“I don’t drink Liuan tea,” said the old lady.



笑说：“知道。这是老君眉。”贾母接了，又问是什么水。妙玉笑回“是旧年蠲的雨水。”贾母便吃了半盏，便笑着递与刘姥姥说：“你尝尝这个茶。”刘姥姥接来一口吃尽，笑道：“好是好，就只淡些，再熬浓些更好了。”贾母众人都笑起来。然后众人都是一色的瓜皮青描金官窑新瓷盖碗，倒了茶来。

那妙玉便把宝钗和黛玉的衣襟一拉，二人随他出去。宝玉悄悄的随后跟了来。只见妙玉让他二人在耳房内，宝钗坐在榻上，黛玉便坐在妙玉的蒲团上。妙玉自向风炉上扇滚了水，另泡了一壶茶。宝玉便走了进来，笑道：“偏你们吃梯己茶呢。”三人都笑道：“你又赶了来作什么？这里并没你吃的。”妙玉刚要去取杯，只见道婆收了上面的茶盏来。妙玉忙命：“将那成窑的茶杯别收了，搁在外头去罢。”宝玉会意，知为刘姥姥吃了，他嫌脏不要了。又见妙玉另拿出两只杯来。一个旁边有一耳，杯上镌着“夔觥罍”三个隶字，后有一行小真字是：“晋王恺珍玩”，又有“宋元丰五年四月眉山苏轼赏于秘府”一行小字。妙玉便斟了一罍，递与宝钗。那一只形似钵而小，也有三个垂珠篆字，镌着“杏犀盃”。妙玉斟了一盃与黛玉。仍将前番自己常常吃茶的那只绿玉斗来斟与宝玉。宝玉笑道：“常言‘世法平等’，他两个就用那样古玩奇珍，我就是个俗器了。”妙玉道：“这是俗器？不是我说狂话，只怕你家里未必找的出这么一个俗器来呢。”宝

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"I know," replied Miaoyu smiling. "This is Patriarch's Eyebrows."

"What water have you used?"

"Rain-water saved from last year."

The Lady Dowager drank half the bowl and passed the rest with a twinkle to Granny Liu, urging her to taste the tea. The old woman drank it straight off.

"Quite good, but a bit on the weak side," was her verdict, which made everyone laugh. "It should have been left to draw a little longer."

All the others had melon-green covered bowls with golden designs of new Imperial kiln porcelain.

Having served tea, Miaoyu plucked at the lapels of Baochai's and Daiyu's clothes and they went out with her, followed surreptitiously by Baoyu. She invited the two girls into a side room, where Baochai sat on a couch and Daiyu on Miaoyu's hassock, while the nun herself fanned the stove and when the water boiled brewed some fresh tea. Baoyu slipped in then and accused them teasingly:

"So you're having a treat here in secret!"

The three girls laughed.

"What are *you* doing here? There's nothing here for you."

Miaoyu was just looking for cups when an old nun came in bringing the used bowls.

"Don't put away that Cheng Hua bowl," cried Miaoyu hastily. "Leave it outside."

Baoyu knew that because Granny Liu had used it, she thought it too dirty to keep. Then he saw Miaoyu produce two cups, one with a handle and the name in uncial characters: Calabash Cup. In smaller characters it bore the inscriptions "Treasured by Wang Kai of the Jin Dynasty" and "In the fourth month of the fifth year of the Yuan Feng period² of the Song Dynasty, Su Shi of Meishan saw this cup in the Imperial Secretariat." Miaoyu filled this cup and handed it to Baochai. The other, shaped like a small alms-bowl, bore the name in the curly seal script: "Rhinoceros Cup." Having filled this for Daiyu, she offered Baoyu the green jade beaker that she normally drank from herself.

"I thought that according to Buddhist law all men should be treated alike," said Baoyu with a grin. "Why give me this vulgar object when



玉笑道：“俗说‘随乡入乡’，到了你这里，自然把那金玉珠宝一概贬为俗器了。”妙玉听如此说，十分欢喜，遂又寻出一只九曲十环一百二十节蟠虬整雕的湘妃竹根的一个大海来，笑道：“就剩了这一个，你可吃的了这一海么？”宝玉喜的忙道：“吃的了。”妙玉笑道：“你虽吃的了，也没这些茶糟蹋。岂不闻‘一杯为品，二杯即是解渴的蠢物，三杯便是饮牛饮驴了’。你吃这一海便成什么？”说的宝钗、黛玉、宝玉都笑了。妙玉执壶，只向海内斟了约有一杯。宝玉细细的吃了，果觉轻清无比，赏赞不已。妙玉正色道：“你这遭吃的茶是托他两个的福，独你来了，我是不给你吃的。”宝玉笑道：“我深知道的，我也不领你的情，只谢他二人便是了。”妙玉听了，方说：“这话明白。”黛玉因问：“这也是旧年的雨水么？”妙玉冷笑道：“你这么个人，竟是大俗人，连水也尝不出来。这是五年前我在玄墓蟠香寺住着，收的梅花上的雪，共得了那鬼脸青的花瓷瓮一瓮，总舍不得吃，埋在地下，今年夏天才开了。我只吃过一回，这是第二回了。你怎么尝不出来？隔年蠲的雨水火爆气不尽，如何吃得？”黛玉知他天性怪僻，不敢多话，亦不敢多坐，吃过茶，便约着宝钗走了出来。

宝玉和妙玉陪笑道：“那茶杯虽然脏了，白撻了岂不可





they get such priceless antiques?"

"Vulgar object!" retorted Miaoyu. "I doubt if your family could produce anything half as good, and that's not boasting either."

"As people say, 'Other countries, other ways.' Here with a person like you, gold, pearls, jade and jewels must all count as vulgar."

Very gratified by this remark, Miaoyu produced a huge goblet carved out of a whole hamboo root which was covered with knots and whorls.

"Here's the only other one I have," she said. "Can you manage such a large one?"

"Of course I can!" declared Baoyu delightedly.

"Even if you can, I've not so much tea to waste on you. Have you never heard the saying: 'First cup to taste, second to quench a fool's thirst, third to water an ox or donkey'? What would you be if you swallowed such an amount?"

As the three others laughed, Miaoyu picked up the pot and poured the equivalent of one small cup into the goblet. Baoyu tasted it carefully and could not praise its bland purity enough.

"You've your cousins to thank for this treat," observed Miaoyu primly. "If you'd come alone, I wouldn't have offered you tea."

"I'm well aware of that." Baoyu chuckled. "So I'll thank them instead of you."

"So you should," said the nun.

"Is this made with last year's rain-water too?" asked Daiyu.

Miaoyu smiled disdainfully.

"Can you really be so vulgar as not even to tell the difference? This is snow I gathered from plum-blossom five years ago while staying in Curly Fragrance Nunnery on Mount Xuanmu. I managed to fill that whole dark blue porcelain pot, but it seemed too precious to use so I've kept it buried in the earth all these years, not opening it till this summer. Today is only the second time I've used it. Surely you can taste the difference? How could last year's rain-water be as light and pure as this?"

Daiyu, knowing her eccentricity, did not like to say too much or stay too long. After finishing her tea she signalled to Baochai and the two girls left, followed by Baoyu.

As he was leaving he said with a smile to Miaoyu, "That bowl may

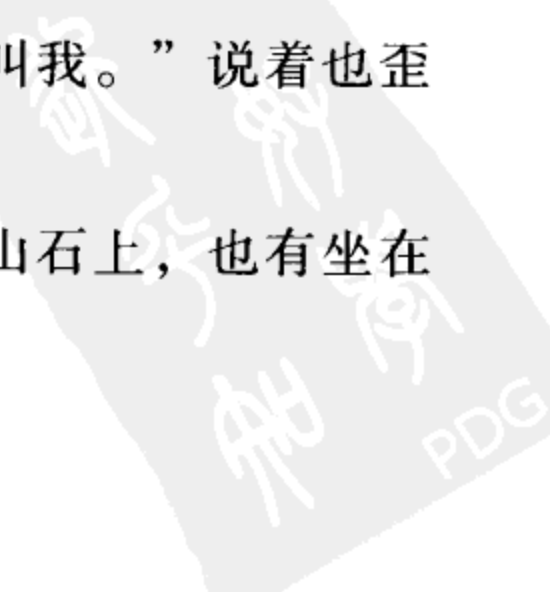


惜?依我说,不如就给那贫婆子罢,他卖了也可以度日。你道可使得?”妙玉听了,想了一想,点头说道:“这也罢了。幸而那杯子是我没吃过的,若我吃过的,我就砸碎了。只是我可不亲自给他。你要给他,我也不管你,只交给你,快拿了去罢。”宝玉笑道:“自然如此,你那里和他说话授受去,越发连你都脏了。只交与我就是了。”妙玉便命人拿来递与宝玉。宝玉接了,又道:“等我们出去了,我叫几个小么儿来,河里打几桶水来洗地如何?”妙玉笑道:“这更好了,只是你嘱咐他们,抬了水来只搁在山门外头墙根下,别进门来。”宝玉道:“这是自然的。”说着,便袖了那杯出来,递与贾母房中的一个丫头拿着,说:“明日刘姥姥家去时,给他带去罢。”交代明白,贾母已经出来要回去。妙玉亦不甚留,送出山门,回身便将门闭了,不在话下。

且说贾母因觉身上乏倦,便命王夫人和迎春姊妹陪了薛姨妈去吃酒,自己便往稻香村来歇息。凤姐忙命人将竹椅小轿抬来,贾母坐上,两个婆子抬起,凤姐、李纨和众丫鬟、婆子围随去了,不在话下。

这里薛姨妈也就辞了出去。王夫人打发文官等出去,将攒盒散与众丫鬟、婆子吃去,自己便也乘空歇着,随便歪在方才贾母坐的榻上,命一个小丫头放下帘子来,又命他捶着腿,吩咐他:“老太太那边醒了,你们就来叫我。”说着也歪着睡着了。

宝玉、湘云等看着丫鬟们将攒盒搁在山石上,也有坐在





have been contaminated, but surely it's a pity to throw it away? I think you'd do better to give it to that poor woman, who'd make enough by selling it to keep her for some time. Don't you agree?"

After a little reflection Miaoyu nodded.

"All right," she said. "It's a good thing I'd never drunk out of it, or I'd have smashed it. But I can't give it to her myself. If you want to give it to her, I've no objection. Go ahead and take it."

"Of course," he chuckled. "How could you speak to the likes of her? You'd be contaminating yourself. Just let me have it."

Miaoyu sent for the bowl and had it handed to him.

As he took it he said, "After we've gone, shall I send a few pages with some buckets of water from the stream to wash your floors?"

"That's a good idea." She smiled. "Only make them leave the buckets by the wall outside the gate. They mustn't come in."

"Of course not."

He withdrew, the bowl in his sleeve, and entrusted it to one of his grandmother's small maids with the instruction, "Give this to Granny Liu to take home tomorrow."

By this time the Lady Dowager was ready to leave, and Miaoyu did not press her hard to stay but saw them out and closed the gate behind them.

The Lady Dowager, feeling rather tired, told Lady Wang and the girls to go and drink with Aunt Xue while she herself had a rest in Paddy-Sweet Cottage. Xifeng ordered a small bamboo sedan-chair to be brought. The old lady seated herself in this and was carried off by two serving-women, accompanied by Xifeng, Li Wan and all her own maids and older serving-women.

Meanwhile Aunt Xue had taken her leave too. Lady Wang, having dismissed the actresses and given what was left in the hampers to the maids, was free to lie down on the couch vacated by her mother-in-law. She told a small maid to lower the portiere and massage her legs.

"When the old lady wakes, come and let me know," she ordered the servants. With that she settled down for a nap, and the rest of the party dispersed.

Baoyu, Xiangyun and the other girls watched the maids put the boxes



山石上的，也有坐在草地下的，也有靠着树的，也有傍着水的，倒也十分热闹。一时又见鸳鸯来了，要带着刘姥姥各处去逛，众人也都跟着取笑。一时来至“省亲别墅”的牌坊底下，刘姥姥道：“嗟哟！这里还有个庙呢。”说着，便爬下磕头。众人笑弯了腰。刘姥姥道：“笑什么？这牌坊上的字我都认得。我们那里这样庙宇最多，都是这样的牌坊，那字就是这庙的名字。”众人笑道：“你认得这是什么庙？”刘姥姥便抬头指那字道：“这不是‘玉皇宝殿’四字？”众人笑的拍手打脚，还要拿他取笑，刘姥姥觉得腹内一阵乱响，忙的拉着一个小丫头，要了两张纸就解衣。众人又是笑，又忙喝他“这里使不得！”忙命一个婆子带了他东北角上去了。那婆子指与他地方，便乐得走开去歇息。

那刘姥姥因喝了些酒，他的脾气不与黄酒相宜，且又吃了许多油腻饮食，因发渴多喝了几杯茶，不免通泻起来，蹲了半日方完。及出厕来，酒被风禁，且又年迈之人，蹲了半天，忽一起身，只觉得眼花头眩，辨不出路径。四顾一望，皆是树木山石，楼台房榭，却不知那一处是往那一路去的了，只得顺着一条石子路慢慢的走来。及至到了房舍跟前，又找不着门，再找了半日，忽见一带竹篱，刘姥姥心中自忖道：“这里也有扁豆架子。”一面想，一面顺着花障走了来，到了一个月洞门进去。只见迎面忽有一带水池，只有七、八尺宽，石头砌岸，里面碧清的水流往那边去了，上面一块白石横架在上面。刘姥姥便踱过石来，顺着石子甬路走去，转

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of titbits on the rocks. Then, some sitting on the rocks or grass, some leaning against trees or strolling by the lake, they made very merry.

Yuanyang arrived presently to take Granny Liu for a stroll, and the rest of them tagged along to watch the run. When they reached the arch erected for the Imperial Consort's visit home, Granny Liu exclaimed:

"My word, what a big temple!"

She plumped down to kowtow, making everyone double up with laughter.

"What's so funny?" she asked. "I know the words on this arch. We have plenty of temples like this where I live, all with arches like this one here. The characters on it are the name of the temple."

"What temple is this?" they demanded.

Granny Liu looked up and pointed at the inscription.

"Splendid Hall of the Jade Emperor, isn't it?"

They laughed and clapped and would have gone on teasing her, but Granny Liu's stomach suddenly started to rumble. Hastily asking one of the younger maids for some paper, she set about loosening her clothes.

"No, no! Not here!" they cried, nearly in hysterics.

An old nurse was told to take her to the northeastern corner. Having shown her the way, the old servant took the chance to amble off to have a rest.

Now the yellow wine which Granny Liu had been drinking did not agree with her; and to quench her thirst after eating all that rich food she had drunk so much tea that her stomach was upset. She remained squatting for some time in the privy. When she emerged the wine had gone to her head, and squatting so long had left the old creature too dizzy to remember the way she had come.

She looked round. Trees, rocks, towers and pavilions stretched on every side, but having no idea how to reach these different places she could only hobble slowly down a cobbled path until she came to a building. After searching for a long time for the gate, she saw a bamboo fence. So they have beantrellises here too, she thought. Skirting the hedge, she reached a moon-gate and stepped through it. Before her was a pool five or six feet across, its banks paved with flag-stones, a clear green brook flowing through it, and lying across it a long slab of white stone. She crossed over this stone to a cobbled path which, after a couple of



了两个弯子，只见有一房门。于是进了房门，只见迎面一个女孩儿，满面含笑迎了出来。刘姥姥忙笑道：“姑娘们把我丢下来了，要我碰头到这里来。”说了，只见那女孩儿不答应。刘姥姥便赶上来拉他的手，“咕咚”一声，便撞到板壁上，把头碰的生疼。细瞧了一瞧，原来是一幅画儿。刘姥姥自忖道：“原来画儿有这样活凸出来的。”一面想，一面看，一面又用手去摸，却是一色平的，点头叹了两声。一转身方得了一个小门，门上挂着葱绿撒花软帘。刘姥姥掀帘进去，抬头一看，只见四面墙壁玲珑剔透，琴剑瓶炉皆贴在墙上，锦笼纱罩，金彩珠光，连地下踩的砖，皆是碧绿凿花，竟越发把眼花了。找门出去，那里有门？左一架书，右一架屏。刚从屏后得了一门才要出去，只见他亲家母也从外面进来。刘姥姥诧异，忙问道：“亲家母，你想是见我这几日没家去，你找我来了。那一位姑娘带你进来的？”只见他亲家只是笑，不答言。刘姥姥笑道：“你好没见世面，见这园子里的花好，你就没死活戴了一头。”他亲家也不答应。便忽然想起：“常听大富贵人家有一种穿衣镜，这别是我在镜子里头罢。”想毕用手一摸，再细一看，可不是，四面雕空紫檀板壁将镜子嵌在中间。因说：“这已经拦住，如何走出去呢？”一面说，一面只管用手去摸。这镜子原是西洋机括，可以开合。不意刘姥姥乱摸之间，其力巧合，便撞开消息，掩过镜



bends, brought her to a door. The first thing she saw as she entered it was a girl, smiling in welcome.

“The young ladies ditched me,” said Granny Liu hastily. “I had to knock about till I found this place.”

When the girl did not answer, the old woman stepped forward to take her hand and — bang! — bumped her head painfully on a wooden partition. Looking carefully at it, she found it was a painting. Strange! How could they make the figure stick out like a real person? Touching it, however, she found it was flat all over. With a nod and couple of sighs of admiration she moved on to a small door over which hung a soft green flowered portiere. She lifted this, stepped through and looked around.

The four walls here were panelled with cunningly carved shelves on which were displayed lyres, swords, vases and incense-burners. They were hung moreover with embroidered curtains and gauze glittering with gold and pearls. Even the green glazed floor-tiles had floral designs. More dazzled than ever she turned to leave — but where was the door? To her left was a bookcase, to her right a screen. She had just discovered a door behind the screen and stepped forward to open it when, to her amazement, her son-in-law’s mother came in.

“Fancy seeing *you* here!” exclaimed Granny Liu. “I suppose you found I hadn’t been home these last few days and tracked me down here. Which of the girls brought you in?”

The other old woman simply smiled and did not answer.

“How little you’ve seen of the world,” chuckled Granny Liu. “The flowers in this garden are so fine, you just had to go picking some to stick all over your own head — for shame!”

Again the other made no reply.

Suddenly Granny Liu recalled having heard that rich folk had in their houses some kind of full-length mirror. It dawned on her that this was her own reflection. She felt it with her hand and looked more carefully. Sure enough, it was a mirror set in four carved red sandalwood partitions.

“This has barred my way. How am I to get out?” she muttered.

Then the pressure of her fingers produced a click. For this mirror had western-style hinges enabling it to open or shut, and she had accidentally pressed the spring which made it swing back, revealing a doorway.



子，露出门来。刘姥姥又惊又喜，迈步出去，忽见有一副最精致的床帐。他此时又带了七、八分醉，又走乏了，便一屁股坐在床上，只说歇歇，不承望身不由己，便前仰后合的，朦胧着两眼，一歪身就睡熟在床上。

外面众人等他不见，板儿见没了他姥姥，急的哭了。众人都笑道：“别是掉在茅厕坑里了？快叫人去瞧瞧。”因命两个婆子去找，婆子去了，回来说没有。众人各处搜寻不见，袭人度其道路：“定是他醉了，迷了路，顺着这一条路往我们后院子里去了。若进了花障子到后房门进去，虽然碰头，还有小丫头们知道；若不进花障子再往西南上去，若绕出去还好，若绕不出去，可够他绕回子呢。我且瞧瞧去。”一面想，一面回来，进了怡红院便叫人，谁知那几个看屋子的小丫头已偷空玩去了。

袭人一直进了房门，转过集锦榻子，就听的鼾声如雷。忙进来，只闻得酒屁臭气，满屋一瞧，只见刘姥姥扎手舞脚的仰卧在床上。袭人慌的忙赶上来将他没死活的推醒。那刘姥姥惊醒，睁眼见了袭人，连忙爬起来道：“姑娘，我失错了！并没弄脏了床。”一面说，一面用手去掸。袭人恐惊动了人，被宝玉知道了，忙将当地大鼎内，贮了三、四把合香，仍旧盖上顶，忙悄悄的笑道：“不相干，有我呢。你只说是你醉了，在外头山子石上打了个盹儿。”刘姥姥满口答



In pleased surprise Granny Liu stepped into the next room, where her eye was caught by some exquisite bed-curtains. Being still more than half drunk and tired from her walk, she plumped down on the bed to have a little rest. But her limbs no longer obeyed her. She swayed to and fro, unable to keep her eyes open, then curled up and fell fast asleep.

Meanwhile the others outside waited in vain for her till Baner started crying for his grandmother.

“Let’s hope she hasn’t fallen into the cesspool of the latrine,” they said jokingly. “Someone should go and see.”

Two old women were sent but came back to report that there was no sign of her. So they searched in all directions but still could not find her.

She must have lost her way because she’s drunk, thought Xiren, and may have followed that path to our back yard. If she passed the hedge and went in by the back door, even if she knocked about blindly the girls there must have seen her. If she didn’t go that way but headed southwest, let’s hope she’s found her way out. If not, she may still be wandering around there. I’ll go and have a look.

Thinking in this way, she went back to Happy Red Court and called for the younger maids who had been left to keep an eye on the place. But they had seized this chance to run off and play. Going in past the latticed screen she heard thunderous snores and, hurrying into the bedroom, found the whole place reeking of wine and farts. On the bed, sprawled out on her back, lay Granny Liu. Xiren was shocked. She ran over and shook her hard until Granny Liu woke with a start. At sight of Xiren she hastily scrambled up.

“It was wrong of me, miss,” she cried. “But I haven’t dirtied the bed.” She was brushing it with both hands as she spoke.

Xiren signed to her to keep quiet, not wanting to disturb others for fear Baoyu should come to hear of this. Hurriedly she thrust several handfuls of incense into the large tripod and replaced the cover, then straightened things a little in the room. It was lucky at least that the old woman hadn’t been sick.

“It’s all right,” she whispered quickly. “I’ll see to this. Just say you were so tipsy that you fell asleep on one of the rocks outside. Now come along with me.”



应。出至小丫头们房中，命他坐了。又与他两碗茶吃，刘姥姥方觉酒醒了，因问道：“这是那位小姐的绣房，这样精致？我就像到了天宫里一样。”袭人笑道：“这个么，是宝二爷的卧室。”刘姥姥吓的不敢作声。袭人带他从前头出去，见了众人，只说他在草地下睡着了，带了他来的。众人都不理会，也就罢了，下回分解。





Granny Liu assented readily and followed Xiren out to the young maids' room where she was told to sit down. Two bowls of tea sobered her up enough to ask:

"Which of the young ladies' room was that? So elegant and beautiful! I thought I was in heaven."

"That?" Xiren smiled. "That's Master Bao's bedroom."

Granny Liu was too shocked to utter another word. Xiren took her out the front way to find the rest of the party.

"Granny Liu fell asleep on the grass" was all she told them. "Now I've brought her back."

Then the others thought no more of the matter, and there it rested.

To know what the sequel was, read the next chapter.



第四十二回

蘅芜君兰言解疑癖 潇湘子雅谑补余香

话说贾母一时醒了，就在稻香村摆晚饭。贾母因觉懒懒的，也没吃饭，便坐了竹椅小轿，回至房中歇息，命凤姐等去吃饭。他姊妹们方复进园来，吃过饭，大家散出，都无别话。

且说刘姥姥带着板儿，先来见凤姐，说：“明儿一早定要家去了。虽然住了两、三天，日子却不多，把古往今来没见过的，没吃过的，没听过的，都经验了。难得老太太和姑奶奶并那些小姐们，连各房里的姑娘们，都这样怜贫惜老的照看我。我这一回去后，没别的报答，惟有请些高香大大的给你们念佛，保佑你们长命百岁的，就算我的心了。”凤姐笑道：“你别喜欢。都是为你，老太太也被风吹病了，睡着说不好过呢；我们大姐儿也着了凉，在那里发热呢。”刘姥姥听了，忙叹道：“老太太有年纪的人，不惯十分劳乏的。”凤姐道：“从来没像昨儿高兴。往常也进园子逛去，不过到一、二处坐坐就回来了。昨儿因为你在这里，要叫你逛逛，一个园子倒走了多半个。大姐儿因找我去，太太递了一块糕给他，谁知风地里吃了，就发起热来。”刘姥姥道：“小姐儿只怕不大进园子，生地方儿，小人儿家比不得我们的孩子们，





Chapter 42

The Lady of the Alpinia Warns Against Dubious Tastes in Literature The Queen of Bamboos' Quips Add to the General Enjoyment

Presently the Lady Dowager awoke and the evening meal was served in Paddy-Sweet Cottage. But the old lady, too listless to eat, had herself carried back in the small bamboo sedan-chair to her own apartments to rest. She insisted, however, that Xifeng and the others should dine, and so they returned to the Garden. After the meal they went their different ways.

Now Granny Liu took Baner to see Xifeng.

"I must go home first thing tomorrow," she announced. "I've not stayed here long, only two or three days, yet I've seen things, eaten things and heard tell of things I never even knew existed. The old lady and you, madam, as well as the young ladies and the girls in the different apartments, have all been kindness itself to a poor old woman. I've no way to show my gratitude when I get back except by burning incense every day and praying hard to Buddha to grant that all of you live to be a hundred."

"Don't look so pleased," replied Xifeng with a smile. "All because of you, the old lady's in bed with a chill and our Dajie has caught cold too and is running a fever."

"The old lady feels her age, and she isn't used to exercise," observed Granny Liu with a sigh.

"She's never been in such high spirits as yesterday," Xifeng assured her. "Though she likes a jaunt in the Garden, she usually only sits a while in one or two places before coming back. With you here to show round yesterday, she covered more than half the Garden. As for Dajie, Lady Wang gave her a cake while she was crying for me, and eating it in the wind has made her feverish."

"I don't suppose the little dear goes much into the Garden or places



会走了，那个坟圈子里不跑去。一则风扑了也是有的；二则只怕他身上干净，眼又干净，或是遇见什么神了。依我说，给他瞧瞧崇书本子，仔细撞客着了。”一语提醒了凤姐，便叫平儿拿出《玉匣记》来，叫彩明来念。彩明翻了一会，念道：“八月二十五日，病者东南方得遇花神。用五色纸钱四十张，向东南方四十步送之，大吉。”凤姐笑道：“果然不错，园子里头可不是花神！只怕老太太也是遇见了。”一面说，一面命人请两分纸钱来，着两个人来，一个与贾母送崇，一个与大姐儿送崇。果见大姐儿安稳睡了。

凤姐笑道：“到底是你们有年纪的人经历的多。我这大姐儿时常要病，也不知是什么原故。”刘姥姥道：“这也有的事。富贵人家养的孩子多太娇嫩，自然禁不得一些儿委曲。再他小人儿家，过于尊贵了，也禁不起。以后姑奶奶倒少疼他些就好了。”凤姐道：“这也有理。我想起来，他还没个名字，你就给他起个名字。一则借借你的寿；二则你们是庄稼人，不怕你恼，到底贫苦些，你这贫苦人起个名字，只怕还压的住他。”刘姥姥听说，便想了一想，笑道：“不知他几时生日？”凤姐儿道：“正是呢。生的日子不大好，可巧是七月初七日。”刘姥姥忙笑道：“这个正好，就叫他作巧哥儿罢。这叫作‘以毒攻毒，以火攻火’的法子。姑奶奶定要依我这名字，他必长命百岁。日后大了，各人成家立业，或一时有不遂心的事，必然是遇难成祥，逢凶化吉，却从这‘巧’字上来。”

凤姐听了，自然欢喜，忙道谢，又笑道：“只保佑他应了你这话就好了。”说着叫平儿来吩咐道：“明儿咱们有事，恐



she doesn't know. Not like our children, who as soon as they can walk are scampering all over the graveyards. She may have caught a chill in the wind, or being a clear-eyed innocent she may have met some spirit. If I were you I'd look up some book of enchantments, just so as to be on the safe side."

Acting on this advice, Xifeng asked Pinger to find *The Records of the Jade Casket* and told Caiming to look up the relevant passage. After leafing through it Caiming read, "On the twenty-fifth of the eighth month, illness may be caused in the southeast by meeting a flower spirit. The cure is to carry forty coloured paper coins forty paces southeast, offering one at each step."

"There you are!" exclaimed Xifeng. "There must be flower spirits in the Garden. Probably the old lady has run into one too."

She sent for two lots of paper money and two servants to exorcise these spirits for the Lady Dowager and her own small daughter. Then sure enough Dajie fell into a sound sleep.

"Yes, after all, it's the old who are the most experienced," observed Xifeng. "Can you tell me, granny, why our Dajie is always ailing?"

"It's natural enough. The children of wealthy families are too delicate to stand any rough handling. Being too pampered isn't good for kiddies either. She'll do better, madam, if you don't spoil her too much."

"I think you're right," agreed Xifeng. "By the way, she has no name yet. You give her one so that she can share your good fortune and live as long as you. Besides — I hope you won't mind my saying this — you country folk aren't so well off, and a name given by someone poor like you should act as a counterbalance."

"When was she born?" asked Granny Liu after some thought.

"That's the trouble: the seventh of the seventh month."

"Why, that's good! Call her Qiaoge¹ then. This is what is known as 'fighting poison with poison and fire with fire.' If you agree to this name, madam, she's sure to live to a ripe old age. And when she grows up and has her own family, if anything untoward happens, her bad luck will turn into good all because of this 'happy coincidence' in her name."

Xifeng was naturally pleased and said gratefully, "I hope it will turn out for her as you say."



怕不得闲儿。你这空儿闲着，把送姥姥的东西打点了，他明儿一早就好走的便宜了。”刘姥姥忙说：“不敢多破费了，已经遭扰了几日，又拿着走，越发心里不安起来。”凤姐道：“也没有什么，不过随常的东西。好也罢，歹也罢，带了家去，你们街坊邻舍看着也热闹些，也是上城一次。”只见平儿走来说：“姥姥过这边来瞧瞧。”

刘姥姥忙跟了平儿到那边屋里，只见堆着半炕东西。平儿一一的拿与他瞧，又说道：“这是昨儿你要的青纱一匹，奶奶另外送你一个实地子月白纱作里子。这是两个茧绸，作袄儿作裙子都好。这包袱里是两匹绸子，年下做件衣服穿。这是一盒子各样的内造点心，也有你吃过的，也有你没吃过的，拿去摆碟子请客，比你们买的强些。这两条口袋是你前儿装瓜果子来的，如今这一个里头装了两斗御田京米，熬粥是难得的；这一条里头是园子里的各样果子。这一包是八两银子，都是我们奶奶给的。这两包每包里头五十两，共是一百两银子，是太太给的，叫你们拿去或者作个小本买卖，或是置几亩地，以后再别求亲靠友的。”说着又悄悄的笑道：“这两件袄儿和两条裙子，还有四块包头，一包绒线，可是我送姥姥的。衣裳虽是旧的，我也没大狠穿，你要弃嫌，我就不敢送了。”平儿说一样，刘姥姥念一句佛，已经念了几千声佛了，又见平儿也送他这些东西，又如此谦逊，忙念佛道：“姑娘说那里话来？这样好东西我还弃嫌！我便有银子也没处去买这样的呢。只是我怪臊的，收了又不好，不收，又辜



She called Pinger then and told her, "Tomorrow we'll most likely be busy. Sort out our presents for granny now that you're free, so that she can leave as early as suits her tomorrow."

"You mustn't spend any more on me," protested Granny Liu. "I've imposed on you for several days already, and if I take presents too I shall feel even worse."

"It's nothing much, nothing special," replied Xifeng. "But good or bad you must take it. That will look better to your neighbours — you'll have something to show for your trip to town."

Just then Pinger returned and said, "Come and have a look, granny."

She led the old woman to the other bedroom, where the *kang* was half covered with things. Pinger picked them up one by one to show them to her.

"This is the green gauze you admired yesterday," she said. "And here is some pale grey gauze from our mistress for a lining. These two rolls of raw silk would do well for tunics or skirts, and the two lengths of silk in this wrapping will make clothes for New Year. Here's a hamper of all sorts of cakes from the Imperial kitchen; some you've tasted, others you haven't; they're better to offer to visitors than any you can buy outside. One of these two sacks you brought vegetables in has two pecks of rice in it from the Imperial fields, which makes an excellent porridge; the other is full of fruit and nuts from our Garden. In this packet are eight taels of silver. All these are presents from our mistress. These two packets of fifty taels each, a hundred in all, are a present from Lady Wang who wants you to start a small business or buy some land with it, so that in future you don't have to appeal to friends for help." Then, smiling, she said in a low voice, "These two tunics and this skirt, four headscarfs and packet of embroidery silks are from me, granny. The clothes may not be new, but they haven't been worn much. Still, if you turn up your nose at them, I shan't complain."

Granny Liu had exclaimed "Gracious Buddha!" at each item mentioned, until she must have invoked Buddha hundreds of times. Now, finding Pinger so generous and so modest too, she protested with a smile:

"How can you say such a thing, miss? Who am I to turn up my nose at such fine things? Things money wouldn't buy, even if I had any. I just



负了姑娘的心。”平儿笑道：“休说外话，咱们都是自己，我才这样。你放心收了罢，我还和你要东西呢。到年下，你只把你们晒的那灰条菜干子和豇豆、扁豆、茄子、葫芦条儿各样干菜带些来，我们这里上上下下都爱吃。这个就算了，别的一概不要，别枉费了心。”刘姥姥千恩万谢的答应了。平儿道：“你只管睡你的去。我替你收拾妥当了就放在这里，明儿一早打发小厮们雇了车来装上，不用你费一点心的。”

刘姥姥越发感激不尽，过来又千恩万谢的辞了凤姐，方过贾母这一边睡了一夜，次早梳洗了就要告辞。因贾母欠安，众人都过来请安，命人出去传请大夫。一时婆子回说大夫来了。老嬷嬷请贾母进帐子去坐。贾母道：“我也老了，那里养不出那阿物儿来，还怕他笑话不成！不用放帐子，就对面瞧罢。”众婆子听了，便拿过一张小桌来，放下一个小枕头，使命人出去请大夫。

一时只见贾珍、贾琏、贾蓉三个人将王太医领进。王太医不敢走甬路，只走边砖，跟着贾珍到了阶矶上。早有两个婆子在两边打起帘子，两个婆子在前导引进去，又见宝玉迎了出来。只见贾母穿着青皱绸一斗珠的羊皮褂子，端坐在榻上，两边四个未留头的小丫鬟都拿着蝇帚、漱盂等物；又有五六个老嬷嬷雁翅排立两旁。碧纱橱后，隐隐约约有许多穿红着绿，戴宝簪珠的人。王太医便不敢抬头，忙上来请了





feel ashamed to take so much, and yet since you're so generous, miss, I must."

"Don't talk as if we were strangers," chuckled Pinger. "I wouldn't presume like this if we weren't good friends. So don't have any scruples about accepting. I've a favour to ask you too. Next New Year I want you to bring us some of your dried vegetables — cabbage, string-beans, lentil, egg-plant and gourds. All of us here, high and low, enjoy such things. That'll be quite enough, don't trouble to bring anything else."

Granny Liu agreed to this with a thousand thanks.

"Off to bed with you now," Pinger urged her. "I'll pack everything up for you and put it here. First thing tomorrow I'll get some boys to order a carriage and load this on for you, so that you don't have to worry about a thing."

More grateful than ever, Granny Liu went back to thank Xifeng effusively and take her leave of her. She spent the night in the Lady Dowager's apartments, meaning to say goodbye to the old lady as soon as she was up the next day.

But since the Lady Dowager was unwell, the whole family came the next morning to ask after her health, and a doctor was sent for. Soon a maid announced his arrival and an old nurse stepped forward to draw the bed-curtains.

"I'm an old woman," said the Lady Dowager. "Old enough to be his mother. Why should I be afraid of his laughing at me? Leave the curtains as they are, he can see me like this."

The maids moved a small table up to the bed, put a tiny cushion on it and sent to invite the doctor in. Presently Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Rong led Doctor Wang over. Not presuming to walk up the central ramp, he took the side steps up the terrace behind Jia Zhen. Two serving-women had the portiere raised and two others ushered him in, while Baoyu came out to greet him.

The Lady Dowager in a blue silk tunic lined with a curly sheepskin was seated on the couch. On either side stood two short-haired young maids holding whisks, rinse-bowls and the like, while ranged beside them were half a dozen old nurses; and behind the green gauze screen the doctor glimpsed other figures wearing gay silks and trinkets set with pre-

安。贾母见他穿着六品服色，便知是御医了，含笑称呼：“供奉好？”因问贾珍：“这位供奉贵姓？”贾珍等忙回：“姓王。”贾母笑道：“当日太医院正堂有个王君效，好脉息。”王太医忙躬身低头，含笑回说：“那是晚生的家叔祖。”贾母听了，笑道：“原来这样，也是世交了。”一面说，一面慢慢的伸手放在小枕头上。王太医忙屈膝在榻上，歪着头诊了半日，又诊那手毕，忙欠身低头退出。贾母笑说：“劳动了。珍儿让出去书房里坐，好生看茶。”

贾珍、贾琏等忙答应了几个“是”，复领王太医出至外书房中。王太医说：“太夫人并无别症，不过偶感一点风寒，究竟不用吃药，不过略清淡些，暖着一点儿，就好了。如今写个方子在这里，若老人家爱吃呢，便按方煎一剂吃；若懒待吃，也就罢了。”说着，吃了茶，写了方子。刚要告辞，只见奶子抱了大姐儿出来，笑说：“王老爷也瞧瞧我们。”王太医听说，忙站起来，就奶子怀里，用左手托着大姐儿的手，右手诊了诊脉，又摸一摸头，又叫伸出舌头来瞧瞧，笑道：“我说了，姐儿又要骂我了，只是要清清净净、饿两顿就好了。不必吃煎药，我送几丸丸药来，临睡时用姜汤研开，吃下去就好了。”说毕告辞，贾珍等送出，回来拿了药方，





cious stones and pearls. Lowering his head, he advanced to pay his respects. The Lady Dowager saw from his robes of the sixth official rank that this was one of the Imperial physicians.

With a smile she greeted him, then asked Jia Zhen: "What is this gentleman's honourable name?"

"Wang."

"In the old days," she said, "the director of the Academy of Imperial Physicians, Wang Junxiao, was an excellent diagnostician."

Wang bowed and, his head lowered, rejoined with a smile, "He was my great-uncle."

"So our families are old friends." With these words she slowly placed one hand on the cushion. An old nurse put a low stool slightly to one side of the table and Doctor Wang, sitting respectfully on the edge of the stool, bent one knee to lean over the couch. He felt both her pulses in turn for some length of time, his head inclined meditatively, after which he rose with a bow, his head lowered, to take his leave.

"Thank you for your trouble," said the Lady Dowager. "Zhen, take the doctor to the study and see that he gets some tea."

Jia Zhen and Jia Lian, quick to obey her instructions, conducted the doctor to the study outside.

There he told them, "There is nothing wrong with the old lady except a slight chill. She need not take any medicine. A light diet and keeping warm will put her right. However, I'll make out a prescription and if she likes the old lady can take one dose. If she feels disinclined, it's of no consequence."

He sipped some tea then and wrote out the prescription. Just as he was about to leave, Dajie's nurse carried her in and asked with a smile:

"Will Doctor Wang look at us too?"

The doctor at once stood up. Supporting the child's hand with his own left hand as she nestled in the nurse's arms, with his right hand he felt her pulse. Then he felt her forehead and made her show him her tongue.

"This young lady may scold me for what I'm going to say," he told them with a smile. "She will be all right if she just goes without two meals. There's no need to dose her with medicine. I'll bring some pills for her to take dissolved in ginger-water before sleeping."



回明贾母，命将药方放在桌上出去，不在话下。

这里王夫人和李纨、凤姐、宝钗姊妹们见大夫出去，方从橱后出来。王夫人略坐了一坐，也回房去。

刘姥姥见无事，方上来向贾母告辞。贾母说：“闲了再来。”又命鸳鸯来：“好生打发你姥姥出去，我身上不好，不能送了。”刘姥姥十分道了谢，又作辞，方同鸳鸯出来。到了下房，鸳鸯指炕上一个包袱说道：“这是老太太的几件衣裳，都是往年间生日节下众人孝敬的，老太太从不穿人家作的，收着也是白收着，却是一次也没穿过的。昨日叫我拿出两套来送你带回去，或是自己家里穿或是送人。这盒子里是你面的果子。这包儿里是你前儿说要梅花点舌丹，也有紫金锭，也有活络丹，也有清心丸，每一样是一张方子包着，总包在里头了。这是两个荷包，带着玩罢。”说着便抽开系子，掏出两个笔锭如意的镞子来给他瞧瞧，笑道：“荷包你拿去，这个留下给我罢。”刘姥姥已经喜出望外，早又念了几千声佛，听鸳鸯说，便说道：“姑娘只管留下罢了。”鸳鸯见他信以为真，便笑着仍与他装上，说道：“哄你玩呢，我有好些呢。留着年下给小孩子们罢。”说着，只见一个小丫头拿了个成窑钟子来，递与刘姥姥，道：“这是宝二爷给你的。”刘姥姥道：“这是那里说起？我那一世修了来的，今儿这样？”说着便接过来。鸳鸯道：“前儿我叫你洗澡，换的那衣裳是我的，你不弃嫌，还有几件，也送你罢。”刘姥姥又忙道谢。



With that he left, seen off by Jia Zhen and the others. They went back to report his diagnosis to the Lady Dowager, then laid the prescription on her desk and withdrew. Lady Wang and the younger women and girls had emerged from behind the screen once the doctor had gone, and Lady Wang sat there a little longer before returning to her own apartments.

When Granny Liu knew that the old lady was free, she came in to say goodbye. The Lady Dowager urged her to come again and told Yuanyang:

“See Granny Liu out. I’m not well enough to see her off myself.”

Then with final thanks Granny Liu took her leave and withdrew with Yuanyang to the maids’ room. Yuanyang pointed at a bundle on the *kang*.

“Those are two sets of clothes given to the old lady on previous birthdays,” she said. “She never wears anything made outside, and it’s a pity to keep them stored away, but she’s never once put them on. Yesterday she told me to choose two sets for you to take back — you can either give them away or wear them at home. In this hamper are the pastries you asked for. In this packet the medicines: plum-blossom powder, purple-gold pills, tonic for the blood and restorative pills, each kind wrapped up with directions for its use. Here are two embroidered pouches you can wear for fun.” She loosened the strings of these and took out two silver ingots. Showing her the device “May your wishes come true,” she suggested with a smile, “You take the pouches, granny, and leave these to me.”

Granny Liu, in such raptures already that she had invoked Buddha several hundred times, at once agreed, “Of course, you keep them, miss.”

Yuanyang smiled to see that the old woman thought her in earnest. Replacing the ingots she said, “I was only teasing. I’ve plenty of these. Keep them to give the children at New Year.”

And now a young maid stepped forward to hand Granny Liu a porcelain bowl made in the Cheng Hua period.

“This is a present from Master Bao,” she announced.

“Well, imagine that!” cried Granny Liu, taking the bowl. “I must have done good deeds in some past life to have all this happen today.”

“Those clothes you changed into when I asked you to have a bath the other day were mine,” Yuanyang told her. “If they’re any use to you keep them, and here are a few others.”



鸳鸯果然又拿了两件出来与他包好。刘姥姥又要到园中辞谢宝玉和众姊妹、王夫人等去。鸳鸯道：“不用去了，他们这会子也不见人，回来我替你说罢。闲了可再来。”又命了一个老婆子，吩咐他：“二门上叫两个小子来，帮着姥姥拿了东西送出去。”婆子答应了，又和刘姥姥到了凤姐那边一并拿了东西，雇了车儿，命小厮搬了出去装上，一直送刘姥姥上车去了，不提。

且说宝钗等吃过早饭，又往贾母处问过安，回园中，至分路各归之时，宝钗便叫黛玉道：“颦儿，跟我来，有一句话问你。”黛玉便同了宝钗，来至蘅芜院中。进了房，宝钗便坐了，笑道：“你跪下，我要审你。”黛玉不解何故，因笑道：“你们瞧这宝丫头疯了！你审我什么？”宝钗冷笑道：“好个不出闺门的女孩儿！好个千金小姐！满嘴说的都是什么？你只实说便罢。”黛玉不解，只管发笑，心里也不免疑惑起来，口里只说：“我何曾说什么来？你不过拿我的错儿罢了。你倒说出来我听听。”宝钗笑道：“你还装憨儿。昨儿行酒令儿你说的是什么？我竟不知是那里来的！”黛玉一想，方想起来了，昨日失于检点，把《牡丹亭》、《西厢记》说了两句，不觉红了脸，便上来搂着宝钗，笑道：“好姐姐，原是我不知道随口说的。你教导我，我再不说了。”宝钗笑道：“我也不





As Granny Liu hastily thanked her, she produced two more sets of clothing and wrapped them up for her. The old woman wanted to go to the Garden to say goodbye to Baoyu, the young ladies and Lady Wang, but Yuanyang prevented her.

“There’s no need. They don’t see people at this hour. I’ll tell them later. You must come again when you’ve time.”

An old serving-woman was dispatched to get a boy from the inner gate to help Granny Liu with her things. Then they went to Xifeng’s apartments to fetch the gifts there, which the page carried out through the side gate and loaded on to the carriage they had hired. Finally, the old serving-woman escorted Granny Liu to the carriage and saw her off.

After breakfast, Baoyu and the others paid their respects again to the Lady Dowager, after which they returned to the Garden. Where their ways parted Baochai said to Daiyu:

“Come with me. I’ve something to ask you.”

So Daiyu accompanied her to Alpinia Court.

As soon as they arrived, Baochai sat down and announced teasingly, “You must kneel down. I’m going to try you.”

“The girl must be mad!” exclaimed Daiyu in amazement. “What am I to be tried for?”

“A fine young lady you are, a sheltered, innocent girl!” Baochai snorted. “Yet the things you say! Confess now.”

Daiyu, who had not the least idea what she meant, was amused but beginning to be worried too.

“What have I said wrong?” she asked. “You’re just trying to pick fault. Tell me what you mean.”

“So you’re still playing the innocent.” Baochai smiled. “What were those lines you quoted yesterday when we played the drinking game? I couldn’t think where they had come from.”

Daiyu remembered then that, the day before, she had been careless enough to quote two lines from *The Peony Pavilion* and *The Western Chamber*. Her cheeks flaming, she threw her arms round Baochai and giggled:

“Dear cousin, they slipped out inadvertently. Now that you’ve scolded



知道，听你说的怪生的，所以请教你。”黛玉道：“好姐姐，你别说与别人知道，我以后再不说了。”宝钗见他羞得满脸飞红，满口央告，便不肯再追问了，因拉他坐下吃茶，款款的告诉他道：“你当我是谁？我也是个淘气的。从小儿七、八岁上也够个人缠的。我们家也算是个读书人家，祖父手里也极爱藏书。先时人口多，姊妹弟兄也在一处，都怕看正经书。弟兄们也有喜诗的，也有爱词的，诸如这《西厢》、《琵琶》以及《元人百种》，无所不有。他们背着我们看，我们却也偷着背他们看。后来大人知道了，打的打，骂的骂，烧的烧，才丢开了。所以咱们女孩儿家不认得字的倒好。男人们读书不明理，尚且不如不读书的好，何况你我。就连作诗写字等事，这并非你我分内之事，究竟也不是男人分内之事。男人们读书明理，辅国治民，这便好了；只是能有几个这样？读了书倒更坏了。这是书误了他，可惜他倒把书糟踏了，所以倒是耕种买卖，倒没什么大害处。你我只该做些针线之事才是，偏又认得了字，既认得了字，不过拣那正经书看看也罢了，最怕是见了这些杂书，移了性情，就不可救了。”一席话，说的黛玉垂头吃茶，心下暗服，只有答应“是”的一字。忽见素云进来说：“我们奶奶请二位姑娘商议要紧事呢。二姑娘、三姑娘、四姑娘、史大姑娘、宝二爷都在那里等着呢。”宝钗道：“又有什么事？”黛玉道：“咱们





me, I promise not to say them again.”

“They were new to me but I was so struck by them I’d like to know where they’re from.”

“Don’t tell anyone, dear cousin! I won’t do it again.”

She was blushing in such confusion and pleading so hard that Baochai had not the heart to question her further. Instead she made her sit down and have some tea.

“You may not believe it, but I used to be a madcap too,” she said gently. “At seven and eight I was a real handful. Our family could be considered a scholarly one, and my grandfather’s chief delight was collecting books. There were a lot of us in those days, boys and girls together, and we all hated serious books. Some of my boy cousins liked poetry, others librettos. We had books like *The Western Chamber*, *Tale of the Lute* and *A Hundred Dramas of the Yuan Dynasty* — a whole collection of that sort. They used to read them in secret, and so did we girls. When the grown-ups later found out, we were beaten or scolded and the books were burnt, which put a stop to that.

“So it’s best for girls like us not to know how to read. Even boys, if they study to no good purpose would do better not to study at all, and that’s even truer in our case. Poetry-writing and calligraphy are not required of us, nor of boys either for that matter. If boys learn sound principles by studying so that they can help the government to rule the people, well and good; but nowadays we don’t hear of many such cases — reading only seems to make them worse than they were to start with. And while study leads them astray, the books they read are debased too. So it’s worse than taking up farming or trade, for in those professions they could do less damage. As for us, we should just stick to needlework. If we happen to have a little education we should choose proper books to read. If we let ourselves be influenced by those unorthodox books, there’s no hope for us.”

Daiyu had lowered her head to sip tea during this lecture and, rather impressed by it, she now simply murmured, “Yes.”

Just then Suyun came in to announce, “Our mistress wants you both to go and discuss some important business. All the other young ladies are there with Master Bao.”



到那里就知道了。”说着便和宝钗往稻香村来，果然众人都在那里。

李纨见了他两个，笑道：“社才起，就有脱滑的了，四丫头要告一年的假呢。”黛玉笑道：“都是老太太昨儿一句话，又叫他画什么园子图儿，惹得他乐得告假了。”探春笑道：“也别要怪老太太，都是刘姥姥一句话。”黛玉忙接道：“可是呢，都是他一句话。他是那一门子的姥姥，直叫他个‘母蝗虫’就是了。”说的大家都笑了，宝钗笑道：“世上的话，到了凤丫头嘴里也就尽了。幸而凤丫头不认得字，不大通，不过一概是市俗取笑。惟有颦儿这促狭嘴，他用‘春秋’的法儿，将市俗的粗话，撮其要，删其繁，再加润色比方出来，一句是一句。这‘母蝗虫’三字，把昨日那些形景都现出来了。亏他想的倒也快。”众人听了，都笑道：“你这一注解，也就不在他两个以下。”李纨道：“我请你们来，大家商议，给他多少日子的假？我给了他一个月，他嫌少，你们怎么说？”黛玉道：“论理一年也不多。这园子盖才盖了一年，如今要画，自然得二年的工夫呢。又要研墨，又要蘸笔，又要铺纸，又要着颜色，又要……”刚说到这里，众人知道他是取笑惜春，便都笑问说：“还要怎样？”黛玉也自己掌不住，笑道：“又要照着这样儿慢慢的画，可不得二年的工夫！”众人听了，都拍手笑个不住。宝钗笑道：“有趣，最妙





“What can this be?” wondered Baochai.

“We’ll know when we get there,” said Daiyu.

They went to Paddy-Sweet Cottage, where they found all the others assembled.

Li Wan told them gaily, “Before we’ve got our club going, someone’s trying to wriggle out. Here’s Xichun asking for a whole year’s leave.”

“That’s all because the old lady told her yesterday to paint a picture of the Garden,” said Daiyu. “She’s glad of the excuse to ask for leave.”

“You can’t blame it on the old lady,” countered Tanchun. “It was Granny Liu who started it.”

“That’s right,” rejoined Daiyu promptly. “It’s all owing to her. Whose granny is she anyway? Old Mother Locust would be a better name for her.”

Everybody laughed.

“Xifeng knows all the usual run of smart talk,” said Baochai. “Luckily she hasn’t had too much education, so all her jokes are the vulgar talk of the town. But now our sharptongued Daiyu is using the method of the *Spring-and-Autumn Annals*² to condense such talk, extract its essence and colour it with metaphors so that every phrase tells. How graphically the name Old Mother Locust conjures up everything that happened yesterday. What a ready wit!”

“Your commentaries are quite up to their standard too,” cried the others, laughing.

Li Wan interposed, “I asked you here to decide how much leave to allow her. I said a month, but she thinks that’s too short. What do you say?”

“Actually a year isn’t too long,” replied Daiyu. “Since this Garden took a year to build, painting it will naturally require two, what with grinding the ink, spreading out the paper, dipping the brushes in the colours and then....”

Before she could finish the others, knowing that she was poking fun at Xichun, asked, “And then what?”

Unable to hold back her laughter, Daiyu went on, “Then slowly painting the whole thing in detail. It will surely take two years.”

This sally was greeted with hilarious applause.



落后一句。是慢慢的画，他可不画去，怎么就有了呢？所以昨儿那些笑话儿虽然可笑，回想是没味的。你们细想颦儿这几句话，虽淡淡的，回想却有滋味。我倒笑的动不得了。”惜春道：“都是宝姐姐赞的他越发逞起强来了，这会子又拿我取笑儿。”黛玉忙拉他，笑道：“我且问你，还是单画这园子呢，还是连我们众人都画上呢？”惜春道：“原说只画这园子的，昨儿老太太又说，单画园子成了个房样子了，叫连人都画上，就像‘行乐’似的才好。我又不会这工致楼台，又不会画人物，又不好驳回，正为这个为难呢。”黛玉道：“人物还容易，你草虫上能不能？”李纨道：“你又说不通的话了，这个上头那里又用的着草虫？或者翎毛倒要点缀一两样。”黛玉笑道：“别的草虫儿不画罢了，昨儿的‘母蝗虫’不画上，岂不缺了典！”众人听了，又都笑起来。黛玉一面笑的两手捧着胸口，一面说道：“你快画罢，我连题跋都有了，起个名字，就叫作《携蝗大嚼图》。”众人听了，越发笑的前仰后合。只听“咕咚”一声响，不知什么倒了，急忙看时，原来是湘云伏在椅子背上，那椅子原不曾放稳，被他全身伏着背子大笑起来，他又不提防，两下里错了劲，向东一歪，连人带椅都歪倒了，幸有板壁挡住，不曾落地。众人一见，越发笑个不住。宝玉忙赶上去扶了起来，方渐渐的止了笑。宝玉和黛玉使个眼色儿，黛玉会意，便走至里间屋里将镜袱揭起，照了照，只见两鬓略松，忙开了李纨的妆奁，拿出抿子来，对镜抿了两抿，仍旧收拾好了，方出来，指着李纨道：



“Marvellous!” cried Baochai. “Especially that last bit about ‘slowly painting.’ Painting is the crux of the business, isn’t it? That’s why all those jokes yesterday seemed funny at the time, not when you look back on them; but when you consider what she’s just said, though there seems nothing to it, it’s so funny in retrospect that I can’t move for laughing.”

“You’re egging her on to show off,” complained Xichun. “And at my expense this time.”

Daiyu caught hold of her arm. “Tell me, are you just painting the Garden or us as well?” she asked.

“The idea at first was just the Garden,” said Xichun. “But yesterday the old lady objected that that would look like an architect’s drawing. She told me to put everybody in, just as in a family outing. I’m no good at the details of buildings or at painting people either, but I can’t very well back out now. A fine fix I’m in.”

“People are easy,” said Daiyu. “But can you paint insects?”

“You’re talking nonsense again,” objected Li Wan. “What insects does this painting need? A bird or two, perhaps, would be appropriate.”

“We can dispense with other insects,” giggled Daiyu. “But the painting will have no point without yesterday’s Old Mother Locust.”

This produced a fresh outburst of laughter.

Shaking with mirth and pressing her hands to her heart, Daiyu cried, “Do start soon. I’ve even got the title ready for you. Call it *Guzzling in the Company of the Locust*.”

That set them rocking backwards and forwards with laughter until something crashed to the floor. At once all looked round. Xiangyun had been leaning on the back of a chair and, this being none too steady, her weight on it as she laughed had toppled it over, upsetting both girl and chair. Luckily the partition stopped her from slipping to the ground. This sight convulsed the whole party. Baoyu hastily helped Xiangyun up, and by degrees they regained control of themselves.

Baoyu then shot Daiyu a glance. Taking the hint she went into the bedroom and took the cover off the mirror to have a look. Seeing that the hair at her temples was dishevelled, she smoothed it with a hair-brush from Li Wan’s dressing-case, then put the brush away again and re-joined the party.



“这是叫你带着我们作针线、教道理呢，你反招了我们来大玩大笑的。”李纨笑道：“你们听他这刁话！他领着头儿闹，引着众人笑了，倒赖我的不是。真真恨的我只保佑你明儿得一个利害婆婆，再得几个千刁万恶的大姑子、小姑子，试试你那会子还这么刁不刁了。”

林黛玉早红了脸，拉着宝钗说：“咱们放他一年的假罢。”宝钗道：“我有一句公道话，你们听听。四丫头虽会画，不过是几笔写意。如今画这园子，非离了肚子里有几幅丘壑的如何成得。这园子都是像画儿一般，山石树木，楼阁房屋，远近疏密，也不多，也不少，恰恰的是这样，你既照样儿往纸上画，是必不能讨好的。这要想纸上的地步远近，该多该少，分主分宾，该添的要添，该减的要减，该藏的要藏，该露的要露。这一起了稿子，再端详斟酌，方成一幅图样。第二件，这些楼台房舍，是必要用界划的。一点不留神，栏杆也歪了，柱子也塌了，门窗也斜了，阶矶也离了缝，甚至于桌子挤到墙里头去，花盆放在帘子上来，岂不倒成了一张笑‘话’儿？第三，安插人物，也要有疏密，有高低。衣折裙带，手指足步，最是要紧的。下笔不细，不是肿了手就是踹了腿，染脸撕发倒是小事。依我想，竟难的很。如今一年的假也太多，一月的假也太少，竟给他半年的假，再派了宝兄弟帮着他。并不是为宝兄弟知道教着他画，那就更误了事；为的是有不知道的，或难安插的，好叫宝兄弟拿



Wagging one finger at Li Wan she demanded, "Are you teaching us needlework and sound principles, or are you getting us here to romp and have fun?"

"Just listen to her!" protested Li Wan. "She takes the lead in sending you into hysterics but puts the blame on me. What a terror she is! Well, I just hope, when you marry, you'll get a fierce mother-in-law and several really vicious sisters-in-law. We'll see if you can go on being so cheeky then."

Daiyu, flushing, caught hold of Baochai. "Let's grant her one year's leave."

"I'll make a fair proposal," countered Baochai. "Listen, all of you. What Xichun's best at is impressionistic sketches, whereas for a painting of this Garden one needs to have the whole lay-out in mind. As a matter of fact, this Garden itself is exactly like a painting with just the right number of rocks, trees, pavilions and villas near and far, some scattered, some grouped together. If you put all that on paper as it is, the result can't possibly please. You must consider the spacing on the paper, how much to present in the background, how much in the foreground, what to play up and what to play down. Certain things should be added, others left out; certain things should be hidden, others revealed. And you must study your draft carefully to produce a good composition.

"The second essential thing is that in order to get the proportions of the buildings right you'll have to use a ruler. The least carelessness may result in crooked balustrades, collapsing pillars, lopsided windows and doors, steps out of line, or even tables squashed into the walls and flower-pots perched on top of screens. Then the whole thing would be a joke.

"The third thing is to make sure that the figures put in are suitably spaced and at different heights. Then the folds of their clothes, their girdles, their fingers and the way they walk are especially important. One slip of the brush and you'll get swollen hands and deformed feet which will look worse than dirty faces or tousled hair.

"So it seems to me a very difficult job. One year's leave is too long, but one month is too short. I suggest allowing her half a year and asking Cousin Bao to help her. Not that he can teach her anything about painting — he'd only hold her up — but if she has any problems or difficulties he



出去问问那几个会画的相公，就容易了。”

宝玉听了，先喜的说：“这话极是。詹子亮的工致楼台就极好，程日兴的美人是绝技，如今就问他们去。”宝钗道：“我说你是无事忙，说了一声你就要问去。也等着商议定了再去。如今且说拿什么画？”宝玉道：“家里有雪浪纸，又大又托墨。”宝钗冷笑道：“我就说你不中用！那雪浪纸写字画写意画儿，或是会山水的画南宗山水，最托墨，禁得皴搜。若拿来画这个，又不托色，又难烘染，画也不好，纸也可惜。我教你一个法子。原先盖这园子，就有一张细致图样，虽是匠人描的，那地步、方向是不错的。你和太太要了出来，也比着那纸大小，和风丫头要块重绢，叫相公给矾了出来，叫他照着这图样删补着，立了稿子，添了人物就是了。就是配这些青绿颜色并泥金泥银，也得他们配去。你们也得另笼上风炉子，预备化胶、出胶、洗笔。还得一个粉油大案，铺上毡子好画。你们那些碟子也不全，笔也不全，都得从新再治才好。”惜春道：“我何曾有这些画器？不过随手写字的笔画画罢了。就是颜色，只有赭石、广花、藤黄、胭脂这四样。再有，不过是两支着色的笔就完了。”宝钗道：“你怎不早说？这些东西我却还有，只是你也用不着，给你也白放着，如今我且替你收着，等你用着这个的时候我送你些，也只可留着画扇子，若画这大幅的也就可惜了。今儿替你





can help solve them by consulting those gentlemen in the study outside who are good at painting.”

“That’s a good idea,” cried Baoyu eagerly. “Zhan Ziliang paints excellent pavilions in the meticulous style and Cheng Rixing does superb beauties. I can go and consult them right away.”

“‘Much Ado About Nothing’ — that’s you,” observed Baochai. “I say one word and off you go to consult them. At least wait till we’ve reached a decision. First let’s discuss what materials we’ll need.”

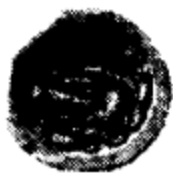
“We’ve some big sheets of *xue lang* paper³ at home which absorbs ink well,” put in Baoyu.

“I knew you’d be no use.” Baochai smiled mockingly. “That *xue lang* paper absorbs the ink and gives good shading effects for calligraphy, ink sketches or landscapes of the Southern School. But if you used it for this, the colours wouldn’t stand out and would easily run. You’d ruin the picture and simply waste the paper.

“So let me make a suggestion. When this Garden was built there was a detailed architect’s drawing, and though it was done by craftsmen the lay-out and directions are accurate. Ask Lady Wang for that and Xifeng for a piece of heavy weight silk of the same size, then get the secretaries outside to have the silk prepared and make a draft according to the drawing with some additions or omissions; and once you’ve put in the figures there’s your painting. Ask them to prepare the green and blue colours and the gold and silver too. In addition you’ll need portable stoves to melt and extract the glue, as well as to heat water to clean the brushes. A big varnished table with a felt cover will be needed too. You haven’t enough paint-saucers or brushes either. You’d better buy new sets.”

“I haven’t all that equipment,” exclaimed Xichun. “I just paint with my writing-brushes. And the only pigments I have are red-ochre, indigo, gamboge and rouge. Apart from that, all I have is a couple of colouring brushes.”

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?” scolded Baochai. “I’ve got all that paraphernalia, more than you’d need — you couldn’t have used it all if I’d sent it over. I’ll keep it for you, and let you have whatever you want when you need it. But these things are only good for painting fans; it would be a pity to use them on a painting this size. I’ll make out for you



开个单子，照着单子和老太太要去。你们也未必知道的全，我说着，宝兄弟写。”宝玉早已预备下笔砚，原怕记不清白，要写了记着，听宝钗如此说，喜的提起笔来静听。宝钗说道：“头号排笔四支，二号排笔四支，三号排笔四支，大染四支，中染四支，小染四支，小南蟹爪十支，小蟹爪十支，须眉十支，大着色二十支，小着色二十支，开面十支，柳条二十支，箭头朱四两，南赭四两，石黄四两，石青四两，石绿四两，管黄四两，广花八两，蛤粉四匣，胭脂十片，大赤飞金二百帖，青金二百帖，广匀胶四两，净矾四两。矾绢的胶矾在外，别管他们，只把绢交出去，叫他们矾去。这些颜色，咱们淘澄飞跌着，又玩了，又使了，包你一辈子都够使了。再要顶细的绢笊四个，粗笊四个，掸笔四支，大小乳钵四个，大粗碗二十个，五寸碟子十个，三寸碟子二十个，风炉两个，大小沙锅四个，新瓷缸二个，新水桶四只，一尺长白布口袋四条，桴炭二十斤，柳木炭一斤，三屉木箱一个，实地纱一丈，生姜二两，酱半斤。”黛玉忙道：“铁锅一口，铁铲一个。”宝钗道：“这作什么？”黛玉笑道：“你要生姜和酱这些作料，我替你要口锅来，好炒颜色吃。”众人都笑起来。宝钗笑道：“你那里知道，那粗色碟子保不住不上火烤，不拿姜汁子和酱先抹在底子上烤过，一经了火是要炸的。”





now a list of materials you can ask the old lady for. In case you don't know everything that's required, I'll list them and Cousin Bao can write them down."

Baoyu, not trusting his memory, had already got brush and ink ready and at this he picked up the brush with alacrity.

"Four large brushes for drawing outlines, four of the medium size and four small ones," Baochai began. "Four large colouring brushes, four medium and four small ones; ten large brushes for painting fine lines and ten small ones; ten beard-and-eyebrow brushes; twenty large and twenty small brushes for colour washes; ten brushes for painting features; twenty willow brushes.

"Then you'll need four ounces each of 'arrow-head' cinnabar, southern ochre, orpiment, azurite, malachite and gamboge; eight ounces of indigo; four boxes of white lead; ten sheets of rouge; two hundred sheets each of red gold-foil and green gold-foil; four ounces of glue and four ounces of pure alum — that's not counting what's used to prepare the silk, but you can leave that to the secretaries when you get them to do it. Once these pigments are properly rinsed, ground, mixed with glue and shaken, I guarantee you'll have enough to play about with and last you a lifetime.

"Then you must prepare four fine silk filters; four sieves; four feather-dusters; four large and small mortars; twenty large coarse bowls; ten five-inch saucers; twenty three-inch coarse white saucers; two portable stoves; four large and small earthenware cooking pots; two new porcelain jars; two new buckets; four white cloth bags one foot long; twenty catties of soft charcoal; one catty of hard charcoal; one chest with three drawers; ten feet of plain gauze; two ounces of ginger; half a catty of soy sauce...."

"And one pan and frying-slice," put in Daiyu.

"What are they for?" demanded Baochai.

"Since you want things like ginger and soy sauce, I may as well get you a pan to fry those colours and eat them."

Everyone laughed.

"You don't understand," rejoined Baochai with a smile. "Those coarse saucers can't stand too much heat. The fire would crack them if you



众人听说都道：“原来如此。”

黛玉又看了一回单子，笑着拉探春悄悄的道：“你瞧瞧，画个画儿又要这些水缸箱子来了。想必他糊涂了，他把他的嫁妆单子也写出来了。”探春“噯”了一声，笑个不住，说道：“宝姐姐，你还不拧他的嘴？你问问他说你的的是什么话。”宝钗笑道：“不用问，狗嘴里还有象牙不成！”一面说，一面走上来，把黛玉按在炕上，便要拧他的嘴。黛玉笑着忙央告道：“好姐姐，饶了我罢！颦儿年纪小，只知说，不知道轻重，作姐姐的教训我。姐姐不饶我，我还求谁去？”众人不知话内有因，都笑道：“说的好可怜见的，连我们也软了，饶了他罢。”宝钗原要和他玩的，忽听又拉扯上前番说他胡看杂书的话，便不好再和他厮闹，便放起他来。黛玉笑道：“到底是姐姐，要是我，再不饶人的。”宝钗笑指他道：“怪不得老太太疼你，众人爱你伶俐，今儿连我也怪疼你的了。过来，我替你把头发拢一拢。”黛玉果然转过身来，宝钗用手替他拢上去。宝玉在旁看着，只觉更好看，不觉后悔不该令他抿上鬓去，也该留着，此时叫他替他抿去。正自胡思，只见宝钗说道：“写完了，明儿回老太太去。若家里有的就罢，若没有的，就拿些钱去买来了，我帮着你们配。”宝玉忙收了单子。

大家闲话了一回，至晚饭后，又往贾母处请安。贾母原





didn't first smear ginger and soy sauce on the bottom."

"Yes, that's right," agreed the others.

Daiyu had another look at the list, then nudged Tanchun and whispered, "Look at all the pots and chests she wants just for one painting. She must have mixed things up and put in the list of her dowry as well."

Tanchun exploded in a fit of laughter.

"Cousin Baochai!" she cried. "Why don't you pinch her lips? Ask her what she just said about you."

"I don't have to ask," retorted Baochai. "One doesn't expect ivory from a dog's mouth."

As she spoke she pushed Daiyu down on the *kang* to pinch her cheeks.

"Forgive me, dear cousin," pleaded Daiyu giggling. "I'm too young to know the right way to talk; but you, dear as an elder sister to me, can teach me. If you won't forgive me, who else can I turn to?"

The others did not know what lay behind this exchange.

"How pathetic she sounds," they teased. "Our hearts bleed for her. Do let her off!"

Baochai had only been joking, but catching this reference to her earlier lecture on reading improper books, she stopped teasing and let Daiyu go.

"What a good girl you are," observed Daiyu. "If it had been me I shouldn't have been so forgiving."

Baochai pointed a finger at her. "No wonder the old lady's so fond of you and everybody loves you. I declare I'm growing quite fond of you myself now. Come here and let me do your hair for you."

Daiyu, complying, turned round and Baochai arranged her dishevelled hair for her. Baoyu, watching, decided that this way of dressing her hair was an improvement and regretted having sent her to comb her hair before — the job should have been left for Baochai. His reverie was cut short by Baochai remarking:

"If you've finished that list, you can show it to the old lady tomorrow. We may have the things at home; if not, they can be bought. I'll help you with the preparations."

Baoyu put the list away then and they chatted. That evening after dinner they went as usual to pay their respects to the Lady Dowager. As

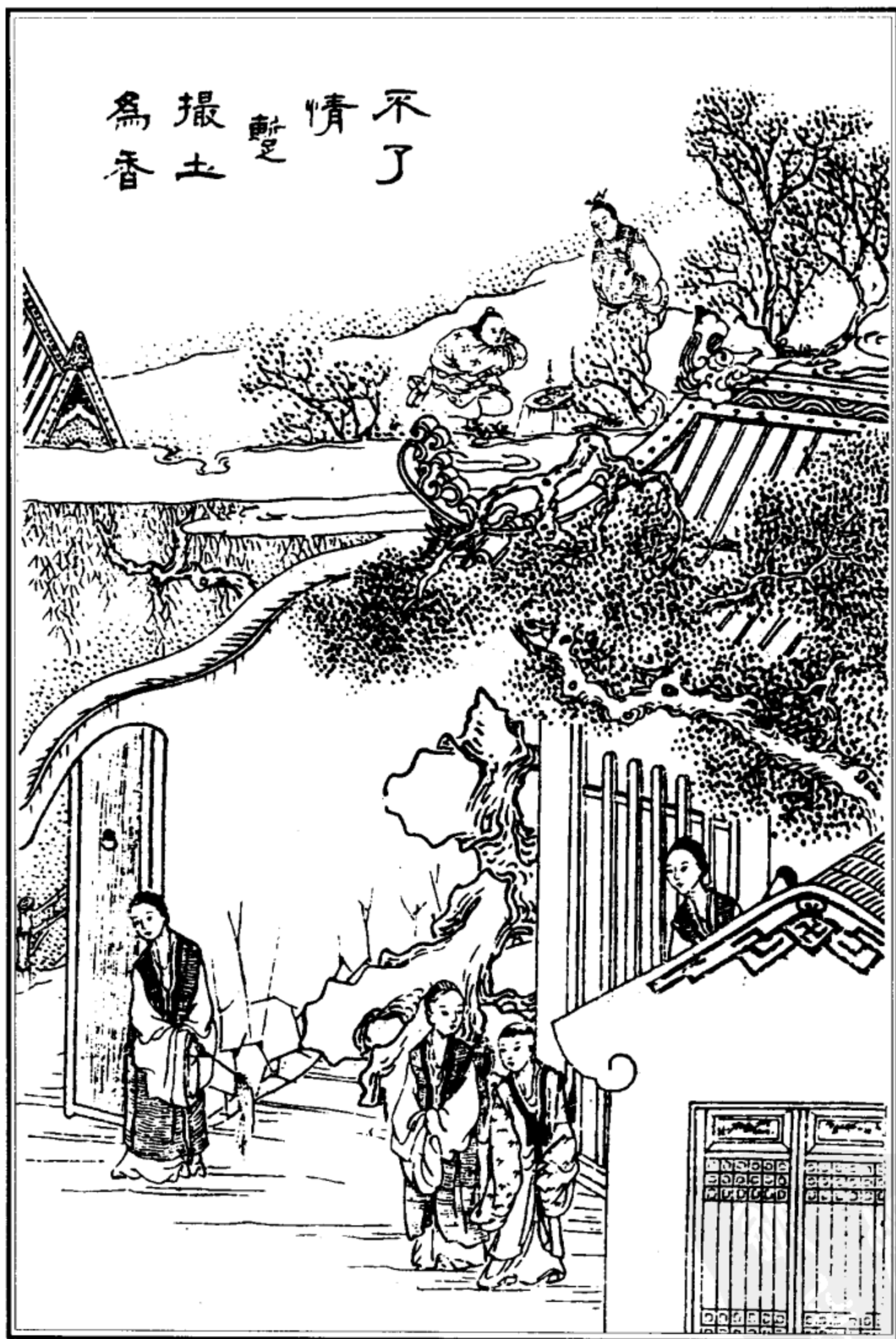
非大病，不过是劳乏了，着了些凉，温存了一日，又吃了一剂药，疏散了疏散，至晚也就好了。不知次日又有何事，下回分解。



she had been suffering from nothing more serious than a slight chill caught when she was tired, a day in bed and a dose of medicine had set her right by the evening.

What happened the day after is told in the next chapter.





第四十三回

闲取乐偶攒金庆寿 不了情暂撮土为香

话说王夫人因见贾母那日在大观园不过着了些风寒，不是什么大病，请医生吃了两剂药也就好了，便放了心，因命凤姐来，吩咐他预备给贾政带去的東西。正商议着，只见贾母打发人来请，王夫人忙引着凤姐儿过来。王夫人又问：“这会子可又觉大安些？”贾母道：“今日可太好了。方才你送来的鹤鹑崽子汤，我尝了尝，倒有味儿，又吃了两块肉，心里很受用。”王夫人笑道：“这是凤丫头孝敬老太太的。算他的孝心虔，不枉了老太太素日疼他。”贾母点头笑道：“难为他想着。若是还有生的，再炸上两块，咸浸浸的，吃粥有味儿。那汤虽好，就只不对吃稀粥。”凤姐听了，连忙答应，命人去厨房传话。

这里贾母又向王夫人笑道：“我打发人请你来，不为别的。初二日是凤丫头的生日，上两年我原就想着给他做生日，偏到跟前就有大事，混过去了。今年人又齐全，料着又没事，咱们大家好生乐一乐。”王夫人笑道：“我也这么想着呢。既是老太太高兴，何不就商议定了？”贾母笑道：“我想往年不拘谁作生日，都是各自送各自的礼，这个也俗了，也觉很生分似的。今儿我出个新法子，又不生分，又可取



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Chapter 43

To Kill Time Money Is Raised to Celebrate a Birthday Incense Is Burned on the Ground to Undying Love

The Lady Dowager was not really ill but had simply caught a chill that day in the Garden. Knowing that a visit from the doctor and some medicine had set her right, Lady Wang stopped worrying and sent for Xifeng whom she told to prepare some things to be taken to Jia Zheng. While they were discussing this, the old lady summoned them and they both hurried over.

“Are you feeling better, madam?” asked Lady Wang.

“Much better,” replied the Lady Dowager. “Just now I tried some of that quail soup you sent, and found it tasty. I ate a few mouthfuls of the flesh too, and enjoyed it.”

“That was a filial offering from Xifeng,” said Lady Wang. “It shows a proper respect for her elders and due gratitude for all your kindness to her.”

“It’s good of her to be so thoughtful.” The old lady nodded. “If there’s any left not yet cooked, I’d like a few slices fried, because being salty it goes well with porridge. The soup doesn’t, although it’s good.”

Xifeng promised to see to this at once and had the order passed on to the kitchen.

Meantime the Lady Dowager told Lady Wang, “I’ll tell you why I sent for you. The second of next month is Xifeng’s birthday. Last year and the year before that I meant to celebrate it, but each time something urgent cropped up and I let matters slide. This year everyone’s here and nothing’s likely to happen, so let’s all have some good fun.”

“Just what I was thinking,” replied Lady Wang. “If that’s what you want, madam, why not settle on it?”

“For birthdays in the past we’ve always sent our presents separately, which is stereotyped and rather formal. Now I’ve thought of a new,



笑。”王夫人忙道：“老太太怎么想着好，就是怎么样行。”贾母笑道：“我想着，咱们也学那小家子大家凑分子，多少尽着这钱去办，你道好玩不好玩？”王夫人笑道：“这个很好，但不知怎么凑法？”贾母听说，益发高兴起来，忙命人去请薛姨妈、邢夫人等，又叫请姑娘们并宝玉，那府里珍儿媳妇并赖大家的等有头脸管事的媳妇也都叫了来。

众丫头、婆子见贾母十分高兴也都高兴，忙忙的各自分头去请的请，传的传，没顿饭时的工夫，老的，少的，上上下下的，乌压压挤了一屋子。只薛姨妈和贾母对坐，邢夫人、王夫人只坐在房门前两张椅子上，宝钗姊妹等五、六个人坐在炕上，宝玉坐在贾母怀前，地下满满的站了一地。贾母忙命拿几个小杌子来，给赖大母亲等几个有体面、年高的嬷嬷坐了。贾府风俗，年高伏侍过父母的家人，比年轻的主子还有体面，所以尤氏凤姐等只管地下站着，那赖大的母亲等三、四个老嬷嬷告了罪，都坐在小杌子上了。

贾母笑着把方才一席话说与众人听了，众人谁不凑这趣儿？再也有和凤姐好的，情愿这样的；也有畏惧凤姐的，巴不得来奉承的。况且都是拿的出来的，所以一闻此言，都欣然应诺。贾母先道：“我出二十两。”薛姨妈笑道：“我随着老太太，也是二十两。”邢、王二夫人笑道：“我们不敢和老太太并肩，自然矮一等，每人十六两罢了。”尤氏、李纨也笑





informal way which should be fun.”

“We’ll do whatever you think best, madam.”

“Well then, why don’t we copy those poorer families in which everybody chips in, and however much is collected goes for a treat. What do you say? Wouldn’t that be fun?”

“Very good. But how shall we go about it?”

Hearing this, the Lady Dowager in high spirits at once gave orders to invite over Aunt Xue, Lady Xing, the girls and Baoyu, as well as Jia Zhen’s wife Madam You from the other mansion, and the wives of the chief stewards such as Lai Da. The maids, infected by the old lady’s good humour, bustled off cheerfully to deliver her invitations; and in less time than it takes for a meal the room was packed with people, old and young, high and low.

Aunt Xue and the Lady Dowager had the seats of honour; Lady Xing and Lady Wang had two chairs by the door; Baochai and five or six other girls sat on the *kang*; Baoyu sat at his grandmother’s knee; and the rest stood, crowding the floor.

The Lady Dowager ordered stools to be fetched for Lai Da’s mother and a few of the older and most highly thought of nurses; for it was the family custom to show more respect to domestics who had served the older generation than to the sons and daughters of the house. Hence Madam You and Xifeng remained standing while, after a show of declining, Lai Da’s mother and three or four other old nurses sat down.

Then the Lady Dowager, beaming, announced her plan. All fell in readily with the novel suggestion. Those on good terms with Xifeng liked the idea, those afraid of her were glad of a chance to please her; and since everyone could afford it they agreed with alacrity.

The Lady Dowager made the first contribution, promising to give twenty taels.

“I’ll follow suit,” said Aunt Xue, “and give twenty too.”

“We dare not rank ourselves with the old lady,” disclaimed Lady Xing and Lady Wang laughingly. “Since we’re one grade lower, we’ll give sixteen apiece.”

“We’re naturally one grade lower still,” put in Madam You and Li Wan. “We’ll give twelve taels each.”



道：“我们自然又矮一等，每人十二两罢。”贾母忙向李纨道：“你寡妇失业的，那里还拉你出这个钱，我替你出了罢。”凤姐忙笑道：“老太太别高兴，且算一算账再揽事。老太太身上已有两分呢，这会子又替大嫂子出十二两，说着高兴，过会子回想又心疼了，过后儿又说：‘都是为凤丫头花了钱’，使个巧法子，哄着我拿出三、四倍来暗里补上，我还作梦呢。”说的众人都笑了，贾母笑道：“依你怎么样呢？”凤姐笑道：“生日没到，我这会子已经折受的不受用了。我一个钱饶不出，惊动这些人实在不安，不如大嫂子这一分我替他出了罢了。我到了那一日多吃些东西，就享了福了。”邢夫人等听了，都说“很是”。贾母方允了。凤姐又笑道：“我还有句话呢。我想老祖宗自己二十两，又有林妹妹、宝兄弟的两分子。姨妈自己二十两，又有宝妹妹的一分子，这倒也公道。只有二位太太每位十六两，自己又少，又不替人出，这有些不公平。老祖宗吃了亏了！”贾母听了，忙笑道：“倒是我的凤丫头向着我，这说的很是。要不是你，我叫他们又哄了去了。”凤姐笑道：“老祖宗只把他姐儿两个交给两位太太，一位占一个，派多派少，每位替出一分就是了。”贾母忙说：“这很公道，就是这样。”赖大的母亲忙站起来笑说道：“这可反了！我替二位太太生气。在那边是儿子媳妇，在这边是内侄女儿，倒不向着婆婆姑娘，倒向着别人。这儿媳妇成了陌路人，内侄女儿竟成了个外侄女儿。”说的贾母与众人都大笑起来了。赖大的母亲因又问道：“少奶奶们十二两，我们自然也该矮一等了。”贾母听说，道：“这使不得。



“You’re a widow with no means of support,” objected the old lady to Li Wan. “We can’t milk you like this. I’ll pay your share.”

“Don’t get carried away, madam,” warned Xifeng with a chuckle. “First count the cost. You still have two more shares to pay, yet now you’re offering to give twelve taels for her. You’re in a good mood at the moment, but presently you may regret it and complain, ‘So much spent on that minx Xifeng!’ Then you’ll play some clever trick to make me part unknowingly with three or four times the amount.”

“What do you propose then?” asked the Lady Dowager amid general laughter.

“My birthday hasn’t come yet,” said Xifeng, “but already I’m quite overwhelmed. Here I am, not paying a cent myself but imposing on all of you — it’s really too bad. So why not let me pay for my sister-in-law? Then I’ll eat more on that day and enjoy myself better.”

Since Lady Xing and the others approved, the old lady gave her consent.

“I’ve something else to say,” continued Xifeng. “It’s quite fair, I think, for our Old Ancestress to give twenty herself plus Daiyu’s and Baoyu’s shares, and for Aunt Xue to give twenty herself plus Baochai’s share. But it’s not very fair for the two mistresses to give less themselves, only sixteen each, and not to pay for anybody else either. This is too hard on our Old Ancestress.”

The Lady Dowager laughed heartily. “So this hussy Xifeng takes my side, and quite right too,” she crowed. “They’d have cheated me if not for you.”

“Just turn Baoyu and Daiyu over to them,” urged Xifeng. “Make them pay one extra share each.”

“Yes, that’s only fair,” the old lady approved. “We’ll do that.”

Lai Da’s mother rose to her feet in mock indignation.

“This is too bad! I can’t bear to see Their Ladyships treated this way. One is Madam Lian’s mother-in-law, the other’s her father’s sister; yet instead of taking their side she sides with someone less close. What’s become of her family feeling?”

This set the whole party laughing.

Then Lai Da’s mother said, “Twelve taels each from Madam You



你们虽该矮一等，我知道你们这几个都是财主，分位虽低，钱却比他们的多。你们和他们一例才使得。”众妈妈听了，连忙答应。贾母又道：“姑娘们不过应个景儿，每人照一个月的月例就是了。”又回头叫鸳鸯来，“你们也凑几个人，商议商议凑了来。”鸳鸯答应着，去不多时，带了平儿、袭人、彩霞等还有几个小丫鬟来，也有二两的，也有一两的。贾母因问平儿：“你难道不替你主子作生日，还入在里头？”平儿笑道：“我那个私自另外有了，这是官中的，也该出一分。”贾母笑道：“这才是好孩子。”凤姐又笑道：“上下都全了。还有二位姨奶奶，他们出不出，也问一声儿，尽到他们是礼，不然，他们只当小看了他们了。”贾母听了，忙说：“可是呢，怎么倒忘了他们！只怕他们不得闲儿，叫一个丫头问问去。”说着，早有一个丫头去了，半日回来，说道：“每位也出二两。”贾母喜道：“拿笔砚来算明，共计多少。”尤氏因悄骂凤姐道：“我把你这没足厌的小蹄子！这么些婆婆、婶子来凑银子给你过生日，你还不足，又拉上两个苦瓠子作什么？”凤姐也悄笑道：“你少胡说，一会子离了这里，我才和你算帐。他们两个为什么苦呢？有了钱也是白填送别人，不如拘了来，咱们乐。”

说着，早已合算了，共凑了一百五十两有零。贾母道：





and Madam Zhu. Of course we're a grade lower, aren't we?"

"No, you can't reckon that way," replied the old lady. "It's true you're one grade lower, but I know you're all rich. You've much more money than they have. So though you rank lower, you must pay the same amount."

The stewards' wives readily agreed to this.

"As for the girls," continued the old lady, "they can simply make a gesture by each giving the equivalent of her monthly allowance." She turned then and called, "Here, Yuanyang! A few of you get together and decide on your contributions."

Yuanyang assented and went out, coming back presently with Pinger, Xiren, Caixia and a few other younger maids. Some said they would give two taels, others one.

"Why are you in on this?" the old lady asked Pinger. "Shouldn't you give your mistress something special for her birthday?"

"I have my own present ready," replied Pinger gaily. "But I want to give my share to the general fund too."

"That's a good girl," approved the Lady Dowager.

"That accounts for everyone here," remarked Xifeng. "Just to be polite, though, we'd better ask the two concubines whether they'd like to join in or not. Otherwise they may feel slighted."

"Of course. Fancy my forgetting them! I don't suppose they're free to come. Send a maid to ask them."

One of the girls went and after some time brought back the answer, "They'll give two taels each too."

The Lady Dowager was pleased. "Get a brush and ink and see how much it comes to," she ordered.

"You greedy bitch," whispered Madam You to Xifeng. "So many in-laws and nurses chipping in for your birthday, yet you're still not satisfied. You must needs drag in those two poor wretches too."

"Nonsense!" Countered Xifeng softly. "Get away with you! Who says they're poor? They throw their money away on other people. We may as well take some and have a good time."

By now the contributions had been counted and they totalled just over a hundred and fifty taels.



“一日戏酒用不了。”尤氏道：“既不请客，酒席又不多，两、三日的用度都够了。头等，戏不用钱，省在这上头。”贾母道：“凤丫头说那一班好，就传那一班。”凤姐道：“咱们家的班子都听熟了，倒是花几个钱叫一班来听听。”贾母道：“这件事我交给珍哥媳妇了。率性叫凤丫头别操一点心，受用一日才是。”尤氏答应着。又说了一回话，都知贾母乏了，才渐渐的都散出来。

尤氏等送邢夫人、王夫人散去，便往凤姐房里来商议怎么办生日的话。凤姐儿道：“你不用问我，你只看老太太的眼色行事就完了。”尤氏笑道：“你这阿物儿，也忒行了大运了。我当有什么事叫我们去，原来单为这个。出了钱不算，还要我来操心，你怎么谢我？”凤姐笑道：“别扯臊，我又没叫你来，谢你什么！你怕操心？你这会子就回老太太去，再派别人办就是了。”尤氏笑道：“你瞧他兴的这样儿！我劝你收着些儿好，太满了就泼出来了。”二人又说了一回方散。

次日，将银子送到宁国府来，尤氏方才起来梳洗，因问是谁送过来的，丫头们说“是林大娘。”尤氏便命叫他进来。丫头们走至下房，叫了林之孝家的过来。尤氏命他脚踏上坐了，一面忙着梳头，一面问他：“这一包银子共多少？”





“That’s more than enough for one day’s theatricals and feasts,” observed the Lady Dowager.

“As we’re not inviting guests, the feasting won’t cost much,” remarked Madam You. “This sum should be enough for two or three days. Besides, the theatricals won’t cost anything. We can save on that.”

“We must get whatever troupe Xifeng wants,” insisted the old lady.

“We’ve heard our own actresses so many times,” said Xifeng, “let’s spend some money and get in a troupe from outside.”

“I’m entrusting all the arrangements to Zhen’s wife,” announced the Lady Dowager. “We mustn’t make Xifeng work. She’s just to have fun that day.”

Madam You agreed to this. And they went on chatting till the old lady was tired, when the party slowly dispersed.

After seeing Lady Xing and Lady Wang off, Madam You called on Xifeng to discuss what arrangements to make for the party.

“Don’t ask me,” said Xifeng. “Just watch the old lady’s reactions and do whatever she wants.”

“You minx, you don’t deserve such luck,” Madam You teased. “I couldn’t think what we were being summoned for. So it was just for this. And as if paying up weren’t bad enough, I’ve got to go to so much trouble too. How are you going to thank me?”

“Don’t talk rubbish,” chuckled Xifeng. “I didn’t ask you to help, why should I thank you? If you think it too much trouble, go and ask the old lady to give someone else the job.”

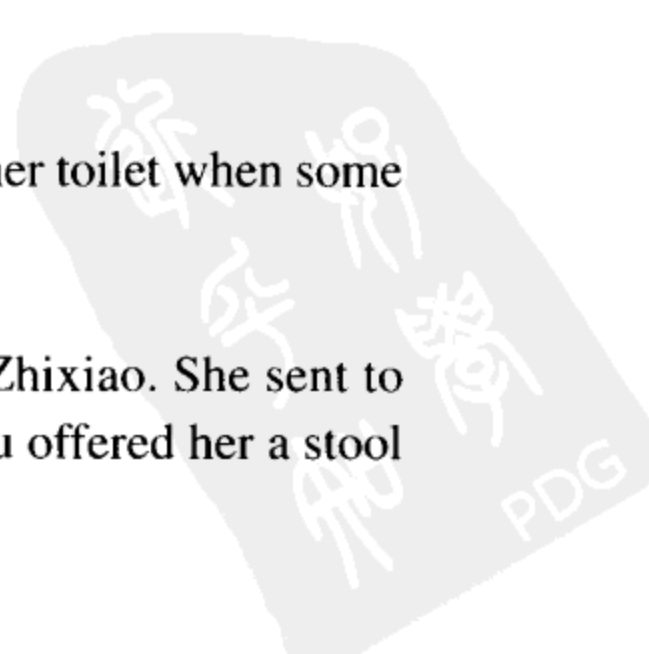
“See how this has gone to your head!” Madam You laughed. “Take my advice and be a bit more modest. If you’re so full of yourself you’ll spill over!”

After some further conversation she left.

The next morning Madam You was still making her toilet when some silver was delivered to the Ning Mansion.

“Who brought this?” she asked.

Her maids told her the wife of the steward Lin Zhixiao. She sent to have her fetched from the maids’ room. Madam You offered her a stool and still combing her hair inquired:





林之孝家的回说：“这是我们底下人的银子，凑了先送过来。老太太和太太们的还没有呢。”正说着，丫鬟们回说：“那府里太太和姨太太打发人送分子来了。”尤氏笑骂道：“小蹄子们，专会记得这些没要紧的话。昨日不过老太太一时高兴，故意的要学那小家子凑分子，你们就记住了，到了你们嘴里当正经的话。还不快接了进来好生待茶，再打发他们去。”丫鬟答应着，忙接了进来，一共两封，连宝钗、黛玉的都有了。尤氏问：“还少谁的？”林之孝家的道：“还少老太太、太太、和姑娘们的，还有底下姑娘们的。”尤氏道：“还有你们大奶奶的呢？”林之孝家的道：“奶奶过去，这银子都从二奶奶手里发，一共都有了。”

说着，尤氏已梳洗了，命人伺候车辆，一时来至荣府，先来见凤姐。只见凤姐已将银子封好，正要送去。尤氏问：“都齐了？”凤姐笑道：“都有了，快拿了去罢，丢了我不管。”尤氏笑道：“我有些信不及，倒要当面点一点。”说着果然按数一点，只没有李纨的一分。尤氏笑道：“我说你弄鬼呢，怎么你大嫂子的没有？”凤姐儿笑道：“那么些还不够么？便短一分儿也罢，等不够了，我再给你。”尤氏道：“昨儿你在人跟前作人，今儿又来和我赖；这个断不依你。我只和老太太要去。”凤姐笑道：“我看你利害。明儿有了事，我也丁是丁卯是卯的，你也别抱怨。”尤氏笑道：“你一般的也怕，





“How much is there in this packet?”

“It’s the money from the staff which we’ve brought over first,” was the answer. “The old lady’s and the mistresses’ isn’t here yet.”

At this point the maids announced, “People have come with chips from Madam Xue and the mistress in the other mansion.”

“You wretches,” scolded Madam You, smiling. “You only remember words of no consequence. Yesterday, for fun, the old lady decided to copy the way poor families chip in to raise money; but you keep solemnly repeating the word. Bring the silver in at once. And see that the messengers have some tea before they go.”

With a cheerful assent the maids brought in two packets of silver, including the shares of Baochai and Daiyu.

“Whose is still missing?” asked Madam You.

“The old lady’s, Lady Xing’s and the shares of the young ladies and their maids,” replied Mrs. Lin.

“How about Madam Zhu?”

“You’ll get hers from Madam Lian when you go over there, madam. It’s all there.”

Madam You, having finished her toilet, ordered her carriage and drove to the Rong Mansion. She called first on Xifeng, who had already wrapped the silver up ready to be delivered.

“Is it all here?” asked Madam You.

“Yes.” Xifeng smiled. “Hurry up and take it away. I won’t be responsible if anything’s lost.”

“I don’t quite believe you.” Madam You laughed. “I must count it here in your presence.” She did so, and found that Li Wan’s share was missing. “I knew you were up to one of your tricks,” she scolded. “Where’s your elder sister-in-law’s contribution?”

“Haven’t you got enough with all the rest? What does it matter if you’re one share short? I’ll make it up later if your funds run out.”

“Yesterday in front of everyone you played the Lady Bountiful; now you want to get out of it, but I won’t let you. I’ll have to apply to the old lady now for the money.”

“What a terror you are,” protested Xifeng, smiling. “Don’t complain next time you’re in trouble if I put on the screws.”



不看你素日孝敬我，我才是不依你呢。”说着，把平儿的一分子拿了出来，说道：“平儿，来！把你这分子收起来，等不够了，我替你添上。”平儿会意，因说道：“奶奶先使着，若剩下了，再赏我一样。”尤氏笑道：“只许你那主子作弊，就不许我作情儿？”平儿只得收了。尤氏又道：“我看着你主子这么细致，弄这些钱那里使去！使不了，明儿带了棺材里使去。”

一面说，一面又往贾母处请了安，大概说了两句话，便走到鸳鸯房中和鸳鸯商议，只听鸳鸯的主意行事，何以讨贾母的喜悦。二人计议妥当。尤氏临走时，也把鸳鸯的二两银子还他，说：“这还使不了呢。”说着，一径出来，又至王夫人跟前说了一回话。因王夫人进了佛堂，把彩云一分也还了他。见凤姐不在跟前，把周、赵二人的也还了，他两个还不敢收。尤氏道：“你们可怜见的，那里有这些闲钱？凤丫头便知道了，有我应着呢。”二人听说，方千恩万谢的收了。于是尤氏一径出来，坐车回家，不在话下。

且说转眼已是九月初二日，园中人都打听得尤氏办得十分热闹，不但有戏，连耍百戏的并说书的男女瞎儿全有，因而都打点取乐玩耍。李纨又向众姊妹道：“今儿是正经社日，可别忘了。宝玉也不来，想必他只图热闹，把清雅就丢开了。”说着，便命丫鬟去瞧作什么呢，快请了来。丫鬟去了半日，回来说：“花大姐姐说，今儿一早就出门去了。”众人



“So you can be frightened too! I wouldn’t let you off if you weren’t usually so dutiful to me.” She took out Pinger’s share then, saying, “Here, Pinger, take this back. I’ll make it up for you if we haven’t enough.”

Pinger understood and replied, “Do keep it, madam. If there’s any left over, you can give it back to me later just the same.”

“So your mistress is allowed to cheat, but I’m not allowed to bribe you,” teased Madam You.

Then Pinger had to take the money back.

“Your mistress is so thrifty,” continued Madam You, “I wonder what she does with all her money. If she can’t spend it all, she’ll have to take it and spend it when she’s in her coffin.”

With this she set off to pay her respects to the Lady Dowager, and after a little conversation with her adjourned to Yuanyang’s room to ask her advice about the party and how best to please the old lady. When their plans were made and she was ready to leave, Madam You returned Yuanyang’s two taels with the explanation:

“I shan’t be needing these.”

She went on then to Lady Wang’s apartments to chat, and when Lady Wang withdrew to her Buddhist shrine she gave Caiyun her share back too. Next she took advantage of Xifeng’s absence to reimburse the two concubines Zhou and Zhao as well. When they dared not take the silver she insisted:

“You’re not well off enough to afford this. If Xifeng hears about it, I’ll take the blame.”

Then the two women accepted with effusive thanks.

In no time it was the second of the ninth month. All the inmates of the Garden knew that Madam You had arranged for a grand party with not only operas but acrobatics and blind story-tellers too, both men and women. They were looking forward to a delightful time.

Li Wan reminded the girls again, “Don’t forget, today is the day for our club meeting. I suppose Baoyu’s not here because he’s forgotten this refined gathering in his eagerness to join in the fun.” She sent a maid to see what he was doing and ask him over.

The maid returned after some time to report, “Sister Xiren says he



听了，都诧异说：“再没有出门之理。这丫头糊涂，不知说话。”因又命翠墨去。一时翠墨回来说：“可不真出了门了。说有个朋友死了，出去探丧去了。”探春道：“断然没有的事。凭他什么，再没有今日出门之理。你叫袭人来，我问他。”刚说着，只见袭人走来，李纨等都说道：“今儿凭他有什么事，也不该出门。头一件，你二奶奶的生日，老太太都这么高兴，两府里上下众人来凑热闹，他倒走了；第二件，又是头一社的正日子，他也不告假，就私自去了！”袭人叹道：“昨儿晚上就说了，今儿一早起有要紧的事到北静王府里去，就赶回来的。劝他不要去，他必不依。今儿一早起来，又要素衣裳穿，想必是北静王府里的要紧姬妾没了，也未可知。”李纨等道：“若果如此，也该去走走，只是也该回来了。”说着，大家又商议：“咱们只管作诗，等他回来罚他。”刚说着，只见贾母已打发人来请，便都往前头来了。袭人回明宝玉的事，贾母不乐，便命人接去。

原来宝玉心内有件私事，于头一日就吩咐茗烟：“明日一早要出门，备下两匹马在后门口等着，不要别的一个跟着。说给李贵，我往北府里去了。倘或要有人找我，叫他拦住不用找，只说北府里留下了，横竖就来的。”茗烟也摸不着头





went out first thing this morning.”

“Surely not!” they exclaimed in surprise. “This girl’s muddled up the message.”

So Cuimo was sent to ask again, but on her return she confirmed that Baoyu had gone out, saying that a friend of his had died and he must go to offer condolences.

“Impossible,” cried Tanchun. “Nothing could have induced him to go out today. Fetch Xiren and let me ask her.”

But even as she was speaking, Xiren walked in.

“Whatever business he had, he shouldn’t have gone out today,” said Li Wan and the others. “In the first place, how could he run off on Madam Lian’s birthday, when the old lady’s in such good spirits and high and low in both mansions are going to join in the fun? In the second, this is the day for our first club meeting, yet he sneaks off alone without even asking leave.”

Xiren explained, “Last night he told me he’d important business first thing this morning and must go to the mansion of the Prince of Beijing, but he’d hurry back. I tried to dissuade him, but he wouldn’t listen. When he got up today he asked for a suit of mourning. It looks as if some lady of consequence in the prince’s household has died.”

“If that’s so, he did right to go,” observed Li Wan. “Still, he should be back by now.”

They discussed what to do.

“Let’s just go ahead with our poems,” said some. “We can punish him when he comes back.”

But just then the Lady Dowager sent for them, and they all went to her apartments. The old lady was displeased when Xiren reported Baoyu’s absence. She ordered him to be fetched back.

Baoyu, with something preying on his mind, the previous day had given Mingyan some instructions. “I’m going out first thing tomorrow, so have two horses waiting at the back gate. I don’t want anyone else to come with us. Tell Li Gui that I’m going to call on the Prince of Beijing, and that he must stop anyone going out to look for me. He can say I’ve been kept by the prince and will soon be back anyway.”



脑，只得依言说了。今儿一早，果然备了两匹马在园子后门等着。天亮了，只见宝玉遍体纯素，从角门出来，一语不发跨上马，一弯腰，顺着街就趲下去了。茗烟也只得跨马加鞭赶上，在后面忙问：“往哪里去？”宝玉道：“这条路是往那里去的？”茗烟道：“这是出北门的大道。出去了冷清清，没有可玩的。”宝玉听说，点头道：“正要冷清清的地方才好。”说着，率性加了两鞭，那马早已转了两个弯子，出了城门。茗烟越发不得主意，只得紧紧跟着。

一气跑了七八里路出来，人烟渐渐稀少，宝玉方勒住马，回头问茗烟道：“这里可有卖香的？”茗烟道：“香倒有，不知要那一样？”宝玉想道：“别的香不好，须得檀、芸、降三样。”茗烟笑道：“这三样，可难得。”宝玉为难。茗烟见他为难，因问道：“要香作什么使？我见二爷时常小荷包里有碎香，何不找一找。”一句话提醒了宝玉，便回手从衣襟下掏出一个荷包来，摸了摸，竟有两星儿沉素香，心内欢喜道：“只是不恭些。”再想自己亲身带的，倒比买的好些。于是又问炉炭，茗烟道：“这可罢了。荒郊野外那里有这个？既要用这些，何不早说，带了来岂不便宜？”宝玉道：“糊涂东西，若可带了来，又不这样没命的跑了。”茗烟想了半日，笑道：“我得了个主意，不知二爷心下如何？我想二爷不止用





Mingyan had no idea what was afoot but had to carry out his orders. The next morning, sure enough, he had two horses ready saddled outside the back gate of the Garden.

At dawn Baoyu, in full mourning, came out of the side gate, mounted his horse without a word and, bending low in the saddle, cantered off down the street. Mingyan could only mount the other horse and whip it on to catch up, shouting after him:

“Where are we going?”

“Where does this road lead?”

“It’s the main road to the North Gate. There’s nothing amusing outside, it’s quiet and deserted.”

Baoyu nodded. “A quiet spot is what I want to find.”

He whipped his horse on and after a couple of turns it sped through the city gate. More puzzled than ever, Mingyan followed close behind. They rode straight on for seven or eight *li* until the houses were few and far between. Then Baoyu reined to a halt and turned to ask:

“Can I buy some incense here?”

“I suppose so,” said Mingyan. “What kind do you want?”

Baoyu replied thoughtfully, “Other kinds are no good; it must be made of sandalwood, rue or laka-wood.”

“Those are difficult to get,” Mingyan told him, grinning. When Baoyu looked worried he asked, “What do you need incense for, sir? I’ve noticed that you often carry bits of incense in your pouch. Why don’t you use that?”

Thus reminded, Baoyu reached for the pouch inside his lapel and was pleased to discover two bits of eaglewood in it. He thought, “This seems a bit lacking in respect. Still, something I have on me should be better anyway than anything I can buy.” He asked then where he could get hold of an incense-burner.

“An incense-burner!” exclaimed Mingyan. “Where would we find one out in the open country? If you wanted these things why didn’t you tell me before? I could easily have brought them.”

“Don’t be a fool,” retorted Baoyu. “I wouldn’t have been riding so hard if it was so simple.”

Mingyan thought for a while then suggested, “I have an idea you



这个呢，只怕还要用别的东西。如今我们率性再往前走二里地，就是水仙庵了。”宝玉听了忙问：“水仙庵就在这里？更好了，我们就去。”说着，就加鞭前行，一面回头向茗烟道：“这水仙庵的姑子常往咱们家去，咱们这一去到那里，和他借香炉使使，他自然是肯的。”茗烟道：“别说他是咱们家的香火，就是平常不认识的庙里，和他借，他也不敢驳回。只是一件，我常见二爷最厌这水仙庵的，如何今儿又这样喜欢了？”宝玉道：“我素日因恨俗人不知原故，混供神，混盖庙，这都是当日有钱的老公们和那些有钱的愚妇听见有个神，就盖起庙来供着，也不知那神是何人，因听些野史小说，便信了真。比如这水仙庵里面因供的是洛神，故名水仙庵，殊不知古来并没有个洛神，那原是曹子建的谎话，谁知这起愚人就塑了像供着。今儿却合我的心事，故借他一用。”

说着，早已来到门前。那老姑子见宝玉来了，事出意外，竟像天上掉下个活龙来的一般，忙上来问好，命老道来接马。宝玉进去，也不拜洛神之像，却只管赏鉴。虽是泥塑的，却真有“翩若惊鸿，婉若游龙”之态，“荷出绿波，日映朝霞”之姿，宝玉不觉滴下泪来。老姑子献了茶，宝玉因和他借香炉。那姑子去了半日，连香供、纸马都预备了来，宝玉道：“一概不用。”便命茗烟捧着炉出至后院，要拣一块干净地方儿，竟拣不出来。茗烟道：“那井台上如何？”宝玉



might consider, sir. I imagine you'll be needing other things too, so why not go on another couple of *li* to River Goddess Convent?"

"Is River Goddess Convent near here? So much the better. Come on, then."

With a crack of his whip Baoyu set off again, calling over his shoulder to Mingyan, "The nuns in that convent often come to our house. If we ask them for the loan of an incense-burner, they're bound to let us have one."

"Of course, we're partons of theirs. Even in a temple we didn't know they could hardly refuse. Only I don't understand why you're so pleased to go there today, sir. I always thought you had a special dislike for this River Goddess Convent."

"It's those vulgar fools who worship gods and build temples for no reason that I hate. Those rich eunuchs and ignorant women who have too much money to spend hear of some god and build a temple to him without knowing the least thing about him, on the strength of some legend or romance they've heard, which they take as the truth. In this River Goddess Convent, for example, they worship the Goddess of the River Luo. That's how the convent got its name. But of course in ancient times no such goddess existed. She's Cao Zijian's invention.¹ Yet some fools had to make an image and worship her. Still, this happens to suit my purpose today, so I'll make use of it."

They had now reached the convent gate. The old abbess was as astonished by this visit as if a live dragon had swooped down from the sky. She made haste to welcome them and told an old serving-man to see to their horses. Baoyu, going in, did not bow to the image of the goddess but simply stared at it in admiration. For though made of clay it really had the grace of "a startled swan of drifting dragon" and the charm of "a lotus rising from green water or sun shining through morning mist."² Unwittingly, he shed tears.

When the old abbess offered him tea he asked if he might borrow an incense-burner. She went to fetch one, finally returning with incense and sacrificial paper to burn as well, but these Baoyu declined. He told Mingyan to find a clean spot at the back of the garden for the incense-burner. Failing to find one, his page asked:



点头，一齐来至井台上，将炉放下。

茗烟站过一边，宝玉掏出香来焚上，含泪施了半礼，回身便命收了去。茗烟答应着，且不收，忙爬下磕了几个头，口里祝道：“我茗烟跟随二爷这几年，二爷的心事，我没有不知道的，只有今儿这一祭祀没有告诉我，我也不敢问。只是这受祭的阴魂虽不知名姓，想来自然是那人间有一，天上无双，极聪明、极俊雅的一位姐姐妹妹了。二爷心事不能出口，让我代祝：你若芳魂有感，香魄多情，虽然阴阳间隔，既是知己之间，时常来望候二爷，未尝不可。你在阴间保佑二爷来生也变个女孩子儿，和你们一处相伴，再不可又托生这须眉浊物了。”说毕，又磕几个头，才爬起来。

宝玉听他没说完，便撑不住笑了，因踢他道：“休胡说，看人听见笑话。”茗烟起来收过香炉，和宝玉走着，因道：“我已经和姑子说了，二爷还没用饭，叫他随便收拾了些东西，二爷勉强吃些。我知道今儿咱们里头大排筵宴，热闹非常，二爷为此才躲了出来的。横竖在这里清净一天，也就尽到了礼了。若不吃东西，断使不得。”宝玉道：“戏酒既不吃，这随便素的吃些何妨。”茗烟道：“这才是呢。还有一说，咱们来了，必有人不放心，若没人不放心，就晚了进城何妨？若有人不放心，二爷须得进城回家去才是。第一，老太太和太太也放了心，第二，礼也尽了，不过如此。就是家



“How about the coping of the well?”

Baoyu nodded and went with him to the well. Having put down the incense-burner, Mingyan stepped aside. Baoyu produced and lit his eaglewood, bowed to it with tears in his eyes, then turned and ordered Mingyan to return the incense-burner. The page assented, but instead of doing as he was told he fell on his knees, kowtowed several times and then prayed:

“I, Mingyan, have served our second master for several years now and known all his affairs; but he didn’t tell me about today’s sacrifice, and I dared not ask. Though your name, oh spirit to whom he is sacrificing, is unknown to me, I am sure you must be a girl with no peer on earth or in heaven, of incomparable intelligence and beauty. As my master can’t tell you what it is he wants, let me pray to you in his place.

“If your fragrant spirit has feeling and compassion, although separated from the world of men do come and visit our young master from time to time, since he longs for you so much. And do help him in the nether world too, so that in his next life he may be reborn as a girl and enjoy himself with the rest of you, never again becoming a filthy man with a beard and shaggy eyebrows.”

This prayer ended, he gave several more kowtows before scrambling to his feet. While he was still holding forth, Baoyu could not help bursting out laughing. Now he kicked him over and swore:

“Shut up, or people will laugh.”

Mingyan rose then and picked up the incense-burner. As they walked away he said, “I told the abbess you’d come out without any breakfast, sir, and asked her to prepare a simple meal. So do try to eat something. I know you’ve come out to avoid the big feast and the racket at home today. Spending a quiet day here you’ll have anyway observed the proprieties; but it would never do if you eat nothing.”

“If we cut the feast, I don’t mind if we have a vegetarian snack here.”

“Good. But there’s another thing: people are bound to be worried by our absence. If not for that, it wouldn’t matter going back late. But since they’ll be worrying, you ought to start back to town soon, sir, and go home. For one thing, that will relieve the minds of the old lady and Lady



去了，看戏吃酒，也并不是二爷有意，原不过陪着父母尽孝道。二爷若单为了这个不顾老太太、太太悬心，就是方才那受祭的阴魂也不安生。二爷想我这话如何？”宝玉笑道：“你的意思我猜着了，你想着只你一个跟了我出来，回去你怕担不是，所以拿这大题目来劝我。我才出来，不过为尽个礼，再去吃酒看戏，并没说一日不进城。这一完了心愿，赶着进城，大家放心，岂不两尽其道。”茗烟道：“这更好了。”说着二人来至禅堂，果然那姑子收拾了一桌素菜，宝玉胡乱吃了些，茗烟也吃了。

二人便上马仍回旧路。茗烟在后面只嘱咐：“二爷好生骑着，这马总没大骑的，手提紧着些。”一面说着，早已进了城，仍从后门进去，忙忙来至怡红院中。袭人等都不在房里，只有几个老婆子看屋子，见他来了，都喜的眉开眼笑，说：“阿弥陀佛，可来了！把花姑娘急疯了！上头正坐席呢，二爷快去罢。”宝玉听说忙将素服脱了，自去寻了华服换上，问在什么地方坐席，老婆子回说在新盖的大花厅上。

宝玉听说，一径往花厅上来，耳内早已隐隐闻得歌管之声。刚至穿堂那边，只见玉钏儿独坐在廊檐下垂泪，一见他来，便收泪说道：“凤凰来了，快进去罢。再一会子不回来，都反了。”宝玉陪笑道：“你猜我往那里去了？”玉钏儿不





Wang; for another, you've already paid sufficient respect to the dead. That's all there is to it. If you go home to drink and watch the shows, it won't be because you want to but simply out of respect for your parents, sir. If you're so set on staying here, regardless of how upset the old lady and Lady Wang are, even the spirit you've just sacrificed to will feel uncomfortable. What do you think, sir?"

"I know what's on your mind." Baoyu grinned. "You're the only one to have come out with me, and you're afraid of a dressing-down when we get home — hence all this high-sounding advice. But I've not been here long, and I only came to make a sacrifice before going to the feast and watching the show. I never said I'd stay out here all day. Now that I've done what I came for, we can hurry back and stop them worrying. That's best both ways, isn't it?"

"That's more like it," said Mingyan.

They entered the hall where the abbess had indeed prepared a vegetarian meal for them. Baoyu ate a little and so did Mingyan, after which they mounted their horses and rode back the way they had come.

Mingyan behind kept warning, "Steady on, sir. That horse hasn't been ridden much. Keep a good grip on the reins."

In no time they re-entered the city and returned home through the back gate, then Baoyu hurried over to Happy Red Court. Xiren and the other girls had gone, leaving only a few old women there in charge. They beamed with joy at sight of Baoyu and exclaimed:

"Amida Buddha! Here you are at last. You had Miss Xiren worried frantic. The feast is just starting. Do hurry, Master Bao."

Baoyu hastily changed his mourning for splendid robes and asked where the feasters were.

The old women told him, "In the new hall in the small garden."

He headed straight for the place, hearing in the distance the faint sound of singing and fluting. When he reached the entrance hall he saw Yuchuan sitting alone on the porch, in tears. She stopped crying at sight of him.

"Here comes the phoenix!" she cried. "Go in, quick. If you'd been any later, I can't think what would have happened."

"Guess where I've been," he said with a sheepish smile.



答，只管擦泪。宝玉忙进厅内，见了贾母、王夫人等，众人真如得了凤凰一般。宝玉忙赶着与凤姐行礼。贾母、王夫人都说他不知好歹，“怎么也不说声就私自跑了，这还了得！明儿再这样，等你老子回家来，必告诉他打你。”说着又骂跟的人偏都听他的话，说那里去就去，也不回一声儿。一面又问他到底那里去了，可吃了什么没有，可唬着了没有。宝玉只应说：“北静王的一个爱妾昨日没了，给他道恼去。他哭的那样，不好撒下就回来，所以多等了一会子。”贾母道：“以后再私自出门，不先告诉我们，一定叫你老子打你。”宝玉答应着。贾母又要打跟的小子们，众人又忙说情，又劝道：“老太太也不必过虑了，他已经回来，大家该放心乐一回了。”贾母先不放心，自然发了恨，今见来了，喜且不尽，那里还恨，也就不提了。还怕他不受用，或者别处没吃饭，路上着了惊怕，反百般的哄他。袭人早过来伏待。大家仍旧看戏。当日演的是《荆钗记》，贾母、薛姨妈等都看的心酸落泪，也有叹的，也有骂的。要知端的，下回分解。





But she did not answer, simply wiping her eyes.

He hurried into the hall and paid his respects to his grand-mother and mother. Everyone was as delighted as if they had indeed got hold of a phoenix. Then Baoyu greeted Xifeng and offered his congratulations.

“You must have taken leave of your senses,” scolded the Lady Dowager and his mother. “How could you run off without telling anybody? Disgraceful! If you ever do such a thing again, we shall tell your father when he comes home and he’ll give you another beating.”

Then the Lady Dowager rounded on the servants. “Why do you all do as he says?” she stormed. “You let him go wherever he pleases without reporting it. And just where *did* you go?” she asked Baoyu. “Have you had a meal? Did anything frighten you?”

“Yesterday one of the Prince of Beijing’s favourite concubines died,” said Baoyu. “I went to offer condolences. He was weeping so bitterly, I hadn’t the heart to leave him. So I stayed for a while.”

“If you go out again without letting me know,” she warned, “I really shall tell your father to beat you.”

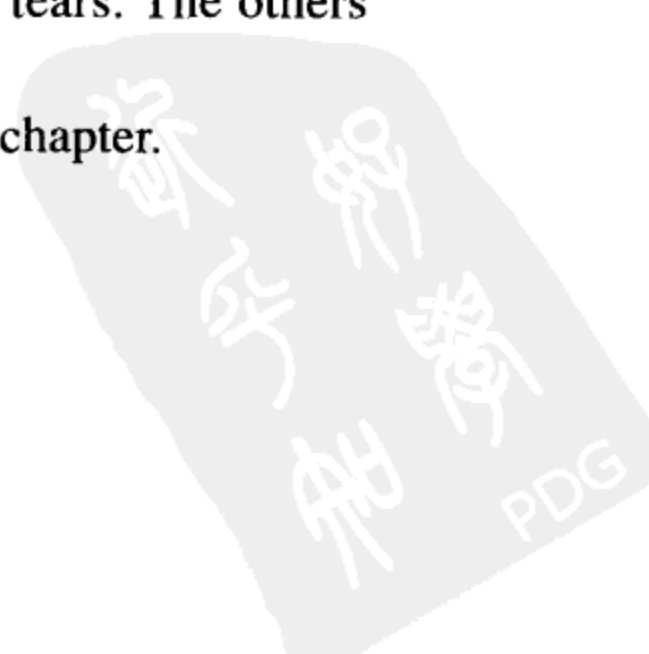
Baoyu promised to do as she said. She threatened, then, to have his servants beaten; but the others pleaded:

“Don’t take it to heart, madam. Now that he’s back we should stop worrying and have some fun.”

As the old lady’s fit of temper had been caused by anxiety, her delight at his return now restored her good humour. She stopped reproaching Baoyu and started making much of him instead, afraid he had had a bad time, missed his breakfast or been frightened on the road. Xiren had come to wait on him too, and they all went on watching the opera.

The opera performed that day was *The Tale of the Thorn Pin*, which so moved the old lady and Aunt Xue that they shed tears. The others laughed at or cursed the characters.

If you want to know what followed, read the next chapter.





寶生不沙鳳
姐潘端



第四十四回

变生不测凤姐泼醋 喜出望外平儿理妆

话说众人看演《荆钗记》，宝玉和姐妹们一处坐着。林黛玉因看到《男祭》这出上，便和薛宝钗说道：“这王十朋也不通的很，不管在那里祭一祭罢了，必定跑到江边子上去作什么！俗语说，‘睹物思人’，天下水总归一源，不拘那里的水舀一碗，看着哭去，也就尽情了。”宝钗不答。宝玉回头要热酒敬凤姐儿。

原来贾母说今日不比往日，定要叫凤姐痛乐一日。本来自己懒待坐席，只在里间屋里榻上歪着和薛姨妈看戏，随心爱吃的拣几样放在小几上，随意吃着说话儿；将自己两桌席面赏给那没有席面的大小丫头并那应差听差的妇人等，命他们在窗外廊檐下也只管坐着随意吃喝，不必拘礼。王、邢二夫人在地下高桌上坐着，外面几席是他们姊妹们坐。贾母不时吩咐尤氏等：“让凤丫头坐在上面，你们好生替我作东，难为他一年到头辛苦。”尤氏答应了，又笑回道：“他坐不惯首席，坐在上头，横不是竖不是的，酒也不肯吃。”贾母听





Chapter 44

Xifeng, Taken by Surprise, Gives Way to Jealousy Pinger, Unexpectedly Gratified, Makes Her Toilet

Baoyu was sitting with the girls as everybody watched *The Tale of the Thorn Pin*. When it came to the scene in which the hero sacrifices to his drowned wife, Daiyu remarked to Baochai:

“What a fool this Wang Shipeng is! Surely he could offer a sacrifice anywhere. Why must he rush off to kneel beside the river? The proverb says: Things have their associations. But water the whole world over in the last analysis comes from the same source. He could have ladled out a bowl of water anywhere and wept over it to work off his feelings.”

Baochai refrained from answering, while Baoyu turned away to ask for some heated wine to toast Xifeng.

As this was a special occasion, the Lady Dowager was determined that Xifeng should have a whole day of unalloyed pleasure. Feeling unequal to joining the feasters herself, she reclined on a couch in the inner room to watch the opera from there with Aunt Xue, from time to time nibbling some of her favourite titbits set out on the teapoy beside her as they chatted. The two tables of food prepared for her she made over to the maids and serving-women who had no share in the feast; with instructions not to stand on ceremony but to sit in the verandah outside and eat and drink as much as they pleased.

Lady Wang and Lady Xing sat at the high table in the old lady's room, the girls at tables in the outer room.

The Lady Dowager reiterated to Madam You, “Xifeng must take the seat of honour. And mind you play hostess well for me to show our appreciation of her hard work all the year round.”

“I'll do my best, madam,” promised Madam You. “But she says she's not used to sitting in the seat of honour. She feels out of place there and won't drink anything.”



了，笑道：“你不会，等我亲自让他去。”凤姐听说忙也进来笑说：“老祖宗别信他们的话，我吃了好几钟了。”贾母笑着，命尤氏：“快拉他出去，按在椅子上，你们都轮流敬他。他再不吃，我当真的就亲自去了。”尤氏听说，忙笑着又拉他出来坐下，命人拿了台盏来斟酒，笑道：“一年到头，难为你孝顺老太太、太太和我。我今儿没什么疼你的，亲自斟杯酒，乖乖儿的在我手里喝一口。”凤姐笑道：“你要安心孝敬我，跪下，我就喝。”尤氏笑道：“说的你不知是谁！我告诉你罢，好不容易今儿这一遭，过了后儿，知道还得像今儿这样不得了？趁着尽力灌丧两钟罢。”凤姐见推不过，只得喝了两钟。接着众姊妹也来敬酒，凤姐也只得每人的喝一口。赖大妈妈见贾母尚这等高兴，也少不得来凑趣儿，领着些嬷嬷们也来敬酒。凤姐也难推脱，只得喝了两口。鸳鸯等也都来敬酒，凤姐真不能了，忙央告道：“好姐姐们，饶了我罢，我明儿再喝罢。”鸳鸯笑道：“真个的，我们是没脸的了？就是我们在太太跟前，太太还赏个脸儿呢。往常倒有些体面，今儿当着这些人，倒拿起主子的款儿来了。我原不该来。不喝，我们就走。”说着真个回去了。凤姐儿忙赶上拉住，笑道：“好姐姐，我喝就是了。”说着拿过酒来，满满的斟了一杯喝干，鸳鸯方笑了散去，然后又入席。





“If you can’t make her drink,” chuckled the old lady, “I’ll go out presently and toast her myself.”

Xifeng hurried in to protest, “Don’t believe her, Old Ancestress. I’ve had quite a few cups already.”

The old lady jokingly ordered Madam You, “Drag her out quick, and force her on to her seat, then take it in turns to toast her. If she still refuses to drink, I shall really come out.”

Madam You gaily carried out these instructions and ordered a mug to be filled.

“From one end of the year to the other you’ve been dutifully filial to the old lady, Lady Wang and me,” she told Xifeng. “I’ve no gift for you today, so I’ll offer you a mug of wine with my own hands. Drink up now like a good girl.”

“If you really want to show appreciation you must kneel down, then I’ll drink,” was Xifeng’s laughing retort.

“Don’t be carried away by all the compliments paid you. I can tell you, such good luck is very rare. Who knows if a day like this will ever come again? So make the most of it, and now drink two cups.”

Xifeng had no choice but to do as she was told. Next, all the girls presented cups and she had to sip from each. Then Lai Da’s mother, seeing the Lady Dowager in such high spirits, decided to join in the fun and led some old serving-women in to toast Xifeng, who again could not refuse them. By the time Yuanyang and the younger maids came to drink her health, she had really had all she could take.

“Good sisters, let me off,” she begged. “I’ll drink with you some other time.”

“So we have no face, is that it?” protested Yuanyang. “Why, even the mistress condescends to drink with us. You usually show us more consideration, but now in front of all these people you’re putting on the airs of a mistress. Well, it’s my fault for coming. If you won’t drink, we’ll leave you.” She turned to go.

Xifeng hastily stopped her, crying. “All right, good sister, I’ll drink.”

She picked up the winepot, filled her cup to the brim, and tossed it off. Then Yuanyang withdrew with a smile.



凤姐儿自觉酒沉了，心里突突的似往上撞，要往家去歇歇，只见那耍百戏的上来，便和尤氏说：“预备赏钱，我要洗洗脸去。”尤氏点头。凤姐儿瞅人不防，便出了席，往房门后檐下走来。平儿留心，也忙跟了来，凤姐儿便扶着他。才至穿廊下，只见他房里的一个小丫头正在那里站着，见他两个来了，回身就跑。凤姐儿便疑心忙叫站住。那丫头先只装听不见，无奈后面连平儿也叫，只得回来。凤姐越发起了疑心，忙和平儿进了穿堂，叫那小丫头子也进来，把榻窗关了。凤姐坐在小院子的台阶上，命那丫头跪下，喝命平儿：“叫两个二门上的小厮来，拿绳子鞭子，把这眼睛里没主子的小蹄子打烂了！”那小丫头已经唬的魂飞魄散，哭着只管碰头求饶。凤姐问道：“我又不是鬼，你见了我，不说规规矩矩站住，怎么倒往前跑？”那小丫头哭道：“我原没看见奶奶来。我又记挂着房里没人，所以跑了。”凤姐道：“房里既没人，谁叫你来的？你便没看见我，我和平儿在后头扯着脖子叫了你十来声，越叫越跑。离的又不远，你聋了不成？你还和我犟嘴！”说着便扬手一掌打在脸上，打的那小丫头一栽；这边脸上又一下，登时小丫头子两腮紫胀起来。平儿忙劝：“奶奶仔细手疼。”凤姐便说：“你再打着问他跑什么。他再不说，把嘴撕烂了他的！”那小丫头子先还犟嘴，后来听



After seating herself again, Xifeng felt the effects of the wine. Her heart was beating so fast that she decided to go home for a rest. As the jugglers had just come in, she asked Madam You to see about tipping them while she went and had a wash.

Madam You nodded and, since no one else detained her, Xifeng left the table and slipped out the back way. Watchful Pinger quickly followed her and took her arm. They were just approaching the covered walk when they noticed one of their young maids standing there, but at sight of them she turned and ran. This made Xifeng suspicious. She called to her to stop. At first the girl pretended not to hear, but when Pinger called to her too she had to come back.

Xifeng, more suspicious than ever now, stepped with Pinger into the entrance hall and told the maid to join them and close the partitions. Seating herself on the steps leading to the small courtyard, she made the girl kneel down.

"Get two boys from the inner gate to bring ropes and whips," she sharply ordered Pinger. "We'll give this impudent little bitch a good flogging."

The girl, frightened out of her wits, burst into tears and knocked her head on the ground as she begged for mercy.

"I'm not a ghost," snapped Xifeng. "Why didn't you stand to attention when you saw me? Why run away?"

"I didn't see you, madam," sobbed the maid. "I ran because I remembered there was no one in our apartments."

"If so, why did you come here in the first place? Even if you didn't see me, we called you at the top of our voices a dozen times, but that only made you run the faster. We weren't far off and you're not deaf. How dare you answer back?"

She slapped the girl so hard on the face that she staggered, then gave her another slap on the other side. At once the girl's cheeks began to swell up and turn purple.

"Mind you don't hurt your hand, madam," urged Pinger.

"Hit her for me then. Make her say why she ran away. If she won't, tear her lips!"

The maid went on protesting her innocence until Xifeng threatened to



见凤姐要烧了红烙铁来烙嘴，方哭道：“二爷在家里，打发我来这里瞧着奶奶的，若是散了，先叫我送信儿去。不承望奶奶这会子就回来了。”凤姐见话中有文章，必有别的缘故，便又问道“叫你瞧着我作什么？难道怕我家去不成？快告诉我，我从此以后疼你。你若不细说，立刻拿刀子来割你的嘴。”说着，回手向头上拔下一根簪子来，向那丫头嘴上乱戳，唬的那丫头一行躲，一行哭求道：“我告诉奶奶，可别说我说的。”平儿在旁劝一回，推他快说。那丫头便说道：“二爷也是才来房里的，睡了一会醒了，打发人来瞧瞧奶奶，说才坐席，还得好一会才来呢。二爷就开了箱子，拿了两块银子，还有两根簪子，两匹缎子，叫我悄悄的送与鲍二的老婆去，叫他进来。他收了东西就往咱们屋里来了。二爷又叫我来瞧着奶奶，底下的事我就知道了。”

凤姐听了，已气的浑身发软，忙立起来一径来家。刚至院门，只见又有个小丫头在门前探头，一见了凤姐，也缩头就跑。凤姐提着名字喝叫站住。那丫头本来伶俐，见躲不过了，率性跑了出来，笑道：“我正要去告诉奶奶去呢，可巧奶奶来了。”凤姐道：“告诉我什么？”那丫头便说二爷在家这般如此，将方才的话也说了一遍。凤姐啐道：“你早作什么来着？这会子我看见你了，你来推干净儿！”说着，也扬手一下，打的那丫头一个趔趄，便蹑手蹑脚的走至窗前。往里听





brand her mouth with a red-hot iron. Then she confessed with tears:

“The master’s home. He sent me here to watch out for you and let him know as soon as I saw you coming, madam. He didn’t think you would be back so soon.”

Xifeng guessed that there was more to it than this. “Why did he ask you to do that?” she demanded. “Why should he be afraid of my return? There must have been a reason. If you tell me straight out, I’ll be good to you; but if you won’t talk, I’ll get a knife this instant and carve you up.” She drew a pin from her hair as she spoke and jabbed viciously at the maid’s mouth.

Shrinking back in fright the girl sobbed, “I’ll tell you, madam. But please don’t let the master know that I told.”

Pinger, trying to pacify Xifeng, urged the maid to hurry up.

“The master came home not long ago and had a short nap,” she said. “After he woke up he sent someone to see what you were doing, madam. She reported that you’d just started the feast and wouldn’t be back for some time. Then the master opened a case and took out two pieces of silver, two hairpins and two bolts of satin. He told me to take them secretly to Bao Er’s wife and ask her to come over. She took the things and came; then the master told me to watch out for you, madam. What happened after that I don’t know.”

Trembling with rage, Xifeng sprang to her feet and hurried towards her compound. Another young maid was stationed at the gate, and at sight of Xifeng she ducked back and ran. Xifeng called her by name to stop, and this girl had more sense: seeing that there was no escape, she came running out instead.

“I was just coming to report to you, madam,” she said with a smile. “But luckily here you are.”

“What were you coming to report?”

“Our master’s back” She went on to repeat the story told by the other.

Xifeng spat in disgust. “And what have you been doing all this time?” she cried. “You’re only trying to clear yourself because I caught you.”

She dealt the maid a blow which made her stagger, then tiptoed into the courtyard and up to the window to listen.



时，只听里面说笑。那妇人笑道：“多早晚你那阎王老婆死了就好了。”贾琏道：“他死了，再娶一个也是这样，又怎么样呢？”那妇人道：“他死了，你倒是把平儿扶了正，只怕还好些。”贾琏道：“如今连平儿他也不许我沾一沾了。平儿也是一肚子委屈不敢说。我命里怎么就该犯了‘夜叉星’。”

凤姐听了，气的浑身乱颤，又听他俩都赞平儿，便疑平儿素日背地里自然也有埋怨的话了，那酒越发涌了上来，也并不忖度，回身把平儿先打了两下，一脚踢开门进去，也不容分说，抓住鲍二家的打了一顿。又怕贾琏走出去，便堵着门站着骂道：“好淫妇！你偷主子汉子，还要治死主子老婆！平儿过来！你们淫妇忘八一条藤儿，多嫌着我，外面儿你哄我！”说着又把平儿打了几下，打的平儿有冤无处诉，只气得干哭，骂道：“你们做这些没脸的事，好好的又拉上我做什么！”说着也把鲍二家的厮打起来。贾琏也因吃多了酒，进来高了兴，未曾作的机密，一见凤姐来了，已没了主意，又见平儿也闹起来，把酒也气上来了。凤姐儿打鲍二家的，他已又气又愧，只不好说的，今见平儿也打，便上来踢骂道：“好娼妇！你也动手打人！”平儿怕打，忙住了手，哭道：“你们背地里说话，为什么拉我呢？”凤姐见平儿怕贾琏，越发





She heard the woman inside say laughingly, "If only that hellish wife of yours would die!"

"What if she did?" replied Jia Lian. "I'd marry another who might be just as bad."

"When she dies, you can promote Pinger and make her your wife. She should be easier to handle."

"Nowadays she won't even let me touch Pinger," said Jia Lian. "Pinger resents it too, but she dares not complain. What a fate, being saddled with a hell-cat like her!"

Xifeng was convulsed with fury, convinced by their praise of Pinger that the latter must have been complaining about her behind her back too. By now the wine had quite gone to her head and, not stopping to think, she rounded on Pinger and slapped her. Next she kicked open the door and burst into the room. Without a word she caught hold of Bao Er's wife and pummelled her, then posted herself at the door to cut off Jia Lian's retreat.

"Dirty whore!" she cursed. "You steal your mistress' husband and plot to murder your mistress. And Pinger, you come here! You whores and bitches have ganged up against me, yet you make such a public show of trying to please me."

With that she struck Pinger again. Having no one to whom to complain of this injustice, Pinger holding back her tears nearly choked with rage.

"Can't you wallow in the muck by yourselves without dragging me in for no reason at all?" she stormed. She started scratching and slapping Bao Er's wife too.

Jia Lian, coming home in high spirits after drinking, had allowed himself to be caught off his guard so that when his wife burst in he was quite at a loss. Now that Pinger was making a scene too he flew into a drunken passion. When Xifeng beat Bao Er's wife he could only look on furiously and sheepishly, but as soon as Pinger joined in he charged forward and kicked her.

"You slut! Who are *you* to raise your hand against her?"

Pinger fearing that he would beat her promptly left off, protesting tearfully, "When you talk behind our backs, why drag me in?"



气了，又赶上来打着平儿偏叫打鲍二家的。平儿急了，便跑出来找刀子要寻死。外面众婆子、丫头忙拦住解劝。这里凤姐见平儿寻死去，便自己一头撞在贾琏怀里，叫道：“你们一条藤儿害我，被我听见了，倒都吓起我来了。你也勒死我！”贾琏气的墙上拔出剑来，说道：“不用寻死，我也急了，一齐杀了，我偿了命，大家干净。”正闹的不开交，只见尤氏等一群人来了，说：“这是怎么说，才好好的，就闹起来。”贾琏见了人，越发“倚酒三分醉”，逞起威风来，故意要杀凤姐。凤姐见有人来了，便不似先前那般泼了，丢下众人，便哭着往贾母那边跑。

此时戏已散出，凤姐跑到贾母跟前，爬在贾母怀里，只说：“老祖宗救我！琏二爷要杀我呢！”贾母、邢夫人、王夫人等忙问怎么了。凤姐哭道：“我才家去换衣裳，不防琏二爷在家和人说话，我只当是有客来了，唬得我不敢进去。在窗户外头听了一听，原来是和鲍二家的商议，说我利害，要拿毒药给我吃了治死我，把平儿扶了正。我原气了，又不敢和他吵，原打了平儿两下，问他为什么要害我。他臊了，就要杀我。”贾母等听了，都信以为真，说：“这还了得！快拿了那下流种子来！”一语未完，只见贾琏拿着剑赶来，后面许多人跟着。贾琏明仗着贾母素日疼他们，连母亲、婶母也无关碍，故逞强闹了来。邢夫人、王夫人见了，气的忙拦住骂



Pinger's fear of Jia Lian made Xifeng angrier than ever. She rounded on her and struck her again, insisting that she go on beating Bao Er's wife. In desperation, Pinger ran out of the room to find a knife with which to kill herself, but the serving-women and maids outside hastily stopped her and tried to dissuade her.

When Xifeng saw Pinger bent on suicide, she rammed her head against Jia Lian's chest and screamed, "You've all ganged up to do me in, and when I find out you all try to frighten me. Strangle me and have done with it!"

In a towering rage Jia Lian snatched a sword from the wall.

"She needn't kill herself," he bellowed. "I've had all I can take. I'll kill the lot of you and pay with my life. Make a clean sweep!"

This uproar was at its height when Madam You and some others arrived on the scene.

"What does this mean?" they exclaimed. "A moment ago all was well. What's the row about?"

Their presence emboldened Jia Lian, half drunk as he was, to bluster even more wildly and swear to kill Xifeng. For her part, at their arrival she had stopped storming and slipped away tearfully to enlist the support of the Lady Dowager.

By this time the opera was over. Xifeng ran to the old lady and threw herself into her arms.

"Save me, Old Ancestress! Lian wants to kill me."

The old lady, Lady Xing and Lady Wang immediately asked what had happened.

"When I went home just now to change," Xifeng sobbed, "I heard him talking to someone. Not liking to intrude if he had a guest, I listened outside the window. It was Bao Er's wife there, and the two of them were plotting to poison me because I'm a shrew and put Pinger in my place. Angry as I was, I dared not quarrel with *him*; I just gave Pinger a couple of slaps and asked her why she should want to murder me. He flared up then and threatened to kill me."

The Lady Dowager and the others believed her story.

"How monstrous!" exclaimed the old lady. "Bring the wretch here."

That same moment Jia Lian rushed in with his sword, followed by a crowd of people. Counting on the Lady Dowager's usual indulgence and



道：“这下流种子！你越发反了，老太太还在这里呢！”贾琏也斜着眼，道：“都是老太太惯的他，他才这样，连我也骂起来了！”邢夫人气的夺下剑来，只管喝他“快出去！”那贾琏只管撒娇撒痴，涎言涎语的还只乱说。贾母气的说道：“我知道你不把我们放在眼里，叫人把他老子叫来看他去不去！”贾琏听见这话，方趑趄着脚儿出去了，赌气也不往家去，便往外书房来。

这里邢夫人、王夫人也说凤姐儿。贾母笑道：“什么要紧的事！小孩子年轻，馋嘴猫儿似的，那里保得住不这么样。从小儿世人都打这么过的。都是我的不是，他多吃了两口酒，又吃起醋来。”说的众人都笑了。贾母又道：“你放心，等明儿我叫他来替你赔不是。你今儿别要过去臊着他。”因又骂：“平儿那蹄子，素日我倒看他好，怎么暗地里这么坏。”尤氏等笑道：“平儿没有不是，是凤丫头拿着人家出气。两口子不好对打，都拿着平儿煞性子。平儿委屈的什么似的呢，老太太还骂人家。”贾母道：“原来这样，我说那孩子倒不像那狐媚魔道的。既这么着，可怜见儿的，白受他主子的气。”因叫琥珀来：“你去告诉平儿，就说我的话：我知道他受了委屈了，明儿我叫凤姐儿替他赔不是。今儿是他主子的好日子，不许他胡闹。”





the helplessness of both his mother and aunt, he ranted and raged with a great show of bravado.

Lady Xing and Lady Wang angrily barred his way. "Have you gone mad, you degenerate?" they scolded. "How dare you behave like this in the old lady's presence?"

He cast them a sidelong glance. "It's the old lady who's spoiled her," he retorted. "So now she even has the nerve to swear at me."

Lady Xing wrathfully snatched away his sword and ordered him out of the room. But he simply went on blustering and storming.

"I know you have no respect for *us*," snapped the Lady Dowager. "Send someone to fetch his father, and see if he'll go then."

Then Jia Lian slunk off. Too angry to go home, he went to his outside study.

Meanwhile Lady Xing and Lady Wang had been remonstrating with Xifeng.

"Don't take it so seriously," said the old lady, smiling. "He's only a boy and as greedy as a cat. This sort of thing can't be helped. All young men go through such stages. It's my fault for making Xifeng drink so much — the wine's turned to vinegar."

At this everybody laughed.

"Don't worry," the old lady told Xifeng. "Tomorrow I'll make him come here to apologize to you. Don't go back today to embarrass him. As for that wretch Pinger, I thought she was a good girl — how could she turn out so sly?"

"Pinger's not to blame," put in Madam You soothingly. "Xifeng was just making a whipping-boy of her. Husband and wife couldn't very well fight each other, so both worked off their temper on her. Pinger feels most terribly wronged. Don't you go blaming her too, madam!"

"So that's how it is," said the Lady Dowager. "Yes, I never thought the child was one of those vamps. Well then, poor thing, her mistress stormed at her for no reason. Here, Hupo! Go and tell Pinger from me: I know she's been unfairly treated and tomorrow I'll get Xifeng to apologize; but she mustn't make a scene today because it's her mistress' birthday."



原来平儿早被李纨拉入大观园去了。平儿哭的哽噎难抬。宝钗劝道：“你是个明白人，素日凤丫头何等待你？今儿他不过多吃了一口酒。他可不拿你出气，难道倒拿别人出气不成？别人又笑话他吃醉了。你只管这会子委屈，素日你的好处，岂不都是假的了？”正说着，只见琥珀走来，说了贾母的话。平儿自觉面上有了光辉，方才渐渐的好了，也不往前头来。宝钗等歇息了一会，方来看贾母、凤姐。

宝玉便让了平儿到怡红院中来。袭人忙接着，笑道：“我先原要让你的，只因大奶奶和姑娘们都让你，我就不好让的了。”平儿也陪笑说“多谢”。因又说道：“好好儿的从那里说起，无缘无故白受了一场气。”袭人笑道：“二奶奶素日待你很好，这不过是一时气急了。”平儿道：“二奶奶倒没说的，只是那个淫妇又偏拿我凑趣儿，我们糊涂爷倒打我。”说着便又委屈，禁不住落泪。宝玉忙劝道：“好姐姐，别伤心，我替他两个赔不是罢。”平儿笑道：“与你什么相干？”宝玉笑道：“我们弟兄姊妹都一样。他们得罪了人，我替他赔个不是也是应该的。”又道：“可惜这新衣裳也沾了，这里有你花妹妹的衣裳，何不换了下来，拿些烧酒喷喷熨一熨，把头也另梳一梳。”一面说，一面便吩咐小丫头子们舀洗脸水，烧熨斗来。平儿素习只闻人说宝玉专能和女孩儿们接交；宝玉素日因平儿是贾琏的爱妾，又是凤姐的心腹，故不肯和他厮近，因不能尽心，也常为恨事。平儿今见他这般，心中也暗暗的掂掇：果然话不虚传，色色想的周到。又见袭人特特的开了箱子，拿出两件不大穿的衣裳来与他换，便连



Long before this Li Wan had led Pinger into Grand View Garden, but she was still sobbing too much to speak.

“You’re an intelligent girl,” reasoned Baochai. “You know how well Xifeng’s always treated you. Today she just happened to have too much to drink and whom could she vent her anger on if not you? People are laughing at her for getting drunk. If you go on taking it so much to heart, it’ll look as if all your good qualities are a pretence.”

Just then Hupo arrived with the Lady Dowager’s message which vindicated Pinger and made her feel rather better. She did not go back, however, to Xifeng’s apartments.

After resting for a while, Baochai and the others rejoined the Lady Dowager and Xifeng. Then Baoyu invited Pinger to Happy Red Court, where Xiren came out to welcome her with a smile.

“I was going to ask you over,” she remarked, “but Madam Zhu and the young ladies got in first.”

Pinger thanked her with a smile. “This storm sprang up out of the blue,” she said. “I’d done nothing, nothing at all, to deserve such treatment.”

“Madam Lian’s usually very good to you. Today she just happened to fly into a temper.”

“I don’t hold it against my mistress,” answered Pinger. “But that bitch had to drag me in, to amuse herself at my expense, and our fool of a master beat me instead of her.”

The thought of this injustice brought on a fresh fit of weeping.

“Don’t be so upset, dear sister,” urged Baoyu. “Let me apologize for them.”

“What has it to do with *you*?” asked Pinger, smiling.

“We’re all cousins alike, so when they offend anybody I ought to apologize.” Then he added, “What a pity you’ve dirtied your new clothes too. Why don’t you change into some of Xiren’s so that yours can be sprayed with spirits and pressed? You’d better comb your hair too.”

He ordered some young maids to bring water and heat a flat-iron.

Now Pinger knew only by hearsay how attentive Baoyu was to girls. For as she was Jia Lian’s favourite concubine and Xifeng’s confidante he had always steered clear of her, much though he regretted not being able to pay her more attention. Secretly impressed today by his behaviour



忙脱下自己的衣服，忙去洗了脸。宝玉在旁笑劝道：“姐姐还该擦上些脂粉，不然倒像是和凤姐姐赌气了似的。况且又是他的好日子，而且老太太又打发了人来安慰你。”平儿听了有理，便去找粉，只不见粉。宝玉忙走至妆台前，将一个宣窑瓷盒揭开，里面盛着一排十根玉簪花棒，拈了一根递与平儿。又笑向他道：“这不是铅粉，这是紫茉莉花种，研碎了兑上香料制的。”平儿倒在掌上看时，果见轻白红香，四样俱美，扑在脸上也容易匀净，且能润泽肌肤，不似别的粉青重涩滞。然后看见胭脂也不是成张的，却是一个小小的白玉盒子，里面盛着一盒，如玫瑰膏子一样。宝玉笑道：“那市卖的胭脂都不干净，颜色也薄。这是上好的胭脂拧出汁子来，淘澄净了渣滓，配了花露蒸叠成的。只用细簪子挑一点儿抹在手心里，用一点水化开抹在唇上；手心里剩的就够打颊腮了。”平儿依言粉饰，果见鲜艳异常，且又甜香满颊。宝玉又将盆内的一枝并蒂秋蕙用竹剪撷了下来，与他簪在鬓上。忽见李纨打发丫头来唤他，方忙忙的去。

宝玉因自来从未在平儿前尽过心，且平儿又是个极聪明极清俊的上等女孩儿，比不得那起俗拙蠢物，深为恨怨。今日是金钏儿的生日，故一日不乐。不想落后闹出这件事来，竟得在平儿前稍尽片心，亦今生意中不想之乐也。因歪在床上，心内怡然自得。忽又思及贾琏惟知以淫乐悦己，并不知





she told herself, "Yes, he lives up to his reputation. He shows real consideration."

Now Xiren specially opened a case to take out some clothes she seldom wore to lend her, and Pinger hastily changed and washed her face.

"Put on some rouge and powder too," coaxed Baoyu who was watching. "Otherwise it will look as if you're still angry with Xifeng. After all, today is her birthday and the old lady did send someone to comfort you."

Pinger felt the truth of this and looked round for some powder, but could not see any. At once Baoyu went to the dressing-table and opened a porcelain casket made in the Xuan De period¹ containing ten sticks of four-o'clock-seed powder. He handed one to her.

"This isn't white lead. It's made of the seeds of purple four-o'clock ground fine and mixed with aromatics."

Pinger holding it on her palm found it light, pinky white and fragrant, delightful in every respect. Brushed over her cheek it was easy to spread smoothly and felt moist, having much finer grains than the usual powder which was bluish-white and sticky. The rouge too, in its small white-jade box, she observed, was not in the usual sheets but looked more like rose salve.

"The rouge sold in the market isn't clean, and the colour's faint," explained Baoyu. "This is made from the essence of the very best safflower, which is steamed after all impurities have been extracted and attar added. You need only take a little on a pin, rub it on the palm of your hand, then dilute it with a drop of water and apply it to your lips. What's left on your palm will be enough for your cheeks."

Pinger carried out his instructions and did indeed find the rouge extraordinarily vivid and fragrant.

Then, with a pair of bamboo scissors, Baoyu cut a spray of double autumn flowering orchid that was growing in a pot for her to pin on her hair. Just then, however, Li Wan sent a maid to fetch her, and Pinger hastily left.

It distressed Baoyu that he had never shown much attention to Pinger before, though she was such an intelligent, good-looking girl, altogether superior to the common run of stupid, vulgar creatures. He had been grieving all day because this was Jinchuan's birthday, till this chance to show Pinger some attention — a chance he had never expected in a



作养脂粉。又思平儿并无父母、兄弟、姊妹，独自一人，供应贾琏夫妇二人。贾琏之俗，凤姐之威，他竟能周全妥贴，今日还遭荼毒，想来此人薄命，比黛玉尤甚。想到此间，便又伤感起来，不觉洒然泪下。因见袭人等不在房内，尽力落了几点痛泪。复起身，又见方才的衣裳上喷的酒已半干，便拿熨斗熨了叠好；见他的手帕子忘去，上面犹有泪渍，又拿至脸盆中洗了晾上。又喜又悲，闷了一会，也往稻香村来，说了一回闲话，掌灯后方散。

平儿就在李纨处歇了一夜，凤姐只跟着贾母。贾琏晚间归房，冷清清的，又不好去叫，只得胡乱睡了一夜。次日醒了，想昨日之事，大没意思，后悔不来。邢夫人记挂着昨日贾琏醉了，忙一早过来，叫了贾琏过贾母这边来。贾琏只得忍愧前来，在贾母面前跪下。贾母问他：“怎么了？”贾琏忙陪笑说：“昨日原是吃了酒，惊了老太太的驾了，今儿来领罪。”贾母啐道：“下流东西，灌了黄汤，不说安分守己的挺尸去，倒打起老婆来了！凤丫头成日家说嘴，霸王似的一个人，昨儿唬得可怜。要不是我，你要伤了他的命，这会子可怎么样？”贾琏一肚子的委屈，不敢分辩，只认不是。贾母又道：“那凤丫头和平儿还不是个美人胎子？你还不足！成日家偷鸡摸狗，脏的臭的，都拉了你屋里去。为这起淫妇打老





lifetime — had brought him a quite unlooked-for happiness. He therefore curled up on his bed feeling very pleased with himself.

“Jia Lian’s only interested in sex but has no consideration for girls,” he reflected. “Here’s Pinger, all alone, with no parents, brothers or sisters, waiting on Jia Lian and Xifeng and coping so well with his vulgarity and her vindictiveness; yet she still gets into this dreadful trouble today. How unkind fate is to her! She’s even worse off than Daiyu.”

These reflections upset him again, reducing him to tears, and as Xiren and the others had left the room he indulged in a fit of weeping. Noticing that the alcohol sprayed on Pinger’s clothes was now almost dry, he pressed the clothes with the iron and folded them neatly. He saw she had forgotten her handkerchief. As it was still stained with tears, he washed it in the basin and hung it up to dry in a mood of pleasurable melancholy. Then, growing bored, he went off to Paddy-Sweet Cottage to chat with the others until it was time to light the lanterns and part.

Pinger spent the night with Li Wan and Xifeng with the Lady Dowager. Thus Jia Lian, going home that evening, found the place uncannily quiet. But since he could hardly fetch them he had to spend that night alone. The next morning, too late, he regretted the scene he had made. So when Lady Xing came over early, distressed by his drunken behaviour the previous day, he accompanied her to the old lady’s apartments. Going in sheepishly, he fell on his knees before the Lady Dowager.

“Well?” she asked.

With an apologetic smile he said, “Yesterday I drank too much and disturbed you, madam. I’ve come now to be punished.”

She spat in disgust and swore, “You degenerate! After swigging you might at least stretch out on your bed quietly like a corpse instead of beating your wife. Xifeng’s a regular saucebox and likes to lord it over everyone, but how you frightened the poor thing yesterday! If not for me you might have killed her. What do you intend to do now?”

Jia Lian had to accept this reproach, much as it rankled, and did not venture to vindicate himself.

“Aren’t Xifeng and Pinger both beauties? Aren’t they enough for you?” the old lady demanded. “You never stop philandering, dragging

婆，又打屋里的人，你还亏是大家的公子出身，活打了嘴了。你若眼睛里有我，你起来，我饶了你，乖乖的替你媳妇赔个不是，拉了他家去，我就喜欢了。要不然，你只管出去，我也不敢受你的跪。”贾琏听如此说，又见凤姐儿站在那边，也不甚妆，哭的眼睛肿着，也不甚施脂粉，黄黄的脸儿，比往常更觉可怜可爱。想着：“不如赔了不是，彼此也好了，又讨老太太的喜欢。”想毕，便笑道：“老太太的话，我不敢不依，只是越发纵了他了。”贾母笑道：“胡说！我知道他最有礼的，再不会冲撞人。他日后要得罪了你，我自然也作主，叫你降伏他就是了。”

贾琏听说，爬起来，便与凤姐儿作了一个揖，笑道：“原是我的不是，二奶奶饶过我罢。”满屋里的人都笑了。贾母笑道：“凤丫头，不许恼了，再恼我就恼了。”说着，又命人去叫平儿来，命贾琏凤姐两个安慰他。贾琏见了平儿，越发顾不得了，所谓“妻不如妾，妾不如偷”，听贾母一说，便赶上来说道：“姑娘昨儿受了委屈了，都是我的不是。奶奶得罪了你，也是因我而起。我赔了不是不算外，还替你奶奶赔个不是。”说着，也作下揖去，引的贾母笑了，凤姐也笑了。贾母又命凤姐儿来安慰他。平儿忙走上来给凤姐磕头，说：“奶奶的千秋，我惹了奶奶生气，是我该死。”凤姐正自愧悔昨日酒吃多了，不念素日之情，浮躁起来，为听了旁人



every stinking bit of filth to your room. Fancy beating your own wife and concubine for a whore like that! How can the son of a good family behave so disgracefully? If you've any respect for me, get up. I'll forgive you on condition that you apologize to your wife and take her home. That's the way to please me. Otherwise just take yourself off, I won't have you kneeling to me."

During this lecture Jia Lian saw Xifeng standing there, not in her usual finery but with her eyes swollen from weeping, her pale face unpainted and unpowdered, looking more pathetic and lovely than ever before. He thought, "I may as well apologize and make it up. That will please the old lady too."

He therefore replied with a smile, "To hear is to obey, madam. But I'm afraid this will only make her more headstrong."

"Nonsense," retorted the Lady Dowager. "She has the strongest sense of what's fitting, I know, and won't burst out like this again. If she offends you in future, of course I'll give you permission to make her submit to your authority."

Jia Lian rose to his feet then and bowed to Xifeng.

"It was my fault, madam," he said. "Please forgive me."

At that the whole company laughed.

"Don't make a scene now, Xifeng," said the old lady smiling. "If you do, I shall be cross."

Next she sent for Pinger and ordered Jia Lian and Xifeng to make their peace with *her*. This Jia Lian was very ready to do. He promptly stepped forward and said:

"I'm the one to blame for the unjust way you were treated yesterday, miss, and because of me your mistress wronged you too. So let me apologize for myself as well as for your mistress." With that he bowed again, making the Lady Dowager and Xifeng laugh.

Then the old lady told Xifeng it was her turn, but already Pinger had kowtowed to her mistress.

"I deserve death, madam," she said, "for offending you on your birthday."

Xifeng was thoroughly ashamed of having drunk so much the previous day that she had forgotten their long friendship and lost her temper,



的话，无故给平儿没脸。今反见他如此，又是惭愧，又是心酸，忙一把拉起来，落下泪来。平儿道：“我伏侍了奶奶这么几年，也没弹我一指头。就是昨儿打我，我也不怨奶奶，都是那淫妇治的，怨不得奶奶生气。”说着，也滴下泪来了。贾母便命人将他三人送回房去，“有一个再提此事，即刻来回我，我不管是谁，拿拐棍子给他一顿。”

三个人从新给贾母、邢夫人、王夫人磕了头。老嬷嬷答应了，送他三人回去。至房中，凤姐见无人，方说道：“我怎么像个阎王，又像夜叉？那淫妇咒我死，你也帮着咒。我千日不好，也有一日好。可怜我熬的连个淫妇也不如了，我还有什么脸过这日子？”说着，又哭了。贾琏道：“你还不足？你细想想，昨儿谁的不是多？今儿当着人还是我跪了一跪，又赔不是，你也争足了光了。这会子还唠叨，难道还叫我给你跪下才罢？太要足了强，也不是好事。”说的凤姐无言可对，平儿“嗤”的一声笑了。贾琏也笑道：“又好了！真真的我也没法了。”

正说着，只见一个媳妇来回说：“鲍二媳妇吊死了。”贾琏、凤姐都吃了一惊。凤姐忙收了怯色，反喝道：“死了罢了，有什么大惊小怪的！”一时，只见林之孝家的进来悄回凤姐道：“鲍二媳妇吊死了，他娘家的亲戚要告呢。”凤姐笑





humiliating Pinger quite groundlessly just because of something a third party had said. Seeing the maid kowtow now, she hastily raised her to her feet, shedding tears of contrition and distress.

Pinger was weeping too. "In all the years I've served you, madam, you've never laid a finger upon me," she said. "I don't blame you for striking me yesterday. It was all the fault of that bitch. How could you help being angry?"

The Lady Dowager ordered attendants to escort the three of them to their own apartments.

"If anyone raises the subject again," she said, "report it to me at once. And no matter who it is, I'll take my cane and give him a good beating."

The three of them, having kowtowed once more to the old lady, Lady Xing and Lady Wang, were seen back by some old nurses.

As soon as they were alone Xifeng demanded, "Just why am I hellish? A hell-cat? When that bitch cursed me and wished me dead, you joined in. In a thousand and one days I must be good at least one day; yet it seems, after all this time, I'm less to you than a whore. How can I have the face to go on living now?" By now she was weeping again.

"What more do you want?" cried her husband. "Just think a bit who was most to blame yesterday? Yet today it was I who knelt down and begged your pardon in front of all those people. You've got quite enough face, so stop nagging now. Do you expect me to kneel to you *again*? It's no good going too far."

This silenced Xifeng and she giggled.

"That's better." He grinned. "I honestly don't know how to cope with you."

Just then a serving-woman came in to report that Bao Er's wife had hanged herself. They were both shocked to hear this. But after her initial fright Xifeng put on a bold face.

"If she's dead, she's dead," she retorted. "What's all the fuss about?"

Presently, however, Lin Zhixiao's wife came in and whispered to her, "Bao Er's wife has hanged herself, madam. And her people are threatening to sue you."



道：“这倒好了，我正想要打官司呢！”林之孝家的道：“我才和众人劝他们一回，又威吓了一阵，又许了他几个钱，也就依了。”凤姐儿道：“我没一个钱！有钱也不给他，只管叫他去告。也不许劝他，也不用镇喝他，只管让他告去。告不成倒问他个‘以尸讹诈’！”林之孝家的正在为难，见贾琏和他使眼色儿，心下明白，便出去等着。贾琏道：“等我出去瞧瞧，看是怎么样。”凤姐儿道：“不许给他钱。”贾琏一径出来，和林之孝来商议，命人去作好作歹，许了二百两发送才罢。贾琏生恐有变，又命人去和王子腾说，将番役、作作人等叫了几名来，帮着办丧事。那些人见了如此，纵要复辨亦不敢辨，只得忍气吞声罢了。贾琏又命林之孝将那二百银子人在流年账上，分别添补，开销过去。又梯己给鲍二些银两，安慰他说：“另日再挑个好媳妇给你。”鲍二又有体面，又有银子，有何不依，便仍然奉承贾琏，不在话下。

里面凤姐心中虽不安，面上只管佯不理论，因房中无人，便拉平儿笑道：“我昨儿灌丧醉了，你别愤怒，打了那里了，让我瞧瞧。”平儿道：“也没打重。”只听得说：“奶奶、姑娘们都进来了。”要知端的，下回分解。





“That’s fine.” Xifeng gave a scornful laugh. “I’ve been waiting for a chance to go to court.”

“We’ve all been trying to talk or frighten them out of it,” said Mrs. Lin. “They’re willing to drop the matter if you’ll give them a few strings of cash.”

“I haven’t a cent, and I wouldn’t give it to them if I had. Let them go ahead and arraign me. Don’t try to talk them round or scare them away. Just let them go ahead. But if they lose their case I shall sue them for blackmail.”

Mrs. Lin was in a quandary when Jia Lian glanced at her significantly and, catching on, she withdrew to wait outside.

“I’ll go and see what can be done,” he told Xifeng.

“You’re not to pay them anything,” she warned.

He went to talk the business over with Lin Zhixiao, then sent people to negotiate and finally hushed the matter up by paying two hundred taels. To give them no chance to change their minds, however, Jia Lian also sent stewards to ask Wang Ziteng for some runners and sergeants to help with the funeral. When the dead woman’s family knew this, they dared make no further move but simply had to swallow their resentment.

Jia Lian also told Lin Zhixiao to deduct the two hundred taels from their housekeeping funds, under cover of various items in their daily expenditure. In addition he gave Bao Er some money too, and promised to find him a good wife later on. Bao Er raised no objection, naturally, having received both money and consideration. He continued in Jia Lian’s service as before.

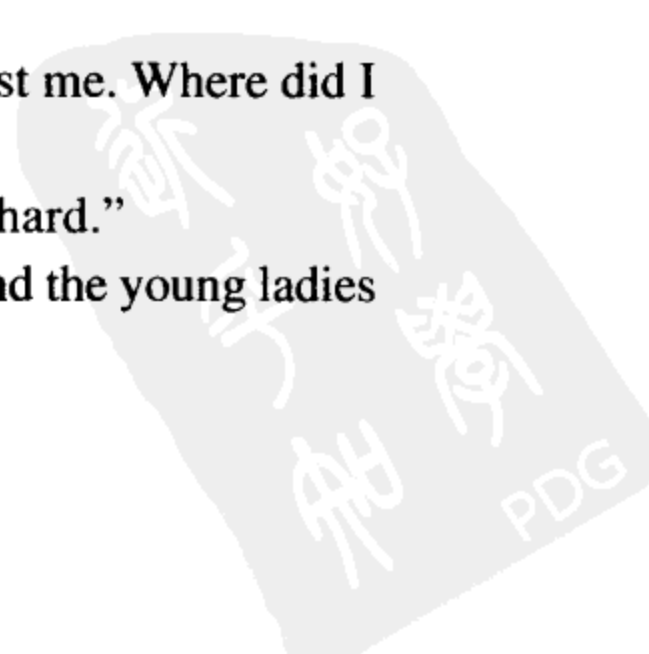
As for Xifeng, although inwardly uneasy she pretended outwardly to be unconcerned. When no one else was about she took Pinger’s hand and said gently:

“Yesterday I was drunk. You mustn’t hold it against me. Where did I hurt you? Let me have a look.”

“It’s nothing,” Pinger answered. “You didn’t hit hard.”

Then someone outside announced, “Madam Zhu and the young ladies have come.”

To know the reason for their visit, read on.



第四十五回

金兰契互剖金兰语 风雨夕闷制风雨词

话说凤姐正安慰平儿，忽见众姊妹进来，忙让了坐，平儿斟上茶来。凤姐笑道：“今儿来的这么齐全，倒像下帖子请了来的。”探春先笑道：“我们有两件事：一件是我的，一件是四妹妹的，还夹着老太太的话。”凤姐笑道：“有什么事，这么要紧？”探春笑道：“我们起了一个诗社，头一社就不齐全，众人脸软，所以就乱了。我想必得你去作个监社御史，铁面无私才好。再四妹妹为画园子的图儿，用的东西这般那般不全，回了老太太，老太太说：‘只怕后头楼底下还有当年剩下的，找一找，若有呢拿出来，若没有，叫人买去。’”凤姐笑道：“我又不会作什么湿的干的，要我吃东西去不成？”探春道：“你虽不会作，也不要你作。你只监察着我们里头有偷安的，有怠惰的，该怎么样罚就是了。”凤姐笑道：“你们别哄我，我猜着了，那里是请我作监社御史！这分明是叫我作一个进钱的铜商。你们弄什么社，必是要轮流作东道的。你们的月钱不够花了，想出这个法子来拘了我去，好和我要钱。可是这个主意？”一席话，说的众人都笑起来了。李纨





Chapter 45

Two Girls Pledge Friendship After a Heart-to-Heart Talk A Plaintive Poem Is Written One Windy, Rainy Evening

As Xifeng was comforting Pinger the young people called. They were offered seats and Pinger handed round tea.

“Well, you’ve come in force,” chuckled Xifeng. “Anyone would think we’d issued invitations.”

“We’ve come about two things,” Tanchun announced. “One is Xichun’s business; and we’ve also brought you a message from the old lady.”

“What is it that’s so urgent?” demanded Xifeng.

“We’ve started a poetry club,” Tanchun explained, “but not even the first meeting was fully attended — all because we’re too soft to keep order. So it occurred to me that we must rope you in too as our supervisor — we need someone strict and impartial. Then Xichun needs more materials of every kind for her painting of the Garden. We told the old lady, and she says there may be some left-over materials in the downstairs store-room at the back, which we can have if we can find them. If not, we can send out to buy more.”

“I’m no hand at versifying,” Xifeng answered. “All I can do is come and join in the eating.”

“You wouldn’t have to write anything,” said Tanchun. “Your job would simply be to watch out for truants or slackers and punish the offenders as you think fit.”

“Don’t try to fool me.” Xifeng laughed. “I can guess what you’re after. It’s obviously not a supervisor you want but a mint-master to supply you with cash. You must take it in turns to play host in this club of yours, and because your monthly allowances aren’t enough you’ve thought up this scheme to rope me in so that you can milk me. Isn’t that the idea?”



笑道：“真真你是个水晶心肝玻璃人。”凤姐笑道：“亏你是个大嫂子呢！把姑娘们原交给你带着念书学规矩针线的，他们不好，你还要劝。这会子他们起诗社，能用几个钱，你就不管了？老太太、太太罢了，原是老封君。你一个月十两银子的月钱，比我们多两倍子。老太太、太太还说你寡妇失业的，可怜，不够用，因有个小子，足的又添了十两，和老太太、太太平等。又给你园子地，各人取租钱。年终分年例，又是上上分儿。你娘儿们，主子奴才共总没十个人，吃的穿的仍旧是官中的。一年通共算起来，也有四五百两银子。这会子你就每年拿出一二百两银子来陪他们玩玩，能几年的限？他们各人出了阁，难道还要你陪不成？这会子你怕花钱，调唆他们来闹我，我乐得去吃一个河涸海干，我还通不知道呢！”

李纨笑道：“你们听听，我说了一句话，他就疯了似的，说了两车无赖的泥腿市俗家常打细算盘分斤拨两的话出来。这东西亏他托生在诗书大宦名门之家做小姐，出了嫁又是这样，他还是这么着；若是生在贫寒之家小门小户的，作个小子，还不知怎么下作贫嘴恶舌的呢！天下人都被你算计了去！昨儿还打平儿呢，亏你伸的出手来！那黄汤难道灌丧了狗肚子里去了？气的我只要给平儿打报不平儿。忖度了半日，好不容易‘狗长尾巴尖儿’的好日子，又怕老太太心里不受用，因此没来，究竟气还未平。你今儿还招我来了。给平儿拾鞋也不要，你们两个只该换一个过子才是。”说的众人都笑了。凤姐忙笑道：“竟不是为诗为画来找我的，这脸子竟是为



The others laughed.

“There’s true perspicacity for you!” cried Li Wan.

“What an elder sister-in-law you are!” scolded Xifeng. “You’re supposed to be in charge of these girls’ studies and of teaching them good manners and needlework. If they do wrong you ought to remonstrate with them. Now they’ve started this poetry club which shouldn’t cost much, but you refuse to take charge. The old lady and Lady Wang have their titled status of course, but your ten taels a month is twice as much as we get, and yet the old lady and mistress still pity you as a poor widow with no means of support. So you get an extra ten taels for your son, which means getting as much as they do, and on top of that you’ve been given land in the Garden farm and are paid rent, apart from the largest share in the annual honuses. There are less than ten in your household, counting the servants, and your food and clothing still come from the common fund. Your income adds up to four or five hundred taels a year. Then why not use one or two hundred a year to keep these girls amused? After all, it won’t be for long. When they marry, you won’t be the one to provide their dowries. Yet here you are, so afraid of spending a cent, you’ve put them up to coming to pester me. I’ve a good mind not to take the hint but just go and eat up everything you’ve got.”

“Listen to her!” cried Li Wan laughingly. “I say one word and the crazy thing spews out two cartloads of shameless talk like a real dirty swindler and tight-fisted money-grubber. This creature was lucky enough to be born the daughter of a family of scholar-officials and to marry into a family like that too, yet she still carries on in this way. If she’d been the son of a poor family, there’s no knowing what dirty language she’d have used. She’d have tried to swindle everyone on earth.

“How could you strike even Pinger yesterday? For shame! You behaved like a dog drunk on yellow wine. I was so furious, I’d have taken up the cudgels for Pinger if not for the fact that it was the dog’s birthday and I didn’t want to upset the old lady either. But I’m still simmering with indignation. And now you’re challenging *me*! You aren’t good enough to pick up Pinger’s shoes. The two of you ought to change places.”

The girls burst out laughing.

“I see,” Xifeng retorted. “You honoured me with this visit, not be-



给平儿来报仇的。我竟不承望平儿有你这么一位仗腰子的人。早知道，便有鬼拉着我的手打他，我也不打了。平姑娘，过来！我当着大奶奶、姑娘们替你赔个不是，担待我酒后无德罢。”说着，众人又都笑起来了。李纨笑问平儿道：“如何？我说必定要给你争气才罢。”平儿笑道：“虽然如此，奶奶们取笑，我禁不起。”李纨道：“什么禁不起，有我呢。快拿了钥匙叫你主子开了楼房找东西去。”

凤姐笑道：“好嫂子，你且同他们回园子里去。我才要把这米账和他们算一算，那边太太又打发人来叫，又不知有什么话说，须得过去走一趟。还有年下你们添补的衣服，还没打点给他们做去。”李纨笑道：“这些事我都不管，你只把我的事完了我好歇着去，省得这些姑娘们、小姐们闹我。”凤姐忙笑道：“好嫂子，赏我一点空儿。你是最疼我的，怎么今儿为平儿就不疼我了？往常你还劝我说，事情虽多，也该保养身子，捡点着偷空儿歇歇，你今儿反倒逼我的命了。况且误了别人年下的衣裳无碍，他姊妹们若误了，却是你的责任，老太太岂不怪你不管闲事，连一句现成话也不说？我宁可自己落不是，岂敢带累你呢。”李纨笑道：“你们听听，说的好不好？把他会说话的！我且问你，这诗社你到底管不管？”凤姐笑道：“这是什么话，我若不入社花几个钱，我不成了大观园的反叛了，还想在这里吃饭不成？明日一早就到任，下马拜了印，先放下五十两银子给你们慢慢的作会社东道。过后几天，我又不作诗作文，只不过作个俗人罢了。”



cause of your poetry club or the painting either, but simply to avenge Pinger. I didn't know she had such a champion. If I'd known, I should never have struck her — not even if some devil were forcing my hand. Here, Miss Pinger, let me apologize to you in front of Madam Zhu and the young ladies for my wild behaviour in my cups."

The others laughed again.

Li Wan asked Pinger, "Well? Didn't I promise to help you get your own back?"

"It's all very well for you ladies to have your fun, but I can't take it," was Pinger's reply.

"Nonsense," said Li Wan. "I'll back you up. Hurry up and fetch the key now, and ask your mistress to open the storeroom for us."

"My dear sister-in-law," put in Xifeng, "do take these girls back to the Garden first. I was just going to check this rice account, and then I've got to see Lady Xing who sent for me on some business, and give instructions for the clothes everyone needs for New Year."

"Never mind those other things," rejoined Li Wan. "Just settle my business first so that I can go home and rest and these young ladies will stop bothering me."

"Give me a little time, dear sister," countered Xifeng. "Why should you, who are usually so good to me, be so hard on me today just because of Pinger? You used to say, 'However busy you are, you must take good care of your health and find time to rest.' Yet now you want to kill me with overwork! Besides, it doesn't matter if other people's clothes are late, but you're responsible for these young ladies' being ready on time. If they're not, the old lady will scold you for not seeing to it or at least reminding me. I'd rather take the blame myself than get *you* into trouble."

"Listen, the rest of you, to this fine talk!" Li Wan smiled. "What a clever tongue! Tell me, are you going to take charge of our club or not?"

"What do you think? If I don't join your club and fork out some money, I'll be looked on as a traitor to Grand View Garden. How could I go on living here then? First thing tomorrow I shall proceed to my post, respectfully accept the seal of office, and then straightway give you fifty silver taels to spread over for several months for your club's refreshments. And as I can't write poems or essays — being just completely



‘监察’也罢，不‘监察’也罢，有了钱了，你们还撵出我来也使得！”说的众人又都笑起来。凤姐又道：“过会子我开了楼房，凡有的这些东西，都叫人搬出来你们看，若使得，留着使，若少什么，照着你们的单子，我叫人替你们买去就是了。画绢我就裁出来。那图样没在太太跟前，还在那边珍大爷那里呢。说给你们，别碰钉子去。我打发人取了来，一并叫人连绢交给相公们砚去，如何？”李纨点头笑道：“这难为你，果然这样还罢了。既如此，咱们家去罢，等着他不送了去再来闹他。”说着，便带了他姊妹就要走，凤姐道：“这些事再没两个人，都是宝玉生出来的。”李纨听了，忙回身笑道：“正是为宝玉来，反忘了。头一社就是他误了。我们脸软，你说该怎么罚他？”凤姐想了一想，说道：“没有别的法子，只叫他把你们各人屋子里的地罚他扫一遍才好。”众人都笑道：“这话不差。”

说着才要回去，只见一个小丫头扶了赖嬷嬷进来。凤姐儿等忙站起来，笑让：“大娘坐。”又都给他道喜，赖嬷嬷向炕沿上坐了，笑道：“我也喜，主子们也喜。若不是主子们的恩典，我们这喜从何来？昨儿奶奶又打发彩哥儿赏东西，我孙子在门上朝上磕了头了。”李纨笑道：“多早晚上任去？”赖嬷嬷叹道：“我那里管他们，由他们去罢！前儿在家里给我磕头，我没好话，我说：‘哥儿，你别说你是官儿了，就横行霸道起来！你今年活了三十三岁，虽然是人家的奴才，一落娘胎胞，主子恩典，放你出来，上托着主子的洪福，下托着你



vulgar — whether you call me supervisor or not, a few days after I've paid up you can still drive me away."

Amid general laughter she went on, "I'll open the storeroom presently and tell them to fetch out all the painting materials for your inspection. If there's anything of use to you, you can have it; and if you'll make out a list of what's still missing, I'll send people to buy it. I'll supply you with the silk for the painting too. The drawing of the Garden isn't with the mistress, Lord Zhen still has it. I'm telling you this to save you a trip for nothing. I'll have it fetched and sent with the silk for the secretaries to work on. How about that?"

Li Wan nodded. "Thank you. If you'll really do that I'll let bygones be bygones. All right, let's go. If she doesn't send the things, we can come and pester her again."

As she started off with the girls Xifeng remarked, "There's only one person who could have put you up to all this, and that's Baoyu."

Li Wan turned back with a smile.

"Oh yes! I'd forgotten. It was Baoyu we came about. He was the one who didn't turn up at our first meeting; but we were too soft with him. What should his punishment be?"

After a second's thought Xifeng replied, "The only thing I can think of is to make him sweep all your floors for you."

They approved laughingly and were on the point of leaving when Granny Lai came in, leaning on a young maid's arm.

Xifeng and the others hastily rose, urged her to sit down and offered her congratulations. Seating herself on the edge of the *kang* she said:

"Our masters and mistresses are rejoicing over our good fortune, and we owe it all to your kindness. Yesterday when you sent Caiming over with presents too, madam, my grandson kowtowed his thanks at the gate."

Li Wan asked, "When will he be leaving to take up his post?"

Granny Lai sighed. "I pay no attention to their affairs, they do just as they please. When he kowtowed to me at home the other day, I gave him a piece of my mind. I said, 'Child, don't start throwing your weight about now that you're an official. You're thirty this year and, though you were born in bondage, our masters were kind enough to give you your freedom the moment you came out of your mother's womb. Thanks to the gener-



老子娘，也是公子哥儿似的读书认字，也是丫头、老婆、奶子捧凤凰似的，长了这么大。你那里知道那“奴才”两字是怎么写的！只知道享福，也不知你爷爷和你老子受的那苦恼，熬了两三辈子，好容易挣出你这么个东西来。从小儿三灾八难，花的银子也照样打出你这么个银人儿来了。到二十岁上，又蒙主子的恩典，许你捐个前程在身上。你看那正根正苗的忍饥挨饿的要多少？你一个奴才秧子，仔细折了福！如今乐了十年，不知怎么弄神弄鬼的，求了主子，又选了出来。州县官儿虽小，事情却大，为那一州的州官，就是那一方的父母。你不安分守己，尽忠报国，孝敬主子，只怕天也不容你。”李纨，凤姐都笑道：“你也多虑。我们看他也就好了。先那几年还进来了两次，这有好几年没来了，年下生日，只见他的名字就罢了。前儿给老太太、太太磕头来，在老太太那院里，见他又穿着新官的服色，倒发的威武了，比先时也胖了。他这一得了官，正该你乐呢，反倒愁起这些来！他不好，还有他父亲呢，你只管受用你的就完了。闲了坐个轿子进来，和老太太斗一天牌，说一天话儿，谁好意思的委屈了你。家去一般也是楼房厦厅，谁不敬你，自然也是老封君似的了。”

平儿斟上茶来，赖嬷嬷忙站起来接了，笑道：“姑娘不管叫那个孩子倒来罢了，又折受我。”说着，一面吃茶，一面



osity of your masters above as well as your parents below, you were able to study like a young gentleman, cossetted by maids and nurses as if you were a phoenix. Though you've reached this age I doubt if you even know how the word "slave" is written. All you know is how to enjoy yourself.'

"'It doesn't occur to you,' I said, 'that you owe your present position to the generations of hardship your grandfather and father had to go through.

"'You've had one trouble after another since you were a boy, and the money we've spent on you would make a silver statue bigger than you are. When you were twenty our masters were kind enough to help you purchase an official post, although plenty of real gentlefolk go hungry. You were born a slave, so watch out — don't tempt fortune too far. After having an easy life of it for ten years you managed somehow — Heaven only know how — to get our masters to have you selected for this post. A district magistrate may not rank too high yet he has a lot of work to do as the father and mother of everyone in the district. If you don't behave properly as a loyal servant of the state to be worthy of your masters' kindness, Heaven and Earth will surely condemn you. '"

"You worry too much," Li Wan and Xifeng told her with a smile. "We're sure he will do all right. He called occasionally some years ago but hasn't been here for quite a few years now — we only saw his visiting-card at New Year or on birthdays. The other day, though, when he came to kowtow to the old lady and Lady Wang we caught a glimpse of him in the old lady's compound. He cut quite an impressive figure in his new official robes, and seemed to have put on weight too. You should be pleased by his appointment instead of worrying like this. If he doesn't do well, that's his parents' look-out; you should just concentrate on enjoying yourself. When you've time you must come by sedan-chair for a day of card-playing or a chat with the old lady. No one would dream of treating you shabbily. You've fine big buildings at home too, where of course everybody must respect you like a lady of quality."

Pinger brought in tea at this point and at once Granny Lai stood up to take it.

"You should have let one of the younger girls do this, miss," she said.



又道：“奶奶不知道，这些小孩子们全要管的严。饶这么严，他们还偷空儿闹个乱子来叫大人操心。知道的，说小孩子们淘气；不知道的，人家就说仗着财势欺人，连主子的名声也不好。恨的我没法儿，常把他老子叫了来骂一顿，才好些。”因又指着宝玉道：“不怕你嫌我，如今老爷不过这么管你一管，老太太护在头里。当日老爷小时挨你爷爷的打，谁没看见的。老爷小时，何曾像你这天不怕地不怕的了。还有那边大老爷，虽然淘气，也没像你这扎窝子的样儿，也是天天打。还有东府里你珍哥他爷爷，那才是火上浇油的性子，说声恼了，什么儿子，竟是审贼！如今我眼里看着，耳朵里听着，那珍大爷管儿子倒也像当日老祖宗的规矩，只是管的到三不着两的。他自己也不管一管自己，怎么怨的这些兄弟侄儿不怕他？你心里明白，喜欢我说；不明白，嘴里不好意思，心里不知怎么骂我呢。”

正说着，只见赖大家的来了，接着周瑞家的、张材家的都进来回事情。凤姐儿笑道：“媳妇来接婆婆来了。”赖大家的笑道：“不是接他老人家，倒是打听打听奶奶、姑娘们赏脸不赏脸？”赖嬷嬷听了，笑道：“可是我糊涂了，正经话且不说，且说陈谷子烂芝麻的混捣。因为我的小子选了出来，众亲友要给他贺喜，少不得家里摆个酒。我想，摆一日酒，请这个也不是，请那个也不是。又想了一想，托主子洪福，想不到的这样荣耀，就倾了家，我也是愿意的。因此吩咐他老子连摆三日酒：头一日，在我们破花园子里摆几席酒，一台



“You’re doing me too much honour.”

Sipping the tea she continued, “You don’t understand, madam, all children need a firm hand. Even then, the way they still make trouble on the sly causes us endless worry. Those who know us say: Boys will be boys. Those who don’t may talk of our relying on wealth and influence to bully other people, and that would damage even the masters’ reputation. When I get too provoked, I often call in his father and give him a good dressing-down, to make them behave a bit better for a while.”

She pointed then at Baoyu. “You won’t like what I’m going to say, but your father isn’t strict enough with you, and the old lady always shields you. Who didn’t see, in the old days, how your grandfather beat your father when he was a boy, though he never ran wild the way you do, fearing neither Heaven nor Earth. And Lord She in the east courtyard, though he was naughty, never buried himself at home the way you do; yet he got beaten every day. As for your cousin Zhen’s grandfather in the East Mansion, he had such a fiery temper he’d flare up at a word, grilling his son as if he were a brigand. From all I’ve seen and heard, Lord Zhen seems to follow his grandfather’s method of disciplining his son, only he’s erratic. And as he doesn’t mind how he behaves himself, you can’t blame his cousins and nephews for not being afraid of him. If you’ve any sense, you should be glad of this warning. If not, you may not like to say anything but I dare say you’re cursing me in your heart.”

Lai Da’s wife came in just then followed by the wives of Zhou Rui and Lin Zhixiao to make their reports.

Xifeng remarked with a smile, “The daughter-in-law has come for her mother-in-law.”

“That’s not why I came,” said Lai Da’s wife, “but to ask if you ladies would honour us with your presence.”

“How stupid of me to forget what I really came for and just to maun-der on!” exclaimed Granny Lai. “Now that my grandson’s appointed to this post, we’ve got to give a feast at home for all the relatives and friends who want to congratulate him. I didn’t want to invite some people, not others. Besides, I thought, it’s sharing our masters’ good fortune that’s brought us this undreamed-of honour, so I don’t mind even if it bankrupts us. That’s why I told his father to make it a three-day affair.



戏，请老太太、太太们、奶奶、姑娘们去散一日闷；外头大厅上一台戏，摆几席酒，请老爷们、爷们去增增光；第二日，再请亲友们；第三日，再把我们的这两府里的伴儿们请一请。热闹三天，也是托着主子的洪福一场，光辉光辉。”李纨、凤姐都笑道：“多早晚的日子？我们必去，只怕老太太高兴要去，也定不得。”赖大家的忙道：“择了十四的日子，只看我们奶奶的老脸罢了。”凤姐笑道：“别人不知道，我是肯定去的。先说下，我是没有贺礼的，也不知道放赏，吃完了一走，可别笑话。”赖大家的笑道：“奶奶说那里话？奶奶要赏，赏我们三、二万银子就有了。”赖嬷嬷笑道：“我才去请老太太，老太太也说去，可算我这脸还好。”说毕又叮咛了一回，方起身要走，因看见周瑞家的，便想起一事来，因说道：“可是还有一句话问奶奶，这周嫂子的儿子犯了什么不是，撵了他不用了？”凤姐听了，笑道：“正是我要告诉你媳妇，事情多也忘了。赖嫂子回去说给你老头子，两府里不许收留他小子，叫他各人去罢。”

赖大家的只得答应着，周瑞家的忙跪下央求。赖嬷嬷忙道：“什么事？说给我评评。”凤姐儿道：“前日我生日，里头还没吃酒，他小子先醉了。老娘那边送了礼来，他不说在外头张罗，他倒坐着骂人，礼也不送进来。两个女人进来了，他才带着小么们往里抬。小么们倒好，他拿的一盒子倒失了



The first day we shall have a few tables of guests and an opera in our humble garden, and invite the old lady, the mistresses, and all you other ladies and young ladies to come and have some fun; at the same time we'll ask the gentlemen to honour us with their presence at another feast with an opera in the hall outside. On the second day, we'll entertain relatives and friends; on the third, our fellow servants from these two mansions. This will be a great occasion for us, these three days of excitement, and we owe it all to our masters."

"When is it to be?" asked Li Wan and Xifeng. "We'll certainly come, and quite likely the old lady will be happy to come too, but we can't say for sure."

"We've chosen the fourteenth," said Lai Da's wife promptly, "Do give mother face by coming."

"I can't answer for the others, but I promise to come," said Xifeng. "First let me warn you, though, I've no presents or tips to bring, so mind you don't laugh at me if after eating I just up and leave."

"What a thing to say, madam!" Lai Da's wife smiled. "Why, if you felt like it, you could give us twenty or thirty thousand taels."

Granny Lai put in, "Just now I went to invite the old lady, and she's promised to come too, so it seems I really have face."

After pressing the invitations she was rising to leave when the sight of Zhou Rui's wife reminded her of something.

"Oh, there's something else, madam," she said to Xifeng. "What has Mrs. Zhou's son done wrong that you want to dismiss him?"

"Yes, I meant to tell your daughter-in-law, but I was so busy I forgot," said Xifeng. "When you go home, Mrs. Lai, tell your husband that neither mansion is to keep Zhou Rui's son. He must go."

While Mrs. Lai had to agree to this, Zhou Rui's wife fell on her knees to beg her son off.

"What happened?" asked Granny Lai. "Tell me what he did, and I'll be judge for you."

"On my birthday yesterday, he got drunk before the feasting even started," said Xifeng. "And instead of seeing to the presents my parents' family sent, he sat there swearing and wouldn't bring them in. Only after the two serving-women delivering the things came in them-



手，撒了一院子馒头。人去了，打发彩明去说他，他倒骂了彩明好一顿。这样无法无天的忘八羔子，还不撵了作什么！”赖嬷嬷笑道：“我当什么事情，原来为这个。奶奶听我说：他有不是，打他骂他，使他改过，撵了去断乎使不得。他又比不得咱们家的家生子儿，他现是太太的陪房。奶奶只顾撵了他，太太脸上不好看。依我说，奶奶教导他几个板子，以戒下次，仍旧留着才是。不看他娘，也看太太。”凤姐听说，便向赖大家的说道：“既这样，打他四十棍，以后不许他吃酒。”赖大家的答应了。周瑞家的磕头起来，又要与赖嬷嬷磕头，赖大家的拉着方罢。然后他三人去了，李纨等也就回园中来。

至晚，果然凤姐命人找了许多旧收的画具出来，送至园中。宝钗等选了一回，各色东西可用的只有一半，将那一半又开了单子，与凤姐去照样置买，不必细说。

一日，外面矾了绢，起了稿子拿进来。宝玉每日便在惜春这里帮忙。探春、李纨、迎春、宝钗等也多往那里闲坐，一则观画，二则便于会面。宝钗因见天气凉爽，夜复渐长，遂至母亲房中商议打点些针线来。日间至贾母处、王夫人处省候两次，不免又承色陪坐闲话半时，园中姊妹处也要度时





selves did he at last get some pages to help him carry them in. The boys did all right, but he went and dropped a hamper so that dumplings started rolling all over the courtyard. After the two women had gone, I sent Caiming to tell him off, and he had the nerve to swear at *him*. How can we keep on such an insolent, lawless young bastard?"

"Is that all?" Granny Lai smiled. "I thought it was something serious. Take my advice, madam, and if he's done wrong, beat him, reprimand him and make him mend his ways, but don't dismiss him — that would never do. He can't be treated like one of our children, as his mother came here with the mistress at the time of her marriage; so dismissing him would reflect badly on Her Ladyship. Keep him on, I say, madam, and give him a good beating to teach him a lesson. If you've no consideration for his mother, at least have some for Lady Wang."

Xifeng turned to Lai Da's wife. "In that case give him forty strokes, and see to it that he doesn't get durnk again."

Lai Da's wife assented and Zhou Rui's wife kowtowed her thanks. She would have kowtowed to Granny Lai too, but Lai Da's wife stopped her. Then these three women left and Li Wan and the girls returned to the Garden.

That evening Xifeng was as good as her word. She had servants get out all the painting material in the storeroom and send it to the Garden. Baochai and the rest went through it and found only half what they wanted. They made out a list of the other things they needed for Xifeng to purchase. But no more of this.

Soon the silk had been sized with alum outside, and the draft drawing was delivered. Baoyu went to help Xichun every day, while Tanchun, Li Wan, Yingchun and Baochai often forgathered there to watch her painting and to be together.

As the weather was chilly now and the nights were lengthening, Baochai asked her mother for some sewing to do. Every day she paid two courtesy calls on the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, and could not but keep them company for a while if they seemed so inclined; and from time to time she felt obliged to drop in for a chat with the girls in the Garden; thus her days were so fully occupied that she sewed every night



闲话一回，故日间不大得闲，每夜灯下女工，必至三更方寝。黛玉每岁至春分、秋分之际，必犯嗽疾；今秋又遇贾母高兴，多游玩了两次，未免过劳了神，近日又复嗽起来，觉得比往常又重些，所以总不出门，只在自己房中将养。有时闷了，又盼个姊妹来说些闲话排遣排遣。及至宝钗等来望候他，说不得三、五句话又厌烦了。众人都体谅他病中，且素日形体娇弱，禁不得一些委屈，所以他接待不周，礼数粗忽，也都不苛责。

这日宝钗来望他，因说起这病症来。宝钗道：“这里走的几个太医虽都还好，只是你吃他们的药总不见效，不如再请一个高明的人来瞧一瞧，治好了岂不好？每年间闹一春一夏，又不老又不小，成个什么？不是个常法儿。”黛玉道：“不中用。我知道我这样病是不能好的了。且别说病，只论好的日子我是怎么个形景，就可知了。”宝钗点头道：“可正是这话。古人说‘食谷者生’，你素日吃的竟不能添养精神气血，也是不好的事。”黛玉叹道：“‘死生有命，富贵在天’，也不是人力可强的。今年比往年反觉又重了些似的。”说话之间，已咳嗽了两、三次。宝钗道：“昨儿我看你那药方上，人参、肉桂觉得太多了。虽说益气补神，也不宜太热。依我说，先以平肝健胃为要，肝火一平，不能克土，胃气无病，饮食就可以养人了。每日早起拿上等燕窝一两，冰糖五钱，用银铤子熬出粥来，若吃惯了，比药还强，

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by lamplight, not going to bed till the third watch.

Daiyu, who suffered from a bad cough around every spring and autumn solstice, had overtaxed her strength this year by going not more than usual, because of the Lady Dowager's good spirits, and had recently started coughing again worse than ever. She therefore stayed in her own rooms to rest. Sometimes she grew bored and wished the girls would drop in for a chat to while away the time; yet when Baochai and the rest called to see how she was, a short conversation was enough to exhaust her. Knowing how delicate and hypersensitive she was, they all made allowances for her, overlooking any lack of hospitality and courtesy.

Today Baochai came to visit her and turned the conversation to her illness.

"Though the doctors who come here aren't bad, their prescriptions don't seem to be doing you much good," said Baochai. "Why don't you ask a real authority to come and examine you and see if he can't cure you? You can't go on like this, having trouble every spring and summer. After all, you're not an old woman or a child."

"It's no use," was Daiyu's reply. "I have a hunch I shall never get over this. You know how poorly I am at the best of times, let alone when I'm ill."

"That's true." Baochai nodded. "The ancients said, 'Food is life,' yet what you normally eat doesn't give you energy or strength, and that's a bad sign."

"Life and death are determined by fate, rank and riches decreed by Heaven," quoted Daiyu with a sigh. "It's beyond the power of man to alter fate. It seems to me my illness is worse this year." This short speech had been punctuated by several bouts of coughing.

"I saw your prescription yesterday," said Baochai. "It struck me there was too much ginseng and cinnamon in it. Although they stimulate the vital forces, you shouldn't have anything too hot either. To my mind, the first essential is to calm your liver and improve your digestion. Once the fire in your liver is quelled so that it can't overcome the 'earth' element your digestion will be better and you'll be able to assimilate your food. When you get up each morning, you should take an ounce of the best



最是滋阴补气的。”

黛玉叹道：“你素日待人，固然是极好的，然我最是个多心的人，只当你心里藏奸。从前日你说看杂书不好，又劝我那些好话，竟大感激你。往日竟是我错了，实在误到如今。细细算来，我母亲去世的早，又无姊妹兄弟，我长了今年十五岁，竟没一个人像你前日的话教导我。怨不得云丫头说你好。我往日见他赞你，我还不受用，昨儿我亲自经过，才知道了。比如要是你说了那个，我再不轻放过你的；你竟不介意，反劝我那些话，可知我竟自误了。若不是从前日看出你来，今日这话，再不对你说。你方才说叫我吃燕窝粥的话，虽然燕窝易得，但只我因身上不好了，每年犯这个病，也没什么要紧的去处。请大夫，熬药，人参、肉桂，已经闹了个天翻地覆，这会子我又兴出新文来熬什么燕窝粥，老太太、太太、凤姐姐这三个人便没话说，那些底下的婆子丫头们，未免不嫌我太多事了。你看这里这些人，因见老太太疼了宝玉和凤丫头两个，他们尚虎视眈眈，背地里言三语四的，何况于我，又不是他们这里正经主子，原是无依无靠投奔了来的，他们已经多嫌着我了。如今我还不知进退，何苦叫他们咒我？”宝钗道：“这样说，我也是和你一样。”黛玉道：“你如何比我？你又有母亲，又有哥哥，这里又有买卖地土，家里又仍旧有房有地。你不过是亲戚的情分，白住在这里，一应大小事情，又不沾他们一文半个，要走就走了。我是一无所有，吃穿用度，一草一纸，皆是和他们家姑娘一样，那起小人岂有不多嫌的。”宝钗笑道：“将来也不过多费得一分嫁妆罢了，如今也愁不到这里。”黛玉听了，不觉红了脸，



quality bird's-nest boiled into a gruel with half an ounce of crystal sugar in a silver pot. Taken regularly, this is a better tonic than any medicine."

"How good you always are to others!" Daiyu exclaimed with a sigh. "I'm so touchy that I used to suspect your motives. I really began to appreciate you that day when you warned me against indiscriminate reading and gave me such good advice. I can see now I'd misjudged you all along. My mother died early and I've no sisters or brothers so, come to think of it, in all my fifteen years no one ever advised me as you did the other day. No wonder Xiangyun speaks so highly of you. I used to be sceptical when she sang your praises, but not after my own recent experience. For instance, when you said anything I always answered back, but instead of taking offence you offered me good advice. That showed that I'd been wrong. If I hadn't realized this the other day, I wouldn't be confiding in you now.

"You just said I should eat bird's-nest. Bird's-nest is easy to buy, but my health is so poor that I fall ill every year and while it's nothing serious I've already caused plenty of trouble, what with sending for doctors and preparing medicine with ginseng and cinnamon. If I started demanding bird's-nest now, the old lady, Lady Wang and Xifeng wouldn't say anything, but those below would be bound to think me too picky. Look how jealous these people are and how much gossip there is here because the old lady favours Baoyu and Xifeng. In my case, they'd resent it even more. After all, I'm not a daughter of the house, I'm here because I've nowhere else to go. They resent me enough as it is. If I should push myself forward, they'd all start cursing me."

"Well, in that case I'm in the same position as you."

"How can you compare yourself with me? You have your mother and your brother too; you have shops and land here as well, not to mention all your property at home. You're just staying here to be close to your relatives, not spending a cent of their money on anything, free to leave whenever you please. But I have nothing. Yet all I eat, wear and use, down to the least blade of grass or sheet of paper, is the same as their own girls get. Naturally those petty-minded people dislike me."

"It only means providing one extra dowry in future," Baochai chuckled. "And it's too early to worry about that yet."



笑道：“人家才拿你当个正经人，把心里的烦难告诉你听，你反拿我取笑儿。”宝钗笑道：“虽是取笑儿，却也是真话。你放心，我在这里一日，我与你消遣一日。你有什么委屈烦难，只管告诉我，我能解的，自然替你解一解。我虽有个哥哥，你也是知道的，只有个母亲比你略强些。咱们也算同病相怜。你也是个明白人，何必作‘司马牛之叹’？你才说的也是，多一事不如省一事。我明日家去和妈妈说了，只怕我们家里还有，与你送几两来，每日叫丫头们就熬了，又便宜，又不劳师动众的。”黛玉忙笑道：“东西事小，难得你多情如此！”宝钗道：“这有什么放在口里的？只愁我在你跟前失于应候罢了。只怕你烦了，我且去了。”黛玉道：“晚上再来和我说句话儿。”宝钗答应着便去了，不在话下。

这里黛玉喝了两口稀粥，仍歪在床上，不想日未落时，天就变了，淅淅沥沥下起雨来。秋霖脉脉，阴晴不定，那天渐渐的黄昏，且阴的沉黑，兼着那雨滴竹梢，更觉凄凉。知宝钗不能来，便在灯下随便拿了一本书，却是《乐府杂稿》，有《秋闺怨》《别离怨》等词。黛玉不觉心有所感，亦不禁发于章句，遂成《代别离》一首，拟《春江花月夜》之格，乃名其词曰《秋窗风雨夕》。其词曰：

秋花惨淡秋草黄，耿耿秋灯秋夜长。
已觉秋窗秋不尽，那堪风雨助凄凉！
助秋风雨来何速，惊破秋窗秋梦绿。





Daiyu flushed red. "I confide my troubles to you, thinking you'll take them seriously," she said, "but instead you make fun of me."

"I was only joking, but it's quite true. Don't worry. As long as I'm here I shall keep you company. Just tell me any complaints or troubles you have, and I'll help as far as I can. As for my brother, though, you know what he's like. My only advantage over you is that I have a mother. Fellow-sufferers can sympathize with each other. Why should an intelligent girl like you lament your lack of a brother? Of course, you were right just now in saying that it's better not to put people to too much trouble. Tomorrow when I go home, I'll ask my mother for some of the bird's-nest I fancy we still have, and bring you a few ounces. You can get your maids to prepare some every day. It won't cost anything and you'll not be putting anybody out."

"It's a small thing, but I appreciate your kindness," said Daiyu gratefully.

"It's not worth mentioning. I'm afraid I'm often lacking in consideration. Well, you must be tired, I'll go now."

"Do drop in again this evening for a chat."

Baochai promised to do this and left.

Daiyu sipped two mouthfuls of rice gruel, then lay down to rest again.

The weather changed unexpectedly before sunset and it began to drizzle. Autumn is a capricious season of many showers and as dusk fell it grew very dark, while the rain pattering on the bamboo leaves made the place seem unusually lonely. Knowing that Baochai would not come out in this weather, Daiyu picked up a book at random under the lamp. It was an anthology of *Yue-fu*, containing lyrics such as *Autumn Sorrow in a Girl's Chamber* and *The Pain of Parting*. Daiyu was moved to write a poem about separation herself entitled *A Windy, Rainy Evening by the Autumn Window* in the style of *A Night of Flowers and Moonlight by the Spring River*. This was her poem:

Sad the autumn flowers, sear the autumn grass,
Autumn lamps flicker through the long autumn night;
Unendurably desolate by the autumn window,
In the wind and rain autumn seems infinite.
The wind and rain speed autumn on its way,





抱得秋情不忍眠，自向秋屏移泪烛。
泪烛摇摇热短檠，牵愁照恨动离情。
谁家秋院无风入？何处秋窗无雨声？
罗衾不奈秋风力，残漏声催秋雨急。
连宵脉脉复飏飏，灯前似伴离人泣。
寒烟小院转萧条，疏竹虚窗时滴沥。
不知风雨几时休，已教泪洒窗纱湿。

吟罢搁笔，方要安寝，丫鬟报说：“宝二爷来了。”一语未完，只见宝玉头上带着大斗笠，身上披着蓑衣。黛玉不觉笑了，说：“那里来的渔翁！”宝玉忙问：“今儿好些？吃了药没有？今儿一日吃了多少饭？”一面说，一面摘笠脱蓑，忙一手举起灯来，一手遮住灯光，向黛玉脸上照一照，觑着眼细瞧了瞧，笑道：“今儿气色好了些。”

黛玉看脱了蓑衣，里面只穿半旧红绫短袄，系着绿汗巾子，膝下露出油绿绸撒花裤子，底下是掐金满绣的绵纱袜子，鞞着蝴蝶落花鞋。黛玉问道：“上头怕雨，底下不怕雨？鞋袜子也倒干净。”宝玉笑道：“我这一套是全的。有一双棠木屐，才穿了来，脱在廊檐上了。”黛玉又看那蓑衣斗笠不是寻常市卖的，十分细致轻巧，因说道：“是什么草编的？怪道穿上不像那刺猬似的。”宝玉道：“这三样都是北静王送





By the window shattering her autumn dream;
And the girl with autumn in her heart cannot sleep
But trims the candle by her autumn screen.
Guttering on its stick, the candle sheds tears of wax,
Evoking the grief of separation, its pain,
As through each autumn courtyard gusts the wind
And on each autumn window beats the rain.
The autumn wind, through silken quilts strikes chill,
Her water-clock the autumn rain spurs on.
All night the pelting rain and souging wind
Accompany her tears for one now gone.
Chill mist enwraps the court in loneliness,
Bamboos drip by the lattice without pause;
None can tell when the wind and rain will cease,
But already tears have soaked her window's gauze.

Having read this through, she had just put down her brush and was about to go to bed when Baoyu was announced. And in he walked, in a large hat of plaited bamboo leaves and a coir cape.

“Where does this fisherman come from?” she greet him laughing.

“Do you feel better today? Have you taken your medicine? How is your appetite?” As he made these inquiries he took off his cape and hat and picked up the lamp, shading it with one hand, to examine her face intently.

“You look a little better today,” was his verdict.

She saw that he was wearing a red silk coat, no longer new, with a green girdle, green silk trousers embroidered with flowers, cotton socks embroidered with gold thread, and slippers with butterfly and flower designs.

“Why did you only protect your head and clothes from the rain, not your footwear?” she asked. “Not that your shoes and socks are dirty either.”

“I’ve got a complete set of rain-wear,” he told her gaily. “I came here in pyrus-wood pattens, which I left outside on the verandah.”

She noticed then that his cape and hat were not the usual sort sold in the market, but extremely finely made.

“What plant are they woven of?” she asked. “You don’t look like a



的。他闲了下雨时，在家里也是这样。你喜欢这个，我也弄一套来送你。别的都罢了，惟有这斗笠有趣，竟是活的。上头这顶儿是活的，冬天下雪，带上帽子，就把竹信子抽了，去下顶子来，只剩了这圈子。冬天下雪时男、妇都戴得，我送你一顶，冬天下雪戴。”黛玉笑道：“我不要他。戴上那个，成个画儿上画的和戏上扮的渔婆了。”及说了出来，方想起话未付度，与方才说宝玉的话相连，后悔不及，羞的满面飞红，便伏在桌上嗽个不住。

宝玉却不留心，因见案上有诗，遂拿起来看了一遍，又不禁叫好。黛玉听了，忙起来夺在手内，向灯上烧了。宝玉笑道：“我已经背熟了，烧也无碍。”黛玉道：“我也好些，多谢你一天来几次瞧我，下雨还来。这会子夜深了，我也要歇着，你且请回去，明儿再来。”宝玉听说，回手向怀中掏出个核桃大小的一个金表来，瞧了一瞧，那针已指到戌末、亥初之间，忙又揣了，说道：“原该歇了，又扰的你劳了半日神。”说着，披蓑戴笠出去了，又翻身进来问道：“你想什么吃，告诉我，我明儿一早回老太太，岂不比老婆子们说的明白？”黛玉笑道：“等我夜里想着了，明儿早起告诉你。你听雨越发紧了，快去罢。可有人跟着没有？”有两个婆子答应道：“有人，在外面拿着伞点着灯笼呢。”黛玉笑道：“这个天点灯笼？”宝玉道：“不相干，是明瓦的，不怕雨。”黛玉听说，回手向书架上把个玻璃绣球灯拿了下来，命点上一支小

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hedgehog in that cape, for a wonder.”

“These three things are all presents from the Prince of Beijing. When it’s raining he wears a similar outfit at home. If you like them, I’ll get you a set. The best thing is the hat as it’s adjustable — the crown can be detached. So men or women alike can wear it in winter in the snow. I’ll get you one for when it snows this winter.”

“No thank you,” Daiyu chuckled. “If I wore one of those, I should look like the fisherman’s wife in paintings and operas.”

As these words left her lips she remembered with dismay that she had just greeted Baoyu as a fisherman. She flushed scarlet and leaned forward over the table, coughing as if she could never stop. Baoyu, however, appeared not to have noticed. Catching sight of the poem on the table, he picked it up, read it through, and exclaimed in involuntary admiration. Daiyu hearing this instantly snatched the paper from him and burned it over the lamp.

“Too late! I know it by heart,” he said cheerfully.

“I’m better now. Thank you for coming so often to see me, even in the rain,” she said. “Now it’s late and I’d like to sleep. Please go now. Come again tomorrow.”

At this he took from his pocket a golden watch the size of a walnut. Its hands, he saw, showed that it was after nine. Replacing the watch he agreed:

“Yes, it’s time to turn in. I’ve disturbed you too long again.” He put on the cape and hat and took his leave, turning back at the door to ask, “What would you like to eat? Let me know and I’ll tell the old lady first thing in the morning. I’m a better messenger than those old women.”

“I’ll think about it during the night, and let you know early tomorrow. Listen, how it’s pouring outside. You’d better go quickly. Have you anyone with you?”

Two serving-women answered, “Yes, they’re waiting outside with umbrellas and a lantern.”

“A lantern? In this weather?” she asked in surprise.

“That’s all right,” said Baoyu. “It’s a horn lantern, and it’s rain-proof.”

She took an ornate glass lantern from the bookcase, ordered a small



蜡来，递与宝玉，道：“这个又比那个亮，正是雨里点的。”宝玉道：“我也有这么一个，怕他们失脚滑倒了打破了，所以没点来。”黛玉道：“跌了灯值钱，跌了人值钱？你又穿不惯木屐子。那灯笼命他们前头照着。这个又轻巧又亮，原是雨里自己拿着的，你自己手里拿着这个，岂不好？明儿再送来。就失了手打了也有限的，怎么又忽然变出这‘剖腹藏珠’的脾气来了！”宝玉听说，连忙接了过来，前头两个婆子打着伞提着明瓦灯，后头还有两个小丫头打着伞。宝玉便将这个灯递与一个小丫头捧着，宝玉扶着他的肩头，一径去了。

就有蘅芜院的一个婆子，也打着伞提着灯，送了一大包上等燕窝来，还有一包子洁粉梅片雪花洋糖。说：“这比买的强。姑娘说了，姑娘先吃着，吃完了再送来。”黛玉道：“回去说‘费心’。”命他外头坐了吃茶。婆子笑道：“不吃茶了，我还有事呢。”黛玉笑道：“我也知道你们忙。如今天又凉快，夜又长，越发该会个夜局，痛赌两场了。”婆子笑道：“不瞒姑娘说，今年我大沾光儿了。横竖每夜各处有几个上夜的人，误了更也不好，不如会个夜局，又坐了更，又解闷儿。今儿又是我的头家，如今园门关了，就该上场了。”黛玉听说，笑道：“难为你。误了你发财，冒雨送来。”命人给他几百钱，打些酒吃，避避雨气。那婆子笑道：“又破费姑娘赏酒吃。”说着，磕了个头，到外面接了钱，打着伞去了。





candle to be lit in it, and handed it to him.

"This is brighter, just the thing to use in the rain."

"I have one like that too," he said. "I didn't bring it for fear they might slip and break it."

"Which is more valuable, lamp or man? You're not used to wearing pattens, so get them to carry the horn lantern in front and take this one yourself, since it's handy and bright and meant to be used in the rain. Wouldn't that be better? You can send it back later. And even if you drop it, it won't matter. What's come over you suddenly that you want to 'cut open your stomach to hide a pearl'?"

Baoyu promptly took the lantern. Two serving-women led the way with an umbrella and the horn lantern, while two young maids with umbrellas followed behind. He made one of these hold the glass lantern and rested a hand on her shoulder.

Scarcely had he gone when a woman, also with an umbrella and a lantern, arrived to deliver a big package of the best quality bird's-nest and a packet of fine plum-petal snow-white sugar from Alpinia Park.

"This is better than any in the shops," she said. "Our young lady hopes you will use it, and when it's finished she'll send some more."

Daiyu thanked her and asked her to sit down in the outer room to have some tea.

"I won't stay," the woman replied. "I've got other things to do."

"I know what keeps you busy," rejoined Daiyu laughingly. "Now that it's turning cold and the nights are long, this is the time for evening gambling parties."

"I'll confess, miss, my luck has been very good this year," said the woman with a smile. "There are always a few of us on night duty, and we mustn't sleep during our watch; so gaming helps to keep us awake and pass the time pleasantly. Tonight it's my turn to be banker. Now that the Garden gates are closed it's time to start."

"Thank you very much for bringing these things in the rain. I'm sorry if I've kept you from making more money." She ordered her maids to give the woman a few hundred cash for wine to keep out the chill.

"Thank you, miss, for treating me again." The woman kowtowed and, having gone to the outer room to take the money, went off with her

紫鹃收起燕窝，然后移灯下帘，伏侍黛玉睡下。黛玉在枕上感念宝钗，一时又羡他有母有兄；一面又想宝玉虽素习和睦，终有嫌疑。又听见窗外竹梢焦叶之上，雨声淅沥，清寒透幔，不觉又滴下泪来。直到四更将阑，方渐渐睡了。暂且无话，且听下回分解。





umbrella.

Zijuan put away the packages, moved aside the lamp and lowered the curtains, then helped her mistress to bed.

Daiyu's thoughts turned to Baochai as she lay on her pillow, and again she envied her for having a mother and a brother. Then she reflected that, good as Baoyu was to her, there was still a certain distance between them. Moreover, the rain drumming steadily down on the bamboos and plantains outside wafted a chill through her curtains and made her shed tears again. Only towards the end of the fourth watch did she finally fall asleep.

If you want to know the sequence, read the next chapter.



第四十六回

尴尬人难免尴尬事 鸳鸯女誓绝鸳鸯偶

话说林黛玉直到四更将阑，方渐渐的睡着，暂且无话。如今且说凤姐因见邢夫人叫他，不知何事，忙另穿戴了一番，坐车过来。邢夫人将房内人都遣出去，悄向凤姐道：“叫你来，不为别的，有一件为难的事，老爷托我，我不得主意，先和你商议。老爷因看上了老太太的鸳鸯，要他作房里的人，叫我和老太太讨去。我想这倒平常有的事，只是怕老太太不给，你可有法子？”凤姐听了，忙道：“依我说，竟别碰这个钉子去。老太太离了鸳鸯，饭也吃不下去的，那里就舍得了？况且平日说起闲话来，老太太常说，老爷如今上了年纪，作什么左一个小老婆右一个小老婆放在屋里，没的耽误了人家。放着身子不保养，官儿也不好生作去，成日家和小老婆喝酒。太太听这话，很喜欢老爷呢？这会子回避还恐回避不及，倒拿草棍儿戳老虎的鼻子眼儿去了！太太别恼，我是不敢去的。明放着不中用，而且反招出没意思来。老爷如今上了年纪，行事不妥，太太该劝才是。比不得年轻，作这些事无碍。如今兄弟、儿子、侄儿、孙子一大群，还这么闹起来，怎么见人呢？”邢夫人冷笑道：“大家子三房四妾的也多，偏咱们就使不得？我劝了也未必依。就是老太





Chapter 46

An Old Reprobate Makes an Unseemly Proposal Yuanyang Vows Never to Marry

Daiyu did not fall asleep till nearly dawn. But let us leave her now and turn back to Xifeng, who received a mysterious summons from Lady Xing and after hastily changing her clothes went off in her carriage to the east court.

Lady Xing sent her maids away then confided to Xifeng, "The Elder Master has given me a difficult task, and I am at a loss, so I want your advice as to how to handle it. He's taken a fancy to the old lady's maid Yuanyang and wants to make her his concubine. He's told me to go and ask the old lady for her. I know this is quite commonly done, but I'm afraid the old lady may not agree. What would you advise me to do?"

"If I were you, I wouldn't run my head against a brick wall," replied Xifeng promptly. "The old lady can't even eat without Yuanyang; how could she part with her? Besides, when we're chatting I've often heard her remark that the Elder Master, at his advanced age, shouldn't be taking concubines left and right. For one thing, he's spoiling those girls' chances of marriage; for another, he's injuring his health and neglecting his official duties by spending all the time drinking with his concubines. You can judge from that, madam, that she's not particularly partial to the Elder Master. He'd do better to try to avoid offending her further instead of 'tickling the tiger's nose with a straw.' Please don't be annoyed, madam, but I haven't the courage to approach her. As far as I can see, it would be useless and just cause unpleasantness. The Elder Master's behaviour is rather unbecoming for a gentleman getting on in years; you should talk him out of it. It wouldn't matter if he were young; but when a man has such a flock of younger brothers, nephews, children and grandchildren, doesn't it look bad to go on fooling around like this?"

"Other noble families often have three or four concubines, so why



太心爱的丫头，这么胡子苍白了又作了官的一个大儿子，要了作房里的人，也未必好驳回的。我叫了你来，不过商议商议，你先派上了一篇不是。也没有叫你要去的理，自然是我说去。你倒说我不劝，你还不知道那性子的，劝不成，先和我恼了。”

凤姐知道他婆婆禀性愚拙，只知承顺贾赦以自保，贪婪财货为自得，家下一应大小事务，俱由贾赦摆布。凡出入银钱，一经他手，便克啬异常，以贾赦浪费为名，“须得我就中俭省，方可偿补”，儿女奴仆，一人不靠，一言不听的。如今又听他如此说，便知他又弄左性，劝了也不中用，连忙陪笑说道：“太太这话说的极是。我能活了多大，知道什么轻重？想来父母跟前，别说一个丫头，就是那么大的一个活宝贝，不给老爷给谁？背地里的话那里信得？我竟是个呆子。琏二爷或有日得了不是，老爷、太太恨的那样，恨不得立刻拿来一下子打死；及至见了面，也就罢了，依旧拿着老爷、太太心爱的东西赏他。如今老太太待老爷，自然也是那样了。依我说，老太太今儿喜欢，要讨今儿就讨去。我先过去哄着老太太发笑，等太太过去了，我搭讪着走开，把屋子里的人我也带开，太太好和老太太说。说的给，更好；不给，也没妨碍，众人也不得知道。”邢夫人见他这般说，便又喜欢起来，又告诉地道：“我的主意，先不和老太太要。若老太太说不给，这事便死了。我心里想着先悄悄的和鸳鸯说，他虽害臊，我细细的告诉他，他自然不言语，就妥了。那时再和老太太说，老太太虽不依，搁不住他愿意，常言‘人去不中留’，自然这就妥了。”凤姐儿笑道：“到底是太太有智谋，



shouldn't we?" retorted Lady Xing coldly. "I doubt if I can talk him out of it. Even if Yuanyang is the old lady's favourite maid, when her elder son, a grey-bearded official wants her for his concubine his mother can hardly refuse him. I invited you over simply to ask your opinion, but at once you trot out all these reasons against it. Did you think I'd send *you* on this errand? I shall go myself, of course. You blame me for not dissuading him, but surely you know your father-in-law better than that. He'd ignore my advice and fly into a temper."

Xifeng knew that her mother-in-law was a stupid, weak-minded woman who, to save herself trouble, always humoured Jia She, finding her sole pleasure in life in amassing property and money. All decisions great or small in their household she left to her husband; but when money passed through her hands she was extraordinarily tight-fisted, alleging that she had to economize to make up for *his* extravagance. Not one of her children or servants did she trust, nor would she listen to their advice. It would be futile to reason with her now, seeing that she was so stubborn.

So with a pleasant smile Xifeng replied, "You're quite right, madam. What can I know, young as I am? After all, she's his mother and would surely never refuse him the rarest treasure, not to say a maid. Whom else would she give her to if not the Elder Master? I was silly to take what she said in private so seriously. Even in Lian's case, for instance, the master and you may threaten to beat him to death when he displeases you, but the moment you see him your anger melts away and you still give him things you treasure. Of course, that's how the old lady will treat the Elder Master. As she's in high spirits today, it seems to me now's the time to make this request. Would you like me to go first to coax her into a good humour? Then when you come I'll make some excuse to leave, taking everyone else there with me, so that you can broach the subject. If she agrees, so much the better. If she doesn't, no harm will be done as no one else will know."

Mollified by this, Lady Xing told her, "My idea was not to approach the old lady first, for if she refused that would be the end of the matter. I was thinking of telling Yuanyang first in private. She may be bashful, but when I've explained it all to her she naturally won't say anything. And that can be taken to mean consent. Then I'll go and ask the old lady, and



这是千妥万妥的。别说是鸳鸯，凭他是谁，那个不想爬高望上，不想出头的？这半个主子不做，倒愿意做奴才、丫头，将来配个小子就完了。”邢夫人笑道：“正是这个话了。别说鸳鸯，就是那些执事的大丫头，谁不愿意这样呢。你先过去，别露一点风声，我吃了晚饭就过来。”

凤姐暗想：“鸳鸯素习是个可恶的，虽如此说，保不严他就愿意。我先过去了，太太后过去，若他依了便没话说；倘或不依，太太是多疑的人，只怕就疑我走了风声，使他拿腔作势的。那时太太又见应了我的话，羞恼变成怒，拿我出起气来，倒没意思。不如同着一齐过去了，他依也罢，不依也罢，就疑不到我身上了。”想毕，因笑道：“方才临来，舅母那边送了两笼子鹌鹑来，我吩咐他们炸了，原要赶太太的晚饭上送过来的。我才进大门时，见小子们抬车，说太太的车拔了缝，拿去收拾去了。不如这会子坐了我的车一齐过去倒好。”邢夫人听了，便命人来换衣服。凤姐忙着伏侍了一回，娘儿两个坐车过来。凤姐又说道：“太太过老太太那里去，我若跟了去，老太太若问起我过去作什么的，倒不好。不如太太先去，我脱了衣裳再来。”

邢夫人听了有理，便自往贾母处来，和贾母说了一回闲话，便出来，假托往王夫人房里去，从后门出去，打鸳鸯的卧房门前过。只见鸳鸯正坐着做针线，见了邢夫人，忙站起来。邢夫人笑道：“做什么呢？我瞧瞧，你扎的花儿越发好了。”一面便进来，接他手内的针线瞧了一瞧，只管赞好。



she'll find it difficult to refuse even though she doesn't want to part with the girl. For as the proverb says, 'There's no holding someone who wants to leave.' It's sure to work out all right."

"After all, you know best, madam." Xifeng smiled. "This is bound to work. Every girl, not to mention Yuanyang, wants to rise in the world and become someone of importance. Who would refuse to become a semi-mistress and remain in service instead, with no prospect but that of marrying some servant in the end?"

"That's what I think," agreed Lady Xing. "Not to say Yuanyang, even those senior maids in responsible positions would jump at the chance. All right, you go over first, but don't let a word leak out. I'll come over after dinner."

Meanwhile Xifeng had been thinking, "Yuanyang is a sharp customer. Still she may refuse. If I go back first and Yuanyang agrees, all right; but if she refuses my mother-in-law's so suspicious she's sure to think I told her and encouraged her to hold out. Seeing me proved right and herself made to look a fool, she may vent her temper on me and that would be no joke. Better if the two of us go over together, for then whether Yuanyang agrees or not no suspicion can fall on me."

So she said cordially, "As I set out just now, my maternal uncle's house sent over two baskets of quails which I told the kitchen to have deep-fried and sent over for your dinner. And as I came through your main gate, I saw some pages carrying off your carriage for repairs — they said it was cracking up. Why don't you come back now, madam, with me in mine? Then we can go together."

Lady Xing called for her maids to change her clothes, assisted by Xifeng, after which they both mounted the carriage.

Then Xifeng said, "If I accompany you to the old lady's place, madam, she may ask what I've come for and that would be awkward. Suppose you go first, and I follow after changing my clothes?"

Lady Xing thought this reasonable, and went on first to call on the Lady Dowager. After chatting with her for a while, she left on the pretext of going to see Lady Wang. Instead, however, she slipped out through the back door to Yuanyang's bedroom. The girl, who was sitting there doing some needlework, hastily rose to her feet at her approach.



放下针线，又浑身打量。只见他穿着半新的藕合色绫袄，青缎掐牙背心，下面水绿裙子。蜂腰削背，鸭蛋脸面，乌油头发，高高的鼻子，两边腮上微微几点雀斑。鸳鸯见这般看他，自己倒不好意思起来，心里便觉诧异，因笑问道：“太太，这会子不早不晚的，过来做什么？”邢夫人使了个眼色，跟的人退出。邢夫人便坐下，拉着鸳鸯的手笑道：“我特来给你道喜来了。”鸳鸯听了，心中已猜着三分，不觉红了脸，低了头不发一言。听邢夫人又道：“你知道，你老爷跟前竟没有个可靠的人，心里再要买一个，又怕那些人牙子家出来的不干不净，也不知道毛病儿，买了来家，三日两日，又弄鬼吊猴的。因此满府里要挑一个家生子儿的女儿收了，又没有好的，不是模样不好，就是性子不好，有了这个好处，没了那个好处。因此冷眼选了半年，这些女孩子里头，就只你是个尖儿，模样儿，行事作人，温柔可靠，一概是齐全的。意思要和老太太讨了你去，收在屋里。你比不得外头新买的，你这一收进去了，进门就开了脸，就封你姨娘，又体面，又尊贵。你又是个要强的人，俗话说，‘金子终得金子换’，谁知竟被老爷看重了你。如今这一来，你可遂了素日的心高志大的愿了，也堵一堵那些嫌你的人的嘴。跟了我，回老太太去！”说着，拉了他的手就要走。鸳鸯红了脸，夺手不行。邢夫人知他害臊，因又说道：“这有什么臊处？你又不用说话，只跟着我就是了。”鸳鸯只低头不动



Lady Xing asked with a smile, "What are you making? Let me have a look. I'm sure you're doing finer work than ever." So saying she entered the room, inspected the embroidery and praised it loudly. Putting it down then, she subjected Yuanyang to a careful scrutiny.

The maid was wearing a light purple silk tunic, none too new, a black satin sleeveless jacket with silk borders, and a pale green skirt. She had a supple wasp-waist, slender shoulders, an oval face, glossy black hair and a finely arched nose, while her cheeks were slightly freckled. This close inspection embarrassed and puzzled her.

"What brings you here at this hour, madam?" she asked with a smile.

Lady Xing signed to her attendants to leave, then sat down and took Yuanyang's hand. "I've come specially to congratulate you," she announced.

This gave Yuanyang some inkling of what was afoot. She blushed and lowered her head without a word.

"You know, the Elder Master has no one reliable to wait on him," Lady Xing continued. "He could buy a girl, of course, but those one gets through brokers aren't clean and there's no knowing what mayn't be wrong with them; besides, after two or three days they're liable to get up to monkey-tricks. So he's been trying to choose one in our household. At first there seemed to be no one suitable. One was ugly, another bad-tempered, and some had certain good points but other shortcomings. After keeping his eyes open for the past six months, he's decided that of all the girls here you're the best — pretty, well-behaved, dependable and sweet-tempered. So he wants to ask the old lady to let him take you into his chambers.

"Your position will be quite different from that of a girl bought from outside, for as soon as you enter our house we shall go through the ceremonies and give you the rank of a secondary wife, treated with all respect and honour. Besides, you're a girl with a will of your own. As the proverb says, 'True gold will find its price.' Now that the Elder Master has picked you, you'll be able to realize your highest ambitions, and this will stop the mouths of those who dislike you. So come along with me to tell the old lady."

She took Yuanyang's hand to lead her out, but the girl coloured and shrank back.



身。邢夫人见他这样，便又说道：“难道你还不愿意不成？若果然真不愿意，可真是个傻丫头了。放着主子奶奶不作，倒愿意作丫头？三年二年，不过配上个小子，还是奴才。你跟了我们去，你知道我的性子又好，又不是那不容人的人，老爷待你们又好。过一年半载，生下一个一男半女，你就和我并肩了。家里人你要使唤谁，谁还不动？现成主子不做去，错过这个机会，后悔就迟了。”鸳鸯只管低了头，仍是不语。邢夫人又道：“你这么个爽快人，怎么又这样积粘起来？有什么不称心之处，只管说与我，我管你遂心如意就是了。”鸳鸯仍不言语。邢夫人又笑道：“想必你有老子娘，你自己不肯说话，怕臊。你等他们问你，这也是理。让我问他们去，叫他们来问你，有话只管告诉他们。”说毕，便往凤姐房中来。

凤姐早换了衣服，因房内无人，便将此话告诉了平儿。平儿摇头，笑道：“据我看，此事未必妥。平常我们背着人说起话来，听他那主意，未必是肯的。也只说着瞧罢。”凤姐道：“太太必来这屋里商议。依了还可，若不依，白讨个臊，当着你们，岂不脸上不好看。你说给他们炸些鹌鹑，再有什么配几样，预备吃饭。你且别处逛逛去，估量着去了再来。”平儿听说，照样传给婆子们，便逍遥自在的往园子里来。

这里鸳鸯见邢夫人去了，必在凤姐房里商议去了，必定





“What’s there to be so bashful about?” asked Lady Xing, seeing how embarrassed she was. “You won’t have to say a word. Just come with me.”

Yuanyang simply hung her head and would not budge.

“Don’t tell me you’re unwilling!” cried Lady Xing. “You’re a very silly girl if that’s the case, turning down the chance to be a mistress and choosing to remain a maid instead. All you can look forward to then is marrying some servant in two or three years’ time — you’ll still be a slave. Far better come to us. You know I’m much too good-natured to be jealous, and the Elder Master will treat you well. In a year or so, when you give birth to a child, you’ll be on the same footing as me with the whole household at your beck and call. If you let slip this chance to better yourself, you’re going to regret it — but then it’ll be too late.”

Still Yuanyang simply hung her head and said nothing.

“You’ve always been a straightforward girl,” persisted Lady Xing. “Why are you being so sticky about this? What’s worrying you? Just tell me, and I’ll see that your wishes are met.”

Yuanyang remained silent.

“I suppose you’re too shy to say ‘yes’ yourself and would prefer to leave it to your parents,” Lady Xing smiled. “Quite right and proper too. I’ll speak to them and get them to speak to you. You can be frank with them.” This said, she went off to find Xifeng.

Xifeng had long since changed her clothes, and since no one else was in the room but Pinger she disclosed this news to her.

Pinger shook her head. “I don’t see this working out,” was her verdict. “From the way she’s spoken when we were chatting on our own, she’s not likely to consent. But we shall soon see.”

“The mistress may bring Yuanyang here to discuss it,” said Xifeng. “If Yuanyang’s willing, all right; if not, she’ll be feeling put out, and it would be embarrassing for her to have you others here. Tell the rest to go and deep-fry some quails and prepare a few other dishes to go with them. Then you can go off and amuse yourself somewhere else till you think she’ll have gone.”

Pinger passed on these instructions to the other servants, then sauntered off to enjoy herself in the Garden.



有人来问他的，不如躲了这里，因找了琥珀说道：“老太太要问我，只说我病了，没吃早饭，往园子里逛逛去就来。”琥珀答应了。鸳鸯也往园子里来，各处游玩，不想正遇见平儿。平儿因见无人，便笑道：“新姨娘来了！”鸳鸯听了，便红了脸，说道：“怪道你们串通一气来算计我！等着我和你主子闹去就是了。”平儿听了，自悔失言，便拉他到枫树底下，坐在一块石上，率性把方才凤姐过去回来所有的形景言词、始末原由告诉与他。鸳鸯红了脸，向平儿冷笑道：“这是咱们好，比如袭人、琥珀、素云、紫鹃、彩霞、玉钏儿、麝月、翠墨，跟了史姑娘去的翠缕，死了的可人和金钏儿，去了的茜雪，连上你我，这十来个人，从小儿什么话儿不说？什么事儿不作？这如今因都大了，各自干各自的去了，然我心里仍是照旧，有话有事，并不瞒你们。这话我先放在你心里，且别和二奶奶说：别说大老爷要我做小老婆，就是太太这会子死了，他三媒六聘的娶我去作大老婆，我也不能去。”

平儿笑着方欲答言，只听山石背后哈哈的笑道：“好个没脸的丫头，亏你不怕牙碜。”二人听了不免吃了一惊，忙起身向山石背后找寻，不是别个，却是袭人笑着走了出来，问：“什么事情？告诉我。”说着，三人坐在石上。平儿又把方才的话说与袭人，袭人听了，说道：“真真这话论理不该我们说，这个大老爷太好色了，略平头正脸的，他就不放手





Meanwhile Yuanyang had guessed that Lady Xing would be going to discuss this business with Xifeng, and that other people were sure to come to sound her out again. Thinking it wisest to make herself scarce, she told Hupo:

“If the old lady should ask for me, tell her I’m not feeling well and I had no breakfast. I’ve gone for a stroll in the Garden but shan’t be long.”

Hupo agreed to this, and Yuanyang went out. While walking in the Garden, to her surprise she met Pinger, who seeing that they were alone cried teasingly:

“Here comes the new concubine!”

Yuanyang flushed scarlet, “So that’s it!” she exclaimed. “You’re all in league against me. Wait till I go and have this out with your mistress.”

Pinger hearing this regretted her tactlessness. Drawing Yuanyang over to sit on a rock under a maple, she told her frankly all that Xifeng had said since her return.

Still blushing, Yuanyang answered bitterly, “What good friends we were, the dozen or so of us — Xiren, Hupo, Suyun, Zijuan, Caixia, Yuchuan, Sheyue, Cuimo, Cuilu who went with Miss Xiangyun, Keren and Jinchuan who’ve died, Qianxue who’s left, and the two of us. We worked together from the time we were young and never had any secrets from each other. Now that we’ve grown up we’ve gone our different ways, but *I* haven’t changed — I don’t hide anything from you. So I’ll confide something to you, but mind you don’t tell Madam Lian. Quite apart from the fact that the Elder Master only wants to make me his concubine, even if Lady Xing had died and he sent matchmakers in style to make me his principal wife, I wouldn’t agree to it.”

Before Pinger could reply they heard laughter behind the rock.

“For shame!” someone cried. “Such talk’s enough to set one’s teeth on edge.”

Startled, they jumped to their feet to see who was there. It was Xiren, who emerged laughingly from behind the rockery.

“What’s up?” she asked. “Let me into the secret.”

The three of them sat down again and Pinger retold her story.

“Of course, we shouldn’t say this, but what an old lecher the Elder Master is!” was Xiren’s comment. “He can’t keep his hands off any



了。”平儿道：“你既不愿意，我教给你个法子，不用费事就完了。”鸳鸯道：“什么法子？你说来我听听。”平儿笑道：“你只和老太太说，就说已经给了琏二爷了，大老爷就只好要了。”鸳鸯啐道：“什么东西！你还说呢！前儿你主子不是这么混说的？谁知应在今日了！”袭人笑道：“他们两个都不愿意，我就和老太太说，叫老太太就说把你已经许了宝玉了，大老爷也就死了心了。”鸳鸯又是气，又是臊，又是急，因骂道：“两个蹄子不得好死的！人家有为难的事，拿着你们当正经人，告诉你们与我排解排解，你们倒替换着取笑儿。你们自为都有了结果了，将来都是做姨娘的。据我看，天下的事未必都遂心如意。你们且收着些儿，别忒乐过了头儿！”二人见他急了，忙陪笑央告道：“好姐姐，别多心，咱们从小儿都是亲姊妹一般，不过无人处偶然取个笑儿。你的主意告诉我们知道，也好放心。”鸳鸯道：“什么主意！我只不去就完了。”平儿摇头道：“你不去，未必得干休。大老爷的性子你是知道的，虽然你是老太太房里的人，此刻不敢把你怎么样，将来难道你跟老太太一辈子不成？也要出去的。那时落了他的手，倒不好了。”鸳鸯冷笑道：“老太太在一日，我一日不离这里；若是老太太归西去了，他横竖还有三年的孝呢，没个娘才死了他先纳小老婆的！等过了三年，知道又是怎么个光景，那时再说。纵到了至急为难，我剪了头发当姑子去；不然，还有一死。一辈子不嫁男人，又怎样？乐得干

红楼梦
鸳鸯
PDG



girl who's not bad-looking."

"Since you're unwilling," said Pinger, "I'll tell you an easy way to fob him off."

"What's that?" asked Yuanyang.

"Simply tell the old lady you've already given yourself to Master Lian," Pinger giggled. "The father can hardly take what belongs to his son."

Yuanyang spat in disgust. "What rubbish! Your mistress was raving the other day. How can you go repeating that today?"

"If you don't want either of them," teased Xiren, "get the old lady to tell Lord She you're already promised to Baoyu. Then he'll have to give up."

Frantic with rage and embarrassment, Yuanyang swore, "You two bitches, you won't come to a good end! I turn to you in trouble, thinking you'll have the decency to help me, but instead you take it in turns to make fun of me. You think your own futures are assured and you'll both end up as secondary wives. I'm not so sure. In this world, things don't always turn out the way you want. So don't start counting your chickens before they're hatched."

Seeing how frantic she was, the two others did their best to soothe her.

"Don't take it the wrong way, dear sister," they cried. "We've been like real sisters since we were small and were only having a joke among ourselves. But, seriously, tell us your plan, so that we can stop worrying."

"Plan? What plan do I have? I just refuse to go."

Pinger shook her head. "Then he may not give up. You know what Lord She's like. Though he won't dare do anything now while you're with the old lady, you won't be in her service all your life, will you? Some day you'll be leaving. If you fell into his clutches then, that would be worse."

"Pah! As long as the old lady lives, I shan't leave this house. If she passes away, he'll have to observe three years' mourning anyway: he can't take a concubine the moment his mother dies. And in those three years anything might happen. Time enough to worry then. If the worst comes to the worst, I can shave my hair off and become a nun. Failing



净呢!”平儿笑道:“真这蹄子没了脸,越发信口儿都说出来了。”鸳鸯道:“事到如此,臊一会子怎么样!你们不信,慢慢的看着就是了。大太太才说,找我老子娘去。我看他南京找去!”平儿道:“你的父母都在南京看房子,没上来,终久也寻的着。现在还有你哥哥、嫂子在这里。可惜你是这里的家生女儿,不如我们两个人是单在这里。”鸳鸯道:“家生女儿怎么样!‘牛不吃水强按头’?我不愿意,难道杀我的老子娘不成?”

正说着,只见他嫂子从那边走来。袭人道:“当时找不着你的爹娘,一定和你嫂子说了。”鸳鸯道:“这个娼妇专管是个‘九国贩骆驼的’,听了这话,他有个不奉承去的!”说话之间,已来到跟前。他嫂子笑道:“那里没找到,姑娘跑了这里来了!你跟了我来,我和你说句话。”平儿、袭人都忙让坐。他嫂子只说:“姑娘们请坐,我找我们姑娘说句话。”平儿、袭人都装不知道,笑道:“什么话这样忙?我们这里猜谜儿赢瓜子打呢,等猜了这个再去。”鸳鸯道:“什么话?你说罢。”他嫂子笑道:“你跟了我来,到那里我告诉你,横竖有好话儿。”鸳鸯道:“可是大太太和你说的那话?”他嫂子笑道:“姑娘既知道,还奈何我!快来罢,我细细的告诉你,可是天大的喜事。”鸳鸯听说,立起身来,照他嫂子脸上使





that, I can kill myself. I don't care if I *never* get married. Then life would be simpler."

"What a shameless slut!" laughed Pinger. "The wild way she runs on!"

"Things have gone too far for modesty," Yuanyang retorted. "If you don't believe me, wait and see. Lady Xing said just now she means to speak to my parents. She'll have to go to Nanking for that."

"Your father and mother are looking after properties in the south," said Pinger. "So even though they're not here, they can still be found. Besides, your elder brother and sister-in-law are here. It's too bad you're a house-born servant. It's worse for you than for us who are here on our own."

"What difference does it make? You can't force an ox to bend its head to drink. Would he kill my parents if I refuse?"

Just then they saw her sister-in-law approaching.

Xiren remarked, "As your parents aren't on the spot, they must have spoken to your sister-in-law."

"That whore!" swore Yuanyang. "She's a regular camel-dealer. She won't let slip this chance to suck up to them."

By now her sister-in-law had come up to her.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," she said smiling. "So this is where you'd run off to. Come with me. I want to have a word with you."

Pinger and Xiren asked her to sit down.

"No thank you. Don't stir," said the woman. "I just want to have a word with my sister-in-law."

"What's the hurry?" they asked, pretending not to know. "We're guessing riddles here and making bets. We must hear her answer to this one before she goes."

"What do you want?" demanded Yuanyang. "Out with it."

"Come with me," the other insisted. "I'll tell you over there. It's good news for you, anyway."

"Your mean what Lady Xing told you?"

"If you know, why keep putting me off? Come along, and I'll give you the details. It's simply the most wonderful piece of good fortune."



劲的啐了一口，指着他骂道：“你快夹着那油嘴离了这里，好多着呢！什么‘好话’！宋徽宗的鹰，赵子昂的马，都是好画。什么‘喜事’！状元痘儿灌的浆儿又满是喜事。怪道成日家羡慕人家女儿作了小老婆了，一家子都仗着他横行霸道的，一家子都成了小老婆了！看的眼热了，也把我送在火坑里去。我若得脸呢，你们在外头横行霸道，自己就封了自己是舅爷了。我若不得脸败了时，你们把忘八脖子一缩，生死由我去。”一面骂，一面哭，平儿、袭人拦着劝。他嫂子脸上下不来，因说道：“愿意不愿意，你也好说，不犯着牵三挂四的。俗话说，‘当着矮人，别说短话’。姑奶奶骂我，我不敢还言，这二位姑娘并没有惹着你，小老婆长小老婆短，人家脸上怎么过得去？”袭人、平儿忙道：“你别这么说，他也并不是说我们，你倒别牵三挂四的。你听见那位太太、太爷封我们做小老婆？况且我们两个也没有爹娘、哥哥、兄弟在这门子里仗着我们横行霸道的。他骂的人自有他骂的，我们犯不着多心。”鸳鸯道：“他见我骂了他，他臊了，没的盖脸，又拿话挑唆你们两个，幸亏你们两个明白。原是我急了，也没分别出来，他就挑出这个空儿来。”他嫂子自觉没趣，赌气去了。

鸳鸯气得还骂，平儿袭人劝了他一回，方才罢了。平儿因问袭人道：“你在那里藏着做什么的？我们竟没看见你。”袭人道：“我因为往四姑娘房里找我们宝二爷去的，谁知迟了一步儿，说是来家里来了。我疑惑怎么没看见呢，想要往林姑娘屋里找去，又遇见他们屋里的人说也没去。我这里正疑惑是出园子去了，可巧你从那里来了，我一闪，你也没看



Yuanyang sprang up and spat hard in her face. Pointing an accusing finger at her she swore.

“Shut your foul mouth and clear off, if you know what’s good for you. What’s all this talk of ‘good news’ and ‘good fortune’? No wonder, though. You’ve always envied those families who start throwing their weight about once their daughters are concubines, as if every one of them was a concubine too. You can’t wait to pitch *me* into that fiery pit. Then if I get given face you can bully people outside, calling yourselves relatives of the Jia family; if I lose face and land in trouble, you turtles can shrink back into your shells and leave me to my fate.”

She wept and stormed while Pinger and Xiren restrained her and tried to calm her.

Her sister-in-law was goaded to retort, “Whether you’re willing or not, you might at least explain properly instead of slinging mud at other people. The proverb says, ‘One doesn’t talk about midgets in front of dwarfs.’ Your abuse of *me* I won’t presume to answer. But these girls haven’t offended you, why embarrass them with all this talk about concubines?”

“That’s no way to speak,” protested the other two. “She wasn’t referring to us. *Your’re* the one trying to drag us into this. Which master or mistress has made us concubines? Besides, we’ve no parents or brother in service here who could make use of our position to bully others. There *are* people of that kind. Let her swear at them — it doesn’t worry *us*.”

“I put her to shame and she didn’t know how to cover up,” said Yuanyang. “That’s why she tried to provoke the two of you. It’s a good thing you understand. Being carried away, I didn’t choose my words carefully enough; then she saw her chance and grabbed it.”

Her sister-in-law flounced off in a huff while Yuanyang went on fulminating against her. When at last they had calmed her Pinger asked Xiren:

“Why were you hiding there? We didn’t see you.”

“I went to Miss Xichun’s apartment to fetch Master Bao, only to be told I’d just missed him — he’d gone back. I doubted that, for in that case I would have seen him. I decided to see if he was with Miss Lin, but I ran into some of her people who told me he wasn’t there either. It had



见。后来他又来了。我从这树后头走到山子石后，我却见你两个说话来了，谁知你们四个眼睛没看见我。”

一语未了，又听身后笑道：“四个眼睛没见你？你们六个眼睛竟没见我！”三人唬了一跳，回头一看，不是别个，正是宝玉走来。袭人先笑道：“叫我好找，你在那里来？”宝玉笑道：“我从四妹妹那里出来，迎头看见你来了，我就知道是找我去的，我就藏了起来哄你。见回着头过去了，进了院子，又出来了，逢人就问。我在那里好笑，原要等你到了跟前，唬你一跳的，后来见你也藏藏躲躲的，我就知道也是要哄人了。我探头往前看了一看，却是他两个，所以我就绕到你身后。你出去，我就躲在你躲的那里了。”平儿笑道：“咱们再找一找去，只怕还找出两个人来也未可知。”宝玉笑道：“这可再没了。”鸳鸯已知话俱被宝玉听了去，只伏在石头上装睡。宝玉笑推他道：“这石头上冷，咱们回房里去睡，岂不好？”说着拉起鸳鸯来，又忙让平儿来家坐吃茶。平儿、袭人都劝鸳鸯走，鸳鸯方立起身来，四人竟往怡红院来。宝玉将方才的话俱已听见，心中自然不悦，只默默的歪在床上，任他三人在外间说笑。

那边邢夫人因问凤姐鸳鸯的父母，凤姐回说：“他爹的名字叫金彩，两口子都在南京看房子，从不大上京。他哥哥金文翔，现在是老太太那边的买办。他嫂子也是老太太那边浆洗上的头儿。”邢夫人便令人叫了他嫂子金文翔媳妇来，细



just occurred to me that he might have left the Garden, when you happened to come along. I dodged out of sight, and then Yuanyang came along too. I slipped from behind that tree to behind this rockery; but you were so busy talking that even with two pairs of eyes you didn't see me."

"Even with two pairs of eyes they didn't see you?" Someone behind them laughed. "Even with three pairs of eyes you didn't see me!"

With a start they turned and saw Baoyu approaching them.

"What a chase you've led me," Xiren exclaimed with a smile. "Where have you been all this time?"

"After I left Xichun, I spotted you coming and guessed you were looking for me, so I hid myself to tease you. I watched you sail straight past into the courtyard, then come out again and question everyone you met. I was laughing up my sleeve, ready to pop out and frighten you when you reached me. But then I saw you dodge into hiding too and knew you were playing a trick on someone else, I peeped out and saw these two. So I crept behind you, and after you came out I hid where you'd been hiding."

"We'd better go and have another look in case another couple's hiding there," proposed Pinger with a laugh.

"No, there's no one there now," he assured her.

Aware that Baoyu must have overheard everything, Yuanyang laid her head on her arms on the rock and pretended she was dozing off.

"It's cold on that stone. Come back to my place to rest," he suggested, nudging her.

Helping her up, he invited Pinger too for a cup of tea. Pressed by both Pinger and Xiren, Yuanyang acquiesced and the four of them went together to Happy Red Court. The conversation Baoyu had overheard had naturally depressed him. He simply lay down quietly on his bed, leaving the three girls to chat in the outer room.

To return to Lady Xing, she had learned from Xifeng that Yuanyang's father Jin Cai and his wife were acting as caretakers in Nanjing and seldom came up to the capital. However, her elder brother Jin Wenxiang was a buyer for the Lady Dowager, and her sister-in-law was chief laun-



细说与他。金家媳妇自是喜欢，兴兴头头去找鸳鸯，只望一说必妥，不想被鸳鸯抢白了一顿，又被袭人、平儿说了几句，羞恼回来，便对邢夫人说：“不中用，他倒骂了我一顿。”因凤姐在旁，不敢提平儿，只说：“袭人也帮着他抢白我，说了许多不知好歹的话，回不得主子的。太太和老爷商议再买罢。谅那小蹄子也没有这么大福，我们也没有这么大造化。”邢夫人听了，因说道：“又与袭人什么相干？他如何知道的？”又问：“还有谁在跟前？”金文翔家的道：“还有平姑娘。”凤姐忙道：“你不会拿嘴巴子打他？回回我一出了门，他就逛去了，我回家来连个影儿也摸不着他的！他必定也帮着说什么来！”金文翔家的道：“平姑娘没在跟前，远远的看着倒像是他，可也不真切，不过是我白忖度着。”凤姐使命人去：“快打了他来，告诉他我来家了，太太也在这里呢，请他来帮个忙儿。”丰儿忙上来回道：“林姑娘打发人下请字儿请了三四次，他才去了。奶奶一进门我就叫他去的。林姑娘说：‘告诉你奶奶，我烦他有事呢。’”凤姐听了方罢，故意的还说：“天天烦他，有什么事！”

邢夫人无计，吃了饭回家，晚间告诉了贾赦。贾赦想了一想，即刻叫贾琏来说道：“南京的房子还有人看着，不止一家，即刻叫上金彩来。”贾琏回道：“上次南京的信来，金彩已经得了痰迷心窍，那边连棺材银子都赏了，不知如今是死





dress in her apartments.

Lady Xing promptly sent for Wenxiang's wife and told her what she proposed. Young Mrs. Jin was of course only too pleased and went off jubilantly to find Yuanyang, sure that her mission would meet with instant success. Instead, she was denounced to her face by Yuanyang and snubbed by Xiren and Pinger into the bargain.

She returned, angry and discomfited, to report to Lady Xing, "It's no use, she just swore at me." Since Xifeng was present she dared not mention Pinger, but she added, "Xiren joined in her attack on me and talked a whole lot of other nonsense too, which doesn't bear repeating. You had better persuade Lord She to buy another girl, madam. That little bitch isn't cut out for such great fortune, nor are we for such good luck."

"What has this to do with Xiren?" asked Lady Xing. "How did she come to hear of it? Who else was there?"

"Miss Pinger was there too."

Xifeng promptly interposed, "Why didn't you slap her face? Every time I go out, off she goes to amuse herself. When I got home today there was no sign of her. I suppose she took Yuanyang's side too?"

"Miss Pinger wasn't there on the spot," replied Mrs. Jin. "It looked like her from a distance, but I may have been mistaken. That was just my guess."

Xifeng ordered a servant, "Go and fetch Pinger, quick. Tell her I'm back and Her Ladyship is here too. She's wanted for something."

Fenger hastily stepped forward to put in, "Miss Lin sent a maid with a note several times to invite her over, so finally she went. As soon as you came back, madam, I went to fetch her, but Miss Lin asked me to tell you she'd like to keep her for a little, madam."

"Every day she seems to want her for something or other," remarked Xifeng, then let the matter drop.

As there was nothing more Lady Xing could do, she went home after dinner and told her husband that evening what had happened. Jia She thought the matter over, then summoned Jia Lian.

"We have other caretakers besides the Jins in Nanjing," he said. "Send at once to have Jin Cai recalled."

"According to the last letter from Nanjing, Jin Cai has had a stroke,



是活，便是活着，人事不知，叫来也无用。他老婆子又是个聋子。”贾赦听了，喝了一声，又骂：“下流囚攘的，偏你这么知道，还不离了我这里！”吓得贾琏退出，一时又叫传金文翔。贾琏在外书房伺候着，又不敢家去，又不敢见他父亲，只得听着。一时金文翔来了，小么儿们直带到二门里去，隔了五、六顿饭的工夫才出来去了。贾琏暂且不敢打听，隔了一会，又打听贾赦睡了，方才过来。至晚间凤姐儿告诉他，方才明白。

鸳鸯一夜没睡，至次日，他哥哥进来回贾母说接他家去逛逛，贾母允了，命他出去。鸳鸯意欲不去，又怕贾母疑心，只得勉强出来。他哥哥只得将贾赦的话说与他听，又许他怎么体面，又怎么当家作姨娘。鸳鸯只咬定牙不愿意。他哥哥没法，少不得去回覆了贾赦。贾赦怒起来，因说道：“我这话告诉你，叫你女人向他说去，就说我的话：‘自古嫦娥爱少年’，他必定是嫌我老了，大约他恋着少爷们，多半是看上了宝玉，只怕也有贾琏。果有此心，叫他早早歇了。我要他不来，以后谁还敢收他？此是一件。第二件，想着老太太疼他，将来自然往外聘作正头夫妻去。叫他细想，凭他嫁到谁家去，也难出我的手心；除非他死了，或是终身不嫁男人，我就服了他了！若不然时，叫他趁早回心转意，有多少好处。”贾赦说一句，金文翔应一声“是”。贾赦道：“你别





sir," replied his son. "Money for his coffin has already been issued there, and for all we know he may already be dead. Even if he's still living he'll be in a coma, so it wouldn't be any use sending for him. And his old wife is deaf."

Jia She swore. "You scurvy scoundrel!" he fumed. "Quite a know-all, aren't you? Get out!"

In consternation Jia Lian promptly withdrew. Soon he heard the order given to fetch Jin Wenxiang. He himself remained on call in the outside study, daring neither to go home nor to confront his father.

Presently Wenxiang arrived and some pages ushered him through the inner gate. He was with Lord She for the space of five or six meals, and after he left Jia Lian did not venture to ask what had been said. Not until late that evening, having ascertained that his father was asleep, did he finally go home where Xifeng cleared up the whole mystery for him.

As for Yuanyang, she passed a sleepless night. The next day her brother came and asked the Lady Dowager's permission to take her home for a rest. The old lady agreed and told her to go. This was not what Yuanyang wanted, but she complied reluctantly in order not to arouse the old lady's suspicions. Her brother told her what Lord She had said and what dignity she would have as his secondary wife. However, Yuanyang refused to consider it. Unable to change her mind, he had to go back and report this to Jia She.

Jia She flew into a rage. "Tell your wife to tell her this from me," he fumed. "Tell her these are my own words. 'From of old, young nymphs have preferred youth to age. She must think me too old for her. I daresay she has set her heart on one of the young masters, most likely Baoyu or possibly my son. If that's her scheme, tell her to forget it. For if she refuses me, who else will dare take her later? That's the first thing.

"The second is this: if she's counting on the old lady's partiality to her to find some decent husband outside, she'd better think again. For no matter whom she marries she'll still be within my reach, unless she dies or remains single all her life, in which case there is nothing I can do. Otherwise, the sooner she changes her mind the better for her."

Wenxiang had expressed agreement after each sentence of this diatribe. Now Jia She added:



哄我，我明儿还打发你太太过去问鸳鸯，你们说了，他不依，便没你们的不是。若问他，他再依了，仔细你的脑袋！”

金文翔忙应了又应，退出回家，也等不得告诉他女人转说，竟自己对面说了这话。把个鸳鸯气的无话可回，想了一想，便说道：“便愿意去，也须得你们带了我去回声老太太。”他哥嫂听了，只当他回想过来，都喜之不胜。他嫂子即刻带了他上来见贾母。

可巧王夫人、薛姨妈、李纨、凤姐、宝钗等姊妹，并外头的几个执事有头脸的媳妇，都在贾母跟前凑趣儿呢。鸳鸯喜之不尽，拉了他嫂子，到贾母跟前跪下，一行哭，一行说，把邢夫人怎么来说，园子里他嫂子又如何说，今儿他哥哥又如何说，“因为不依，方才大老爷率性说我恋着宝玉，不然要等着往外聘，凭我到天边上，这一辈子也跳不出他的手心去，终久要报仇。我是横了心的，当着众人在这里，我这一辈子别说是‘宝玉’，便是‘宝金’、‘宝银’、‘宝天王’、‘宝皇帝’，横竖不嫁人就完了！就是老太太逼着我，我一把刀子抹死了，也不能从命！若有造化，我死在老太太之先；若没造化，该讨吃的命，伏侍老太太归了西，我也不跟着我老子娘、哥哥去，或是寻死，或是剪了头发当姑子去！若说我不是真心，暂且拿话支吾，日后图别的，天地鬼神，日头月亮照着嗓子，从嗓子里头长疔，烂了出来，烂化成酱在这里！”原来他一进来时，便袖了一把剪子，一面说着，一面左手打开头发，右手便铰。众婆娘、丫头忙来拉



“And don’t you try to cheat me. Tomorrow I shall send the mistress to her again. If you’ve really told her and she still refuses, I won’t hold you responsible. But if when we ask her again she agrees, you’ll have to watch out for your head!”

Jin Wenxiang agreed hastily and withdrew. Upon his arrival home, without waiting to get his wife to pass on this message he told Yuanyang himself, reducing her to a state of speechless anger.

After some reflection she said, “Well, supposing I agree, you’ll still have to take me back to report this to the old lady.”

Her brother and his wife were overjoyed by this apparent change of heart. Her sister-in-law at once took her to the Lady Dowager, who happened to be chatting with Lady Wang, Aunt Xue, Li Wan, Xifeng, Baochai and the other girls, as well as a few of the chief stewards’ wives, all of whom were doing their best to amuse the old lady.

Delighted by this opportunity, Yuanyang drew her sister-in-law forward and threw herself on her knees before her mistress. Sobbing, she told the old lady what Lady Xing had said to her, what her sister-in-law had told her in the Garden, and how her brother had threatened her today.

“Because I wouldn’t agree, the Elder Master says I’ve set my heart on Baoyu. He swears I’ll never escape him, not even if I marry someone outside, no, not even if I go to the ends of the earth — he’ll have his revenge in the end. Well, my mind’s made up. Everybody here can bear witness. I shall never marry so long as I live, neither Baoyu with his precious jade, nor someone born with silver or gold, not even a Heavenly King or Emperor!

“If Your Ladyship tries to force me, I’ll kill myself rather than marry. If I’m lucky, I shall die before you, madam. Otherwise I mean to serve Your Ladyship till the end of your life; then, rather than go back to my parents or to my brother, I shall commit suicide or shave my head and become a nun. If you think I’m not in earnest and this is just empty talk which I’ll go back on later, may Heaven, Earth, all the deities and the Sun and Moon who are my witnesses choke me with an ulcer in my throat so that I rot away into a pulp!”

Before coming in, she had hidden a pair of scissors in her sleeve, and while uttering this oath she let down her hair with her left hand and started

住，已剪下半绺来了。众人看时，幸而他的头发极多，绞的不透，连忙替他挽上。贾母听了，气的浑身乱颤，口内只说：“我通共剩了这么一个可靠的人，他们还要来算计！”因见王夫人在旁，便向王夫人道：“你们原来都是哄我呢！外头孝敬，暗地里盘算我。有好东西也来要，有好人也要，剩了这么个毛丫头，见我待他好了，你们自然气不过，弄开了他，好摆弄我！”王夫人忙站起来，不敢还一言。薛姨妈见连王夫人怪上，反不好劝的了。李纨一听见鸳鸯这话，早带了姊妹们出去。

探春是有心的人，想王夫人虽有委屈，如何敢辩；薛姨妈现是亲姊妹，自然也不好辩的；宝钗也不便为姨妈辩；李纨、凤姐、宝玉一概不敢辩；这正用着女孩儿之时，迎春老实，惜春又小，因此在窗外听了一听，便走进来，陪笑向贾母道：“这事与太太什么相干？老太太想一想，也有大伯子要收屋里的人，小婶子如何知道？便知道，也推不知道。”话未说完，贾母笑道：“可是我老糊涂了！姨太太别笑话我。你这个姐姐他极孝顺我，不像我那大太太一味怕老爷，婆婆跟前不过应景儿。可是我委屈了他。”薛姨妈只答应“是”，又说：“老太太偏心，多疼小儿子媳妇，也是有的。”贾母道：“我不偏心！”因又说道：“宝玉，我错怪了你娘，你怎么



cutting it with the scissors in her right. Maids and serving-women hurried over to stop her. She had cut off one lock already but, luckily, her hair being so thick, it was difficult to cut much. They lost no time in dressing it for her again.

The Lady Dowager was trembling with rage.

“The only girl left I can trust, and they want to get her away from me,” she quavered. Her eye falling on Lady Wang beside her, she cried, “So you’re all deceiving me, putting on a show of being dutiful but plotting against me in secret. Whenever I have anything good you come and demand it from me. And my best servants too. Now I’ve only this one girl left, and seeing how partial I am to her naturally infuriates you. You’re trying to get her away from me, so as to get me under your own thumb.”

Lady Wang had risen to her feet but did not venture a word in self-defence. And Aunt Xue being her sister, could not try to shift the blame from her. Li Wan had quietly taken the girls outside when Yuanyang began her story.

Tanchun, however, had sense enough to see that it was not for Lady Wang to clear herself of these false charges, nor for Aunt Xue to defend her sister, nor for Baochai to defend her aunt, while Li Wan, Xifeng and Baoyu were in no position to protest either. It was now up to one of the girls to speak. But Yingchun was too naive, Xichun too young. So after listening for a while outside the window, she entered the room with a smile.

“What has this to do with Her Ladyship?” she asked her grandmother. “Just think, madam, how could a younger sister-in-law know that her elder brother-in-law was going to get a concubine? Even if she did, could she say anything?”

At once the old lady chuckled, “I’m losing my wits with age,” she exclaimed. “Don’t laugh at me, Madam Xue. This elder sister of yours is a very good daughter-in-law, not like my elder son’s wife who’s so afraid of her husband she only makes a show of compliance to me. Yes, I was wrong to blame your sister.”

Aunt Xue murmured agreement, then added, “I wonder if you’re not, perhaps, rather partial to the wife for your younger son, madam?”

“No, I’m not partial,” the old lady declared. She continued, “Baoyu,



也不提我，看着你娘受委屈？”宝玉笑道：“我偏着娘说大爷、大娘不成？通共一个不是，我娘在这里不认，却推给谁去？我倒要认是我的不是，老太太又不信。”贾母笑道：“这也有理。你快给你娘跪下，你说太太别委屈了，老太太有年纪了，看着宝玉罢。”宝玉听了，忙走过去，便跪下要说。王夫人忙笑着拉他起来，道：“快起来，快起来，断乎使不得，终不成你替老太太给我赔不是不成？”宝玉听说，忙站起来，贾母又笑道：“凤丫头也不提我。”凤姐笑道：“我倒不派老太太的不是，老太太倒寻上我了？”贾母听了，与众人都笑道：“这可奇了！倒要听听这不是。”凤姐道：“谁教老太太会调理人，调理的水葱儿似的，怎么怨得人要？我幸亏是孙子媳妇，我若是孙子，我早要了，还等到这会子呢。”贾母笑道：“这倒是我的不是了？”凤姐笑道：“自然是老太太的不是了。”贾母笑道：“这样，我也不要了，你带了去罢！”凤姐笑道：“等我修了这辈子，来生托生个男人，再要罢。”贾母笑道：“你带了去，给琏儿放在屋里，看你那没脸的公公还要不要了！”凤姐道：“琏儿不配，就只配我和平儿这一对烧糊了的卷子和他混罢。”说的众人都笑起来了。忽见丫鬟回说：“太太来了。”王夫人忙迎了出去。要知端的，下回分解。





why didn't you point out my mistake and prevent me from blaming your mother so unfairly?"

"How could I stick up for my mother at the expense of my elder uncle and aunt?" he countered. "Anyway, someone's done wrong; and if mother here won't take the blame, who will? I could have said it was *my* fault but I'm sure you wouldn't have believed me."

"Yes, that's right," chuckled the Lady Dowager, "Now kneel to your mother and ask her not to feel hurt, but to forgive me for your sake on account of my old age."

Baoyu stepped forward and knelt to do as he was told, but his mother instantly stopped him.

"Get up," she cried with a smile. "This is absurd. How can you apologize for your grandmother?"

As Baoyu rose to his feet the old lady said, "And Xifeng didn't pull me up either."

"I haven't said a word against you, madam," retorted Xifeng laughingly, "but now you're trying to put the blame on me."

All the others laughed and the old lady cried, "This is strange! Let's hear what you have to say against me."

"Who told you, madam, to train your girls so well? If you bring one up as fresh as a sprig of young parsley, you can't blame people for wanting her. It's lucky I'm a grandson's wife. If I were a grandson I'd have grabbed her long ago. I shouldn't have waited till now."

"So it's all my fault, is it?" the old lady chortled.

"Of course it is," agreed Xifeng.

"In that case I won't keep her. You can take her away."

"Wait till I've done enough good deeds in this life to be reborn as a man. Then I'll marry her."

"You can take her and give her to Lian. See if that shameless father-in-law of yours still wants her then or not."

"Lian doesn't deserve her," said Xifeng. "He'll have to make do with scarecrows like Pinger and me."

They were all laughing at this when Lady Xing was announced, and Lady Wang went out to greet her.

If you want to know what followed, read the next chapter.



歡王情苦
霸調遭打



第四十七回

呆霸王调情遭苦打 冷郎君惧祸走他乡

话说王夫人听见邢夫人来了，连忙迎了出来。邢夫人犹不知贾母已知鸳鸯之事，正还要来打听信息，进了院门，早有几个婆子悄悄的回了她，他方知道。待要回去，里面已知，又见王夫人接了出来，少不得进来，先与贾母请安，贾母一声儿也不言语，自己也觉得愧悔。凤姐早指一事回避了；鸳鸯也自回房去生气；薛姨妈、王夫人等恐碍着邢夫人的脸面，也都渐渐的退了。邢夫人且不敢出去。

贾母见无人，方说道：“我听见你替你老爷说媒来了。你倒也三从四德的，只是这贤慧也太过了！你们如今也是孙子、儿子满眼了，你还怕他，劝两句都使不得，还由着你老爷那性儿闹！”邢夫人满面通红，回道：“我劝过几次不依。老太太还有什么不知道的呢，我也是不得已儿的。”贾母道：“他逼着你杀人，你也杀去？如今你也想想，你兄弟媳妇本来老实，又生得多病多痛，上上下下那不是他操心？你一个媳妇虽然帮着，也是天天丢下笆儿弄扫帚。凡百事情，我如今都自己减了。他们两个就有一些不到的去处，有鸳鸯，那孩子还心细些，我的事情他还想着一点子，该要去的，他就要了来；该添什么的，他就度空儿告诉他们添了。鸳鸯再





Chapter 47

A Stupid Bully Is Beaten Up for His Amorous Advances A Cool Young Gentleman Leaves Home for Fear of Reprisals

Lady Wang hurried out to greet Lady Xing who had come in the hope of news, unaware that the Lady Dowager knew all about her proposal to Yuanyang. Only as she stepped into the courtyard was she quietly apprised of this by some serving-women; but it was too late to retreat now that her arrival had been announced and Lady Wang had come out to meet her. She had no choice but to go in and pay her respects.

The old lady received her without a word, to her great mortification. Xifeng had already left on the pretext of some business, while Yuanyang had retired to her room to sulk. Now Aunt Xue, Lady Wang and the others withdrew one by one to spare Lady Xing embarrassment. She herself dared not leave, however.

Once they were alone the Lady Dowager sneered, "I hear you've been doing some matchmaking for you husband. Quite a model of wifely submission and virtue, aren't you? Only you carry this obedience too far. You have children and grand children now, yet you're still afraid of him. Instead of giving him a little good advice you let him carry on just as he pleases."

Blushing all over her face Lady Xing replied, "I *have* reasoned with him several times, but he pays no attention. You know how it is, madam. I had no choice."

"Would you commit murder too if he insisted? Have some sense! Your sister-in-law is a simple soul and, for all her poor health, she has to worry about high and low in this household. Though your daughter-in-law helps her, her work is never done. So I don't make too many demands on them, and when the two of them overlook certain things, that child Yuanyang is thoughtful enough to attend to my wants. She sees I get what I need, and tells them in time what wants replenishing. If not for her,



不这样，他娘儿两个，里头外头，大的小的，那里不忽略一点半点，我如今反倒自己操心去不成？还是天天盘算和你们要东西去？我这屋里有的没的，剩了他一个，年纪也大些，我凡百的脾气性格儿他还知道些。二则他还投主子们的缘法，他也并不指着我和这位太太要衣裳去，又和那位奶奶要银子去？所以这几年一应事情，他说什么，从你小婶和你媳妇起，以至家中大大小小，没有不信的。所以不单我得靠，连你小婶和你媳妇也都省心。我有了这么个人，便是媳妇、孙子媳妇有想不到的，我也不得缺了，也没气可生了。这会子他去了，你们弄个什么人来我使？你们就弄个他那么大一个真珠的人来，不会说话也是无用。我正要打发人和你老爷说去，他要什么人，我这里有钱，叫他只管一万八千的买去，我只要这个丫头。但能留下他伏侍我几年，就比他日夜伏侍我尽了孝的一样。你来的也巧，你就去说，更妥当了。”

说毕，命人来：“请了姨太太和你姑娘来。才高兴说个话儿，怎么又都散了！”丫头们忙答应着去了。众人忙赶的又来，只有薛姨妈向那丫头说道：“我才来了，又作什么去？你就说我睡了觉了。”那丫头道：“好亲亲的姨太太，姨祖宗！我们老太太生气呢，你老人家不去，没个开交了，只当疼我们罢。你老人家嫌乏，背了你老人家去。”薛姨妈道：“小鬼头儿，你怕些什么？不过骂几句完了。”说着，只得和这小丫头走来。贾母忙让坐，又笑道：“咱们斗牌罢。姨太太的牌也生，咱们一处坐着，别叫凤丫头混了我们去。”薛姨妈笑



in all their press of business the pair of them would be bound to forget this or that. Do you expect *me* to see to everything? To work out every day what I need to ask for? She's the only maid left me who's not just a child and knows something of my ways and temperament. In the second place: she gets on well with the older and younger mistresses alike here, and never tries in my name to ask this mistress for clothes or that for money. So during the last few years the whole household old and young, starting with your sister-in-law and daughter-in-law, all trust her. It's not just that I rely on her, she saves them trouble too. As long as I've someone like her, I don't have to worry about going short of anything even if my daughters-in-law or my grandsons' wives forget it. But who would you give me in her place if she left now? Even if you managed to produce a girl of her size made of pearls but unable to talk she'd still be no use to me.

"I was just on the point of sending to tell your husband: I've money here for him if he wants to buy someone, and I don't care if it costs eight or even ten thousand taels; but he can't have *this* girl. If she can be left to wait on me for a few years, that'll be the same as him waiting on me day and night himself like a dutiful son. It's a good thing that you've come. It's more fitting that he should hear this from you."

She called for her maids then and told them, "Ask Madam Xue and the young ladies to come back. We were having fun together, why have they all left?"

The maids made haste to carry out her orders.

Everyone hurried back except Aunt Xue, who objected, "I've just got home, why should I go over again? Tell her I'm sleeping."

"Do us a favour, dear madam, good ancestress!" pleaded the maid. "Our old lady's in a bad temper. If *you* won't go, we shall never manage to soothe her. Just do it for our sake. If you're tired, madam, I'll carry you there on my back."

"You little imp!" Aunt Xue chuckled. "You've nothing to fear except a taste of her tongue." None the less she felt constrained to go back with the maid.

The Lady Dowager made her sit down and suggested, "What about a game of cards? You must be rather rusty, so let's sit together to make sure that Xifeng can't cheat us."



道：“正是呢，老太太替我看着些儿。就是咱们娘儿四个斗呢，还是再添个人呢？”王夫人笑道：“可不只四个人。”凤姐道：“再添一个人热闹些。”贾母道：“叫鸳鸯来，叫他在这下手里坐着。姨太太的眼也花了，咱们两个的牌都叫他瞧着些儿。”凤姐儿叹了一口气，向探春道：“你们知书识字的，倒不学算命！”探春道：“这又奇了。这会子你倒不打点精神赢老太太几个钱，又想算命。”凤姐道：“我正要算算，今儿该输多少钱呢，我还想赢？你瞧瞧，场子没上，左右都埋伏下了。”说的贾母、薛姨妈都笑起来。

一时鸳鸯来了，便坐在贾母下手，鸳鸯之下便是凤姐。铺下红毡子，洗牌告么，五人起牌。斗了一回，鸳鸯见贾母的牌已十严，只等一张“二饼”，便递了眼色与凤姐儿。凤姐正该发牌，便故意踌躇半晌，笑道：“我这一张牌定在姨妈的手里扣着呢。我若不发这一张，真顶不下来。”薛姨妈道：“我手里没有你的牌。”凤姐儿道：“我回来是要查牌的。”薛姨妈道：“你只管查。你且发下来，我瞧瞧是张什么。”凤姐便送在薛姨妈跟前，薛姨妈一看是个“二饼”，便笑道：“我倒不稀罕他，只怕老太太满了。”凤姐儿听了，忙笑道：“我发错了。”贾母笑的已掷下牌来，说：“你敢拿回去！谁叫你错了？”凤姐道：“可是我要算一算命呢。这是自己





"That's right, you must help me, madam," agreed Aunt Xue. "Shall we have a foursome or rope in one or two others?"

"Yes, there are just four of us," observed Lady Wang.

"One more would be more fun," put in Xifeng.

"Then send for Yuanyang," directed the old lady. "Tell her to sit on my left. Your aunt's eyesight isn't good; she can help us both with our cards."

Xifeng sighed and remarked to Tanchun, "With all your education, it's too bad you haven't learned to tell fortunes too."

"What an odd thing to say!" exclaimed Tanchun. "Why not concentrate on winning some money from the old lady instead of thinking about fortune-telling?"

"I want some fortune-teller to predict how much I'll be losing today. How can I hope to win? Look, before the game even starts they've laid ambushes right and left."

The Lady Dowager and Aunt Xue laughed.

Presently Yuanyang arrived and took a seat between the Lady Dowager and Xifeng. The red felt cloth was spread and the cards were shuffled and drawn. After the five of them had played for a while, Yuanyang noticed that the old lady needed only a "two of circles" to win the game, and she signalled this to Xifeng whose turn it was to discard. Xifeng deliberately hesitated.

"I'm sure Aunt Xue has the card I want," She said. "If I don't play *this* she'll never part with it."

"I haven't anything you want," said Aunt Xue.

"I won't believe that till I've seen your hand."

"You can have a look if you like. But first discard and let's see what that card is."

Xifeng put down the "two of circles" in front of Aunt Xue.

"I don't want that," chuckled the latter. "I'm only afraid the old lady is going out."

"I've thrown the wrong one!" cried Xifeng hastily.

But the Lady Dowager, beaming, had already laid down her hand.

"Don't you dare take it back," she crowed. "Who told you to throw the wrong card?"



发的，可埋怨谁！”贾母笑道：“可是呢，你自己该打着你那嘴，问着你自己才是。”又向薛姨妈笑道：“我不是小器爱赢钱，原是个彩头儿。”薛姨妈笑道：“可不是这样，那里有这样糊涂人说老太太爱钱呢？”凤姐正数着钱，听了这话，忙又把钱穿上了，向众人笑道：“够了我的了。竟不为赢钱，单为赢彩头儿。我到底小器，输了就数钱，快收起来罢。”贾母规矩是鸳鸯代洗牌，因和薛姨妈说笑，不见鸳鸯动手，贾母道：“你怎么恼了，连牌也不替我洗。”鸳鸯拿起牌来，笑道：“二奶奶不给钱么。”贾母道：“他不给钱，那是他交运了。”便命小丫头：“把他那一吊钱都拿过来。”小丫头真就拿了，搁在贾母旁边。凤姐忙笑道：“赏我罢，我照数儿给就是了。”薛姨妈笑道：“果然凤丫头小器，不过是玩儿罢了。”凤姐听说，便站起来，拉着薛姨妈，回头指着贾母素日放钱的一个木匣子便笑道：“姨妈瞧瞧，那个里头不知玩了我多少去了。这一吊钱玩不了半个时辰，那里头的钱就招手儿叫他了。只等把这一吊也叫进去了，牌也不用斗了，老祖宗的气也平了，又有正经事差我办去了。”话未说完，引的贾母、众人笑个不住。偏有平儿怕钱不够，又送了一吊来。





“You see why I wanted to consult a fortune-teller,” said Xifeng. “But this time it was really my own fault.”

“That’s right.” The old lady laughed. “You should slap your own face and blame yourself.” She turned to Aunt Xue. “It’s not that I’m miserly and to win; I play for luck.”

“Of course, madam,” replied Aunt Xue with a smile. “Who’s so foolish as not to know that?”

Xifeng, who was counting out the cash she had lost, strung the coins together again on hearing this. “That’s fine,” she cried with a twinkle. “If the old lady only plays for luck, not for money, I needn’t count my cash in this miserly way. I’ll put it away at once.”

The Lady Dowager always made Yuanyang shuffle the cards for her, but now as she chatted with Aunt Xue she noticed that the girl had made no move.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “Won’t you even shuffle for me?”

Yuanyang picked up the cards then, asking, “Isn’t Madam Lian going to pay?”

“Not going to pay? Paying up will bring her better luck!” cried the old lady.

She ordered a young maid to bring Xifeng’s whole string of cash and put it by her pile. The girl did as she was told.

“Give that back,” pleaded Xifeng. “All right, I’ll pay the amount I owe.”

“Xifeng really is stingy,” laughed Aunt Xue. “This is only a game, after all.”

At this Xifeng left her seat and, taking Aunt Xue by the arm, turned and pointed at the wooden chest in which the Lady Dowager kept her money.

“Look there, aunt,” she said. “Goodness knows how much of my money has been swallowed up by that. It’s less than an hour since we began, and already the money in that chest has beckoned to this string of cash. As soon as this string’s gone in too we shan’t have to play any more, and our Old Ancestress will have got over her temper. Then she’ll send me off to attend to my duties again.”

The whole company was laughing uproariously when Pinger arrived



凤姐道：“不用放在我跟前，也放在老太太的那一处罢。一齐儿叫他进去倒省事，不用做两次，叫箱子里的钱费事。”贾母笑的手里的牌撒了一桌子，推着鸳鸯，叫：“快撕他的嘴！”

平儿依言放下钱，也笑了一回，方回来。至院门前遇见贾琏，问他：“太太在那里呢？老爷叫我请过去呢。”平儿忙笑道：“在老太太跟前呢，站了这半日还没动呢。趁早儿丢开手罢。老太太生了半日气，这会子亏二奶奶凑了半日趣儿，才略好些。”贾琏道：“我过去只说讨老太太的示下，十四往赖大家去不去，好预备轿子。又请了太太，又凑了趣儿，岂不好？”平儿笑道：“依我说，你竟不去罢。合家子连太太、宝玉都有了不是，这会子你又填限去了。”贾琏道：“已经完了，难道还找补不成？况且与我又无干。二则老爷又亲自吩咐我请太太的，这会子我打发人去，倘或知道了，正没好气呢，指着这个拿我出气罢。”说着就走。平儿见他说得有理，也便跟了过来。

贾琏到了堂屋里，便把脚步放轻了，往里间探头，只见邢夫人站在那里。凤姐眼尖，先瞧见了，便使眼色儿不命他进来，又使眼色与邢夫人。邢夫人不便就走，只得倒了一杯茶来，放在贾母跟前。贾母一回身，贾琏不防，便没躲伶俐。贾母便问：“外头是谁？倒像个小子一伸头。”凤姐忙起





with another string of cash, for fear her mistress might not have enough.

“There’s no need to put that in front of *me*, ” cried Xifeng. “Just put it on the old lady’s pile. That will save the money in her chest the trouble of beckoning twice.”

The Lady Dowager laughed so much at this that she scattered the cards in her hand all over the table as she nudged Yuanyang and out told her to pinch Xifeng’s mouth.

Pinger put the money down as she was told and, having joined in the laughter, left. By the courtyard gate she met Jia Lian.

“Where’s my mother?” he asked. “Father sent me to fetch her.”

“She’s been standing stock-still all this time before the old lady. You’d better clear off, quick. It’s taken our mistress a long time to coax the old lady into a better temper.”

“I’ve come over just to ask whether she’s going to Lai Da’s feast on the fourteenth or not, so that I can have her sedan-chair ready,” he replied. “What’s wrong with fetching my mother and pleasing the old lady at the same time?”

“Take my advice and steer clear,” Pinger smiled. “The whole family, Lady Wang and Baoyu too, have had a dressing-down. But here you come asking for a share in it.”

“It’s blown over now. Why should I have to make up for something past and done with? Besides, this business had nothing to do with me, and my father himself ordered me to fetch my mother. If he discovered that I’d sent someone else, in the temper he’s in now he’d vent his anger on me.”

With that he walked in. And since there was reason in what he said, Pinger followed. Once in the hall, Jia Lian tiptoed to the door of the inner room and peeped inside. He had just seen Lady Xing standing there when Xifeng with her sharp eyes spotted him. She signalled to him to keep out and threw a meaning glance at Lady Xing; but the latter, afraid to go without taking her leave, poured a cup of tea for the Lady Dowager. As the old lady turned to take it, she caught sight of Jia Lian who had not stepped back in time.

“Who’s that in the hall?” she demanded. “It looked like some young fellow peering in.”



身说：“我也恍惚看见一个人影儿，让我瞧瞧去。”一面说，一面起身出来。贾琏忙进去，陪笑道：“打听老太太十四可出门？好预备轿子。”贾母道：“既这么样，怎么不进来？又作鬼作神的。”贾琏陪笑道：“见老太太玩牌呢，不敢惊动，不过叫媳妇出去问问。”贾母道：“就忙到这一时，等他家去，你问多少问不得？那一遭儿你这么小心来着！又不知是来作耳报神的，也不知是来作探子的，鬼鬼祟祟的，倒唬了我一跳。什么好下流种子！你媳妇和我玩牌呢，还有半日的空儿，你家去再和那赵二家的商量着治你媳妇去罢。”说着，众人都笑了。鸳鸯笑道：“鲍二家的，老祖宗又拉上赵二家的。”贾母笑道：“可是，我那里记得什么抱着背着，提起这些事来，不由我不生气！我进了这门子作重孙子媳妇起，到如今我也有了重孙子媳妇了，连头带尾五十四年，凭他什么大惊大险、千奇百怪的事，也经过了些，从没经过这些事。还不离了我这里呢！”

贾琏一声儿不敢言语，忙退了出来。平儿在窗外站着，悄悄笑道：“我说着你不听，到底碰在网里了。”正说着，只见邢夫人也出来了，贾琏道：“都是老爷闹的，如今都搬在我和太太身上了。”邢夫人道：“我把你没孝心的雷打的下流种子！人家还替老子死呢，白说了几句，你就抱怨了。你还不好好的呢，这几日生气，仔细他捶你。”贾琏道：“太太快过去





“Yes, I thought I saw someone too,” said Xifeng. “I’ll go and have a look.”

She got up and started out.

At once Jia Lian came in with a conciliatory smile.

“I’ve come to ask whether the old lady means to go out on the fourteenth,” he announced, “so that I can have her chair ready.”

“Why didn’t you come in, then instead of skulking outside?” asked the Lady Dowager.

“I didn’t like to disturb you at your game, madam. I was hoping to get my wife to come out so that I could ask *her*.”

“Why couldn’t you wait for her to go home where you can ask her all the questions you want? Since when have you been so attentive? Or are you spying for someone, acting in this hole-and-corner way? You gave me quite a fright, you sneaky devil. Your wife is playing cards with me and won’t be free for some time. Better go home and plot against her again with that wife of Zhao Er’s.”

Amid general laughter Yuanyang put in, “Bao Er’s wife, not Zhao Er’s wife, Old Ancestress.”

“That’s right.” The old lady smiled. “How do you expect me to remember their names, whether they mean ‘carried in the arms or on the back’? Talking of that business I can’t help but be angry. I came to this house as the bride of a great-grandson, and now I have great-granddaughters-in-law myself. In my fifty-four years first and last here, I’ve had plenty of shocks and frights and seen all manner of amazing happenings — but never such scandalous carryings-on as yours. Off with you now. Out of my sight!”

Without venturing to say a word, Jia Lian beat a hasty retreat.

“Well,” whispered Pinger, standing outside the window, “you wouldn’t take my advice and now you’ve caught it.” Just then Lady Xing came out and Jia Lian complained, “It’s all the master’s fault, but *we* are the ones to suffer for it, madam.”

“May lightning strike you, you unfilial wretch,” scolded Lady Xing. “Other sons would die for their fathers; but you, you start complaining just because of a little talking-to. You’d better watch your step. He’s in a bad mood these days — mind he doesn’t beat you.”



罢，叫我来请了好半日了。”说着，送他母亲出来过那边去。

邢夫人将方才的话只略说了几句，贾赦无法，又含愧，自此便告病，且不敢见贾母，只打发邢夫人及贾琏每日过去请安。只得又各处遣人购求寻觅，终究费了八百两银子，买了一个十七岁的女孩子来，名唤嫣红，收在屋内，不在话下。

这里斗了半日牌，吃晚饭才罢。此一二日间无话。

转眼到了十四日，黑早，赖大的媳妇又进来请。贾母高兴，便带了王夫人、薛姨妈及宝玉姊妹等，到赖大花园中坐了半日。那花园虽不及大观园，却也十分齐整宽阔，泉石林木，楼阁亭轩，也有好几处惊人骇目的。外面厅上，薛蟠、贾珍、贾琏、贾蓉并几个近族的，很远的也就没来。贾赦也没来。赖大家内也请了几个现任的官长并几个世家子弟作陪。因其中有柳湘莲，薛蟠自上次会过一次，已念念不忘。又打听他最喜串戏，且都串的是生旦风月戏文，不免错会了意，误认他是风月子弟，正要与他相交，恨没有个引进，这日可巧遇见，乐得无可不可。且贾珍等也慕他的名，酒盖住了脸，就求他串了两出戏。下来，移席和他一处坐着，问长问短，说此说彼。

那柳湘莲原是世家子弟，读书不成，父母早丧，素性爽





“Please go home quickly, madam,” he urged. “It’s some time now since I was sent to find you.”

He then accompanied his mother out and across to the other courtyard.

When Lady Xing gave her husband an abbreviated version of what the Lady Dowager had said, Jia She felt at a loss and bitterly mortified too. After this, on the pretext of illness he stopped calling on his mother, being actually afraid to face her, sending his wife and son instead to pay their respects every day. None the less he made his men scout around and finally, for the sum of eight hundred taels, bought a seventeen-year-old girl called Yanhong to be his concubine. No more of this.

The card game in the Lady Dowager’s rooms went on until dinner time, and the next couple of days passed uneventfully.

Soon it was the fourteenth, and almost before it was light Lai Da’s wife came to invite them over. The Lady Dowager, being in a good humour, took Lady Wang, Aunt Xue, Baoyu and the girls to spend half a day in Lai Da’s garden. Although it could not compare with Grand View Garden, the grounds were extensive and neatly laid out with pleasant streams, rocks and trees, as well as some splendid lodges and fantastic pavilions.

Xue Pan, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian, Jia Rong and some other close relatives of the Rong and Ning households were entertained in the outer hall. Their distant relatives did not come, however, and neither did Jia She.

A few officials and sons of good families had also been invited to keep them company. Among these was a certain Liu Xianglian, whom Xue Pan had been longing to meet again ever since he first made his acquaintance; for the report that Liu was fond of acting in romantic operas about young scholars and beauties had made him mistake him for a homosexual. Eager as he was to make closer acquaintance, he was overjoyed by this chance meeting today.

The others also knew Liu Xianglian’s reputation, and Jia Zhen, emboldened by wine, persuaded him to perform in two operas, after which he came and sat down next to Liu, chatting with him for a while on various subjects.

Now this Liu Xianglian was the son of a good family who had lost both parents early. No great scholar but frank, chivalrous and unconven-



侠，不拘细事，酷好耍枪舞剑，赌博吃酒，以至眠花卧柳，吹笛弹筝，无所不为。因他年纪又轻，生得又美，不知他身分的人，却误认作优伶一类。那赖大之子赖尚荣与他素习交好，故今日请来作陪。不想酒后别人犹可，独薛蟠又犯了旧病。他心中早已不快，得便意欲要走开完事，无奈赖尚荣死也不放。赖尚荣又说：“方才宝二爷又吩咐我，才一进门虽然见了，只是人多不好说话，叫我嘱咐你散的时候别走，他还有话说呢。你既一定要去，等我叫他出来，你两个见了再走，与我无干。”说着，便命小厮们到里头找一个老婆子，悄悄告诉：“请出宝二爷来。”那小厮去了没一盏茶时，果见宝玉出来了。赖尚荣向宝玉笑道：“好叔叔，把他交给你，我张罗人去了。”说着，一径去了。

宝玉便拉了柳湘莲到厅侧小书房中坐下，问他这几日可到秦钟的坟上去了。柳湘莲道：“怎么不去？前日我们几个人放鹰去，离他坟上不远。我想今年夏天的雨水勤，恐怕他的坟站不住。我背着众人，走到那里瞧了一瞧，果然又动了一点子。回家来就便弄了几百钱，第三日一早出去，雇了两个人收拾好了。”宝玉道：“怪道呢，上月我们大观园的池子里头结了莲蓬，我摘了十个，叫茗烟出去到他坟上供去，回来我也问他可被雨冲坏了没有。他说不但没冲，且比上回又新了些。我想着，不过是这几个朋友新筑了。我只恨我天天圈在家里，一点儿做不得主，行动就有人知道，不是这个拦就

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tional in his ways, he was a good spearman and swordsman addicted to gambling and drinking, fond of the company of singsong girls and quite a musician himself. His youth and good looks led many who did not know him to mistake him for an actor; but he had been invited today because he was a friend of Lai Da's son Shangrong. The other guests behaved decently enough after drinking; but Xue Pan got up to his old tricks again, which so disgusted Liu that he would have slipped away had not Lai Shangrong most earnestly detained him.

"Just now Master Bao told me he'd noticed you as soon as he came in, but there's too much of a crowd here to talk in comfort," said Lai Shangrong. "He hopes you'll stay on after the party breaks up, as he has something to ask you. If you insist on going, let me fetch him first. Then I shan't be responsible for your leaving without having seen him."

He ordered some pages, "Go in and get one of the old women to have a quiet word with Master Bao and ask him to come out."

This was done, and in less time than it would take to drink a cup of tea they were joined by Baoyu.

"I leave Xianglian to you, my dear uncle," said Lai Shangrong with a smile. "I must see to our other guests." With that he left them.

Baoyu led Liu Xianglian into a small study at one side of the hall and, when the two of them were seated, asked, "Have you visited Qin Zhong's grave at all recently?"

"Yes, I have," Xianglian told him. "Some time ago a few of us were flying falcons near his grave. For fear it might not have stood up to the heavy rain this summer, I rode over on my own to have a look and, sure enough, found it slightly damaged. So after coming home I got together a few hundred cash and went out three days later with two men I'd hired to repair it."

"That explains it," said Baoyu. "Last month when the lotus seed-pods in our pool in Grand View Garden ripened, I picked ten and sent Mingyan out to offer them at his grave. When he came back, I also asked if the grave had been damaged by the rain; but he said that on the contrary it looked in better condition than before. I guessed, then, that some friends must recently have restored it. My trouble is that I'm cooped up at home all the time and am not my own master. Every move I make is



是那个劝的，能说不能行。虽然有钱，又不能由我使。”湘莲道：“这个事也用不着你操心，外头有我呢，你只心里有了就是了。眼前十月初一，我已经打点下上坟的花消了。你知道我一贫如洗，家里是没有积聚的，纵有几个钱来，随手就光的，不如趁空儿留下这一分，省得到了跟前扎煞手。”宝玉道：“我也正为这个要打发茗烟找你，你又不大在家，知道你天天萍踪浪迹，没个一定去处。”湘莲道：“你也不用找我，这个事不过各尽其道。眼前我还要出门去走走，外头逛个三年五载再回来。”宝玉听了，忙问道：“这是为何？”柳湘莲冷笑道：“你不知道我的心事，等到跟前你自然知道。我如今要别过了。”宝玉道：“好容易会着，晚上同散岂不好？”湘莲道：“你那令姨表兄还是那样，再坐着未免有事，不如我回避了倒好。”宝玉想了一想说道：“既是这样，倒是回避他为是。只是你要果真远行，必须先告诉我一声，千万别悄悄的走了。”说着便滴下泪来。柳湘莲道：“自然要辞的。你只别和别人说就是。”说着便站起来要走，又道：“你就进去罢，不必送我。”

一面说，一面出了书房。刚至大门前，早遇见薛蟠在那里乱嚷乱叫：“谁放走了小柳儿？”柳湘莲听了，火星乱迸，恨不得一拳打死。复思酒后挥拳，又碍着赖尚荣的脸面，只





known, and there's always someone trying to stop me or dissuade me, so whatever I say, I can't do a thing. Though I've money, I can't spend it as I want."

"You don't have to worry about that," Xianglian assured him. "I'll see to anything that you can't do outside. So long as you remember him, that's what counts. It will soon be the first of the tenth month, and I've put by some money to sacrifice at his grave. You know how hard up I am, with no property of my own, and any money I get slips straight through my fingers. It seemed better to set this sum aside so as not to be caught empty-handed when the time comes."

"That's why I was meaning to send Mingyan to look for you; but you're so seldom at home, floating about free as duckweed every day, one never knows where to find you."

"There was no need to look for me. Each of us must simply do what he can. But soon I shall be setting out on a long journey. I don't expect to be back for three or four years."

"Why should you stay away so long?"

"You don't know what's been on my mind." Xianglian gave a bitter smile. "You'll find out all in good time. Now I must take my leave."

"It's so rarely we have a chance to meet, can't you stay until the party breaks up this evening?"

"That honourable maternal cousin of yours is up to his old tricks again. If I stay, there may be trouble. I'd better keep out of his way."

"I see," said Baoyu after a thoughtful pause. "Well, you may be right to keep out of his way, but you mustn't really go off on a long journey without letting me know beforehand. Whatever happens, don't just slip away." He was shedding tears as he spoke.

"Of course I'll say goodbye to you," promised Xianglian. "Only don't tell anyone else." As he stood up to leave he added, "Go on in, there's no need to see me out."

He left the study and had just reached the main gate when he saw Xue Pan there bawling, "Who let that lad Liu get away?"

Liu Xianglian's eyes flashed with anger. He longed to strike Xue Pan dead with one blow of his fist. Only the thought that a drunken brawl would embarrass Lai Shangrong made him control himself.



得忍了又忍。薛蟠忽见他走出来，如得了珍宝，忙趑趄着上来一把拉住，笑道：“我的兄弟，你往那里去了？”湘莲道：“走走就来。”薛蟠笑道：“好兄弟，你一去都没兴了，好歹坐一坐，你就是疼我了。凭你有什么要紧的事，交给哥，你只别忙，有你这个哥，你要做官、要发财都容易。”湘莲见他如此不堪，心中又恨又愧，忽心生一计，便拉他到避人之处，笑道：“你真心和我好，假心和我好呢？”薛蟠听他如此说，喜的心痒难挠，乜斜着眼忙笑道：“好兄弟，你怎么问起我这话来？我要是假心，立刻死在眼前！”湘莲道：“既如此，这里不便。等坐一坐，我先走，你随后出来，跟我到下处，咱们提另喝一夜酒。我那里还有两个绝色的孩子，从没出门的。你可连一个跟的人也不用带了去，那里有人伏侍。”薛蟠听如此说，喜得酒醒了一半，说：“果然如此？”湘莲道：“如何！人拿真心待你，你倒不信了！”薛蟠忙笑道：“我又不是傻子，怎么有个不信的呢！既如此，我又不认得，你先去了，我在那里找你？”湘莲道：“我这下处在北门外头，你可舍得家，城外住一夜去？”薛蟠笑道：“有了你，我还要家做什么！”湘莲道：“既如此，我在北门外桥头上等你。咱们席上且吃酒去。你看我走了之后你再走，他们就不留心了。”薛蟠听了，连忙答应。于是二人复又入席，饮了一回。那薛蟠难熬，只拿眼看湘莲，心内越想越乐，左一壶右一壶，并



Xue Pan catching sight of him was as overjoyed as if he had found some treasure.

“Where are you going, brother?” he chortled, staggering forward to catch him by the arm.

“I’ll be back soon,” said Xianglian.

“If you go, dear fellow, it won’t be any fun. Do stay a bit longer to show you care for me. Any pressing business you have, just leave it to me — your elder brother — only don’t hurry off. Do you want an official post? Want to make money? Your elder brother can easily fix it for you.”

Angered and humiliated by this outrageous talk, Xianglian hit on a plan. He pulled Xue Pan aside.

“Do you mean that, about wanting to be my friend?”

Xue Pan could hardly contain himself for excitement.

“How can you ask such a question, dear brother?” he leered. “If I’m not in earnest may I drop dead!”

“Very well, but we can’t talk here. After staying a little longer I’ll leave first, and you can follow me presently to my place. We may as well make a night of it. I’ve two marvellous boys there, absolutely virgin; so there’s no need for you to bring a single servant. I’ve people to wait on you.”

Xue Pan was so overjoyed that he half sobered up.

“Do you really mean it?”

“Now, come, come!” Xianglian chuckled. “Why turn sceptical when someone’s sincere with you?”

“I’m no fool.” Xue Pan grinned. “I trust you. But I don’t know where you live. If you go on ahead, how am I to find you?”

“I live outside the North Gate. Do you mind spending a night outside, away from your family?”

“If I’ve got you, I shan’t miss my family.”

“In that case, I’ll wait for you on the bridge outside the North Gate. Now let’s go back to the feast. Once you see I’m gone, you can slip out and no one will notice.”

Xue Pan promptly agreed. They went back to their table then and drank another round. Xue Pan could hardly sit still. As he feasted his avid



不用人让，自己便吃了又吃，不觉酒已八、九分了。

湘莲便起身出来，瞅人不防，去了。至门外，命小厮杏奴：“先家去罢，我到城外就来。”说毕，直上马出城，桥上等候薛蟠。没顿饭时的工夫，只见薛蟠骑着一匹大马，远远的赶来，张着口，瞪着眼，头似拨浪鼓一般不住左右乱瞧。及至从湘莲马前过去，只顾望远处瞧，不曾留心近处，反踩过去了。湘莲又是笑，又是恨，便也撒马随后跟来。薛蟠往前看时，渐渐人烟稀少，便又圈马回来再找，不想一回头见了湘莲，如获奇珍，忙笑道：“我说你是个再不失信的。”湘莲笑道：“快往前走，仔细人看见跟了来，就不便了。”说着，先就撒马前去，薛蟠也紧紧的跟随。

湘莲见前面人迹已稀，且有一带苇塘，便下马，将马拴在树上，向薛蟠笑道：“你下来，咱们先设个誓，日后要变了心，告诉人去的，就应誓了。”薛蟠笑道：“这话有理。”连忙下了马，也拴在树上，便跪下说道：“我要日久变心，告诉人去的，天诛地灭！”一语未完，只听“咚”的一声，颈后好似铁锤砸下来一般，只觉得一阵黑，满眼金星乱迸，身不由己，便倒下了。湘莲走上来瞧瞧，知他是个笨家子，不惯捱打，只使了三分气力，向他脸上拍了几下，登时便开了果子铺。薛蟠先还要挣扎起来，又被湘莲用脚尖点了两点，仍旧跌倒，口内说道：“原是两家情愿，你不依，只好说，为什



eyes on Xianglian he grew more and more jubilant, until soon he was tossing off whole pots of wine without waiting to be urged. When he was nine-tenths drunk, Xianglian rose to leave and slipped away unnoticed. Outside the gate, he ordered his page Xinnu to go home while he paid a call out of town.

Then he mounted his horse and rode straight out of the North Gate to wait on the bridge for Xue Pan. In less time than it takes for a meal, he saw a solitary horseman approaching. It was Xue Pan, his mouth open, his eyes gaping, his head turning right and left like a pedlar's rattle as he gazed wildly around. So intent was he on staring into the distance that he missed what was close at hand and rode right past Xianglian's horse. Amused and disgusted, Xianglian cantered after him. Riding on, Xue Pan observed that the houses now were few and far between. He turned back then to make another search and was overjoyed by the sight of Liu Xianglian.

"I knew you'd keep your word," he chortled.

"Ride on, quick," said Xianglian. "We don't want people to see us and follow us."

He spurred on his horse and Xue Pan followed close behind. At a lonely spot near a marsh overgrown with reeds, Xianglian dismounted and tethered his horse to a tree.

"Down you get," he said. "First we must take an oath. Cursed be he who has a change of heart or betrays our secret."

"Right you are!" Xue Pan slithered eagerly down from his saddle. Having made fast his horse he fell on his knees to swear: "If ever I have a change of heart or betray our secret, may Heaven and Earth destroy me...."

Before he had finished, wham! He was struck from behind by what seemed like an iron hammer. Everything went black before him, then he saw a riot of golden stars as he flopped to the ground.

Xianglian stepped forward to have a look at him and, knowing the oaf to be unused to beatings, gave him only a few light punches in the face which instantly turned all the colours of a fruit stall. When Xue Pan tried to struggle to his feet, Xianglian tripped him with one foot a couple of times and sent him sprawling again.



么哄出我来打我？”一面说，一面乱骂。湘莲道：“我把你瞎了眼的，你认认柳大爷是谁！你并不哀求，你还伤我！我打死你也无益，只给你个利害罢。”说着，便取了马鞭子过来，从背至胫，打了三四十下。薛蟠酒已醒了大半，觉得疼痛难禁，不禁有“嗷哟”之声。湘莲冷笑道：“也只如此！我只当你是不怕打的。”一面说，一面又把薛蟠的左腿拉起来，朝苇中泞泥处拉了几步，滚的满身泥水，又问道：“你可认得我了？”薛蟠不应，只伏着哼哼。湘莲又掷下鞭子，用拳头向他身上擂了几下。薛蟠便乱滚乱叫，说：“肋条折了。我知道你是正经人，因为我错听了旁人的话了。”湘莲道：“不用拉别人，你只说现在的。”薛蟠道：“现在也没有说的。不过你是个正经人，我错了。”湘莲道：“还要说软些才饶你。”薛蟠哼哼着道：“好兄弟。”湘莲便又一拳，薛蟠“嗷哟”了一声道：“好哥哥。”湘莲又连两拳，薛蟠忙“嗷哟”叫道：“好老爷，饶了我这没眼睛的瞎子罢！从今以后我敬你怕你了。”湘莲道：“你把这水喝两口。”薛蟠一面听了，一面皱眉道：“这水脏得很，怎么喝得下去！”湘莲举拳就打，薛蟠忙道：“我喝，我喝。”说着，只得俯头向苇根下喝了一口，犹未咽下去，只听“哇”的一声，把方才吃的东西都吐了出来。湘莲道：“好脏东西，你快吃干净了饶你。”薛蟠听了，





"We did this by mutual consent," complained Xue Pan. "If you didn't want to, you could simply have said so. Why fool me into coming out here and then beat me up?" He let loose a flood of abuse.

"You must be blind not to know your master," cried Xianglian. "Now instead of asking my pardon you insult me. There's no point in killing you, I'll just teach you a lesson."

He fetched his horsewhip and gave him a few dozen strokes all over his back till Xue Pan, pretty well sober now, yelped with pain.

"You coward," sneered Xianglian. "I thought you could take a beating." As he spoke he dragged him by the left leg through the mud into the reeds, bedaubing him with slime. "Now do you know who I am?"

Xue Pan said nothing, just lay face downwards, groaning. Xianglian tossed away the whip to pummel him with his fists. Xue Pan rolled over and over frantically howling:

"You've broken my ribs. I know you're straight. I shouldn't have believed other people's talk."

"Don't drag anyone else into this. Just stick to the point."

"What more do you want me to say, except that you're straight and I was wrong?"

"You'll have to do better than that to be let off."

Xue Pan whined, "Dear younger brother..."

Once more Xianglian punched him.

"Ouch!" he yelled. "Dear elder brother..."

Xianglian struck him twice again.

"Mercy, kind master, spare me! I was blind. From now on I'll respect and fear you."

"Drink two mouthfuls of that water," ordered Xianglian.

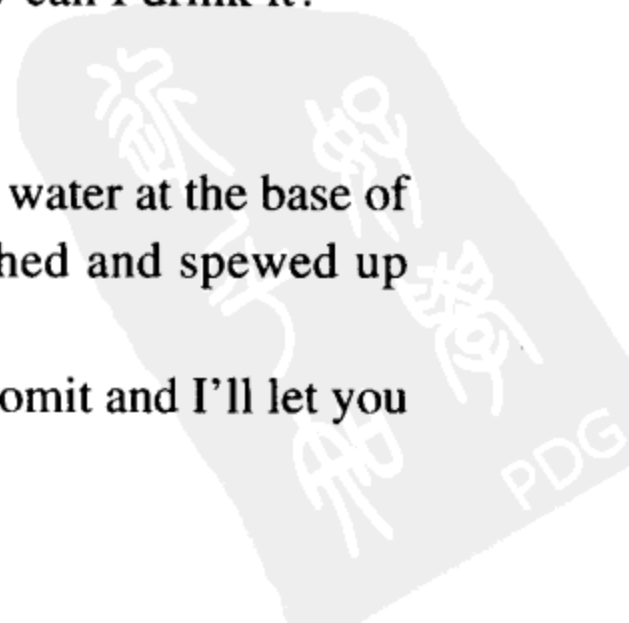
Xue Pan wrinkled his brows. "It's too foul. How can I drink it?"

Xianglian raised a threatening fist.

"I'll drink it, I'll drink it."

Bending his head he lapped up a mouthful of the water at the base of the reeds; but before he could swallow it, he retched and spewed up everything he had eaten.

"Filthy swine!" swore Xianglian. "Lick up that vomit and I'll let you off."





叩头不迭道：“好歹积点阴功饶我罢！这个至死不能吃的。”湘莲道：“这样气息，倒熏坏了我。”说着丢下薛蟠，便牵马认镫去了。这里薛蟠见他已去，放下心来，后悔自己不该误认了人。待要挣扎起来，无奈遍体疼痛难禁。

谁知贾珍等在席上忽不见了他两个，各处寻找不见。有人说：“恍惚出北门去了。”薛蟠的小厮们素日是惧怕他的，他吩咐不许跟去，谁还敢找去？后来还是贾珍不放心，命贾蓉带着小厮们寻踪问迹，直找出北门，下桥二里多路，忽见一带苇坑旁边薛蟠的马拴在那里。众人都道：“可好了！有马必有人。”一齐来至马前，只听苇中有人呻吟。大家忙走来一看，只见薛蟠衣衫零碎，面目肿破，没头没脸，遍身内外，滚的似泥母猪一般。贾蓉心内已猜着了九分，忙下马令人搀了出来，笑道：“薛大叔天天调情，今儿调到苇子坑里来了。必定是龙王爷也爱上你风流，想要你招驸马去，你就碰到龙犄角上了。”薛蟠羞的恨没地缝儿钻进去，那里爬的上马去？贾蓉只得命人到关厢里雇了一乘小轿来，薛蟠坐了，一齐进城。贾蓉还要抬往赖家赴席去，薛蟠百般央告，又命他不要告诉人，贾蓉方依允了，让他各自回家去了。贾蓉仍往赖家来回复贾珍，并说方才形景。贾珍也知被湘莲所打，笑道：“他也须得吃个亏才好。”至晚散了，便来问候。薛蟠



Kowtowing frantically Xue Pan begged, "Have a heart! Do a good deed and let me off. I can't stomach that, not if you kill me."

"This stench is making me sick!" declared Xianglian.

With that he left Xue Pan, untethered his horse and, mounting it, rode away. When Xue Pan saw with relief that he had gone, he regretted his blunder in mistaking his man. He tried to struggle to his feet, but the pain was too much for him.

When the absence of the two of them from the feast was suddenly noticed by Jia Zhen and others, they searched high and low for them but could not find them. It was rumoured, though, that they seemed to have gone out of the North Gate. Xue Pan's pages were too afraid of him to follow him against his orders; Jia Zhen, however, was so worried that he sent Jia Rong with some men to track them down. The search party rode out of the North Gate for more than two *li* along the road from the bridge, until they saw Xue Pan's horse tethered to a tree beside the marsh.

"Thank goodness!" they exclaimed. "If the horse is here, the rider can't be far off."

Going up to the horse, they heard groaning in the reeds and hurrying forward discovered Xue Pan there, his clothes tattered and torn, his face swollen and bruised, covered from head to foot with mud like a sow.

Jia Rong had a shrewd idea of what had happened. Quickly dismounting, he ordered some men to help Xue Pan to his feet.

"So today Uncle Xue's pursuit of love has brought him to this swamp," he joked. "I suppose the Dragon King was so impressed by your romantic spirit that he wanted you to be his son-in-law; but then you knocked into the dragon's horn!"

Xue Pan wished he could sink through the ground for shame. As he could not ride, Jia Rong sent to the North Gate to hire a small chair for him, after which they all returned to the city together. Jia Rong threatened to carry him back to Lai Da's feast, and Xue Pan had to plead hard not to have this business made public before he was allowed to go back home.

Then Jia Rong returned to Lai Da's house to tell Jia Zhen what had

自在卧房将养，推病不见人。

且说贾母等回来各自归家时，薛姨妈与宝钗见香菱哭得眼睛肿了。问其原故，忙赶来瞧薛蟠时，见脸上、身上虽有伤痕，并未伤筋动骨。薛姨妈又是心疼，又是发恨，骂一回薛蟠，又骂一回柳湘莲，意欲告诉王夫人，遣人寻拿柳湘莲。宝钗忙劝道：“这不是什么大事，不过他们一处吃酒，醉后反脸也是常事。谁醉了，多挨几下子打，也是有的。况且咱们家的无法无天，人所共知。妈不过是心疼的缘故，要出气也容易，等三五天哥哥养好了出的去时，那边珍大爷、琏二爷这干人也未必白丢开了手，自然备个东道，叫了那个人来，当着众人替哥哥赔不是、认罪就是了。如今妈先当件大事告诉众人，倒显得妈偏心溺爱，纵容他生事招人，今儿偶然吃了一次亏，妈就这样兴师动众，倚着亲戚之势欺压常人。”薛姨妈听了道：“我的儿，到底是你想的到，我一时气糊涂了。”宝钗笑道：“这才好呢。他又不怕妈，又不听人劝，一天纵似一天，吃过两三个亏，他倒罢了。”薛蟠睡在炕上痛骂柳湘莲，又命小厮们去拆他的房子，打死他，和他



happened. Hearing of the beating Xianglian had given Xue Pan, Jia Zhen observed with a laugh:

“A lesson like this should be good for him.”

After the party had broken up that evening he went to inquire after Xue Pan’s health, but the latter sent word from his bedroom that he was too unwell to receive anyone.

To return to the Lady Dowager and her party, after they all went back to their own quarters Aunt Xue and Baochai noticed that Xiangling’s eyes were swollen from weeping. Having learned the reason they hurried in to see Xue Pan. They found that, although badly bruised on both face and body, he had broken on bones. Aunt Xue, torn between maternal affection and anger, abused her son and Liu Xianglian by turns. She wanted to complain to Lady Wang and have Xianglian arrested.

“This isn’t all that serious,” Baochai demurred. “They were simply drinking together, and drunken brawls are common enough. A man often gets a thrashing too when he’s drunk. Besides, everyone knows how wild and headstrong Pan is. I understand why your heart’s bleeding for him, mother, and it won’t be hard to get even. In three days’ or five days’ time, when my brother’s well enough to go out again, Cousin Zhen, Cousin Lian and the others over there won’t let the matter drop. They’ll invite that fellow to a feast to make a public apology to Pan. If you make such an issue of it and spread the news, everyone will think you spoil your son and encourage him to make trouble and that once he’s beaten you raise a big rumpus, relying on your powerful relatives to bully humble folk.”

“You’re right as usual, child,” replied her mother. “I was muddled for the moment by anger.”

“In fact, this is all to the good,” continued Baochai with a smile. “He’s not afraid of you, mother, and won’t listen to other people’s advice either. He’s growing more and more headstrong. Coming a few croppers should cure him.”

Xue Pan was still raging at Liu Xianglian from his *kang*, ordering his servants to go and pull down Liu’s house, beat him to death, or take the case to court. Aunt Xue stopped them however, saying:

打官司。薛姨妈禁住小厮们，只说柳湘莲一时酒后放肆，如今酒醒，后悔不及，惧罪逃走了。薛蟠听见如此说了，气方渐平。且听下回分解。





“Liu Xianglian ran riot after a bout of drinking, but now that he’s sobered up he’s filled with remorse. He’s run away for fear of the consequences.”

Xue Pan, hearing this, gradually got over his rage.

To know the outcome, read on.



第四十八回

滥情人情误思游艺 慕雅女雅集苦吟诗

且说薛蟠听见柳湘莲逃走，气方渐平。三五日后，疼痛虽愈，伤痕未平，只装病，愧见亲友。

转眼已到十月，因有各铺面伙计内有算年帐要回家的，少不得家内治酒饯行。内有一个张德辉，年过六十，自幼在薛家当铺内揽总，家内也有二三千金的过活，今岁也要回家，明春方来。因说起：“今年纸札、香料短少，明年必是贵的。明年先打发大小儿来当铺内照管照管，赶端午节前我顺路贩些纸札、香扇来卖。除去关税花销，亦可以剩得几倍利息。”薛蟠听了，心下忖度：“我如今捱了打，正难见人，想着要躲个一年半载，又没处去躲。天天装病，也不是事。况且我长了这么大，文又不文，武又不武，虽说做买卖，究竟戥子、算盘从没拿过，地土风俗、远近道路又不知道，不如也打点几个本钱，和张德辉逛一年来。赚钱也罢，不赚钱也罢，且躲躲羞去。二则逛逛山水也是好的。”心内主意已定，至酒席散后，便和张德辉说知，命他等一二日一同前往。





Chapter 48

A Rebuffed Reprobate Decides on a Journey An Aspiring Maid Racks Her Brains to Write Poetry

After he was told that Liu Xianglian had fled, little by little Xue Pan's anger abated. In a few days he was over his pain and simply pretending to be ill, being ashamed to see relatives or friends till his bruises had disappeared.

In no time the tenth month arrived, and as some of their shop managers were to get home to settle their annual accounts, the Xue family had to prepare a farewell feast for them.

One of those leaving was Zhang Dehui, a man of over sixty who had managed the Xues' pawnshop since he was young and was now worth two or three thousand taels. Not wanting to return before spring he said:

"This year sacrificial paper and aromatics are in short supply, which means that next year the price is bound to rise. I propose to send my eldest son here to see to the shop after New Year and on my way back purchase sacrificial paper and scented fans to sell before the Dragon-Boat Festival. After deducting taxes and expenses, we should still net a profit of several hundred percent."

When Xue Pan heard this he reflected, "Since my beating I've been ashamed to show my face, wishing I could disappear for a year or so; but I have nowhere to hide. I can't go on shamming illness indefinitely. Besides, all these years I've never taken to books or soldiering, and although I'm in business I've never handled a balance or abacus and know nothing either about local customs and different parts of the country. I may as well take some capital and travel around with Zhang Dehui for a year. It doesn't matter whether I make money or not; I can at any rate hide my face for a while and enjoy some sight-seeing at the same time."

Having made up his mind to this, he took Zhang aside after the feast,



晚间薛蟠告诉了他母亲。薛姨妈听了虽是欢喜，但又恐他在外生事，花了本钱倒是末事，因此不命他去。只说：“好歹你守着我，我还放心些。况且用不着你做买卖，也不等着这几百银子来用。你在家里安分守己的，就强似这几百银子了。”薛蟠主意已定，那里肯依。只说：“天天又说我不知世事，这个也不知，那个也不学。如今我发狠把那些没要紧的都断了，如今要成人主事，学习着做买卖，又不准我了，叫我怎么样呢？我又不是个丫头，把我关在家里，何日是个了？况且那张德辉又是个年高有德的，咱们和他是世交，我同他去，怎么得有舛错？我就一时半刻有不好的去处，自然他说我，劝我。就是东西贵贱行情，他是知道的，自然色色问他，何等顺利，倒不叫我去！过两日我不告诉家里，私自打点了一走，明年发了财回来，那时才知道我呢。”说毕，赌气睡觉去了。

薛姨妈听他如此说，因和宝钗商议。宝钗笑道：“哥哥果然要经历正事，正是好的了。只是他在家里说的好听，到了外头旧病复犯，越发难拘束他了。但也愁不得许多。他若是真改了，是他一生的福；若不改，妈也不能又有别的法子。一半尽人力，一半听天命罢了。这么大人了，若只管怕他不知世路，出不得门，干不得事，今年关在家里，明年还是这个样儿。他既说的名正言顺，妈就打发他去试一试，只打谅着丢了八百一千银子，横竖有伙计们帮着呢，也未必好意思

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explained his plan, and asked him to wait a couple of days so that they could travel together.

That evening he told his mother. But though pleased in a sense, she was also afraid he might get into trouble outside — the loss of capital was immaterial. So she withheld her consent.

“I don’t worry too much so long as you’re with me,” She said. “And it’s not as if we needed *you* to handle business or were short of money. If you’ll stay quietly at home that’s worth more to me than a few hundred taels.”

But Xue Pan, once his mind was made up, was stubborn.

“You keep complaining every day of my lack of worldly wisdom, my ignorance and failure to learn,” he protested. “Yet now that I’ve resolved to stop fooling around, come to grips with life and establish myself by learning to run the business, you won’t let me. What do you expect me to do? I’m not a girl to stay cooped up at home all the time. You’ll have to let me out some day. Besides, Zhang Dehui is well on in years, a moral character and an old family friend. What could go wrong if I’m with him? He’ll naturally point it out if I make the least blunder. And he knows the market so well that his advice will be most useful to me. Yet you won’t let me go! All right, I’ll slip away some day without telling you, and come back next year with my fortune made. Just wait and see if I don’t!”

He went off to bed in a huff. Then Aunt Xue discussed the matter with her daughter.

“If my brother’s really serious about working properly, that’s good,” said Baochai. “But if he’s just saying this to talk you round, once away from home he may slip back into his bad old ways and it will be even more difficult to restrain him. Still, it’s no use worrying too much. If he truly reforms, so much the better for him; if he doesn’t, there’s nothing you can do about it, mother. It depends half on what one can do for him half on his own fate. He’s no longer a boy, and if you keep him at home this year for fear he’s too inexperienced to travel or do business, it’ll be just the same next year. As his arguments sound reasonable, you may as well send him off to have a try — at worst it only means wasting eight hundred or a thousand taels. After all, he’ll have assistants who can’t

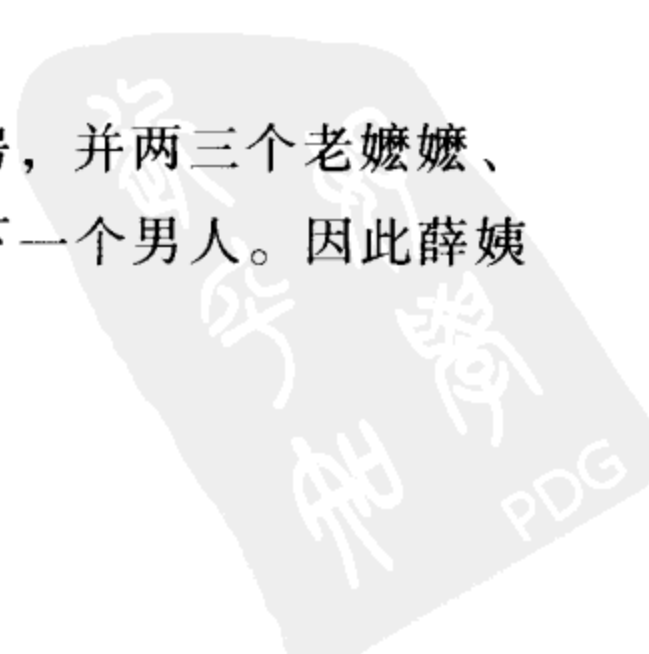


哄骗他的。二则他出去了，左右没了助兴的人，也没了倚仗的人，到了外头，谁还怕谁，有了的吃，没了的饿着，举眼无靠。他见这样，只怕比在家里省了事也未可知。”薛姨妈听了，思忖半晌说道：“倒是你说的是。花两个钱，叫他学些乖来也值了。”商议已定，一宿无话。

至次日，薛姨妈命人请了张德辉来，在书房中命薛蟠款待酒饭，自己在后廊下，隔着窗子，向里千言万语嘱托张德辉照管薛蟠。张德辉满口应承，吃过饭告辞，又回说：“十四日是上好出门的日子，大世兄即刻打点行李，雇下骡子，十四一早就长行了。”薛蟠喜之不尽，将此话告诉了薛姨妈。薛姨妈便和宝钗、香菱并两个老年的嬷嬷连日打点行装，派下薛蟠之乳父老苍头一名，当年谄事旧仆二名，外有薛蟠随身常使小厮二人，主仆一共六人，雇了三辆大车，单拉行李使物，又雇了四个长行骡子。薛蟠自骑一匹家内养的大青走骡，外备一匹坐马。诸事完毕，薛姨妈、宝钗等连日劝戒之言，自不必备说。

至十三日，薛蟠先去辞了他舅舅，然后过来辞了贾宅诸人。贾珍等未免又有饯行之说，也不必细述。至十四日一早，薛姨妈、宝钗等直送薛蟠出了仪门，母女两个四只泪眼看他去了，方回来。

薛姨妈上京带来的家人不过四五房，并两三个老嬷嬷、小丫头，今跟了薛蟠一去，外面只剩下一个男人。因此薛姨





very well cheat him. Besides, once he's gone there'll be no one to egg him on or to back him up, and he won't be able to throw his weight about. If he has food, he can eat; if not, he'll just have to go hungry. And for all we know, seeing that he's on his own, he may cause less trouble than at home."

Aunt Xue thought this over for a while.

"You're quite right," she said at last. "It's worth a little money if he'll learn to behave himself better."

Having agreed on this they retired for the night.

The next day Aunt Xue invited Zhang Dehui to a meal in the study at which Xue Pan presided, and standing in the back corridor she urged Zhang very earnestly through the window to take good care of her son. Zhang promised to do so.

After the meal as he took his leave he said, "The fourteenth is an auspicious day to start a journey. Please get your luggage ready, sir, and hire mules. On the fourteenth we can make an early start."

Xue Pan was overjoyed and passed on this message to his mother, who promptly set to work with Baochai, Xiangling and two old nurses to prepare his things. An old steward, the husband of Xue Pan's wet-nurse, was to accompany him with two other experienced old bondsmen as well as two of the pages who usually attended him, making a party of six. Three carts were hired for the luggage, and four sturdy mules. Xue Pan himself would ride a large black mule from the family stable, in addition to which a horse was provided for him too. When all these preparations had been made, his mother and sister went on to give him good advice and warnings which we can pass over here.

On the thirteenth, Xue Pan want to take his leave first of his maternal uncle, then of other members of the Jia family; but we need not dwell on all the farewell banquets offered by Jia Zhen and the rest.

On the fourteenth, first thing in the morning, his mother and sister saw him out of the ceremonial gate and with tears in their eyes watched until he was out of sight before turning back again.

Aunt Xue had brought to the capital only four or five families of servants apart from a few old nurses and young maids. Now that five of the men had gone with her son, only one man-servant was left. That same



妈即日到书房中，将一应陈设玩器并帘幔等物尽行搬了进来收贮，命那两个跟去的男子之妻一并也进来睡觉。又命香菱将他屋里也收拾严紧，“将门锁了，晚间和我去睡。”宝钗道：“妈既有这些人作伴，不如叫香菱姐姐和我作伴儿去。我们园子里又空，夜长了，我每夜作活，越多一个人岂不越好？”薛姨妈笑道：“正是我忘了，原该叫他同你去才是。我前日还向你哥哥说，文杏又小，到三不着两的，莺儿一个人不够伏侍的，还要买一个丫头来你使。”宝钗道：“买的不知底里，倘或走了眼，花了钱事小，没的淘气。倒是慢慢的打听，有知道来历的，买个还罢了。”一面说，一面命香菱收拾了衾褥妆奁，命一个老嬷嬷并臻儿送至蘅芜院去，然后宝钗和香菱才同回园中来。

香菱道：“我原要和奶奶说的，大爷去了，我和姑娘作伴儿去。又恐怕奶奶多心，说我贪着园内来玩；谁知你竟说了。”宝钗笑道：“我知道你心里羡慕这园子不是一日两日了，只是没个空儿。就每日来一趟，慌慌张张的，也没趣儿。所以趁着这机会，率性住上一年，我也多个作伴的，你也遂了心。”香菱笑道：“好姑娘，趁着这个工夫，你教给我作诗罢。”宝钗笑道：“我说你‘得陇望蜀’呢。我劝你今儿头一天进来，先出园东角门，从老太太起，各处各人你都瞧瞧，问候一声儿，也不必特意告诉他们说搬进园来。若有提起因由的，你只带口说我带了进来作伴儿就完了。回来进了园子，再到各姑娘房里走走。”



day, accordingly, she had all the ornaments, curtains, and other furnishings of the study stored away and ordered the wives of two men who had accompanied Xue Pan to move into the inner quarters. She also told Xiangling to clear up and lock her room and to share her own bedroom.

“You already have quite a few people to keep you company, mother,” observed Baochai. “Why not let Sister Xiangling move in with me? We’ve plenty of space in the Garden, and now that the nights are getting longer and I sew every evening, wouldn’t it be better if I had one more companion?”

“Of course.” Her mother smiled. “That had slipped my mind or I should have suggested it. Only the other day I was telling your brother that Wenxing’s too young to do much, and Yinger can’t wait on you properly all on her own. We must buy you another maid.”

“A girl bought outside is a dark horse,” objected Baochai. “If she turns out badly the money will be wasted, but that’s a small matter compared with the trouble she may cause. We’d better take our time making inquiries, and not buy a girl until we know her record.”

She urged Xiangling to pack up her bedding and toilet things, and ordered an old nurse and Zhener to take them to Alpinia Park. Then she went back to the Garden with Xiangling.

“I thought of asking our lady’s permission to stay with you after your brother left,” Xiangling confided. “I was afraid, though she’d think I just wanted to play about. I’m so glad you suggested it.”

“I know how long you’ve admired this Garden without ever having time really to enjoy it,” Baochai answered. “There’s no fun in hurried visits every day. So if you take this chance to stay here for a year, I’ll be glad of your company and you’ll get your wish too.”

“Can you take this opportunity, dear miss, to teach me to write poetry?”

“The more you get, the more you want!” chuckled Baochai. “As this is your first day here, I advise you to start by paying your respects to all the ladies in the different apartments outside the Garden’s east gate, beginning with the old lady. You needn’t tell them specially that you’ve moved into the Garden; but if anyone asks, just say I’ve brought you to keep me company. Then after you come back you ought to call on all the



香菱应着才要走时，只见平儿忙忙的走来。香菱忙问了好，平儿只得勉强陪笑相问。宝钗因向平儿笑道：“我今儿把他带了来作伴儿，正要打发人去回你奶奶一声儿。”平儿笑道：“姑娘说的是那里话？我竟没话答言了。”宝钗道：“这才是正理。店房也有个主人，庙里也有个住持。虽不是大事，到底告诉一声儿，便是园子里坐更上夜的人知道添了他两个，也好关门候户的。你回去告诉一声罢，我不打发人说去了。”平儿答应着，因又向香菱笑道：“你既来了，也不拜一拜街坊邻舍去？”宝钗笑道：“我正叫他去呢。”平儿道：“你且不必往我们家去，二爷病了在家里呢。”香菱答应着去了，先从贾母处来，不在话下。

且说平儿见香菱去了，便拉宝钗悄说道：“姑娘可听见我们家的新闻了？”宝钗道：“我没听见新闻。因连日打发我哥哥出门，所以你们这里的事，一概也不知道，连姊妹们这两日也没见。”平儿笑道：“老弟把二爷打了个动不得，难道姑娘就没听见？”宝钗道：“早起恍惚听见了一句，也信不真。我也正要瞧你奶奶去呢，不想你来了。又是为了什么打他？”平儿咬牙骂道：“都是那贾雨村！什么风村！半路途中，那里来的饿不死的野杂种！认了不到十年，生了多少事出来！今年春天，老爷不知在那个地方看见了几把旧扇子，回家看家里所有收着的这些好扇子都不中用了，立刻叫人各处搜



young ladies here.”

Xiangling agreed and was about to set out when Pinger hurried in. Xiangling greeted her, and Pinger returned her greeting with a strained smile.

“I’ve brought her here to keep me company,” Baochai told Pinger. “I was just going to send someone to report it to your mistress.”

“What a way to talk, miss!” cried Pinger. “How do you expect me to answer?”

“No, this is only right. ‘Hostels have their hosts, abbeys their abbots.’ It’s a small matter, but still I should notify her so that the night-watch will know whom to expect here before locking the gates. Will you report this for me when you go back? That’ll save me sending someone.”

Pinger agreed readily, then asked Xiangling, “Why don’t you call on your neighbours now that you’re here?”

“Just what I was saying to her,” remarked Baochai.

“But you’d better leave us out,” advised Pinger. “Master Lian is at home, ill in bed.”

Xiangling did as she was told, going first to call on the Lady Dowager. As soon as she had left, Pinger took Baochai’s arm.

“Have you heard the latest news in our family, miss?” she whispered.

“Not a word,” rejoined Baochai. “These last few days we’ve been so busy getting my brother off, I’ve heard nothing of what’s been happening in your apartments. I haven’t even seen my cousins for a couple of days.”

“Then you haven’t heard of the beating Lord She gave Master Lian? It’s quite laid him up.”

“I heard something vaguely this morning but didn’t believe it. If you hadn’t come, I’d have gone to call on your mistress. What did he beat him for?”

“It’s all the fault of that upstart Jia Yucun — the bastard deserves to starve to death!” fumed Pinger, grinding her teeth. “In the less than ten years that we’ve known him he’s stirred up endless trouble. This spring Lord She happened to see a few old fans somewhere, which made him so dissatisfied with all our best fans at home that he sent men out at once



求。谁知就有一个不知死的冤家，混号儿世人叫他作‘石呆子’，穷的连饭也没的吃，偏他家就有二十把旧扇子，死也不肯拿出大门来。二爷好容易烦了多少情，见了这个人，说之再三，他把二爷请到他家里坐着，拿出这扇子略瞧了一瞧。据二爷说，原是不能再有的了，全是湘妃、棕竹、麋鹿、玉竹的，皆是古人写画的真迹。回来告诉老爷，老爷便叫买他的，要多少银子给他多少银子。偏那石呆子说：‘我饿死冻死，一千两银子一把我也不卖！’老爷没法，天天骂二爷。已经许他五百两了，先兑银子后拿扇子。他只是不卖，只说：‘要扇子，先要我的命！’姑娘想想，这有什么法子？谁知雨村那没天理的听见了，便设了个法子，讹他拖欠官银，拿他到衙门里去，说所欠官银，变卖家产赔补，把这扇子抄了来，作了官价送了来。那石呆子如今不知是死是活。老爷拿着扇子问着二爷说：‘人家怎么弄来了？’二爷只说了一句：‘为这点子小事，弄的人坑家败业，也不算什么能为！’老爷听了就生了气，说二爷拿话堵老爷了，因此这是第一件大的。还有几件小的，我也记不清，所以都凑在一处，就打起来了。也没拉倒用板子、棍子，就站着，不知拿什么混打了一顿，脸上打破了两处。我们听见姨太太这里有种丸药，上棒疮的，姑娘快寻一丸子给我家去给他上。”宝钗听了，忙命莺儿去要了一丸子来与平儿。宝钗道：“既这样，替我问候罢，我就不去了。”平儿答应着去了，不在话下。



to search for better ones. A wretched crank they call the Stone Idiot had twenty old fans as it happened, but though so poor that he'd hardly a bite to eat, he'd sooner die than part with them. Master Lian had to pull a lot of strings just to meet him. Then, after much urging, the idiot invited him home and let him have a look at a few of these fans. According to Master Lian they were quite unique, all made of rare varieties of bamboo. And the calligraphy and paintings on them were by genuine old masters.

"When he came back and reported this, Lord She determined to buy them at any price. But the Stone Idiot swore, 'I'll die of cold and hunger sooner than sell, even if you offer me a thousand taels apiece.'

"There was nothing Lord She could do, except strom at Master Lian every day. Even when the fellow was promised five hundred taels in advance, he still refused. 'I'd sooner die than part with my fans,' he insisted. So, really, miss, what could be done?

"Then that black-hearted scoundrel Jia Yucun heard about it and hatched a scheme. He had the idiot taken to his yamen on a charge of owing the government some money, and ordered the default to be made good by the sale of his property. So the fans were seized, paid for at the official price and brought to our house. As for that Stone Idiot, who knows whether he's alive or dead?

"Lord She, once he had the fans, asked Master Lian, 'How did *he* succeed where you failed?' Master Lian simply answered, 'It's nothing to boast of, if somebody is willing to ruin a family for such a trifling reason.' Then his father flew into a passion, and accused him of trying to put him in the wrong. That was the main reason.

"There were a few other things too, so insignificant that I can't remember them exactly. Together, anyway, they got our young master a beating. Instead of being held down and flogged with a cane or stick, he was beaten where he stood — with just what, nobody knows — so that his face was cut open in two places. We heard that Aunt Xue had a cure for cuts of that kind. Could you send for a pill now, miss, for me to take to him?"

Baochai promptly despatched Yinger to fetch a pill, and handed this to Pinger, "I won't call just now, under the circumstances," she said. "Please give my regards to your mistress."



且说香菱见过众人之后，吃过晚饭，宝钗等都往贾母处去了，自己便往潇湘馆中来。此时黛玉已好了大半，见香菱也进园来住，自是欢喜。香菱因笑道：“我这一进来了，也得了空儿，好歹教给我作诗，就是我的造化了！”黛玉笑道：“既要学作诗，你就拜我为师。我虽不通，大略也还教得起你。”香菱笑道：“果然这样，我就拜你作师。你可不许腻烦。”黛玉道：“什么难事，也值得去学！不过是起承转合，当中承、转，是两副对子，平声的对仄声，虚的对实的，实的对虚的，若是果有了奇句，连平仄虚实不对都使得的。”香菱笑道：“怪道我常弄一本旧诗偷空儿看一两首，又有对的极工的，又有不对的，又听见说‘一三五不论，二四六分明’。看古人的诗上，竟有二四六上错了的，所以天天的疑惑。如今听你一说，原来这些格调规矩竟是末事，只要词句新奇为上。”黛玉道：“正是这个道理。词句究竟还是末事，第一是立意要紧。若意趣真了，连词句不用修饰，自是好的，这叫做‘不以词害意’。”香菱笑道：“我只爱陆放翁的诗，有一对：‘重帘不卷留香久，古砚微凹聚墨多’，说的真切有趣！”黛玉道：“断不可看这样的诗。你们因不知诗，所以见了这浅近的就爱，一入了这个格局，是再学不出来的。”





Pinger assented and left.

Let us return to Xiangling, who had paid her courtesy calls. After dinner, when Baochai had gone to see the Lady Dowager, she went to Bamboo Lodge. And Daiyu, now in better health, was delighted to learn that she had moved into the Garden.

“I shall have more free time here,” remarked Xiangling. “If only you’d teach me to write poems, how lucky I’d count myself!”

“If you want to write poetry you must acknowledge me as your tutor,” replied Daiyu teasingly. “I’m no poet myself, but I dare say I could teach you.”

“Of course I’ll be only too glad to be your pupil. But you must be patient with me.”

“It’s quite simple really. There’s hardly anything to learn,” Daiyu told her. “In regulated verse¹ it’s just a matter of opening, developing, changing and concluding; and the developing and changing couplets in the middle should be antithetical. A level tone should be contrasted with a deflected one, an abstract word with a concrete one. But if you’ve got a really fine line, the rules can be disregarded.”

Xiangling said, “No wonder, then that whenever I steal time to read a couple of old poems, I find some lines have very neat parallelisms while others have none. And I understood there was a rule that the first, third and fifth characters of a line needn’t follow the tone pattern, but the second, fourth and sixth must abide strictly by it. Yet I found that in some old poems even the second, fourth and sixth characters break the rules. This has always puzzled me. From your explanation it seems one needn’t bother with these rules, provided the line is fresh and original.”

“That’s right. The rules of prosody are secondary, the main thing is to have original ideas. For if there’s feeling, a poem is good even if the lines are unpolished. This is what we mean by ‘not letting the words interfere with the sense.’”

Xiangling gushed, “I simply love those lines by Lu You:

The heavy hangings, unrolled, retain the scent of incense;
The old inkstone, slightly concave, brims with ink.

That’s so true and so quaintly put.”

你只听我说，你若真心要学，我这里有王摩诘的全集，你且把他的五言律读一百首，细心揣摩透熟了，然后再读一二百首老杜的七言律，再李青莲的七言绝句读一二百首。肚子里先有了这三个人的诗作了底子，然后再把陶渊明、应场、谢、阮、庾、鲍等人的诗一看。你又是这样一个极聪明伶俐的人，不用一年的工夫，不愁是个诗翁了！”香菱听了，笑道：“既这样，好姑娘，你就把这诗给我拿出来，我带回去夜里念几首也是好的。”黛玉听说，便命紫鹃将王右丞的五言律拿来，递与香菱，又道：“你只看有红圈儿的都是我选的，有一首念一首。不明白的问你姑娘，或者遇见我，我讲与你就是了。”香菱拿了诗，回至蘅芜院中，诸事不顾，只向灯下一首一首的读起来。宝钗连催他数次睡觉，他也不睡。宝钗见他这样苦心，只得随他去了。

一日，黛玉方梳洗完了，只见香菱笑吟吟的送了诗来，又要换杜律。黛玉笑道：“共记得多少首？”香菱笑道：“凡红圈选的我都读了。”黛玉道：“可领略了些滋味没有？”香菱笑道：“我倒领略了些滋味，不知可是不是，说与你听听。”黛玉笑道：“正要讲究讨论，方能长进。你且说来我听。”香菱笑道：“据我看来，诗的好处，有口里说不出来的意思，想去却是逼真的。有似无理的，想去竟是有情有理的。”黛玉笑道：“这话有些意思了，但不知你从何处见得？”香菱笑道：“我看他《塞上》一首，内一联云：‘大漠孤烟直，长河落日



“You mustn’t on any account read poems of that kind,” warned Daiyu. “It’s because you don’t understand poetry that you like such superficial lines when you come across them. Once you get into that habit you’ll never cure yourself of it. Now, listen to me: If you really want to write poetry, take my copy of the complete poems of Wang Wei and study a hundred of his pentasyllabic poems in regulated verse until you know them well. Then read one or two hundred of Du Fu’s regulated heptasyllabics, and one or two hundred of Li Bai’s² heptasyllabic quatrains. After digesting these and laying a foundation with these three poets, go on to read Tao Yuanming, Ying Yang, Xie Lingyun, Yuan Ji, Yu Xin and Bao Zhao.³ In less than a year’s time, with your intelligence, you can count on becoming a poet.”

“That’s fine, miss.” Xiangling smiled. “Please give me that book then to take back with me, and I’ll read a few poems tonight.”

Daiyu told Zijuan to fetch Wang Wei’s *Regular Pentasyllabics* and give it to Xiangling.

“Just read those I’ve marked with red circles,” she told her. “Read all the ones I’ve chosen. If there’s anything you don’t understand, ask your young lady. Or I can explain it to you next time I see you.”

Xiangling took the book back to Alpinia Park and, oblivious of all else, read poem after poem by lamplight, ignoring Baochai’s repeated reminders to go to bed. Seeing her so much in earnest, Baochai finally let her be.

One morning, Daiyu had just finished her toilet when a radiant Xiangling came in to return Wang Wei’s poems and ask for Du Fu’s *Regulated Verse*.

“How many poems have you memorized?” asked Daiyu.

“I’ve read all those marked with red circles.”

“Do you appreciate them better now?”

“I think so, but I’m not sure. I’d like your opinion.”

“Go ahead. We can only make progress by talking things over.”

“To my mind, the beauty of poetry lies in something that can’t be put into words yet is very vivid and real when you think about it. Again, it seems illogical, yet when you think it over it makes good sense.”

“There’s something in that. But what grounds have you for saying



圆。’想来烟如何直？日自然是圆的。这‘直’字似无理，‘圆’字似太俗。合上书一想，倒像是见了这景的。若说再找两个字换这两个字，竟找不出来。再还有‘日落江湖白，潮来天地青’，这‘白’、‘青’两字也似无理。想来，必得这两个字才形容得尽，念在嘴里倒像有几千斤重的一个橄榄。还有‘渡头余落日，墟里上孤烟’，这‘余’字和‘上’字，难为他怎么想来！我们那年上京来，那日下晚湾住船，岸上没有人，只有几棵树，远远的几家人家作晚饭，那个烟竟是碧青，连云直上。谁知我昨日晚上读了这两句，倒像又到了那个地方去了。”

正说着，宝玉和探春也来了，也都入坐听他讲诗。宝玉笑道：“既是这样，也不用看诗。会心处不用多，听你说了这两句，可知‘三昧’你已得了。”黛玉笑道：“你说他这‘上孤烟’好，你还不知他这一句还是套了前人的来呢。我给你这一句瞧瞧，更比这个淡而现成。”说着便把陶渊明的“暧暧远人村，依依墟里烟”翻了出来，递与香菱。香菱瞧了，点头叹赏，笑道：“原来‘上’字是从‘依依’两字化出来的。”宝玉大笑道：“你已得了，不用再讲，越发倒学杂了。”





so?”

“Well, take that couplet in the poem on the northern borderland:

In the great desert a single straight plume of smoke;
By the long river at sunset a ball of flame.

Of course the sun’s round, but how can smoke be straight? The first description seems illogical, the second trite. But when you close the book and think, the scene rises before your eyes, and you realize it would be impossible to choose any better words. Or take the couplet:

As the sun sets, rivers and lakes gleam white;
The tide comes up and the horizon turns blue.

The adjectives ‘white’ and ‘blue’ seem illogical too; but when you think about it no other words would be so apt, for read aloud they have all the savour of an olive weighing several thousand catties! Again, take the lines:

The setting sun still lingers by the ford,
A single plume of smoke ascends from the village.

It’s the choice of ‘lingers’ and ‘ascends’ that I admire. On our way to the capital that year, our boat moored by the bank one evening. There was nobody about, nothing but a few trees, and the smoke from some distant cottages where supper was being cooked rose up, a vivid blue, straight to the clouds. Fancy, reading those lines last night carried me back to that place.”

Meanwhile Baoyu and Tanchun had also arrived and sat down to listen to this disquisition on poetry.

“Actually, you don’t need to read any more poems,” remarked Baoyu with a smile. “‘True understanding need not be sought far away.’ Judging by the little I’ve heard you say, you’ve already grasped the gist of the matter.”

Daiyu put in, “You’ve praised that expression ‘a single plume of smoke ascends’ without realizing that it’s taken from an earlier poet. Have a look at this line, which is even more evocative and natural.”

She found and showed her Tao Yuanming’s lines:

Misty the distant village,
Smoke dawdles up from the hamlet.

Xiangling read this and nodded her appreciation. “So ‘ascends’ is



你就作起来，必是好的。”探春笑道：“明儿我补一个柬来，请你入社。”香菱笑道：“姑娘何苦打趣我，我不过是心里羡慕，才学着玩罢了。”探春、黛玉都笑道：“谁不是玩？难道我们是认真作诗呢！若说我们认真成了诗，出了这园子，把人的牙还笑倒了呢。”宝玉道：“这也算自暴自弃了。前日我在外头和相公们商议画儿，他们听见咱们起诗社，求我把稿子给他们瞧瞧。我就写了几首给他们看，谁不真心叹服。他们都抄了刻去了。”探春、黛玉忙问道：“这是真话么？”宝玉笑道：“说谎的是那架上的鹦哥儿。”黛玉、探春听说，都道：“你真真胡闹！且别说那不成诗，便是成诗，我们的笔墨也不该传出去。”宝玉道：“这怕什么！古来闺阁中的笔墨不要传出去，如今怎有人知道呢。”说着，只见惜春打发了人画来请宝玉，宝玉方去了。香菱又逼着黛玉换出杜律来，又央黛玉、探春二人：“出个题目，且等我诌去，诌了来，替我改正。”黛玉道：“昨夜月景甚好，我正要诌一首，竟未诌成，你就作他一首来。十四寒的韵，由你爱用那几个字去。”

香菱听了，喜的拿了诗回来，又苦思一回作两句诗，又舍不得杜律，又读两首。如此茶饭无心，坐卧不定。宝钗道：“何苦自寻烦恼。都是颦儿引的你，我和他算账去。你本





derived from 'dawdles up,'" she said.

"You've got it," cried Baoyu laughing. "No need for further explanations. In fact, more might lead you astray. Just start writing poetry yourself now, and you're bound to produce something good."

Tanchun said, "Tomorrow I'll prepare some refreshments and invite you formally to join our poetry club."

"Don't laugh at me, miss," cried Xiangling. "It's just out of admiration for you that I'm learning this for fun."

"Who's not doing it for fun?" countered Tanchun and Daiyu. "We don't write seriously either. If we really set up as poets, people outside the Garden would split their sides laughing."

"Don't be too modest," said Baoyu. "The other day, when I was discussing our painting with those secretaries outside and they heard we'd started a poetry club, they begged me to show them some of our poems. I wrote out a few for them, and they were so genuinely impressed that they copied them all out to have them printed."

"Is that true?" demanded Tanchun and Daiyu.

"I'm not a liar like that parrot there on the perch."

"You really are the limit!" they exclaimed. "In the first place they aren't proper poems, and even if they were you shouldn't circulate our writings outside."

"What does it matter?" he argued. "We'd never have heard of the poems by ladies of old if they hadn't been made public."

At this point Xichun's maid Ruhua arrived, and at her request Baoyu went to see her mistress.

Xiangling again urged Daiyu to lend her Du Fu's poems, and begged her and Tanchun to set her a subject.

"Let me try my hand and you can correct it," she said.

"Last night there was a fine moon," rejoined Daiyu. "I was meaning to write a poem on it but didn't get round to it. Take that as your subject, and choose as your rhymes any characters in the fourteenth group rhyming with *han* ('cold')."

Xiangling went back in high delight with the poems. After cudgelling her brains she wrote a few lines, then read a couple more of Du Fu's *Regulated Verses* which she could not bear to put down. She was so



来呆头呆脑的，再添上这个，越发弄成个呆子了。”香菱笑道：“好姑娘，别混我。”一面说，一面作了一首，先与宝钗看。宝钗看了笑道：“这个不好，不是这个作法。你别怕臊，只管拿了给他瞧去，看他是怎么说。”香菱听了，便拿了诗找黛玉。黛玉看时，只见写道是：

月挂中天夜色寒，清光皎皎影团团。

诗人助兴常思玩，旅客添愁不忍观。

翡翠楼边悬玉镜，珍珠帘外挂冰盘。

良宵何用烧银烛，晴彩辉煌映画栏。

黛玉看了，笑道：“意思却有，只是措词不雅。皆因你看的诗少，被他缚住了。把这首丢开，再作一首，只管放开胆子去作。”

香菱听了，默默的回来，率性连房也不入，只在池边树下，或坐在石上出神，或蹲在地下掘土，来往的人都诧异。李纨、探春、宝玉、宝钗等听得此信，都远远的站在山坡上瞧着他笑。只见他皱一回眉，又自己含笑一回。宝钗笑道：“这个人定要疯了！昨夜嘟嘟哝哝直闹到五更天才睡下，没一顿饭的工夫天就亮了。我就听见他起来了，忙忙碌碌梳了头就找颦儿去了。一回来，呆了一日，作了一首又不好，自然这会子另作呢。”宝玉笑道：“这正是‘地灵人杰’，老天生人再不虚赋性情的。我们成日叹说可惜他这么个人竟俗了，谁知到底有今日。可见天地生人至公。”宝钗笑道：“你能够



engrossed that she forgot food and sleep.

“Why torture yourself?” asked Baochai. “This is all Daiyu’s fault. I must settle scores with her. You were always a bit weak in the head, and now this has crazed you completely.”

“Please don’t distract me,” begged Xiangling.

With that she finished her verse and showed it to her.

Baochai read it and commented with a smile, “This isn’t the way. Don’t be shy, though. Just show it to her and see what she has to say.”

So Xiangling took the poem to Daiyu, who read as follows:

The moon hangs in mid-sky, cold is the night;
Round its reflection, limpid white its light,
Inspiring poets to let their fancies roam,
But traveller, sick at heart, cannot bear the sight.
By emerald pavilion hangs a mirror of jade,
A disc of ice outside pearl screen displayed;
No need for silvery candles this fine night —
Its bright splendour lights up the painted balustrade.

Daiyu commented with a smile, “You’ve no lack of ideas but the language lacks elegance, because you’re restricted by having read so few poems. Scrap this one and write another. Just let yourself go.”

Xiangling went away in silence. She did not go back to her room but strolled by the pool and under the trees, sat lost in thought on the rocks or crouched down to scribble on the ground, to the amazement of all those who passed by.

When Li Wan, Tanchun, Baochai and Baoyu heard of this, they climbed a slope some way off and stood there laughing as they watched her, now frowning, now smiling to herself.

“The girl’s bound to go mad at this rate,” giggled Baochai. “She sat up all last night muttering to herself, and didn’t go to sleep till nearly dawn. In less time than it takes for a meal it was daybreak, and I heard her get up and make a hurried toilet before rushing off to find Daiyu. She came back to spend the whole day in a daze; but since the poem she wrote was no good, now of course she’s writing another.”

Baoyu chuckled. “This is a case of ‘a remarkable place producing outstanding people.’ So Heaven has endowed her with more than good



像他这苦心就好了，学什么有个不成的。”宝玉不答。

只见香菱兴头头的又往黛玉那边去了。探春笑道：“咱们跟了去，看他有些意思没有。”说着，一齐都往潇湘馆来。只见黛玉正拿着诗和他讲究呢。众人因问黛玉作的如何，黛玉道：“这已算难为他了，只是还不好。这一首过于穿凿了，还得另作。”众人因要诗看时，只见写道是：

非银非水映窗寒，试看晴空护玉盘。
淡淡梅花香欲染，丝丝柳带露初干。
只疑残粉涂金砌，恍若轻霜抹玉栏。
梦醒西楼人迹绝，余容犹可隔帘看。

宝钗笑道：“不像吟月了，月字底下添一个‘色’字倒还使得，你看句句倒是月色。这也罢了，原来诗从胡说来，再迟几天就好了。”香菱自为这首妙绝，听如此说，自己又扫了兴，不肯丢开手，便又思索起来。因见他姊妹们说笑，便自己走至阶前竹下闲步，抠心搜肠，耳不旁听，目不他视。一时探春隔窗笑说：“菱姑娘，你闲闲罢。”香菱怔怔答应道：“‘闲’字是十五删的，错了韵了。”众人听了，不觉大笑起来。宝钗道：“可真是诗魔了。都是颦儿引的他！”黛玉道：“圣人





looks. We were always regretting that such a girl lacked polish, but now see what's happened! This shows there is true justice in the world."

"I only wish you would work as hard." Baochai smiled. "Then you'd succeed in your studies."

Baoyu let this pass.

They now saw Xiangling set off exuberantly to find Daiyu again.

"Let's follow her," suggested Tanchun. "I want to see if she's done any better this time."

So off they trooped together to Bamboo Lodge, where they found Daiyu discussing Xiangling's poem with her.

"What's it like?" they asked.

"A creditable effort but still poor," was Daiyu's verdict. "This one is too arty. She'll have to try again."

They asked to see the verse, which read:

Neither silver nor liquid this chill light on the window;
A jade disc hangs above in the limpid sky;
Pale the plum-blossom steeped in fragrance,
Slender the willow slips, their dew half dry.
Golden steps appear coated with powder,
Marble balustrades seem lightly frosted over;
Waking in West Pavilion, no trace of man.
But some vestiges still behind the screen we discover.

Baochai remarked pleasantly, "This doesn't read like a poem about the moon, but it would do if the subject were changed to *The Colour of the Moon*, for almost every line seems to deal with colour. Never mind, all poetry starts with meaningless talk. In a few days you'll do better."

Xiangling, who had preened herself on this poem, was discouraged again by these comments. She refused to give up, however, and once more started racking her brains. Leaving the others to chat, she strolled into the bamboo grove before the steps and concentrated on thinking, deaf and blind to everything going on around her.

Presently Tanchun called to her through the window, "Do have a rest, Xiangling!"

"'Rest' belongs to the fifteenth group of rhymes — you've got the wrong rhyme," she answered absently.

说，‘诲人不倦’，他又来问我，我岂有不说的理。”李纨笑道：“咱们拉了他往四姑娘房里去，引他瞧瞧画儿，叫他也醒一醒才好。”

说着，真个出来拉了他过藕香榭，至暖香坞中。惜香正乏倦，在床上歪着睡午觉，画缂立在壁间，用纱罩着。众人唤醒了惜春，揭纱看时，十停方有了三停。香菱见画儿上有几个美人，因指着笑道：“这个是我们姑娘，那个是林姑娘。”探春笑道：“既会作诗的都画在上头，你快学罢。”说着，玩笑了一回。

各自散后，香菱满心还是想诗。至晚间对灯出了一回神，至三更后上床卧下，两眼鳏鳏，直到五更方才朦胧睡去。一时天亮，宝钗醒了，听了一听，他安稳睡了，心下想：“他翻腾了一夜，不知可作成了没有？这会子乏了，且别叫他。”正想着，只听香菱从梦中笑道：“可是有了，难道这一首还不好？”宝钗听了，又是可叹，又是可笑，连忙唤醒了他，问他：“得了什么了？你这诚心都通了仙了。学不成诗，还弄出病来呢。”一面说，一面起来梳洗了，会同姊妹往贾母处来。

原来香菱苦志学诗，精血诚聚，日间不能做出，忽于梦中得了八句。梳洗已毕，便忙录出来。自己并不知好歹，便拿了又找黛玉来。刚至沁芳亭，只见李纨与众姊妹方从王夫



Everybody laughed.

“She’s really become a demoniac poet!” said Baochai. “It’s all Daiyu’s fault for egging her on.”

“The Sage says ‘tireless in teaching others,’” quipped Daiyu. “Since she consulted me, I had to tell her what I knew.”

“Let’s take her to see Xichun,” proposed Li wan. “It’ll wake her up to look at the painting.”

No sooner said than done. They dragged Xiangling off past Lotus Fragrance Anchorage to Warm Scented Arbour, where Xichun was having a siesta on her couch. The painting, propped against one wall, was covered by a piece of gauze. Having woken Xichun they removed the gauze, disclosing that the painting was only about one-third finished. Xiangling saw some beautiful girls in it. Pointing at two of them she said with a smile:

“This is our young lady, and that’s Miss Lin.”

Tanchun laughed. “If all who can write poems are to be painted there, you’d better hurry up and learn.”

After a few more jokes the party dispersed.

Still Xiangling’s whole mind was occupied by poetry. That evening she sat up facing the lamp lost in thought, only going to bed after midnight and lying there open-eyed, not getting off to sleep till nearly dawn. When presently day broke and Baochai woke up, she found her sleeping soundly.

“She’s been tossing and turning all night,” thought Baochai. “I wonder if she’s finished her poem? She must be tired out. I’d better not wake her.”

Just then Xiangling laughed in her sleep and cried, “Ah, now I’ve got it! She’ll hardly be able to find fault with this.”

Amused and touched, Baochai woke her up to ask, “What have you got? Your single-mindedness should move the gods to pity. But you may fall ill if you can’t write good poems.”

Having finished her toilet she went off with the other girls to pay her respects to the Lady Dowager.

Now Xiangling had been so determined to learn to write poems, giving her whole mind to it, that although she had failed to finish this new poem the previous day she had suddenly hit on eight lines in her dreams. As

人处回来，宝钗正告诉他们，说他梦中作诗说梦话。众人正笑着，抬头见他来了，便都争着要诗看。未知如何，且听下回分解。





soon as she was dressed she wrote them out. And as she could not tell whether they were good or not, she went to find Daiyu again. She reached Seeping Fragrance Pavilion as Li Wan and the girls, just back from Lady Wang's apartments, were laughing at Baochai's account of how Xiangling had been versifying and talking in her sleep. When they looked up and saw her, all clamoured to see her new poem.

If you want to know what it was like, read the next chapter.



第四十九回

琉璃世界白雪红梅 脂粉香娃割腥啖膻

话说香菱见众人正在说笑，他便迎上去笑道：“你们看这首，若使得，我便还学；若还不好，我就死了心了。”说着，把诗递与黛玉及众人看时，只见写道是：

精华欲掩料应难，影自娟娟魄自寒。
一片砧敲千里白，半轮鸡唱五更残。
绿蓑江上秋闻笛，红袖楼头夜倚栏。
博得嫦娥应借问，何缘不使永团圆！

众人看了笑道：“这首不但好，而且新巧有趣。可知俗语说‘天下无难事，只怕有心人。’社里一定要请你了。”香菱听了心中不信，料着他们是哄自己的话，还只管问黛玉宝钗等。

正说之间，只见几个小丫头并老婆子忙忙的走来，都笑道：“来了好些姑娘、奶奶们，我们都不认得，奶奶、姑娘们快认亲去。”李纨笑道：“这是那里的话？你们到底说明白了是谁的亲戚？”那婆子、丫头们都笑道：“奶奶的两位妹妹都来了。还有一位姑娘，说是薛大姑娘的妹妹，还有一位爷，说是薛大爷的兄弟。我这会子请姨太太去呢，奶奶和姑娘们



Chapter 49

White Snow and Red Plum-Blossom Make the Garden Entrancing Girls Enjoy Rustic Fare at a Venison Barbecue

When Xiangling discovered the others talking about her, she went up to them with a smile.

“Read this,” she said. “If it’s any good, I’ll persevere; if not, I’ll give up trying to write poetry.”

She handed Daiyu her poem and they all read:

Hard, surely, to hide such splendour,
A form so fair, a spirit so cold, so withdrawn;
Washing-blocks pound in an expanse of white,
Only a crescent is left when cocks crow at dawn;
In green coir cape on the river he listens to autumn fluting,
In red sleeves she leans over her balustrade at night.
Well might the goddess Chang E ask herself:
Why cannot we enjoy endless, perfect delight?

“Not only good but original and ingenious,” was the general verdict. “As the proverb says, ‘All difficulties on earth can be overcome if men but give their minds to it.’ You certainly must join our poetry club.”

Xiangling, hardly able to believe her ears, was questioning Daiyu and Baochai to make sure they were not teasing when some maids and old nurses hurried in.

“A party of ladies, old and young, have arrived,” they announced. “We don’t know them, but they’re your relatives. Please go quickly to welcome them.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Li Wan. “You must explain more clearly. Whose relatives are they?”

“Two of them are your younger cousins, madam. Two young ladies, one of them is said to be Miss Xue’s cousin, and there’s a young gentleman who’s Master Xue’s cousin. We’re on our way now to invite Madam



先上去罢。”说着，一径去了。宝钗笑道：“我们薛蝌和他妹妹来了不成？”李纨也笑道：“我们婶子又上京来了不成？他们如何凑在一处，这可是奇事。”大家纳闷，来至王夫人上房内，只见乌压压一地的人。

原来邢夫人之兄嫂带了女儿岫烟进京来投邢夫人的，可巧凤姐之兄王仁也正进京，两亲家一处打帮来了。走至半路泊船时，正遇见李纨之寡婶带着两个女儿——大名李纹，次名李绮——也上京。大家叙起来又是亲戚，因此三家一路同行。后有薛蟠之从弟薛蝌，因当年他父亲在京时，已将胞妹薛宝琴许配都中梅翰林之子为婚，正欲进京发嫁，闻得王仁进京，他也随后带了妹子赶来。所以今日会齐了，来访投各人亲戚。

于是大家见礼叙过，贾母、王夫人都欢喜非常。贾母因笑道：“怪道昨儿晚上灯花爆了又爆，结了又结，原来应在今日。”一面叙些家常，一面收看带来的礼物，一面命留酒饭。凤姐儿自不必说，忙上加忙。李纨、宝钗自然和婶母、妹子叙离别之情。黛玉见了，先是欢喜，次后想起众人皆有亲眷，独自己孤单，无个亲眷，不免又去垂泪。宝玉深知其情，十分劝慰了一番方罢。

然后宝玉忙忙来至怡红院中，向袭人、麝月、晴雯等笑道：“你们还不快看人去！谁知宝姐姐的亲哥哥是那个样子，他这叔伯兄弟形容举止另是一样了，倒像宝姐姐同胞兄弟似的。更奇在你们成日家只说宝姐姐是绝色的人物，如今你们



Xue over. You and the young ladies had better go first.”

As these messengers left Baochai exclaimed joyfully, “Can it be our Xue Ke and his sister?”

Li Wan said gaily, “It sounds as if my aunt has come to the capital again. But how odd that they should all arrive together.”

Going in some mystification to Lady Wang’s reception hall, they found it crowded with people. Lady Xing’s brother and sister-in-law had brought their daughter Xiuyan to stay with her; and they had travelled with Xifeng’s elder brother Wang Ren, who was coming to the capital too. Half way there, when their boats moored, they had happened to meet Li Wan’s widowed aunt making the same journey with her daughters Li Wen and Li Qi; and having found out in the course of conversation that they were related, these three families had proceeded on their way together. Then there was Xue Pan’s cousin Xue Ke, coming to arrange for the marriage of his younger sister Baoqin who had been betrothed to the son of Academician Mei when their father was in the capital. Learning of Wang Ren’s trip, he had followed with his sister and overtaken him. In this way they had arrived together today to visit their respective relatives.

The Lady Dowager and Lady Wang welcomed these guests most warmly.

“Not wonder our lamp wicks kept forming snuff and sputtering last night!” remarked the old lady with a smile. “It was a sign of this reunion today.”

While exchanging family news and accepting the gifts brought, she ordered a meal. Xifeng, it goes without saying, was busier than ever, for Li Wan and Baochai were naturally chatting with their relatives about all that had happened since they parted. Daiyu enjoyed the general excitement too until it came home to her that she alone had no family but was all on her own, and at this thought she shed tears. Baoyu, well aware how she felt, finally succeeded in consoling her, after which he hurried back to Happy Red Court.

“Go and have a look, quick!” he urged Xiren, Sheyue and Qingwen. “Baochai’s boy cousin looks and behaves quite differently from Xue Pan, more as if he were her real brother. And there’s something even more amazing. You always insist that nobody can rival Baochai’s looks



瞧瞧他这妹子，还有大嫂嫂的两个妹子，我竟形容不出来了。老天，老天，你有多少精华灵秀，生出这些人上之人来！可知我井底之蛙，成日家自说现在的这几个人是有一无二的，谁知不必远寻，就是本地风光，一个赛似一个，如今我又长了一层学问了。除了这几个，难道还有几个不成？”一面自笑自叹。袭人见他又有些魔意，便不肯去瞧。晴雯等早去瞧了一遍回来，喜欢的笑向袭人道：“你快瞧瞧去！！太太的一个侄女儿，宝姑娘一个妹妹，大奶奶两个妹妹，倒像一把子四根水葱儿。”

一语未了，只见探春也笑着进来找宝玉，因说道：“咱们的诗社可兴旺了。”宝玉笑道：“正是呢，这是你一高兴起诗社，所以鬼使神差来了这些人。但只一件，不知他们可学过作诗不曾？”探春道：“我才都问了，他们虽是自谦，看其光景，没有不会的。便是不会也没难处，你看香菱就知道了。”袭人笑道：“他们说薛大姑娘的妹妹更好，三姑娘看着怎么样？”探春道：“果然的话。据我看，连他姐姐并这些人总不及他。”袭人听了，又是诧异，又笑道：“这也奇了，还从那里再好的去呢？我倒要瞧瞧去。”探春道：“老太太一见了，喜欢的无可不可，已经逼着太太认了干女儿了。老太太要养活，才刚已经定了。”宝玉喜的忙问道：“这果然的？”探春道：“我几时说过谎！”又笑道：“有了这个好孙女儿，就忘了你这孙子了。”宝玉笑道：“这倒不妨，原该多疼女儿些

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but you should just see her girl cousin and my elder sister-in-law's two cousins — words fail me to describe them! Old Man Heaven, what fine essences and subtle spirits you must have used to produce such exquisite creatures! Why, I've been like the frog at the bottom of a well, imagining that our girls here were unmatched; but now, without searching far afield, here on this very spot I see others who surpass them. We certainly live and learn. Does this mean there are still others like these?"

He had been laughing and exclaiming so wildly that Xiren refused to go. Qingwen and the others had done as he said, however, and now they ran back smiling.

"You must go and have a look," they urged Xiren. "Lady Xing's niece, Miss Baochai's cousin and Madam Zhu's two cousins are as pretty as four fresh young shallots, they really are!"

While they were speaking, Tanchun came to find Baoyu. "This is a fine thing for our poetry club," she told him.

"That's right," he agreed. "You had the bright idea of starting the club, so now all these people turn up as if by magic. We don't know, though, whether they can write poems or not."

"I asked them just now," said Tanchun. "Though they disclaimed modestly, they all seem as if they can. Even if they can't, they can learn — look at Xiangling."

"Miss Xue's cousin sounds the best of them all," put in Xiren. "Is that your impression, miss?"

"Yes," said Tanchun. "I shouldn't be surprised if she surpasses even Baochai and all the rest of us here."

"It will be strange if she does. I shouldn't have thought it possible to find anyone better than her!" exclaimed Xiren, much impressed. "I must go and have a look."

"The old lady lost her heart to her as soon as she set eyes on her," Tanchun continued. "She's already told Lady Wang to adopt her as her daughter, and means to bring her up as her own grandchild. It's just been decided."

"Is that true?" demanded Baoyu joyfully.

"Since when have I lied to you?" retorted Tanchun. "Now that the old lady has this good grand-daughter she'll forget you, her grandson."



才是正理。明儿十六，咱们可该起社了。”探春道：“林丫头刚起来了，二姐姐又病了，终是七上八下的。”宝玉道：“二姐姐又不大作诗，没有他又何妨。”探春道：“率性等几天，等他们新来的混熟了，咱们邀上他们岂不好？这会子大嫂子、宝姐姐自然心里没有诗兴，况且湘云又没来，颦儿才好了，人人不合式。不如等着云丫头来了，这几个新的也熟了，颦儿也大好了，大嫂子和宝姐姐心也闲了，香菱诗也长进了，如此邀一满社岂不好？咱们两个如今且往老太太那里去听听，除宝姐姐的妹妹不算外，他一定是在咱们家住定了的。倘或那三个要不在咱们家住，咱们央告着老太太留下他们也在园子里住下，岂不多添几个人，越发有趣了。”宝玉听了，欢喜道：“倒是你明白。我终久是个糊涂心肠，空喜欢一会子，却想不到这上头。”说着，兄妹两个一齐往贾母处来。

且说贾母见了薛宝琴，甚是欢喜，便命王夫人认作干女儿，因此欢喜非常，连园中也不命住，晚上跟着贾母一处安寝，薛蝌自向薛蟠书房中住下。贾母便和邢夫人说：“你侄女儿也不必家去了，园里住几天，逛逛再去。”邢夫人兄嫂家中原艰难，这一上京，原仗的是邢夫人与他们治房舍，帮盘缠，听如此说，岂不愿意。邢夫人便将岫烟交与凤姐，凤姐筹算得园中姊妹多，性情不一，且又不便另设一处，莫若送到迎春一处去，倘日后邢岫烟有些不遂意的事，纵然邢夫人知道了，与自己无干。从此后，邢岫烟家去住的日期不算，若在大观园住到一个月上，凤姐亦照迎春分例一样送一分与



"I don't mind. It's only right to love girls more. Tomorrow's the sixteenth — our club ought to hold another meeting."

"Daiyu's just out of bed and Yingchun's ill again. There's always someone missing."

"Yingchun doesn't write much, so we can manage without her."

"Wouldn't it be better, though, to wait a few days till the newcomers have settled down and then invite them? Our elder sister-in-law and Baochai naturally won't be in a poetizing mood just now either. Besides, Xiangyun's not here and Daiyu's only just recovered. It wouldn't suit anyone. Let's wait till Xiangyun comes. By then the new arrivals will know us, Daiyu will be completely well, Li Wan and Baochai will have less on their minds, and Xiangling will have made further progress; then we can have a better meeting. Come on now, let's go and see what's happening in the old lady's place. We don't have to worry about Baochai's cousin — it's settled that she's to stay here. If the other three aren't, we can beg the old lady to invite them to stay in the Garden too. The more the merrier."

Baoyu's face lit up. "That's a splendid idea," he cried. "I'm such a fool, I was so carried away by their arrival, I never thought of that."

The two of them went together then to the Lady Dowager's quarters. Sure enough, the old lady was so delighted with Baoqin that she had made Lady Wang adopt her as her goddaughter. And overjoyed by this, she would not even hear of Baoqin staying in the Garden — the girl was to sleep with her. Xue Ke was to be put up in Xue Pan's study.

The Lady Dowager then told Lady Xing, "Your niece needn't go home for a few days either. Let her enjoy herself in the Garden first."

As Lady Xing's elder brother was poorly off, he and his wife had counted on her providing them with accommodation and financial assistance during this visit to the capital; so Xiuyan was entrusted to Xifeng. Now there were many girls, temperamentally different, in the Garden; and as Xifeng considered it unnecessary to open up another house for Xiuyan, she decided the best thing would be to put her up with Yingchun; for then if later Lady Xing heard that her niece was dissatisfied, no blame would attach to Xifeng. And not counting the time she chose to spend at home, each month that she stayed in Grand View Garden Xifeng would



岫烟。凤姐冷眼瞧着岫烟的心性为人，竟不像邢夫人并他父母一样，却是温厚可疼的人。因此凤姐反怜他家贫命苦，比别的姊妹多疼他些，邢夫人倒不大理论了。

贾母和王夫人因素喜李纨贤惠，且年轻守节，令人敬伏，今见他寡婶来了，便不肯令他外头去住。那李婶虽十分不肯，无奈贾母执意不从，只得带着李纹、李绮在稻香村住下了。

这里安插既定，谁知保龄侯史鼎又迁委了外省大员，不日要带了家眷去上任。贾母因舍不得湘云，便留下他了，接到家中，原要命凤姐另设一处与他住。史湘云执意不肯，定要与宝钗一处住，因此也就罢了。

此时大观园中比先更热闹了多少。李纨为首，余者迎春、探春、惜春、宝钗、黛玉、湘云、李纹、李绮、宝琴、岫烟，再添上凤姐和宝玉，一共十三个。叙起年庚，除李纨年纪最长，这十二个皆不过十五六七岁，或有这三个同年，或有那五个共岁，或有这两个同月、同日，或有那两个同刻、同时，所差者大半是时刻月分而已。连他们自己也不能记清谁长谁幼了，连贾母、王夫人及家中婆娘、丫鬟，也不能细细分别，不过是“姊”、“妹”、“弟”、“兄”四个字随便乱叫。

如今香菱正满心满意只想作诗，又不敢十分罗唆宝钗，可巧来了个史湘云。那史湘云又是极爱说话的，那里禁得起香菱又请教他谈诗，越发高兴起来，便没昼没夜高谈阔论起来。宝钗因笑道：“我实在聒噪的受不了。一个女孩儿家，只管拿着诗当正经事讲起来，叫有学问的人听了，反笑话



allocate her the same monthly allowance as Yingchun. Dispassionately appraising Xiuyan's character and behaviour, she found her unlike both Lady Xing and her parents, being extremely gentle and lovable. So Xifeng gave her preferential treatment out of pity for her poverty and hard life, whereas Lady Xing paid little attention to her.

Because the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang appreciated Li Wan's good qualities and her admirable conduct since her husband's untimely death, they would not hear of her widowed aunt staying anywhere but in their house. So although most reluctant to impose on them, on the old lady's insistence Li Wan's aunt had to move into Paddy-Sweet Cottage with her two daughters.

Barely had the newcomers settled in than Shi Nai, Marquis of Baoling, was transferred to a provincial governorship. In a few days he would be taking his family to his new post. Not wanting to part with Xiangyun, the Lady Dowager kept her and had her fetched to their house, directing Xifeng go to give her a separate establishment. This Xiangyun resolutely declined, however, and at her insistence they let her move in with Baochai instead.

Things were livelier in Grand View Garden now that thirteen people, counting in Xifeng, lived there. In addition to Li Wan who had senior status there were Yingchun, Tanchun, Xichun, Baochai, Daiyu, Xiangyun, Li Wen, Li Qi, Baoqin and Xiuyan, as well as Xifeng and Baoyu. Apart from the two married women, the other eleven were all about the same age — fifteen, sixteen or seventeen. Some of them had been born in the same month, on the same day or at the same hour, with the result that they themselves often confused their ages. Thus the terms "elder sister," "younger sister," "younger brother" and "elder brother" were bandied about at random.

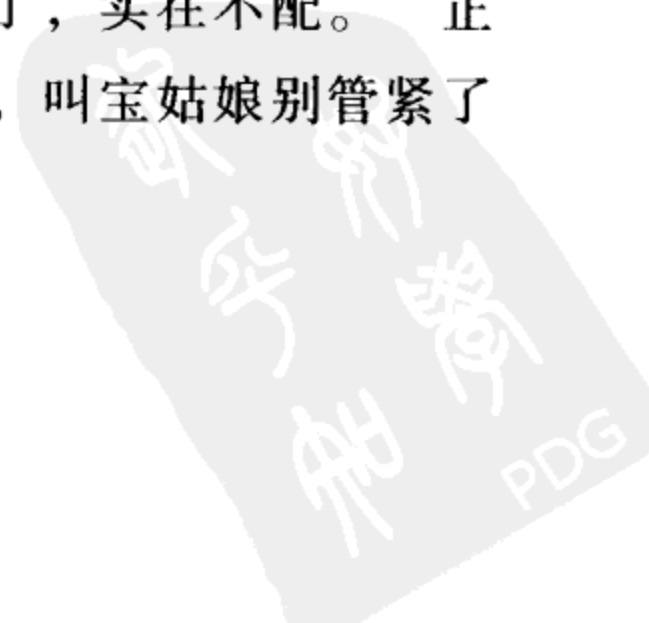
Xiangling's whole heart was nowadays set on writing poetry, but she did not like to trouble Baochai too much. For her, talkative Xiangyun's arrival was a stroke of luck, as the latter was only too glad to be consulted on poetry and would cheerfully hold forth on the subject at all hours of the day and night.

"You're deafening me with this noise," protested Baochai jokingly. "Real scholars would laugh to hear a girl discussing poetry so seriously.



不守本分的。一个香菱没闹清，偏又添了你这么个话口袋，满嘴里说的是什么：怎么是杜工部之沉郁，韦苏州之淡雅，又怎么是温八叉之绮靡，李义山之隐僻。放着现在的两个诗家不知道，提那些死人做什么！”湘云听了，忙笑问：“现在是那两个？好姐姐，你告诉我。”宝钗笑道：“呆香菱之心苦，疯湘云之话多。”二人听了，都大笑起来。

正说着，只见宝琴来了，披着一领斗篷，金翠辉煌，不知何物。宝钗忙问：“这是那里的？”宝琴笑道：“因下雪珠儿，老太太找了这一件给我的。”香菱上来瞧道：“怪道这么好看，原来是孔雀毛织的。”湘云道：“那里是孔雀毛织的，就是野鸭子头上的毛作的。可见是老太太疼你了，这样疼宝玉，也没给他穿。”宝钗道：“真俗语说‘各人有缘法’。我再想不到他这会子来，既来了，又有老太太这么疼他。”湘云道：“你除了在老太太跟前，就在园里来，这两处只管玩笑吃喝。到了太太屋里，若太太在屋里，只管和太太说笑，多坐一回无妨；若太太不在屋里，你可别进去，那屋里人多心坏，都是要害咱们的。”说的宝钗、宝琴、香菱、莺儿等都笑了。宝钗笑道：“说你没心，却又有心；虽然有心，到底嘴太直了。我们这琴儿就有些像你。你天天说要我作亲姐姐，我今儿竟叫你认他作亲妹妹罢了。”湘云又瞅了宝琴半日，笑道：“这一件衣裳也只配他穿，别人穿了，实在不配。”正说着，只见琥珀走来笑道：“老太太说了，叫宝姑娘别管紧了





They'd say you'd forgotten your place. One Xiangling is more than enough without a chatterbox like you joining in and spouting about "Du Fu's profundity, Wei Yingwu's quiet distinction, Wen Tingyun's brilliance and Li Shangyin's recondite obscurity.' All these are dead poets; why harp on them without any mention of our two living poets?"

"Which two living poets? Do tell me, dear sister," begged Xiangyun.

"The hard-working eccentric Xiangling and the garrulous lunatic Xiangyun," answered Baochai.

Xiangling and Xiangyun were laughing uproariously when Baoqin arrived. She was wearing a glittering green and gold cape made of some fabric they did not recognize.

"Where did this come from?" asked Baochai.

"The old lady got it out for me because it was beginning to hail," replied her cousin.

Xiangling examining it more closely remarked, "No wonder it's so pretty; it's made of peacock feathers."

"Not peacock feathers," Xiangyun corrected her. "The feathers from wild ducks' heads. That shows how fond of you the old lady is. Fond as she is of Baoyu, she never gave him this to wear."

"As the proverb says, 'The fortune of each is predestined,'" put in Baochai. "I never thought she'd come here at this time or that, having come, the old lady would take such a fancy to her."

Xiangyun told Baoqin, "There are two places here where you can enjoy yourself just as you please: the old lady's apartments or here in the Garden. When you call on Lady Wang, if she's at home it's all right to stay and chat with her for a while; but if she's out, don't go in. They're a nasty lot there who'd all like to do us in."

Baochai, Baoqin, Xiangling and Yinger all laughed.

Baochai said, "That's good sense from a flibbertigibbet like you, but you still talk too bluntly. Our Baoqin is rather like you. You're always saying you wish I were your sister; but now I think you'd better take my cousin as your younger sister."

With another glance at Baoqin, Xiangyun said, "She's the only one here fit to wear this cape. It's too good for the rest of us."

As they were chatting Hupo came in with the message, "The old lady



琴姑娘。他还小呢，让他爱怎么着就由他怎么着。要什么东西只管要去，别多心。”宝钗忙起身来答应了，又推宝琴笑道：“你也不知是那里来的这段福气！你倒去罢，仔细我们委屈着你。我就不信我那些儿不如你。”说话之间，宝玉、黛玉都进来了，宝钗犹是嘲笑。湘云因笑道：“宝姐姐，你这话虽是玩话，恰有人真心是这样想呢。”琥珀笑道：“真心恼的再没别人，就只是他。”口里说，手指着宝玉。宝钗、湘云都笑道：“他倒不是这样人。”琥珀又笑道：“不是他，就是他。”说着又指着黛玉。湘云便不则声，宝钗忙笑道：“更不是了。我的妹妹和他的妹妹一样，他比我还更喜欢呢，那里还恼？你信云儿混说，他的那嘴有什么实据！”宝玉素习深知黛玉有些小性儿，然尚不知近日黛玉、宝钗之事，正恐贾母疼宝琴他心中不自在，今见湘云如此说了，宝钗又如此答，再审度黛玉声色亦不似往时，居然与宝钗之说相符，便心中闷闷不解。因想：“他两个素日不是这样的，如今看来竟更比别人好了十倍。”一时观林黛玉赶着宝琴叫妹妹，并不提名道姓，直是亲姊妹一般。那宝琴年轻心热，本性聪明，自幼读书识字，今在贾府住了两日，大概人物已知。又见诸姊妹都不是那轻薄脂粉，且又和姐姐皆和气，故也不肯怠慢，其中又见林黛玉是个出类拔萃的，便更与他亲近异常。宝玉看着只是暗暗的纳闷。

一时宝钗姊妹往薛姨妈房内去后，湘云往贾母处来，黛





doesn't want Miss Baochai to be too strict with Miss Baoqin, because she's still very young. Just let her do as she pleases and ask for whatever she wants, and don't interfere."

Baochai rose to give her assent, after which she nudged Baoqin and said mischievously, "I wonder where such good luck as yours comes from. Better leave us now before we start bullying you. I don't see in what way I'm worse than you."

As she was teasing, Baoyu and Daiyu arrived.

"You're only joking, cousin," said Xiangyun, "but some people are really jealous."

"If anyone is, it must be him," said Hupo laughingly, pointing at Baoyu.

"Oh, no, not him," Baochai and Xiangyun retorted in unison.

"If not him, then her." Giggling, Hupo pointed at Daiyu.

Xiangyun kept silent but Baochai cried, "You're even wider of the mark this time. She treats my cousin like her own sister; in fact she's even fonder of her than I am. So how could she be jealous? Don't believe that nonsense Xiangyun talks. You can never take anything she says seriously."

Baoyu knew very well how narrow-minded Daiyu could be, and having as yet no idea of what had recently passed between her and Baochai he was really afraid she might resent the Lady Dowager's partiality for Baoqin. Her reactions to Xiangyun's remark and Baochai's answer were not what they would once have been but tallied with what Baochai had said, and this puzzled him. He thought, "The relationship between these two has changed, they now seem ten times better friends than the others." And then he heard Daiyu address Baoqin as "younger sister" without mentioning her name, as if they were real sisters.

Baoqin was young and warm-hearted, intelligent too, and well-educated from an early age. After a couple of days there she had formed a general impression of the Jia family. And since the girls gave themselves no airs but were all good to her cousin, she tried likewise to make herself agreeable to them. Noticing too that Daiyu stood out from the rest, she treated her even more affectionately. Baoyu observed all this with secret surprise.

Presently Baochai and her cousin rejoined Aunt Xue, Xiangyun went



玉回房歇着。宝玉便找了黛玉来，笑道：“我虽看了《西厢记》，也曾有明白的几句，说了取笑，你曾恼过。如今想来，竟有一句不解的，我念出来你讲讲我听。”黛玉听了，便知有文章，因笑道：“你念出来我听听。”宝玉笑道：“那《闹简》上有一句说得最好，‘是几时孟光接了梁鸿案？’这句最妙。‘孟光接了梁鸿案’这五个字，不过是现成的典，难为他这‘是几时’三个虚字问的有趣。是几时接了？你说说我听听。”黛玉听了，禁不住也笑起来，因笑道：“这原问的好。他也问的好，你也问的好。”宝玉道：“先时你只疑我，如今你也没的说了，我反落了单。”黛玉笑道：“谁知他竟真是个好入，我素日只当他藏奸。”因把说错了酒令起，连送燕窝病中所谈之事，细细告诉了宝玉。宝玉方知缘故，因笑道：“我说呢，正纳闷‘是几时孟光接了梁鸿案’，原来是从‘小孩儿家口没遮拦’上就接了案了。”黛玉因又说起宝琴来，想起自己没有姊妹，不免又哭了。宝玉忙劝道：“你又自寻烦恼了。你瞧瞧，今年比旧年越发瘦了，你还不保养保养。每天好好的，你必是自寻烦恼，哭一会子，才算完了这一天的事。”黛玉拭泪道：“近来我只觉心酸，眼泪却像比旧年少了些似的。心里只管酸痛，眼泪却不多。”宝玉道：“这是你哭惯了心里疑的，岂有眼泪会少的！”





to the Lady Dowager's apartments, and Daiyu returned to her own rooms to rest.

Baoyu followed her there and said with a smile, "Although I've read *The Western Chamber* and annoyed you by quoting some lines from it in fun, a line has occurred to me which I can't understand. I'll recite it now and see if you can explain it."

Sensing something behind this she said archly, "Go on."

"In that scene 'Trouble Over the Billet-doux' there's an excellent line:

Since when did Liang Hong and Meng Guang become so intimate?

Isn't that superb! The reference to Liang Hong and Meng Guang is just an ordinary classical allusion, but turned into a question it's rather neat. So, since when? Can you explain?"

Unable to suppress a laugh she replied, "That's a good question. Well asked in the play, and well asked by you too."

"You wouldn't take my word for it before. Now you two are getting on fine, but I'm left out in the cold."

"I never knew how truly good she was, but used to think she had ulterior motives."

Daiyu proceeded to give him a full account of all Baochai had said to her when she pulled her up for her gaffe in the drinking game, and her gift of bird's-nest during her illness.

This explained matters to Baoyu. "I was wondering since when Liang Hong and Meng Guang started to hit it off so well," he said. "So it all came of her 'being young and talking too freely.'"¹

Then Daiyu spoke of Baoqin, and wept because she had no sister of her own.

"There you go again, upsetting yourself for no reason," scolded Baoyu. "Just see, you're thinner this year than last, yet you won't look after yourself. Every day you work yourself up for no reason at all, and aren't satisfied until you've had a good cry."

Wiping her tears she answered, "I've been feeling sick at heart, but I don't seem to cry as much as before. Though my heart aches, I haven't many tears to shed."

"You just imagine that because you're so used to crying," he ob-



正说着，只见他屋里的小丫头子送了猩猩毡斗篷来，又说：“大奶奶才打发人来说，下了雪，要商议明日请人作诗呢。”一语未了，只见李纨的丫头走来请黛玉，宝玉便邀着黛玉同往稻香村来。黛玉换上掐金挖云红香羊皮小靴，罩了一件大红羽纱面白狐狸皮里鹤氅，束一条青金闪绿双环四合如意绦，头上罩了雪帽。二人一齐踏雪行来，只见众姊妹已都在那边，都是一色大红猩猩毡与羽毛缎斗篷，独李纨穿一件青哆罗呢对襟褂子，薛宝钗是一件莲青斗纹锦上添花洋线番羝丝的鹤氅，邢岫烟仍是家常旧衣，并无有遮雪之衣。一时史湘云来了，穿着贾母与他的一件貂鼠脑袋面子大毛黑灰鼠里子里外发烧大褂子，头上带着一顶挖云鹅黄片金里大红猩猩毡昭君套，又围着大貂鼠的风领。黛玉先笑道：“你们瞧瞧，孙行者来了。他一般的也拿着雪褂子，故意装出一个小小骚达子来。”湘云笑道：“你们瞧我里头打扮的。”一面说，一面脱了褂子。只见他里头穿着一件半旧的靠色三镶领袖秋香色盘金五色绣龙窄袖小袖掩衿银鼠短袄，里面短短的一件水红装缎狐欣褶子，腰里紧紧束着一条蝴蝶结子长穗五色宫绦，脚下也穿着鹿皮小靴，越显的蜂腰猿背，鹤势螂形。众人都笑道：“偏他只爱打扮成个小子的样儿，原比他打扮女儿更俏丽些。”湘云道：“快商议作诗！我听听是谁的东家？”李





jected. "How can anyone's tears dry up?"

At this point one of his maids brought him a scarlet woollen cape and the message, "Madam Zhu just sent to say that, as it's started to snow, she wants to consult you about calling a meeting of the poetry club tomorrow."

While she was still speaking a maid arrived from Li Wan with an invitation for Daiyu, and Baoyu urged her to go with him to Paddy-Sweet Cottage. Having put on red boots lined with lambskin and with a gold-thread cloud-design appliqué, a crimson silk cape lined with white fox-fur, a green and gold plaited belt with double rings, and a snow-hat, she walked with him through the snow to Li Wan's apartments. There they found the other girls assembled, most of them in red capes of wool or satin. Li Wan, however, had on a gown of blue velvet buttoned down the middle, Baochai a pale purple woollen cape embroidered with flower designs, and Xiuyan her ordinary indoor clothes without any outer garments to keep off the snow.

Presently Xiangyun arrived wearing an ermine coat lined with grey squirrel given her by the Lady Dowager, a scarlet woollen hood with a gosling-yellow appliqué of cloud designs and a golden lining, and a big sable collar.

"Look, here comes the Monkey King!" exclaimed Daiyu laughing. "She's got a cape too, yet she's dressed herself up like a saucy little Tartar."

"You should see what I'm wearing underneath," chuckled Xiangyun.

Taking off the coat she revealed a narrow-sleeved, none too new greenish yellow satin tunic lined with white squirrel, with fur-lined cuffs and collar, which was embroidered with dragons in gold thread and coloured silks. Her pink satin breeches were lined with fox fur. A long-tasselled coloured butterfly belt was fastened tightly round her waist. Her boots were of green leather. With her slender build she looked thoroughly neat and dashing.

"She loves dressing up like a boy," they teased. "And that costume suits her better than a girl's."

"Hurry up and discuss the poetry meeting," urged Xiangyun. "I want to know who's to be host."



纨道：“我的主意。想来昨儿的正日已过了，再等正日又太远，可巧又下雪，不如咱们大家凑个社，又给他们接风，又可以作诗。你们意思怎么样？”宝玉先道：“这话很是。只是今日晚了，若到明儿，晴了又无趣。”众人都道：“这雪未必晴，纵晴了，这一夜下的也够赏了。”李纨道：“我这里虽好，又不如芦雪庵好。我已经打发人笼地炕去了，咱们大家拥炉作诗。老太太想来未必高兴，况且咱们小玩意儿，单给凤丫头个信儿就是了。你们每人一两银子就够了，送到我这里来。”指着香菱、宝琴、李纹、李绮、岫烟，“五个人不算，咱们里头二丫头病了不算，四丫头告了假也不算，你们四分子送了来，我包总五六两银子也足够了。”宝钗等一齐应诺。因又拟题限韵，李纨笑道：“我心里自己定了，等到了明日临期，横竖知道。”说毕，大家又闲话了一回，方往贾母处来。本日无话。

到了次日一早，宝玉因心里记挂着这事，一夜没好生得睡，天亮了就爬起来。掀起帐子一看，虽然门窗尚掩，只见窗上光辉夺目，心内踌躇起来，抱怨定是晴了，日光已出。一面忙起来揭起窗屉，从玻璃窗内往外一看，原来不是日光，竟是一夜大雪，下的将有一尺多厚，天上仍是搓棉扯絮一般。宝玉此时欢喜非常，忙唤起人来，盥漱已毕，只穿一件茄色哆罗呢狐皮袄子，罩一件海龙皮小小鹰膀褂子，束了腰，披上玉针蓑，戴了金藤笠，登上沙棠屐，忙忙的往芦雪



"It was my idea," said Li Wan. "We should have met yesterday, and the next date isn't due for quite some time; so I thought, as it happens to have snowed, why shouldn't we get together for a meeting to welcome the newcomers and to write some poems? What do the rest of you think?"

"That's a good idea," responded Baoyu promptly. "But it's too late today, and tomorrow if the weather clears it won't be such fun."

"The snow may not stop," said the others, "Even if it does, this evening's fall is big enough to enjoy."

"There's nothing wrong with this place, but Reed Snow Cottage would be even better," remarked Li Wan. "I've already sent people there to heat the flues under the floor, and we can sit round the fire and write poems. I don't suppose the old lady will be in the mood to join us. And as we're just going there for a romp, we need only let Xifeng know. Each of you can send one tael of silver here, and that ought to be enough." Indicating Xiangling, Baoqin, Li Wen, Li Qi and Xiuyan, she continued, "We'll leave these five newcomers out, as well as Yingchun who's poorly and Xichun who's asked for leave. If you four send your share. I guarantee that five or six taels will be ample."

Baochai and the others readily agreed, then asked what the subject and the rhyme would be.

"I've already decided, but all in good time," replied Li Wan with a smile. "You'll hear what I've chosen tomorrow."

After chatting a little longer they went to see the Lady Dowager. And nothing more of consequence happened that day.

Too excited to sleep soundly, Baoyu got up the next day as soon as it was light to draw the curtains. Although the blinds were down, it was so bright outside that he concluded regretfully that the weather must have cleared and the sun had come out. When he raised the blinds, however, to look through the glass window, he discovered that this brightness was not sunlight. It had been snowing hard all night so that the snow lay over a foot deep, and it was still falling in great flakes like cotton-wool.

In high delight he called for someone to help him with his toilet. Wearing just his purple velvet gown lined with fox-fur and an otter waistcoat



庵来。出了院门，四顾一望，并无二色，远远的是青松翠竹，自己却如装在玻璃盒内一般。于是走至山坡之下，顺着山脚刚转过去，已闻得一阵寒香拂鼻。回头一看，却是妙玉门前栊翠庵中有十数株红梅如胭脂一般，映着雪色，分外显得精神，好不有趣！宝玉便立住，细细的赏玩一回方欲走，只见蜂腰板桥上一个人打着伞走来，原来是李纨打发了请凤姐去的人。

宝玉来至芦雪庵，只见丫鬟、婆子正在那里扫雪开径。原来这芦雪庵盖在傍山临水河滩之上，一带几间，茅檐土壁，槿篱竹牖，推窗便可垂钓，四面都是芦苇掩覆，一条去径逶迤穿芦度苇过去，就是藕香榭的竹桥了。众丫鬟、婆子见他披蓑戴笠而来，却笑道：“我们才说正少个渔翁，如今果然全了。姑娘们吃了饭才来呢，你也太性急了。”宝玉听了，只得回来。刚至沁芳亭，见探春正从秋爽斋出来，围着大红猩猩毡斗篷，戴着观音兜，扶着一个丫头，后面一个妇人打着一把青绸油伞。宝玉知他往贾母处去，遂立在亭边，等他来到，二人一同出园前去。宝琴正在里间屋里梳洗更衣。

一时众姊妹来齐，宝玉只是嚷饿了，连连催饭。好容易等摆上来，头一样菜便是牛乳蒸羊羔。贾母便说：“这是我们有年纪的人的药，没见天日的东西，可惜你们小孩子们吃不



and belt, with a fine coir cape over his shoulders, a rattan hat on his head and pattens on his feet, he set off without delay for Reed Snow Cottage.

Once outside his own gate he gazed round. All was white except for some green pines and emerald bamboos in the distance, so that he had the sensation of being in a crystal bowl. As he rounded the foot of the slope he smelt a cold fragrance and, looking over his shoulder, saw a dozen or so crimson plum trees in Green Lattice Nunnery where Miaoyu lived, their blossom, red as rouge, reflected in the snow and remarkably vivid against it. He stopped there awhile to enjoy the sight. As he was about to continue on his way, on Wasp-Waist Bridge he saw a messenger with an umbrella sent by Li Wan to invite Xifeng over.

Outside Reed Snow Cottage, maids were sweeping the snow from the path. This cottage was built on the bank of a stream by a hill. Its adobe rooms with their thatched roofs and bamboo windows were surrounded by a wattle-fence, and it was possible to fish through the windows. All around grew clumps of reeds, through which a path meandered to the bamboo bridge of Lotus Fragrance Anchorage.

When the maids saw Baoyu approaching in his rattan hat and coir cape, they burst out laughing.

“We were just saying we needed a fisherman, and here you are to fill the bill,” they cried. “The young ladies won’t be coming till after breakfast. You’re too impatient.”

Baoyu had to go back then, and he had just reached Seeping Fragrance Pavilion when he saw Tanchun in a hooded scarlet woollen cape emerging from Autumn Freshness Studio leaning on the arm of a maid, followed by a serving-woman with a black silk umbrella. Guessing that she was on her way to see their grandmother, he waited for her by the pavilion and they left the Garden together.

In the Lady Dowager’s inner room, Baoqin was doing her hair and changing her clothes. Soon all the girls arrived and Baoyu set up a clamour, urging them to hurry breakfast because he was hungry. When finally the tables were laid, however, the first dish was a lamb embryo steamed in milk.

“This is a tonic for us old people,” said the Lady Dowager. “It’s a creature that’s never seen the sky and the sun, so I’m afraid you chil-



得。今儿另外有新鲜鹿肉，你们等着吃罢。”众人答应了。宝玉却等不得，只拿茶泡了一碗饭，就着野鸡瓜子忙忙的咽完了。贾母道：“我知道你们今儿又有事情，连饭也不顾吃了。”便叫：“留着鹿肉与他晚上吃”，凤姐忙说：“还有呢”，方才罢了。史湘云便悄和宝玉计较道：“有新鲜鹿肉，不如咱们要一块，自己拿了园里弄着，又玩又吃。”宝玉听了，巴不得一声儿，便真和凤姐要了一块，命婆子送入园中去。

一时大家散后，进园齐往芦雪庵来，听李纨出题限韵，独不见湘云、宝玉二人。黛玉道：“他两个再到不了一处，若到一处，生出多少事故来。这会子，一定算计那块鹿肉呢。”正说着，只见李婶也走来看热闹，因问李纨道：“怎么一个带玉的哥儿和那一个挂金麒麟的姐儿，那样干净清秀，又不少吃的，他两个在那里商议着要吃生肉呢，说的有来有去的。我只不信肉也生吃的。”众人听了，都笑道：“了不得了，快拿了他两个来。”黛玉笑道：“这可是云丫头闹的，我的卦再不错。”

李纨等忙出来找着他两个，说道：“你们两个要吃生的，我送你们到老太太那里去吃。那怕吃一只生鹿，撑病了不与我相干。这么大雪，怪冷的，替我作祸呢。”宝玉忙笑道：“没有的事，我们烧着吃呢。”李纨道：“这还罢了。”只见





dren mustn't eat it. There's some fresh venison which you can have presently."

They all agreed to this except Baoyu, who was too impatient to wait. He steeped a bowl of rice in hot tea, added some diced pheasant and hastily swallowed this down.

"I know you're busy again today and can't be bothered to eat," said his grandmother. "Keep the venison for him for this evening," she told the maids.

Only when Xifeng assured her that there was plenty, did she say no more about saving it for him.

Xiangyun whispered to Baoyu, "If there's fresh venison, let's ask for some to cook ourselves in the Garden. That would be fun."

Baoyu promptly passed on this request to Xifeng, who ordered a serving-woman to take some venison to the Garden.

Presently they left the Lady Dowager and trooped back to the Garden and to Reed Snow Cottage to hear what subject and rhyme Li Wan had chosen. But at this point Xiangyun and Baoyu disappeared.

"It's no good when those two get together," remarked Daiyu. "Whenever that happens, there's trouble. They must have slipped off because they have designs on that venison."

Li Wan's aunt came in now to watch the fun. She told her niece, "That boy with the jade and the girl with the golden unicorn are fine handsome young people who must have plenty to eat, but there they are planning to eat raw meat — and talking as if they meant it. I can't believe it!"

The young people laughed and exclaimed, "What an idea! Somebody fetch them, quick!"

"This is all Xiangyun's doing," said Daiyu. "What did I tell you?"

Li Wan hurried out to find the two of them. "If you want to eat raw meat, I'll take you to the old lady's place," she said. "I shan't care then if you eat a whole deer and fall ill — it won't be my responsibility. Look how it's snowing and how cold it is. Don't go making trouble for me."

"We're not eating it raw," countered Baoyu. "We're going to grill it."



老婆子们拿了铁炉、铁叉、铁丝绦来，李纨道：“仔细割了手，可不许哭！”说着，同探春进去了。

凤姐打发平儿来回复不能来，为发放年例正忙。湘云见了平儿，那里肯放。平儿也是个好玩的，素日跟着凤姐无所不至，见如此有趣，乐得玩笑，因而褪去手上的镯子，三个人围着火，便要先烧三块吃。那边宝钗、黛玉平素看惯了，不以为异，宝琴等及李婶深为罕事。探春与李纨等已议定了题韵。探春笑道：“你闻闻，香气这里都闻见了，我也吃去。”说着，也找了他们来。李纨也随来说：“客已齐了，你们还没吃够？”湘云一面吃，一面说道：“我吃这个方爱吃酒，吃了酒才有诗。若不是这鹿肉，今儿断不能作诗。”说着，只见宝琴披着凫靛裘，站在那里笑，湘云笑道：“傻子，过来尝尝。”宝琴笑说：“怪脏的。”宝钗道：“你尝尝去，吃的甚有味。林姐姐弱，吃了不消化，不然他也爱吃。”宝琴听了，便过去吃了一块，觉得好吃，便也吃起来。

一时凤姐打发小丫头来叫平儿。平儿说：“史大姑娘拉着我呢，你先去罢。”小丫头听说去了。一时只见凤姐也披了斗篷走来，笑道：“吃这样好东西，也不告诉我！”说着也凑在一处吃起来。黛玉笑道：“那里找这一群花子去！罢了，罢了，今日芦雪庵遭劫，生生被云丫头作践了。我为芦雪庵一





"That's all right then," said Li Wan, eyeing the barbecue and spits which some old servants had brought. "Be careful now, and don't cry if you cut your fingers!" With that warning she went in again with Tanchun.

Now Pinger arrived, sent by Xifeng to explain that she was unable to come as she was busy distributing the New Year allowances. Xiangyun insisted that Pinger must stay with them, and the maid was only too willing, for she was naturally playful and always up to endless pranks with her mistress. Seeing the fun they were having, she took off her bracelets to join Baoyu and Xiangyun by the barbecue, and suggested grilling three pieces first to try. Baochai and Daiyu, being used to a barbecue, were not surprised by this; but to Baoqin and Li Wan's aunt it seemed very strange.

By now, Li Wan and Tanchun had fixed the subject and rhyme.

Tanchun said to Li Wan, "Just smell that venison! If it smells so good even from here, I must try some too."

She joined the party outside and Li Wan followed.

"All your guests are here," she protested. "Won't you stop eating?"

Xiangyun, still munching, replied, "It's only after eating this that I feel like drinking, and I need wine to give me inspiration. Without this venison I couldn't possibly write a poem today." Her eye fell on Baoqin in her wild duck cape, who was standing there smiling at them. "Come here, silly!" she cried. "Come and try some."

"How dirty it looks," laughed Baoqin.

"Go and taste some," urged Baochai. "It's really delicious. Cousin Daiyu's so delicate, it would give her indigestion. If it weren't for that, she'd like some too."

Baoqin went over then to try a morsel, and finding it good she helped herself to more.

Presently a young maid came from Xifeng to fetch Pinger.

"Miss Xiangyun won't let me go. You go back first," Pinger told her.

Not long after the maid had left, Xifeng came in person, a cape over her shoulders.

"So you have such a treat without telling me!" she scolded, joining the group around the barbecue.

"Where did all these beggars come from?" cried Daiyu. "Well, well! Reed Snow Cottage is out of luck today, all messed up by Xiangyun. My



哭！”湘云笑道：“你知道什么！‘是真名士自风流’，你们都是假清高，最可厌的。我们这会子腥膻大吃大嚼，回来却是锦心绣口。”宝钗笑道：“你回来若作不好了，把那鹿肉掏了出来，就把这雪压的芦苇子搯上些，以完此劫。”

说着，吃毕，洗漱了一回。平儿带镯子时却少了一个，左右前后乱找了一番，踪迹全无。众人都诧异，凤姐笑道：“我知道这镯子去向。你们只管作诗去，我们也不用找，只管前头去，不出三日保管就有了。”说着又问：“你们今儿作什么诗？老太太说了，离年又近了，正月里还该作些灯谜儿大家玩笑。”众人听了，都笑道：“可是倒忘了。如今赶着作几个好的，预备着正月里玩。”说着，一齐来至地炕屋里，只见杯盘果菜俱已摆齐，墙上已贴出诗题韵脚、格式来了。宝玉、湘云二人忙看时，只见题目是“即景联句，五言排律一首，限二‘萧’韵。”后面尚未列次序。李纨道：“我不大会作诗，我只起三句罢，然后谁先得了谁先联。”宝钗道：“到底分个次序的好。”要知端的，下回分解。





heart bleeds for it.”

“A lot you know,” retorted Xiangyun. “A real scholar can afford to be eccentric. You pretend to be so refined and pure, it’s disgusting! Stuffing ourselves now with this venison will inspire us presently to produce some fine lines.”

“If you don’t make good that boast,” threatened Baochai, “you’ll have to pay the penalty by bringing up that meat and swallowing some of those reeds under the snow!”

When they had finished eating, they washed their hands and rinsed their mouths.

Pinger, looking for her bracelets, found one missing. She searched everywhere but there was no trace of it, to everyone’s surprise.

“I know where it’s gone,” said Xifeng with a smile. “There’s no need to look for it now. Just get on with your poems. I guarantee you’ll get it back within three days.” Then she asked, “What are you writing today? The old lady says it will soon be New Year, and we should make some lantern riddles to amuse ourselves in the first month.”

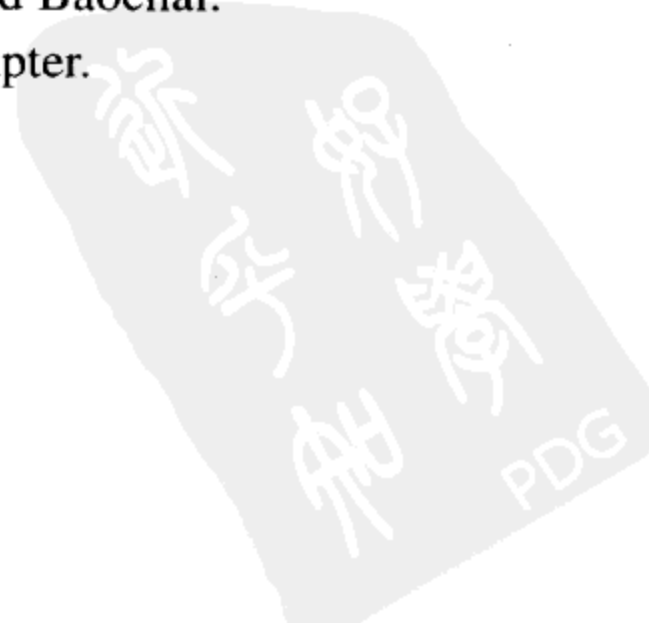
“That’s right,” they agreed. “We’d forgotten. We must hurry up and make up a few good ones to guess in the first month.”

They went into the room with the heated floor, where refreshments and drinks were ready. Pasted on the wall was the subject on which they were to write, and the rhyme and metre. Baochai and Xiangyun, going over to have a look, saw that they were to compose a collective poem on the scenery in five-character lines using rhymes from the *xiao* group of rhymes. The order in which to write was not stipulated.

Li Wan proposed, “As I’m a poor hand at versifying, let me just do the first three lines. Whoever’s quickest can go on from there.”

“We should arrange some sort of order,” protested Baochai.

If you want to know the upshot, read the next chapter.





第五十回

芦雪庵争联即景诗 暖香坞雅制春灯谜

话说薛宝钗道：“到底分个次序，让我写出来。”说着，便令众人拈阄为序。起首恰是李氏，然后按次各各开出。凤姐道：“既是这样说，我也说一句在上头。”众人都笑说：“更妙了！”宝钗便将稻香老农之上补了个“凤”字，李纨又将题目讲与他听。凤姐想了半日，笑道：“你们可别笑话，我只有一句粗话，下剩的我就知道了。”众人都笑道：“越是粗话越好，你说了就只管干正经事去罢。”凤姐笑道：“我想下雪必刮北风。昨夜听见一夜的北风，我有了一句，就是‘一夜北风紧’，可使得？”众人听了，都相视笑道：“这句虽粗，不见底下的，这正是会作诗的起法。不但好，而且留了多少地步与后人。就是这句为首，稻香老农快写上续下去。”凤姐和李婶、平儿又吃了两杯酒，各自去了。这里李纨便写了：

一夜北风紧，





Chapter 50

In Reed Snow Cottage Girls Vie in Composing a Collective Poem In Warm Scented Arbour Fine Lantern Riddles Are Made

“We must have some sort of order. Let me write out the numbers,” proposed Baochai.

She made them draw lots. And Li Wan, as it happened, drew first place.

“If that’s how it is, I’ll give you the first line,” volunteered Xifeng.

“Better still,” responded the others laughingly.

Baochai put down “Phoenix” before “Old Peasant of Sweet Paddy,” while Li Wan explained the subject to Xifeng. The latter thought for a while.

“You mustn’t laugh!” she warned. “I have only one line — rather a crude one, too — but I wouldn’t know how to go on from there.”

“The cruder the better,” they replied. “Let’s hear it, and then you can go off and attend to your own business.”

“I suppose when it snows the north wind must blow,” said Xifeng. “At any rate I heard it all last night. So my line is:

The north wind blew hard all night.

Will that do?”

The others exchanged smiling glances.

“It may be crude but it doesn’t show what is to follow, and that’s the proper way to start a poem,” was their verdict. “So besides being good, it leaves plenty of scope for the others. Let’s start with this line. Hurry up and write it down, Old Peasant of Sweet Paddy, then complete the couplet and begin a new one.”

Xifeng, Aunt Li and Pinger drank a few more cups of wine with them, then went off on their own business. Meanwhile Li Wan wrote:

Xifeng:

The north wind blew hard all night



自己联道：

开门雪尚飘。人泥怜洁白，

香菱道：

匝地惜琼瑶。有意荣枯草，

探春道：

无心饰萎苕。价高村酿熟，

李绮道：

年稔府梁饶。葭动灰飞管，

李纹道：

阳回斗转杓。寒山已失翠，

岫烟道：

冻浦不闻潮。易挂疏枝柳，

湘云道：

难堆破叶蕉。麝煤融宝鼎，

宝琴道：

绮袖笼金貂。光夺窗前镜，

黛玉道：

香粘壁上椒。斜风仍故故，

宝玉道：

清梦转聊聊。何处梅花笛？

宝钗道：

谁家碧玉箫？鳌愁坤轴陷，

李纨笑道：“我替你们看热酒去罢。”宝钗命宝琴续联，只见





After this she went on to write down the following lines composed by herself and others:

Li Wan:

The door opens on a flurry of snow.
Pity the pure white mingling with the mud....

Xiangling:

Jade scattered on the earth below.
Fain would it revive the dead grass

Tanchun:

But no veil on withered plants throw.
The village brew, matured, is costly now

Li Qi:

With a good crop the granaries overflow.
Ash flying from the pipe shows the change of season

Li Wen:

The Dipper turns and longer the nights grow.
Cold hills have lost their vivid green

Xiuyan:

In frozen creeks no tide is heard to flow.
The snow hangs lightly on sparse willow boughs

Xiangyun:

But slides off tattered plantain leaves drooped low.
Musk-ink is melted in the precious tripod

Baoqin:

Rich sables hide the silken sleeves below.
Brightness the mirror by the window catches

Daiyu:

Scent clings to walls with pepper dye aglow.
A side wind blows and blows incessantly

Baoyu:

While the clear dream lingers slow.
Whence comes the sound of the plum-blossom flute?

Baochai:

Who is it that on green jade pipe doth blow?
The giant turtle fears the earth may sink

Li Wan interposed at this point, "I'll go and see about getting some



湘云站起来道：

龙斗阵云销。野岸回孤棹，

宝琴也站起道：

吟鞭指灞桥。赐裘怜抚戍，

湘云那里肯让人，且别人也不如他敏捷，都看他扬眉挺身的说道：

加絮念征徭。坳垤审夷险，

宝钗连声赞好，也便联道：

林枝怕动摇。皑皑轻趁步，

黛玉忙联道：

翦翦舞随腰。煮芋成新赏，

一面说，一面推宝玉，命他联。宝玉正看宝钗、宝琴、黛玉三人共战湘云，十分有趣，那里还顾得联诗，今见黛玉推他，方联道：

撒盐是旧谣。苇蓑犹泊钓，

湘云笑道：“你快下去，你不中用，倒耽搁了我。”只听得宝琴联道：

林斧不闻樵。伏象千峰凸，





wine heated for you.”

Baochai urged Baoqin to go on; but before she could do so, Xiangyun stood up boisterously.

Xiangyun:

Dragons fight, the cloud-wrack billows to and fro.

A lone boat puts back to the lonely shore....

Baoqin, standing up too, continued:

Baoqin:

A whip points at the bridge, the poet must go.

Fur coats are issued to the garrison....

Xiangyun could never bear to take second place. And being more quick-witted than the others, arching her eyebrows now she straightened up and declaimed:

Xiangyun:

Cotton-padded clothes to conscripts in the snow.

Hard the going through gullies and hills....

“Well done!” cried Baochai, and continued:

Baochai:

They must not shake the branches hanging low.

Soft and gleaming swirls the snow....

Daiyu cut in:

Daiyu:

In swaying dance, now swift, now slow.

Fresh taros are steamed for a treat....

She nudged Baoyu, but he was too intent on watching Baoqin, Baochai and Daiyu compete against Xiangyun to be bothered to join in himself. Prompted by Daiyu, however, he improvised:

Baoyu:

To “scattered salt” the song compares the snow.

The boatman is fishing still in his coir cape....

“You’re no good!” cried Xiangyun with a laugh. “Keep out of this. You’re only holding us up.”

Baoqin took over.

Baoqin:

Silent the woodman’s axe, unheard each blow.

Hill after hill like crouching elephants....



湘云忙联道：

盘蛇一径遥。花缘经冷聚，
宝钗与众人又忙赞好。探春联道：

色岂畏霜凋。深院惊寒雀，
湘云正渴了，忙忙的吃茶，已被岫烟联道：

空山泣老鸱。阶墀随上下，
湘云忙丢下茶杯，忙联道：

池水任浮漂。照耀临清晓，
黛玉联道：

缤纷入永宵。诚忘三尺冷，
湘云忙笑联道：

瑞释九重焦。僵卧谁相问，
宝琴也忙笑联道：

狂游客喜招。天机断锦带，
湘云又忙道：

海市失鲛绡。
林黛玉不容他道出，接着便道：

寂寞对台榭，
湘云忙联道：



Xiangyun struck in:

Xiangyun:

A single snake-like path winds to and fro.

Congeaed by cold these flowers of ice....

As Baochai and the others exclaimed in admiration, Tanchun went on:

Tanchun:

Beauty no frost can blight or overthrow.

In the deep courtyard chilly sparrows take fright....

As Xiangyun was thirstily gulping down some tea, Xiuyan took this chance to join in.

Xiuyan:

In lonely hills an old owl hoots its woe.

Snow dances up and down the courtyard steps....

Xiangyun hastily put down her cup to interject:

Xiangyun:

Drifts at will on the lake below.

Glittering bright in dawn's clear light....

Daiyu:

Setting the whole night aglow.

Truly the cold of three feet of snow is forgotten....

Xiangyun hastily continued:

Xiangyun:

Its promise clears the sovereign's gloomy brow.

Who cares for the one lying frozen....

Baoqin cut in gleefully:

Baoqin:

While merry-makers, feasting, toast the snow.

A white silk belt from the heavenly loom is broken....

Xiangyun:

Whiter than mermaid's silk from sea-market below,

Before she could start a new couplet, Daiyu put in:

Daiyu:

Deserted pools are locked in loneliness....

Xiangyun swiftly rounded this off.





清贫怀箪瓢。

宝琴也不容情，也忙道：

烹茶冰渐沸，

湘云见这般，自为得趣，又是笑，又忙联道：

煮酒叶难烧。

黛玉也笑道：

没帚山僧扫，

宝琴也笑道：

埋琴稚子挑。

湘云笑弯了腰，忙念了一句，众人问：“到底说的是什么？”

湘云喊道：

石楼闲睡鹤，

黛玉笑的握着胸口，高声嚷道：

锦罽暖亲猫。

宝琴也忙笑道：

月窟翻银浪，

湘云忙联道：

霞城隐赤标。

黛玉忙笑道：

沁梅香可嚼，

宝钗笑着称好，也忙联道：

淋竹醉堪调。

宝琴也忙道：

或湿鸳鸯带，

湘云忙联道：

犹凝翡翠翘。





Xiangyun:

Back to his humble lodge the poor scholar would go.

Again Baoqin cut in:

Baoqin:

The ice to make our tea is slow to boil

Xiangyun who was having great fun, laughed and went on:

Xiangyun:

The leaves to warm the wine will hardly glow.

With a giggle Daiyu continued:

Daiyu:

Snow covers the broom of the monk up on the hill....

Baoqin gaily capped this:

Baoqin:

It hides the boy's lyre below.

Xiangyun, doubled up with mirth, now babbled something so quickly that the others had to ask her to repeat it. She gasped.

Xiangyun:

On the stone tower sleeps an idle crane....

Hugging herself to stop her sides from splitting, Daiyu fairly shouted:

Daiyu:

And silken quilts are warm, the fond cats know....

They rattled off the next lines between fits of laughter.

Baoqin:

From the moon cave roll silver waves....

Xiangyun:

Cloud ramparts hide the crimson glow....

Daiyu:

One can almost taste the scent of wet plum-blossom....

"A fine line!" exclaimed Baochai, and capped it:

Baochai:

And from the dripping bamboos sweet melodies flow.

Baoqin:

Snow-flakes wet the belt with a design of love-birds....

Xiangyun:

Or congeal on emerald hairpins in a row....





黛玉又忙道：

无风仍脉脉，

宝琴也忙笑联道：

不雨亦潇潇。

湘云伏着已笑软了。众人看他三人对抢，也顾不得作诗，看着也只是笑。黛玉还推他往下联，又道：“你也有才尽力穷之时，我听听，还有什么舌根嚼了！”湘云只伏在宝钗怀里，笑个不住。宝钗推他起来，道：“你有本事，把‘二萧’的韵全用完了，我才服你。”湘云起身笑道：“我也不是作诗，竟是抢命了。”众人笑道：“倒是你自己说罢。”探春早已料定没有自己联的分了，便命写出来，因说：“还没收住呢。”李纨听了，接过来便联道：

欲志今朝乐，

李纨收了一句道：

凭诗祝舜尧。

李纨道：“够了，够了。虽没作完了韵，腾挪的字若生扭用了，倒不好了。”说着，大家来细细评论一回，独湘云的多，都笑道：“这都是那块鹿肉的功劳。”

李纨笑道：“逐句评去都还一气，只是宝玉又落了第了。”宝玉笑道：“我原不会联句，只好担待我罢。”李纨笑道：“也没有社社担待你的。又说韵险了，又整误了，又不会





Daiyu:

They hang in the air although there is no wind....

Baoqin:

And though there is no rain still hiss down slow....

Xiangyun had collapsed by now in a fit of laughter. The rest of the party had long since opted out to enjoy watching these three rivals compete. Daiyu urged Xiangyun to go on.

“So even *you* can run out of ideas,” she teased. “Let me hear if you can’t rattle on a bit longer.”

Xiangyun, lying in Baochai’s lap, was shaking with laughter.

Baochai made her sit up, declaring, “If you can use all the rhymes in this category, then I’ll admit you’ve won.”

“Call this versifying?” she spluttered, getting up. “I’m fighting for my life!”

“Whose fault is that?” they retorted laughingly.

Tanchun, having decided earlier on that she could not compete, had been writing down their lines. She told them now, “This still requires an ending.”

Li Wen took over and added:

Li Wen:

These lines record this happy day....

Li Qi added the concluding line:

Li Qi:

And praise on this sagacious reign bestow.

“That’s enough,” said Li Wan. “Even if we haven’t used up all the rhymes, to do that would sound forced and awkward.”

After a careful reckoning they found that Xiangyun had made up the most lines.

“The credit should go to that venison!” they quipped.

“It hangs together quite well when you read it through,” observed Li Wan. “Only Baoyu flunked again.”

“I’m no good at collective poems,” he rejoined. “You’ll just have to make allowances for me.”

“We can’t make allowances every time,” she retorted. “You complain either that the rhyme’s too difficult, the judge too unfair, or that



联句了，今日必罚你。我才看见栊翠庵的红梅有趣，我要折一枝来插瓶。可厌妙玉为人，我不理他。如今罚你去折一枝来。”众人都道这罚的又雅又有趣。宝玉也乐为，答应着便要走，湘云、黛玉一齐说道：“外头冷得很，你且喝一杯热酒再去。”湘云早执起壶来，黛玉递了一个大杯，满斟了一杯，湘云笑道：“你吃了我们这杯酒，你要取不来，加倍罚你。”宝玉忙吃了酒，冒雪而去。李纨命人好生跟着，黛玉忙拦说：“不必，有了人反不得了。”李纨点头说：“是。”一面命丫鬟将一个美女簪肩瓶拿来，贮了水，准备插梅。因又笑道：“回来该咏红梅了。”湘云忙道：“我先作一首。”宝钗忙道：“今儿断乎不容你再作了。你都抢了去，别人都闲着，也没趣。回来还罚宝玉，他说不会联句，如今就叫他自己作去。”黛玉笑道：“这话很是。我还有个主意，方才联句不够，莫若拣那联的少的人作红梅。”宝钗笑道：“这话是极。方才邢、李三位屈才，且又是客。琴儿和颦儿、云儿三个人也抢了许多，我们一概都别作，只让他三个作才是。”李纨因说：“绮儿也不大会作，还是让琴妹妹作罢。”宝钗只得依允，又道：“就用‘红梅花’三个字作韵，每人一首七言律。



you're no good at collective poems. Today you'll have to pay the penalty. I was struck just now by the red plum-blossom in Green Lattice Nunnery, and wanted to pick a spray for this vase; but because I can't stand Miaoyu's ways, I never have anything to do with her. Now we'll punish you by sending you to fetch a spray."

"A good penalty, refined and amusing," was the general verdict.

Baoyu agreed readily. He was starting out when Xiangyun and Daiyu both spoke up together.

"It's very cold outside. Have some hot wine before you go."

Xiangyun picked up the wine pot and Daiyu filled a large goblet.

"After drinking our wine, if you don't carry out your mission we'll redouble your punishment," Xiangyun threatened him.

Having tossed off the wine he went out into the snow. Li Wan told some servants to accompany him, but Daiyu stopped them.

"There's no need," she said. "If other people go with him, he won't get it."

"Yes, you're right." Li Wan nodded and ordered a maid to fetch a tall vase with a narrow neck and sloping shoulders, and fill it with water in readiness. "Presently we should write some poems on red plum-blossom," she suggested.

Xiangyun promptly volunteered to do the first one.

"Oh, no, you don't," laughed Baochai. "You've done quite enough for today. It's no fun if you hog everything and leave the rest of us idle. Baoyu has got to be punished when he comes back. He says he's no good at collective couplets. All right then, we'll make him write a poem on his own."

"Quite right," agreed Daiyu. "And I've another idea. Just now we didn't make enough couplets. We should get those who contributed least to write on red plum-blossom."

"That's an excellent idea," approved Baochai. "Xiuyan, Li Wen and Li Qi had no chance to shine although they are, after all, our guests, because Baoqin, Daiyu and Xiangyun were so greedy. This time, the rest of us should keep out of it and let just the three of them write."

"Qi's not too good at poetry," said Li Wan. "Let Baoqin take her place."

Baochai had to accept this. She added, "Let's choose the three char-



邢大妹妹作‘红’字，李大妹妹作‘梅’字，琴儿作‘花’字。”李纨道：“饶过宝玉去，我不依。”湘云忙道：“有个好题目叫他作。”众人问是何题？湘云道：“命他就作‘访妙玉乞红梅’，岂不有趣？”众人听了，都说有趣。

一语未了，只见宝玉笑嘻嘻背了一枝红梅进来，众丫鬟忙已接过，插入瓶中。众人都笑称谢，宝玉笑道：“你们赏玩罢，也不知费了我多少精神呢。”说着，探春又递过一杯暖酒来，众丫鬟上来接了蓑笠掸雪。各人房中丫鬟都添送衣服来。袭人也遣人送了半旧的狐腋褂来。李纨命人将那蒸的大芋头盛了一盘，又将朱橘、黄橙、橄榄等物盛了两盘，命人带与袭人吃去。湘云且告诉宝玉方才的诗题，又催宝玉快作，宝玉道：“好姐姐妹妹，让我自己用韵罢。别限韵了。”众人都说：“随你作去罢。”

一面说一面大家看梅花。原来这枝梅花只有二尺来高，旁有一横枝纵横而出，约有五六尺长，其间小枝分歧，或如蟠螭，或如僵蚓，或孤削如笔，或密聚如林，花吐胭脂，香欺兰蕙，各各称赏。谁知邢岫烟、李纹、薛宝琴三人都已吟成，各自写了出来。众人便依“红梅花”三字之序看去，写道是：

咏红梅花 得“红”字 邢岫烟

桃未芳菲杏未红，冲寒先已笑东风。

魂飞庾岭春难辨，霞隔罗浮梦未通。





acters 'red plum flower' as rhymes. Each of them can write a heptasyllabic regulated verse, Xiuyan using the rhyme 'red,' Wen 'plum' and Baoqin 'flower.'"

"That's all very well," said Li Wan. "But we mustn't let Baoyu off."

"I've another good subject for him," put in Xiangyun quickly. Asked what it was, she replied, "'Calling on Miaoyu to Beg for Red Plum-Blossom.' Wouldn't that be fun?"

They were voicing their approval when Baoyu came back, beaming, holding a branch of red blossom. The maids at once took it and put it in the vase, while all the others expressed their appreciation.

"Go ahead and enjoy it," said Baoyu. "You don't know the trouble it cost me."

Tanchun handed him another cup of hot wine, and maids came to take his cape and hat and shake off the snow. Maids from different apartments had brought extra clothing for all their young mistresses, and Xiren had sent Baoyu an old jacket lined with fox-fur. Li Wan ordered a dish of steamed taros and two plates of tangerines, oranges and olives to be sent back to Xiren, while Xiangyun told Baoyu the subject just chosen for him and urged him to hurry up and write.

"Do let me choose my own rhymes, good cousins," he begged. "Don't set the rhymes for me."

The rest agreed, "All right. Do as you like."

Meanwhile they were looking at the plum-blossom bough. Only about two feet in height with a side branch nearly five or six feet long, it had branchlets coiling like dragons or worms, others pointed like brushes, or densely twigged as a forest; and the petals, red as rouge, were fragrant as orchids. As the others were admiring this, Xiuyan, Li Wen and Baoqin composed and wrote out their poems. The rest read them in the order of their rhymes as follows:

RED PLUM-BLOSSOM

Rhyming "red"

Braving the cold it blossoms for the east wind
Ere peach trees bloom or apricots turn red;
In a dream, rosy clouds bar the way to Mount Luofu,
But to Yuling's eternal spring my soul has fled.



绿萼添妆融宝炬，缟仙扶醉跨残虹。
看来岂是寻常色，浓淡由他冰雪中。

咏红梅花 得“梅”字 李 纹
白梅懒赋赋红梅，逞艳先迎醉眼开。
冻脸有痕皆是血，酸心无限亦成灰。
误吞丹药移真骨，偷下瑶池脱旧胎。
江北江南春灿烂，寄言蜂蝶漫疑猜。

咏红梅花 得“花”字 薛宝琴
疏是枝条艳是花，春妆儿女竞奢华。
闲庭曲槛无余雪，流水空山有落霞。
幽梦冷随红袖笛，游仙香泛绛河槎。
前身定是瑶台种，无复相疑色相差。

众人看了，都笑称赏了一回，又指末一首说更好。宝玉见宝琴年纪最小，才又敏捷，深为奇异。黛玉、湘云二人斟了一小杯酒，齐贺宝琴，宝钗笑道：“三首各有好处。你们两个天天捉弄厌了我，如今又捉弄他来了。”李纨又问宝玉：“你可有了？”宝玉忙道：“有倒有了，才一看见那三首，又怕忘了，等我再想一想。”湘云听了，便拿了一支铜火箸击着手



Green sepals, rouged, blend into brilliant torches,
Tipsy snow-sprites over shattered rainbows have sped;
We can see this is no ordinary beauty
That in the snow and ice blooms pink and red.

Xing Xiuyan

Rhyming "plum"

What loveliness assails my drunken eyes?
This not the white I sing, but the red plum.
Its frozen cheeks are stained with tears of blood,
Its heart though free from misery is numb.
Transformed by an elixir wrongly swallowed,
Down it slips, its old guise cast off, from Elysium.
Magnificent the spring north and south of the Yangtze;
Bees and butterflies who doubt this — do not come!

Li Wen

Rhyming "flower"

Like rich girls in spring finery competing,
Stark boughs burst into flower.
Still courts, winding balustrades, with no white plum;
Stream and lonely hills glow with sunset at this hour.
Like fairy bark on red stream floating free,
Fluting drifts chill in the dreaming maiden's bower.
It must have sprung from seeds in paradise;
Past doubting this, though changed in form the flower.

Xue Baoqin

They praised all these poems delightedly pointing out that the last was the best. Baoyu was amazed that Baoqin, although the youngest, had the quickest wit; and Daiyu and Xiangyun poured a small cup of wine to congratulate her.

"All three poems have their merits," said Baochai. "You two have grown tired of making fun of *me* every day, so now you're picking on *her*."

Li Wan asked Baoyu, "Are you ready?"

"I did concoct something," he replied. "But their poems so overawed me that I've forgotten it. Let me think again."

Xiangyun struck her hand-stove with a copper poker. "I'm starting



炉，说道：“我击鼓了。若鼓绝不成，又要罚的。”宝玉笑道：“我已有了。”黛玉提起笔来，说道：“你念，我写。”湘云便击了一下，笑道：“一鼓绝。”宝玉笑道：“有了，你写吧。”众人听他念道：

酒未开樽句未裁，

黛玉写了，摇头笑道：“起的平平。”湘云又道“快着！”宝玉笑道：

寻春问腊到蓬莱。

黛玉、湘云都点头笑道：“有些意思了。”宝玉又道：

不求大士瓶中露，为乞嫦娥槛外梅。

黛玉写了，又摇头道：“巧凑而已。”湘云忙催二鼓，宝玉又笑道：

人世冷挑红雪去，离尘香割紫云来。

槎枒谁惜诗肩瘦，衣上犹沾佛院苔。

黛玉写毕，大家才评论时，只见几个丫鬟跑进来回道：“老太太来了。”众人忙迎出来。大家又笑道：“怎么这样高兴！”说着，远远见贾母围着大斗篷，带着灰鼠暖兜，坐着小竹轿，打着青绸油伞，鸳鸯琥珀等五六个丫鬟，每人都是打着伞，众人拥轿而来。李纨等忙往上迎，贾母命人止住说：“只





to 'beat the drum,'" she warned. "If you're not ready by the time I stop, you'll have to pay another forfeit."

"I'm ready," he answered.

"Dictate it to me." Daiyu picked up a brush.

Xiangyun struck the hand-stove, crying, "One!"

"All right," agreed Baoyu. "Take this down." He declaimed:

"Before the drinking starts, ere poems are made"

Daiyu shook her head as she wrote. "A nondescript opening."

"Hurry up!" ordered Xiangyun.

He continued:

"He goes to the Fairy Isles in search of spring, asking a boon."

Daiyu and Xiangyun nodded. "That's more like it."

He proceeded:

"Not in quest of dew from the Bodhisattva's *kundi*,
But to beg a plum branch by the fence of the Goddess of
the Moon."

Once more Daiyu shook her head as she wrote this down. "Too arty."

Xiangyun hastily struck the stove again.

Baoyu went on:

"He returns to earth with a load of cold red snow,
A fragrant cloud cut far from the dusty world;
Its forked boughs resting on the poet's slim shoulders,
His clothes by moss from the nunnery still purlled."

When Daiyu had finished writing this out and the others were discussing it, some maids ran in to announce:

"The old lady's coming!"

All hurried out to meet her, commenting, "What a good mood she must be in!"

She could be seen in the distance wearing a big cape with a grey squirrel-fur hood, seated in a small bamboo sedan-chair sheltered by a black silk umbrella, and surrounded by her maids, each holding an umbrella. Li Wan and the young people were hastening to meet them when the Lady Dowager sent word that they should stay where they were.



站在那里就是了。”来至跟前，贾母笑道：“我瞒着你太太和凤丫头来了。大雪地里我坐着这个无妨，没的叫他娘儿们来踏雪。”众人忙一面上前接斗篷，搀扶下轿，一面答应着。

贾母来至室中，先笑道：“好俊梅花！你们也会乐，我来着了。”说着，李纨早命人拿了一个大狼皮褥子来铺在当中。贾母坐了，因笑道：“你们只管照旧玩笑吃喝。我因为天短了，不敢睡中觉，抹了一回牌，忽然想起你们来了，我也来凑个趣儿。”李纨早又捧过手炉来，探春另拿了一副杯箸来，亲自斟了暖酒，奉与贾母。贾母便饮了一口，问那个盘子里是什么东西。众人忙捧了过来，回说是糟鹌鹑，贾母道：“这倒罢了，撕一两点腿子来。”李纨忙答应了，要水洗手，亲自来撕。贾母又道：“你们仍旧坐下说笑我听。”又命李纨：“你也只管坐下，就如同我没来的一样才是，不然我就去了。”众人听了，方依次坐下，只李纨挪到尽下边去了。贾母因问作何事来着，众人便说作诗。贾母道：“有作诗的，不如作些灯谜，大家正月里好玩的。”众人答应了。

说笑了一回，贾母便道：“这里潮湿，你们别久坐，仔细受了潮湿。”因说：“你四妹妹那里暖和，我们到那里瞧瞧他





Upon reaching them she announced, "I've given Lady Wang and Xifeng the slip. Though the snow lies so deep, I'm all right in this chair; but I didn't want *them* to come traipsing through the snow."

Calling out greetings, they pressed forward to take her cape and help her out of the chair.

Her first remark on entering the room was, "What beautiful plum-blossom! You certainly know how to enjoy yourselves. I've come at the right time."

Li Wan had already ordered maids to spread a big wolf-skin rug in the middle of the *kang* for the old lady.

"Go on with your fun, and don't stop eating or drinking," she said when she had sat down on the rug. "Now that the days are shorter I've given up taking a nap after lunch. I was playing cards when I suddenly thought of you, so I came to join in your fun."

By now Li Wan had passed her a hand-stove, and Tanchun brought over clean chopsticks and a cup and poured some warm wine for her.

The old lady took a sip.

"What's on that plate there?" she asked.

They brought it over and told her, "Quails cured in wine."

"That will do nicely," she said. "Pull off some bits of the leg meat for me."

Li Wan assented and did so, after first calling for water to wash her hands.

"Just sit down as you were and go on chatting," urged the old lady. "I like listening." She told Li Wan, "You must sit down too as if I weren't here, or else I shall go away."

All resumed their seats then, except Li Wan, who moved to the lowest place.

"What were you doing?" the Lady Dowager asked. When informed that they had been writing poems she said, "You'd do better to make up some lantern riddles for all of us to enjoy after New Year."

They agreed to this.

After some more conversation she remarked, "It's damp here. You mustn't stay too long or you may catch cold. Xichun's place is warmer than this. Let's go and see how she's getting on with her painting, and



的画儿，赶年可有了。”众人笑道：“那里能年下就有了？只怕明年端阳有了。”贾母道：“这还了得！他竟比盖这园子还费工夫。”

说着，仍坐了竹轿，大家围随，过了藕香榭，穿入一条夹道，东西两边皆有过街门，门楼之上里外皆嵌着石头匾，如今进的是西门，向外的匾上凿着“穿云”二字，向里的凿着“度月”两字。来至当中，进了向南的正门，贾母下了轿，惜春已接了出来。从里边游廊过去，便是惜春卧房，门斗上有“暖香坞”三个字。早有几个人打起猩毛毡帘，已觉温香拂脸。大家进入房中，贾母并不归坐，只问画在那里。惜春笑回道：“天气寒冷了，胶性皆凝涩不润，画了不好看，故此收起来。”贾母笑道：“我年下就要的。你别托懒儿，快拿出来给我快画。”一语未了，忽见凤姐披着紫羯绒褂，笑孜孜的来了，口内说道：“老祖宗今儿也不告诉人，私自就来了，耍的我好找。”贾母见他来了，心中自是喜悦，便道：“我怕你们冷着了，所以不许人告诉你们去。你真是个鬼灵精儿，到底找了我来；论理，孝敬也不在这上头。”凤姐笑道：“我那里是孝敬的心找了来？我因为到了老祖宗那里，鸦没雀静的，问小丫头子们，他们也不肯说，叫我到园子里来。我正疑惑，忽然又来了两三个姑子，我心里才明白了。我想姑子必是来送年疏，或要年例香火银子，老祖宗年下的



whether it will be ready by New Year.”

“By New Year?” they exclaimed. “Not likely! It probably won’t be ready till the Dragon-Boat Festival.”

“Well. I never! Is it going to take her longer to paint the Garden than it took the workmen to build it?”

She mounted her chair again then, and the whole party accompanied her past Scented Lotus Pavilion and along a covered walk with at either end an archway, both sides of which were inset with stone tablets. They passed through the western arch, which on its outer side bore the inscription “Through the Clouds,” on the inner side “Across the Moon,” and entered Xichun’s compound by the front northern gate. By the time the Lady Dowager alighted, Xichun had come out to meet her and lead them all along the verandah to her bedroom. Above its door was the inscription “Warm Scented Arbour,” and perfumed air struck warm on their cheeks as attendants lifted the red felt portière. As soon as they were inside, before even sitting down, the Lady Dowager asked to see Xichun’s painting.

Xichun explained that it was difficult to mix colours in such cold weather, as they congealed. “I was afraid of spoiling it, so I’ve put it away,” she concluded.

“I want it for New Year, so don’t be lazy!” teased the old lady. “You must fetch it out at once and go on with it.”

As she was speaking, Xifeng, in a purple woollen gown, made a smiling entrance.

“What a dance you’ve led me, Old Ancestress!” she cried. “Coming here without a word to anyone.”

The Lady Dowager was pleased to see her.

“I didn’t want you to come out in the cold; that’s why I wouldn’t let them tell you,” she replied. “You’re an artful puss to have found me after all. There’s no need to show your dutifulness in this way.”

“I didn’t come out of any sense of duty,” countered Xifeng laughingly. “When I found your place so quiet and questioned the maids, they wouldn’t tell me where you were. Just suggested I try the Garden. I was puzzling over this when a few nuns turned up. I realized they must have come with an alms list, or to make their annual requests for donations or



事也多，一定是躲债来了。我赶忙问了那姑子，果然不错。我连忙把年例给了他们去了。如今来回老祖宗，债主已去，不用躲了。已预备下希嫩的野鸡，请吃晚饭去，再迟一会的就老了。”他一行说，众人一行笑。

凤姐也不等贾母说话，便命人抬过轿子来。贾母笑着，搀了凤姐，仍上竹轿，带着众人，说笑着出了夹道的东门。一看四面粉妆银砌，忽见宝琴披着凫靛裘站在山坡上遥等，身后一个丫鬟抱着一瓶红梅。众人都笑道：“少了两个人，他却在这里等着，也弄梅花去了。”贾母喜的忙笑道：“你们瞧，这山坡上配着他的这个人品，又是这件衣裳，后头又是这梅花，像个什么？”众人都笑道：“就像老太太屋里挂的仇十洲画的《艳雪图》。”贾母摇头笑道：“那画的那里有这件衣裳？人也不能这样好！”一语未了，只见宝琴背后又转出一个披大红猩猩毡的人来，贾母道：“那又是那个女孩儿？”众人笑道：“姑娘们都在这里，那是宝玉。”贾母笑道：“我的眼越发花了。”说话之间，来至跟前，可不是宝玉和宝琴？宝玉笑向宝钗、黛玉等道：“我才又到了栊翠庵。妙玉每人送了你们一枝梅花，我已经打发人送去了。”众人都笑说：“多谢你费心。”

说话之间，已出了园门，来至贾母房中。吃毕饭，大家





incense money. So many people apply to our Old Ancestress just before New Year, I knew you'd run away to avoid being dunned. Now I've come to report to our Old Ancestress: Your duns have gone, you can come out of hiding. I've some very tender pheasant ready. So please come back for dinner. If you leave it any later, it'll be overcooked."

Amid the general merriment that followed, and before the old lady could make any retort, Xifeng ordered her sedan-chair. The Lady Dowager mounted it with Xifeng's help, in smiling acquiescence, and was carried through the east gate of the covered walk, chatting with the rest of the party.

All about lay snow, soft as powder, bright as silver. And suddenly, at the top of a slope, they saw Baoqin in the cape of wild ducks' down, with a maid behind her carrying a vase of red plum-blossom.

"So there she is!" they cried laughingly. "No wonder two people were missing. She's got herself some plum-blossom as well."

"Just look!" exclaimed the old lady in delight. "This snowy slope matched with a girl like her, in that costume too, and with plum-blossom in the background — what does it remind you of?"

"It's like Qiu Ying's¹ painting *The Beauty in Snow* which hangs in your room, madam," some of them answered.

The Lady Dowager shook her head.

"No, the girl in that painting hasn't a costume like hers, and she isn't a patch on Baoqin for looks, either."

Even as she spoke, someone in a red felt cape stepped out from behind Baoqin.

"Which of the girls is that?" asked the old lady.

"All the girls are here," they told her. "That's Baoyu."

"My eyes are failing," she sighed.

While talking they had drawn level with Baoyu and Baoqin.

Smiling, Baoyu told Baochai, Daiyu and the rest, "Just now I went back to Green Lattice Nunnery, and Miaoyu's given you each a spray of plum-blossom. They've already been sent to your rooms."

As they thanked him for going to such trouble, they left the Garden and made their way to the Lady Dowager's quarters. They were chatting there after dinner when Aunt Xue arrived.



又说笑了一回。忽见薛姨妈也来了，说：“好大雪，一日也没过来望候老太太。今日老太太倒不高兴？正该赏雪才是。”贾母笑道：“何曾不高兴了！我找了他们姊妹们去玩了一会子。”薛姨妈笑道：“昨儿晚上，我原想着今儿要和我们姨太太借一日园子，摆两桌粗酒，请老太太赏雪的，又见老太太安息的早。我听得女儿说，老太太心下不大爽快，因此今日也没敢惊动。早知如此，我正该请的。”贾母笑道：“这才是十月里头场雪，往后下雪的日子多呢，再破费不迟。”薛姨妈笑道：“果然如此，算我的孝心虔了。”凤姐笑道：“姨妈仔细忘了，如今先秤五十两银子来，交给我收着；一下雪，我就预备下酒，姨妈也不用操心，也不得忘了。”贾母笑道：“既这么说，姨太太就给他五十两银子收着，我和他每人分二十五两，到下雪的日子，我装心里不快，混过去了，姨太太更不用操心，我和凤丫头得了实惠。”凤姐将手一拍，笑道：“妙极了，这和我主意一样。”众人都笑了，贾母笑道：“呸！没脸的，就顺着竿子爬上来了！你不该说姨太太是客，在咱们家受委屈，我们该请姨太太才是，那里有破费姨太太的理！不这样说呢，还有脸先要五十两银子，真不害羞！”凤姐笑道：“我们老祖宗最是有眼色的，试一试，姨妈若松呢，拿出五十两来，就和我分。这会子估量着不中用了，翻过脸来拿我做法子，说出这些大方话来。如今我也不



"I haven't come over to see you all day because of this heavy snow," she told the old lady. "Are you in low spirits, madam? You should have gone out to enjoy the snowy landscape."

"What makes you think I'm feeling low? I went out and amused myself for a while with the girls."

"Last night I was thinking of asking my sister for the use of the Garden for one day, to invite you to a simple meal so as to enjoy the snow. But I found you'd gone to bed early, and as Baochai told me you weren't feeling too well I didn't like to bother you. If I'd known, I should have invited you."

"It's only the tenth month, and this is the first fall of snow this winter," rejoined the old lady. "You'll have plenty of chances to treat us later on."

"I hope so," said Aunt Xue. "That will give me an opportunity to show my respect."

"Mind you don't forget, aunt!" cried Xifeng playfully. "Why not weigh out fifty taels of silver now and give it to me to keep? Then as soon as it snows again, I'll prepare the feast. That'll save you trouble and the danger of forgetting."

The Lady Dowager chuckled.

"Yes, just give her fifty taels," she said to Aunt Xue, "and we'll take half each. When it snows, I'll excuse myself on the pretext of illness, so as to save you trouble, while Xifeng and I reap all the benefit."

Xifeng clapped her hands. "Excellent! Just what I was thinking."

General laughter greeted this sally.

"Bah! For shame!" exclaimed the Lady Dowager. "You've always got an eye to the main chance. Aunt Xue is our guest and it's we who should be inviting her, instead of neglecting her so badly. How can we let her spend money on us? Yet instead of issuing an invitation, you have the nerve to ask for fifty taels. You've no sense of shame at all."

"No one's as shrewd as our Old Ancestress," commented Xifeng. "She was just sounding you out, aunt. If you'd really forked up fifty taels, she'd have gone halves with me. Now that her scheme doesn't look like coming off, she turns around to shift the blame to me, talking in that high-minded way. All right then, instead of asking Aunt Xue for money,



和姨妈要银子，我竟替姨妈出银子治了酒，请老祖宗吃了，我另外再封五十两银子孝敬老祖宗，算是罚我包揽闲事。这可好不好？”话未说完，众人已笑倒在炕上。

贾母因又说及宝琴雪下折梅比画儿上还好，又细问他的年庚八字并家内景况。薛姨妈度其意思，大约是要与宝玉求配。薛姨妈心中固也遂意，只是已许过梅家了，因贾母尚未明说，自己也不好拟定，遂半吐半露告诉贾母道：“可惜这孩子没福，前年他父亲就没了。他从小儿见的世面倒多，跟他父亲四山五岳都走遍了。他父亲是好乐的，各处因有买卖，带着家眷，这一省逛一年，明年又往那一省逛半年，所以天下十停倒走了五六停了。那年在这里，把他许了梅翰林的儿子，偏第二年他父亲就辞世了，如今他母亲又是痰症。”凤姐也不等说完，便“嗳”声不止说：“偏不巧，我正要做个媒呢，又已经许了人家。”贾母笑道：“你要给谁说媒？”凤姐笑道：“老祖宗别管，我心里看准了他们两个是一对。如今已许了人家，说也无益，不如不说罢了。”贾母也知凤姐之意，听见已有了人家，也就不提了。大家又闲话了一会方散，一宿无话。

次日雪晴。饭后，贾母又亲嘱惜春：“不管冷暖，你只画去，赶到年下，十分不能便罢了。第一要紧把昨日琴儿和丫





I'll let her treat the old lady at my expense; and I'll offer our Old Ancestress another packet of fifty taels to make up for my officiousness. How's that?"

By this time all the others were prostrate with laughter.

The Lady Dowager then reiterated that Baoqin, with the plum-blossom in the snow, had looked prettier than a picture. She asked her age as well as the hour, day and month of her birth, and wanted to know all about her family. Aunt Xue guessed that she wished to arrange a match between Baoqin and Baoyu, and she would have been quite willing had the girl not been promised already to a son of the Mei family. But as the old lady had made no direct proposal, she could not say so outright. She answered therefore in a roundabout way:

"It's a pity this poor child has had no luck. Before her father died two years ago, she saw a good deal of the world and travelled to all sorts of beauty spots with her parents. Her father knew how to enjoy life. And as he owned shops everywhere, he used to take his family to stay in different provinces for several months or a year at a time, until they'd visited more than half the country. Last time he was here he betrothed her to Academician Mei's son; but the year after that he died. And now her mother is a victim to asthma...."

She was interrupted at this point by Xifeng, who heaved a long sigh.

"Too bad!" she exclaimed. "I was on the point of proposing a match for her, but she's already engaged."

"Whom were you going to propose?" asked the old lady with a smile.

"Never you mind, Old Ancestress. I was convinced they'd make an ideal couple. But as she's engaged it's no use bringing it up. I'd better hold my tongue."

The Lady Dowager knew very well whom Xifeng had in mind, but in view of Baoqin's engagement she said no more. After a little more chat they party broke up, and the night passed without further incident.

The next morning the sky had cleared. After breakfast the old lady told Xichun, "Never mind the weather but get on with your painting, and try to finish it before New Year. Of course, if you really can't, it doesn't matter. The main thing is to lose no time in painting in Baoqin and her



头、梅花，照模照样，一笔别错，快快添上。”惜春听了虽是为难，只得应了。一时众人都来看他如何画，惜春只是出神。李纨因笑向众人道：“让他自己想去，咱们且说话儿。昨日老太太只叫作灯谜儿，回了家和绮儿、纹儿睡不着，我就编了两个‘四书’的。他两个每人也编了一个。”众人听了，都笑道：“这倒该作的。先说了，我们猜猜。”李纨笑道：“‘观音未有世家传’，打‘四书’一句。”湘云接着就说：“在止于至善。”宝钗笑道：“你也想一想‘世家传’三个字的意思再猜。”李纨笑道：“再想。”黛玉笑道：“哦，是了。是‘虽善无征’。”众人都笑道：“这句是了。”李纨又道：“一池青草草何名。”湘云又忙道：“这一定是‘蒲芦也’。再不是不成？”李纨笑道：“这难为你猜。纹儿的是‘水向石边流出冷’，打一古人名。”探春看着他，笑问道：“可是山涛？”李纨笑道：“是。”李纨又道：“绮儿的是个‘萤’字，打一个字。”众人猜了半日，宝琴笑道：“这个意思却深，不知可是花草的‘花’字？”李纨笑道：“恰是了。”众人道：“萤与花何干？”黛玉笑道：“妙得很！萤可不是草化的？”众人





maid with the plum-blossom, just the way they looked yesterday.”

This was a tall order, but Xichun had to agree. When the others went to see how she was getting on, they found her lost in thought.

“We can chat while she’s thinking,” Li Wan told the rest. “Yesterday the old lady asked us to make up some lantern riddles; so when I went home with Qi and Wen, and we couldn’t sleep, I made up two using quotations from the Four Books, and they thought up two each as well.”

“Yes, we ought to get to work on those riddles,” the others agreed. “Let’s hear yours first and see if we can guess the answers.”

“‘Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) lacks a chronicle,’ ” said Li Wan. “The answer should be a line from the Four Books.”

Xiangyun promptly guessed, “‘The end is supreme goodness.’”

Baochai smiled. “First think about ‘chronicle.’ ”

“Try again,” urged Li Wan.

“I’ll make a guess,” said Daiyu. “Is it ‘though good there is no documentation’?”

“That must be right,” cried the others.

Li Wan continued, “‘A poolful of plants — what are they?’”

“‘Just flags and reeds,’ ” responded Xiangyun promptly. “I must be right this time.”

“Yes, good for you,” said Li Wan. “Here is Wen’s riddle: ‘The water flows cold by the rocks.’ And the answer is the name of a man of old.”

“Shan Tao?”² asked Tanchun.

“That’s right,” said Li Wan.

“Qi’s riddle is the word ‘glow-worm,’” Li Wan went on. “And the answer is a single word.”

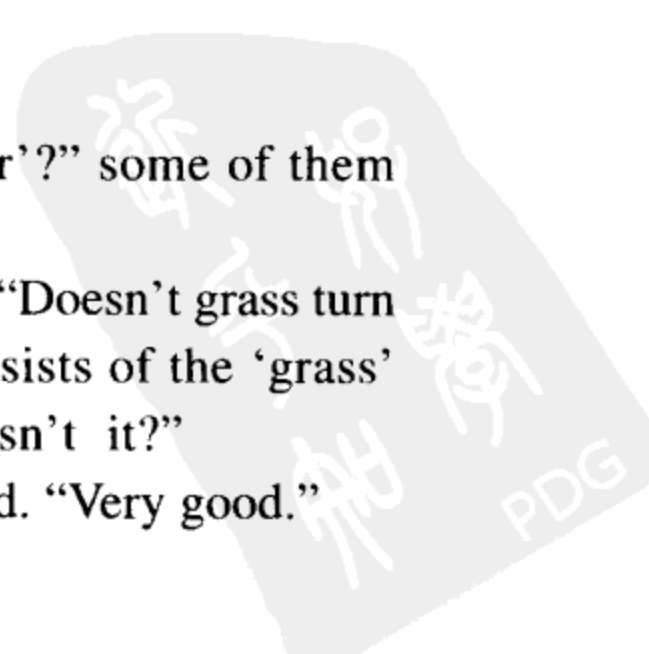
They cudgelled their brains for a long time. Then Baoqin said, “This one’s deep. Is the answer ‘flower’?”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head,” Li Qi told her.

“What has ‘glow-worm’ got to do with ‘flower’?” some of them demanded.

“Most ingenious,” remarked Daiyu with a smile. “Doesn’t grass turn into glow-worms?³ The character for ‘flower’ consists of the ‘grass’ radical and the character for ‘metamorphosis,’ doesn’t it?”

The others laughed when they coughed on and said. “Very good.”





会意，都笑了说“好！”宝钗道：“这些虽好，不合老太太的意，不如作些浅近的物儿，大家雅俗共赏才好。”众人都道：“也要作些浅近的俗物才是。”湘云想了一想道：“我编了一枝《点绛唇》，却真是个俗物，你们猜猜。”说着念道：

溪壑分离，红尘游戏，真何趣？名利犹虚，后事终难继。

众人都不解，想了半日，也有猜是和尚的，也有猜是道士的。也有猜是偶戏人的。宝玉笑了半日，道：“都不是，我猜着了，必定是要的猴儿。”湘云笑道：“正是这个了。”众人道：“前头却好，末后一句怎么解？”湘云道：“那一个要的猴儿不是剃了尾巴去的？”众人听了，都笑起来，说：“他编个谜儿也是刁钻古怪的。”李纨道：“昨儿姨妈说，琴妹妹见的世面多，走的道路也多，你正该编谜儿，正用着了。你的诗又好，何不编几个我们猜一猜？”宝琴听了，点头含笑，自去寻思。宝钗也有了一个，念道：

镂檀锲梓一层层，岂系良工堆砌成？

虽是半天风雨过，何曾闻得梵铃声！

打一物。众人猜时，宝玉也有了一个，念道：





“They’re all good, but they’re not the sort of riddle the old lady wants,” observed Baochai. “We’d better make up some about everyday objects, which everyone can enjoy.”

All agreed to this.

After a moment’s thought Xiangyun volunteered, “I’ve got one written after the melody *Dian Jiang Chun*, about some thing very common. See if you can guess the answer.” She recited:

“Parted from his valleys and streams,
He fools about midst mankind
In utter futility.
Fame and profit are vanity.
And nothing is left behind.

For a long time they failed to guess the answer. Some suggested a monk, others a Taoist, yet others a marionette.

“You’re all wrong,” declared Baoyu, who had been chuckling to himself for a while. “I’ve got it. It must be a monkey in a circus.”

Xiangyun confirmed that he was right.

“The first part makes sense,” said the others. “But what does the last line mean?”

“Is there any performing monkey that hasn’t got its tail docked?” asked Xiangyun.

All the others protested laughingly, “Even when making riddles, she’s full of monkey-tricks!”

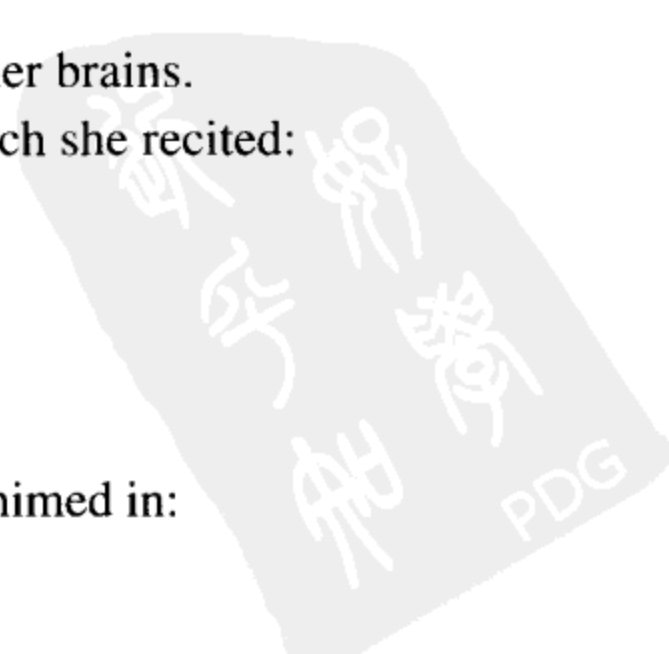
Li Wan now turned to Baoqin. “Aunt Xue was telling us yesterday that you’ve travelled a good deal, and seen lots of sights. Do try your hand at some riddles. And since you write such good poems, why not make them in verse?”

Baoqin nodded cheerfully and went off to rack her brains.

Meanwhile Baochai was ready with a riddle which she recited:

“Tier upon tier of carved cedar and sandalwood,
By no craftsmen was it reared;
Even when the sky is swept by wind and rain
No holy bells are heard.”

While the rest were trying to solve this, Baoyu chimed in:





天上人间两渺茫，琅玕节过谨提防。

鸾音鹤信须凝睇，好把唏嘘答上苍。

黛玉也有了一个，念道是：

驷马何劳缚紫绳，驰城逐堑见狰狞。

主人指示风雷动，鳌背三山独立名。

探春也有了一个，方欲念时，宝琴走过来笑道：“我从小儿所走的地方古迹不少，我如今拣了十个地方的古迹，作了十首怀古的诗。诗虽粗鄙，却怀往事，又暗隐俗物十件，姐姐们请猜一猜。”众人听了，都说：“这倒巧，何不写出来大家一看？”要知端的，下回分解。



“Vanished from heaven and the world of men,
The bamboo frame bids us beware!
Gaze up to catch the message from the phoenix,
And sigh your answer to the azure air.”

By now Daiyu had one ready too and she declaimed:

“No need to tether these fine steeds with ropes,
Gallop round the walls how fierce they seem!
At their master’s bidding they speed fast as lightning;
Only three fairy isles on the giant turtle’s back have left a name.”

Tanchun now had one ready too, but before she could tell it to them Baoqin came back.

“I’ve visited many places of historical interest since I was small,” she said. “So I’ve made ten verses about ten of them. They’re very crude, but at least they recall the past and the answers are everyday objects. I hope you’ll guess them.”

“How ingenious!” exclaimed the others. “Won’t you write them out for us?”

If you want to know more about this, read the next chapter.



第五十一回

薛小妹新编怀古诗 胡庸医乱用虎狼药

众人闻得宝琴将素习所经过各省内的古迹为题，作了十首怀古绝句，内隐十物，皆说这自然新巧。都争着看时，只见写道是：

赤壁怀古

赤壁沉埋水不流，徒留名姓载空舟。
喧阗一炬悲风冷，无限英魂在内游。

交趾怀古

铜铸金镛振纪纲，声传海外播戎羌。
马援自是功劳大，铁笛无烦说子房。

钟山怀古

名利何曾伴汝身，无端被诏出凡尘。
牵连大抵难休绝，莫怨他人嘲笑频。

淮阴怀古

壮士须防恶犬欺，三齐位定盖棺时。
寄言世俗休轻鄙，一饭之恩死也知。

广陵怀古

蝉噪鸦栖转眼过，隋堤风景近如何。
只缘占得风流号，惹得纷纷口舌多。





Chapter 51

Baoqin Composes Poems Recalling the Past An Incompetent Physician Prescribes Strong Medicine

Baoqin told the others that she had written ten riddles in the form of quatrains, about famous places she had visited in different provinces.

“How original!” they cried.

They crowded round to read the poems, which were as follows:

RED CLIFF¹

Wrecked by Red Cliff, choking the stream,
Nothing remains in the empty hulks but names;
Yet countless gallant souls are roaming there
Where cold winds sigh and fan the leaping flames.

COCHIN CHINA²

His rule is strengthened by great bells of bronze,
Whose sound has spread to tribes beyond the seas;
Ma Yuan assuredly achieved great deeds,
And the iron flute of Zhang Liang³ needs no praise.

MOUNT ZHONGSHAN⁴

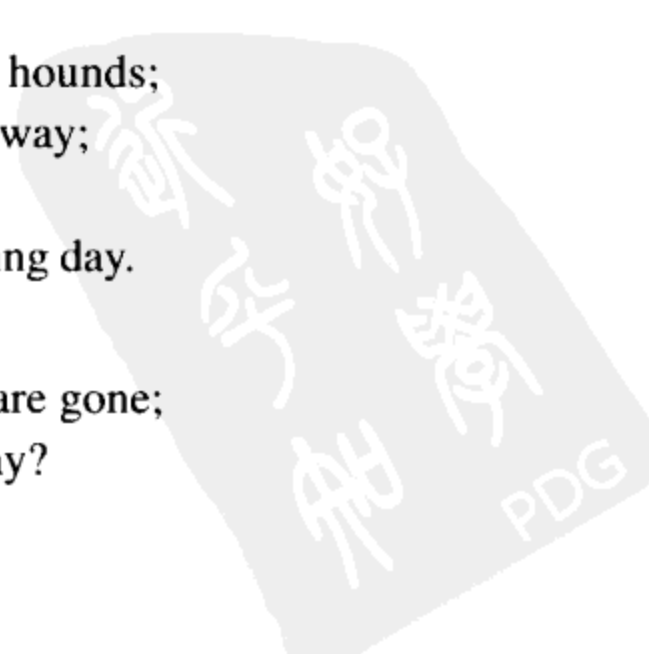
Fame and profit have never kept you company,
Abruptly haled into the dusty world;
To sever all the strings attached is hard;
Don't murmur, then, if taunts at you are hurled.

HUAIYIN⁵

Even the brave must guard against savage hounds;
He was made Prince of Qi and died straightway;
But let not the worldly despise him —
He remembered the gift of a meal till his dying day.

GUANGLING⁶

Cicadas chirp, crows roost, in a flash they are gone;
How looks the landscape by Sui Dyke today?
I was the emperor's romantic reputation





桃叶渡怀古

衰草闲花映浅池，桃枝桃叶总分离。
六朝梁栋多如许，小照空悬壁上题。

青冢怀古

黑水茫茫咽不流，冰弦拨尽曲中愁。
汉家制度诚堪叹，樗栎应惭万古羞。

马嵬怀古

寂寞脂痕渍汗光，温柔一旦付东洋。
只因遗得风流迹，此日衣衾尚有香。

蒲东寺怀古

小红骨贱最身轻，私掖偷携强撮成。
虽被夫人时吊起，已经勾引彼同行。

梅花观怀古

不在梅边在柳边，个中谁拾画婵娟。
团圆莫忆春香到，一别西风又一年。

众人看了，都称奇道妙。宝钗先说道：“前八首都是史鉴上有据的；后二首却无考，我们也不大懂得，不如另作两首为是。”黛玉忙拦道：“这宝姐姐也忒‘胶柱鼓瑟’，矫揉造作了。这两首虽于史鉴上无考，咱们虽不曾看这些外传，不知底里，难道咱们连两本戏也没见过不成？那三岁的孩子也知道，何况咱们。”探春道：“这话正是了。”李纨又道：“况且





That was to blame for so much calumny.

PEACH-LEAFFORD⁷

Flowers bloom in idleness by the shallow pool,
Peach-Leaf must part company at last with the bough;
Many mansions stood here in the Six Dynasties,
Only a portrait hangs on the bare wall now.

THE GREEN TOMB⁸

The dark stream is stagnant, choked,
The icy strings of the lute all her grief proclaim;
How absurd they were, the rules of the House of Han;
Wood the carpenter scorns should feel eternal shame.

MAWEI SLOPE⁹

Lonely traces of rouge and perspiration remain,
But with the flowing water her beauty has gone;
Yet some vestiges of her charm still linger on,
And even today a fragrance clings to her gown.

PUDONG MONASTERY¹⁰

A young maid, low-born and flippant,
By stealth brings a couple together;
Though caught out at last by her mistress,
She has induced her young lady to join her lover.

PLUM-BLOSSOM NUNNERY¹¹

Not by plum trees but by willows,
Who will pick up the beauty's portrait here?
It is no use longing for a reunion in spring.
Autumn means parting for another year.

They all admired the subtlety of these riddles, Baochai, however, commented, "The first eight deal with authenticated incidents in history, but it's harder for us to understand the last two fictitious ones. I think you ought to write two others instead."

Daiyu at once objected, "Don't be so sanctimonious and strait-laced, dear cousin. The last two incidents may not appear in historical records, and not having read the romances from which they come we may not know the details; but we've surely all seen the operas based on them. Why, even three-year-olds know them, not to say us."

"That's quite right," agreed Tanchun.

他原走到这个地方的。这两件事虽无考，古往今来，以讹传讹，好事者竟故意的弄出这古迹来以愚人。比如那年上京的时节，单是关夫子的坟，倒见了三四处。关夫子一生的事业，皆是有据的，如何又有许多的坟？自然是后来人敬爱他生前为人，只怕从这敬爱上穿凿出来，也是有的。及至看《广輿记》上，不止关夫子的坟多，自古以来有些名望的人，坟就不少，无考的古迹更多。如今这两首诗虽无考，凡说书唱戏，甚至于求的签上，皆有注批，老少男女，俗语口头，人人皆知皆说的。况且又并不是看了《西厢记》《牡丹亭》的词曲，怕看了邪书。这竟无妨，只管留着。”宝钗听说，方罢了。大家猜了一回，皆不是。

冬日天短，不觉又是前头吃晚饭之时，一齐前来吃饭。因有人回王夫人说：“袭人的哥哥花自芳进来说，他母亲病重了，想他女儿。他来求恩典，接袭人家去走走。”王夫人听了，便说：“人家母女一场，岂有不许他去的。”一面就叫了凤姐来，告诉了凤姐，命他酌量去办理。

凤姐答应了，回至房中，便命周瑞家的去告诉袭人原故，又吩咐周瑞家的：“再将跟着出门的媳妇传一个，你们两个人，再带两个小丫头子，跟了袭人去。外头派四个有年纪跟车的。要一辆大车，你们带着坐；要一辆小车，给丫头们坐。”周瑞家的答应了，才要去，凤姐又道：“那袭人是个省事的，你告诉他说我的话：叫他穿几件颜色好衣裳，大大的包一包袱衣裳拿着，包袱也要好的，手炉也拿好的。临走时，叫他先来，我瞧瞧。”周瑞家的答应去了。



“Besides,” Li Wan added, “these poems are about places she’s visited. What if these two stories are fictitious? Plenty of legends have come down from ancient times, and well-meaning busybodies have even faked relics to fool men. For instance, that year we come to the capital we passed three or four tombs on the way said to be Lord Guan’s. Well, there’s historical evidence for Lord Guan’s life and actions, but how could one man have so many tombs? They appeared, of course, as often happens, because later generations admired him and wanted to show their respect. I’ve since learned from a book of geography that Lord Guan isn’t the only one to have several tombs — so do most famous men of old. As for legendary sites, there are even more of them. So though the stories referred to in these two riddles are fictitious, they’re mentioned in ballads and operas, even in temple oracles. The whole world knows them. Each one is a household word. Besides, it’s not as if we ourselves had read *The Western Chamber* and *The Peony Pavilion*, which are licentious works. So it doesn’t matter if these two verses are kept.”

Then Baochai did not insist, and they tried for a while to guess the answers, but with no success.

In winter the days are short, it was soon dinner-time, and they went to the mansion for a meal. Then a maid reported to Lady Wang that Xiren’s brother Hua Zifang had brought word that their mother was ill and wanted to see her daughter. He had come to beg permission to take her home.

“Of course we can’t keep her if her mother wants her,” was Lady Wang’s reply. She sent for Xifeng and told her to see to the matter.

Xifeng agreed and went back to her apartments. She asked Zhou Rui’s wife to break the news to Xiren, and gave her these instructions:

“You must get another matron beside yourself and a couple of young maids to go with Xiren. Four older attendants are to escort her carriage. Take a big one yourselves and a smaller one for the girls.”

As Mrs. Zhou was leaving to carry out these orders, Xifeng added, “Xiren is a sensible girl. Tell her from me to dress smartly and to take a big bundle of good clothes in a handsome wrapper, as well as a good hand-stove. She must come and let me see her before she leaves.”

Mrs. Zhou assented and went off.



半日，果见袭人穿戴了来了，两个丫头与周瑞家的拿着手炉与衣包。凤姐看袭人头上戴着几枝金钗珠钏，倒华丽；又看身上穿着桃红百花刻丝银鼠袄子，葱绿盘金彩绣绵裙，外面穿着青缎灰鼠皮褂。凤姐笑道：“这三件衣裳都是太太赏的，倒是好的；但只这褂子太素了些，如今穿着也冷，你该穿一件大毛的。”袭人笑道：“太太就只给了这灰鼠的，还有一件银鼠的。说赶年下再给大毛的，还没有得呢。”凤姐笑道：“我倒有一件大毛的，我嫌风毛出的不好了，正要改去。也罢，先给你穿去。等年下太太给你作的时节再作罢，只当你还我的一样。”众人都笑道：“奶奶惯会说这话。成年家大手大脚的，替太太不知背地里赔垫了多少东西，真真的赔的是说不出来，那里又和太太算去？偏这会子又说这小器话取笑儿。”凤姐笑道：“太太那里想的到这些？究竟这又不是正经事，再不照管，也是大家的体面。说不得我自己吃些亏，把众人打扮体统了，宁可我得个好名儿也罢了。一个一个像‘烧糊了的卷子’似的，人先笑话我，说我当家倒把人弄出个花子来了。”众人听了，都叹道：“谁似奶奶这样圣明！在上体贴太太，在下又疼顾下人。”一面说，一面只见凤姐命平儿将昨日那件石青刻丝八团天马皮褂子拿出来，与了袭



After some time, sure enough, Xiren arrived, having changed her clothes, accompanied by Mrs. Chou and two maids who were carrying her hand-stove and bundle. Xifeng saw that she had some fine gold pins ornamented with pearls in her hair, and was wearing an ermine-lined peach-red silk tapestry jacket with a hundred-beads design, a yellowish-green padded skirt embroidered with coloured silk and gold thread, and a black satin coat lined with squirrel.

“These three garments which your mistress gave you are of good quality,” acknowledged Xifeng with a smile. “But the coat’s on the drab side. It’s not warm enough either. You need one with thicker fur.”

“The mistress gave me this squirrel, and the ermine too,” Xiren replied. “She promised to give me a fox-fur as well at New Year.”

“Well, I have a fox-fur, but I don’t care for the way the fringe hangs and was meaning to have it altered,” said Xifeng. “You may as well have that for the time being. When the mistress orders a coat for you for New Year, I’ll have it made for myself instead. That’ll compensate me for the one I’m giving you.”

Everybody present laughed.

“We know your way of talking, madam,” they said. “You give with both hands, the whole year round, privately giving away all sorts of things to make up for the presents that the mistress forgets. There’s really no saying how much you’ve given. And you never charge the mistress for them, of course. Yet you talk in this stingy way to raise a laugh.”

“How can the mistress remember all these things, which aren’t important anyway?” Xifeng retorted. “But if no one saw to them, it would reflect badly on the family; and I’m quite willing to put my hand in my pocket to keep everyone decently dressed — for the sake of my own good name. I’m in charge of the household, after all, and if everyone here looked like scarecrows I’d be blamed for fitting you out in such a beggarly way.”

This impressed them all. “No one else can hold a candle to you, madam,” they said. “So considerate as you are to Her Ladyship, and kindness itself to those of us beneath you.”

Pinger had been sent to fetch Xiren the fox-fur-lined coat of slate-blue silk tapestry with eight circular designs which Xifeng had worn the



人。又看包袱，只得一个弹墨花绫水红绸里的夹包袱，里面只包着两件半旧棉袄与皮褂子。凤姐又命平儿把一个玉色绸里的哆罗呢的包袱拿出来，又命包上一件雪褂子。

平儿走去拿了出来，一件是半旧大红猩猩毡的，一件是大红羽纱的。袭人道：“一件就当不起了。”平儿笑道：“你拿这猩猩毡的。把这件顺手拿将出来，叫人给邢大姑娘送去。昨儿那么大雪，人人都穿着，不是猩猩毡就是羽缎羽纱的，十来件大红衣裳，映得大雪好不齐整。就只他穿着那件旧毡斗篷，越发显的拱肩缩背，好不可怜见的。如今把这件给他罢。”凤姐笑道：“我的东西，他私自就要给人。我一个还花不够，再添上你提着，更好了！”众人笑道：“这都是奶奶素日孝敬太太，疼爱下人。若是奶奶素日是小器的，只以东西为事，不顾下人的，姑娘那里还敢这样。”凤姐笑道：“所以知道我的心的，也就是他还知三分罢了。”说着，又嘱咐袭人道：“你妈要好了，就罢；若不中用了，只管住下，打发人来回我，我再另打发人给你送铺盖去。可别使他们的铺盖和梳头的家伙。”又吩咐周瑞家的道：“你们自然是知道这里的规矩的，也不用我嘱咐了。”周瑞家的答应：“都知道。我们这去到那里，总叫他们的人回避。若住下，必是另要一两间内房的。”说着，跟了袭人出去了，又吩咐预备灯笼，遂坐车往花自芳家来，不在话下。

这里凤姐又将怡红院的嬷嬷唤了两个来，吩咐道：“袭人





previous day. Now, seeing that Xiren's wrapper was of black and white silk gauze, lined with pink silk, and in it she had only two worn silk-padded jackets and one fur jacket, Xifeng told Pinger to bring her own jade-coloured velvet wrapper with a silk lining, as well as a cape for the snow. Pinger brought two capes, one of worn crimson felt, the other a rather newer one of red satin.

"One is already too much," Xiren demurred.

"The felt's for you," chuckled Pinger. "I've brought the other at the same time to send to Miss Xiuyan. Yesterday, in that heavy snow, the others were all wearing felt, camlet or satin, and it was really a splendid sight — a dozen or so red capes against the snow. She was the only one in a shabby cape, all hunched up with cold, poor thing! So we'd better give her this."

"See the way she gives away my property!" cried Xifeng. "As if I'm not spending enough myself without her help. A fine thing!"

"It's *your* fault, madam, for being so dutiful to Her Ladyship and so good to us servants," they retorted, smiling. "If you were the stingy sort that hoards things up with no consideration for those below you, she wouldn't dare do such a thing."

"That's because she's the only one with some inkling of my character," rejoined Xifeng. She told Xiren, "Let's hope your mother is better. If not, you'll just have to stay there; but send me word, and I'll have your bedding sent over. Don't use their bedding or combs." She turned to Mrs. Zhou. "You all know our rules, of course. I don't have to remind you."

"We know, madam," replied Mrs. Zhou. "When we get there, we'll ask the others to keep their distance. If we stay, we'll insist on a couple of inner rooms."

She went out then with Xiren and ordered the servantboys to light the lanterns. Mounting their carriages, they drove to Hua Zifang's house.

Meanwhile Xifeng had summoned two old nannies from Baoyu's quarters.

"Xiren probably won't be back today," she told them. "You know which of the older girls have most sense. Get a couple of them to keep



只怕不来家了，你们素日知道那大丫头们，那两个知好歹，派出来在宝玉屋里上夜。你们也好生照管着，别由着宝玉胡闹。”两个嬷嬷答应着去了，一时来回说：“派了晴雯和麝月在屋里，我们四个人原是轮流着带管上夜的。”凤姐听了，点头又说道：“晚上催他早睡，早上催他早起。”老嬷嬷们答应了，自回园去。一时果有周瑞家的带了信回凤姐儿说：“袭人之母业已停床，不能回来。”凤姐回明了王夫人，一面着人往大观园去取他的铺盖妆奁。

宝玉看着晴雯、麝月二人打点妥当，送去之后，晴雯、麝月皆卸罢残妆，脱换过裙袄。晴雯只在熏笼上围坐，麝月笑道：“你今儿别装小姐了，我劝你也动一动儿。”晴雯道：“等你们都去尽了，我再动不迟。有你们一日，我且受用一日。”麝月笑道：“好姐姐，我铺床，你把那穿衣镜的套子放下来，上头的划子划上，你的身量比我高些。”说着，便去与宝玉铺床。晴雯“嘻”了一声，笑道：“人家才坐暖和了，你就来闹。”此时宝玉正坐着纳闷，想袭人之母不知是死是活，忽听见晴雯如此说，便自己起身出去，放下镜套，划上消息，进来笑道：“你们暖和罢，都完了。”晴雯笑道：“终久暖和不成的，我又想起来汤婆子还没拿来呢。”麝月道：“这难为你想着！他素日又不要汤婆子，咱们那熏笼上暖和，比不得那屋里炕冷，今儿可以不用。”宝玉笑道：“这个话，你



watch at night in Baoyu's rooms. You must see to things too. Don't let Baoyu run wild."

The two nannies assented and left, returning presently to report:

"We've told Qingwen and Sheyue to attend Master Bao. The four of us will keep watch at night in turn."

Xifeng nodded.

"See that he goes to bed early and gets up early."

They promised to do this and went back to the Garden.

Before long Zhou Rui's wife sent word that Xiren's mother was dying, and Xiren could not come back. Having reported this to Lady Wang, Xifeng sent to the Garden for Xiren's bedding and dressing-case. Baoyu looked on while Qingwen and Sheyue got these ready and sent them off. This done, the two maids changed their clothes for the night, and Qingwen sat down on the big openwork bronze clothes-warmer over the brazier.

"Stop putting on such ladified airs," Sheyue teased. "Do something, can't you!"

"I will after all the rest of you are gone," retorted Qingwen. "So long as you're here, I mean to take it easy."

"I'll make the bed, dear sister, but you must let down the cover over the mirror and hook back the clasp about — you're taller than I am." She then went to make Baoyu's bed.

"I was just nicely warm and you had to disturb me!" Qingwen gave a mock sigh.

Baoyu had been sitting brooding, wondering whether Xiren's mother would recover or not. Hearing this exchange between the girls, he got up and went out to cover the mirror and hook back the clasp himself.

"You can stay in the warm," he said as he came in again. "I've seen to everything."

"I can't toast myself here *all* the time," replied Qingwen smiling. "That reminds me, I've not fetched your pewter bed-warmer."

"How thoughtful you suddenly are!" remarked Sheyue. "He never uses a bed-warmer. And we shall be snuggler here on the clothes-warmer than on the cold *kang* in the other room. There's no need for a bed-warmer today."

"If you both sleep on that clothes-warmer, I'll be all alone out here."



们两个都在那上头睡了，我这外边没个人，怪怕的，一夜也睡不着。”晴雯道：“我是在这里睡的，麝月你往他外边睡去。”说话之间，天已二更，麝月早已放下帘幔，移灯炷香，伏侍宝玉卧下，二人方睡。

晴雯自在熏笼上，麝月便在暖阁外边。至三更以后，宝玉睡梦之中，便叫袭人。叫了两声，无人答应，自己醒了，方想起袭人不在家，自己也好笑起来。晴雯已醒，因叫唤麝月道：“连我都醒了，他守在旁边还不知道，真是个挺死尸的。”麝月翻身打个哈气，笑道：“他叫袭人，与我什么相干！”因问：“作什么？”宝玉说要吃茶，麝月忙起来，单穿着红绸小棉袄儿，宝玉道：“披上我的袄儿再去，仔细冷着。”麝月听说，回手便把宝玉披着起夜的一件貂颏满襟暖袄披上，下去向盆内洗洗手，先倒了一钟温水，拿了大漱盂，宝玉漱了口；然后才向茶格上取了茶碗，先用温水荡了一荡，向暖壶中倒了半碗茶，递与宝玉吃了；自己也漱了一漱，吃了半碗。晴雯笑道：“好妹妹，也赏我一口儿呢。”麝月笑道：“越发上脸儿了！”晴雯道：“好妹妹，明儿晚上你别动，我伏侍你一夜，如何？”麝月听说，只得也伏侍他漱了口，





objected Baoyu. "I'd be too scared to get a wink of sleep."

"I mean to sleep here," declared Qingwen. "You sleep in his room, Sheyue."

By this time it was already the second watch. Sheyue who had by this time drawn the curtains, removed the lamp and added incense to the burner, now helped Baoyu to bed. Then the two girls slept too, Qingwen on the clothes-warmer above the brazier, Sheyue outside Baoyu's alcove.

After the third watch had sounded, Baoyu called Xiren in his sleep. He called a couple of times but no one answered, and it dawned on him as he woke that she was away, at which he laughed at himself.

Qingwen, awake too now, called to Sheyue, "You really sleep like the dead! He's even woken me, over here; but you right next to him didn't hear a thing."

Sheyue turned over, yawning.

"It was Xiren he called. What's that to do with me?" She asked Baoyu what he wanted.

He told her, "Some tea."

She got up at once then, wearing nothing over her night clothes but a padded red silk jacket.

"Slip on my fur before you go out to the other room," he advised. "You mustn't catch cold."

So she put on the warm sable jacket he used as a dressing-gown, then washed her hands in the basin and took Baoyu a cup of warm water and a large rinse-bowl, so that he could rinse his mouth. Next she fetched a bowl from the cupboard, warmed it with hot water and half filled it with tea from the warm pot for him to drink. She then rinsed her own mouth and drank half a bowl of tea too.

"Bring me a drop too, dearie!" called Qingwen.

"You're getting above yourself, aren't you?" Sheyue retorted.

"Good sister, tomorrow night you needn't stir, and I'll dance attendance on you. How about that?"

Then Sheyue gave her water to rinse her mouth and poured her half a bowl of tea.

"Don't go to sleep just yet, you two," she said. "You can have a chat



倒了半碗茶与他吃了。麝月笑道：“你们两个别睡，说着话儿，我出去走走回来。”晴雯笑道：“外头有个鬼等着你呢。”宝玉道：“外头自然有大月亮的，我们说话，你只管去。”一面说，一面便嗽了两声。

麝月便开了后房门，揭起毡帘一看，果然好月色。晴雯等他出去，便欲唬他玩耍。仗着素日比别人气壮，不畏寒冷，也不披衣，只穿着小袄，便蹑手蹑脚的下了熏笼，随后出来。宝玉笑劝道：“罢呀！冻着不是玩的！”晴雯只摆手，随后去了，将出房门。只见月光如水，忽然一阵微风，只觉侵肌透骨，不禁毛骨森然。心下自思道：“怪道人说热身子不可被风吹，这一冷果然利害。”一面正要唬麝月，只听宝玉在内高声说道：“晴雯出去了！”晴雯忙回身进来，笑道：“那里就唬死了他了？偏你就蝎蝎螫螫，老婆汉像的！”宝玉笑道：“倒不为唬坏了他，头一件你冻着也不好；二则他不防，不免一喊，倘或惊醒了别人，不说咱们是玩意儿，反倒说袭人才去了一夜，你们就见神见鬼的。你来把我这边的被掖一掖。”晴雯听说，便上来掖了掖，伸手进去就渥一渥，宝玉笑道：“好冷手！我说看冻着。”一面又见晴雯两腮如胭脂一般，用手摸了一摸，也觉冰冷。宝玉道：“快进被来渥渥罢。”一语未了，只听“咯噔”一声门响，麝月慌慌张张的





while I slip out for a moment.”

“Beware of the ghost out there waiting for you,” teased Qingwen.

“The moon’s bright tonight,” said Baoyu, clearing his throat. “We’ll be talking. Just run along.”

Sheyue opened the back door then and, raising the felt portiere, found that it was indeed a bright moonlit night. As soon as she had gone, Qingwen felt tempted to give her a scare for fun. As she was stronger than the other girls and did not feel the cold, she slipped quietly down from the clothes-warmer wearing nothing but a light tunic, and tiptoed after Sheyue without putting on any wraps.

“Don’t go out like that,” warned Baoyu. “It’ll be no joke if you catch cold.”

Qingwen motioned to him to keep quiet and slipped out of the door. Once outside the room, however, a breath of wind chilled her to the bone and set her shivering.

“No wonder they say you shouldn’t expose yourself to the wind when you’re warm,” she thought. “This cold really cuts like a knife.”

Just then, before she had time to frighten Sheyue, Baoyu called loudly from inside, “Qingwen’s gone out!”

She turned back and went in again at once.

“Did you think I was going to scare her to death?” She giggled. “What a fuss-pot you are — a regular old woman!”

“That wasn’t what worried me,” Baoyu explained. “For one thing, I didn’t want you to catch cold. For another, if she’d been caught by surprise and screamed that might have woken the others; and instead of seeing the joke they’d accuse us of getting up to mischief as soon as Xiren was away. Now, come and tuck in my bedding for me, will you?”

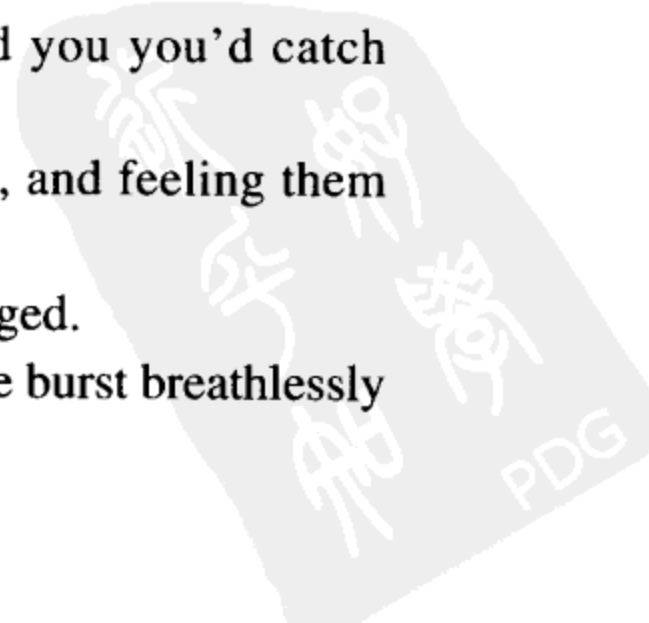
Qingwen did so, putting her hands inside his quilt to warm them.

“Your hands are *icy!*” he exclaimed. “I warned you you’d catch cold.”

He noticed that her cheeks were as red as rouge, and feeling them found them as cold as ice as well.

“Hop inside my quilt, quick, and warm up!” he urged.

That same instant the door was flung open. Sheyue burst breathlessly in.





笑了进来，说道：“吓了我一跳好的，黑影子里，山子石后头，只见一个人蹲着。我才要叫喊，原来是那个大锦鸡，见了人一飞，飞到亮处来，我才看真了。若冒冒失失一嚷，倒闹起人来。”一面说，一面洗手，又笑说道：“晴雯出去我怎么不见？一定是要唬我去了。”宝玉笑道：“这不是他，在这里渥呢！我若不嚷的快，可是倒唬你一跳。”晴雯笑道：“也不用我唬去，这小蹄子已经自惊自怪的了。”一面说，一面仍回自己被中去。麝月道：“你就这么‘跑解马’的打扮儿，伶伶俐俐的出去了不成？”宝玉笑道：“可不就这么出去了。”麝月道：“你要死，不拣好日子？你出去白站站，把皮不冻破了你的！”说着，又将火盆上铜罩揭开，拿灰铲重将熟炭埋了一埋，拈了两块素香来，放在火盆内，仍旧罩上，至屏后重剔亮了灯，方才睡下。

晴雯因方才一冷，如今又一暖，不觉打了两个喷嚏。宝玉叹道：“如何？到底伤了风了。”麝月笑道：“他早起就嚷不受用，一日也没吃饭。他这会子不说保养着些，还要捉弄人。明儿病了，叫他自作自受的。”宝玉问：“头上可热？”晴雯嗽了两声，说道：“不相干，那里这么娇嫩起来了。”说着，只听外间房中十锦格上的自鸣钟“当、当”两声，外间值宿的老嬷嬷嗽了两声，因说道：“姑娘们睡罢，明儿再说罢。”宝玉方悄悄的笑道：“咱们别说话了，看又惹他们说



“Goodness me! I’ve had such a fright,” she cried laughing. “I thought I saw someone crouching in the dark, behind the rocks. I was just going to scream when I realized it was only that big pheasant — it flapped out into the light at the sight of me, and then I saw it clearly. If I’d screamed, it would have woken all the others.” Washing her hands then she remarked, “So Qingwen’s gone out, has she? How come I didn’t see her? She must have been meaning to scare me.”

“Here she is,” chuckled Baoyu. “Thawing out under my quilt. If I hadn’t called out quickly, she’d have given you a fine fright.”

“She didn’t need *me* for that. The wretch took fright herself,” retorted Qingwen, returning to her own bed.

“Surely you didn’t slip out like that, in that tight-fitting horse-thief’s out fit?” asked Shenyue.

“Oh yes, she did,” said Baoyu.

“You deserve to catch your death!” exclaimed Sheyue. “What a day to choose! Why, just standing outside for a minute would chap your skin.”

She took the copper guard off the brazier to shovel some ash over the glowing charcoal, then put in two slabs of incense before replacing the guard. After that stepping behind the screen, she trimmed the lamp and lay down to sleep again.

Qingwen, warm now after being chilled, gave a couple of sneezes.

“What did I tell you?” Baoyu sighed. “Now you’ve caught cold.”

“She complained of not feeling well this morning,” Sheyue told him. “And she hasn’t eaten anything all day. Yet instead of taking proper care of herself she tries to scare me. If she’s ill tomorrow it will serve her right.”

“Do you have a fever?” asked Baoyu.

“It’s nothing.” Qingwen coughed. “I’m not all that delicate.”

Just then the clock on the shelf in the outer room struck two. The old nanny on night duty outside coughed warningly.

“Go to sleep now, young ladies,” she said. “There’ll be plenty of time for chattering tomorrow.”

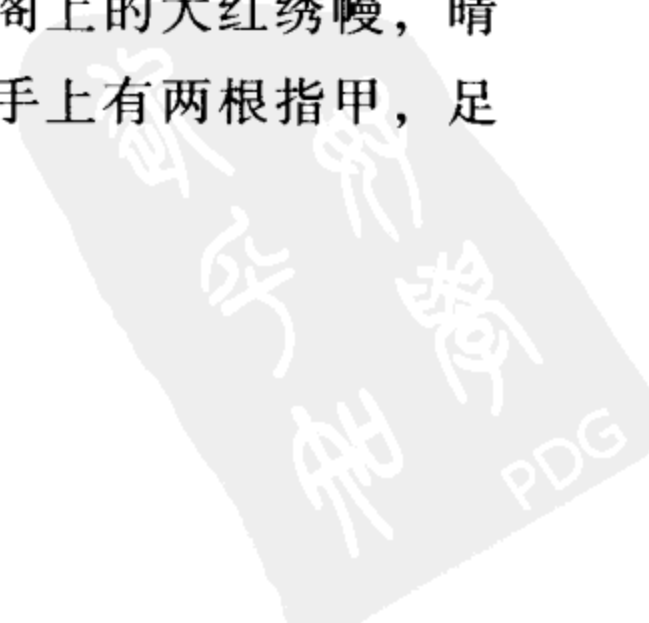
“We’d better stop talking before they start to nag,” whispered Baoyu. And so the three of them settled down to sleep.



话。”说着，大家笑了一会，睡了。

至次日起来，晴雯果觉有些鼻塞声重，懒待动弹。宝玉道：“快不要声张！太太知道，又叫你搬了家去养息。家去虽好，到底冷些，不如在这里。你就在里间屋里躺着，我叫人请了大夫来，悄悄从后门进来瞧瞧就是了。”晴雯道：“虽如此说，你到底要告诉大奶奶一声儿，不然一时大夫来了，人问起来，怎么说呢？”宝玉听了有理，便唤一个老嬷嬷吩咐道：“你回大奶奶去，就说晴雯白冷着了些，不是什么大病。袭人又不在家，他若家去养病，这里更没有人了。传一个大夫，悄悄的从后门进来瞧瞧，别回太太罢了。”老嬷嬷去了半日，回来说：“大奶奶知道了，说吃两剂药好了便罢，若不好时，还是出去的为是。如今时气不好，沾染了别人事小，二爷身子要紧的。”晴雯睡在暖阁，只管咳嗽，听了这话，气的喊道：“我那里就害瘟病了，生怕过了人！我离了这里，看你们这一辈子都别头疼脑热的。”说着，便真要起来。宝玉忙按他，笑道：“别生气，这原是他的责任，生恐太太知道了说他，不过白说了一句。你素习好生气，如今肝火自然又盛了。”

正说时，人回大夫来了。宝玉便走过来，避在书架后面。只见两三个后门口的老婆子带了一个大夫进来。这里的丫头都回避了，有三四个老嬷嬷放下暖阁上的大红绣幔，晴雯从幔帐中单伸出手去。那大夫见这只手上有两根指甲，足





The next morning, sure enough, Qingwen woke feeling listless. Her nose was stopped up and her voice was hoarse.

“Let’s say nothing about this,” suggested Baoyu. “If the mistress heard, she’d want you to go home and rest; and though you might enjoy being back with your people, it would be colder there. Better stay here. Just lie down in the inner room. I’ll have a doctor fetched through the back gate and he can take a look at you on the quiet.”

“That’s all very well,” said Qingwen. “But at least let Madam Zhu know. Otherwise, how will you explain it when people ask what the doctor’s doing here?”

Baoyu saw sense in this and called in one of the old nannies.

“Go and tell Madam Zhu that Qingwen has a slight cold, nothing serious,” he said. “But if she goes home to rest I’ll have nobody here, as Xiren’s away just now. Ask her to send for a doctor and have him come here quietly through the back gate. There’s no need to tell the mistress.”

The nanny returned in due course to announce, “I’ve told Madam Zhu. She says if a couple of doese will cure her, all right; otherwise she should be sent home. The weather now is treacherous. Infecting other people doesn’t matter much, but we mustn’t let the young ladies in the Garden catch anything.”

Qingwen heard this as she lay coughing in the alcove.

“She talks as if I had the plague!” she cried crossly. “Whom am I going to infect? All right, I’ll leave this place. But after this none of you must ever complain, as long as you live, of so much as a headache!”

She started getting up.

“Don’t be angry,” begged Baoyu, making her lie down again. “She’s only doing her job, afraid the mistress may scold if she hears about this. She doesn’t mean it seriously. You lose your temper far too easily, and of course being ill today makes you extra fractious.”

Just then the doctor was announced. Baoyu hid hurriedly behind a bookcase while a few matrons from the back gate ushered him in. The young maids had withdrawn, leaving three or four older women to let down the embroidered red curtains in front of the alcove, and Qingwen put her hand out through the curtains. The doctor hastily averted his eyes at the sight of two nails a good two to three inches long, stained crimson

有二、三寸长，尚有金凤花染的通红的痕迹，便忙回过头来。有一个老嬷嬷忙拿了一块手帕掩了。那大夫方诊了一回脉，起身到外间，向嬷嬷们说道：“小姐的病症是外感内滞，近日时气不好，竟算是个小伤寒。幸亏是小姐素日饮食有限，风寒也不大，不过是气血原弱，偶然沾染了些，吃两剂药，疏散疏散就好了。”说着，便又随婆子们出去。

彼时，李纨已遣人知会过后门上的人及各处丫鬟回避，那大夫只见了园中的景致，并不曾见一个女子。一时出了园门，就在守园门的小厮们的班房内坐了，开了方子。老嬷嬷们道：“老爷且别去，我们小爷罗唆，恐怕还有话问。”大夫忙道：“方才不是小姐，是位爷不成？那屋子竟是绣房一样，又是放下幔子来瞧的，如何是位爷呢？”老嬷嬷悄悄笑道：“我的老爷，怪道小厮们才说今儿请了一位新大夫来了，真不知我们家的事。那屋子是我们小哥儿的，那病人是他屋里的丫头，倒是个大姐，那里的小姐？若是小姐的绣房，小姐病了，你那么容易就进去了？”说着，拿了药方进去。

宝玉看时，上面有紫苏、桔梗、防风、荆芥等药，后面又有枳实、麻黄。宝玉道：“该死，该死，他拿着女孩儿们也像我们一样的治，如何使得！凭他有什么内滞，这枳实、麻黄如何禁得？谁请了来的，快打发他去罢！再请一个熟的来。”老嬷嬷道：“用药好不好，我们不知道。如今再叫小厮





with balsam; and at once an old nanny covered the hand with a handkerchief. After feeling the patient's pulse for a while, the doctor rose and withdrew to the outer room.

"The young lady is suffering from a cold aggravated by indigestion," he told the nannies. "The weather has been trying recently, and this is a mild attack of influenza. Luckily she is a young lady who normally eats and drinks with moderation, and the trouble isn't serious; but as she is rather delicate she has succumbed to a slight infection. A couple of doses of medicine will set her right." He then followed the matrons out again.

Since Li Wan had sent to order the attendants at the back gate and the maids in the various apartments to keep out of sight, the doctor could only feast his eyes on the Garden — not a single young woman did he see on his way out. Upon reaching the back gate, he sat down in the gatehouse used by the pages on duty to make out his prescription.

The old nannies asked him not to leave at once.

"Our young master is most particular," one of them explained. "He may want to ask you some questions."

"Young master!" exclaimed the doctor. "Wasn't that a young lady I examined just now? Surely it was a young lady's boudoir. And the curtains were let down too, so how can it have been a young gentleman?"

"Why, sir," chuckled the nanny, lowering her voice, "I see now why the boy told me they'd invited a new doctor. You don't know our family. That was our young master's room, and your patient was one of his maids, one of the more senior ones, true, but no young 'lady.' You wouldn't have gained admission so easily to one of our young ladies' boudoirs."

With that she took the prescription back to the Garden.

Baoyu examined it and found it listed such herbs as *perilla*, *platycodon*, *siler* and *nepeta*, as well as *citrus trifoliata* and *ephedra*.

"Confound the fellow!" he swore. "He's prescribing for her just as he would for a man. How could she stand such strong medicine? Even if she had bad indigestion how could she take *citrus trifoliata* and *ephedra*? Who sent for this fellow? Get rid of him, quick, and fetch some doctor we know."

"How were we to know what his prescriptions would be like?" re-



去请王太医去倒容易，只是这个大夫，又不是告诉总管房请的，这轿马钱是要给他的。”宝玉道：“给他多少？”婆子道：“少了不好看，也得一两银子才是我们这门户的礼。”宝玉道：“王太医来了给他多少？”婆子笑道：“王太医和张太医每常来了，也并没曾给银钱，不过每年节一趸送礼，那是一定的例。这个人新来了一次，须得给他一两银子，少了不好看。”宝玉听了，便命麝月去取银子。麝月道：“花大姐姐还不知搁在那里呢？”宝玉道：“我常见他在那小螺甸柜子里拿钱，我和你找去。”说着，二人来至宝玉堆东西的房内，开了螺甸柜子，上一格都是些笔墨、扇子、香饼、各色荷包、汗巾等类的东西；下一格却有几串钱。于是开了抽屉，才看见一个小簸箩内放着几块银子，倒也有一把戥子。麝月便拿了一块银子，提起戥子来问宝玉：“那是一两的星儿？”宝玉笑道：“你问我？有趣，你倒成了才来的了。”麝月也笑了，又要去问人。宝玉道：“拣那大的给他一块就是了。又不作买卖，算这些做什么！”麝月听了，便放下戥子，拣了一块掂了一掂，笑道：“这一块只怕是一两了。宁可多些好，别少了，叫那穷小子笑话，不说咱们不认得戥子，倒说咱们有心





torted the nanny. "We can easily send for Doctor Wang, but we'll have to pay for the hire of this other man's sedan-chair, as we didn't send for him through the chief steward."

"How much will it be?"

"It wouldn't look well to give too little," she answered. "A family like ours, in such a case, should pay at least a tael."

"How much do we usually pay Doctor Wang?"

"Doctor Wang and Doctor Zhang, who come so often, aren't paid for each separate visit. Our rule is to give them a lump sum at the chief festivals every year. Since this new man's only coming this once, we should give him one tael."

Baoyu then ordered Sheyue to fetch some silver.

"I don't know where our Mistress Xiren keeps it," she answered laughingly.

"I often see her getting money from that small infaid cabinet," he told her. "I'll help you find it."

They went together into the storeroom and opened the cabinet. The top compartment was full of brushes and sticks of ink, fans, incense slabs, multi-coloured pouches, sashes and the like. On the lower shelf lay a few strings of cash. But upon opening one of the drawers, they discovered a small wicker basket containing some silver ingots, as well as a balance for weighing them with.

Sheyue picked up the balance and one ingot of silver.

"Which is the one-tael mark?" she asked Baoyu.

"Are you asking me?" he chuckled. "You should know better."

She smiled too and started out to consult someone else.

"Just pick one of the biggest pieces," urged Baoyu. "We're not shopkeepers — why be so finicking?"

Setting down the balance, Sheyue picked up another ingot which she weighed in her hand.

"This is probably about one tael," she remarked. "We'd better be on the generous side, so as not to have that poor devil laughing at us. It would never occur to him that we don't know how to use a balance. Instead, he'd call us misers."

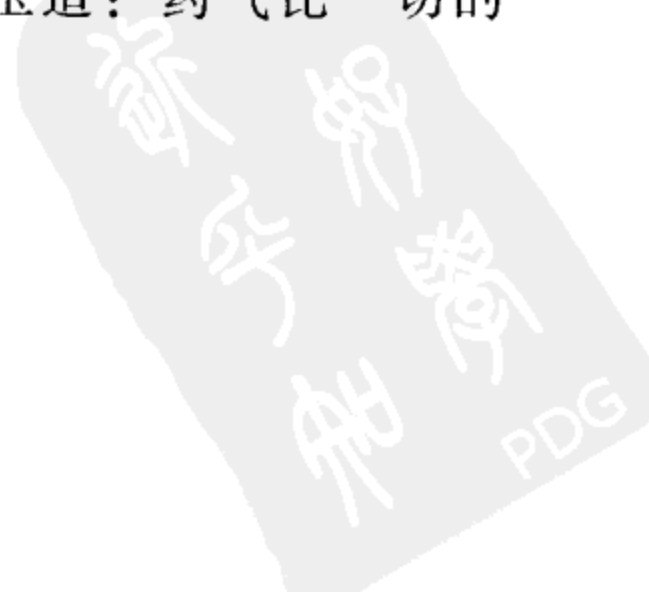
The woman standing on the steps outside the door put in, "That's



小器似的。”那婆子站在外头台矶上，笑道：“那是五两的锭子夹了半个，这一块至少还有二两呢！这会子又没夹剪，姑娘收了这个，再拣一块小些的罢。”麝月早关了柜子出来，笑道：“谁又找去！多了些你拿了去罢。”宝玉道：“你只快叫茗烟再请了王大夫来就是了。”婆子接了银子，自去料理。

一时茗烟果请了王太医来，先诊了脉后，说的病症与前相仿，只是方上果没有枳实、麻黄等药，倒有当归、陈皮、白芍等，药之分量比先也减了些。宝玉喜道：“这才是女孩儿们的药，虽然疏散，也不可太过。旧年我病了，却是伤寒内里饮食停滞，他瞧了，还说我禁不起麻黄、石膏、枳实等狼虎药。我和你们一比，我就如那野坟圈子里长的几十年的一颗老杨树，你们就如秋天芸儿进我的那才开的白海棠，连我禁不起的药，你们如何禁得起。”麝月等笑道：“野坟里只有杨树不成？难道就没有松柏？我最嫌的是杨树，那么大笨树，叶子只一点子，没一丝风，他也是乱响。你偏比他，也太下流了。”宝玉笑道：“松柏不敢比。连孔夫子都说：‘岁寒，然后知松柏之后凋也。’可知这两件东西高雅，不怕羞臊的才拿他混比呢。”

说着，只见老婆子取了药来。宝玉命把煎药的银吊子找了出来，就命在火盆上煎。晴雯因说：“正经给他们茶房里煎去，弄得这屋里药气，如何使得？”宝玉道：“药气比一切的





half a five-tael bar, it must weigh at least two taels. As you've nothing here to cut it with, you'd better put it away, miss, and pick something smaller."

By now, however, Sheyue had closed the cabinet.

"I can't be bothered," she laughed. "If it's too much, you can pocket the difference yourself."

"Just go and fetch Doctor Wang here fast," ordered Baoyu.

The woman took the silver and went to do as she was told.

Before very long Mingyan brought Doctor Wang, who first examined the patient then made a diagnosis very similar to the previous one. But instead of such ingredients as *citrus trifoliata* and *ephedra*, his prescription called for angelica, orange peel and white peony; moreover the dosage was smaller.

"This is more like medicine for girls," observed Baoyu approvingly. "Although we want to drive out the cold, drastic methods are no good. Last year when I had a chill and a bilious attack, and Doctor Wang examined me, he said I couldn't take strong drugs like *ephedra*, *gypsum* and *citrus trifoliata*. When I compare myself with you girls, I'm like a big poplar scores of years old in the graveyard, while you're like that white begonia in bud which Jia Yun gave me last autumn — how can you take medicines too potent even for me?"

"Are poplars the only graveyard trees?" Sheyue countered. "What about pines and cedars? Personally, I can't stand poplars. They have so few leaves for their size, and they keep up that maddening rustling even when there's not a breath of wind. How low-class to compare yourself to such a tree!"

"I wouldn't venture to compare myself with the pine or cedar," chuckled Baoyu. "Even Confucius said, 'When winter comes, we realize that the pine and cedar are evergreen.' You see, they're so magnificent, only really thick-skinned people would compare themselves with *them*."

As they were chatting, a serving-woman brought in the drugs. Baoyu ordered them to fetch the silver medicine-pot and brew the decoction over the brazier.

"Why not let the kitchen do it?" asked Qingwen. "You don't want the whole place reeking of medicine, do you?"



花香、果子香都雅。神仙采药烧药，再者高人逸士采药治药，最妙的一件东西。这屋里我正想各色都齐了，就只少药香，如今恰好全了。”一面说，一面早命人煨上。又嘱咐麝月打点些东西，遣老嬷嬷去看袭人，劝他少哭。一一妥当，方过前边来贾母、王夫人处问安吃饭。

正值凤姐和贾母、王夫人商议说：“天又短又冷，不如以后大嫂子带着姑娘们在园子里吃饭。等天长暖和了，再来回的跑也不妨。”王夫人笑道：“这也是好主意。刮风下雪倒便宜。吃些东西受了冷气也不好；空心走来，一肚子冷风，压上些东西也不好。不如后园门里头的五间大房子，横竖有女人们上夜，挑两个厨子女人在那里，单给他姊妹们弄饭。新鲜菜蔬是有分例的，在总管房里支了去，或要钱，或要东西；那些野鸡、獐、狍各样野味，分些给他们就是了。”贾母道：“我也正想着呢，就怕又添一个厨房多事些。”凤姐道：“并不多事。一样的分例，这里添了，那里减了。就便多费些事，姑娘们冷风朔气的，别人还可，第一林妹妹如何禁得住？就连宝兄弟也禁不住，何况众位姑娘。”贾母道：“正是这话了。上次我要说这话，我见你们的大事太多，如今又添出这些事来，你们固然不敢抱怨，未免想着我只顾疼这些小孙子、小孙女儿，就不体贴你们这当家的人了。你既这么说出来，更好了。”因此时薛姨妈、李婶都在座，邢夫人及





“The smell of medicine is sweeter than any flower or fruit,” asserted Baoyu. “What could be finer than these herbs which immortals, as well as hermits and recluses, pick to decoct as medicine? I was thinking only just now that we lack nothing here except the fragrance of herbs; but now it will be perfect.”

With that he had the medicine brewed. He also made Sheyue prepare some things to send by an old nanny to Xiren, with a message begging her not to grieve too much. After having seen to all this, he went to pay his respects to his grandmother and mother and to have his meal.

Just then Xifeng was saying to the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, “Now that it’s so cold and the days are shorter, wouldn’t it be better for the girls to have their meals with my elder sister-in-law in the Garden? They can come here to eat again once it is warmer.”

“That’s a good idea,” said Lady Wang. “Especially if there’s a high wind or snow. Exposure to cold after eating isn’t good; neither is breathing cold air on an empty stomach. Some maids are always on duty in those five large rooms inside the back gate of the Garden, and we can send two women from our kitchen there to cook for the girls. They can get their share of fresh vegetables and any money or things they need from the chief steward’s office. And when we have game like pheasant or roebuck, we can send them a share.”

“The idea did occur to me too,” said the Lady Dowager. “But I was afraid it would mean more work, setting up another kitchen.”

“It won’t,” Xifeng assured her. “They’ll get their usual share. More in one place means less in another. And even if it causes a little more trouble, it will prevent the girls from being exposed to the cold. The others might stand it all right, but not Daiyu, or even Cousin Bao for that matter. In fact, none of the girls is really strong.”

“Quite so,” approved the Lady Dowager. “I would have proposed this myself, but saw you were all so busy, even if you didn’t complain of the extra work you might well feel that I only care about my younger grandchildren, with no consideration for those of you who run the household. I’m glad you suggested this.”

It so happened that Aunt Xue and Aunt Li had called, while Lady Xing and Madam You were still there paying their respects.



尤氏婆媳也都过来请安，还未过去，贾母向王夫人等说道：“今儿我才说这话，素日我不说，一则怕逞了凤丫头的脸，二则众人不伏。今儿你们都在这里，都是经过妯娌、姑嫂的，还有像他这样想的到的没有？”薛姨妈、李婶、尤氏等齐笑道：“真个少有。别人不过是礼上面子情儿，实在他是真疼小叔子、小姑子。就是在老太太跟前，也是真孝顺。”贾母点头叹道：“我虽疼他，我又怕他太伶俐了，也不是好事。”凤姐忙笑道：“这话老祖宗说差了。世人都说太伶俐聪明了，怕活不长。世人都说得，人人都信，独老祖宗不当说，不当信。老祖宗只有伶俐聪明过我十倍的，怎么如今这样福寿双全的？只怕我明儿还胜老祖宗一倍呢！我活一千岁后，等老祖宗归了西，我才死呢。”贾母笑道：“众人都死了，单剩下咱们两个老妖精，有什么意思？”说的众人都笑了。且听下回分解。





“I’m going to say something today which I’ve been keeping back for fear of giving Xifeng a swelled head or causing jealousy,” the old lady told them. “All of you have been sister-in-law yourselves, before and after your own marriages. So tell me — have you ever known a sister-in-law as thoughtful as she is?”

Aunt Xue, Aunt Li and Madam You agreed.

“She’s one in a thousand!” they said. “Other young married women do no more than politeness requires, whereas she has genuine feeling for her husband’s younger relatives and is truly dutiful to you as well, madam.”

The Lady Dowager nodded.

“But fond as I am of her, I’m afraid she may be too clever for her own good,” she sighed.

“You’re wrong there, Old Ancestress,” laughed Xifeng. “It’s said that the cleverest people don’t live long. It’s all right for everyone else to say that and believe it. But you’re the last person who should subscribe to that. Our Old Ancestress is at least ten times more intelligent than I am, and since *you’re* enjoying both good fortune and long life, I ought to do even better. I may live to be a thousand, not dying until our Old Ancestress has ascended to the Western Paradise.”

“What fun would that be, pray?” the Lady Dowager parried. “Everybody else dead and only we two old hags left?”

The whole party burst out laughing at this retort.

What followed is related in the next chapter.



第五十二回

俏平儿情掩虾须镯 勇晴雯病补雀金裘

话说众人各自散后，宝钗姊妹等同贾母吃毕饭，宝玉因记挂着晴雯，便先回园子里来。到了房中，药香满室，一人不见，只见晴雯独卧于炕上，脸面烧的飞红，又摸了一摸，只觉烫手。忙又向炉上将手烘暖，伸进被去摸了一摸，身上也是火烧。因说道：“别人去了也罢，麝月、秋纹也这样无情，各自去了？”晴雯道：“秋纹是我撵了他去吃饭的，麝月是方才平儿来找他出去了。两个人鬼鬼祟祟的，不知说什么。必是说我病了不出去。”宝玉道：“平儿不是那样人。况且他并不知你病特来瞧你，想来一定是找麝月来说话，偶然见你病了，随口说特瞧你的病，这也是人情乖觉取和的常事。便不出去，有不是，与他何干？你们素日又好，断不肯为这无干的事伤和气。”晴雯道：“这话也是，只是疑他为什么忽然瞒起我来。”宝玉笑道：“等我从后门出去，到那窗根下听听说些什么，回来告诉你。”说着，果然从后门出去，至窗下潜听。

只闻麝月悄问道：“你怎么就得了的？”平儿道：“那日洗手时不见了，二奶奶就不许吵嚷，出了园门，即刻就传给园里各处的妈妈们小心查访。我们只疑心跟那姑娘的丫头，本



Chapter 52

Tactful Pinger Conceals the Theft of Her Gold Bracelet Plucky Qingwen Mends a Peacock-Feather Cape in Bed

After the rest had left, Baochai and the other girls dined with the old lady. The meal at an end, Baoyu went back first to the Garden as he had Qingwen on his mind. His rooms were filled with the pungent scent of herbs and Qingwen was lying all alone on the *kang*, her face flushed with fever, her forehead hot to his touch. After hastily warming his hands over the brazier, he felt her body beneath the quilt and found it burning too.

"I don't mind the others going off," he said, "but how could Sheyue and Qiuwen have the heart to leave you?"

"I made Qiuwen go for her meal, and just now Pinger called Sheyue out to have a word with her. Goodness knows what they're being so secretive about — my staying here although I'm ill, I suppose."

"Pinger's not like that," he assured her. "Besides, she'd no idea you were ill. She must have come to talk to Sheyue about something else and, happening to find you in bed, said she'd come to ask after you. That's only common politeness. If any trouble comes of your staying here, it has nothing to do with her. And the two of you normally get on so well, she'd never risk spoiling your friendship over something that is no concern of hers."

"You're probably right," agreed Qingwen. "But why are they suddenly hiding something from me?"

"I'll slip out by the back door and listen outside the window, then let you know what it's all about," he told her with a grin.

He did in fact go out to eavesdrop and heard Sheyue ask softly, "How did you recover it?"

"When I missed it that day after washing my hands, my mistress told me not to make a fuss," replied Pinger. "Once out of the Garden, how-



来又穷，只怕小孩子家没见过，拿了起来，也是有的。再不料定是你们这里的，幸而二奶奶没有在屋里，你们这里的宋妈妈去了，拿着这只镯子，说是小丫头坠儿偷起来的，被他看见，来回二奶奶的。我赶忙接了镯子，想了一想：宝玉是偏在你们身上留心用意、争胜要强的，那一年有个良儿偷玉，刚冷了这一二年，还有人提起来趁愿，这会子又跑出一个偷金镯子的来了，而且更偷到街坊上去了。偏是他这样，偏是他的人打嘴。所以，我倒忙叮咛宋妈，千万别告诉宝玉，只当没有这事，别和一个人提起。第二件，老太太、太太听见也生气。三则袭人和你们也不好看。所以我回二奶奶，只说：‘我往大奶奶那里去的，谁知镯子褪了口，丢在草根底下，雪深了没看见。今儿雪化尽了，黄澄澄的映着日头，还在那里呢，我就拣了起来。’二奶奶也就信了，所以我来告诉你们。你们以后防着他些，别使唤他到别处去。等袭人回来，你们商议着，变个法子打发出去就完了。”麝月道：“这小蹄子也见过些东西，怎么这么眼皮子浅。”平儿道：“究竟这镯子能多重，原是二奶奶说的，这叫‘虾须镯’，倒是这颗珠子还罢了。晴雯那蹄子是块爆炭，要告诉了他，他是忍不住的，一时气了，或打或骂，依旧嚷出来不好。所以单告诉你，留心就是了。”说着便作辞而去。

宝玉听了，又喜又气又叹。喜的是平儿竟能体贴自己；气的是坠儿小窃；再叹坠儿那样个伶俐人，作出这样丑事来。因而回至房中，把平儿之话一长一短告诉了晴雯。又

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ever, she ordered the matrons in all the Garden apartments to investigate carefully. It was Miss Xiuyan's maid whom we suspected. We thought that, being poor and never having seen such things before, the child might have picked it up. We never dreamed it would turn out to be one of *your* girls. Luckily Madam Lian was out when Mrs. Song brought the bracelet back to me saying she'd seen young Zhuier take it, and she'd come to report it to Madam Lian. I was very glad to get my bracelet back.

"I couldn't help thinking then how considerate Baoyu is to you girls, and how proud of you as well. Yet two years ago Lianger stole a piece of jade, which is still making idle tongues wag, and now another of your girls has stolen a gold bracelet from one of his neighbours, too! It's a shame that Baoyu of all people should be disgraced by his own maids in this way. So I hurriedly asked Mrs. Song on no account to tell him but just to forget it, and to say nothing to *anyone* about it. For if this came to the ears of the old lady and Lady Wang, how angry they'd be! It would reflect badly on Xiren and the rest of you as well.

"So I simply told Madam Lian that the clasp of my bracelet was loose and so I'd dropped it in the grass on the way to Madam Zhu's place, when the snow was too deep to find it. Today after the snow had melted and it lay glinting in the sun, I picked it up where I'd dropped it. And she took my word for it. The reason I'm telling you this is so that you'll take precautions in future and not send Zhuier out on any errands. When Xiren comes back, you can talk it over with her and cook up some excuse for dismissing the girl."

"It's not as if the little bitch hadn't seen plenty of things of that sort," exclaimed Sheyue. "Why did she have to steal it?"

"There's not too much gold in that bracelet, though the pearl on it is a good size," remarked Pinger. "It's one that Madam Lian gave me. She called it her 'shrimp-beard bracelet.' I haven't told Qingwen because she's as hot-tempered as crackling charcoal. She'd be bound to flare up and start beating or cursing the girl; then the whole story would get out. That's why I'm just warning *you* to be on your guard." This said she took her leave.

Baoyu had overheard this with mixed feelings: pleasure at Pinger's consideration for him, anger at Zhuier's dishonesty, and regret that such



说：“他说你是个要强的，如今病着，听了这话越发要添病的，等好了再告诉你。”晴雯听了，果然气的蛾眉倒竖，凤眼圆睁，即时就叫坠儿。宝玉忙劝道：“你这一喊出来，岂不辜负了平儿待你我之心了。不如领他这个情，过后打发他出去就完了。”晴雯道：“虽如此说，只是这口气如何忍得！”宝玉道：“这有什么气的？你只养病就是了。”

晴雯服了药，至晚间又服二和药，夜间虽有些汗，还未见效，仍是发烧，头疼鼻塞声重。次日，王太医又来诊视，另加减汤剂。虽然稍减了些烧，仍是头疼。宝玉便命麝月：“取鼻烟来，给他嗅些，痛打几个嚏喷，就通快了。”麝月果真却取了一个金镶双扣金星玻璃的一个扁盒来，递与宝玉。宝玉便揭开盒盖，里面有西洋珐琅的黄发赤身女子，两肋又有肉翅，里面盛着些真正汪恰洋烟。晴雯只顾看画儿，宝玉道：“嗅些，走了气就不好了。”晴雯听说，忙用指甲挑了些嗅入鼻中，不怎样。便又多多挑了些嗅入。忽觉鼻中一股酸辣透入脑门，接连打了五、六个嚏喷，眼泪鼻涕登时齐流。晴雯忙收了盒子，笑道：“了不得，好辣！快拿纸来。”早有丫头递过一搭子细纸，晴雯便一张一张的拿来醒鼻





an intelligent girl should do something so underhand.

He went back to Qingwen and told her all that Pinger had said, concluding, "She didn't want you to know till you were better, because you take things so much to heart that this news might make your illness worse."

Indeed, Qingwen's eyebrows had shot up and her eyes were round with rage. She wanted to summon Zhuier then and there.

"All Pinger's consideration for us would be wasted if you make a scene," he warned. "As she's been so thoughtful, let's do as she suggested and get rid of Zhuier later."

"It's all very well for you to talk," cried Qingwen. "But I can't stand it — I'm so angry!"

"It's not worth flaring up about. Just concentrate on getting better."

Qingwen took some medicine then and that evening had the second infusion. She sweated a little that night, but not enough, and awoke the next morning with a fever, headache, a stopped-up nose and sore throat. Doctor Wang called again and made certain alterations in the prescription; but although her temperature went down a little, her head continued to ache.

"Bring her some snuff," Baoyu told Sheyue. "She'll feel better after a few good sneezes."

Sheyue accordingly brought him a small flat, goldenstarred glass case with gilt double-catches, and Baoyu opened it. Inside the lid, in western enamel, was a picture of a naked girl with yellow hair and fleshy wings the case contained some genuine *Wangqia* foreign snuff; but instead of taking it, Qingwen just pored over the picture.

"Do hurry up and take some," Baoyu urged her. "It's not good to expose snuff to the air too long."

She promptly dipped one finger-nail into the snuff, put it to her nose and inhaled. As she felt no effect, she tried a larger amount. At once her nose tingled and the smarting spread right up to her cranium. She sneezed so violently, five or six times in succession, that her nose and eyes started to run.

"My, that's better!" she exclaimed, closing the case. "Fetch me some paper, quick."

One of the younger maids had a stack of fine soft paper ready, and

子。宝玉笑问：“如何？”晴雯笑道：“果觉通快些，只是太阳还疼。”宝玉笑道：“率性尽用西洋药治一治，只怕就好了。”说着，便命麝月：“和二奶奶要去，就说我说了：姐姐那里常有那西洋贴头疼的膏子药，叫做‘依弗哪’，找寻一点儿。”麝月答应了，去了半日，果拿了半截来。便去找了一块红缎子角儿，铰了两块指头顶大的圆式，将那药烤和了，用簪挺摊上。晴雯自拿着一面靶儿镜，贴在两太阳上。麝月笑道：“病的蓬头鬼一样，如今贴了这个，倒俏皮了。二奶奶贴惯了，倒不大显。”说毕，又向宝玉道：“二奶奶说了，明日是舅老爷生日，太太说叫你去呢。明儿穿什么衣裳？今儿晚上好打点齐备了，省得明儿早起费事。”宝玉道：“什么顺手就是什么罢，一年闹生日也闹不清。”说着，便起身出房，往惜春房中去看画。

刚到了院门，忽见宝琴的小丫头名小螺者从那边过去，宝玉忙赶上问道：“那去？”小螺笑道：“我们二位姑娘都在林姑娘房里呢，我如今也往那里去。”宝玉听了，转步也便同他往潇湘馆来。不但宝钗姊妹在此，且连邢岫烟也在那里，四人围坐在熏笼上叙家常呢。紫鹃倒坐在暖阁里，临窗作针黹。一见他来，都笑说：“又来了一个！可没了你的坐处了。”宝玉笑道：“好一幅‘冬闺集艳图’！可惜我迟来了一步。横竖这屋子比各屋子暖，这椅子上坐着并不冷。”说



Qingwen took sheet after sheet to blow her nose.

“Well, how’s that?” asked Baoyu.

“Better. But my temples still ache.”

“We may as well try some other Western medicine to set that right too.” He told Sheyue, “Go and ask the Second Mistress for some of that Western ointment she keeps for headaches. *Yi-fu-na*, it’s called.”

Sheyue assented and went off to Xifeng’s apartments, returning after a while with some of the ointment. She then fetched a scrap of red satin from which she cut out two round patches, each the size of her finger-tip. Having heated the ointment, she spread it on with a hairpin. Qingwen picked up a hand-mirror and stuck the patches on her temples herself.

“You were lying there like a tousled ghose,” teased Sheyue. “Now with these patches you look rather pretty! We’re so used to the Second Mistress wearing these that we hardly notice them on her.”

She turned to Baoyu. “Madam Lian says tomorrow is your Uncle Wang’s birthday, and the mistress wants you to go and pay your respects. What will you wear? We’d better get your clothes ready tonight, to save trouble tomorrow morning.”

“I’ll wear whatever’s handy,” Baoyu answered. “I can’t keep track of these endless birthdays all the year round.”

With that he got up and went out, intending to go and watch Xichun painting. Just outside his compound, however, he saw Baoqin’s little maid Xiaoluo passing by not far away. Overtaking her, he asked where she was going.

“Our two young ladies are with Miss Daiyu,” she told him. “I’m on my way there too.”

So he changed his mind and went with her to Bamboo Lodge. There, sitting round the brazier and chatting with Daiyu, he found not only Baochai and Baoqin but Xiuyan as well, while Zijuan was sewing in the warm alcove by the window.

“Here comes another!” they cried at sight of him. “There’s no place left for you.”

“What a delightful picture!” laughed Baoyu. “‘Beauties in a Winter Chamber!’ Too bad I didn’t come a bit earlier. Still, this is the warmest room there is and I shan’t be cold on this chair.”



着，便坐在黛玉常坐的搭着灰鼠椅搭的一张椅子上。因见暖阁之中有一玉石条盆，里面攒三聚五栽着一盆单瓣水仙，点着宣石，便极口赞：“好花！这屋子越暖，这花香的越浓。昨日未见。”黛玉因说道：“这是你家的大总管赖大婶子送薛二姑娘的，两盆腊梅，两盆水仙。他送了我一盆水仙，送了蕉丫头一盆腊梅。我原不要的，又恐辜负了他的心。你若要，我转送你如何？”宝玉道：“我屋里却有两盆，只是不及这个。琴妹妹送你的，如何又转送人，这个断使不得。”黛玉道：“我一日药杯子不离手，我竟是药养着呢，那里还搁得住花香来熏？越发弱了。况且这屋里一股药香，反把这花香搅坏了。不如你抬了去，这花也清净了，没杂味来搅他。”宝玉笑道：“我屋里今儿也有病人吃药呢，你怎么知道了？”黛玉笑道：“这话奇了，我原是无心的话，谁知你屋里的事？你不早来听说古记，这会子来了，自惊自怪的。”

宝玉笑道：“咱们明儿下一社又有了题目了，就咏水仙、腊梅。”黛玉听了，笑道：“罢，罢！我再不敢作诗了，作一回，罚一回，没的怪羞的。”说着，便两手握起脸来。宝玉笑道：“何苦来！又奚落我作什么？我还不怕臊呢，你倒握起脸来了。”宝钗因笑道：“下次我邀一社，四个诗题，四个词题。每人四首诗，四阕词。头一个诗题《咏〈太极图〉》，限一先的韵，五言律，要把一先的韵都用尽了，一个不许剩。”宝琴笑道：“这一说，可知姐姐不是真心起社

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He seated himself on Daiyu's favourite chair which was covered with a squirrel-fur rug. And his eye fell on a rectangular marble jardiniere in the alcove in which were arranged some single-petalled narcissi and rocks.

"What lovely flowers!" he exclaimed. "The warmer the room, the stronger their scent. How is it I didn't notice them yesterday?"

Daiyu told him, "The wife of your chief steward Lai Da sent Baoqin two pots of winter-plum and two of narcissi. Baoqin gave me one pot of narcissi and Tanchun one of winter-plum. I only took it to show my appreciation of her kindness. If you like it, you can have it."

"I've two pots actually in my room, only they're not as good as this," he replied. "How can you possibly give away a present from cousin Baoqin?"

"I've medicine simmering on the stove all day; in fact, I practically live on medicine," she countered. "How can I stand the scent of flowers as well? It's too enervating. Besides, the pungent aroma of medicine here spoils the fragrance of the flowers. You'd better take these narcissi to your place where their pure perfume won't get mixed up with other odours."

"How do you know?" he demanded laughingly. "I've a patient taking medicine in my place too now."

"That's a strange way to talk," she retorted. "As if I was hinting at something. How should I know what's happening in your apartments? You should have come earlier to listen to our stories, instead of turning up now and raising such a rumpus."

"We've a subject now for the next meeting of our club," declared Baoyu. "We can write on the narcissus and winter-plum."

"Not I!" cried Daiyu. "No more versifying for me. One only gets penalized each time, and that's too shameful." She covered her face with her hands.

"Now then!" laughed Baoyu. "Why make fun of me again? If even I don't feel ashamed why should *you* hide your face?"

"Next time I'll call a meeting," announced Baochai. "Each of you will have to produce four pentasyllabic *shi* and four *ci* on different themes. The first *shi* of couplets will be on *The Diagram of the Supreme Ulti-*



了，这分明难人。若论起来，也强扭的出来，不过颠来倒去弄些《易经》上的话生填，究竟有何趣味？我八岁时节，跟我父亲到西海沿子上买洋货，谁知有个真真国的女孩子，才十五岁，那脸面就和那西洋画上的美人一样，也披着黄头发，打着联垂，满头带的都是珊瑚、琥珀、猫儿眼、祖母绿这些宝石；身上穿着金丝织的锁子甲洋锦袄袖；带着倭刀，也是镶金嵌宝的，实在画儿上的也没他好看。有人说他也通中国的诗书，会讲五经，能作诗填词，因此我父亲央烦了一位通事官，烦他写了一张字，就写的是他作的诗。”众人都称奇道异，宝玉忙笑道：“好妹妹，你拿出来我瞧瞧。”宝琴笑道：“在南京收着呢，此时那里取来？”宝玉听了，大失所望，便说：“没福得见这世面。”黛玉笑拉宝琴道：“你别哄我们。我知道你这一来，你的这些东西未必放在家里，自然都是要带了来的，这会子又扯谎说没带来。他们虽信，我是不信的。”宝琴便红了脸，低了头微笑不语。宝钗笑道：“偏这个颦儿惯说这些白话，把你伶俐的。”黛玉道：“若带来了，就给我们见识见识也罢了。”宝钗笑道：“箱子笼子一大堆还没理清，知道在那个里头呢！等过日收拾清了，找出来大家再看就是了。”又向宝琴道：“你若记得，何不念念我们听听。”宝琴方答道：“记得是一首五言律，外国的女子也就难为他了。”宝钗道：“你且别念，等把云儿叫了来，也叫他



mate,¹ and all the words that rhyme with *xian* will have to be used — not one must be left out.”

“You obviously don’t really want to invite us, cousin, or you wouldn’t make things so difficult,” chuckled Baoqin. “Of course, if one tried, one could manage by filling up the lines with phrases from the *Book of Change* — but where’s the fun in that? When I was eight, my father took me to the coast of the western sea to buy foreign goods, and there we saw a girl from the land of Zhenzhen, who had just turned fifteen, with a face like those beauties in Western paintings. Her long golden hair was plaited, and in it she wore precious stones like coral, amber, cat’s-eye and emerald. She had on golden chainmail and a jacket of foreign brocade, and she carried a Japanese sword inlaid with gold and studded with gems—in fact, she was even lovelier than those beauties in the paintings. It was said that she was versed in our Chinese classics and could expound the *Five Canons* and write poems; so my father asked, through an interpreter, to see one of her poems written in her own hand.”

They all marvelled at this story.

Baoyu pleaded, “Good cousin, do let me have a look at that poem!”

“I left it in Nanjing,” said Baoqin. “I can’t lay my hands on it at a moment’s notice.”

Baoyu, most disappointed, sighed at not having the luck to see it.

“Don’t try to fool us!” chuckled Daiyu, tugging at Baoqin’s sleeve. “I know you wouldn’t leave such things behind. You’d naturally bring them all along. *They* may be taken in by your fib, but not I.”

Baoqin smiled and blushing lowered her head in silence.

“Trust Daiyu to say such a thing,” put in Baochai. “You can’t out-smart her.”

“If you’ve brought it, do let us profit by seeing it,” urged Daiyu.

“They’ve a whole pile of cases and baskets not yet sorted out,” explained Baochai. “Who knows which one it’s in? Just wait until everything’s properly unpacked, then she’ll let everyone see it.” She turned to Baoqin. “Don’t you know it by heart? Do recite it.”

“I remember a pentasyllabic regular verse she wrote,” said Baoqin. “It wasn’t bad at all for a foreigner.”

“Wait a bit,” interposed Baochai. “Let’s get Xiangyun here to hear it



听听。”说着，便叫小螺来吩咐道：“你到我那里去，就说我们这里有一个外国的美人来了，作的好诗，请你这‘诗疯子’瞧去，再把我们那‘诗呆子’也带来。”小螺笑着去了。

半日，只听见湘云笑问：“那一个外国的美人来了？”一头说，一头果和香菱来了。众人笑道：“人未见形，先已闻声。”宝琴等忙让坐，遂把方才的话重叙了一遍。湘云笑道：“快念来听听。”宝琴因念道：

昨夜朱楼梦，今宵水国吟。

乌云蒸大海，岚气接丛林。

月本无今古，情缘自浅深。

汉南春历历，焉得不关心。

众人听了，都道“难为他！竟比我们中国人还强。”一语未了，只见麝月走来说：“太太打发人来告诉二爷，明日一早往舅舅那里去，就说太太身上不大好，不能亲自来。”宝玉忙站起来答应道：“是。”因问宝钗、宝琴可去？宝钗道：“我们不去，昨儿单送了礼去了。”大家说了一回方散。

宝玉因让诸姊妹先行，自己落后。黛玉便又叫住他，问道：“袭人到底多早晚回来？”宝玉道：“自然等送了殡才来呢。”黛玉还有话说，又不曾出口，出了一回神，便说道：“你去罢。”宝玉也觉心里有许多话，只是口里不知要说什么，想了一想，也笑道：“明日再说罢”。一面下了阶矶，低



too." She called Xiaoluo and told her, "Go to our apartments and tell our maid poetess that we have a foreign beauty here who writes good poems. And tell her to bring the other poetry maniac to see her too."

Xiaoluo went off on this errand with a smile.

After a while they heard Xiangyun demanding merrily, "Where is this foreign beauty?" And in she came with Xiangling.

They teased, "Before you see her, you hear her voice."

Baoqin and the others hurriedly offered them seats and told them what had been said.

"Hurry up and let us hear the poem," begged Xiangyun.

Then Baoqin recited:

Last night I dreamed in a vermilion mansion,
Today my songs rise by the sea:
Clouds from the islands make a haze over the ocean,
Mist from the hills links the forests' greenery;
To the moon, past and present are one;
Men's passions, inconstant, are no counterpart.
As spring pervades south China.
How can I but take this to heart?

"Not bad at all!" was the verdict. "Better, in fact, than some Chinese could write."

As they were speaking Sheyue came in to announce, "The mistress has sent to tell Master Bao to call on his uncle first thing tomorrow morning. She wants him to explain that she's not well enough to go herself."

Baoyu, who had risen to accept these instructions, asked Baochai and Baoqin if they would be going too.

"No," said Baochai. "We just sent presents yesterday."

After a little further chat they dispersed.

Baoyu had told his cousins to go on ahead, leaving him to follow, but now Daiyu asked him:

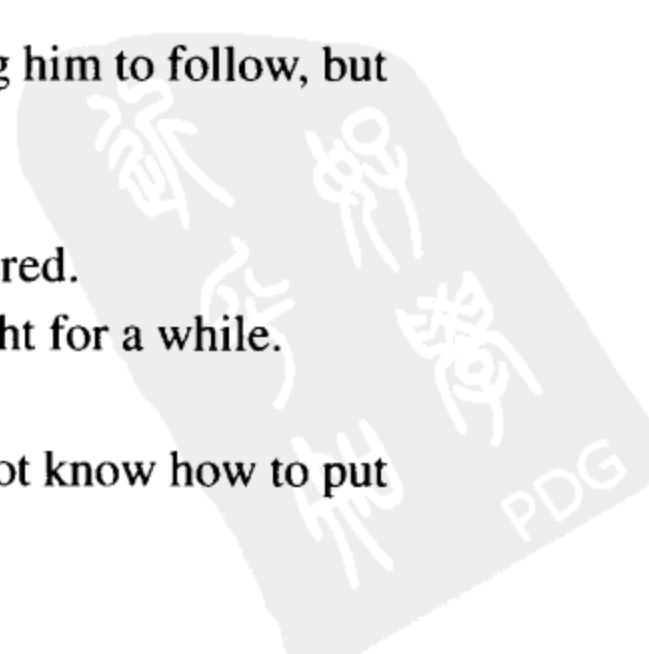
"When will Xiren be back?"

"Not until after the funeral, of course," he answered.

Daiyu had more to say but hesitated, lost in thought for a while.

"Well, go along now," she said finally.

Baoyu, too, had much in his heart to say but did not know how to put





头正要迈步，复又忙回身问道：“如今的夜越发长了，你一夜咳嗽几遍？醒几次？”黛玉道：“昨儿夜里好，只咳嗽了两遍，却只睡了四更一个更次，就再不能睡了。”宝玉又笑道：“正是有句要紧的话，这会子才想起来。”一面说，一面就挨近身来，悄悄的道：“我想宝姐姐送你的燕窝……”一语未了，只见赵姨娘走了进来瞧黛玉，问：“姑娘这两天好？”黛玉便知他是从探春处来，从门前过，顺路的人情。黛玉忙陪笑让坐，说：“难为姨娘想着，怪冷的，亲自走来。”又忙命倒茶，一面又使眼色与宝玉。宝玉会意，便走出来。

正值吃晚饭时，见了王夫人，王夫人又嘱咐他早去。宝玉回来，看晴雯吃了药。此夜宝玉便不命晴雯挪出暖阁来，自己便在晴雯外边。又命将熏笼抬至暖阁前，麝月便在熏笼上，一宿无话。

至次日，天未明时，晴雯便叫醒麝月道：“你也该醒醒了，只是睡不够！你出去叫人给他预备茶水，我叫醒他就是了。”麝月忙披衣起来道：“咱们叫起他来，穿好衣服，抬过熏笼去，再叫他们进来。老嬷嬷们已经说过，不叫他在这屋里，怕过了病气。如今叫他们看见咱们挤在一处，又该唠叨了。”晴雯道：“我也是这么说呢。”二人才叫时，宝玉已醒了，忙起身披衣。麝月先叫进小丫头子们来，收拾妥了，才命秋纹、檀云等进来，一同伏侍宝玉梳洗毕。麝月道：“天又

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it into words. After a thoughtful pause he rejoined, "We can talk again tomorrow."

He walked down the steps with lowered head, turning back suddenly to ask, "Are you coughing much, now that the nights are longer? How often do you wake?"

"I had a good night yesterday, with only two fits of coughing. But I only managed to sleep through the fourth watch — after that I couldn't get back to sleep again."

"I've just remembered something important." Drawing closer to her he whispered, "I think that bird's-nest Baochai gave you...."

He was cut short by the arrival of concubine Zhao, come to ask after Daiyu's health.

Daiyu knew that she had only called out of politeness on her way back from Tanchun's apartments. She made her sit down and remarked, "It was considerate of you to come out on such a cold day."

She ordered tea, glancing at Baoyu as she did so. Taking the hint, he left to join his mother for dinner, and was there reminded to make an early start the next day. Upon his return to Happy Red Court he saw to it that Qingwen took her medicine and slept in the warmth inside the alcove, while he remained outside. The brazier was moved closer to the alcove, and Sheyue slept on the clothes-warmer. They passed a quiet night.

The next morning Qingwen woke Sheyue before it was light.

"Get up!" she called. "You never seem to have had enough sleep! Go and get them to make some tea while I wake him up."

Sheyue scrambled into her clothes.

"Let's get him up and dressed first, and move away this clothes-warmer before we call the others," she proposed. "The nurses said he wasn't to sleep in this room for fear of infection. If we let them see us all crowded together in here, they'll start nagging again."

"Just what I think," agreed Qingwen.

Baoyu woke up himself as they were about to rouse him. He got up and dressed without delay while Sheyue called in some young maids to tidy the room. Only when this was done were Qiuwen and Tanyun sum-



阴阴的，只怕有雪，穿那一套毡子的罢。”宝玉点头，即时换了衣裳。小丫头使用小茶盘捧了一盖碗建莲红枣汤来，宝玉喝了两口。麝月又捧过一小碟法制紫姜来，宝玉噙了一块。又嘱咐了晴雯一回，便往贾母处来。

贾母犹未起来，知道宝玉出门，便开了房门，命宝玉进去。宝玉见贾母身后，宝琴面向里还未起来呢。贾母见宝玉身上穿着荔色哆啰呢的天马箭袖，大红猩猩毡盘金彩绣石青妆缎沿边的排穗褂子。贾母问道：“下雪么？”宝玉道：“天阴着呢，还没下雪。”贾母便命鸳鸯来：“把昨儿那一件乌云豹的氅衣给他罢。”鸳鸯答应了，走去果然取了一件来。宝玉看时，金翠辉煌，碧彩闪烁，又不似宝琴所披之凫靥裘。只听贾母笑道：“这叫作‘雀金呢’，这是俄罗斯国拿孔雀毛拈了线织的。前儿把那一件野鸭子的给了你小妹妹，这件给你罢。”宝玉磕了一个头，便披在身上。贾母笑道：“你先给你娘瞧瞧去再去。”宝玉答应了，便出来，只见鸳鸯站在地下揉眼睛。因自那日鸳鸯发誓决绝之后，他总不和宝玉讲话。宝玉正自日夜不安，此时见他又要回避，宝玉便上来笑道：“好姐姐，你瞧瞧，我穿着这个好不好？”鸳鸯一摔手，便进贾母房中去了。宝玉只得来到王夫人房中，与王夫人看了，然后又回至园中，与晴雯、麝月看过，便回至贾母房中回说：“太太看了，只说可惜了，叫我仔细穿，别糟踏了。”





moned to wait on Baoyu.

As he finished his toilet Sheyue said, "It's cloudy again and looks like snow, you'd better wear something woollen."

He nodded and changed his clothes, then sipped a little of the lotus-seed and date broth a young maid offered him on a small tray, and took a piece of crystallized ginger from the plate Sheyue brought him. Finally, having urged Qingwen to look after herself, he went to the Lady Dowager's apartments.

His grandmother was still abed, but hearing that Baoyu was going out she had him admitted to her bedroom, where he saw Baoqin lying asleep behind her, her face to the wall.

The Lady Dowager noticed that Baoyu was wearing, over his brown velvet archer's coat lined with fox fur, a scarlet felt jacket embroidered with gold thread. Its slate-blue satin border was fringed with tassels.

"Is it snowing?" she asked him.

"Not yet, but it looks as if it will," he replied.

"Bring him that peacock-feather cape taken out yesterday," the old lady ordered Yuanyang.

The maid promptly brought in a cape which shimmered gold, green and blue and was no less magnificent, in a different style, than Baoqin's cape of wild-duck down.

"This is called 'golden peacock felt,' " his grandmother told him with a smile. "It was woven of peacock feathers in Russia. The other day I gave your cousin one of wild-duck down, so now I'm making you a present of this."

Baoyu kowtowed his thanks and put on the cape.

"Mind you show it to your mother before you go out," the Lady Dowager charged him with a smile.

He agreed to this and, going out, saw Yuanyang standing in the passage rubbing her eyes. Since the day on which she had vowed never to marry, she had upset him by ignoring him. At sight of him now she started to slip away, but he stepped forward to greet her.

"Look, dear sister! How does this suit me?"

She flung away from him into the old lady's room.

Baoyu had to go on then to show the cape to his mother, after which

贾母道：“就剩了这一件，你糟踏了也再没了。这会子特给你做这个也是没有的事。”说着又嘱咐他：“不许多吃酒，早些回来。”宝玉应了几个“是”。

老嬷嬷们跟至厅上，只见宝玉的奶兄李贵、王荣、张若锦、赵亦华、钱启、周瑞六个人，带着茗烟、伴鹤、锄药、扫红四个小厮，背着衣包，抱着坐褥，拢着一匹雕鞍彩辔的白马，早已伺候多时了。老嬷嬷又吩咐了他六人些话，六个人忙答应了几个“是”，便捧鞭坠镫。宝玉慢慢的上了马，李贵和王荣拢着嚼环，钱启、周瑞二人在前引导，张若锦、赵亦华在两边紧贴宝玉身后。宝玉在马上笑道：“周哥，钱哥，咱们打这角门走罢，省得到了老爷的书房门口又下来。”周瑞侧身笑道：“老爷不在家，书房天天锁着的，爷可以不用下来罢了。”宝玉笑道：“虽锁着，也要下来的。”钱启、李贵等都笑道：“爷说的是。要托懒不下来，倘或遇见赖大爷、林二爷，虽不好说，也要劝他两句。有的不是，都派在我们身上，又说我们不教爷礼了。”周瑞、钱启便一直引出角门来。

正说话时，顶头果见赖大进来。宝玉忙拢住马，意欲下来，赖大忙上来抱住腿。宝玉便在镫上站起来，笑携他的手，说了几句话。接着又见一个小厮带着二、三十个拿扫帚簸箕的人进来，见了宝玉，都顺墙垂手立住，独那为首的小厮打千儿，请了一个安。宝玉不识名姓，只微笑点了点头。马已过去，那人方带了人去。于是出了角门外，又有李贵等



he returned to the Garden and displayed it to Qingwen and Sheyue. He went back then to the Lady Dowager.

“Mother’s seen it and thinks it a pity to wear it,” he said. “She told me to be extra careful not to spoil it.”

“It’s the only one left,” replied his grandmother. “If you spoil it, you won’t get another. Impossible to replace it.” She warned him not to drink too much and to come back early, which he promised to do.

Some old nurses followed him to the main hall where six stewards — Nanny Li’s son Li Gui, Wang Rong, Zhang Ruojin, Zhao Yihua, Qian Qi and Zhou Rui — were waiting for him. With them were his four pages Mingyan, Banhe, Chuyao and Saohong, who were carrying a change of clothes for him and a cushion. A splendidly caparisoned white horse with an embossed saddle stood there in readiness too. When the stewards had received the old nurses’ instructions, acting as grooms they helped Baoyu to mount slowly into the saddle. Then Li Gui and Wang Rong took the bridle, Qian Qi and Zhou Rui led the way, and Zhang Ruojin and Zhao Yihua followed close behind, one on each side of Baoyu.

“Let’s leave by the side gate, brothers,” called Baoyu to Zhou Rui and Qian Qi. “Then I won’t have to dismount by my father’s study.”

“There’s no need for that,” replied Zhou Rui, turning his head with a smile. “His Lordship is away and the place is locked.”

“Even so, I still ought to get down,” insisted Baoyu.

“Quite right, sir,” chuckled Qian Qi and Li Gui. “If you were too lazy to dismount and we happened to run into Mr. Lai or Mr. Lin, even if they didn’t lecture you they’d have something to say about it. And all the blame would be laid on us for not teaching you better manners.”

So Zhou Rui and Qian Qi led the horse to the side gate. And, sure enough, as they were talking they ran into Lai Da. Baoyu promptly pulled up to dismount, but the chief steward hurried forward and clasped his knee. Baoyu stood up in his stirrups and, taking him by the hand, exchanged greetings with him. Then a page came in at the head of a couple of dozen men with brooms and dustpans. These lined up respectfully by the wall at the sight of their young master, while the page knelt on one knee and paid his respects. Baoyu, not knowing his name, simply smiled and nodded. Not until he had ridden past did the men move on.



六个人的小厮并几个马夫，早预备下十来匹马专候。一出了角门，李贵等都各上了马，前引傍围的一阵烟去了，不在话下。

这里晴雯吃了药，仍不见病退，急的乱骂大夫，说：“只会骗人的钱，一剂好药也不给人吃。”麝月笑劝他道：“你太性急了，俗语说：‘病来如山倒，病去如抽丝。’又不是老君的仙丹，那有这样灵药！你只静养几天，自然就好了。你越急越着手。”晴雯又骂小丫头子们：“那里钻沙去了！瞅我病了，都大胆子走了。明儿我好了，一个一个的才揭你们的皮呢！”唬的小丫头子篆儿忙进来问：“姑娘作什么？”晴雯道：“别人都死绝了，就剩了你不成？”说着，只见坠儿也蹭了进来。晴雯道：“你瞧瞧这小蹄子，不问他还不来呢。这里又放月钱了，又散果子了，你该跑到头里了。你往前些，我不是老虎，吃了你！”坠儿只得前凑。晴雯便冷不防欠身一把将他的手抓住，向枕边取出一丈青，向他手上乱戳，口内骂道：“要这爪子作什么？拈不得针，拿不得线，只会偷嘴吃。眼皮子又浅，手爪子又轻，打嘴现世的，不如戳烂了！”坠儿疼的乱哭乱喊。麝月忙拉开坠儿，按晴雯睡下，笑道：“你才出了汗，又作死。等你好了，要打多少打不得？这会子闹





Then Baoyu and his party passed through the side gate, where some grooms and the boys under the six stewards had some dozen horses ready. Once outside the gate, Li Gui and the rest mounted these horses. Then the whole troop, escorting Baoyu on all sides, galloped off.

But let us return to Qingwen, who was worried because the medicine had done her no good and now started abusing the doctor.

“He’s nothing but a swindler and quack,” she complained. “His medicine’s no use at all.”

“You must have patience,” urged Sheyue. “Haven’t you heard the saying: ‘Illness comes as fast as a wall falling down, but goes as slowly as unravelling a cocoon’? He’s no Lao Jun² with a magic elixir to cure you overnight. Just rest quietly for a few days and you’ll be all right. The more impatient you are, the worse for you.”

Qingwen switched then to lashing out at the younger girls.

“Where have they all buried themselves?” she scolded. “They take advantage of my illness to make off, bold as brass! I’m going to flay each one of them for this when I’m better.”

This so frightened Zhuaner, one of the younger maids, that she hurried in to ask, “Is there anything you want, miss?”

“Are the others all dead?” demanded Qingwen. “Are you the only one left?”

At this, Zhuier sidled in.

“Look at that little bitch!” cried Qingwen. “She won’t come unless asked for. But on pay-day or when sweets are shared out, she’s always the first to come running. Come over here! Am I a tiger? Are you afraid I’ll eat you?”

Zhuier had to come closer. Then Qingwen, lunging forward, grabbed one of her hands and began jabbing it with a hairpin from under her pillow.

“What use is this claw?” she swore. “It won’t hold a needle or thread, all it’s good for is stealing. You with your avid eyes and itching palms, you’re the bane of our lives and a disgrace to us all — I’ll carve you up!”

Zhuier screamed with pain until Sheyue pulled her away and made



什么!”晴雯便命人叫宋嬷嬷进来，说道：“宝二爷才告诉了我，叫我告诉你们，坠儿很懒，宝二爷当面使他，他拨嘴儿不动，连袭人使他，他背后骂他。今儿务必打发他出去，明儿宝二爷亲自回太太就是了。”宋嬷嬷听了，心下便知镯子事发，因笑道：“虽如此说，也等花姑娘回来知道了，再打发他。”晴雯道：“宝二爷今儿千叮咛万嘱咐的，什么‘花姑娘’‘草姑娘’，我们自然有道理。你只依我的话，叫他家的人来领他出去。”麝月道：“这也罢了，早也是去，晚也是去，带了去早清静一日。”

宋嬷嬷听了，只得出去唤了他母亲来，打点他的东西，又来见晴雯等，说道：“姑娘们怎么了，你侄女儿不好，你们教导他，怎么撵出去？也到底给我们留个脸儿。”晴雯道：“你这话只等宝玉来问他，与我们无干。”那媳妇冷笑道：“我有胆子问他去！他那一件事不是听姑娘们的调停？他纵依了，姑娘们不依，也未必中用。比如方才说话，虽是背地里，姑娘就直叫他的名字。在姑娘们就使得，在我们就成了野人了。”晴雯听说，益发急红了脸，说道：“我叫了他的名字了，你在老太太跟前告我去，说我撒野，也撵我出去。”麝月忙道：“嫂子，你只管带了人出去，有话再说。这个地方岂有你叫喊讲理的？你见谁和我们讲过理？别说嫂子你，就是





Qingwen lie down again.

“You’ll catch your death after that sweat you were in,” she scolded. “Once you’re better you can beat her as much as you like. Why raise this rumpus now?”

But Qingwen ordered someone to fetch Nanny Song and when she arrived informed her, “Master Bao has told me to tell you that Zhuier’s too lazy. When he gives her a job to do she refuses to stir; and when Xiren asks her to do anything, she even curses her behind her back. She must be sent packing today, and tomorrow he’ll report it himself to the mistress.”

Nanny Song knew at once that this was because of the bracelet.

“Even so,” she said with a smile, “we’d better wait till Miss Xiren comes back before dismissing her.”

“Master Bao was most emphatic,” insisted Qingwen. “Never mind about this ‘Miss’ or that ‘Miss,’ we’ll answer to her. Just do as I say. Tell her family to come and take her away.”

“You may as well,” put in Sheyue. “She’ll have to go sooner or later. The sooner she goes, the sooner we’ll have some peace.”

So Nanny Song had to fetch Zhuier’s mother. And when they had packed up her things, the woman came in to see Qingwen and Sheyue.

“What’s this I hear?” she protested. “If my girl misbehaves, why can’t you teach her a lesson instead of throwing her out? At least leave us a little face.”

“Save that talk for Baoyu,” snapped Qingwen. “This has nothing to do with us.”

“Ask *him*?” The woman snorted. “He does just what you young ladies tell him, doesn’t he? Even if he were willing to keep her, you wouldn’t let him. Why, just now, even though you were talking behind his back, you referred to him by name. That may be all right for the likes of you, but in our case it would be thought most ill-bred.”

“So I called him by his name, did I?” Qingwen flushed with anger. “All right, go and report me to the old lady. Tell her I’ve run wild and have me thrown out too.”

“Just take your daughter and go, sister,” put in Sheyue. “You can have your say about it some other time. This is no place for you to bicker



赖奶奶、林大娘，也得担待我们三分。便是叫名字，从小儿直叫到如今，都是老太太吩咐过的，你们也知道的，恐怕难养活，巴不的写了他的小名儿，各处贴着叫万人叫去，为的是好养活。连挑水的挑粪的都叫得，何况我们！昨日林大娘叫了一声‘爷’，老太太还说他呢，此是一件。二则，我们这些人常回老太太的话去，可不叫着名字回话，难道也称‘爷’？那一日不把宝玉两个字念二百遍，偏嫂子又来挑这个了！过一日嫂子闲了，在老太太、太太跟前，听听我们当着面儿叫他就知道了。嫂子原也不在老太太、太太跟前当些体面差事，成年家只在三门外头混，怪不得不知我们里头的规矩。这里不是嫂子久站的，再一会子，不用我们说话，就有人来问你了。有什么分证的话，且带了他去，你回了林大娘，叫他来找二爷说话。家里上千的人，你也跑来，我也跑来，我们认人问姓，还认不清呢！”说着，便叫小丫头子：“拿了擦地的布来擦地！”那媳妇听了，无言可对，亦不敢久立，赌气带了坠儿就走。宋嬷嬷忙道：“怪道你这嫂子不知规矩，你女儿在这屋里一场，临去时，也给姑娘们磕个头。没有别的谢礼罢了，便有谢礼，他们也不希罕，不过磕个头，尽个心。怎么说走就走？”坠儿听了，只得翻身进来，给他两个磕了两个头，又去找秋纹等。他们也不睬他。那媳妇噤声叹气，口不敢言，抱恨而去。





and wrangle. Have you ever seen anyone wrangling with us here? Even Mrs. Lai and Mrs. Lin have to treat us with some respect, not to say you.

“As for using his name, we’ve done that since he was a child, as well you know, on the old lady’s orders. Didn’t they have his name written out and posted up everywhere so that everybody would use it, for fear that otherwise he might die young? Why, even water-carriers, night-soil collectors and beggars use it, not to say us. Only the other day, Mrs. Lin was taken to task by the old lady for calling him ‘young master.’ That’s the first point.

“The second is that since we’re always in and out reporting things to the old lady and the mistress, we obviously can’t refer to him as ‘master.’ We must use the name Baoyu a couple of hundred times a day; so it’s strange that you should choose this to pick fault. Some day when you have time, you can listen to us using his name to the old lady and Lady Wang; then you’ll understand. But of course, it’s not to be wondered at that you don’t know the rules in the inner apartments, since you don’t have any important business that would take you near the ladies of the house — you’re mucking about outside the gate all the time.

“And this is no place for you to hang about. If you do, people will be coming to ask you the reason, even if we don’t say anything ourselves. So first take your girl away. If you’re not satisfied, you can complain to Mrs. Lin and ask her to speak to Master Bao about it. There are nearly a thousand people in this household. If you come one day and others the next, how are we to recognize who’s who? We can’t have everyone running in and out here.”

She ordered one of the young maids to fetch a cloth and wipe the floor.

Zhuier’s mother was silenced then and dared stay no longer. Swallowing her anger, she started out with her daughter.

“You really have no manners,” expostulated Nanny Song. “After working here all this time, your daughter should surely kowtow to the young ladies before she leaves. Presents they don’t expect, but she should at least kowtow to express her thanks. How can you just walk off?”

At this, Zhuier had to come in again and kowtow to Sheyue and Qingwen, then to Qiuwen and the others. They all ignored her. Her mother,



晴雯方才又闪了风，着了气，反觉更不好了。翻腾至掌灯，刚安静了些，只见宝玉回来，进门就嘻声跺脚。麝月忙问原故，宝玉道：“今儿老太太喜喜欢欢的给了这个褂子，谁知不防，后襟子上烧了一块，幸而天晚了，老太太、太太都不理论。”一面说，一面脱下来。麝月瞧时，果见有指顶大的烧眼，说：“这必定是手炉里的火进上了。这不值什么，赶着叫人悄悄的拿出去，叫个能干织补匠人织上就是了。”说着便用包袱包了，交与一个老嬷嬷送出去，说：“赶天亮就有才好。千万别给老太太、太太知道。”婆子答应去了半日，仍旧拿回来，说：“不但能干织补匠人，就连裁缝绣匠并作女工的问了，都不认得这是什么，都不敢揽。”麝月道：“这怎么样呢！明儿不穿也罢了。”宝玉道：“明儿是正日子，老太太、太太说了，还叫穿这个去呢。偏头一日烧了，岂不扫兴。”晴雯听了半日，忍不住翻身说道：“拿来我瞧瞧罢。没那福气穿就罢了，这会子又着急。”宝玉笑道：“这话倒说的是。”说着，便递与晴雯，又移过灯来，细瞧了一瞧。晴雯道：“这是孔雀金线织的，如今咱们也拿孔雀金线就像界线似的界密了，只怕还可混的过去。”麝月笑道：“孔雀线现成





thoroughly discomfited and too cowed to say another word, went off in high indignation.

Qingwen had caught another slight chill, and this no top of her anger made her feel even more poorly. She tossed about restlessly and did not quiet down until lighting-up time when Baoyu came back, sighing and stamping his feet. Sheyue asked him what was the matter.

"Today the old lady was in a good mood and gave me this cape," he explained. "But somehow I carelessly burned a hole in the back. Luckily it was too dark just now for my grandmother or mother to notice it."

He took the cape off and Sheyue inspected the damage. There was a hole the size of a finger-tip.

"This must have been done by a spark from a hand-stove," She commented. "It's nothing. We'll smuggle it out at once for some skilled weaver to patch." She wrapped up the cape and told an old serving-woman to take it out. "See that it's done by tomorrow morning," She ordered. "And be sure not to let the old lady or mistress know."

The woman assented and went off, returning some time later with the cape.

"I tried not only weavers and the best tailors but embroiders and sewing-women too," she said. "But as they'd never seen anything like this before, none of them dared take on the job."

"What's to be done then?" wondered Sheyue. "I suppose you needn't wear it tomorrow."

"Tomorrow is the birthday proper," objected Baoyu. "The old lady and my mother expressly told me to wear it when I go. But the day before I burn it. What a bad show!"

Qingwen, who had been following the conversation, could no longer keep silence and now sat up in bed.

"Let me see it," she called. "Maybe it's not in your stars to wear this cape. Look at the state you're in."

"You're right," said Baoyu, smiling.

He handed the cape to Qingwen and took her the lamp.

"This is made of peacock feathers and gold thread," she observed after examining it carefully. "If we darn it with the same material it should pass."



的，但这屋里除了你，还有谁会界线？”晴雯道：“说不得，我挣命罢了。”宝玉忙道：“这如何使得！才好了些，如何做得活。”晴雯道：“不用你蝎蝎螫螫的，我自知道。”一面说，一面坐起来，挽了一挽头发，披上了衣裳，只觉头重身轻，满眼金星乱迸，实实撑不住。待要不作，又恐宝玉着急，少不得狠命咬牙捱着。便命麝月只帮着纫线。晴雯先拿了一根比一比，笑道：“这虽不很像，若补上，也不很显。”宝玉道：“这就很好，那里又找俄罗斯国的裁缝去。”晴雯先将里子拆开，用茶杯口大小的一个竹弓钉牢在背面，再将破口四边用金刀刮的散松松的，然后用针纫了两条线，分出经纬，亦如界线之法，先界出地子来，然后依本衣之纹来回织补。织补两针，又看看，织补两针，又端详端详。无奈头晕眼黑，气喘神虚，补不上三、五针，便伏在枕上歇一会。宝玉在旁，一时又问：“吃些滚水不吃？”一时又命：“歇一歇再补。”一时又拿一件灰鼠斗篷替他披在背上，一时又命拿个拐枕与他靠着，急的晴雯央告道：“小祖宗！你只管睡罢。再熬上半夜，明儿把眼睛抠搂了，怎么处！”宝玉见他着急，只得胡乱睡下，仍睡不着。一时只听自鸣钟已敲了四下，刚刚补完；又用小牙刷慢慢的剔出绒毛来。麝月道：“这就很好，若不留心，再看不出来。”宝玉忙要了瞧瞧，笑道：“真真一样了。”晴雯已嗽了几阵，好不容易补完了，说了一声：





"We've peacock feathers and thread," said Sheyue. "But you're the only one here who can do that type of darning."

"There's no help for it then but to try my best, I suppose."

"How can you?" Baoyu demurred. "You mustn't start working the moment you're a bit better."

"Don't fuss," she retorted. "I know what I can do."

With that she sat up to knot up her hair and put on some clothes. At once she felt so dizzy that stars began dancing before her eyes and she was afraid she would collapse; but rather than worry Baoyu by giving up, she gritted her teeth and stuck it out. Having asked Sheyue to help by twisting the thread, she now took one and compared it with the cape.

"It's not quite the same," she remarked. "once it's mended, though, the difference shouldn't show."

"That's splendid," said Baoyu. "Where would we find a Russian tailor?"

Qingwen first unpicked the lining and slipped a bamboo embroidery-frame the size of a teacup up the back of the cape. Next she scraped away the singed edges with a knife, sewed two threads across at right angles to each other, stitched in the outline in cross-stitch, and then darned the hole to reproduce the original pattern. After a couple of stitches she would stop to examine her work, and after every four or five, feeling dizzy, breathless and faint, she would sink back on her pillow to rest for a while. Baoyu hovered over her solicitously, offering her hot water, urging her to rest, putting a squirrel cape over her shoulders and sending for a pillow for her back, until she became quite frantic.

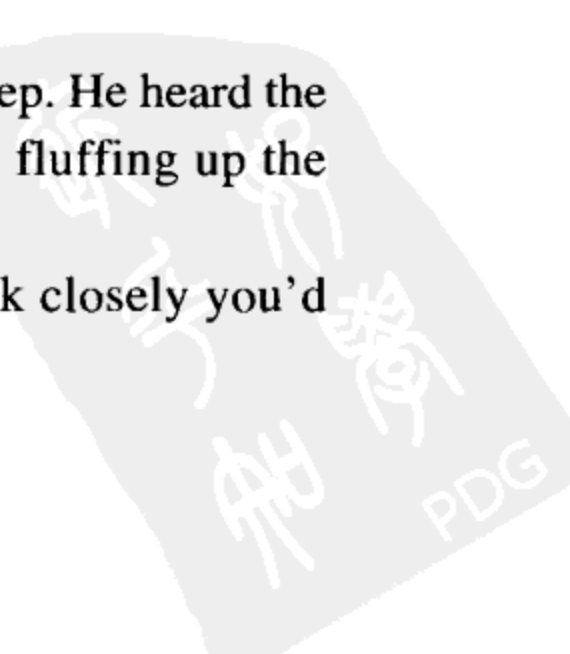
"Do go to bed, little ancestor!" she begged him. "If you stay up half the night again, you'll have sunken eyes tomorrow, and that wouldn't do!"

To soothe her he had to lie down, but he could not sleep. He heard the clock strike four just as she finished her task and was fluffing up the down with a small toothbrush.

"That's fine!" exclaimed Sheyue. "If you don't look closely you'd never notice it."

Baoyu asked to see it too.

"It's really as good as new," he commented.



“补虽补了，到底不像，我也再不能了。”“暖哟”了一声，便身不由主倒下了。且听下回分解。





Coughing after her exertions, Qingwen said, "I'm afraid the mend still shows. But I can't do any more." She sank back with a groan of exhaustion.

If you want to know the outcome, read the next chapter.





第五十三回

宁国府除夕祭宗祠 荣国府元宵开夜宴

话说宝玉见晴雯将雀金裘补完，已使得力尽神危，忙命小丫头子来替他捶着，彼此捶打了一会歇下。没一顿饭的工夫，天已大亮，且不出门，只叫快传大夫。一时王太医来诊了脉，疑惑道：“昨儿已好了些，今日如何反虚浮微缩起来，敢是吃多了饮食？不然就是劳了神思。外感却倒清了，这汗后失于调养，非同小可。”一面说，一面出去开了药方进来。宝玉看时，已将疏散驱邪诸药减去，倒添了茯苓、地黄、当归等益神养血之剂。宝玉一面忙命人煎去，一面叹说：“这怎么处！倘或有个好歹，都是我的罪孽。”晴雯睡在枕上嗜道：“好太爷！你干你的去罢，那里就得痲病了。”宝玉无奈，只得去了。至下半天，说身上不好就回来了。晴雯此症虽重，幸亏他素习是个使力不使心的；再者素习饮食清淡，饥饱无伤。这贾宅中的风俗秘法：无论上下，只略有些伤风咳嗽，总以净饿为主，次则服药调养。故于前日一病时，净饿了两、三日，又谨慎服药调治，如今劳碌了些，又加倍养了几日，便渐渐的好了。近日园中姊妹皆各在房中吃饭，炊爨饮食亦便，宝玉自能变法要汤要羹调停，不必细说。



Chapter 53

Ancestral Sacrifice Is Carried Out on New Year's Eve in the Ning Mansion An Evening Banquet Is Held on the Feast of Lanterns in the Rong Mansion

Seeing that mending his peacock-feather cape had left Qingwen exhausted, Baoyu called a young maid to massage her; and barely had they rested for the time it takes for one meal before the day was light. Then Baoyu, instead of going out, ordered the doctor to be sent for at once.

Presently Doctor Wang arrived and felt his patient's pulse.

"She was on the mend yesterday — what has caused this relapse today?" he asked in surprise. "Has she been over-eating or tiring herself? Her influenza is better; but after sweating she hasn't had a proper rest. The consequences may be serious."

He withdrew to make out a prescription, then brought it in, and Baoyu saw that it called for fewer drugs to counteract noxious contagions but more tonics such as *pachyma cocos*, *rehmannia* and *angelica*.

Baoyu ordered this medicine to be prepared at once.

"What's to be done?" he sighed. "If anything happens to her, it will all be my fault."

"Run along and mind your own business, young master," scoffed Qingwen from her pillow. "Is it so easy to fall into a decline?"

Baoyu had to leave her then. But he returned during the afternoon on the pretext of not feeling well. Although Qingwen's illness was by no means light, luckily, though hard-working she was not the worrying type, and instead of over-eating she normally kept to a simple diet. The Jia family's cure for a cold or cough, among masters and servants alike, consisted mainly of fasting supplemented by medication. Thus as soon as Qingwen fell ill she had fasted for a couple of days and been careful to take her medicine, with the result that in spite of her exertions a few days of extra treatment set her right. And because all the girls in the Garden were eating at home now, catering for a patient was simple as Baoyu



袭人送母殡后，业已回来，麝月便将平儿所说宋妈、坠儿一事，并晴雯撵逐坠儿出去，也曾回过宝玉等话，一一的告诉了一遍。袭人也没别说，只说太性急了些。只因李纨亦因时气感冒，邢夫人又正害火眼，迎春、岫烟皆过去朝夕侍药；李婶之弟又接了李婶和李纹、李绮家去住几日；宝玉又见袭人常常思母含悲，晴雯犹未大愈，因此诗社之日，皆未有人作兴，便空了几社。

当下已是腊月，离年日近，王夫人与凤姐治办年事。王子腾升了九省都检点，贾雨村补授了大司马，协理军机参赞朝政，不题。

且说贾珍那边开了宗祠，着人打扫，收拾供器，请神主，又打扫上房，以备悬供遗真影像。此时荣、宁二府内外上下，皆是忙忙碌碌。这日宁府中尤氏正起来同贾蓉之妻打点送贾母这边的针线礼物，正值丫头捧了一茶盘押岁锞子进来，回说：“兴儿回奶奶，前儿那一包碎金子共是一百五十三两六钱七分，里头成色不等，共总倾了二百二十个锞子。”说着递上去。尤氏看了看，只见也有梅花式的，也有海棠式的，也有笔锭如意的，也有八宝联春的。尤氏命人：“收起这





could easily ask for soup and gruel. But enough of this.

Upon Xiren's return after her mother's funeral, Sheyue told her in detail of Pinger's visit, the part played by Nanny Song, the reason for Zhuier's dismissal by Qingwen and the fact that this had been reported to Baoyu.

Xiren's only comment was, "You were rather too hasty."

These days Li Wan also had a cold on account of the bad weather; Yingchun and Xiuyan were fully occupied attending to Lady Xing, who was suffering from an inflammation of the eyes; Aunt Li and her two daughters had been invited by her younger brother to his home for a few days; and Baoyu was worried by Xiren's depression after her mother's death, as well as by Qingwen's delayed recovery. So no one was in the mood for poetry gatherings, and several of the appointed dates passed unobserved.

It was now the twelfth month. As New Year was fast approaching, Lady Wang and Xifeng had their hands full with preparations. Wang Ziteng was promoted at this time to be Chief Inspector of Nine Provinces, and Jia Yucun to the post of Minister of War, to assist with military strategy and advise on state policy. But no more of this.

Over in the Ning Mansion Jia Zhen had the Ancestral Temple opened and swept, the sacrificial vessels prepared, the ancestral tablets put in place, and the north hall cleaned in readiness for displaying the ancestral portraits. High and low alike in both mansions were kept hard at work.

One morning in the Ning Mansion, Madam You and her daughter-in-law were preparing embroidery and other gifts for those in the other mansion when a maid came in with a trayful of gold New-Year ingots.

"Xinger reports that that packet of loose gold of a mixed quality the other day amounted to a hundred and fifty-three taels and sixty-seven cents, madam," she announced. "It's made two hundred and twenty ingots in all."

She presented them for inspection and her mistress saw that they were of different shapes: plum-blossom, crab-apple-blossom, a writing-brush and an ellipsoid signifying "All Wishes Granted," and "The Eight



个来，叫他把银靛子快快交了进来。”丫鬟答应去了。

一时贾珍进来吃饭，贾蓉之妻回避了。贾珍因问尤氏：“咱们春祭的恩赏可领了不曾？”尤氏道：“今儿我打发蓉儿关去了。”贾珍道：“咱们家虽不等这几两银子使，多少是皇上天恩。早关了来，给那边老太太看过，办了祖宗的供，上领皇恩，下则是托祖宗的福。咱们那怕用一万银子供祖宗，到底不如这个又体面，又是沾恩锡福的。除咱们这样一两家之外，那些世袭穷官儿家，若不仗着这个银子，拿什么上供过年？真正皇恩浩荡，想的周到。”尤氏道：“正是这话。”

二人正说着，只见人回：“哥儿来了。”贾珍便命叫他进来。只见贾蓉捧了一个小黄布口袋进来，贾珍道：“怎么去了这一日？”贾蓉陪笑回说：“今儿不在礼部关了，又分在光禄寺库上，因又到了光禄寺才领了下来。光禄寺的官儿们都说，问父亲好，多日不见，都着实想念。”贾珍笑道：“他们那里是想我？这又到了年下了，不是想我的东西，就是想我的戏酒了。”一面说，一面瞧那黄布口袋，上有印，就是“皇恩永锡”四个大字，那一边又有礼部祠祭司的印记，又写着一行小字，道是“宁国公贾演荣国公贾源恩赐永远春祭”





Treasures of Spring.”

Having ordered these to be put away, Madam You sent to tell Xinger to hand in the silver ingots without delay. The maid had not been gone long on this errand when Jia Zhen came in for his meal, and his daughter-in-law slipped away.

Jia Zhen asked his wife, “Have we fetched the Imperial Bounty yet for the spring sacrifice?”

“I sent Rong for it today,” was her reply.

“Of course, our family doesn’t depend on these few taels,” observed her husband. “Still they are a mark of the Imperial favour. We should collect this silver early to show the old lady in the other mansion before using it to prepare the ancestral sacrifice; for this is evidence that we are honoured by the Emperor’s favour and benefit from the good fortune of our forbears. Even if we spent ten thousand taels on this sacrifice, it would convey less distinction than the use of this bounty so graciously conferred. Indeed, apart from one or two houses like ours, most poor families of hereditary officials have to rely on this silver for their New-Year sacrifice. Such consideration is truly a sign of the infinite graciousness of the Emperor.”

“Exactly what I feel,” agreed his wife.

Just then a servant announced their son’s return, and Jia Zhen ordered him to be admitted. Jia Rong came in, carrying in both hands a small yellow bag.

“Why have you been so long?” demanded his father.

Jia Rong answered with a smile, “I had to go to the Office of Imperial Banquets for the bounty, as it isn’t issued by the Ministry of Rites nowadays. All in that office asked after you, sir, and said they hadn’t seen you for a long time but were constantly thinking of you.”

“It’s not me they’re thinking of,” laughed his father. “Now that New Year’s coming, it’s presents they want from me or an invitation to a banquet and opera.”

While speaking he examined the yellow bag, which was stamped with the four-word inscription: “Eternal Imperial Favour Granted” and the seal of the Sacrificial Department of the Ministry of Rites. In smaller characters was written: “Two gratuities for the Spring Sacrifice are



赏共二分，净折银若干两，某年月日龙禁尉候补侍卫贾蓉当堂领讫，值年寺丞某人”，下面一个朱笔花押。

贾珍吃过饭，盥漱毕，换了靴帽，命贾蓉捧着银子跟了来，回过贾母、王夫人，又至这边回过贾赦、邢夫人，方回家去，取出银子，命将布袋向宗祠火炉内焚了。又命贾蓉道：“你去问问你琏二婶子，正月里请吃年酒的日子拟了没有？若拟定了，叫书房里明白开了单子来，咱们再请时，就不能重犯了。旧年不留神重了几家，人家不说咱们不留心，倒像两宅商议定了送虚情、怕费事的一样。”贾蓉忙答应了过去。一时，拿了请人吃年酒的日期单子来了，贾珍看了，命交与赖升去看了，请人别重了这上头的日子。因在厅上看着小厮们抬围屏，擦抹几案金银供器。只见小厮手里拿着个禀帖并一篇账目，回说：“黑山村的乌庄头来了。”

贾珍道：“这个老砍头的，今儿才来。”说着，贾蓉接过禀帖和账目，忙展开捧着，贾珍倒背着两手，向贾蓉手内看红帖上写着：“门下庄头乌进孝叩请爷、奶奶万福金安，并公子小姐金安。新春大喜大福，荣贵平安，加官进禄，万事如





conferred by the Emperor in perpetuity upon Jia Yan, Duke of Ningguo, and Jia Yuan, Duke of Rongguo.” The amount and date were specified, together with the name of the recipient Jia Rong, Captain of the Imperial Guard Reserve, while the officer in charge had signed his name in vermilion.

After his meal, Jia Zhen washed and rinsed his mouth, then put on his boots and hat to go, accompanied by his son with the silver, to inform the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang and after them Jia She and Lady Xing that the bounty had been collected. This done, he returned home and took out the silver, ordering the bag to be burned in the large incense-burner in the Ancestral Temple.

After this he told his son, “Go and ask your Second Aunt whether they’ve fixed on dates or not for their New-Year feasts in the first month. If they have, get the secretaries to write out a detailed list so that our invitations don’t clash. Last year we were careless enough to invite several families on the same day, and instead of attributing it to negligence they imagined we’d done it deliberately — to make an empty gesture at no trouble to ourselves.”

Jia Rong went off to do as he was told, returning some time later with the list of dates for the feasts and the names of those invited. After running his eye over it Jia Zhen said:

“Give it to Lai Sheng. Tell them to avoid asking the same people on those days.”

He proceeded then to the hall and was watching the pages shift screens, clean tables and polish the gold and silver sacrificial vessels, when a boy brought him a card and list.

“Bailiff Wu of the manor in Black Mountain Village has arrived, sir,” he reported.

“The old scoundrel, coming so late!” swore Jia Zhen.

Jia Rong took the card and list and held them out while Jia Zhen, his hands behind his back, read them. On the red card was written:

“Your servant, Bailiff Wu Jinxiao, kowtows to wish the master and mistress boundless happiness and good health, and good health to the young master and young mistress too. May the New Year bring you great happi-

意。”贾珍笑道：“庄稼人有些意思。”贾蓉也忙笑说：“别看文法，只取个吉利罢了。”一面忙展开单子看时，只见上面写着：“大鹿三十只，獐子五十只，狍子五十只，暹猪二十个，汤羊二十个，龙猪二十个，野猪二十个，家腊猪二十个，野羊二十个，青羊二十个，家汤羊二十个，风干羊二十个，鲟鳇鱼二个，各色杂鱼二百斤，活鸡、鸭、鹅各二百只，风鸡、鸭、鹅二百只，野鸡、兔子各二百对，熊掌二十对，鹿筋二十斤，海参五十斤，鹿舌五十条，牛舌五十条，蛏干二十斤，榛、杏、桃、松仁各二口袋，大对虾五十对，干虾二百斤。上等选用银霜炭一千斤、中等的二千斤，柴炭三万斤，御田胭脂米二石，碧糯五十斛，白糯五十斛，粉粳五十斛，杂谷各五十斛，下用常米一千石，各色干菜一车，外卖粮食、牲口各项之银共折银二千五百两。外门下庄头孝



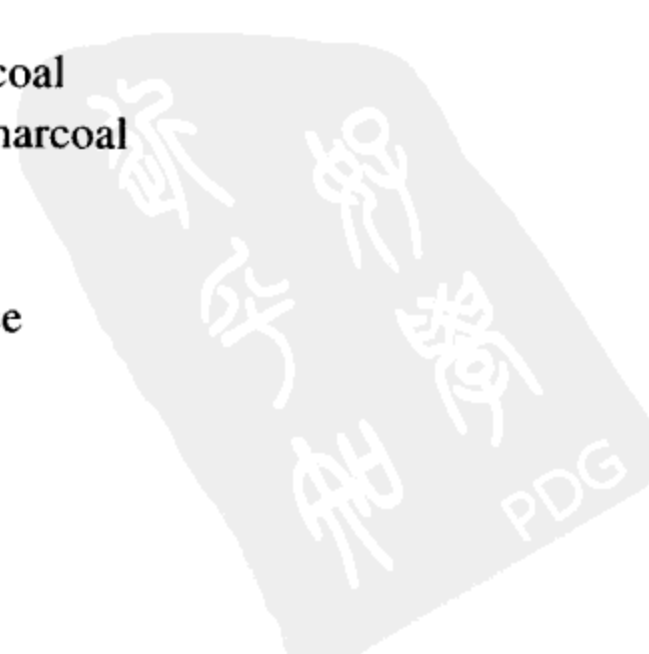
ness and good fortune, wealth, nobility and peace. May you be promoted with increased emoluments and have all your wishes come true.”

Jia Zhen chuckled. “They have some sense, these country folk, eh?”

“Yes, it’s not the style,” said his son, “but the good wishes that count.”

Next they read the list, which was as follows:

thirty stags
fifty deer
fifty roebuck
twenty each of three breeds of hogs and pigs
twenty boars
twenty wild goats
twenty each of three breeds of goats and sheep
two sturgeon
two hundred catties of other fish
two hundred each of live chicken, ducks and geese
two hundred each of salted chicken, ducks and geese
two hundred brace of pheasants
two hundred brace of rabbits
twenty pairs of bear’s-paws
twenty catties of deer-sinews
fifty catties of sea-slugs
fifty deer-tongues
fifty ox-tongues
twenty catties of dried oysters
two bags each of hazel-nuts, pine-kernels, peach and apricot-kernels
fifty pairs of giant lobsters
two hundred catties of dried prawns
one thousand catties of first-grade silver-frost charcoal
two thousand catties of second-grade silver-frost charcoal
thirty thousand catties of ordinary charcoal
two piculs of rose-rice from the Imperial Farm
five hundred pecks each of three varieties of fine rice
five hundred pecks each of other kinds of grain
one thousand piculs of ordinary rice
one cartoad of sun-dried vegetables





敬哥儿姐儿玩意：活鹿两对，活黑兔四对，白兔四对，活锦鸡两对，西洋鸭两对。”

贾珍便命带进他来。一时，只见乌进孝在院内磕头请安，贾珍命人拉他起来，笑道：“你还硬朗。”乌进孝笑回：“托爷的福，还走得动。”贾珍道：“你儿子也大了，该叫他走走也罢了。”乌进孝笑道：“不瞒爷说，小的们走惯了，不来也闷的慌。他们可不是都愿意来见见天子脚下的世面？他们到底年轻，怕路上有闪失，再过几年就可以放心了。”贾珍道：“你走了几日？”乌进孝道：“回爷的话，今年雪大，外头都是四五尺深的雪，前日忽然一暖一化，路上竟难走的很，耽搁了几日。走了一个月零两天，是因日子有限了，怕爷心焦，可不赶着来了。”贾珍道：“我说呢，怎么今儿才来。我才看那单子上，今年你这老货又来打擂台来了。”乌进孝忙前进了两步，回道：“回爷说，今年年成实在不好。从三月下雨起，接接连连直到八月，竟没有一连晴过五日。九



two thousand five hundred taels raised by the sale of grain and cattle. In addition, some trifles to amuse the young gentlemen and young ladies:

two brace of live deer
four brace of white rabbits
four brace of black rabbits
two brace of live pheasants
two brace of foreign ducks.

Having read this list Jia Zhen ordered, "Bring him in."

Soon Wu Jinxiao entered the courtyard, kowtowed and offered greetings.

Jia Zhen told the servants to help him up.

"So you're still hale and hearty," he remarked.

"Thanks to Your Lordship's good fortune, I can still get about," was the reply.

"Your sons have grown up. You should have sent them instead."

"I'm used to the trip, Your Lordship, and that's a fact. Besides, I was sick and tired of staying at home. Of course they all wanted to come, to see what it's like living at the feet of the Son of Heaven; but they're still young and I was afraid they might get into trouble on the way. A few years from now I shan't worry."

"How long did you spend on the road?"

"There's been heavy snow this year, Your Lordship. The snow's lying four or five feet deep in the country; and a sudden thaw recently made the going so difficult that I was held up for several days. The whole journey took me one month and two days, not that I didn't make the best speed I could, knowing time was running short and Your Lordship might be worried."

"I was wondering why you were so late," replied Jia Zhen. "I've just looked at your list, you old scoundrel. So this year you're trying to defraud us again."

Wu hastily took two steps forward.

"May it please Your Lordship, we had a wretched harvest this year," he declared. "It rained steadily from the third month to the eighth without letting up for five days at a stretch. In the ninth month, hailstones as large



月里一场碗大的雹子，方近打了一千三百里地，连人带房并牲口粮食，打伤了上千上万的，所以才这样。小的并不敢说慌。”贾珍皱眉说道：“我算定了你至少也有五千两银子来，这够作什么的！如今你们一共只剩了八九个庄子，今年倒有两处报了旱涝，你们又打擂台，真真是叫别过年了。”乌进孝道：“爷的这地方还算好呢！我兄弟离我那里只一百多地，谁知竟又大差了。他现管着那府里八处庄地，比爷这边多着几倍，今年也只这些东西来，不过多二三千两银子，也是有饥荒打呢。”贾珍道：“正是呢，我这边都可，已没有什么别项大事，不过是一年费用。多呢，我受用些；少呢，我受些委屈，就省些。再者年例送人请人，我把脸皮厚些，可以省些也就完了。比不得那府里，这几年添了许多花钱的事，一定不可免是要花的，却又不添些银子产业。这一二年倒赔了许多，不和你们要，找谁去！”乌进孝笑道：“那府里如今虽添了事，是有去有来，娘娘和万岁爷岂不赏的！”贾珍听了，笑向贾蓉等道：“你们听，他这话可笑不可笑？”贾蓉等忙笑道：“你们山坳海沿子上的人，那里知道这道理。娘娘难道把万岁爷的库给了我们不成？他心里纵有这心，他也不能作主。岂有不赏之理，按时到节不过赏些彩缎、古董玩意儿。纵赏，不过一百两金子，才值一千两银子，够一年的什





as bowls fell for one thousand three hundred *li* around, injuring thousands of men and countless houses, to say nothing of cattle and grain. That's why this is all there is. I wouldn't dare lie to Your Lordship."

Frowning, Jia Zhen answered, "I counted on your bringing at least five thousand taels. What use is this paltry sum? In all, we've only eight or nine manors left now, already two of them claim to have suffered from flood or drought. How are we to get through this New Year I'd like to know? And now you default like this."

"Your Lordship's farms haven't done so badly," said Wu. "My brother just a hundred *li* away is much worse off. Those eight farms which he manages for the other mansion are several times bigger than yours, sir; yet he's produced no more than I have this year, apart from just two or three thousand taels extra. They're hard hit too."

"No doubt," replied Jia Zhen. "We can just about manage here, with no extra large outlay beyond the normal annual expenditure. If I want to enjoy myself, I spend more; but I can economize if necessary. As for New-Year gifts and entertaining, by not caring about appearances and cutting down I shall get by. It's different for the other house. In recent years they've had so many unavoidable extra expenses, without acquiring any additional income or property, that in the last year or two they've made great inroads into their capital. And whom can they ask for money if not you?"

Wu Jinxiao smiled.

"Their expenditure may have increased, but surely it works both ways. Don't they get presents from Her Imperial Highness and His Majesty?"

Jia Zhen turned to his son and the rest.

"Did you hear that?" he asked laughingly. "What a joke!"

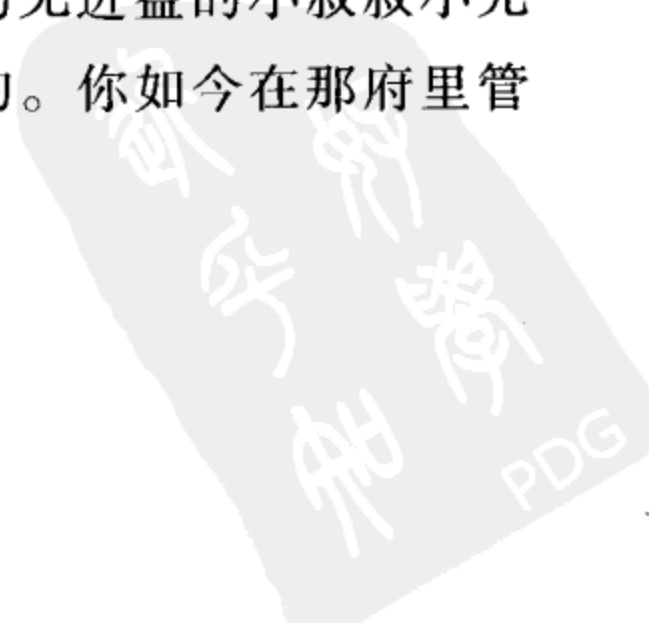
Jia Rong made haste to explain to Wu, "You people from the back of beyond don't understand. Can Her Highness make over the Imperial Treasury to us? Even if she wanted to, it's not in her power. Of course she sends gifts at the different festivals, but they're simply brocade, curios and other trifles. As for money gifts, those only amount to a hundred or so gold taels a year-worth little more than a thousand taels of silver. What use is that? The last couple of years, they've had to spend several thousand taels extra each year. Just reckon for yourself how much it cost



么?这二年,那一年不多赔出几千银子来!头一年省亲连盖花园子,你算算那一注共花了多少,就知道了。再两年再省一回亲,只怕就净穷了。”贾珍笑道:“所以他们庄稼人老实,分明不知里头的事,黄柏木作磬槌子——外头体面里头苦。”贾蓉又笑向贾珍道:“果真那府里穷了。前儿我听见凤姑娘和鸳鸯悄悄的商议,要偷出老太太的东西去当银子呢。”贾珍笑道:“那又是你凤姑娘的鬼,那里就穷到如此。他必定是见去路太多了,实在赔的狠了,不知又要省那一项的钱,先设出这个法使人知道,就穷到如此了?我心里却有一个算盘,还不至如此田地。”说着,命人带了乌进孝出去,好生待他,不在话下。

这里贾珍吩咐将方才各物,留出供祖的,将各样取了些,命贾蓉送过荣府里去。然后自己留下了家中所用的,余者派出等第来,一分一分的堆在月台下,命人将族中的子侄唤来散与他们。接着,荣府也送了许多供祖之物及与贾珍之物。贾珍看着收拾完备供器,鞞着鞋,披着猢猻大裘,命人在厅柱下石矾上太阳中,铺了一个大狼皮褥子坐下,看各子侄们来领取年物。因见贾芹亦来领物,贾珍叫他过来,说道:“你作什么也来了?谁叫你来的?”贾芹垂手回话:“听见大爷这里叫我们领东西,我没等人去叫就来了。”贾珍道:

“我这东西,原是给你那些闲着无事的无进益的小叔叔小兄弟们的。那二年你闲着,我也给过你的。你如今在那府里管





to build the Garden the first year for the Imperial Visit. A second visit in another couple of years would bankrupt them!”

“These simple country folk don’t realize that not all is gold that glitters,” chuckled Jia Zhen. “Wormwood carved into a drumstick may look imposing, but it’s bitter inside!”

“The other house does seem to be in difficulties, sir,” remarked his son. “The other day I heard Second Aunt asking Yuanyang in confidence to smuggle out some of the old lady’s things to pawn.”

“That’s just your Aunt Xifeng’s trick.” Jia Zhen laughed. “They’re not as poor as all that. You may be sure she does it to make a show of poverty, because she knows they’re spending too much and making inroads into their capital, and she wants to cut down on expenditure. I’ve my own means of reckoning, though. They’re not as badly off as they make out.”

With that he told the servants to take Wu Jinxiao away and entertain him well.

Jia Zhen now disposed of this rent in kind as follows: part was kept for the ancestral sacrifice; part delivered by Jia Rong to the other mansion; part kept for family use; and the rest divided into different shares and placed on the terrace of the main hall, where the younger men of the clan were summoned to collect them.

At this juncture the Rong Mansion sent over a variety of sacrificial offerings and gifts for Jia Zhen. When he had inspected these and supervised the arrangement of the sacrificial vessels, he changed into his slippers, draped a big raccoon cloak over his shoulders, and made the servants spread a large wolfskin rug at the top of the steps by the pillars so that he could sit in the sun watching his junior clansmen collect their gifts. When he saw Jia Qin come to take a portion too, he called him over.

“What are *you* doing here?” he asked. “Who told you to come?”

Standing at attention Jia Qin replied, “I heard you had sent for us to take things, sir. So I came without waiting to be called.”

“These things are for your uncles and cousins who have no jobs and no income,” Jia Zhen told him. “Those two years when you had no job, I gave you a share. But now you’re in charge of the monks and Taoist priests in the family temple. Apart from the stipend you receive each

事，家庙里管和尚道士们，每月又有你的分例外，这些和尚的分例银子都从你手里过，你还来取这个来了，太也贪了！你自己瞧瞧，你穿的可像个手里使钱办事的？先前你说没进益，如今又怎么了？比先倒不像了。”贾芹道：“我家里原人口多，费用大。”贾珍冷笑道：“你还支吾我。你在家庙里干的事，打谅我不知道呢。你到了那里自然是爷了，没人敢违拗你。你手里又有了钱，离着我们又远，你就为王称霸起来，夜夜招集匪类赌钱，养老婆、小子。这会子花的这个形象，你还敢领东西来？领不成东西，领一顿馱水棍去才罢。等过了年，我必和你琏二叔说，换回你来。”贾芹红了脸，不敢答言。人回：“北府水王爷送了字联、荷包来了。”贾珍忙命贾蓉出去款待，“只说我不在家。”贾蓉答应去了，这里贾珍看着领完东西，回房与尤氏吃毕晚饭，一宿无话。至次日，更比往日忙，都不必细说。

1524

到了腊月二十九日，各色齐备，两府中都换了门神、对联、挂牌，新油了桃符板，焕然一新。宁国府从大门、仪门、大厅、暖阁、内厅、内三门、内仪门、塞门，直到正堂，一路正门大开，两边阶下一色朱红大高照，点的两条金龙一般。次日，由贾母有诰封者，皆按品级着朝服，先坐八人大轿，带领着众人先进宫朝贺，行礼领宴毕回来，便到宁



month, the allowance for all the monks and priests passes through your hands as well — yet you still show up to take this. You're too miserly. Just look at yourself. Are you dressed like a gentleman of means with a responsible post? You used to complain because you had no income; but now that you have one, you look even shabbier than before."

"I have such a large household, my expenses are heavy."

"Don't hand me that line!" Jia Zhen laughed scornfully. "Do you think I don't know what goes on in the family temple? Out there, of course, you're the master and no one dares disobey you. With money in your hands and us at a safe distance you lord it over everyone, night after night assembling a pack of scoundrels-gamblers, debauchees or queers. And now that your money's squandered you have the effrontery to come here for things. Well, you won't get anything except a good beating. After New Year I shall tell your Second Uncle Lian to dismiss you."

Jia Qin flushed scarlet and dared not reply.

Just then a servant announced that the Prince of Beijing had sent a gift of scrolls and pouches. Jia Zhen ordered his son to entertain the messenger and explain that he was out, and Jia Rong, assenting, went off. Jia Zhen watched till the distribution of goods was finished, then returned to his rooms to dine with his wife, and the night passed without further incident. The next day there was even more to do, but we need not go into the details.

By the twenty-ninth of the twelfth month all was ready. Both mansions were resplendent with new door-gods, couplets, tablets and New-Year charms. The Ning Mansion's main gate was thrown open, as were the ceremonial gate, the doors of the great hall, the lobby and the inner hall, the three inner gates, the inner central gate and the inner secondary gate—all the gates leading to the main hall. And on both sides below the steps, tall vermilion candles blazed like golden dragons.

The next day all the titled members of the family from the Lady Dowager downwards put on the court costume appropriate to their rank and, led by the old lady in a large sedan-chair carried by eight bearers, went to the Imperial Palace to pay homage and attend a banquet. On their return, they alighted from their chairs by the lobby of the Ning Mansion. All their



府暖阁前下轿。诸子弟有未随入朝者，皆在宁府门前排班伺候，然后引入宗祠。

且说薛宝琴是初次进贾府宗祠，便细细留神打谅。原来宁府西边另一个院宇，黑油漆栅栏内五间大门，上面悬着一匾，写着是“贾氏宗祠”四个大字，旁书“衍圣公孔继宗书”。两边有一副长联，写道是：

肝脑涂地，兆姓赖保育之恩；
功名贯天，百代仰蒸尝之盛。

亦是衍圣公所书。进入院中，白石甬路，两边皆是苍松翠柏。月台上设着青绿古铜鼎彝等器。抱厦前上面悬一九龙金匾，写道是：“星辉辅弼”，乃先皇御笔。两边一副对联，写道是：

勋业有光昭日月，功名无间及儿孙。

亦是御笔。五间正殿前悬一闹龙填青匾，写道是：“慎终追远”。旁边一副对联，写道是：

已后儿孙承福德，至今黎庶念荣宁。

俱是御笔。里边香烛辉煌，锦幃绣幕，虽列着些神主，却看





younger kinsmen who had not gone to court had lined up to wait in front of the main gate, and now ushered them into the Ancestral Temple.

Now as this was Xue Baoqin's first visit here, she took pains to observe the whole place carefully. The temple, a five-frame structure enclosed by a black palisade, stood in a separate courtyard to the west of the Ning Mansion. In large characters on the placard over the gate was the imposing four-character inscription "Jia Family Ancestral Temple." In small characters beside this she read "Written by Kong Jizong, Hereditary Duke Descended from Confucius." The couplet flanking this read:

The grateful recipients of Imperial Favour will gladly
dash their brains out on the ground;
Generations to come will make solemn sacrifice for deeds
whose fame resounds to Heaven.

This too had been written by the duke descended from Confucius.

Entering this courtyard, the party proceeded along a way paved with white marble and bordered by green pines and cypresses to a terrace on which were displayed ancient bronze tripods and libation cups green with patina. Before the porch hung a placard gilded with the nine-dragon design, and the inscription "Stars Shine on the Assistant," which had been written by the late Emperor himself. The couplet on either side, also in the Imperial calligraphy, read:

Their achievements outshine the sun and moon,
Their fame will extend to all their posterity.

The tablet over the entrance to the main hall was engraved with frolicking dragons, and bore the intagliated motto in blue: "Venerate the Departed, Continue Their Sacrifices." The couplet flanking this, also written by the Emperor, read:

Their descendants succeed to their good fortune and virtue;
Ning and Rong live in the memory of the black-haired people.

The hall itself, ablaze with candles and lamps, was so brilliant with silk hangings and embroidered curtains that the ancestral tablets, ranged in their places, were hard to make out distinctly.

The members of the Jia family disposed themselves now according to



不真切。只见贾府诸人分昭穆排班立定：贾敬主祭，贾赦陪祭，贾珍献爵，贾琏、贾琮献帛，宝玉捧香，贾菖、贾菱展拜毯，守焚池。青衣乐奏，三献爵，拜兴毕，焚帛奠酒，礼毕，乐止，退出。众人围随着贾母至正堂上，影前锦幔高挂，彩屏张护，香烛辉煌。上面正居中悬着宁、荣二祖遗像，皆是披蟒腰玉；两边还有几轴列祖遗影。贾荇、贾芷等从内仪门挨次站立，直到正堂廊下。槛外方是贾敬、贾赦，槛内是各女眷。众家人小厮皆在仪门之外。每一道菜至，传至仪门，贾荇、贾芷等接了，按次传至阶下贾敬手中。贾蓉系长房长孙，独他随女眷在槛内。每贾敬捧菜至，传与贾蓉，贾蓉便传与他妻子，他妻子又传与凤姐、尤氏诸人，直传至供桌前，方传至王夫人。王夫人传于贾母，贾母方捧放在桌上。邢夫人在供桌之西，东向立，同贾母供放。直至将菜饭、汤点、酒茶传完，贾蓉方退出下阶，归入贾芹阶位之首。凡从文旁之名者，贾敬为首；下则从玉者，贾珍为首；再下从草头者，贾蓉为首；左昭右穆，男东女西。俟贾母拈香下拜，众人方一齐跪下，将五间大厅，三间抱厦，内外廊檐，阶上阶下两丹墀内，花团锦簇，塞的无一隙空地。鸦雀





the generations to which they belonged, on the left and right-hand sides. Jia Jing the Master of Sacrifice was assisted by Jia She, with Jia Zhen as libationer, Jia Lian and Jia Cong to present silk, Baoyu to offer incense, and Jia Chang and Jia Ling to spread a rug for kneeling and tend the incinerator. Black-robed musicians played music while the libation-cup was presented three times and obeisance made. Then the silk was burnt and wine poured.

At the end of this ceremony the music stopped and all withdrew, following the Lady Dowager to the main hall, in front of the portraits. In the middle of the shrine hung with long silk curtains, surrounded by brilliant screens and blazing censers, were portraits of the Duke of Rongguo and the Duke of Ningguo in dragon robes with jade belts. On both sides were portraits of other ancestors.

Jia Xing, Jia Zhi and some others had ranged themselves in due order all the way from the inner ceremonial gate to the terrace by the verandah of the main hall, where stood Jia Jing and Jia She outside the palisade, while the ladies stood inside. The family servants and pages remained outside the ceremonial gate. Each time they brought a plate of offerings to this gate, it was taken by Jia Xing or Jia Zhi and passed from hand to hand until it reached Jia Jing on the terrace. Jia Rong, as the eldest grandson of the senior branch, was the only one to accompany the ladies inside. When Jia Jing passed him an offering he handed it to his wife, who passed it on to Xifeng and Madam You until it reached Lady Wang in front of the altar. She in turn passed it to the Lady Dowager, who set it on the altar. Lady Xing, posted west of the altar facing east, helped the Lady Dowager.

When all the dishes, rice, soup, cakes, wine and tea had been presented, Jia Rong withdrew to join Jia Jing's group below the steps. Places were assigned according to generations, Jia Jing heading the senior group, Jia Zhen the second, and Jia Rong the third; and now they ranged themselves on the two sides, the men on the east and the women on the west. When the Lady Dowager offered incense and bowed, the whole clan knelt down together. Every square foot of the five sections of the hall, the three annexes, the inner and outer corridors, terrace and courtyard, was a mass of rich silks and brocades. And the only sounds to break the



无闻，只听“铿锵”、“叮当”，金铃玉珮，微微摇曳之声，并起跪靴履飒沓之响。一时礼毕，贾敬、贾赦等便忙退出，至荣府专候与贾母行礼。

尤氏上房内早已袭地铺满红毡，当地放着象鼻三足鳅沿鎏金珧琅大火盆，正面炕上铺新猩红毡，设着大红彩绣云龙捧寿的靠背引枕，外另有黑狐皮的袱子搭在上面，大白狐皮坐褥，请贾母上去坐了。两边又铺皮褥，让贾母一辈的两三个妯娌坐了。这边横头插牌之后小炕上，也铺了皮褥，让邢夫人等坐了。地下两面相对十二张雕漆椅上，都是一色灰鼠椅搭小褥，每一张椅下一个大铜脚炉，让宝琴等姊妹坐了。尤氏用茶盘亲自捧茶与贾母，蓉妻捧与众老祖母，然后尤氏又捧与邢夫人等，蓉妻又捧与众姊妹。凤姐、李纨等只在地下伺候。吃毕茶，邢夫人等忙先起身来伏侍贾母。贾母吃了茶，与老妯娌闲话了两三句，便命看轿。凤姐忙上去挽起来。尤氏笑回说：“已经预备下老太太的晚饭。每年都不肯赏些体面用了晚饭过去，果然我们就不及凤丫头不成？”凤姐挽着贾母笑道：“老祖宗快走罢，咱们家去吃去，别理他。”贾母笑道：“你这里供着祖宗，忙的什么似的，那里搁得住我闹。况且每年我不吃，你们也要送去的。不如还送了去，我吃不了，留着明儿再吃，岂不多吃些。”说的众人都笑了。





solemn silence were the tinkling of gold bells and jade pendants, the rustling of silks and the shuffling of boots and slippers as the worshippers rose or knelt down.

After this ceremony, Jia Jing, Jia She and the other men hurried to the Rong Mansion, where they waited to pay their respects to the Lady Dowager. She, however, now went to Madam You's sitting-room, the floor of which was covered with a red carpet where stood a large gilded cloisonné brazier, its three legs in the form of elephant trunks. On the *kang* by the north wall were a new crimson rug and red silk back-rests and bolsters embroidered with "Dragons in the Clouds" designs and the character "Longevity." On it, too, were spread a black fox-skin and a big white fox-skin mattress. When the Lady Dowager had been ensconced here, more furs were spread on both sides and the few other ladies of her generation were invited to sit down.

Then fur rugs were spread on the smaller *kang* behind the partition for Lady Xing's generation, and twelve carved lacquer chairs covered with grey squirrel-skins and with a large bronze foot-warmer under each were placed in a row on either side for Baoqin and the other girls.

Madam You ceremoniously presented tea to the Lady Dowager while Jia Rong's wife served the other elderly ladies, after which Madam You served Lady Xing's group and Jia Rong's wife the girls. Xifeng and Li Wan stood by all this time in attendance.

After sipping some tea, Lady Xing and the rest rose to wait upon the Lady Dowager, and after a few words to the other old ladies she asked for her sedan-chair. At once Xifeng stepped up to her and took her arm.

"We've prepared dinner for you, madam," demurred Madam You with a smile. "Why will you never honour us with your company at dinner on this day of the year before you leave? Aren't we as good as Xifeng?"

Xifeng, supporting the old lady, urged her, "Come on, Old Ancestress. Pay no attention to her. Let's go home to eat."

"You have your hands full here with the ancestral sacrifice," said the Lady Dowager. "How could you put up with more trouble from me? Besides, even though I don't dine here, you send dishes over every year. It's better that way. If there's more than I can eat today, I can save it for



又吩咐他：“好生派妥当人夜里看香火，不是大意得的。”尤氏答应了，一直送出来，至暖阁前上了轿。尤氏等闪过屏风后面，小厮们才领轿夫上来，请了轿出大门。尤氏亦随邢夫人等同至荣府。

这里轿出大门，只见这一条街上，东边合面设立着宁国公的仪仗执事乐器，西边合面设立着荣国公的仪仗执事乐器，来往行人皆屏退不从此过。一时来至荣府，也是大门正厅直开到底。如今便不在暖阁前下轿了，过了大厅，便转弯向西，至贾母这边正厅上下轿。众人围随来至贾母正室之中，亦是锦茵绣屏，焕然一新。当地火盆内焚着松柏香、百合草。贾母归了坐，老嬷嬷们来回：“老太太们来行礼。”贾母忙又起身要迎，只见两三个老妯娌已进来了。大家拉着手，笑了一回，让了一回。吃茶去后，贾母只送至内仪门便回来，归了正坐。贾敬、贾赦等领诸子弟进来。贾母笑道：“一年价难为你们，不行礼罢。”一面说着，一面男一起，女一起，一起一起俱行过了礼。左右两旁设下交椅，然后又按长幼挨次归坐受礼。两府男妇、小厮、丫鬟亦按差役上中下行礼毕，又散押岁钱、荷包、金银锞，摆上合欢宴来。男





tomorrow. That way, don't I get more of your food than by eating here?"

Everyone laughed.

Then the old lady reminded Madam You, "Make sure to post reliable people tonight, to see that no fires break out owing to carelessness."

As soon as Madam You had promised to see to this, they all went out to the lobby to mount their sedan-chairs. The ladies slipped behind a screen while page boys brought in sedan-bearers to carry them out, Madam You and Lady Xing accompanying the others to the Rong Mansion. As their chairs were borne out of the main gate, they saw the insignia, equipage and musical instruments of the Duke of Ningguo and the Duke of Rongguo displayed on the east and west sides of the street, which was closed today to passers-by.

Presently they reached the Rong Mansion and found all its gates, too, open right up to the main hall. But instead of stopping at the lobby this time, they turned west after the main hall and alighted outside the Lady Dowager's reception room. All trooping in after her, they discovered that the place was freshly furnished with embroidered screens and brocade cushions. Fragrant herbs and aromatic pine and cedar-wood were burning in the brazier.

As soon as the Lady Dowager had taken her seat, some old serving-women reported that two or three ladies of her generation had come to offer their congratulations. She rose to welcome them, for they had already entered, and after clasping hands and greeting her they were ushered to their seats and sipped some tea. Then the Lady Dowager saw them out no farther than the inner ceremonial gate. When she had returned and seated herself again, Jia Jing and Jia She led in the younger men of the family.

"I put you to so much trouble the whole year round, don't stand on ceremony now," urged the old lady.

But the men in one group and the women in another paid their respects together, after which they took seats on both sides in order of seniority to receive the salutations of their juniors. When all the men and maid-servants of both mansions had paid their respects according to their degree, there was a distribution of New-Year money, as well as pouches and gold and silver ingots. Then they took their seats for the family-



东女西归坐，献屠苏酒、合欢汤、吉祥果、如意糕毕，贾母起身进内间更衣，众人方各散出。那晚各处佛堂、灶王前焚香上供，王夫人正房院内设着天地纸马香供，大观园正门上也挑着大明角灯，两溜高照，各处皆有路灯。上下人等，皆打扮的花团锦簇，一夜人声嘈杂，笑语喧阗，爆竹起火，络绎不绝。

至次日五鼓，贾母等又按品大妆，摆全副执事进宫朝贺，兼祝元春千秋。领宴回来，又至宁府祭过列祖，方回来受礼毕，便换衣歇息。所有贺节来的亲友一概不会，只和薛姨妈、李婶二人说话取便，或者同宝玉、宝琴、钗、黛等姊妹赶围棋、抹骨牌作戏。王夫人与凤姐天天忙着请人吃年酒，那边厅上院内皆是戏酒，亲友来的络绎不绝，一连忙了七、八日才完了。早又元宵将近，宁、荣二府皆张灯结彩。十一日是贾赦请贾母等，次日贾珍又请，贾母皆去随便领了半日。王夫人和凤姐连日被人请去吃年酒，不能胜记。

至十五日之夕，贾母便在大花厅上命摆几席酒，定一班小戏，满挂各色佳灯，带领荣、宁二府各子侄孙男孙媳等家





reunion feast, the men on the east side, the women on the west, and New-Year wine, "happy-reunion soup," "lucky fruit" and "wish-fulfilment cakes" were served, until the Lady Dowager rose and went into the inner room to change her clothes, whereupon the party broke up.

That evening, incense and sacrifices were offered at the various Buddhist shrines and to the kitchen god; and incense-sticks and paper effigies were burnt to Heaven and Earth in the main court of Lady Wang's compound. Huge horn lanterns high on both sides of the main gate of Grand View Garden cast a brilliant light, while all the paths were lit with lanterns too. High and low alike were splendidly dressed. And the babel of talk and laughter, punctuated by the explosion of fire-crackers, went on without intermission the whole night long.

The next morning the Lady Dowager and others, rising at dawn, put on their robes of state and went with full pageantry to pay homage at the Imperial Palace as well as to offer the Imperial Concubine birthday congratulations. Upon her return from the Imperial banquet, the old lady went to the Ning Mansion to sacrifice to the ancestors. Then, going back to her own apartments she received the younger generations' New-Year salutations. After these ceremonies she changed her clothes and rested, not receiving any of the kinsmen and friends who came to offer their congratulations but simply chatting with Aunt Xue and Aunt Li or playing draughts and card-games with Baoyu, Baoqin, Baochai, Daiyu and the other girls.

Lady Wang and Xifeng were busy entertaining guests, for an unending stream of friends and relatives attended the New-Year feasts and operas held daily for about a week in their hall and courtyard. And as soon as this was over, both mansions were decked out and hung with lanterns for the approaching Lantern Festival. The Lady Dowager was feasted by Jia She on the eleventh, by Jia Zhen on the twelfth, staying with them on each occasion for half a day, while time forbids us to enumerate all the feasts to which Lady Wang and Xifeng were invited.

On the evening of the fifteenth, the Lady Dowager had tables spread in the big hall in the small garden, an opera company hired, and gay lanterns of every description displayed at a family feast for her kinsmen in both mansions.



宴。贾敬素不茹酒，也不去请他，于后日十七日祀祖已完，他便仍出城修养去了。这几日在家内，亦是净室默处，一概无听无闻，不在话下。且说贾赦略领了贾母之赐，也便告辞而去。贾母知他在此彼此不便，也就随他去了。贾赦自到家中与众门客赏灯吃酒，自然是笙歌聒耳，锦绣盈眸，其取便快乐另与这边不同的。

这边贾母花厅之上共摆了十来席。每一席旁边设一几，几上设炉瓶三事，焚着御赐百合宫香。又有八寸来长、四五寸宽、二三寸高的点着宣石布满青苔的小盆景，俱是新鲜花卉。又有小洋漆茶盘，内放着旧窑茶杯并十锦小茶杯，里面泡着上等香茗。一色皆是紫檀透雕，嵌着大红纱透绣花卉并草字诗词的璎珞。原来绣这璎珞的也是个姑苏的女子，名唤慧娘。因他亦是书香宦门之家，他原精于书画，不过偶然绣一两件针线作耍，并非市卖之物。凡这屏上所绣之花卉，皆仿的是唐、宋、元、明各名家的折枝花卉，故其格式配色皆从雅，本来非一味浓艳匠工可比。每一枝花侧皆用古人题此花之旧句，或诗或歌不一，皆用黑绒绣出草字来，且字迹勾踢、转折、轻重、连断皆与笔写无异，亦不比市绣字迹板强可恨。他不仗此技获利，所以天下虽知，得者甚少，凡世宦





The only one not invited was Jia Jing, who abstained from both wine and meat. After the ancestral sacrifice on the seventeenth he moved back outside the city to live in seclusion; but even during his stay at home he remained quietly in his room, ignoring all the festivities around him.

As for Jia She, after sitting a while at his mother's feast he also asked her permission to withdraw; and this the old lady readily granted knowing that his presence would cause a general constraint. Having his own different pleasures, he went home to enjoy the festival by drinking with his protégés amid a bevy of gaily-dressed girls, to the sound of music and singing.

In the old lady's hall about ten tables were set for the feast. Beside each, on a teapoy, stood an incense-burner burning Palace incense conferred by the Emperor; an incense box and a vase; a miniature garden about eight inches long, four inches wide and two or three inches high, with fresh flowers among small mossy rocks; teacups made in a previous reign; and gay little teapots filled with the finest tea on a small tray of Western lacquerware.

Set out too was a crimson gauze screen in a carved purple-sandalwood frame embroidered with flowers and calligraphy. The embroiderer, a Suzhou girl called Huiniang, had come from a family of officials and literati and been a skilled calligrapher and painter; but occasionally she did some embroidery too — purely for her own amusement, not to sell. All the floweres she embroidered were copied from paintings by famous artists of the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties; thus the compositions and colours were based on excellent models, unlike the stereotyped compositions and garish colours produced by artisans. Beside each spray of flowers there were lines of verse about these flowers from short poems or songs by poets of old, all embroidered in cursive script with black silk thread. And the strokes of these characters, whether light or heavy, continuous or broken, were exactly the same as if written with a brush — a far cry from the grotesquely distorted scripts in the embroidery sold in the market-place.

As Huiniang was not out to make money from this skill of hers, although her embroidery was widely known few could procure a specimen of it. Many rich and noble official families were unable to acquire one. It



富贵之家，无此物者甚多，当今便称为“慧绣”。竟有世俗射利者，近日仿其针迹，愚人获利。偏这慧娘命夭，十八岁便死了，如今竟不能再得一件的了。所有之家，亦不过一两件而已，皆惜若宝玩一般。更有那一干翰林文魔先生们，因深惜“慧绣”之佳，便说这“绣”字不能尽其妙，这样针迹说一“绣”字，反似乎唐突了，便大家商议了，将“绣”字隐去，换了一个“纹”字，所以如今都称为“慧纹”。若有一件真“慧纹”之物，价则无限。贾府之荣，也只有两三件，上年将那两件已进了上，目下只剩这一副瓔珞，一共十六扇，贾母爱之如珍宝，不入请客各色陈设之内，只留在自己这边，高兴摆酒时赏玩。又有各色旧窑小瓶中都点缀着“岁寒三友”、“玉堂富贵”等鲜花草。

上面两席是李婶、薛姨妈二位，贾母于东边设一席，是透雕夔龙护屏矮足短榻，靠背引枕皮褥俱全。榻之上一头又设一个极轻巧洋漆描金小几，几上放着茶吊、茶碗、漱盂、手巾之类，又有一个眼镜匣子。贾母歪在榻上，与众人说笑一回，又自取眼镜向戏台上照一回，又向薛姨妈、李婶笑道：“恕我老了，骨头疼，放肆，容我歪着相陪罢。”因又命琥珀坐在榻上，拿着美人拳捶腿。榻下并不摆席面，只有一张高几，却设着瓔珞、花瓶、香炉等物。外另设一精致小高桌，设着酒杯、匙箸，将自己这一席设于榻旁，命宝琴、湘云、黛玉、宝玉四人坐着。每一馔一果来，先捧与贾母看了，喜则留在小桌上尝一尝，仍撤了放在他四人席上，只算



was known as “Hui” embroidery, and some vulgar hucksters had recently started imitating it to fool people and make a profit.

Huiniang had been fated to die at the early age of eighteen, so that no more of her work could be obtained. Any family which possessed one or two samples only kept them as rare treasures. And then certain admirers of “Hui” embroidery among the literati declared that to call such superb work “embroidery” showed a lack of respect and failed to do justice to its beauty. After discussion they agreed not to call it “embroidery” but “art.” Hence it had now come to be known as the “Hui art” and a genuine piece was priceless. Even a wealthy family like the Jias had only acquired three pieces, two of which had been presented to the Emperor the previous year. All they had left now was this screen with sixteen panels. The Lady Dowager prized it so much that she would not display it to guests with her other ornaments. Instead, she kept it in her own apartments to enjoy when in a good mood or entertaining.

There was also a variety of porcelain vases from old kilns filled with flowers symbolizing “The Three Companions of Winter” and “Wealth and Splendour in a Marble Hall.”

Aunt Li and Aunt Xue took the seats of honour. To their east stood a carved openwork dragon-screen with below it a low couch spread with cushions, pillows and furs. Beside the pillows, an elegant low table of foreign lacquer with gilt designs was set out with a teapot, cups, rinse-bowls and towels as well as a spectacle-case. Here the Lady Dowager reclined to chat with the others, putting on her spectacles whenever she wanted to watch the performance.

“My old bones are aching,” she told Aunt Xue and Aunt Li. “Excuse me if I just keep you company lying here.” She made Hupo sit beside her to massage her legs with a small pestle.

In place of a banquet table before the couch, there stood only one tall teapoy on which were a screen, flower-vase and incense-burner, and a small, elegant long-legged table laid with winecups, spoons and chopsticks. Baoqin, Xiangyun, Daiyu and Baoyu were told to sit at this table to share her feast; for before each dish was served to them it was shown to the old lady and, if she fancied it, left on her small table first for her to taste, then removed to the four young people’s table. So they could be



他四人是跟着贾母坐。故下面方是邢夫人、王夫人之位，再下便是尤氏、李纨、凤姐、贾蓉之妻。西边一路便是宝钗、李纹、李绮、岫烟、迎春、探、惜等姊妹。两边大梁上，挂着一对联三聚五玻璃芙蓉彩穗灯。每一席前竖一柄漆干倒垂荷叶，叶上有烛信，插着彩烛。这荷叶乃是鍤珞琅的活信，可以扭转，如今皆将荷叶扭转向外，将灯影逼住全向外照，看戏分外真切。窗格门户一齐摘下，全挂彩穗各种宫灯。廊檐内外及两边游廊罩棚，将各色羊角、玻璃、戳纱、料丝，或绣或画、或堆或抠、或绢或纸，诸灯挂满。廊上几席，便是贾珍、贾琏、贾环、贾琮、贾蓉、贾芹、贾芸、贾菱、贾菖等。

贾母也曾差人去请族中众人，奈他们或有年迈懒于热闹的；或有家内无人不便来的；或有疾病淹缠，欲来竟不能来的；或有一等妒富愧贫不来的；甚至于有一等憎畏凤姐之为人赌气不来的；或有羞口羞脚，不惯见人，不敢来的；因此族众虽多，女客来者只不过贾茵之母娄氏带了贾茵来了，男子只有贾芸、贾芹、贾菖、贾菱四个现在凤姐麾下办事的来了。当下人虽不全，在家庭间小宴中，数来也算是热闹的了。当下又有林之孝之妻带了六个媳妇，抬了三张炕桌，每一张上搭着一条红毡，毡上放着选净一般大新出局的铜钱，用大红彩绳串好，两个人抬一张，共三张。林之孝家的指示将那两张摆至薛姨妈、李婶的跟前，将一张送至贾母榻下。贾母道：“放在当地罢。”这媳妇们都素知规矩的，放下桌子，一并将钱都打开，将彩绳抽去，散堆在桌上。正唱《西楼·楼会》这出将终，于叔夜因赌气去了，那文豹便发科诨



regarded as sitting with the Lady Dowager. Lower down sat Lady Xing and Lady Wang; then Madam You, Li Wan, Xifeng and Jia Rong's wife; while Baochai, Li Wen, Li Qi, Xiuyan, Yingchun and the other girls had tables on the west side.

From the great beams on either side hung crystal, hibiscus-shaped chandeliers with coloured tassels. In front of each table was a candelabrum of Western enamel with a lacquer shade in the shape of an inverted lotus leaf; and this could be turned outwards to shade the coloured candles' light from the feasters and illumine the stage more brightly. The lattices of the windows and doors had been removed and in their place hung gaily-tasselled Palace lanterns. From the eaves of the house, as well as the covered walks on either side, hung lanterns made of horn, glass, gauze, cut-glass or silk and paper with embroidered or painted, raised or incised designs. Jia Zhen, Jia Lian, Jia Huan, Jia Cong, Jia Rong, Jia Qin, Jia Yun, Jia Ling and Jia Chang were seated at tables in the corridors.

The Lady Dowager had sent to invite all the members of the clan. But some were too old to enjoy lively celebrations; some had no one to mind the house for them; some were bed-ridden; some envied the rich and were ashamed of their own poverty; some disliked or feared Xifeng; some were timid and unused to company — for one reason or another they would not or could not come. Thus, large as the clan was, the only female relative to appear was Jia Jun's mother, née Lou, who brought her son; and the only men were Jia Qin, Jia Yun, Jia Chang and Jia Ling, all of whom worked under Xifeng. In spite of their depleted numbers, however, it was quite a merry family feast.

And now Lin Zhixiao's wife led in six serving-women carrying three low tables, each covered with red felt and piles of bright copper coins, fresh from the mint, strung together with red cord. Mrs. Lin had two of these tables set before Aunt Xue and Aunt Li and the other in front of the Lady Dowager, who told her where to put it. Knowing the family custom, serving-women then untied the coins and stacked them up.

This was towards the end of the scene "Encounter in the Tower" from *The West Tower*,¹ when Yu Shuye flings off in a rage. The girl playing Wenbao ad-libbed:

"So you're leaving in a huff. Luckily this is the fifteenth of the first



道：“你赌气去了，恰好今日正月十五，荣国府老祖宗家宴，待我骑了这马，赶进去讨些果子吃是要紧的。”说毕，引的贾母等都笑了。薛姨妈等都说：“好个鬼头孩子，可怜见的。”凤姐便说道：“这孩子才九岁了。”贾母笑说：“难为他说的巧。”便说了一个“赏”字。早有三、四个媳妇已经手下预备下簸箩，听见一个“赏”字，便走上去向桌上的散钱堆内，每人撮了一簸箩，走出来向戏台说：“老祖宗、姨太太、亲家太太赏文豹买果子吃的！”说着，向台上便一撒，只听“豁唧唧”满台的钱响。贾珍、贾琏已命小厮们抬了大簸箩的钱来，暗暗的预备在那里。听见贾母一赏，……要知端的，下回分解。





month, and the Old Ancestress of the Rong Mansion is holding a family feast. I'm going to ride there as fast as I can on this horse to ask for some goodies now. That's the thing to do."

This set the old lady and the whole party laughing.

Aunt Xue exclaimed, "Clever little imp!"

"She's only nine," remarked Xifeng.

"That was smart of her," said the Lady Dowager. "Reward the child."

Three serving-women, who had small baskets ready, stepped forward at this command to fill their baskets with coins from the three tables. Then going to the stage they announced:

"Our Old Ancestress, Madam Xue and Madam Li are giving this to Wenbao to buy goodies."

With that they emptied their baskets and the coins scattered, clinking, all over the stage.

Jia Zhen and Jia Lian, too, had ordered their pages in secret to bring in several crates of coins.

To know how these were distributed, read the next chapter.



第五十四回

史太君破陈腐旧套 王熙凤效戏彩斑衣

话说贾珍、贾琏暗暗预备下大簸箩的钱，听见贾母说“赏”，他们也忙命小厮们快撒钱。只听满台钱响，贾母大悦。

二人遂起身，小厮们忙将一把乌银新暖壶递过来，贾琏捧在手内，随了贾珍先至李婶席上，躬身取下杯来，回身，贾琏忙斟了一杯；然后便至薛姨妈席上，也斟了一杯。二人忙起身笑说：“二位爷请坐着罢，何必多礼。”于是除邢、王二夫人，满席都离了席，俱垂手旁侍。贾珍等至贾母榻前，因榻矮，二人便屈膝跪了。贾珍在前捧杯，贾琏在后捧壶。虽止二人奉酒，那贾环弟兄等，却也是排班按序，一溜随着他二人进来，见他二人跪下，也都一溜跪下。宝玉也忙跪了。史湘云悄悄的推他笑道：“你这会子又帮着跪下作什么？有这样的，你也去斟一巡酒岂不好？”宝玉悄笑道：“再等一会子再斟去。”说着，等他二人斟完起来，方起来。又与邢夫人、王夫人斟过了酒。贾珍笑道：“妹妹们怎么样？”贾母等都说：“你们去罢，他们倒便宜些。”说了，贾珍等方退出去。

当下天未二鼓，戏演的是《八义》中《观灯》八出。正



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Chapter 54

The Lady Dowager Debunks Trite Stories Xifeng Clowns to Amuse Her Elders

When Jia Zhen and Jia Lian heard the call for largesse they made their pages scatter the coins which they had prepared in advance, and the clink and jingle of money on the stage delighted the old lady. Then, as both men rose from their seats, a page brought Jia Lian a silver pot of freshly-heated wine which he carried himself as he followed Jia Zhen inside. First Jia Zhen bowed to Aunt Li and, taking her cup, turned round so that Jia Lian might fill it. He then bowed to Aunt Xue and filled her cup as well.

The two ladies rose protesting laughingly, "Please take seats, gentlemen. Why be so formal?"

All but Lady Xing and Lady Wang had risen from their seats and were standing by them, with their hands at their sides, to show respect. Now Jia Zhen and Jia Lian went up to the Lady Dowager's couch and, as it was low, knelt down, Jia Zhen holding her cup and Jia Lian, behind him, the wine-pot. Although only the two of them were proposing toasts, Jia Huan and the other young men had trooped in behind them, and when these two knelt the rest fell on their knees too. Baoyu made haste to follow suit.

"Why should *you* join in?" whispered Xiangyun, nudging him. "Better offer a toast yourself."

"I will later on," he replied softly. Only when his cousins had risen after pouring out the wine, did he rise to his feet.

After this toast, Jia Zhen and Jia Lian got up to pour wine for Lady Xing and Lady Wang.

"How about our cousins?" asked Jia Zhen then.

"Get along now and leave them in peace," answered the ladies.

Then Jia Zhen and the other young men withdrew.



在热闹之际，宝玉因下席来往外走，贾母因说：“你往那里去？外头爆竹利害，仔细天上掉下火纸来烧了衣服。”宝玉回说：“不往远去，只出去就来。”贾母命人好生跟着，于是宝玉出来，只有麝月秋纹并几个小丫头随着。贾母因说：“袭人怎么不见？他如今也有些拿大了，单支使小女孩子出来。”王夫人忙起身笑回道：“他妈前日没了，因有热孝，不便前头来。”贾母听了点头，又笑道：“跟主子却讲不起这孝与不孝。若是他还跟我，难道这会子也不在这里不成？皆因我们太宽了，有人使，不查这些，竟成了例了。”凤姐忙过来笑回道：“今儿晚上他便没孝，那园子里也须得他看着，灯烛花炮最是耽险的。这里一唱戏，园子里的人谁不偷来瞧瞧。他还细心，各处照看照看。况且这一散后宝兄弟回去睡觉，各色都是齐全的。若他再来了，众人又不经心，散了回去，铺盖也是冷的，茶水也不齐备，各色都不便宜，所以我叫他不用来，只看屋子。散了又齐备，我们这里也不耽心，又可以全他的礼，岂不三处有益。老祖宗要叫他，我叫他来就是了。”贾母听了这话，忙说：“你这话很是，比我想的周到，快别叫他了。但只他妈几时没了，我怎么不知道？”凤姐笑道：“前儿袭人去亲自回老太太的，怎么倒忘了？”贾母想了一想，笑说：“想起来了。我的记性竟平常了。”众人都笑说：“老太太那里记得这些事？”贾母因又叹道：“我想着，他



It was not yet the second watch. Eight scenes from *Eight Gallants at the Lantern Festival* were being performed, and the climax had just been reached when Baoyu rose to go out.

“Where are you off to?” asked his grandmother. “Watch out for the fireworks outside, or you may get burnt by some of the sparks raining down.”

“I’m not going far,” he replied. “I’ll be back soon.”

She ordered some attendants to escort him, and he went out followed only by Sheyue, Qiuwen and a few young maids.

“Where’s Xiren?” asked the Lady Dowager. “She must be getting above herself if she only sends the younger girls out.”

Lady Wang rose to explain, “She couldn’t very well come, madam, because she’s newly in mourning for her mother.”

The old lady nodded but commented, “A girl in service can’t really afford the niceties of filial piety. If she were still waiting on me, she’d hardly absent herself at this time, would she? This all comes of our leniency. Having enough servants we don’t insist on these things, so this seems to be the rule now.”

“Even if she weren’t in mourning, we need someone in the Garden this evening to keep an eye on the fireworks and prevent accidents,” put in Xifeng quickly. “Whenever we have operas here all the other maids from the Garden sneak out to watch, but Xiren can be relied on to see to things. Besides, this means that when Baoyu goes back presently to sleep he’ll find everything ready for him. If she’d come too, the others are so thoughtless that he’d find his bedding cold on his return, no tea made and everything at sixes and sevens. That’s why I told her to stay there to look after the house and see that everything’s ready for his return. Then we here needn’t worry, while she can observe the proprieties. Isn’t that better all round? But if our Old Ancestress wants her, I’ll send for her.”

“You’re quite right,” said the Lady Dowager. “Trust you to have thought it all out. Don’t send for her. But when did her mother die? How is it I didn’t know?”

“Have you forgotten, madam?” Xifeng smiled. “The other day she came herself to report to you.”

The old lady thought back and shuckled.

“So she did. What a memory I have!”



从小儿伏侍了我一场，又伏侍了云儿一场，末后给了一个魔王宝玉，亏他魔了他这几年。他又不是咱们家的根生土长的奴才，没受过咱们什么大恩典。他妈没了，我想着要给他几两银子发送，也就忘了。”凤姐道：“前儿太太已赏了他四十两银子，也就是了。”贾母听说，点头道：“这还罢了。正好鸳鸯的娘前儿也没了，我想他老子娘都在南边，我也没叫他家去走走守孝，如今叫他两个一处作伴儿去。”又命婆子将些果子菜饌点心之类与他两个人吃去。琥珀笑说：“还等这会子呢，他早就去了。”说着，大家又吃酒看戏。

且说宝玉一径来至园中，众婆子见他回房，便不跟去，只坐在园门里茶房里烤火，和管茶的女人偷空饮酒斗牌。宝玉来至院中，虽是灯光灿烂，却无人声。麝月道：“他们都睡了不成？咱们悄悄的进去唬他们一跳。”于是大家蹑足潜踪的进了镜壁一看，只见袭人和一人对面，都歪在地炕上，那一头有两三个老嬷嬷打盹。宝玉只当他两个睡着了，才要进去，忽听鸳鸯叹了一声，说道：“可知天下的事难定。论理你单身在这里，父母在外头，每年他们东去西来，没个定准，想来你是再不能送终的了，偏生今年就死在这里，你倒出去送了终。”袭人道：“正是。我也想不到能够看着父母回首。太太又赏了四十两银子，这倒也算养我一场，我也不敢





“How can Your Ladyship remember every little thing?” remarked the others laughingly.

“She was only a child when she came to wait on me,” recalled the old lady with a sigh. “Then she waited on Xiangyun for a time, until finally I gave her to our young demon king, and what a dance her’s led her all these years! It’s not as if her parents had been our slaves or received any special kindness from us. After her mother died I meant to give her some silver for the funeral, but somehow it slipped my mind.”

“The other day the mistress gave her forty taels, and that should have been enough,” interposed Xifeng.

The Lady Dowager nodded.

“That’s all right then. As it happens, Yuanyang’s mother has just died too; but because her home’s in the south I didn’t send her back for the funeral. Now they can keep each other company.” She ordered a serving-woman to take them some refreshments.

“Yuanyang’s gone without waiting to be told,” put in Hupo with a smile.

They went on with their feast then, still watching the opera.

Meanwhile Baoyu had gone straight back to the Garden. And seeing that he was going to his own quarters, the nurses did not follow him but sat down by the stove in the Garden gatehouse to drink and gamble with the women in charge of making tea there.

Baoyu found his compound brightly lit but strangely silent.

“Can they all be in bed?” wondered Sheyue. “Let’s go in quietly and give them a fright.”

Tiptoeing past the full-length looking-glass, they saw Xiren lying opposite someone on the *kang*, with two or three old serving-women dozing on the other side.

Baoyu thought they were asleep. He was on the point of going in when he heard Yuanyang say with a sigh:

“There’s no telling what will happen in this life. You were on your own here while your parents lived outside and were for ever travelling east and west, so no one would have expected that you’d be able to attend their death-beds. Yet this year your mother died at home and you were able to go to her funeral.”

“Yes,” said Xiren. “I never thought I’d be able to be there when she



妄想了。”宝玉听了，忙转身悄悄向麝月道：“谁知他也来了。我这一进去，他又赌气走了，不如咱们回去罢，让他两个清清静静的说一回话儿。袭人正一个闷闷的，他幸而来的好。”说着，仍悄悄的出来。

宝玉便走过山石背后去站着撩衣，麝月、秋纹都站住背过脸去，口内笑说：“蹲下再解小衣，仔细风吹了肚子。”后面两个小丫头知是小解，忙先出去茶房内预备去了。这里宝玉刚转过身来，只见两个媳妇迎面走来，问是谁，秋纹道：“宝玉在这里呢，你们大呼小叫，仔细吓着他。”那媳妇们忙笑道：“我们不知道，大节下来惹祸了。姑娘们可连日辛苦了。”说着，已到了跟前，麝月等问：“手里拿的是什么？”媳妇们道：“是老太太赏金、花二位姑娘吃的东西。”秋纹笑道：“外头唱的是《八义》，没唱《混元盒》，那里又跑出‘金花娘娘’来了。”宝玉笑命：“揭开盒子我瞧瞧。”秋纹、麝月忙上去将两个盒盖揭开。两个媳妇忙蹲下身子，宝玉看了两盒内都是席上所有的上等果品菜馐，点了一点头，迈步就走。麝月、秋纹二人忙胡乱掷了盒盖，跟上来。宝玉笑道：“这两个女人倒和气，会说话，他们天天乏了，倒说你们连日辛苦了，倒不是那矜功自伐的。”麝月道：“这好的也





breathed her last. And the mistress gave me forty taels too, which was a very handsome reward to her for having brought me up, and more than I dared hope for.”

Baoyu turned to whisper to Sheyue, “I didn’t know Yuanyang was here too. If I go in, she’ll leave again in a huff. We’d better go back and leave them to chat in peace. I’m glad she came, Xiren was lonely all on her own.”

So they slipped out quietly. Then Baoyu, stepping behind some rocks, lifted his gown.

Sheyue and Qiuwen had stopped and averted their faces.

“Don’t undo your pants till you’ve squatted down,” they cried, “or you may catch a chill on your stomach!”

When the two younger maids behind knew what he was up to, they hurried to the room where tea was made to get hot water.

As Baoyu was about to rejoin the others, two of the servants’ wives approached.

“Who’s that?” they called.

“It’s Baoyu,” replied Qiuwen. “Don’t shout like that or you may startle him.”

“Sorry, we didn’t know,” said the women with a smile. “So we’ve caused you trouble on this festival. You must all be very busy, miss, these days.”

As they had drawn level now, Sheyue asked them what they were carrying.

“Some cakes and fruit from the old lady for Miss Jin and Miss Hua.”

“They’re playing *The Eight Gallants* over there, not *The Magic Box*,” quipped Qiuwen. “So where does this Goddess Jinhua come from?”¹

Baoyu made Qiuwen and Sheyue open the hampers, and as they did so the two women squatted down. Seeing some of the choicest fruits, sweetmeats, cakes and dishes from the feast there, he nodded and moved on. The two girls hastily closed the hampers and followed.

“Those are friendly, tactful women,” remarked Baoyu cheerfully. “They’ll be tired out themselves these days, but they said how busy you must be. They’re not boastful show-offs.”



很好，那不知礼的也太不知礼。”宝玉笑道：“你们是明白人，耽待他们是粗笨可怜的人就完了。”一面说，一面来至园门。那几个婆子虽吃酒斗牌，却不住的出来打探，见宝玉来了，也都跟上了。来至花厅后廊上，只见那两个小丫头一个捧着小沐盆，一个搭着手巾，又拿着馥子小壶，在那里久等。秋纹忙先伸手向盆内试了试，说道：“你越大越粗心了，那里弄的这冷水？”小丫头笑道：“姑娘瞧瞧这个天啊，我怕天冷，巴巴的倒的是滚水，这还冷了呢。”正说着，可巧见一个老婆子一手端着茶杯，又提着一壶滚水走来。小丫头便说：“好奶奶，过来给我倒上些。”那婆子道：“哥哥儿，这是老太太泡茶的，劝你走了舀去罢，那里会走大了脚！”秋纹道：“凭你是谁的，你不给？我管把老太太的茶吊子倒了洗手。”那婆子回头见是秋纹，忙提起壶来就倒。秋纹道：“够了，你这么大年纪也没个见识，谁不知是老太太的水！要不着的人就敢要了？”婆子笑道：“我眼花了，没认出这姑娘来。”宝玉洗了手，那小丫头拿小壶倒了些馥子在他手内，宝玉馥了。秋纹、麝月也趁热水洗了一洗，也馥了，跟进宝玉来。

宝玉便要了一壶暖酒，也从李婶、薛姨妈斟起，二人也





“Those two are all right,” rejoined Sheyue. “Some of the others really have no manners.”

“You’re intelligent girls,” he said. “You should make allowances for those poor coarse creatures.”

By now he had approached the Garden gate. The nurses, who had been looking out for him while drinking and gaming, tagged after him as soon as he reappeared and followed him to the corridor behind the feasting hall in the small garden. There the two young maids had been waiting for some time, one holding a basin, the other a towel and a small flask of ointment.

Qiuwen dipped her fingers in the basin.

“How careless you’re growing,” she scolded. “Fancy bringing such cold water!”

“It’s the fault of the weather, miss,” explained the girl. “I took boiling water for fear it might get cold; but it’s cooled off all the same.”

Just then, as luck would have it, up came a nurse with a kettle of boiling water.

“Please give me some of that, granny,” begged the girl.

“This is to make tea for the old lady,” retorted the nurse. “Fetch some for yourself, lass. It won’t hurt you to walk a few steps.”

“Never mind who it’s for,” put in Qiuwen. “If you won’t give us any, I’ll pour water from the old lady’s teapot to wash in.”

When the woman saw it was Qiuwen, she hastily poured them some water.

“That’s enough,” said Qiuwen. “At your age you should have more sense. As if we didn’t know this was for the old lady! But why do you think we asked?”

The nurse smiled and apologized, “My eyes are so dim I didn’t see who it was, miss.”

When Baoyu had washed his hands, the girl with the flask poured some ointment over them which he rubbed in. Then Qiuwen and Sheyue, having rinsed their hands in the hot water and rubbed on ointment too, escorted him back to the hall.

Baoyu now called for a pot of warm wine to toast Aunt Li and Aunt Xue, who both begged him to be seated.



笑让坐。贾母便说：“他小，让他斟去，大家倒要干过这杯。”说着，便自己干了。邢、王二夫人也忙干了，让他二人，薛、李也只得干了。贾母又命宝玉道：“连你姐姐妹妹一齐都斟上，不许乱斟，都要叫他干了。”宝玉听说，答应着，按次斟了。至黛玉前，偏他不饮，拿起杯来，放在宝玉唇边，宝玉一气饮干。黛玉笑说：“多谢。”宝玉又替他斟上一杯，凤姐便笑道：“宝玉，别喝冷酒，仔细手颤，明儿写不得字，拉不得弓。”宝玉忙道：“没有吃冷酒。”凤姐笑道：“我知道没有，不过白嘱咐你。”然后宝玉将里面斟完，只除贾蓉之妻是丫头们斟的，然后出至廊上，又与贾珍等斟了一巡。坐了一回，方进来仍归旧坐。

一时上汤后，又献上元宵。贾母便命将戏暂歇：“小孩子们可怜见的，也给他们些滚汤滚菜的吃了再唱。”又命将各色果子元宵等物拿些与他们吃去。一时歇了戏，便有婆子带了两个门下常走的女先生儿进来，放了两张杌子在那一边命他坐了，将弦子、琵琶递过去。贾母便问李、薛二人听何书，他二人都回说：“不拘什么都好。”贾母便问：“近来可有添些什么新书？”那两个女先儿回说：“倒有一段新书，是残唐五代的故事。”贾母问是何名，女先儿道：“叫做《凤求鸾》。”贾母道：“这个名字倒好，不知因什么起的。你先大概说说原故，若好再说。”女先儿道：“这书上乃说残唐之时，有一位乡绅，本是金陵人氏，名唤王忠，曾做过两朝宰辅。如今告老还家，膝下只有一位公子，名唤王熙凤。”众人听



“Let the boy fill your cups,” said the Lady Dowager. “And mind you empty them.”

She drained her own cup then. And when Lady Xing and Lady Wang followed suit, Aunt Xue and Aunt Li had to drink up too.

“Fill your cousins’ cups,” the old lady told Baoyu. “See that you do it properly and make them all drink up.”

Baoyu assented and filled every cup in turn. When he came to Daiyu she refused to drink but held the cup up to his lips, thanking him with a smile when he tossed it off. He poured her another cup.

“Don’t drink cold wine, Baoyu,” warned Xifeng. “If you do, your hands will tremble too much to write or draw your bow later on.”

“I haven’t drunk any cold wine,” he protested.

“I know. I’m just warning you.”

Having filled all the cups except that of Jia Rong’s wife, whose cup was filled by a maid, he went out to the corridor to toast Jia Zhen and the other men and kept them company for a while before returning to his seat inside.

Presently soup was served, followed by New-Year dumplings.

“Tell the actresses to rest now,” said the Lady Dowager. “Those poor children must have some hot soup and hot food before they go on.” She ordered sweetmeats of every kind to be taken to the actresses.

Now that the performance had stopped, one of the matrons brought in two women story-tellers who often visited the house, putting stools for them at one side. They were told to sit down and handed a fiddle and a lute. Then the Lady Dowager asked Aunt Li and Aunt Xue what they would like to hear.

“Anything will do,” they answered.

She asked the two women what new stories they had.

“One about the end of the Tang Dynasty and the Five dynasties,” they replied.

“What is its name?”

“*The Phoenix Seeks Its Mate.*”

“That’s a good title,” she remarked. “Why is it called that? Let’s hear what it’s about, and if it sounds good you can tell it.”

“It’s about a country gentleman named Wang Zhong at the end of the Tang Dynasty,” said one of the women. “His family came from Jinling.



了，笑将起来。贾母笑道：“这不重了我们凤丫头了。”媳妇们忙上去推他道，“这是二奶奶的名字，少混说。”贾母笑道：“你说，你说。”女先儿忙笑着站起来，说：“我们该死了，不知是奶奶的尊讳。”凤姐笑道：“怕什么，你们只管说罢，重名重姓的多呢。”女先儿又说道：“这年王老爷打发了王公子上京赶考，那日遇见大雨，进到一个庄上避雨。谁知这庄上也有个乡绅，姓李，与王老爷是世交，所以便留下这公子住在书房里。这李乡绅膝下无儿，只有一位姑娘名唤作雏鸾，琴棋书画，无所不通。”贾母忙道：“怪道叫作《凤求鸾》。不用说，我已猜着了，自然是王熙凤要求这雏鸾小姐为妻了。”女先儿笑道：“原来老祖宗听过这一回书。”众人都道：“老太太什么没听过！便没听过，也猜着了。”贾母笑道：“这些书都是一个套子，左不过是些佳人才子，最没趣儿。把人家女儿说的那样坏，还说是佳人，编的连影儿也没有了。开口都是书香门第，父亲不是尚书就是宰相，生一个小姐必是爱如珍宝。这小姐必是通文知礼，无所不晓，竟是个绝代佳人。只一见了一个清俊的男子，不管是亲是友，便想起终身大事来了，父母也忘了，书礼也忘了，鬼不成鬼，





After serving as a minister under two emperors, he retired in his old age. He had an only son called Wang Xifeng.”

The whole party laughed at that.

“The same name as our minx Xifeng,” chuckled the old lady.

Some serving-women nudged the story-tellers.

“That’s our Second Mistress’ name. Be careful,” they warned.

“Never mind. Go on,” said the Lady Dowager.

The story-tellers rose to apologize.

“We deserve to drop dead. We didn’t know it was Her Ladyship’s honourable name.”²

“What does that matter?” asked Xifeng cheerfully. “Plenty of people have the same name. Go on.”

Then one of the women continued, “One year, old Mr. Wang sent his son to take the examination in the capital. Running into heavy rain on the way he took shelter in a village where, as it happened, there lived a gentleman named Li, an old family friend of Mr. Wang’s, who put the young man up in his study. This Mr. Li had no son, only one daughter Chuluan³ who was thoroughly accomplished in lyre-playing, chess, calligraphy and painting. . .”

“I understand the title now,” interposed the old lady. “You needn’t go on. I can guess the rest. Naturally Wang Xifeng wants to marry this Miss Chuluan.”

“So you’ve heard this story before, Old Ancestress.” The story-teller smiled.

The others explained, “The old lady can guess the ending, even if she hasn’t heard the story before.”

“There’s a sameness about all these tales,” complained the old lady. “And they’re so stereotyped — all about talented scholars and lovely ladies. Fancy describing girls who behave so badly as fine young ladies! Why, they’re nothing of the sort. They’re always introduced as girls from cultured families whose fathers are invariably high officials or prime ministers. In that case, an only daughter would be treasured and brought up as a real fine young lady, well-versed in literature and a model of propriety; yet her first glimpse of a handsome man, whether a relative or family friend, sets her thoughts running on marriage. She forgets her



贼不成贼，那一点儿是佳人？便是满腹的文章，做出这些事来，也算不得是佳人了。比如男人满腹文章去作贼，难道那王法就说他是才子，就不入贼情一案了不成？可知那编书的是自己塞了自己的嘴。再者，既说是世宦书香大家的小姐都知礼读书，连夫人都知书识礼，便是告老还家，自然这样大家人口不少，奶母、丫鬟伏侍小姐的人也不少，怎么这些书上，凡有这样的事，就只小姐和紧跟的一个丫鬟？你们白想想，那些人都是管什么的，可是前言不答后语？”众人听了，都笑说：“老太太这一说，是谎都批出来了。”贾母笑道：“这有个原故：编这样书的，有一等妒人家富贵，或有求不遂心，所以编出来污秽人家。再一等，他自己看了这些书看魔了，他也想一个佳人，所以编了出来取乐。何尝他知道那世宦读书家的道理！别说他那书上那些世宦书礼大家，如今眼下真的，拿我们这中等人家比说，也没有那样的事，别说是那些大家子。可知是诌掉了下巴的话。所以我们从不许说这些书，连丫头们也不懂这些话。这几年我老了，他们姊妹们住的远，我偶然闷了，说几句听听，他们一来，就忙叫歇了。”李、薛二人都笑说：“这正是大家的规矩，连我们家也没这些杂话给孩子们听见。”

凤姐走上来斟酒，笑道：“罢了，酒冷了，老祖宗喝一口润润嗓子再掰谎罢。这一回就叫作《掰谎记》，就出在本朝本地本年本月本日本时，老祖宗一张口难说两家话，花开两朵，各表一枝，是真是谎且不表，再整那观灯看戏的人。老



parents then and gets up to all sorts of devilry, behaving quite unlike a fine lady. If she carries on like that she's surely no lady, no matter how her head is crammed with learning. If a man whose head is crammed with learning becomes a thief, does the court spare him on account of his talents? So these story-tellers contradict themselves.

"Besides, not only would the daughter of a good scholar-official family be well-educated and a model of propriety — so would her mother. And even if her father had retired, a big family like that would have plenty of nurses and maids to look after the girl. How is it that in all these stories, when such things happen, no one has any inkling of it except the girl herself and one trusted maid? What are all the others doing, I'd like to know? Isn't that contradictory?"

Everyone laughed.

"The old lady's shown up their lies!"

"There's a reason for this," she continued. "Either the people who spin these tales envy the rank and riches of other families, or ask for help which isn't granted, and so they make up these stories to discredit them. Or else they're so bewitched by reading such tales that they wish they could get a fine young lady themselves, and so they invent these things for their own amusement.

"But what do *they* know about the ways of scholar-official families? Let's not talk about those great families in their stories — even in a middle-rank family like ours such things couldn't possibly happen. They're talking utter nonsense! That's why we never allow such stories here, and our girls have never heard any. Now that I'm growing old and the girls' apartments are some distance away, I may listen to a tale or two to pass the time; but as soon as the girls come I put a stop to it."

"That's the rule for a good family, madam," approved Aunt Li and Aunt Xue. "Even in our homes we don't let the children hear such frivolous nonsense."

Xifeng stepped forward then to pour more wine.

"That's enough," she cried. "The wine's cold but you'd better take a sip, Old Ancestress, to wet your gullet before debunking their lies. This is a story called Debunking Lies which is happening in this reign, here and now, in this year, month, day and hour. Our Old Ancestress, with only one



祖宗且让这二位亲戚喝一杯酒，听两出戏之后，再从昨朝话言掰起如何？”他一面斟酒，一面笑说，话未曾说完，众人俱已笑倒。两个女先儿也笑个不住，都说：“奶奶好钢口。奶奶要一说书，真连我们吃饭的地方都没了。”薛姨妈笑道：“你少兴头些罢，外头有人，比不得往常。”凤姐笑道：“外头的只有一位珍大爷。我们还是论哥哥妹妹，从小儿一处淘气了这么大。这几年因做了亲，我如今立了多少的规矩了。便不是从小儿的兄妹，便以伯叔论，那《二十四孝》上的‘斑衣戏彩’，他们不能来‘戏彩’引老祖宗笑一笑，我这里好容易引的老祖宗笑了一笑，多吃了一点儿东西，大家喜欢，都该谢我才是，难道反笑话我不成？”贾母笑道：“可是这两日我竟没有痛痛的笑一场，倒是亏他才这一路笑的我心里痛快了好些，我再吃一钟酒。”吃着酒，又命宝玉：“也敬你姐姐一杯。”凤姐笑道：“不用他敬，我讨老祖宗的寿罢。”说着，便将贾母的半杯剩酒拿起吃了，酒杯递与丫鬟，另将温水浸的杯换了一个上来。于是各席上的杯都撤去，另将温水浸着待换的杯斟了新酒上来，然后归坐。

女先儿回说：“老祖宗不听这个书，或者弹一套曲子听听罢。”贾母便说道：“你们两个对一套《将军令》罢。”二人听说，忙和弦按调拨弄起来。贾母回问：“天有几更了？”众





mouth, can hardly speak for two families at once. As two blooms grow on separate boughs, let's deal with one first. Never mind whether true or false, let's go back to enjoying the lanterns and opera.⁴ Just allow these two relatives to have a cup of wine and enjoy two more scenes of the show. After that you can go on debunking stories, starting with those of the very first dynasty down to the present one — how about it?"

She had filled everyone's cup, chuckling as she spoke, and by now the whole company was prostrate with laughter. The two story-tellers as well were in fits of mirth.

"What a tongue Her Ladyship has!" they cried. "If she started telling stories she's soon do us out of a job."

"Don't get too carried away," cautioned Aunt Xue. "The gentlemen are outside, this isn't like ordinary times."

"There's only cousin Zhen," retorted Xifeng. "We've been like brother and sister since we were small and played naughty tricks together. Since my marriage, of course, I've behaved much more correctly. But even if we hadn't played together as children and were only in-laws, isn't there a story in *The Twenty-four Acts of Filial Piety*⁵ about someone dressing in motley and clowning to amuse his parents?⁶ They can't come and amuse our Old Ancestress, so if I manage to make her laugh and eat a little more, keeping everybody happy, you should all thank me instead of laughing at me."

"It's true that I haven't had a good laugh for the last couple of days," said the Lady Dowager. "Now that she's raised my spirits by her antics I'll have another cup of wine." sipping her drink, she told Baoyu to offer Xifeng a toast.

"I don't need him," declared Xifeng laughingly. "I'll cash in on some of your good fortune, madam."

She took the old lady's cup and drank what was left, then handed the cup to a maid and took another from a basin of hot water. All the cups on the tables were changed then for fresh ones from the basin, and when more wine had been poured they resumed their seats.

"If our Old Ancestress doesn't want to hear this story, shall we play a tune?" asked one of the story-tellers.

"Yes, play *The General's Command*," ordered the old lady.



婆子忙回：“三更了。”贾母道：“怪道寒浸浸的起来。”早有众丫鬟拿了添换的衣裳送来穿了。王夫人起身陪笑说道：“老太太不如挪进暖阁里炕上倒也罢了。这二位亲戚也不是外人，我们陪着就是了。”贾母听说，笑道：“既这样的话，不如大家都挪进去，岂不暖和？”王夫人道：“里面恐坐不下。”贾母笑道：“我有道理。如今也不用这些桌子，只用两三张并起来，大家坐在一处挤着，又亲密，又暖和。”众人都道：“这才有趣。”说着，便起身，众媳妇忙撤去残席，在里面顺炕并了三张大桌，另又添换了果饌摆好。贾母便说：“这却不要拘礼，只听我分派你们就坐才好。”说着便让薛、李二位正面上坐，自己西向坐了，叫宝琴、黛玉、湘云三人皆紧依左右坐下，向宝玉说：“你挨着你太太。”于是邢夫人、王夫人之中夹着宝玉，宝钗等姊妹在西边，挨次下去便是娄氏带着贾茵，尤氏、李纨夹着贾兰，下面横头便是贾蓉之妻。贾母便说：“珍哥儿带着你兄弟们去罢，我也就睡了。”

贾珍等忙答应了，又都进来。贾母道：“快去罢！不用进来，才坐好了，又都要起来。你快歇着去罢，明日还有大事呢。”贾珍忙答应了，又笑说：“留下蓉儿斟酒才是。”贾母笑道：“正是忘了他。”贾珍答应了一个“是”，便转身带领贾琏等出来。二人自是欢喜，便命人将贾琮等各自送回家



The two women tuned their instruments and played until the Lady Dowager asked the time. On being told that it was the third watch, she observed:

“No wonder it’s growing so chilly.”

Some young maids had already brought warmer clothes.

Now Lady Wang rose to ask, “Why not move to the lobby with the heated floor, madam? Our two relatives needn’t be treated like outsiders. We’ll keep them company for you.”

“In that case why don’t we all move inside?” countered the old lady. “That would be cosier.”

“There may not be room for us all,” demurred Lady Wang.

“I know what. Instead of using all these tables, we’ll just join two or three together so that we can sit side by side, cosy and snug.”

They all liked this idea and rose from their seats. The servants hastily cleared the feast away, put three large tables together in the lobby, and brought in more refreshments.

“Don’t stand on ceremony, anyone,” said the old lady when all was ready. “Just sit where I tell you.”

She made Aunt Xue and Aunt Li take the seats of honour on the north side and took an east seat herself with Baoqin, Daiyu and Xiangyun beside her. Baoyu, told to sit by his mother, found a place between her and Lady Xing. Baochai and the other girls sat on the west side, Madam Lou and her son Jia Jun came next, then Jia Lan between Madam You and Li Wan, and Jia Rong’s wife on the south side.

The Lady Dowager now sent word to Jia Zhen, “You can take your brothers away, I shall soon be retiring.”

At once all the men came in to take their leave.

“Go along,” said the old lady. “No need to come in. We’ve just sat down and don’t want to stand up again. Go and rest now; tomorrow will be a busy day.”

“Very good, madam,” replied Jia Zhen. “But at least let us leave Jung here to serve you wine.”

“That’s right,” she agreed. “I’d forgotten him.”

With a word of assent Jia Zhen turned to lead Jia Lian and the others out and, having told servants to see Jia Cong and Jia Huang home, the



去，便邀了贾琏去追欢买笑，不在话下。

这里贾母笑道：“我正想着虽然这些人取乐，竟没一对双全的，就忘了蓉儿了。这可全了，蓉儿就合你媳妇坐在一处，倒也团圆了。”因有媳妇回说开戏，贾母笑道：“我们娘儿们正说的高兴，又要吵起来。况且那孩子们熬夜怪冷的，也罢，叫他们且歇歇，把咱们的女孩子们叫了来，就在这台上唱两出也给他们瞧瞧。”媳妇们听说，答应了出来，忙的一面着人往大观园去传人，一面二门口去传小厮们伺候。小厮们忙至戏房将班中所有的大人一概带出，只留下小孩子们。

一时，梨香院的教习带了文官等十二个人，从游廊角门出来。婆子们抱着几个软包，因不及抬箱，估料着贾母爱听的三五出戏的彩衣包了来。婆子们带了文官等进去见过贾母，皆垂手站着，贾母笑道：“大正月里，你师父也不放你们出来逛逛。你们如今唱什么？刚才八出《八义》闹得我头疼，咱们清雅些好。你瞧瞧，薛姨太太、李亲家太太都是有戏的人家，不知听过多少好戏的。这些姑娘都比咱们家的姑娘见过好戏，听过好曲子。如今这小戏子又是那有名玩戏家的班子，虽是小孩子们，却比大班还强。咱们好歹别落了褒贬，少不得弄个新样儿的。叫芳官唱一出《寻梦》，只用箫随着，笙笛一概不用。”文官笑道：“这也使得，我们的戏自然不能入姨太太和亲家太太姑娘们的眼，不过听我们一个发

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two of them went off cheerfully to enjoy the company of some singsong girls. But no more of this.

Meanwhile the Lady Dowager remarked with a smile, "I was just thinking that to make our pleasure complete we ought to have a married couple here. I'd forgotten Rong. Now with him here we've nothing missing. Sit next to your wife, Rong, and we shall have a married pair."

Some matrons announced that another opera was starting.

"We women folk are just having a pleasant chat," said the old lady. "We don't want any more noise. It's so late, those child-actresses must be freezing. Let them rest a while. Go and fetch our girl-actresses here to put on a couple of items on this stage. The troupe from outside can watch."

The women hurried off to send a messenger to Grand View Garden with instructions for the pages at the inner gate. These boys went straight to the changing room to escort all the grown people in the company out, leaving only the young performers. Then the instructor from Pear Fragrance Court brought Wenguan and the eleven other girl actresses out through the side gate of the corridor, accompanied by some women carrying bundles. Since there was no time to bring all their stage properties, they had chosen only the costumes for a few operas which they judged the old lady might like. The women led the actresses inside, and when they had paid their respects they stood there at respectful attention.

"It's the first month of the year, why didn't your instructor let you out to enjoy yourselves?" asked the old lady. "What have you been rehearsing lately? The eight scenes from *The Eight Gallants* were so noisy that they've made my head ache. Let's have something quieter. Look, Madam Xue and Madam Li here both have opera troupes at home; they've seen countless good performances, and their young ladies have watched better operas and heard better singing than ours. These young actresses we've hired today are from troupes trained by well-known families of opera connoisseurs, better than many older companies, for all that they're only children. We mustn't make a poor showing today, so let's try something new. Fangguan shall sing us 'Seeking the Dream'⁷ with no accompaniment but a two-string fiddle and a flute."



脱口齿，再听一个喉咙罢了。”贾母笑道：“正是这话了。”李婶、薛姨妈喜的都笑道：“好个灵透孩子，你也跟着老太太打趣我们。”贾母笑道：“我们这原是随便的玩意儿，又不去做买卖，所以竟不大合时。”说着又道：“叫葵官唱一出《惠明下书》，也不用抹脸。只用这两出，叫他们听个野异罢了。若省一点力，我可不依。”文官等听了答应出来，忙去扮演上台，先是《寻梦》，次是《下书》。众人都雅雀无闻，薛姨妈因笑道：“实在亏他，戏也看过几百班，从没见过用箫管随他的。”贾母道：“也有，只是像方才《西楼·楚江情》一支，多有小生吹箫随的。这大套的实在少，这也在主人讲究不讲究罢了。这个就算出奇了？”指湘云道：“我像他这么大的时节，他爷爷有一班小戏，偏有一个弹琴的凑了来，即如《西厢记》的《听琴》，《玉簪记》的《琴挑》，《续琵琶记》的《胡笳十八拍》，竟成了真的了，比这个更如何？”众人都道：“这更难得了。”贾母便命个媳妇来，吩咐文官等叫他们吹弹一套《灯月圆》，媳妇领命而去。

当下贾蓉夫妻二人捧酒斟了一巡，凤姐因见贾母高兴，便笑道：“趁着女先儿在这里，不如叫他们击鼓，咱们传梅，行一个‘春喜上眉梢’的令如何？”贾母笑道：“这是个好





“Very good,” replied Wenguan with a smile. “Our performance can’t possibly measure up to the standard to which these ladies are accustomed. They can only judge of our delivery and voices.”

“That’s it,” said the old lady.

“What a clever child!” exclaimed Aunt Li and Aunt Xue. “You’re helping the old lady to make fun of us.”

“We just put on shows for fun here, we’re not professionals; that’s why you won’t find us following the usual fashion,” said the Lady Dowager. She then told Kuiguan, “Sing that aria ‘Huiming Delivers a Letter’⁸ and don’t trouble to make up. Just sing a couple of scenes to amuse these ladies with our amateur style. But mind you do your best.”

Wenguan and the others assented and withdrew to change their clothes. First they staged “Seeking the Dream,” then “The Letter Is Delivered.” All listened in absolute silence.

“It isn’t easy for her. I’ve seen truly hundreds of companies perform, but never heard an accompaniment of only flutes,” observed Aunt Xue presently.

“There have been cases,” the Lady Dowager told her. “For instance that melody in *The Western Tower* ‘Longing by the Chu River’ is often sung to a flute accompaniment by the young male actor. It is rare, though, to have a whole scene like this. It just depends on one’s taste. This is nothing unusual.” Pointing at Xiangyun she added, “When I was her age, her grandfather had an opera troupe in which someone performed real lyre music when they played ‘Listening to the Lyre’ from *The Western Chamber*, ‘Seduction by the Lyre’ in *The Romance of the Jade Hair-pin*⁹ and ‘Eighteen Songs to the Hunnish Pipe’ in *The Lute Player’s Return*.¹⁰ What do you think of that?”

All admitted that such a thing was even rarer. Then the old lady told servants to order Wenguan and her troupe to play with lute and flute *Full Moon at the Lantern Festival*, and they went off to carry out her instructions.

At this point Jia Rong and his wife offered toasts all round. The Lady Dowager was now in such high spirits that Xifeng suggested, “While the story-tellers are here, why don’t we get them to drum for us while we pass round a spray of plum-blossom and play ‘Spring Lights Up the Eye-



令，正对时景。”忙命人取了一面黑漆铜钉花腔令鼓来，与女先儿们击着，席上取了一枝红梅来。贾母笑道：“若到谁手里住了，喝一杯，也要说个什么才好。”凤姐笑道：“依我说，谁像老祖宗要什么有什么呢。我们这不会的，岂不没意思。依我说也要雅俗共赏，不如谁输了谁说个笑话罢。”众人听了，都知道他素日善说笑话，最是他肚内有无限的新鲜趣谈。今见如此说，不但在席的诸人喜欢，连地下伏侍的老小人等，无不欢喜。那小丫头子们都忙出去，找姐唤妹的告诉他们：“快来听，二奶奶又说笑话儿了。”众丫头子们挤了一屋子。于是戏完乐罢，贾母命将些汤点果菜与文官等吃去，便命响鼓。那女先儿们皆是惯的，或紧或慢，或如残漏之滴，或如进豆之疾，或如惊马之乱驰，或如疾电之光而忽暗。其鼓声慢，传梅亦慢；鼓声疾，传梅亦疾。恰恰至贾母手中，鼓声忽住。大家哈哈大笑，贾蓉忙上来斟了一杯。众人都笑道：“自然老太太先喜了，我们才托赖些喜。”贾母笑道：“这酒也罢了，只是这笑话倒有些难说。”众人都说：“老太太的比凤姐儿的还好还多，赏一个我们也笑一笑儿。”贾母笑道：“并没有什么新鲜笑话，少不得老脸皮厚的说一个罢了。”因说道：“一家养了十个儿子，娶了十个媳妇。惟有那





brows'?"

"That's a fine drinking-game, and this is just the time for it," approved the old lady.

She sent for a black lacquered drum with copper tuds which was kept for drinking-games, asked the story-tellers to beat it, and took a spray of red plum-blossom from the table.

"Whoever has the blossom when the drum stops must drink a cup and say something," she decreed.

"The rest of us aren't so smart as our Old Ancestress," objected Xifeng. "If we get stuck, it won't be any fun. Let's find something that highbrows and lowbrows alike can enjoy. Suppose the one caught with the blossom tells a joke?"

As Xifeng was noted for her jokes and endless fund of original quips, this met with the approval of all the feasters as well as the maid-servants there, both old and young. The young maids hurried out to urge their friends:

"Come quick! The Second Mistress is going to tell a joke."

In no time at all the room was crowded with maids.

As soon as the performance ended, the old lady had refreshments sent to Wenguan and the other actresses. Then she ordered the drumming to start. The story-tellers, being old hands at this, varied the tempo and the pulse was passed from hand to hand to its rhythm. First slow as the dripping of water from a clepsydra, the drumming soon gathered speed like the patter of peas being poured into a bowl. Then, after a rapid tattoo like a horse stampeding or sudden flashes of lightning, the sound abruptly broke off just as the plum-blossom reached the old lady's hand. A roar of laughter went up, and Jia Rong at once stepped forward to fill her cup.

"Naturally the old lady's face should light up first," cried the others. "Then we shall be able to share in her happiness."

"I don't mind drinking a cup," she rejoined. "But I can't think of a joke."

"Why, your Ladyship knows even more and better jokes than Xifeng," they expostulated. "Do tell us a good one, madam."

"I've no new jokes, but I'll just have to brazen it out. So here goes," said the old lady. "Well, a family had ten sons and ten daughters-in-law.



第十个媳妇聪明伶俐，心巧嘴乖，公婆最疼，成日家说那九个不孝顺。这九个媳妇委屈，便商议说：“咱们九个心里孝顺，只是不像那小蹄子嘴巧，所以公婆老了，只说他好，这委屈向谁诉去？”大媳妇有主意，便道：“咱们明儿到阎王庙去烧香，和阎王爷说去，问他一问，叫我们托生人，为什么单给那个小蹄子一张乖嘴，我们都是笨的。”众人听了都欢喜，说这主意不错。第二日便都到阎王庙里来烧了香，九个人都在供桌底下睡着了。九个魂专等阎王驾到，左等不来，右等也不到。正等的着急，只见孙行者驾着筋斗云来了，看见九个魂便要拿金箍棒打，唬得九个魂忙跪下央求。孙行者因问原故，九个魂忙细细的告诉了他，孙行者听了，把脚一跺，嗟叹了一声，道：“这个原故幸亏遇见我，就等着阎王来了，他也不得知道的。”九个魂听了，求说：“大圣发个慈悲，我们就好了。”孙行者笑道：“这却不难，那日你们妯娌十个托生时，可巧我到阎王这里来，因为撒了泡尿在地下，你那小婶子便吃了。你们如今要伶俐嘴乖，有的是尿，再撒泡你们吃了就是了。”说毕，大家都笑起来。凤姐儿笑道：“好的，幸而我们都笨嘴笨腮的，不然也就吃了猴儿尿了。”尤氏、娄氏都笑向李纨道：“咱们这里谁是吃过猴儿尿的，别装没事人儿。”薛姨妈笑道：“笑话儿不在好歹，只要对景就发笑。”说着又击起鼓来。小丫头子们只要听凤姐的





The tenth daughter-in-law was the cleverest, so smart and so well-spoken that she was the favourite of her father and mother-in-law, who kept finding fault with the nine others. This seemed so unfair that the others put their heads together.

“‘We’ve been dutiful daughters-in-law,’ they said. ‘We’re just not as smooth-spoken as that bitch, which is why the old couple keep on singing her praises. Who can we complain to about this injustice?’

“The eldest one suggested, ‘Let’s go tomorrow to the Temple of the King of Hell to offer incense and complain to him. We’ll ask why, since we’ve all been born human, that bitch alone was given the gift of the gab while the rest of us are so dumb?’

“The other eight approved of this idea. They all went the next day to the temple and offered incense, then slept there at the foot of the altar while their spirits waited for the King of Hell to appear. They waited for a long time but nothing happened, and they were growing impatient when they saw Monkey King come somersaulting down through the clouds. At sight of these nine spirits, he raised his magic staff and threatened to beat them. The nine spirits knelt down fearfully to beg for mercy. Then Monkey asked what brought them there, and they told him the whole story. He stamped his foot.

“‘So that’s the reason!’” he sighed, ‘It’s a good thing you met *me*. If you’d waited for the King of Hell, he wouldn’t have known.’

“The nine spirits pleaded, ‘Have pity and tell us, Great Sage. That’s all we ask.’

“‘That’s easy,’ answered Monkey with a smile. ‘The day you ten girls were born, I’d gone to visit the King of Hell and happened to piss on the ground. Your youngest sister-in-law lapped it up. If you want the gift of the gab, I’ve plenty more piss you can drink if you like.’”

The whole company burst out laughing.

“Fine!” cried Xifeng. “It’s lucky we’re all so dumb here. Otherwise people might say we’d drunk monkey’s piss.”

Madam You and Madam Lou joked to Li Wan, “The one who’s drunk monkey’s piss is playing innocent!”

Aunt Xue remarked with a chuckle, “Topical jokes are always the funniest.”



笑话，便悄悄的和女先儿说明，以咳嗽为记。须臾传了两遍，刚到了凤姐手里，小丫头们故意咳嗽，女先儿便住了鼓。众人齐笑道：“这可拿住他了。快吃了酒说一个好的，别太逗人笑的肠子疼。”凤姐吃过酒，想了一想，笑道：“一家子也是过正月半，合家赏灯吃酒，真真的热闹非常，祖婆婆、太婆婆、婆婆、媳妇、孙子媳妇、重孙子媳妇、亲孙子、侄孙子、重孙子、灰孙子，滴滴搭搭的孙子、孙女儿、侄孙女儿、外孙女儿、姨表孙女儿、姑表孙女儿，……暖哟哟，真好热闹！”众人听他说着，已经笑了，都说：“听数贫嘴的，又不知编派那一个呢。”尤氏笑道：“你要招我，我可撕你的嘴。”凤姐起身拍手笑道：“人家费力说，你们混，我就不说了。”贾母笑道：“你说你说，底下怎么样？”凤姐想了一想，笑道：“底下就团团的坐了一层子，吃了一夜酒就散了。”众人见他正言厉色的说了，便再无他话，都怔怔的还等他往下说，只觉冰冷无味。史湘云看了他半日。凤姐儿笑道：“再说一个过正月半的。几个人抬着个房子大的爆竹，往城外头放去，引了上万的人跟着瞧去。有一个性急的人等不得，便偷着拿香火点着了。只听‘噗哧’一声，众人哄然一笑都散了。这抬炮仗的人抱怨卖炮仗的扞的不结实，没等放就散了。”湘云道：“难道他本人没听见响？”凤姐道：“这本





The drums started up again then, and some young maids who just wanted to hear Xifeng's jokes softly told the story-tellers that they would cough when it was time to stop. The plum-blossom went round twice and had just reached Xifeng when they coughed, and silence fell.

"Now we've caught her!" the others exulted. "Drink up quickly and let us have a good one. Just don't make us split our sides laughing."

Xifeng drained her cup and thought for a second.

"In the middle of the first month," she began, "during the Lantern Festival a family was having a fine lively time, enjoying lanterns and drinking together. There were the greatgrandmother, grandmother, mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, grand-daughters-in-law, great-grand-daughters-in-law, grandsons, grand-nephews and a pack of great-great-grandsons, as well as grand-daughters and grand-nieces on the paternal and maternal sides, and grand-nieces on the brothers' and sisters' sides... Aiya, it was really lively...."

Already laughing they cried, "Listen to the way she runs on. Who else is she going to put in?"

"If you drag *me* in I'll pinch your lips," warned Madam You.

Xifeng sprang to her feet to protest, "Here am I hard at work, yet you keep butting in. All right, I won't say any more."

"Go on," urged the old lady. "What happened?"

Xifeng reflected before answering, "They sat up together feasting all night, and then the party broke up."

Having said this gravely with a straight face she stopped. The others waited in some mystification for her to go on, but all that followed was an icy silence.

Xiangyun stared at Xifeng until she said with a smile, "Here's another about the Lantern Festival. A man carried a fire-cracker as large as a house out of town to let it off, and thousands of people followed to watch. One fellow was so impatient that he set light to it on the sly with a stick of incense. Then — Whizz! Bang! — the crowd roared with laughter and dispersed. But the man carrying the fire-cracker complained:

"What a sloppy job the cracker-maker did! How could it burst apart before being lit?"

"Surely he'd heard the bang?" objected Xiangyun.



人原是个聋子。”众人听说，一回想，不觉一齐失声都大笑起来。又想着先前那一个没说完的，问他：“头里那一个怎么样？也该说完。”凤姐将桌子一拍，说道：“好罗唆，到了第二日是十六，年也完了，节也完了，我看着人忙着收东西还闹不清，那里还知道底下的事了。”众人听说，复又大笑起来。凤姐笑道：“外头已经四更了，依我说，老祖宗也乏了，咱们也该‘聋子放爆竹——散了’罢。”尤氏等用手帕子握着嘴，笑的前仰后合，指他说道：“这个东西真会数贫嘴。”贾母笑道：“真真这凤丫头越发贫嘴了。”一面说，一面吩咐道：“他提爆竹来，咱们也把烟火放了解解酒。”

贾蓉听了，忙出去带着小厮们就在院内安下屏架，将烟火设吊齐备。这烟火皆系各处进贡之物，虽不甚大，却极精致，各色故事俱全，夹着各色花炮。林黛玉禀气柔弱，不禁毕驳之声，贾母便搂他在怀中。薛姨妈便搂着湘云。湘云笑道：“我不怕。”宝钗等笑道：“他专爱自己放大爆竹呢，还怕这个呢。”王夫人便将宝玉搂在怀中。凤姐笑道：“我们是没人疼的了。”尤氏笑道：“有我呢，我搂着你，别害怕。你这会子又撒娇了，听见放炮仗，吃了蜜蜂儿屎似的，今儿又轻狂起来。”凤姐笑道：“等散了，咱们园子里放去。我比小厮们放的还好呢。”说话之间，外面一色一色的放了，又放有





“The man was deaf,” Xifeng told her.

When this had sunk in, everybody burst out laughing.

Then reverting to the unfinished joke they asked: “What happened afterwards in your first story? Do finish that one too.”

“What a question to ask!” cried Xifeng, banging the table. “The next day would have been the sixteenth, when the festival would be over and I suppose everyone would be busy clearing up. In that flurry who’d know what happened afterwards?”

At this they laughed again.

“The fourth watch has sounded outside,” announced Xifeng. “I think our Old Ancestress is tired, and it’s time for us to whizz off too like that deaf man’s fire-cracker.”

All the rest were rocking with laughter, their handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. Madam You wagged a finger at Xifeng.

“How this creature does rattle on!” she spluttered.

“The minx is growing perter all the time,” chuckled the Lady Dowager. “She mentioned fire-crackers. We’ll let off some fireworks, too, to sober ourselves up.”

Jia Rong promptly went out to get pages to set up screens and stands in the courtyard on which to place or hang the fireworks. These had come as tribute from different parts of the country, and although not very large they were most ingeniously made in different colours, ornamented with scenes from stories and fitted with all kinds of fire-crackers.

As Daiyu was too delicate to stand much noise, her grandmother help her close to her while Aunt Xue put her arms around Xiangyun, who declared with a smile that she was not afraid.

“She likes nothing better than letting off big fire-crackers herself,” explained Baochai. “Why should she be scared of these?”

Lady Wang had taken Baoyu on her lap.

“No one cares for poor little me!” Xifeng complained.

“I do,” chuckled Madam You. “Come and sit on my knee and don’t be afraid. You’re behaving like a spoilt brat again. The sound of fireworks has sent you off your head, just as if you’d eaten bees’ wax.”

“When this party’s over let’s go and let off fireworks in the Garden,” proposed Xifeng gaily. “I’m better at that than those page boys.”



许多的满天星、九龙入云、平地一声雷、飞天十响之类的零碎小爆竹。放罢，然后又命小戏子打了一回“莲花落”，撒了满台的钱取乐。又上汤时，贾母说道：“夜长，觉的有些饿了。”凤姐忙回说：“有预备的鸭子肉粥。”贾母道：“我吃些清淡的罢。”凤姐忙道：“也有枣儿熬的粳米粥，预备太太们吃斋的。”贾母笑道：“不是油腻腻的就是甜的。”凤姐又忙道：“还有杏仁茶，只怕也甜。”贾母道：“倒是这个还罢了。”说着，已命人撤去残席，外面另设上各种精致小菜。大家随便吃了些，用过漱口茶，方散。

十七日早，又过宁府行礼，伺候掩了宗祠，收过影像，方回来。此日便是薛姨妈家请吃年酒。十八日便是赖大家，十九日便是宁府赖升家，二十日便是林之孝家，二十一日便是单大良家，二十二日便是吴新登家。这几家，贾母也有去的，也有不去的，也有高兴直待众人散了方回的，也有兴尽半日一时就来的。凡诸亲友来请或来赴席的，贾母一概怕拘束，不会，自有王夫人、邢夫人、凤姐三人料理。连宝玉只除王子腾家去了，余者亦皆不会，只说贾母留下解闷。所以倒是家下人家来请，贾母可以自便之处，方高兴去逛逛。闲言不提，当下元宵已过，要知端的，下回分解。





Meanwhile a pyrotechnical display was going on outside, including sparklers like "A Skyful of Stars," "Nine Dragons Soar to the Clouds," "A Bolt from the Blue," and "Ten Peals in the Air."

After this they ordered the young actresses to perform *Lotus Flowers Fall*, largesse was scattered all over the stage and the little girls scampered round gaily to snatch up the coins.

By the time soup was served the Lady Dowager remarked, "It's been a long night and I feel rather hungry."

"We've prepared some duck congee," Xifeng told her.

"I'd prefer something less greasy," was the reply.

"There's date congee too for the ladies observing a fast."

"One's too greasy, the other too sweet," complained the old lady.

"We've almond gruel as well. Only I'm afraid that's sweet too."

"That will do for me."

Then the tables were cleared, fresh delicacies served, and after a small collation they rinsed their mouths with tea and the party broke up.

In the morning of the seventeenth they went to the Ning Mansion's Ancestral Temple to sacrifice once more, after which the temple gates were closed, the ancestral portraits put away, and everybody went home.

That day Aunt Xue asked the others over to a New-Year feast. Other feasts were given by the stewards — on the eighteenth by Lai Da, on the nineteenth by Lai Sheng of the Ning Mansion, on the twentieth by Lin Zhixiao, on the twenty-first by Shan Taliang, and on the twenty-second by Wu Xinteng. The Lady Dowager went to some of these only, staying on till the end if she was in a good mood, otherwise leaving after a short time.

As for relatives and friends who came in person to invite the Jias to a feast or to enjoy a feast given by them, she declined to meet all, making Lady Wang, Lady Xing and Xifeng entertain the callers for her. And Baoyu, claiming that his grandmother needed him to amuse her, went nowhere but to Wang Ziteng's house. So the old lady attended only those stewards' family parties where she could relax and enjoy herself. But enough of this.

Soon the festival was over. To know what happened afterwards, read the next chapter.

第五十五回

辱亲女愚妾争闲气 欺幼主刁奴蓄险心

且说元宵已过，只因当今以孝治天下，目下宫中有一位太妃欠安，故各嫔妃皆为之减膳谢妆，不独不能省亲，亦且将宴乐俱免。故荣府今岁元宵亦无灯谜之集。

话说刚将年事忙过，凤姐便小月了，在家一月，不能理事，天天两三个太医用药。凤姐自恃强壮，虽不能出门，然筹画计算，想起什么事来，便命平儿去回王夫人，任人谏劝，他只不听。王夫人便觉失了膀臂一样，一人能有多大精神？凡有了大事，自己主张；将家中琐碎之事，一应都暂令李纨协理。李纨是个尚德不尚才的，未免逞纵了下人。王夫人便命探春合同李纨裁处，只说过了一个月，凤姐将息好了，仍交与他。谁知凤姐禀赋气血不足，兼年幼不知保养，平生争强斗智，心力使亏，故虽系小月，竟着实亏虚下来；一月之后，复添了下红之症。他虽不肯说出来，众人见他面目黄瘦，便知失于调养。王夫人只令他好生服药调养，不令他操心。他自己也怕成了大症，遗笑于人，便想偷空调养，





Chapter 55

A Stupid Concubine Insults Her Own Daughter in a Futile Squabble A Spiteful Servant Imposes Upon Her Young Mistress

The Lantern Festival passed. As one of the Dowager Concubines was unwell and the Emperor was known for his filial piety which had brought harmony to the land, all the Imperial Concubines ate and dressed simply, their visits home were cancelled, and there were no New-Year feasts or entertainments in the Palace. Consequently, there was no display of lantern riddles in the Rong Mansion this year.

No sooner was the bustle of New Year over than Xifeng had a miscarriage. She had to stop running the household for a month, and two or three doctors attended her every day; but overestimating her own strength, although staying indoors she continued mapping out plans for the household, which Pinger was sent to report to Lady Wang. All advice to rest she ignored.

Lady Wang felt as if she had lost her right arm, and simply had not the energy to cope. She decided important matters herself, entrusting lesser domestic affairs to Li Wan for the time being. But Li Wan, being one of those people who have more virtue than ability, inevitably let the servants have their own way; so Lady Wang told Tanchun to help her out for a month, until Xifeng was well enough to take over again.

Xifeng had a delicate constitution, however, and as a girl had never looked after her health. In her passion to shine she had overtaxed her strength, with the result that her miscarriage left her very weak. A month after it she was still losing blood. Although she kept this a secret, everyone could see from her pallor and loss of weight that she was not taking proper care of herself. Lady Wang urged her not to worry about family affairs, but just to take medicine and recuperate. And as she herself was afraid that if she fell really ill other people would gloat, she concentrated on getting better as soon as possible. However, she did not start to mend



恨不得一时复旧如常。谁知一时难痊，调养到八、九月间，才渐渐的起复过来，下红也渐渐的止了，此是后话。

如今且说目今王夫人见他如此，探春与李纨骤难卸事，园中人多，又恐失于照管，因又特请了宝钗来，托他各处小心：“老婆子们不中用，得空儿就斗牌吃酒，白日里睡觉，夜里斗牌，我都知道的。凤丫头在外头，他们还有个惧怕，如今他们又该取便了。好孩子，你还是个妥当人，你兄弟姐妹们又小，我又没工夫，你替我辛苦两天，照看照看。凡有想不到的事，你来告诉我，别等老太太问出来，我没话回。那些人不好了，你只管说；他们若不听，你来告诉我，别弄出大事来才好。”宝钗听说，只得答应了。

时届孟春，黛玉又犯了嗽症。湘云亦因时气所感，亦卧病于蘅芜院，一天医药不断。探春同李纨相住间隔，二人近日同事，不比往年，来往回话人等亦不便宜，故二人议定：每日早晨皆到园门口南边的三间小花厅上去，会齐办事，吃过早饭，于午错方回房。这三间厅，原系预备省亲之时，众执事太监起坐之处，故省亲之后也用不着了，每日只有婆子们上夜。如今天已和暖，不用十分修饰，只不过略略的铺陈了，便可他二人起坐。这厅上也有一匾，题着“辅仁谕德”四字，家下俗呼皆只叫“议事厅”儿。如今他二人每日卯正至此，午正方散。凡一应执事媳妇来往回话者，络绎不绝。

红楼梦
PDG



for some time: not until the autumn did she begin to recover and gradually stop losing blood. But this is anticipating.

Meanwhile, seeing that for the time being Tanchun and Li Wan could hardly be relieved of their responsibilities, and that there were many people in the Garden who needed to be kept in order, Lady Wang enlisted Baochai's help as well.

"The old serving-women are no use," she told her. "They drink and gamble whenever they have the chance, sleeping during the day so as to play cards at night. I know all they're up to. When Xifeng was up and about there was someone to scare them, but now they'll be taking advantage. You're a good steady girl, my dear. Your cousins are young and I'm busy — do you mind putting yourself out, for a couple of days, to keep an eye on things for me? If there's anything I overlook, come and let me know before the old lady asks and I'm stumped for an answer. If the servants misbehave, just tell them off. If they won't listen, let me know. We don't want to have any trouble."

Baochai had to agree to this.

It was now early spring and Daiyu was coughing again while Xiangyun too was under the weather, confined to her bed in Alpinia Park, taking medicine day after day. As Tanchun and Li Wan lived some distance from each other, now that they were working together it proved so inconvenient sending messages to and fro that they arranged to settle their business every morning in the small three-roomed hall south of the Garden gate. They took to having breakfast there and returning to their own quarters about noon.

This hall had served as the headquarters for the eunuchs in charge at the time of the Imperial Consort's visit, since when it had only been used by some old maid-servants who kept watch there at night. As the weather was warm now no major repairs were needed: a little fixing up made the place fit for the two of them to use. The tablet over this hall bore the inscription "Assisting Benevolence and Discussing Virtue," but members of the household called it the Council Hall.

Now the two young mistresses came here at six every morning and did not leave until noon, after an endless stream of women-servants had



众人先听见李纨独办，各各心中暗喜，以为李纨素日原是个厚道多恩无罚的，自然比凤姐好搪塞。便又添了一个探春，也都想着不过是个未出闺阁的年轻小姐，且素日也最和平恬淡，因此都不在意，比前便懈怠了许多。只三四日后，几件事过手，渐觉探春精细处不让凤姐，只不过是言语安静，性情和顺而已。可巧连日有王公侯伯、世袭官员十几处，皆系荣、宁非亲即世交之家，或有升迁，或有黜降，或有婚丧红白等事，王夫人吊贺迎送，应酬不暇，前边更无人。他二人便一日皆在厅上起坐。宝钗便一日在上房监察，至王夫人回方散。每于夜间针线暇时，临寝之先，坐了小轿带领园中上夜人等，各处巡察一次。他三人如此一理，更觉比凤姐当权时倒更谨慎了些。因此里外下人都暗中抱怨说：“刚刚的倒了一个‘巡海夜叉’，又添了三个‘镇山太岁’，率性连夜里偷着吃酒玩的工夫都没了。”

这日王夫人正是往锦乡侯府去赴席，李纨与探春早已梳洗，伺候出门去后，回至厅上坐下。刚吃茶时，只见吴新登家的媳妇进来回说：“赵姨娘的兄弟赵国基昨儿死了。昨儿回过太太，太太说知道了，叫回姑娘、奶奶来。”说毕，便垂手旁侍，再不言语。彼时来回话的不少，都打听他二人办事如何：若办得妥当，大家则安个畏惧之心；若少有嫌隙不当





reported on the matters entrusted to them. These women had all exulted secretly at the news that Li Wan was to be in sole charge, thinking her too kind-hearted to punish anyone, and obviously much easier to impose on than Xifeng. It did not worry them either when Tanchun later joined her, for they discounted her as a young unmarried girl who had always been most pleasant and easy-going. So they became much slacker than before. After only a few days, however, it dawned on them from the way certain matters were handled that Tanchun was every bit as alert as Xifeng, being simply more softspoken and even-tempered.

It happened now that a dozen or so promotions, demotions, marriages or funerals in the families of nobles or hereditary officials related to or friendly with the Rong and Ning houses kept Lady Wang busy for several days in a row, paying visits of congratulation or condolence. This left her less time than ever to attend to affairs at home.

So Li Wan and Tanchun remained in the hall all day long, while Baochai supervised the servants in Lady Wang's apartments until her return; and last thing at night, after doing some needlework, she would make a tour of the Garden in a small sedan-chair accompanied by those on watch. Thus the three of them controlled things even more strictly than when Xifeng was in charge.

"We're only just rid of one demon patrolling the sea, and here come three guardian mountain spirits instead!" all the servants started grouching secretly.

"We've not even a chance now to drink and play cards at night."

One day, Lady Wang was invited to a feast in the house of the Marquis of Jinxiang. Li Wan and Tanchun rose early to attend her until she left, then went back to the hall. They were sipping tea there when Wu Xindeng's wife came in to inform them that Zhao Guoji, the brother of Concubine Zhao, had died the previous day.

"I reported this yesterday to the mistress," she said. "She told me to let you ladies know."

She made no further comment after this, just stood by at respectful attention.

All the servants who had come to report on business were eager to see how these two would handle the matter. If it was handled correctly



之处，不但不畏服，一出二门还要编出许多笑话来取笑。吴新登家的媳妇心中已有主意，若是凤姐前，他便献勤说出许多主意，又查出许多旧例来，任凤姐儿拣择施行。如今他藐视李纨老实，探春是年轻的姑娘，所以只说出这一句话来，试他二人有何主见。探春便问李纨，李纨想了一想，便道：“前儿袭人的妈死了，听见说赏了银子是四十两。这也赏他四十两罢了。”吴新登家的媳妇听了，忙答应个“是”，接了对牌就走。探春道：“你且回来。”吴新登家的只得回来，探春道：“你且别支银子去。我且问你：那几年老太太屋里的几位老姨奶奶，也有家里的，也有外头的，这有个分别：家里的，若死了人，是赏多少？外头的，死了人，是赏多少？你且说两个我们听听。”一问，吴新登家的本是忘了，忙陪笑回说：“这也不是什么大事，赏多赏少，谁还敢争不成？”探春笑道：“这话胡闹。依我说，赏一百倒好。若不按例，别说你们笑话，明儿也难见你二奶奶。”吴新登家的笑道：“既这么说，我查旧账去，此时却记不得。”探春笑道：“你办事办老了的，还记不得，倒来难我们？你素日回你二奶奶也现查账去？若有这个道理，凤姐姐还不算利害，也就算是宽厚了！还不快找了来我瞧。再迟一日，不说你们粗心，反像我们没主意了。”吴新登家的满面通红，忙转身出来。众媳妇们都伸舌头，这里又回别的事。

一时，吴新登家的取了旧账来。探春接过来看时，上面





they would respect them; if the least mistake was made, not only would they despise them, once out of the inner gate they would start gossiping and making fun of them. Mrs. Wu knew what should be done, and had she been dealing with Xifeng she would have made various suggestions to curry favour, quoting precedents for her to decide between. But as she looked down on Li Wan as a simpleton and Tanchun as only a girl, she said no more, waiting to see what the two of them would do.

Tanchun consulted Li Wan, who thought for a moment.

“The other day when Xiren’s mother died, I understand she was given forty taels,” she said. “We can give the same amount.”

Mrs. Wu promptly assented, took the tally and was about to go off when Tanchun stopped her.

“Don’t go for the money yet,” said Tanchun. “I’ve something to ask you. Some of those old concubines in the old lady’s apartments came from outside, some from families serving here. There was a distinction. If a relative of one from our household died, how much was given? How much to one from outside? Give us a couple of examples.”

When questioned like this, Mrs. Wu could not remember.

“It doesn’t matter,” she answered with a smile. “Whatever sum’s given, who would dare to complain?”

“Nonsense!” retorted Tanchun pleasantly. “I would just as soon give a *hundred* taels; but if I didn’t go by the rules, not only would you laugh at me but I shouldn’t be able to face the Second Mistress.”

“In that case I’ll go and look up the old accounts,” offered Mrs. Wu. “I can’t for the moment remember.”

“You’re an old hand at this,” Tanchun pointed out. “Yet you claim to have forgotten, so as to make things awkward for us. Do you have to go and look up the accounts when you report to the Second Mistress? If so, Xifeng would count as lenient, not as exacting. Fetch those accounts at once. One more day’s delay, and instead of blaming you for negligence people will accuse us of incompetence.”

Mrs. Wu flushed scarlet and hurried out, while the other stewards’ wives stuck out their tongues in dismay. Then other matters were reported.

Soon Mrs. Wu came back with the old accounts. Tanchun, taking

有两个家里的，赏过皆是二十两，两个外头的，皆赏过四十两。外还有两个外头的，一个赏过一百两，一个赏过六十两。这两笔底下皆注有原故：一个是隔省迁父母之柩，外赏六十两；一个是现买葬地，外赏二十两。探春便递与李纨看了。探春便说：“给他二十两银子。把这账留下，我们细看看。”吴新登家的答应去了。

忽见赵姨娘进来，李纨、探春忙让坐下。赵姨娘开口便说道：“这屋里的人都踩下我的头去还罢了。姑娘你也想一想，该替我出气才是。”一面说，一面便眼泪鼻涕哭起来，探春忙道：“姨娘这话说谁，我竟不解。谁踩姨娘的头？说出来我替姨娘出气。”赵姨娘道：“姑娘现踩我，我告诉谁去！”探春听说，忙站起来，说道：“我并不敢。”李纨也站起来劝，赵姨娘道：“你们请坐，听我说。我这屋里熬油似的熬了这么大年纪，又有你和你兄弟，这会子连袭人都不如了，我还有什么脸？连你也没脸面！别说我了！”探春笑道：“原来为这个，我说我并不敢犯法违理。”一面就坐了，拿账翻与赵姨娘瞧，又念与他听，又说道：“这是祖宗手里的旧规矩，人人都依着，偏我改了这例不成？也不但袭人，将来环儿收了外头的女孩儿，自然也是同袭人一样。这原不是什么争大争小的事，讲不到有脸没脸的话上。他是太太的奴才，我是按着旧规矩办的。说办的好，领的是祖宗的恩典、太太的恩典；若说办的不均，那是他糊涂不知福，也只好凭



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them, found that two concubines who had been family servants had received twenty taels apiece, and two from outside forty. Two others from outside had received a hundred taels and sixty taels respectively; but it was recorded that this was because the first was allowed an extra sixty to have her parents' coffins moved to another province; the second was allowed an extra twenty to buy a burial ground.

Tanchun showed these items to Li Wan.

"Give her twenty taels," she ordered Mrs. Wu.

"And leave these accounts here for us to go through carefully."

Mrs. Wu assented and withdrew.

Suddenly Concubine Zhao burst in. Li Wan and Tanchun at once asked her to be seated.

"Everyone in this house tramples on my head," she stormed. "I should think *you* at least, miss, should take my side!" She began to sob and snivel as she was speaking.

"Whom are you accusing, madam?" asked Tanchun. "I don't understand. Who's trampling on your head? If you'll tell me, I'll take your side."

"You're the one — so whom can I complain to?"

Tanchun hastily rose to protest, "I wouldn't dare."

Li Wan also stood up to act as a peacemaker.

"Sit down, please, and listen to me!" cried the concubine. "I've been treated like dirt in this house all these years, though I've borne you and your brother, and now I rank even lower than Xiren. What face have I got left? Not only me — this makes *you* lose face too."

"So that's it," Tanchun smiled. "As if I dared take the law into my own hands!"

Sitting down again, she showed Concubine Zhao the account books and read out the items to her.

"These are the rules handed down by our ancestors," she declared. "We all have to abide by them — how could *I* change them? Xiren isn't a special case. If Huan takes a concubine from outside later on, she'll naturally rank the same as Xiren. This isn't a question of competing for status, it has nothing to do with face. If someone's in our mistress' service, I can only go by the rules. The sum's given thanks to the kindness



他抱怨去。太太连房子赏了人，我有什么有脸之处；一文不赏，我也没什么没脸之处。依我说，太太不在家，姨娘安静些养神罢了。何苦只要操心。太太满心里疼我，因姨娘每每生事，几次寒心。我但凡是个男人，可以出得去，我必早走了，另立一番事业，那时自有我一番道理。偏我是女孩儿家，一句多话也没有我乱说的。太太满心里都知道，如今因看重了我，才叫我照管家务，还没有做一件好事，姨娘倒先来作践我。倘或太太知道了，怕我为难不叫我管了，那才正经是没脸呢，连姨娘也真没脸！”一面说，一面不禁滚下泪来。赵姨娘没了别话答对，便说道：“太太疼你，你越发拉扯拉扯我们。你只顾讨太太的疼，就把我们忘了。”探春道：“我怎么忘了？叫我怎么拉扯？这也问你们各人，那一个主子不疼出力的奴才？那一个好人用人拉扯来着？”李纨在旁只管劝说：“姨娘别生气。也怨不得姑娘，他满心里有拉扯的心，口里怎么说的出来？”探春忙道：“这大嫂子也糊涂了。我拉扯谁？谁家姑娘们拉扯奴才来着？他们的好歹，自然你们该知道，与我什么相干。”赵姨娘气的问道：“谁叫你拉扯别人去了？你不当家我也不来问你。你如今现说一是一，说二是二。如今你舅舅死了，你多给了二三十两银子，难道太太就不依你？分明太太是好太太，都是你们尖酸刻薄，可惜太太有恩无处施。姑娘放心，这也使不着你的银子。明儿等出了阁，我还想你额外照看赵家呢。如今没有长羽毛，就忘了根本，只拣高枝儿飞去了！”探春没听完，已气的脸白气噎，



of our ancestors and our mistress. If that someone thinks it unfair and is too stupid to know when she's well off, I can't stop her complaining. If our mistress were to give away the whole *house*, I'd get no face from it. If she didn't give a cent, it wouldn't make me lose face either.

"Take my advice and have a quiet rest while the mistress is out. Why work yourself up? The mistress is kindness itself to me, but you've grieved her more than once by the way you make trouble. If I were a boy, able to leave this house, I'd have gone long ago to make my own way in the world, for then of course I'd know what to do. It's too bad that I'm only a girl and mustn't say a word out of turn. The mistress fully understands, and thinks well enough of me to put me in charge; but before I've managed to be of any use you come and start picking on me. If she found out and relieved me of the job so as not to embarrass me, then I'd *really* lose face. And so would you as well." By this time she was sobbing bitterly.

The concubine having no other answer to this retorted, "If the mistress is partial to you, that's all the more reason to lend us a helping hand. But you've quite forgotten us in your eagerness to curry favour with *her*."

"Who says I've forgotten you? How am I to lend a helping hand? You have to ask yourselves: Don't all mistresses like inferiors who make themselves useful? Good people don't need the kind offices of others."

Li Wan put in soothingly, "Don't be angry, madam. It's not her fault. She's only too eager to help you, but how can she say so?"

"Don't be ridiculous, sister-in-law!" cried Tanchun. "Who do you mean I'm to help? Does the daughter of any house help servants? You should know what they are — their affairs are none of my business."

"Who asked you to help others?" fumed the concubine. "If you weren't in charge I wouldn't have come to you. Now if you say one it's one, if you say two it's two. If you gave an extra twenty or thirty taels for your uncle's funeral, why should the mistress object? Everyone knows how good she is — it's you people who are so stingy. It's too bad she has no chance to show her kindness. But don't worry, miss, it's not your own silver you're saving. I'd always hoped, after you married, you'd show more consideration to the Zhao family; but now before your feathers have grown you've forgotten your roots, you're so keen to fly to the



抽抽咽咽的一面哭，一面问道：“谁是我舅舅？我舅舅年下才升了九省检点去了，那里又跑出一个舅舅来了？我倒素习按礼尊敬，越发敬出这些亲戚来了。既这么说，每日环儿出去，为什么赵国基又站起来，又跟他上学？为什么不拿出舅舅的款来？何苦来，谁不知道我是姨娘养的，必要两三个月寻出一个由头来，彻底子翻腾一阵，生怕人不知道，故意的表白表白。也不知谁给谁没脸？幸亏我还明白，但凡糊涂不知理的，早急了。”李纨急的只管劝，赵姨娘只管还唠叨。

忽听有人说：“二奶奶打发平姑娘来了。”赵姨娘听说，方把口止住。只见平儿进来，赵姨娘忙陪笑让坐，又忙问：“你奶奶好些？我正要瞧去呢，就只没得空儿。”李纨见平儿进来，因问他做什么。平儿笑道：“奶奶说，赵姨奶奶的兄弟没了，恐怕奶奶和姑娘不知有旧例，若照常例，只得二十两。如今请姑娘、奶奶裁夺着，再添些也使得。”探春早已拭去泪痕，忙说道：“又好好的添什么，谁又是二十四个月养的？不然也是那出兵放马背着主子逃过命的不成？你主子倒也巧，叫我开了例，他做好人，拿着太太不心疼的钱，乐的做人情。你告诉他，我不敢添减，混出主意。他添他施恩，等他好了出来，爱怎么添怎么添。”平儿一来时已明白了对半，今听这一番话，越发会意，见探春有怒色，便不敢以往日喜乐之时相待，只一边垂手默侍。





very top of the tree.”

Before she had finished, Tanchun’s face was white with anger.

Nearly choking with sobs she demanded, “Who’s my uncle? My uncle’s just been appointed Military Inspector of Nine Provinces. What other uncles do I have? Is this my reward for always observing the ruler of propriety — to have all these relative foisted off on me? If what you say were true, why did Zho Guoji have to stand up whenever Huan went out? Why follow him to school? Why didn’t he behave like an uncle?”

“Do you have to make such a scene? Everyone knows I’m a child by a concubine, yet you needs must bring it up every few months and rub it in, as if you had to make it plain for fear they didn’t know. Who’s making the other lose face? It’s lucky I’ve sense enough to remember my manners, or you’d have driven me frantic long ago!”

Li Wan tried desperately to pacify them, but the concubine went on ranting. She did not stop until it was announced:

“Miss Pinger has come with a message from the Second Mistress.”

Concubine Zhao greeted Pinger with a smile and urged her to take a seat.

“Is your mistress better?” she asked. “I’ve been meaning to call on her but haven’t yet found the time.”

Li Wan asked Pinger her business.

“The Second Mistress thought you ladies might not know what the usual allowance would be in connection with the death of Concubine Zhao’s brother,” answered Pinger. “The rule is to give only twenty taels, but it’s up to you to decide. You can give more if you want.”

“Why make an exception in this case?” retorted Tanchun who had now dried her eyes. “Was he a prodigy who took twenty-four months to be born, or someone who saved his master’s life in the army? How clever your mistress is, wanting me to break the rules while she gets the credit, buying herself goodwill at our mistress’ expense! Tell her I don’t dare to increase or cut down amounts for no good reason. If she wants to be charitable and add something, she’ll have to wait till she’s better.”

Pinger had sensed as soon as she came in that something was wrong. After this tirade she grasped the situation. And since Tanchun was glowering instead of replying with one of her usual jokes she waited there in a



时值宝钗也从上房中来，探春等忙起身让坐。未及开言，又有一个媳妇进来回事。因探春才哭了，便有三四个小丫鬟捧了沐盆、巾帕、靶镜等物来。此时探春因盘膝坐在矮板榻上，那捧盆的丫鬟走至跟前，便双膝跪下，高捧沐盆；那两个小丫鬟，也都在旁屈膝捧着巾帕并靶镜脂粉之类。平儿见待书不在这里，便忙上来与探春挽袖卸镯，又接过一条大手巾来，将探春面前衣襟掩了。探春方伸手向面盆中盥沐，那媳妇便回道：“回奶奶姑娘，家学里支环爷和兰哥儿一年的公费。”平儿先道：“你忙什么！你睁着眼睛看见姑娘洗脸，你不出去伺候着，先说话来。二奶奶跟前你也这么没眼色来着？姑娘虽然恩宽，我去回了二奶奶，只说你们眼里都没姑娘，你们都吃了亏，可别怨我。”唬的那个媳妇忙陪笑道：“我粗心了。”一面说，一面忙退出去。

探春一面匀脸，一面向平儿冷笑道：“你迟来了一步儿，还有可笑的：连吴姐姐这么个办老了事的，也不查清楚了，就来混我们。幸亏我们问他，他竟有脸说忘了。我说他回你主子事也忘了再查去？我料着你那主子未必有耐性儿等他去查。”平儿忙笑道：“他有这一次，管包腿上的筋早折了两根。姑娘别信他们，那是他们瞅着大奶奶是个菩萨，姑娘又是腼腆小姐，固然是托懒来混。”说着，又向门外说：“你们只管撒野，等奶奶大安了，咱们再说。”门外的众媳妇都笑道：“姑娘，你是个最明白的人，俗语说，‘一人作罪一人

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respectful silence.

At this point Baochai arrived too from Lady Wang's apartments. Tanchun and the others rose to offer her a seat; but before they could enter into conversation another woman came in to make her report. And as Tanchun's face was tear-stained, three or four young maids brought in a basin, towels and a mirror with a handle. One of them knelt before Tanchun, who was cross-legged on the couch, and held the basin out to her while two others knelt beside her with the towels, mirror and cosmetics. Seeing that Daishu was not there to help, Pinger stepped forward to roll up Tanchun's sleeves, take off her bracelets, and drape a large towel over the front of her clothes. Tanchun had just dipped her hands into the basin when the woman who had come in announced:

"If you please, my ladies, the family school has sent for this year's allowance for Master Huan and Master Lan."

"What's the hurry?" scolded Pinger. "Can't you see the young lady is washing? You should wait outside, not come butting in like this. Would you be so impertinent to the Second Mistress? The young lady may be kind-hearted, but don't blame me if my mistress hears of this and your lack of respect gets you all into trouble."

"How stupid of me!" cried the woman in dismay, then hastily left the room.

Tanchun, now powdering her face, smiled ironically at Pinger.

"You came just too late to see something still more ridiculous," she said. "Even an old hand like Mrs. Wu came without checking up on her facts in order to trip us up. When challenged, she'd the nerve to say she'd forgotten. I asked if that was the way she reported to the Second Mistress. I doubt whether that mistress of yours would put up with it."

"If she tried that just once, I can promise you she'd have her legs broken." replied Pinger. "You can't trust these people an inch, miss. They're trying to take advantage, because Madam Zhu's a real Bodhisattva and you're such a gentle young lady." Turning towards the door she called to the women outside, "All right, just take all the liberties you like. Wait till Madam Lian's well again, and we'll settle scores with you!"

The matrons outside answered, "You're most understanding, miss.



当’，我们并不敢欺蔽小姐。如今小姐是娇客，若认真惹恼了，死无葬身之地。”平儿冷笑道：“你们明白就好了。”又陪笑向探春道：“姑娘知道二奶奶本来事多，那里照看的这些？保不住不忽略。俗语说，‘旁观者清’，这几年姑娘冷眼看着，或有该添该减的去处，二奶奶没行到的，姑娘竟一添减，头一件于太太的事有益，第二件也不枉姑娘待我们奶奶的情义了。”话未说完，宝钗、李纨皆笑道：“好丫头，真怨不得凤丫头偏疼他！本来无可添减的事，如今听你一说，倒要找出两件来斟酌斟酌，不辜负你这话。”探春笑道：“我一肚子气，没人煞性子，正要拿他出气去，偏他碰了来，说了这些话，叫我也没了主意了。”一面说，一面叫进方才那媳妇来问：“环爷和兰哥儿家学里这一年的银子，是做那一项用的？”那媳妇便回说：“一年学里吃点心，剩的买纸笔，每位有八两银子的使用。”探春道：“凡爷们的使用，都是各屋里领了月钱的。环哥儿的是姨娘屋里领二两，宝玉的是老太太屋里袭人领二两，兰哥儿的是大奶奶屋里领。怎么学里每人又多这八两？原来上学去的是为这八两银子！从今儿起，把这一项蠲了。平儿，回去告诉你奶奶，我的话，把这一条务必免了。”平儿笑道：“早就该免。旧年奶奶原说要免的，因年下忙，就忘了。”那个媳妇只得答应着去了。就有大观园中媳妇们捧了饭盒来。

待书、素云早已抬过一张小饭桌来，平儿也忙着上菜。





You know the saying: 'If a man does wrong, he alone must take the blame.' *We'd* never presume to deceive Miss Tanchun. *We'd* deserve to die and go unburied if we provoked a delicate young lady like her."

"So long as you know that," replied Pinger scornfully. Then she turned with a smile to Tanchun. "You know how busy Madam Lian was, miss. She couldn't cope with everything and is bound to have overlooked certain things. As the proverb says, 'The spectator sees most of the sport.' As a detached observer all these years, you may have noticed cases where she failed to make suitable cuts or additions. If you'll set these right, you'll first of all be helping the mistress in her work and showing your friendship for my lady as well..."

"What a clever girl!" exclaimed Baochai and Li Wan, smiling, before Pinger could finish. "No wonder Xifeng is so attached to you. *We'd* no intention of making any changes, but after what you've said we shall reconsider one or two cases to show our appreciation."

"I was so furious I wanted to work off my feelings on her mistress." Tanchun laughed. "But turning up and talking like this she has quite taken the wind out of my sails." She called in the woman who had just come and asked her, "What are these annual allowances for Master Huan and Master Lan for?"

"For a year's refreshments at school and the remainder for stationery," was the reply. "Each gets eight taels of silver a year."

"All the young master's expenses are covered by the monthly allowances for the different apartments," countered Tanchun. "Huan's two taels a month are given to Concubine Zhao, Baoyu's to the old lady's maid Xiren; and Lan's to Madam Zhu's maid. So why this extra eight taels for the school? Do they go to school for the sake of this eight taels? From now on this will be cancelled. Tell your mistress this from me, Pinger, when you go back. Say I think there's no need for it."

"This should have been cut long ago," said the maid with a smile. "Last year my mistress did speak of doing it, but with all the bustle over New Year she forgot."

Then the matron had to assent and take herself off.

Now servants from Grand View Garden brought lunch hampers, and Pinger set out the dishes on the small table put ready by Daishu and



探春笑道：“你说完了话干你的去罢，在这里忙什么？”平儿笑道：“我原没事的。二奶奶打发了我来，一则说话，二则恐这里人不方便，原是叫我帮着妹妹们伏侍奶奶、姑娘的。”探春因问：“宝姑娘的饭怎么不端来一处吃？”丫鬟们听说，忙出至檐外命媳妇们去说：“宝姑娘如今在厅上一处吃，叫他们把饭送了这里来。”探春听说，便高声说道：“你别混支使人！那都是办大事的管家娘子们，你们支使要饭要茶的，连个高低都不知道！平儿这里站着作什么，你叫叫去。”

平儿忙答应了一声出来，那些媳妇们都忙悄悄的拉住笑道：“那里用姑娘去叫，我们已经有人叫去了。”一面说，一面用手帕掸了一掸石矾上说：“姑娘站了半天乏了，这太阳影里且歇歇。”平儿便坐下，又有茶房里的两个婆子拿了个坐褥铺下，说：“石头冷，这是极干净的，姑娘将就坐一坐儿罢。”平儿忙陪笑道：“多谢。”一个又捧了一碗精致新茶出来，也悄悄的笑说：“这不是我们常用的茶，原是伺候姑娘们的，姑娘且润一润喉罢。”平儿忙欠身接了，因指众媳妇们悄悄说道：“你们太闹的不像了。他是个姑娘家，不肯发威动怒，这是他尊重，你们就藐视欺负他。果然招他动了大怒，不过说他个粗糙就完了，你们就现吃不了的亏。他撒个娇儿，太太也得让他一、二分，二奶奶也不敢怎样，你们就这么大胆子小看他，可是鸡蛋往石头上碰。”众人都忙道：“我们何尝敢大胆了，都是赵姨奶奶闹的。”平儿又悄悄的道：“罢了，好奶奶们。‘墙倒众人推’，那赵姨奶奶原有些倒三



Suyun.

“You can go and attend to your business now that you’ve had your say,” Tanchun told her. “You don’t have to help out here.”

“I’m free now.” replied Pinger, smiling. “The Second Mistress sent me partly to give you that message, partly to help the girls wait on you if I found you short-handed.”

“Where’s Miss Baochai’s lunch?” asked Tanchun.

Some girls hurried out to notify the matrons, “Miss Baochai’s lunching here too. Have her food brought over.”

Hearing this Tanchun said loudly, “Don’t start ordering them about. They’re all the wives of chief stewards, not people you can send to fetch rice and tea! Have you no manners? Pinger has nothing to do here. Let her go.”

Pinger promptly agreed and went out.

The stewards’ wives quietly drew her aside and said, “There’s no need for you to go, miss. We’ve already sent someone.” They dusted off the steps with their handkerchiefs and urged her to have a rest there in the sun after standing for so long.

As soon as she sat down, two women from the boiler house brought over a mattress.

“That stone’s cold, miss,” they said. “This is quite clean, do use it.”

As she thanked them with a smile, someone else brought her a bowl of good freshly brewed tea.

“This isn’t our usual tea but some for the young ladies,” she whispered. “Do try it.”

Pinger inclined her head and accepted it.

Then wagging finger at them all she scolded, “You’ve really gone too far. She’s only a girl and, quite properly, doesn’t like to lose her temper; but that’s no reason why you should be rude to her. If you really made her angry, at worst she could be blamed for flaring up but you’d get into big trouble. If she made a scene, even Lady Wang would have to humour her, and there’s nothing the Second Mistress could do either. How have you the nerve to slight her in that way? It’s like an egg dashing itself against a rock.”

“How dare we?” they protested. “It was all Concubine Zhao’s fault.”



不着两的，有了事都就赖他。你们素日那眼里没人，心术利害，我这几年难道还不知道？二奶奶若是略差一点儿的，早被你们这些奶奶治倒了。饶这么着，得一点空儿，还要难他一难，好几次没落了你们的口声。”众人道：“如何敢？”平儿道：“他利害，你们都怕他，惟我知道他心里，也就不算不怕你们呢。前儿我们还议论到这里，再不能依头顺尾的，必有两场气生。那三姑娘虽是姨娘的姑娘，你们都横看了他。二奶奶这些大姑子、小姑子里头，也就只单惧他五分。你们这会子倒不把他放在眼里了。”

正说着，只见秋纹走来，众媳妇忙赶着问好，又说：“姑娘也且歇一歇，里头摆饭呢。等撤下饭桌子来，再回话去。”秋纹笑道：“我比不得你们，我那里等得？”说着便直要上厅去，平儿忙叫：“快回来。”秋纹回头见了平儿，笑道：“你又在这里充什么外围的防护？”一面回身便坐在平儿褥上，平儿悄问道：“回什么？”秋纹道：“问一问宝玉的月钱，我们的月钱多早晚才领？”平儿道：“这什么大事。你快回去告诉袭人，就说我的话，凭有什么事今儿都别回。若回一件，管驳一件；回一百件，管驳一百件。”秋纹听了，忙问：“这是为什么了？”平儿与众媳妇等都忙告诉他原故，又说：“正要找几处利害与有体面的人来开例作法子，镇压与众人作榜样呢。何苦你们先来碰在这钉子上。你这一去说了，他们若拿你们也作一二件榜样，又碍着老太太、太太；若不拿着你们作一二件榜样，人家又说偏一个向一个，仗着老太



“That’s enough, my good women,” whispered Pinger. “‘If a wall starts tottering, everyone gives it a shove.’ Concubine Zhao does tend to turn things upside down, I grant you, but when there’s trouble you put all the blame on her. I’ve seen for myself these years the airs you give yourselves and the tricks you play. If the Second Mistress weren’t so able, you fine ladies would have got the upper hand of her long ago. Every chance you get, you still try to land her in trouble. Several times she’s only just missed falling into your traps.

“People say you’re scared of her because she’s such a terror,” Pinger continued. “But I who know her best can tell you she’s afraid of you too. Only the other day, we were saying things couldn’t go on like this — there were bound to be a couple of rumpuses. Though Miss Tanchun’s an unmarried young lady, you’ve all misjudged her. She’s the only one of the young ladies that my mistress is half afraid of; yet you think you can treat her any way you please!”

They were interrupted by Qiuwen’s arrival. All the matrons greeted her and urged her to rest for a while.

“They’re having lunch inside,” they explained. “You’d better not go in till they’ve finished.”

“What time have I to wait?” retorted Qiuwen. “I’m not like you.”

She was walking in when Pinger called her back. At sight of her Qiuwen smiled.

“What are *you* doing here? Acting as an extra bodyguard?” she asked, sitting down by her on the mattress.

“What business brings you here?” asked Pinger softly.

“We want to know when the monthly allowances for Baoyu and the rest of us will be issued.”

“Very important. I must say! Go back quickly and tell Xiren from me not to try to settle any business today. Every single request you make will be refused.”

Qiuwen asked the reason and all of them promptly told her.

“They’re looking for some big issues and someone who counts to make an example of as a warning to everyone,” Pinger explained. “Why should you bump *your* head against this brick wall? If you go in now, they can hardly make an example of you, out of deference to Their Ladyships;



太、太太威势的就怕，也不敢动，只拿我们软的作鼻子头。你听听罢，二奶奶的事，他还要驳两件，才压的住众人口声呢。”秋纹听了，伸舌笑道：“幸而平姐姐在这里，没的臊一鼻子灰。我赶早知会他们去。”说着，便起身走了。

接着宝钗的饭至，平儿忙进来伏侍。那时赵姨娘已去，三人在板床上吃饭。宝钗面南，探春面西，李纨面东，众媳妇皆在廊下静候，里头只有他们紧跟常侍的丫鬟伺候，别人一概不敢擅入。这些媳妇们都悄悄的议论说：“大家省事罢，都别安着没良心的主意了。连吴大娘才都讨了没意思，咱们又是什么有脸的。”他们一边悄悄议论，等饭完回事。只觉里面鸦雀无声，并不闻碗箸之声。一时只见一个丫鬟将帘栊高揭，又有两个将桌子抬出。茶房内早有三个丫头捧着三沐盆水，见饭桌已出，三人便进去了。一回又捧出沐盆并漱盂来，方有待书、素云、莺儿三个，每人用茶盘捧了三盖碗茶进去。一时等他三人出来，待书命小丫头们：“好生伺候着，我们吃了饭来换你们，可别又偷坐着去。”众媳妇们方慢慢的一个一个的安分回事，不敢如先前轻慢疏忽了。

探春气方渐平，因向平儿道：“我有一件大事，早要和你奶奶商议，如今可巧想起来。你吃了饭快来，宝姑娘也在这里，咱们四个人商议了，再细细的问你奶奶可行可止。”平儿答应回去。

凤姐因问为何去这一日，平儿便笑着将方才的原故细细





but if they don't they may be accused of bias, of not daring to touch those backed by Their Ladyships and just picking on the weak instead. Wait and see. They're even countermanding a few of the Second Mistress' rulings too — that's their only way to stop gossip."

Qiuwen stuck out her tongue in dismay.

"Thank goodness you came here. Sister Pinger!" she cried. "You've saved me from a snubbing. I'll go straight back and tell them." With that she left.

At this point Baochai's meal arrived and Pinger sent in to serve her. Concubine Zhao had now left and the three others were eating on the couch, Baochai facing south, Tanchun west and Li Wan east. The matrons waited quietly outside on the verandah, none but personal serving-maids venturing to go in.

"We'd better watch our step and not try anything on," said the matrons softly. "Mrs. Wu was went off with a flea in her ear, and do we have more face than she does?" They decided not to go in until lunch was over.

All was quiet now inside, with no clatter of bowls or chopsticks. Presently a maid raised the portiere and two others carried out the table. Three girls from the boiler house had brought three basins of water, and as soon as the table was removed they went in, reappearing before long with the basins and rinse-bowls. Then Daishu, Suyun and Yinger took in three covered bowls of tea on trays.

When these three came out again Daishu instructed the younger maids, "You must see to things here till we come back from our meal. Don't sneak off to have a rest."

Then, slowly, the matrons made their reports in turn, not presuming to behave with their previous impertinence.

Tanchun, somewhat mollified, remarked to Pinger. "I've just happened to remember something important I've been meaning to discuss with your mistress. Come back straight after your meal, will you? As Miss Baochai is here too, the four of us can talk it over before asking your mistress whether she agrees or not."

Pinger assented and left.

"Why were you away so long?" asked Xifeng on her return.



说与他听了。凤姐笑道：“好，好，好个三姑娘！我说他不错。只可惜他命薄，没托生在太太肚子里。”平儿笑道：“奶奶也说糊涂话了。他便不是太太养的，难道谁敢小看他，不与别的一样看了不成？”凤姐叹道：“你那里知道，虽然说是一样，女儿却比不得男人，将来攀亲时，如今有一种轻狂人，先要打听姑娘是正出是庶出，多有为庶出不要的。殊不知别说庶出，便是我们的丫头们，比人家的小姐还强呢。将来不知那个没造化的挑庶、正误了事呢，也不知那个有造化的不挑庶、正的得了去。”说着，又向平儿笑道：“你知道，我这几年生了多少省俭的法子，一家子大约也没个不背地里恨我的。我如今也是骑上老虎，虽然看破些，无奈一时也难宽放；二则家里出去的多，进来的少。凡百大小事仍是照着老祖宗手里的规矩，却一年进的产业又不及先时。多省俭了，外人又笑话；老太太、太太又受委屈，家下人也抱怨刻薄。若不趁早儿料理省俭之计，再几年就都赔尽了。”平儿道：“可不是这话！将来还有三四位姑娘，还有两三个小爷，一位老太太，这几件大事未完呢。”凤姐笑道：“我也虑到这里，倒也够了：宝玉和林妹妹，他两个一娶一嫁，可以使不着官中的钱，老太太自有梯己拿出来。二姑娘是大老爷那边的，也不算。剩了两三个，满破着每人花上一万银子。环哥娶亲有限，花上三千两银子，不拘那里省一抿子也就够了。”



Pinger gave her a detailed account of all that had happened.

“Splendid! Good for Tanchun!” Xifeng smiled. “What did I always say? It’s too bad she wasn’t fated to be the mistress’ own daughter.”

“So you, too, talk nonsense, dear madam!” retorted Pinger. “She may not be the mistress’ own child, but everyone has to show her the same respect as the other daughters of the house.”

“You don’t understand.” Xifeng sighed. “Though we may say they’re the same, a girl can’t compare with a boy. When the time comes to arrange her marriage, some foolish people will first ask whether she’s the daughter of the wife or of a concubine, and most likely refuse her in the second case. Although, not to mention a concubine’s child, even one of the maids in our family is better than the daughters of other households. Some unlucky family may lose an excellent daughter-in-law by insisting on the wife’s daughter, and some lucky one may do well by not being so choosy.”

She changed the subject then, continuing, “You know how hard I’ve tried to save money these last few years, which must have made the whole household secretly curse me. I’m riding on a tiger’s back, and though I’m not clamping down too strictly at present I can’t let everything slide. Besides, our expenses have increased while our income’s dwindled; yet we still have to manage all affairs large and small according to the ancestors’ old rules, in spite of less money coming in every year. If I economize too much, outsiders may jeer and Their Ladyships will feel the pinch, while the rest of the household complain of my stinginess. On the other hand, if I don’t devise ways to save money in good time, another few years may see us bankrupted.”

“That’s very true,” agreed Pinger. “And there’s big expenditure still to come with the marriages of three or four young ladies and two or three young masters, as well as the Old Ancestress’ funeral.”

“I’ve taken those into account. We’ve enough for that. The marriages of Baoyu and Daiyu won’t cost the estate anything, as the old lady will pay for them herself. We can count Yingchun out too, as she belongs to the Elder Master’s side. That leaves Tanchun and Xichun, who will require ten thousand taels each at the most. Huan’s marriage shouldn’t cost more than three thousand, which we can raise easily by cutting down



老太太的事出来，一应都是全了的，不过零星杂项使费，也满破三五千两银子。如今再省俭些，陆续也就够了。只怕如今平空又生出一两件事来，可就了不得了。——咱们且别虑后事，你且吃了饭，快听他商议什么。这正碰了我的机会，我正愁没有膀臂。虽有个宝玉，他又不是这里头的货，纵收伏了他也不中用。大奶奶是个佛爷，也不中用。二姑娘更不中用，亦且不是这屋里的人。四姑娘小呢。兰小子更小。环儿更是个燎毛的小冻猫子，只等有热灶火坑让他钻去罢。真真一个娘肚子里，跑出这样天悬地隔的两个人来，我想到这里就不服。再者，林丫头和宝姑娘他两个倒好，偏又都是亲戚，又不好管咱们家务事。况且一个是美人灯儿，风吹吹就坏了；一个是拿定了主意，‘不干己事不张口，一问摇头三不知’，也难十分去问他。倒只剩了三姑娘一个，心里嘴里都也来得，又是咱们家的正人，太太又疼他，虽然面上淡淡的，皆因是赵姨娘那老东西闹的，心里却是和宝玉一样疼呢。比不得环儿，实在令人难疼，要依我的性子早撵出去了。如今他既有这个主意，正该和他协同，大家做个膀臂，我也不孤不独了。按正理，天理良心上论，咱们有他这一个人帮着，咱们也省些心，于太太的事也有些益。若按私心藏奸上论，我也太行毒了，也该抽头退步，回头看看，再要穷追苦克，人恨极了，暗地里笑里藏刀，咱们两人才四个眼



on other expenses.

“As for the old lady’s funeral, all the preparations have already been made, and sundry minor expenses will amount at most to another four or five thousand. So if we economize now we should do all right. It’s only the possibility of some unforeseen expenses that makes me anxious, for then we’d really be in serious trouble. Still, it’s no use worrying now.

“Hurry up and have your meal, then go back to hear what they’re discussing. This is just the chance I wanted: it worried me that I had no assistant. Although there’s Baoyu, he’s not cut out for the job — even if I win him to my side he’s not much use. Madam Zhu’s too saintly to be of any use either. And Yingchun’s even worse, apart from the fact that she doesn’t belong to our house. Xichun’s still too young; Lan’s even younger. As for Huan, he’s like a kitten half perished with cold, always looking for a stove or heated *kang* to creep under and get his hair singed. It really and truly passes my understanding how one mother could bear two such utterly different children!”

“Daiyu and Baochai, now, are — both good girls; but not being daughters of our family they can’t very well mind our affairs. Besides, one’s a lovely paper lantern which a puff of wind will blow out; and it’s no use asking the other anything, as she’s made up her mind not to open her mouth about matters that don’t concern her, but to shake her head in answer to all questions.

“That leaves only Tanchun, who’s quick in the uptake with a ready tongue, a daughter of the house and a favourite with the mistress — she just doesn’t show it because of the trouble made by that old bitch Concubine Zhao, but at heart she’s as fond of her as of Baoyu. Tanchun’s totally different from Huan, whom nobody could like. If I had *my* way, he’d have been thrown out long ago. Now that she’s made this proposal, we should co-operate and help each other; then I won’t be on my own any longer.

“From the point of view of what’s fair and right, a helper like her will save us worry and make the mistress’ task so much easier. From a selfish point of view, I’ve made myself so unpopular that it’s time for me to back down and look about me; because if I go on being so strict I shall get myself thoroughly hated, and everybody’s smiles will hide daggers!



睛，两个心，一时不防，倒弄坏了。趁着紧溜之中，他出头一料理，众人就把往日咱们的恨暂可解了。还有一件，我虽知你极明白，恐怕你心里挽不过来，如今嘱咐你：他虽是姑娘家，他心里却事事明白，不过是言语谨慎；他又比我知书识字，更利害一层了。如今俗语说‘擒贼必先擒王’，他如今要作法开端，一定是先拿我开端。倘或他要驳我的事，你可别分辩，你只越恭敬，越说驳的是才好。千万别想着怕我没脸，和他一犟，就不好了。”平儿不等说完，便笑道：“你太把人看糊涂了。我才已经行在先了，这会子又反嘱咐我。”凤姐笑道：“我是恐怕你心里眼里只有了我，一概没有别人之故，不得不嘱咐。既已行在先，更比我明白了。你又急了，满口里‘你’、‘我’起来。”平儿笑道：“偏说‘你’！你不依，这不是嘴巴子，再打一顿。难道这脸上还没尝过的不成！”凤姐笑道：“你这小蹄子，要掂多少过子才罢。看我病的这个样儿，还来恼我。过来坐下，横竖没人来，咱们一处吃饭是正经。”

说着，丰儿等三四个小丫头子进来放小炕桌。凤姐只吃燕窝粥，两碟子精致小菜，每日的分例菜暂已减去。丰儿便将平儿的四样分例菜端至桌上，与平儿盛了饭来。平儿屈一膝于炕沿之上，半身犹立于炕下，陪着凤姐吃了饭，伏侍盥漱毕，嘱咐了丰儿些话，方往探春处来。只见院中寂静，人已散出。要知端的，下回分解。



You and I have only four eyes and two brains between us: if they once catch us off guard they can do for us. We must make the most of this chance. So long as she's in charge, they'll forget their past grudges against us for the time being.

"And there's another thing I must tell you, as you may not have spotted it for all you're so smart. Young as Tanchun is she's no fool, only careful how she talks. In fact, with her book-learning, she's smarter than I am. She must know the saying 'To catch rebels first catch the chief.' So to set an example she's bound to start with me. If she reverses any of my decision, don't argue with her but back her up, the more respectfully the better. On no account protest for fear I lose face."

Long before the end of this speech Pinger was smiling.

"What do you take me for — a fool?" she retorted. "That's what I've been doing, and here you are warning me."

"I was afraid you'd forget other people in your concern for me, that's why. If that's what you've been doing, it shows you've more sense than I have. Don't get so worked up, though, that you forget yourself and whom you're talking to."

"That's my way," countered Pinger. "If you don't like it you can slap my face again. It won't be the first time."

"You bitch!" Xifeng laughed. "How many times do you have to harp on that? Why be so provoking when you can see I'm ill? Come and sit down. As we're all on our own let's have our meal together."

Fenger and three or four other young maids came in then with a small table, which they set on the *kang*. Xifeng ate nothing but some bird's-nest gruel and two tasty side-dishes, having cancelled her usual food for the time being. Fenger set Pinger's normal four dishes before her and helped her to rice. Then Pinger, half kneeling on the *kang* and half standing, accompanied her mistress. The meal at an end, she helped Xifeng wash and tinkle her mouth. Then, having given Fenger some instructions, she went back to rejoin Tanchun.

But she found the courtyard quiet and deserted. To know the reason, read the following chapter.



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第五十六回

敏探春兴利除宿弊 识宝钗小惠全大体

话说平儿陪着凤姐吃了饭，伏侍盥漱毕，方往探春处来。只见院中寂静，只有丫鬟、婆子在窗外听候。

平儿进入厅中，见他姊妹三人正议论些家务，说的便是年内赖大家来请吃酒，他家花园中的事。见他来了，探春便命他脚踏上坐了，因说道：“我想的事不为别的，因想着我们一月有二两月银外，丫头们又另有月钱。前儿又有人回，要我们一月所用的头油脂粉，每人又是二两。这又同才刚学里的八两一样，重重叠叠，事虽小，钱有限，看起来也不妥当。你奶奶怎么就没想到这个？”平儿笑道：“这有个原故：姑娘们所用的这些东西，自然是该有分例的。每月买办买了，令女人们各房交与我们收管，不过预备姑娘们使用就罢了，没有一个我们天天各人拿钱找人买头油又是脂粉去的理。所以外头买办总领了去，按月使女人按房交与我们的。姑娘们的每月这二两，原不是为买这些东西，原为的是一时当家的奶奶、太太或不在，或不得闲，姑娘们偶然一时可巧要几个钱使，省得找人去。这原是恐怕姑娘们受了委屈，可知这个钱并不是为买这个才有的。如今我冷眼看着，各房里的姑娘，各门的姊妹都是现拿钱买这些东西的，竟有一半。





Chapter 56

Clever Tanchun Devises a Scheme to Make a Profit and End Abuses Understanding Baochai Rounds It Out with a Small Act of Kindness

After eating with Xifeng and waiting on her while she washed and then rinsed her mouth, Pinger went back to Tanchun. She found the Council Hall quiet, with a few maids and matrons waiting outside the windows. As she walked in, the three cousins were discussing family affairs and had just brought up the subject of Lai Da's garden, where they had feasted shortly before New Year.

Tanchun offered Pinger a foot-stool.

"Here's what I was thinking," she told her. "In addition to our monthly allowance of two taels, our maids have separate allowances; but a few days ago someone reported that each of us gets an extra two taels a month for hair-oil, rouge and powder. This is like that extra allowance of eight taels for the school just now — another duplication. Admittedly it's a small matter, involving very little money, but it doesn't seem right. Why hasn't this occurred to your mistress?"

"There's a reason," answered Pinger. "Of course the young ladies should be provided with cosmetics every month, and they're bought by the stewards in charge, then delivered by the matrons to us in the different apartments to be kept ready for when the young ladies need them. That's to save us the trouble of having to send out all the time to buy them. So the stewards get the lump sum for this item, and distribute the cosmetics each month to the different apartments.

"As for the monthly allowance of two taels, that was never meant for this purpose. It was so that you don't have to search for the mistresses in charge, if they're away or too busy to be bothered when you happen to need a little money. In other words, to see that you don't go short. That money obviously isn't meant for cosmetics. But I've noticed that at least half our sisters attending in the different apartments make these



我就疑惑，不是买办脱了空，迟些日子，就是买的不是正经货，弄些使不得的东西来搪塞。”探春、李纨都笑道：“你也留心看出来。脱空是没有的，也不敢，只是迟些日子；催急了，不知那里弄了来的那平常东西，使不得，依然得现买。就用这二两银子，另叫别人的奶妈或是兄弟哥哥的儿子买了来才使得。若使了官中的人买去，照旧是那样。不知他们是什么法子，是铺子里坏了的不要了，他们都弄了来，单预备给我们的？”平儿笑道：“买办买的是那样的，他买了好的来，买办岂肯和他善开交，又说他使坏心，要夺这买办了。所以他们也只得如此，宁可得罪了里头，不肯得罪了外头办事的人。姑娘们只得使奶妈们，他们也就不敢说闲话了。”探春道：“因此我心里不自在。钱费两起，东西又白掷一半，算起来，反费了两折子钱，不如竟把买办这一分子免了罢，此是一件事。第二件，年里头往赖大家去，你也去的，你看他那小园子比咱们这个如何？”平儿笑道：“还没有咱们这一半大，树木花草也少多了。”探春道：“我因和他们家女儿说闲话儿，谁知那么个园子，除他们带的花儿、吃的笋菜鱼虾之外，一年还有人包了去，年终总有二百两银子剩。从那日我才知道，一个破荷叶，一根枯草根子，都是值钱的。”

宝钗笑道：“真真膏粱纨绔之谈。你们原是千金小姐，不知道这事，但你们都念过书，识字的，竟没看见朱夫子有一篇《不自弃文》不成？”探春笑道：“虽也看过，那不过是勉

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purchases with their own money. I suspect it's because the stewards aren't supplying them on time, or because what they buy is of a poor quality."

"So you've noticed that too." Tanchun and Li Wan smiled. "The stewards supply us all right, they wouldn't dare stop, but always a few days late. When we hurry them they produce something inferior, goodness knows from where, which we can never use. We still have to buy our own with those two taels. We have to ask the sons of other people's nurses or brothers to do this — they get us what we want. But if we send those servants in charge, they buy the same kind, we can't imagine why. Could it be that they just buy us shop-soiled rejects?"

Pinger smiled.

"If the stewards get you that kind and they were to buy something better, of course the stewards would be annoyed and accuse them of trying to do them out of a job," she explained. "That's why they have to do this. They'd rather offend you ladies than the stewards. But when you send your nurses, no one can complain."

"It's been worrying me," put in Tanchun, "because we spend two lots of money but half the purchases are wasted. That means we're spending twice as much as we should. So my first proposal is to stop that monthly allowance to the stewards. I've another idea too. You went with us to Lai Da's house before New Year. How did you think his small garden compared with ours?"

"It's less than half the size and has far fewer trees and flowers."

"I had a chat with one of their grils," continued Tanchun. "I learned to my surprise that its annual produce — apart from the flowers they wear and the bamboo shoots, vegetables, fish and prawns they eat — has been contracted for by people who pay them at least two hundred taels a year. That was how I first learned that even a snapped lotus leaf or a blade of withered grass is worth money."

"Truly spoken like a rich young dandy!" laughed Baochai. "Though sheltered young ladies know nothing about such things, in the course of your studies you've surely read Zhu Xi's essay *On Not Debasing One-self?*"¹

"Of course I have. Just a lot of exhortations and empty talk, I call it.



人自励，虚比浮词，那里都真有的？”宝钗道：“朱子都有虚比浮词？那句句都是有的。你才办了两天的时事，就利欲熏心，把朱子都看虚了。你再出去见了那些利弊大事，越发把孔子也看虚了！”探春笑道：“你这样一个通人，竟没看见子书？当日《姬子》有云：‘登利禄之场，处运筹之界者，窃尧舜之词，背孔孟之道。——’”宝钗笑道：“底下一句呢？”探春笑道：“如今只断章取义，念出底下一句，我自己骂我自己不成？”宝钗道：“天下没有不可用的东西；既可用，便值钱。难为你是个聪明人，这些正事大事上竟没经历过，如今可惜迟了些。”李纨笑道：“叫了人家来，不说正事，你们且对讲学问。”宝钗道：“学问中便是正事。此刻于小事上用学问一提，那小事越发作高一层了。不拿学问提着，便都流入市俗去了。”

三人只是取笑之谈，说笑了一回，仍谈正事。探春因又接着说道：“咱们这园子只算比他们的多一半，加一倍算，一年就有四百银子利息。若此时也出脱生发银子，自然小器，不是咱们这样人家行的事。若派出两个一定的人来，既有许多值钱之物，一味任人作践，也似乎暴殄天物。不如在园子里的所有的老妈妈中，拣出几个本分老成，能知园圃事的，派准他们收拾料理，也不必要他们交租纳税，只问他们一年可有些孝敬。一则园子有专管之人修理，花木自有一年好似一年的，也不用临时忙乱；二则也不至作践，白辜负了东西；三则老妈妈们也可借此小补，不枉每年在园中辛苦；四



Such things can't really happen."

"So even Zhu Xi's writings are empty talk, are they?" retorted Baochai. "No, every word there is true. After just two days of managing affairs you've become so mercenary that you accuse Zhu Xi of empty talk! I suppose if you worked outside, where you'd profit more by cutting down bigger expenses, you'd bring the same accusation against even Confucius!"

"Well-read as you are," countered Tanchun, "haven't you read Jizi? Jizi said, 'Those in a position to seek profit and emolument, or responsible for planning and calculating, may talk like Yao and Shun but disobey the precepts of Confucius and Mencius.'"

Baochai smiled as Tanchun broke off and urged, "Go on."

"That's all I want to quote. Why should I go on to make fun of myself?"

"There's nothing useless in this world, and when something has a use it's worth money. I'd have thought, where a serious matter like this is concerned, you had sense enough to grasp such a self-evident truth."

"You call us here," put in Li Wan, "but instead of talking business the two of you just carry on an academic discussion."

"This academic discussion has a bearing on our business," replied Baochai. "If our small tasks aren't guided by principles, they'll get out of hand and sink to the vulgar level of the market-place."

After this joking they got down to business.

Tanchun reverting to her earlier question said, "If we consider our Garden just twice the size of theirs, it should bring in double the profit — four hundred taels a year. Of course, it would be petty and unworthy of our family to concentrate solely now on making money. But if a couple of women are assigned to take charge, all the valuable things here won't be squandered — it's a shame to let them go to waste. Better choose a few of the most reliable old women here who know something about gardening, and let them see to things. We needn't charge them or ask for any rent if they send in some presents every year.

"In the first place, with people in charge of the flowers and trees, the Garden will naturally improve as time goes on and we shan't be called on for sudden emergency measures. In the second place, there'll be no



则亦可以省了这些花儿匠、山子匠并打扫人等的工费。将此有余，以补不足，未为不可。”宝钗正在地下看壁上的字画，听如此说一则，便点一回头，说完，便笑道：“善哉，三年之内无饥馑矣！”李纨笑道：“好主意。这果一行，太太必喜欢。省钱事小，第一有人打扫，专司其职，又许他们去卖钱。使之以权，动之以利，再无不尽职的了。”平儿道：“这件事须得姑娘说出来，我们奶奶虽有此心，也未必好出口。此刻姑娘们在园里住着，不能多弄些玩意儿去陪衬，反叫人去监管修理，图省钱，这话断不好出口。”宝钗忙走过来，摸着他的脸笑道：“你张开嘴，我瞧瞧你的牙齿舌头是什么作的？从早起到这会子，你说这些话，一套一个样子，也不奉承三姑娘，也没见你说你们奶奶才短想不到，也并没有三姑娘说一句，你就说一句是；横竖三姑娘一套话出来，你就有一套话进去；总是三姑娘想的到的，你奶奶也想的到，只是必有个不可办之故。这会子又是因姑娘住的园子，不好因省钱令人去监管。你们想想这话，若果真交与他人弄钱去的，那人自然是一枝花儿也不许掐，一个果子也不许动了，姑娘们分中自然不敢，天天与小姑娘们就吵不清了。他这远愁近虑，不亢不卑。他奶奶便不是和咱们好，听他这一番话，也必要自愧的变好了，不和的也变和了。”探春笑道：“我早起一肚子气，听他来了，忽然想起他主子来，素日当家，使出



waste either. In the third, the old women won't be working hard all year for nothing, but will have a few perks. In the fourth, what we save on the gardeners' and cleaners' pay can be spent on improvements and repairs. How's that?"

"Very good!" Baochai, who was standing looking at the scrolls on the walls, nodded approvingly. "Within three years an end will be put to famine." ³

"That's an excellent idea." approved Li Wan too. "If we do this the mistress is sure to be pleased. Saving money isn't the main thing, but we shall need fewer cleaners too. If there are people in charge of the Garden's upkeep who are allowed to make something on the side, given the authority and a profit incentive they're bound to do their best."

"This proposal had to come from you, miss," remarked Pinger. "My mistress had the same idea, but she could hardly suggest it with all you young ladies living in the Garden. Instead of improving the place, how could she propose putting people in charge to save money?"

Baochai stepped up to her and patted her cheek.

"Open your mouth and let me see what your teeth and tongue are made of!" she cried. "From first thing this morning till now you've done so much talking, and you've a different argument each time. You neither praise Miss Tanchun to her face nor admit that your mistress ever overlooks anything, not do you agree to whatever Miss Tanchun says; but each time she makes some proposal you have your answer pat — the same idea occurred to your mistress, too, but there was always some reason why she couldn't suggest it."

"Now you're saying that because we live here she couldn't put people in charge so as to save money. Can't you two see what that means? If we really let people make money out of the Garden, they naturally won't want anyone to pick a single flower or fruit. Of course they won't dare deny us, but they'll be quarrelling all the time with our maids. How far-sighted and circumspect Pinger is! She neither argues back nor flatters you. If her mistress weren't good to us, as in fact she is, hearing Pinger talk like this would surely make her repent and mend her ways."

"I was in a bad temper this morning," said Tanchun. "When I heard *she'd* come I suddenly thought of her mistress and of how insubordinate



来的好撒野的奴才，我见他更生了气。谁知他来了，避猫鼠儿似的站了半天，怪可怜的。接着又说了那么些话，不说他主子待我好，倒说‘不枉姑娘待我们奶奶素日的情意。’这一句话，不但没了气，我倒愧了，又伤起心来。我细想，我一个女孩儿家，自己还闹得没人疼没人顾的，我那里还有待人的好处？”口中说到这里，不免又流下泪来。李纨等见他说的恳切，又想他素日赵姨娘每生诽谤，在王夫人跟前亦为赵姨娘所累，也都不免流下泪来，都忙劝他：“趁今日清静，大家商议两件兴利剔弊的事，也不枉太太委托一场。又提这没要紧的事做什么？”平儿忙道：“我已明白了。姑娘竟说谁好，竟一派人就完了。”探春道：“虽如此说，也须得回你奶奶一声。我们这里搜剔不遗，已经不当，皆因你奶奶是个明白人，我才这样行，若是糊涂，多歪多妒的，我也不肯，倒像抓了尖儿。岂可不商议了再行？”平儿笑道：“既这样，我去告诉一声。”说着去了，半日方回来，笑说：“我说是白走一趟，这样好事，奶奶岂有不依的。”

探春听了，便和李纨命人将园中所有的婆子的名单要来，大家参度，大概定了几个。又将他们一齐传来，李纨即将大概告诉了他们。众人听了，无不愿意，也有说：“那一片竹子，单交给我，一年工夫，明年又是一片。除了家里吃的笋，一年还可交些钱粮。”这一个说：“那一片稻地交给我，



all the servants have grown under her management. So the sight of Pinger made me even angrier. But she came in like a mouse shrinking from a cat, and looked so pathetic all the time she stood there; and then the way she *talked*! Instead of reminding me how good her mistress is to me, she spoke of *my* consideration for her mistress. That not only stopped me being angry but made me so ashamed I felt like crying. I thought: a girl like myself, who's reduced to such a state that nobody cares for me — what can I do for anyone else?" At this point she broke down again and wept.

Her distress reminded Li Wan and the others of all the instances of Concubine Zhao's outrageous behaviour, which had involved Tanchun, making her embarrassed to face Lady Wang. They could not help shedding tears of sympathy.

"Don't talk like that," they urged. "What does it matter? Now that we're free, let's work out a couple of ways to make a profit and get rid of past abuses, so as to prove ourselves worthy of the mistress' trust."

"I understand," put in Pinger hastily. "Just trust this business to some reliable people of your own choosing, miss, and that will be that."

"That's all very well, but we must consult your mistress first," insisted Tanchun. "We've already overstepped our authority, scrimping and scraping, right and left, and I wouldn't suggest this if she weren't so understanding. If she were officious or spiteful, I'd never have dreamed of it either — it would look as if I were trying to show her up. We certainly must consult her."

"In that case I'll go and tell her," said Pinger, and with that she went off.

After a while she came back to tell them gaily, "I said there was no need to go. It's such a good idea, of course my mistress approves."

Then Tanchun and Li Wan asked for a list of the names of all the elderly women in the Garden, and after some discussion made a tentative choice of a few. These women; summoned and told the plan in outline by Li Wan, agreed to it readily.

"Just leave that bamboo plot to me," said one. "In a year's time there'll be another plot. Then, apart from supplying the household with bamboo shoots, I can hand in some money too."



一年这些玩的大小雀鸟的粮食，不必动官中钱粮，我还可以交钱粮。”探春才要说话，人回：“大夫来了，进园瞧姑娘。”众婆子只得去领大夫。平儿忙说：“单你们，有一百个也不成个体统，难道没有管事的头脑带进大夫来么？”回事的那人说：“有，吴大娘和单大娘他两个在西南角上聚锦门等着呢。”平儿听说，方罢了。

众婆子去后，探春问宝钗如何？宝钗笑答道：“幸于始者怠于终，善其辞者嗜其利。”探春听了点头称赞，便向册上指出几人来与他三人看。平儿忙去取笔砚来，他三人说道：“这一个老祝妈是个妥当的，况他老头子和他儿子代代都是管打扫竹子，如今竟把这所有的竹子交与他。这一个老田妈本是个种庄稼的，稻香村一带凡有菜蔬稻麦之类，虽是玩意儿，不必认真大治大耕，也须得他去，再一按时加意培植，岂不更好？”探春笑道：“可惜，蘅芜院和怡红院这两处大地方竟没有出利息之物。”李纨忙笑道：“蘅芜院更利害。如今香料铺并大市大庙卖的各处香料香草儿，都是这些东西，算起来比别的利息更大。怡红院别说别的，单只说春、夏天二季玫瑰花，共下多少花？还有一带篱笆上蔷薇、月季、宝相、金银藤，单这没要紧的花草干了，卖到茶叶铺、药铺去，也值几个钱。”探春笑道：“原来如此。只是弄这香草的





Another said, "Let me have the paddy fields. I can keep all the pet birds, big and small, supplied with grain the whole year round without asking the stewards for any, and pay something over and above that too."

Before Tanchun could reply, it was announced that a doctor had come to the Garden to see a young lady, and the matrons should go to escort him in.

"Even if a hundred of you were to go to meet the doctor it wouldn't look proper," objected Pinger. "Surely there are chief stewards' wives to take him in?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wu and Mrs. Shan," the messenger answered. "They're waiting in the southwest corner by the Gate of Embroidery."

Then Pinger let the matter drop. And as soon as the women had gone Tanchun asked Baochai her opinion.

"One who is zealous at the start may grow lax before the finish," quoted Baochai smiling. "Fine speech may hide a hankering after profit."

Tanchun nodded her agreement, then selected a few more names from the list for the other three's consideration, whereupon Pinger fetched a brush and inkstone.

"Mrs. Zhu is a reliable old soul," they said. "Besides, her husband and son have always looked after bamboos, so we may as well put all the bamboos here in her care. And then there's old Mrs. Tian who comes from a farming family. The paddy fields and vegetable plots in Paddy-Sweet Cottage are only for fun and don't need to be cultivated seriously; still, it would be better to have her there in charge during the different seasons."

"What a pity there's nothing we can turn to profit in Happy Red Court and Alpinia Park, large as they both are," remarked Tanchun.

"Why, Alpinia Park's even better," declared Li Wan. "Isn't it full of the spices and herbs you find sold by perfumers, as well as at all the big markets and temple fairs? I reckon those will bring in the biggest profit of the lot. As for Happy Red Court, not to mention anything else, just think how many roses it has all spring and summer. That fence there is covered with rambler roses and monthly-roses, as well as honeysuckle and other flowers, all of which fetch a good price in tea-shops and pharmacies when they're dried."



没有在行的人。”平儿忙笑道：“跟宝姑娘的莺儿他妈就是会弄这个的，上回他还采了些晒干了，编成花篮葫芦给我玩的，姑娘倒忘了不成？”宝钗笑道：“我才赞你，你到来捉弄我了。”三人都诧异，问道这是为何？宝钗道：“断断使不得！你们这里多少得用的人，一个一个闲着没事办，这会子我又弄我的人来，叫那起人连我也看小了。我倒替你们想出一个人来：怡红院有个老叶妈，他就是茗烟的娘。那是个诚实老人家，他又和我们莺儿的娘极好，不如把这事交与叶妈。他有不知道的，不必咱们说，他就找莺儿的娘去商议了。那怕叶妈全不管，竟交与那一个，那是他们的私情儿，有人说闲话，也就怨不到咱们身上了。如此一行，你们办的又至公，于事又甚妥。”李纨、平儿都道：“是极。”探春笑道：“虽如此说，只怕他们见利忘义呢。”平儿笑道：“不相干，前儿莺儿还认了叶妈做干娘，请吃饭吃酒，两家和厚，好的很呢。”探春听了，方罢了。又共同斟酌出几个人来，俱是他四人素习冷眼取中的，用笔圈出。

一时婆子们来回大夫已去，将药方送上去。三人看了，一面遣人出去取药，并派煎药的人，一面探春与李纨明示诸人：某人管某处，除四季家中定例用多少外，余者任凭你们采取了去取利，年终算账。探春笑道：“我又想起一件事：若年终算账归钱时，自然归到账房，仍是上头又添一层管主，还在他们手心里，又剥一层皮。这如今我们兴出这事来派了



"Is that so?" asked Tanchun with a smile. "We're no one, though, who understands such things."

"The mother of Yinger who works for Miss Baochai does." Pinger informed them. "Have you forgotten that time she gathered and dried some sprigs to make me baskets?"

"I've just been singing your praises, yet now you're laying a trap for me," protested Baochai jokingly.

"What do you mean?" asked the other three in surprise.

"This is out of the question," she answered. "All your attendants here with nothing to do will certainly think badly of me if I bring in someone else. Let me suggest another woman instead: Mingyan's mother, old Mrs. Ye, in Happy Red Court. She's an honest old soul and on good terms with Yinger's mother. You may as well entrust this to her. If there's something she doesn't understand, we shan't have to tell her to consult Yinger's mother, she may even leave the whole job to her — that's up to them. But if anyone gossips it won't be our concern. Handled this way it will look fair and the work will be properly done."

Pinger and Li Wan approved but Tanchun teased, "I'm only afraid they may forget friendship for profit!"

"Not they," Pinger assured her. "Only the other day Yinger became Mrs. Ye's god-daughter and they had a feast to celebrate. Those two families are on the best of terms."

Then Tanchun made no further objection.

By the time they had settled on a few other women who had won their approval, and marked their names on the list, the matrons returned to report that the doctor had gone and showed them his prescription. Having examined it, the three young ladies sent for the ingredients and ordered them to be prepared. Tanchun and Li Wan then informed the women of the places entrusted to them.

"Apart from what it's decided the household requires, all the rest of the year's produce will be yours," announced Li Wan. "And you must present an account at the end of the year."

"I've thought of something else," put in Tanchun. "If the accounts are made up at the end of the year and you take the money to the accountants' office in the usual way, there'll be someone again in control



你们，已是跨过他们的头去了，心里有气，只说不出来；你们年终去归账，他们还不捉弄你们等什么？再者，这一年间管什么的，主子有一全分，他们就得半分。这是家常的旧例，人所共知的，别的偷着的在外。如今这园子是我的新创，竟别人他们的手，每年归账，竟归到里头来才好。”宝钗笑道：“依我说，里头也不用归账。这个多了那个少了，倒多了事。不如叫他们谁领一分子去，就派他揽一宗事去。不过是园里的人动用的东西。我替你们算出来了，有限的几宗事：不过是头油、胭脂、香、纸，每一位姑娘几个丫头，都是有定例的；再者，各处笤帚、撮簸、掸子，并大小禽鸟、鹿、兔的粮食。不过这几样，都是他们包了去，不用账房去领钱。你算算，就省下多少来？”平儿笑道：“这几宗虽小，一年通共算起来，也省的下四百两银子。”宝钗笑道：“却又来，一年四百，二年八百两，取租钱的房子也能置得几间了，薄地也可添几亩了。虽然还有富余的，但他们既辛苦闹一年，也要叫他们剩些，粘补粘补自己。虽是兴利节用为纲，然亦不可太啬。纵再省上二、三百银子，失了大体统也不像。所以如此一行，外头账房里一年少出四、五百银子，也不觉得很艰难了，他们里头却也得些小补。这些没营生的妈妈们也宽裕了，园子里花木，也可以每年滋长些，你们也得了可使之物，这庶几不失大体。若一味要省，那里搜不出几个钱来？凡有些余利的，一概入了官中，那时里外怨声载道，岂不失了你们这样人家的大体？如今这园子里几十个老



of you. You'll still be in their clutches, and they'll be able to fleece you. As this is *our* idea and we've bypassed them by entrusting the work to you, they'll resent it even if they don't say so outright; thus they're bound to squeeze you if you go to them to settle your annual accounts. Why, every year the steward managing each property or estate gets one-third of the proceeds. That's how it's always been; it's an open secret. That's apart from what else they filch. Our new management of the Garden shouldn't go through their hands at all. So come to us at the end of the year to settle your accounts."

"I don't think accounts need be turned in at all," said Baochai. "Comparisons are so invidious. Better let the woman entrusted with one job be responsible for the expenses of that place. I've worked it out and it doesn't come to much, just what's needed for hair-oil, rouge, powder, scent and toilet-paper for the young mistresses and their maids, as well as for brooms, dustpans, dusters and whisks and food for the poultry, pet birds, deer and rabbits. If they take care of these few items, we needn't draw anything from the accountants' office. Think how much we can save that way."

"These items may be small," agreed Pinger, "yet the total saving in a year will amount to more than four hundred taels of silver."

"There you are!" rejoined Baochai. "Four hundred a year, eight hundred in two years: enough to buy a few more houses to rent and a few *mu* of not too good land. There'll be more than that, of course; but after working hard for a whole year they should keep some back for themselves. Although our aim is to economize and make a profit, we mustn't be too stingy either. If we saved an extra two or three hundred taels but spoiled our reputation, that wouldn't do."

"In this way, though, the accountants' office can spend four or five hundred less on us each year without anyone feeling the pinch; the people here will benefit, as these women with no special means of livelihood will manage more comfortably; the plants in the Garden will do better from year to year; you'll be more adequately supplied with what you need; and no loss of dignity will be involved. If all we wanted was to economize, of course we could save money and stash all our profits away; but then everyone would start complaining, and that would impair the dignity



妈妈们，若只给了这几个，那剩的也必抱怨不公。我才说的他们只供给这几样，也未免太宽裕了。一年竟除这个之外，他每人不论有余无余，只叫他拿出若干贯钱来，大家凑齐，单散与园中这些妈妈们。他们虽不料理这些，却日夜也是在园中照看当差之人，关门闭户，起早睡晚，大雨大雪，姑娘们出入抬轿子，撑船，拉冰床，一应粗糙活计，都是他们的差使。一年在园里辛苦到头，这园里既有出息，也是分内该沾带些的。还有一句至小的话，越发说破了。你们只管了自己宽裕，不分与他们些，他们虽不敢明怨，心里却都不服，只用假公借私的，多摘你们几个果子，多掐几枝花儿，你们有冤还没处诉。叫他们也沾带了些利息，你们有照顾不到的，他们就替你们照顾了。”众婆子听了这个议论，又去了账房的辖制，又不与凤姐去算账，一年不过多拿出若干贯钱来，各各欢喜异常，都齐声说：“愿意。强如出去被他们揉搓着，还得拿出钱来呢。”那不得管地的听了每年终又无故得分钱，也都喜欢起来，口内说：“他们辛苦收拾，是该剩些钱粘补的。我们怎么好‘稳坐吃三注’呢？”宝钗笑道：“妈妈们也别推辞了，这也是分内应当的。你们只要日夜辛苦些，别躲懒纵放人吃酒赌钱就是了。不然，我也不该管这事；你们一般听见，姨娘亲口嘱托我三五回，说大奶奶如今又不得闲儿，别的姑娘又小，托我照看照看。我若不管，分明是叫姨娘操心。你们奶奶又多病多灾，家务也忙。我原是

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of a family such as yours.

“Now there are several dozen old married women in the Garden. If we just give jobs to these few, the rest are bound to feel it unfair. For them simply to supply those few items, as I suggested, is letting them off too lightly. On top of that I think they should also give a few strings of cash each every year, regardless of how much they have left; and this combined sum can be distributed to the other nannies in the Garden. After all, even if they have no special assignments they work here day and night from early to late, running errands and locking or unlocking gates, no matter how bad the weather. They carry the young ladies’ sedan-chairs, punt boats, and draw sleighs in winter — in fact, they do all the hard work the whole year round in the Garden. So they should have a small share in the profits too.

“There’s another small thing, and I’ll put it more bluntly. If you just better yourselves without letting the others share in your good fortune, even if they don’t complain openly they’re bound to feel resentful; and then if they pick more fruit or flowers ostensibly for their mistresses but actually for themselves, there’ll be nobody to whom you can complain. But if they benefit too, they can keep an eye on things for you when you’re busy.”

The women were delighted with this proposal, which meant they would neither be controlled by the stewards nor have to settle accounts with Xifeng — all they needed to do was to pay a few extra strings of cash every year.

“That suits us!” they cried. “This is better than being squeezed by those stewards outside and having to pay them.”

Those with no special assignments were also pleased to learn that they would be getting something for nothing.

“If they do the hard work they deserve to make a little money,” they said. “How can we sit idle and rake in a profit too?”

“You nannies needn’t decline,” replied Baochai with a smile. “This is as it should be. Just work hard and don’t slack or allow any gambling or drinking. This is really none of my business but, as you know, my aunt has urged me repeatedly to help out now that Madam Zhu’s so busy and my other cousins are still young. I don’t like to add to her worries by refus-



个闲人，便是个街坊邻居，也要帮着些，何况是亲姨娘托我。我免不得去小就大，讲不起众人嫌我。倘或我只顾了小分沽名钓誉，那时酒醉赌博生出事来，我怎么见姨娘？你们那时后悔也迟了，就连你们素昔的老脸也都丢了。这些姑娘、小姐们，这么一所大花园，都是你们看管，皆因看得你们是三四代的老妈妈，最是循规蹈矩的，原该大家齐心，顾些体面。你们反纵放别人任意吃酒赌博，姨娘听见了，教训一场犹可，倘或被那几个管家娘子知道了，他们也不用回姨娘，竟教导你们一番。你们这年老的反受了年少的教训，虽是他们是管家，管的着，何如你们自己存些体面，他们如何得来作践？所以我如今替你们想出这个额外的进益来，为大家齐心把这园子周全的谨谨慎慎，使那些有权执事的看见这般严肃谨慎，且不用他们操心，他们心里岂不敬服？也不枉替你们筹画这进益，既能夺他们之权，生你们之利，岂不能省无益之治，分他们之忧。你们自己想想这话。”众人听了，都欢声鼎沸，说：“姑娘说的很是。从此姑娘、奶奶只管放心，姑娘、奶奶这样疼顾我们，我们再要不体上情，天地也不容了。”

刚说到这里，只见林之孝家的来说：“江南甄府里家眷昨日到京，今日进宫朝贺。此刻先遣人来送礼请安。”说着，便将礼单送上去。探春接了，看道是：“上用的妆缎蟒缎十二匹，上用各色宁绸十二匹，上用宫绸十二匹，上用杂色缎十二匹，上用纱十二匹，上用各色绸绫四十匹。”李纨也看



ing. Besides, your Second Mistress has poor health and is busy with family affairs, while I've nothing to do. Why, even a neighbour should help out, not to say a niece like myself when specially asked. So I have to overcome my scruples and not mind if everyone thinks me a nuisance. If all I cared about was my own reputation while other people made trouble drinking or gambling, how could I face my aunt? You'd be sorry too, then, and lose face yourselves.

"You're looking after all these young ladies and this big Garden because it's acknowledged that you're the steadiest, most reliable old nannies whose families have served here for three or four generations. So you should behave in a fit and proper way. If my aunt hears you've been giving people a free hand to drink and gamble, she may take you to task; whereas if those stewards' wives learn of it they may lecture you without telling my aunt, and you'll find yourselves being scolded by your juniors! Though they're stewards and in charge, how much better to stand on your dignity and not give them a chance to sneer. That's why I've suggested this bonus for you, so that all of you will work together to take good care of this Garden. When those in charge see you behaving in a serious, responsible way, they won't have to worry about things and will respect you. It's gratifying for us, too, having thought of a way for you to earn a bonus. While you seize power from them and profit yourselves, you'll also be helping to do away with waste and spare them worry. Think it over carefully."

"You're quite right, miss," cried the women jubilantly. "Set your minds at rest, young ladies and madam. If we don't show our gratitude for your goodness, may Heaven and Earth condemn us!"

They were interrupted by the arrival of Lin Zhixiao's wife.

"The ladies of the Zhen family from south of the Yangzi arrived in the capital yesterday," she announced. "They've gone to the Palace today to pay homage, sending some servants here with gifts and their respects."

Tanchun took the list of presents from her and read:

- twelve rolls of first-grade Imperial brocade with the serpent design
- twelve rolls of different colours for the Imperial use
- twelve rolls of Imperial gauze in different colours
- twelve rolls of Imperial silk



过，便说道：“用上等封儿赏他。”因又命人去回贾母。贾母便命人叫李纨、探春、宝钗等也都过来，将礼物看了。李纨收过，一边吩咐内库上人说：“等太太回来看了再收。”贾母因说道：“这甄家又不与别家相同，上等封儿赏男人，只怕转眼又打发女人来请安，预备下尺头。”一语未完，果然人回：“甄府四个女人来请安。”贾母听了，忙命人带进来。

那四个人都是四十往上的年纪，穿戴之物，皆比主子不甚差别。请安问好毕，贾母便命拿了四个脚踏来，他四人谢了坐，待宝钗等坐了，方坐下。贾母便问：“多早晚进京的？”四人忙站起来回说：“昨日进的京。今日太太带了姑娘进宫请安去了，故先令奴才们来请安，问候姑娘们好。”贾母笑问道：“这些年没进京，也不想到今年来。”四人也都笑回道：“正是，今年是奉旨进京的。”贾母问道：“家眷都来了？”四人回说：“老太太和哥儿、两位小姐并别位太太都没来，就只太太带了三姑娘来了。”贾母道：“有了人家没有？”四人回道：“没有呢。”贾母笑道：“你们大姑娘和二姑娘这两家，都和我们甚好。”四人笑道：“正是。每年姑娘们有信回去说，全亏府上照看。”贾母笑道：“什么照看，原是





twenty-four rolls of satin, gauze and silk in different colours for official use.

Li Wan also looked at the list, then ordered the bringers of these gifts to be rewarded with the first-grade tip, and sent to inform the Lady Dowager. The latter summoned Li Wan, Tanchun and Baochai to her quarters to examine the presents, which Li Wan then had put aside, telling the servant in charge of the storeroom not to store them away until Lady Wang had seen them.

“The Zhens are different from other families,” observed the Lady Dowager. “It was right to give their men-servants the first-grade tip. I expect they will lose no time in sending some women to pay their respects as well. We must have some dress materials ready for them.”

That same instant, sure enough, it was announced that four serving-women from the Zhen family had come to pay their respects. The old lady ordered them to be admitted. These women were all over forty and dressed not very differently from their mistresses. As soon as they had paid their respects the Lady Dowager had four foot-stools brought, and with murmured thanks they seated themselves after Baochai and the rest had resumed their seats.

“When did you come to the capital?” asked the old lady.

“We arrived yesterday,” the women stood up to reply. “Today our mistress has taken our young lady to the Palace to pay homage. She first told us to come and pay our respects to you, madam, and to ask after the young ladies.”

“It’s so long since your last visit, we weren’t expecting you this year.”

“Yes, this year we were sent for by the Emperor.”

“Has the whole family come?”

“Not the old lady, the young master, the two other young ladies or the other mistresses. Only our mistress and our third young lady.”

“Is she engaged yet?”

“Not yet.”

“Your first and second young ladies’ families are on close terms with ours.”

“Yes, every year when they write home they say how exceedingly good you are to them, madam.”



世交，又是老亲，原应当的。你们二姑娘又更好，更不自尊自大的，所以我们才走的亲密。”四人笑道：“这是老太太过谦了。”贾母又问：“你们哥儿也跟着你们老太太？”四人回说：“也是跟着老太太。”贾母道：“几岁了？念书了没有？”四人笑说：“今年十三岁。因长得齐整，老太太很疼。自幼淘气异常，天天逃学，老爷、太太也不便十分管教。”贾母笑道：“也不成了我们家的了！你们那哥儿叫什么名字？”四人道：“因老太太当作宝贝一样，他又生的白，老太太便叫他作宝玉。”贾母笑向李纨等道：“偏也叫作宝玉。”李纨等忙欠身笑道：“从古至今，同时隔代重名的很多。”四人也笑道：“起了这小名儿之后，我们上下都疑惑，不知那位亲友家也倒像有个似的。只是这十来年没进京，却记不真了。”贾母笑道：“岂敢，就是我的孙子。人来！”众媳妇丫头答应了一声，走进来。贾母笑道：“园里把咱们的宝玉叫了来，给这四个管家娘子瞧瞧，比他们的宝玉如何？”

众媳妇听了，忙去了。半刻，围了宝玉进来。四人一见，忙起身笑道：“唬了我们一跳。若是我们不进府来，倘若别处遇见，还只当我们的宝玉后赶着也进了京呢。”一面说，一面都上来拉他的手，问长问短。宝玉也忙笑问好。贾母笑道：“比你们的长的如何？”李纨等笑道：“四位妈妈才一说，可知模样儿相仿了。”贾母笑道：“那有这样巧事？大家



“Not a bit of it!” The Lady Dowager smiled. “That’s how it should be with old family friends and relatives. We see most of your second young lady, who’s so very good and modest.”

“You’re too kind, madam,” they replied.

Then she asked, “Does your young master stay with your old lady?”

“Yes, madam, he does.”

“How old is he? Has he started school yet?”

“He’s thirteen this year” was the answer. “Such a handsome boy that our old lady dotes on him. He’s always been very naughty and plays truant every day, but the master and the mistress couldn’t be too strict with him.”

“It’s just the same in our family. What’s your young master’s name?”

“Because the old lady treasures him so, and he has a fair complexion, she calls him Baoyu.”

The Lady Dowager exclaimed to Li Wan, “Another Baoyu — fancy that!”

Li Wan half rose to reply, “There have been many people with the same names since ancient times, some living in the same, some in different ages.”

“After he was given this pet-name we did all of us, high and low, wonder whether some friend or relative didn’t have the same name,” volunteered one of the women. “But after some ten years away from the capital, we could none of us remember.”

“That’s my worthless grandson’s name,” chuckled the Lady Dowager. She called in her attendants and ordered them, “Go and fetch our Baoyu from the Garden, so that these good women can have a look at him and see how he compares with their Baoyu.”

The maids went off at once, returning presently with Baoyu, at sight of whom the four women rose to their feet.

“Well, this *is* a surprise!” they exclaimed. “If we’d met him anywhere else but here, we’d have thought *our* Baoyu had followed us to the capital.”

They went up to Baoyu, who greeted them with a smile, and taking his hand they asked him a number of questions.

“How does he compare with your boy?” inquired the old lady.



子的孩子们再养的娇嫩，除了面上有残疾十分黑丑的，大概看去都是一样的齐整，这也没有什么怪处。”四人笑道：“如今看来，模样儿是一样。据老太太说，淘气也一样。我们看来，这位哥儿性情却比我们的好些。”贾母忙问：“怎么见得？”四人笑道：“方才我们拉哥儿的手说话便知。我们那一个只说我们糊涂，慢说拉手，他的东西我们略动一动也不依。所以使唤的人都是女孩子们……”话未说完，李纨等忍不住笑了，贾母也笑道：“我们这会子也打发人去见了你们宝玉，若拉他的手，他也自然勉强忍耐一时。可知你我这样人家的孩子们，凭他们有什么刁钻古怪的毛病儿，见了外人，必是要还出正经礼数来的。若他不还正经礼数，也断不容他刁钻去了。就是大人溺爱的，是他一则生的得人意，二则见人礼数竟比大人行出来的不错，使人见了可疼可爱，背地里所以才纵他一点子。若一味他只管没里没外，不与大人争光，凭他生的怎样，也是该打死的了。”四人听了，都笑着说：“老太太这话正是。虽然我们宝玉淘气古怪，有时见了人客，规矩礼数更比大人有趣，所以无人见了不爱，只说为什么还打他。殊不知他在家里无法无天，大人想不到的话他偏会说，想不到的事他偏要行，所以老爷、太太恨的无法。就是弄性，也是小孩子的常情，胡乱花费，这也是公子哥儿的常情，怕上学，也是小孩子的常情，还都治的过来。第一，天生下来这一种刁钻古怪的脾气，如何使得……”一语未了，人回：“太太回来了。”王夫人进来问安毕。他四人请了安，大概说了两句。贾母便命歇歇去罢。王夫人亲捧过茶来，方退出。四人告辞了贾母，便往王夫人处来，说了一回



“Judging by what these four nannies just said, the two must look rather alike,” put in Li Wan.

“That’s no coincidence.” rejoined the old lady. “If their faces aren’t disfigured in some way, the pampered sons of great houses all look rather handsome. There’s nothing strange about that.”

“They’re the image of each other,” declared the four women. “And judging by what you say, madam, both of them have been rather spoilt; but your young master seems to us the better-tempered of the two.”

“Why do you say that?”

“We found out by holding his hands just now. Ours would have thought us silly. *We’re* not allowed even to touch his things, let alone hold his hands. So all his maids are young ones.”

This evoked a peal of laughter from Li Wan and the girls.

“If we sent people to see your Baoyu, and they took his hand, he’d have to put up with it too,” chuckled the old lady. “The thing about boys from families like ours is that, no matter how perverse they may be, they always behave correctly to visitors — otherwise we would never let them be so naughty. We spoil our boy because he looks so engaging, and because his manners to visitors are even better than those of many grown-ups. That’s why nobody can help being fond of him and why he has his own way so often at home. If he behaved badly to outsiders too, making us lose face, then no matter how handsome he was he’d deserve to be beaten to death.”

“You are quite right, madam,” they replied cheerfully. “Thought our Baoyu is so naughty and so wayward, his manners to guests are better than most grown-ups’. So everybody takes a fancy to him and can’t understand why he should sometimes be beaten. They don’t know the way he runs wild at home, saying and doing the most outrageous things which make our master and mistress very angry. It’s natural for boys of noble families to be wilful, extravagant and lazy — such faults can be corrected. But what can we do when he was born with such a strange cranky temper?”

As they were talking Lady Wang was announced. She came in to inquire after her mother-in-law, and when the four visitors had paid their respects to her and said a few words the old lady told her to go and rest.



家务，打发他们回去，不必细说。

这里贾母喜的逢人便告诉，他家也有一个宝玉，行景也是一样。众人都为天下世宦之家，多有同名者，也有祖母溺爱孙者亦古今之常情，不是什么罕事，故皆不介意。独宝玉是个迂阔呆公子的心性，自为是那四人承悦贾母之词。后回至园中去看史湘云病去，湘云说他：“你放心闹罢，先是‘单丝不成线，独树不成林’，如今有了个对子了，闹急了，再打狠了，你逃走到南京找那一个去。”宝玉道：“那里的谎话你也信了，偏又有个宝玉了？”湘云道：“怎么列国有个蔺相如，汉朝又有个司马相如呢？”宝玉笑道：“这也罢了，偏又模样儿也是一样，这是没有的事。”湘云道：“怎么匡人看见孔子，只当是阳货呢？”宝玉笑道：“孔子阳货貌虽同，却不同名姓；蔺与司马虽同名，而又不同貌；偏我和他就两样俱同不成？”湘云没话答对，因笑道：“你只会胡搅，我也不和你分证。有也罢，没也罢，与我无干。”说着便睡下了。

宝玉心中便又疑惑起来：若说必无，然亦似有；或若必有，又并无目睹。心中闷闷，回至房中榻上默默盘算，不觉忽忽睡去，竟到了一座花园之内。宝玉诧异道：“除了我们大观园，竟又有这个园子？”正疑惑间，从那边来了几个女





This Lady Wang did, having first served her with tea. She was followed by the four women when they had taken their leave of the old lady, and they chatted together for a while about family affairs before she sent them away. But enough of this.

Meanwhile the Lady Dowager was gleefully telling everyone who came in that another family had a Baoyu just like their own. The others thought little of it, supposing that many official families must use the same names and that it was the general rule, rather than the exception, for a grandmother to spoil her grandson. Only Baoyu, being a prejudiced simpleton, imagined that the four women had made this up to please his grandmother. He went back to the Garden to see how Xiangyun was.

“Now you can be as naughty as you like,” she teased. “Before this it was a case of ‘A single thread can’t make a cord nor a single tree a forest.’ But now that there are two of you, next time you’re beaten for raising a rumpus you can run away to Nanjing to find your double.”

“Don’t believe such nonsense,” he said. “How could there be another Baoyu?”

“Wasn’t there a Lin Xiangru in the Warring States Period and a Sima Xiangru in the Han Dynasty?” she retorted.

“All right, I’ll grant you that. But two people can’t possibly look just alike.”

“Didn’t the men of Kuang take Confucius for Yang Hu?”

“Confucius and Yang Hu looked alike but had different names; Lin Xiangru and Sima Xiangru had the same name but looked different. How can I look the same and have the same name as someone else?”

Unable to refute him Xiangyun said, “You’re just quibbling, I refuse to argue with you. Whether it’s so or not, this has nothing to do with me.” Then she lay down to sleep.

Baoyu stared reflecting dubiously, “I may say this can’t be, yet I feel all the same it’s true. Yet how can I be sure, when I haven’t seen my double with my own eyes?”

Feeling at a loss, he went back to his room and lay down on the couch to think. Soon he dozed off and dreamed he was in a garden.

“Is there another garden like this apart from our Grand View Gar-



儿，都是丫鬟。宝玉又诧异道：“除了鸳鸯、袭人、平儿之外，也竟还有这一干人？”只见那些丫鬟笑道：“宝玉怎么跑到这里来了？”宝玉只当是说他，自己忙来陪笑说道：“因我偶步到此，不知是那位世家的花园，好姐姐们，带我逛逛。”众丫鬟都笑道：“原来不是咱们家的宝玉。他生的倒也还干净，嘴儿倒也乖觉。”宝玉听了，忙道：“姐姐们，这里也竟有个宝玉了？”丫鬟们忙道：“‘宝玉’二字，我们是奉老太太、太太之命，为保佑他延寿消灾的。我们叫他，他听见喜欢。你是那里远方来的一个臭小子，也乱叫起来。仔细你的臭肉，打不烂你的。”又一个笑道：“咱们快走罢，别叫宝玉看见，又说同这臭小子说了话，把咱们熏臭了。”说着一径去了。

宝玉纳闷道：“从来没有人如此涂毒我，他们如何竟这样？真亦有我这样一个人不成？”一面想，一面顺步早到了一所院内。宝玉又诧异道：“除了怡红院，也竟还有这么一个院落。”忽上了台矶，进入屋内，只见榻上有一人卧着，那边有几个女孩儿做针线，也有嘻笑玩耍的。只见榻上那个少年叹了一声。一个丫鬟笑问道：“宝玉，你不睡又叹什么？想必为你妹妹病了，你又胡愁乱恨呢。”宝玉听说，心下也便吃惊，只见榻上少年说道：“我听见老太太说，长安都中也有个宝玉，和我一样的性情，我只不信。我才作了一个梦，竟梦中到了都中一个花园子里头，遇见几个姐姐，都叫我臭小子，不理我。好容易找到他房里，偏他睡觉。空有皮囊，真



den?" he exclaimed in surprise.

As he was puzzling over this some girls — all serving-maids — approached.

Again he exclaimed in surprise, "So Yuanyang, Xiren and Pinger aren't the only fine girls!"

"What is Baoyu doing here?" the girls asked each other.

Assuming that they were talking about him he answered with a smile, "I happened to stroll in here, not that I know which of my family's friends this garden belongs to. Will you show me round it, sisters?"

"Why, this isn't our Baoyu," cried the girls. "He's not bad-looking though, and soft-spoken too."

"Do you have another Baoyu here, sisters?" he asked.

"It was the old lady and mistress who told us to call him Baoyu, so as to make him live longer and keep him out of danger," they said. "He likes it when we call him by his name. But how can a stinking young upstart from far away like you start using it at random? You'd better watch out or we'll beat you to a pulp, you filthy lout!"

"Let's go before Baoyu sees him," urged another.

"He'd think talking to this stinking wretch had made us stink too."

With that they left.

"Why should they insult me like this?" wondered Baoyu. "I've never been treated in such a way before. Can I really have a double?"

Occupied with these thoughts he had wandered into a courtyard.

"Why, this is another Happy Red Court!" he marvelled.

He ascended the steps and walked in. There was someone lying on a couch inside, with a few girls by him sewing or amusing themselves. The young man on the couch sighed.

"Why don't you sleep, Baoyu, instead of sighing?" asked one of the girls. "I suppose it's your cousin's illness that's worrying you?"

As Baoyu marvelled at this the young man replied, "I didn't believe the old lady when she told me that in the capital there's another Baoyu whose character's just like mine. Just now, though, I had a dream. I dreamed I was in a big garden in the capital, where I met some girls who called me a stinking wretch and refused to talk to me. When at last I found his rooms he was asleep. Only his empty form was there — his



性不知那去了。”宝玉听说，忙说道：“我因找宝玉来到这
里，原来你就是宝玉？”榻上的忙下来拉住笑道：“原来你
就是宝玉？这可不是梦里？”宝玉道：“这如何是梦？真而又
真了。”一语未了，只见人来说：“老爷叫宝玉。”吓得二人都
慌了。一个宝玉就走，一个宝玉便忙叫：“宝玉快回来，快回来！”

袭人在旁听他梦中自唤，忙推醒他，笑问道：“宝玉在那
里？”此时宝玉虽醒，神意尚恍惚，因向门外指道：“才出去
了。”袭人笑道：“那是你梦迷了。你揉眼细瞧瞧，是镜子里
照的你的影儿。”宝玉向前照了一照，原是那嵌的大镜对面
相照，自己也笑了。早有人捧过漱盂茶卤来，漱了口。麝月
道：“怪道老太太常嘱咐说，小人屋里不可多有镜子。小人魂
不全，镜子照多了，睡觉惊恐作胡梦。如今倒在大镜子那里
安了床。有时放下镜套还好；往前来，天热困倦不定，那里
想的到放他，比如方才就忘了。自然是先躺下瞧着影儿玩
的，一时合上眼，自然是胡梦颠倒。不然如何得看着自己，
叫自己的名字？不如明儿挪进床来是正经。”一语未了，只
见王夫人遣人来叫宝玉。不知有何话说，且听下回分解。





real self had gone, I don't know where."

Baoyu hearing this interjected hastily, "I came here to find Baoyu. So *you're* Baoyu!"

The other stepped down from the couch and caught hold of him. "So *you're* Baoyu!" he cried. "This isn't a dream then."

"Of course not. It's absolutely true."

As he said this someone announced, "The master wants Baoyu."

That threw both of them into a panic. One started out while the other called:

"Baoyu, come back! Come back!"

Xiren nearby heard him calling out in his sleep and shook him to wake him up.

"Where's Baoyu?" she asked.

Baoyu, although awake now, was still confused.

Pointing outside the door he answered, "He's just left."

"You've been dreaming," Xiren told him with a smile. "Rub your eyes and look — that's your own reflection in the mirror."

When Baoyu saw that he was indeed looking at himself in the big mirror, he also smiled. By now some maids had brought him a rinse-bowl and some strong tea to rinse his mouth.

Sheyue remarked, "No wonder the old lady keeps warning us, 'There mustn't be too many mirrors in children's rooms. A young person's spirit is weak, and if he looks at himself too much in the glass he may be frightened in his sleep and have nightmares.' Yet we've put his couch in front of this big mirror. It's all right when the cover's down, but now that the hot weather's made us sleepy we keep forgetting to lower it. Just now, for instance, we forgot again. He must have been lying there amusing himself by looking at his own reflection; then as soon as he closed his eyes he started dreaming foolish dreams. Otherwise he wouldn't have called out his own name. Tomorrow we'd better move the couch inside."

She was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from Lady Wang to fetch Baoyu. To know why she wanted him, read the next chapter.

第五十七回

慧紫鹃情辞试忙玉 慈姨妈爱语慰痴颦

话说宝玉听说王夫人唤他，忙至前边来，原来是王夫人要带他拜甄夫人去。宝玉自是欢喜，忙去换衣服，跟了王夫人到那里。见其家中的形景，自与荣、宁不甚差别，或有一二稍盛者。细问，果有一宝玉。甄夫人留席，竟日方回，宝玉方信。因晚间回家来，王夫人又吩咐预备上等的席面，定名班的大戏，请过甄夫人母女。后二日，他母女便不作辞，回任去了，无话。

这日宝玉因见湘云渐愈，然后去看黛玉。正值黛玉才歇午觉，宝玉不敢惊动，因紫鹃正在回廊上，手里做针黹，便上来问他：“昨日夜里咳嗽可好些？”紫鹃道：“好些了。”宝玉笑道：“阿弥陀佛！宁可好了罢。”紫鹃笑道：“你也念起佛来，真是新闻！”宝玉笑道：“所谓‘病笃乱投医’了。”一面说，一面见他穿着弹墨绫子薄绵袄，外面只穿着青缎子夹背心，宝玉便伸手向他身上摸了一摸，说：“穿这样单薄，还在风口里坐着，春风才至，时气最不好，你再病了，越发难了。”紫鹃便说道：“从此咱们只可说话，别动手动脚的。一年大二年小的，叫人看着不尊重。打紧的那起混帐行子们背



Chapter 57

Artful Zijuan Tests Baoyu's Feelings Kindly Aunt Xue Comforts Daiyu

Baoyu hurried to his mother as soon as summoned, to find that she wanted to take him to call on Lady Zhen. Naturally delighted to go, he changed his clothes hurriedly and accompanied her. The Zhens' house struck him as much like the Rong and Ning mansions, if not slightly grander, and by making careful inquiries he learned that they did indeed have a young master called Baoyu. By the time they had spent the day there, for Lady Zhen kept them to a meal, he was quite convinced of this.

On their return that evening Lady Wang ordered a sumptuous feast to be prepared and a celebrated opera company hired to entertain Lady Zhen and her daughter, who two days later set off for Nanjing without any further leave-taking.

One day, having seen that Xiangyun was on the road to recovery, Baoyu went to call on Daiyu. She was taking a siesta, and not wishing to disturb her he's joined Zijuan who was sewing on the verandah.

"Was her cough any better last night?" he asked.

"A little."

"Amida Buddha! I do hope she soon gets well."

"Really, this is news to me! Since when have you started invoking Buddha?" she teased.

"Men at death's door will turn in desperation to any doctor," he quipped.

Noticing that she was wearing a thin padded silk tunic with black dots under a lined blue silk sleeveless jacket, he reached out to feel her clothes.

"You shouldn't sit in the wind so lightly dressed," he remarked. "If you *fall* ill too in this treacherous early spring weather, it will be even worse."

"When we talk to each other in future kindly keep your hands to



地里说你，你总不留心，还只管和小时一般行为，如何使得？姑娘常常吩咐我们，不叫和你说笑。你近来瞧他远着你，还恐远不及呢。”说着便起身，携了针线进别房去了。

宝玉见了这般景况，心中忽觉浇了一盆冷水一般，只瞅着竹子，发了一回呆。因祝妈正来挖笋修竿，便怔怔的走了出来，一时魂魄失守，心无所知，随便坐在一块山石上出神，不觉滴下泪来。直呆了五六顿饭工夫，千思万想，总不知如何是好。偶值雪雁从王夫人房中取了人参来，从此经过，忽扭项看见桃花树下石上一人，手托腮颊在那里出神，不是别人，却是宝玉。雪雁疑惑道：“怪冷的，他一个人在这里作什么？春天凡有残疾的人都犯病，敢是他犯了呆病了？”一边想，一边便走过来蹲下笑道：“你在这里作什么呢？”宝玉忽见了雪雁，便说道：“你又作什么来招我？你难道不是女儿？他既防嫌，总不许你们理我，你又来寻我，倘被人看见，岂不又生口舌？你快家去罢。”雪雁听了，只当是他又受了黛玉的委屈，只得回至房中。

黛玉未醒，将人参交与紫鹃。紫鹃因问他：“太太做什么呢？”雪雁道：“也歇中觉，所以等了这半日。姐姐，你听笑话儿，我因等太太的工夫，和玉钏儿姐姐在下房里说话，谁知赵姨奶奶招手儿叫我。我只当有什么话说，原来他和太太告了假，出去给他兄弟伴宿坐夜，明儿送殡去，跟他的头子小吉祥儿没衣裳，要借我的月白缎子袄儿。我想他们一

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yourself,” retorted Zijuan. “You’re growing up now and should want people to respect you, but you keep provoking those wretches to gossip behind your back. You’re so careless, you still carry on like a little boy. Well, that won’t do. Our young lady’s warned us many a time not to joke with you. Haven’t you noticed recently how she’s been avoiding you?”

She got up then and took her needlework inside.

Baoyu felt as if doused by a bucket of cold water. He was staring blankly at the bamboo grove when Mrs. Zhu came to dig up some bamboo shoots and trim the bamboos. Then, stupefied, he went away. Presently, his wits wandering, not knowing what he did, he sank down in a daze on a rock and shed tears. For the time half a dozen meals would take he sat there brooding, but could not think what to do.

It so happened that Xueyan passed here now on her way back from Lady Wang’s quarters with some ginseng. Turning her head towards the rock below the peach tree she noticed someone sitting there lost in thought, his face propped on his hands. To her surprise she saw it was Baoyu.

“What’s he doing here all alone on such a chilly day?” she wondered. “Spring’s a dangerous time for people in delicate health. Can his wits be wandering again?”

Going over she crouched down beside him.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

“What do *you* want with me?” countered Baoyu as soon as he saw who it was. “Aren’t you a girl too? To prevent gossip she’s ordered you to ignore me, but here you come seeking me out. If you’re seen, there will be talk. Hurry up and go home.”

Thinking Daiyu had been scolding him again, Xueyan had to go back to Bamboo Lodge where she gave Zijuan the ginseng, as their mistress was still asleep.

“What’s Her Ladyship doing?” Zijuan asked.

“She’s been having a siesta too. That’s why I’ve been so long,” replied Xueyan. “But let me tell you something amusing, sister. As I was waiting for the mistress and chatting with Sister Yuchuan in the maids’ quarters, who should beckon me out but Concubine Zhao. I thought she had some message, but it turned out she was there to ask leave from the mistress to go to her brother’s wake tonight and the funeral tomorrow;



般也有两件子的，往脏地方去恐怕弄脏了，自己的舍不得穿，故此借别人的。借我的弄脏了也是小事，只是我想，他素日有些什么好处到咱们跟前？所以我说了：‘我的衣裳簪环都是姑娘叫紫鹃姐姐收着呢。如今先得去告诉他，还得回姑娘呢。姑娘又病着，更费了大事，误了你老出门，不如再转借罢。’”紫鹃笑道：“你这个小东西子倒也巧。你不借给他，你往我和姑娘身上推，叫人怨不着你。他这会子就下去了，还是等明日一早才去？”雪雁道：“这会子就去的，只怕此时已去了。”紫鹃点头，雪雁道：“姑娘还没醒呢，是谁给了宝玉气受，坐在那里哭呢。”紫鹃听了，忙问在那里呢？雪雁道：“在沁芳亭后头桃花底下呢。”

紫鹃听说，忙放下针线，又嘱咐雪雁好生听叫：“若问我，答应我就来。”说着，便出了潇湘馆，一直来寻宝玉。走至宝玉跟前，含笑说道：“我不过说了那两句话，为的是大家好，你就赌气跑了这风地里来哭，作出病来唬我？”宝玉忙笑道：“谁赌气了！我因为听你说的有理，我想你们既这样说，自然别人也是这样说，将来渐渐的都不理我了，我所以想着自己伤心。”紫鹃也便挨他坐下，宝玉笑道：“方才对面说话你尚走开，这会子如何又来挨着我坐着？”紫鹃道：“你都忘了？几日前，你们兄妹两个正说话之间，赵姨娘一头走进来，我才听见他不在家，所以我来问你。正是前日你和他才说了一句‘燕窝’就歇住了，总没提起，我正想着问你。”宝玉道：“也没什么要紧。不过我想着宝姐姐也是客



and she wanted to borrow my pale-blue satin tunic for her little maid Jixiang, who's to go with her too but has nothing decent to wear. Well, I thought, they've clothes of their own, they just don't want to wear them to the funeral for fear of getting them dirty — they'd rather borrow someone else's to soil. Of course, I'm not all that fussy about my clothes, but what kindness has that woman ever done us? So I told her. 'All my clothes and trinkets are kept by Sister Zijuan on our young lady's orders. I should have to tell her first and then report to my young mistress. And as our young lady's not well, it would be a lengthy business and delay you, madam. Can't you borrow from someone else?'"

"You imp!" Zijuan laughed. "You shift the blame for not lending your things to us, to stop her complaining about you. Is she leaving now or not till tomorrow morning?"

"She was just setting off. I expect she's gone by now."

Zijuan nodded in silence.

"If our young lady's still asleep, who's been upsetting Baoyu?" continued Xueyan. "He's sitting out there crying."

"Out where?"

"Under the peach-blossom behind Seeping Fragrance Pavilion."

At once Zijuan laid down her needlework.

"Be ready if she calls," she told Xueyan. "If she asks for me, tell her I'll be back in a minute." So saying she left Bamboo Lodge to look for Baoyu.

Finding him, she told him gently, "I was only thinking of what's best for us all. Why take offence and rush over here to sit crying in the wind? Are you trying to scare me by risking your health like this?"

"I didn't take offence," he answered with a smile. "You were quite right. But if everyone feels the way you do, before long nobody will speak to me at all. The thought of that upset me."

Zijuan sat down too then beside him.

"Just now we were talking face to face but you wouldn't stay," he pointed out. "Why are you sitting right beside me now?"

"You've probably forgotten, but a few days ago you and your cousin had just started talking about bird's nest when Concubine Zhao burst in. I've just heard that she's gone out, and that reminded me to come and ask you: what more did you mean to say if she hadn't interrupted you



中，既吃燕窝，不可间断，若只管和他要去，太也托实。虽不便和太太要，我已经在老太太跟前略露了个风声，只怕老太太和凤姐姐说了。我正要告诉他，没得说完。我如今听见说他一日给你们一两燕窝，这也就完了。”紫鹃道：“原来是你说了，这又多谢你费心。我们正疑惑，老太太怎么忽然想起来叫人每日送一两燕窝来呢？这就是了。”宝玉笑道：“这要天天吃惯了，吃上二三年就好了。”紫鹃道：“在这里吃惯了，明年家去，那里有这闲钱吃这个。”宝玉听了，吃了一惊，忙问：“谁？往那个家去？”紫鹃道：“你妹妹回苏州家去。”宝玉笑道：“你又说白话。苏州虽是原籍，因没了姑父、姑母，无人照看，才就来的。明年回去找谁？可见是撒谎。”紫鹃冷笑道：“你太看小了人。你们贾家虽是大族人口多，除了你们家，别人只得一父一母，房族中真个再无人了不成？我们姑娘来时，原是老太太心疼他年小，虽有伯、叔，不如亲父母，故此接来住几年。大了该出阁时，自然要送还林家的。终不成林家的女儿在你贾家一世不成？林家虽贫到没饭吃，也是世代书宦之家，断不肯将他家的人丢与亲戚，落人耻笑。所以早则明年春天，迟则秋天，这里纵不送去，林家亦必有人来接的。前日夜里姑娘和我说了，叫我告诉你：将从前小时玩的东西，有他送你的，叫你都打点出来还他。他将你送他的也打点在那里呢。”宝玉听了，便如头



that day?

“Oh, nothing much,” said Baoyu. “It simply occurred to me that now that she’s taking bird’s-nest and has to keep it up, it’s not right to impose too much on Baochai who’s only a visitor here. As it’s no use asking my mother. I dropped a hint to the old lady, and I suspect she must have told Xifeng. That was what I started explaining. I understand an ounce of bird’s-nest is being sent over to you every day now, so that’s all right.”

“So it was you who suggested that, was it?” said Zijuan. “That was very good of you. We’ve been wondering what made the old lady suddenly start sending an ounce every day. So that’s the reason.”

“If she takes it regularly every day, after two or three years her health should be much better.”

“She can have some every day here, but where will the money come from to continue the cure when she goes home next year?”

Baoyu gave a start.

“Who’s going to which home?” he demanded.

“Your cousin — back to Suzhou.”

“Nonsense!” Baoyu chuckled. “Suzhou may be her hometown, but she came here because there was no one there to look after her after her parents’ death. Whom could she go back to next year? No, you’re obviously fibbing.”

“What a poor opinion you have of other people!” Zijuan snorted. “You Jias may be a big, wealthy family, but do other families have only a father and mother and not other relatives? Our young lady was brought here for a few years while she was still only a child, because the old lady felt for her and didn’t think her uncles could take the place of her parents. When she grows up to marriageable age, she’s bound to be sent back to the Lin family.

“How can a daughter of the Lins stay all her life with you in your Jia family? Even if the Lins were desperately poor, for generations they’ve been a family of scholars and officials: they’d never expose themselves to ridicule by abandoning a daughter to relatives. So next spring or next autumn at the latest, even if your family doesn’t send her back, the Lins are sure to send to fetch her.

“The other evening our young lady told me to ask you for all the little



顶上打了一个焦雷一般！紫鹃看他怎么回应，见他总不作声。忽见晴雯找来说：“老太太叫你呢，谁知在这里。”紫鹃笑道：“他这里问姑娘的病症。我告诉了他半日，他只不信。你倒拉他去罢。”说着，便自己走回房去了。

晴雯见他呆呆的，一头热汗，满脸紫胀，忙拉他的手，一直到怡红院中。袭人见了这般光景，慌张起来，只说时气所感，热身子被风吹了。无奈宝玉发热事犹小可，更觉两个眼珠儿直直的起来，口角边津液流出，皆不知觉。给他个枕头，他便睡下；扶起他来，他便坐着；倒了茶来，他便吃茶。众人见他这般，一时忙乱起来，又不敢造次了去回贾母，便先叫人出去请李嬷嬷。

一时李嬷嬷来了，看了半日，问他几句话也无回答，用手向他脉门摸了摸，嘴唇人中上边着力掐了两下，掐的指印如许来深，竟也不觉疼。李嬷嬷只说了一声“可了不得了”，“呀”的一声便搂着放声大哭起来，急的袭人忙拉他说：“你老人家瞧瞧，可怕不怕？且告诉我们去回老太太、太太去。你老人家怎么先哭起来？”李嬷嬷捶床捣枕，说：“这可不中用了！我白操了一世心了！”袭人等以他年老多知，所以请他来看，如今见他这般一说，都信以为实，也都哭起来。

晴雯便告诉袭人，方才如此这般，袭人听了，便忙到潇湘馆来见紫鹃，紫鹃正伏侍黛玉吃药，也顾不得什么了，便走上来问紫鹃道：“你才和我们宝玉说了些什么？你瞧他去，你回老太太去，我也不管了！”说着，便坐在椅子上。黛玉



gifts and souvenirs she's given you since you were children. She means to return all yours to you as well."

Baoyu was thunderstruck. Zijuan waited for him to answer, but not a word could he utter. And just then Qingwen came up.

"So here you are, Baoyu!" she cried. "The old lady wants you."

"He's been inquiring after Miss Daiyu's health, and I've been reassuring him," Zijuan remarked. "But he won't believe me. You'd better take him away." With that she returned to her room.

Qingwen noticed Baoyu's distraught look, the hectic flush on his cheeks and the sweat on his forehead. She at once led him by the hand to Happy Red Court where his appearance horrified Xiren, who imagined he must have caught a chill in the wind while overheated. A fever was not too alarming, but his eyes were fixed and staring, saliva was trickling from the corners of his lips, and he seemed in a state of stupefaction. He would lie down if a pillow was put for him, would sit up if pulled, and drink tea if it was brought. His condition threw them all into a panic, but not daring to report this too hastily to the Lady Dowager they first sent for his old nurse, Nanny Li.

Nanny Li, arriving presently, examined Baoyu carefully. When he made no answer to any of her questions she felt his pulse, then pinched his upper lip so hard that her fingers left deep imprints — yet he felt no pain. At that she gave a great cry of despair and, taking him in her arms, started weeping and wailing.

Xiren frantically pulled her away.

"Is it serious, nanny?" she demanded. "Do tell us, so that we can let the old lady and the mistress know. Don't start carrying on like this."

Nanny Li beat the bed and pillows with her fists.

"He's done for," she wailed. "A life-time of care gone for nothing!"

Xiren had asked the nurse to have a look because she respected her age and experience. So now her words carried conviction. They all started sobbing.

Qingwen told Xiren then what had just happened, whereupon Xiren dashed off to Bamboo Lodge. There she found Zijuan giving Daiyu her medicine. Blind to everything else, Xiren flew at her.

"What have you been saying to our Baoyu?" she demanded. "Go



忽见袭人满面急怒，又有泪痕，举止大变，便不免也慌了，忙问怎么了。袭人定了一回，哭道：“不知紫鹃姑奶奶说了些什么，那个呆子眼也直了，手脚也凉了，话也不说了，李嬷嬷掐着他也不疼了，已死了大半个了！连李嬷嬷都说不中用了，那里放声大哭。只怕这会子都死了！”黛玉一听此言，李嬷嬷乃是经过的老妪，说不中用了，可知必不中用。

“哇”的一声，将腹中之药一概呛出，抖肠搜肺、炽胃扇肝的大嗽了几阵，一时面红发乱，目肿筋浮，喘的抬不起头来。紫鹃忙上来捶背，黛玉伏枕喘息了半晌，推紫鹃哭道：“你不用捶，你竟拿绳子来勒死我是正经！”紫鹃哭道：“我并没说什么，不过是说了几句玩话，他就认了真。”袭人道：“你还不知道那傻子？每每玩话认了真。”黛玉道：“你说了什么话，趁早儿去解说，他只怕就醒过来了。”紫鹃听说，忙下了床，同袭人到了怡红院。

谁知贾母、王夫人等都已在那里了。贾母一见了紫鹃，便眼内出火，骂道：“你这小蹄子，和他说了什么？”紫鹃忙道：“并没敢说什么，不过说了几句玩话儿。”谁知宝玉见了紫鹃，方“嗷哟”了一声，哭出来了。众人一见，方都放下心来。贾母便拉住紫鹃，只当他得罪了宝玉，所以拉紫鹃命他打。谁知宝玉一把拉住紫鹃，死也不放，说：“要去连我也





and see the state he's in! You'll have to answer for this to the old lady. I wash my hands of it." So saying she threw herself into a chair.

Daiyu was taken aback by Xiren's furious, tear-stained face and this behaviour which was so unlike her.

"What's happened?" she asked.

Making an effort to calm herself Xiren sobbed, "I don't know what your Miss Zijuan's been telling him, but the silly boy's eyes are staring, his hands and feet are cold; he can't speak, and when Nanny Li pinched him he felt nothing. He's more dead than alive! Even Nanny Li says there's no hope and is weeping and wailing there. He may be dead by now for all I know."

Nanny Li was such an experienced old nurse that Daiyu could not but believe her gloomy predictions. With a cry she threw up all the medicine she had just taken, and was racked by such dry coughing that her stomach burned and it seemed her lungs would burst. Red in the face, her hair tousled, her eyes distended, limp in every limb, she choked for breath and could not lift up her head. Zijuan made haste to massage her back while she lay gasping on her pillow.

"Stop thumping me," cried Daiyu at last, pushing her away. "You'd far better fetch a rope to strangle me."

"I didn't say anything," the maid protested with tears. "Just a few words in fun, which he took seriously."

"You should know how seriously the silly boy always takes teasing," scolded Xiren.

"Whatever you said, go and clear up the misunderstanding, quick!" urged Daiyu. "That may bring him back to his senses."

Zijuan jumped up then and hurried off with Xiren to Happy Red Court, where the old lady and Lady Wang had already arrived. At sight of Zijuan the old lady's eyes flashed.

"You bitch!" she stormed. "What did you say to him?"

"Nothing, madam. Nothing but a few words in fun."

At the sight of her Baoyu cried out and burst into tears, to the relief of everybody present. The Lady Dowager caught Zijuan's arm, thinking she had offended him, and urged him to beat her. But Baoyu seized hold of her and would not let go.



带了去。”众人不解，细问起来，方知紫鹃说“要回苏州去”一句玩话引出来的。贾母流泪道：“我当有什么要紧大事，原来是这句玩话。”又向紫鹃道：“你这孩子素日最是个伶俐聪敏的，你又知道他有个呆根子，平白的哄他作什么？”薛姨妈劝道：“宝玉本来心实，可巧林姑娘又是从小儿来的，他兄妹两个一处长了这么大，比别的兄妹更不同。这会子热刺刺的说一个去，别说他是个实心的傻孩子，便是冷心肠的大人也要伤心。这并不是什么大病，老太太和姨太太只管安心，吃一两剂药就好了。”

正说着，人回林之孝家的单大良家的都来瞧哥儿来了。贾母道：“难为他们想着，叫他们来瞧瞧。”宝玉听了一个“林”字，便满床闹起来了，说：“了不得了，林家的人接他们来了，快打出去罢！”贾母听了，也忙说：“打出去罢。”又忙安慰说：“那不是林家的人。林家的人都死绝了，没人来接他的，你只放心罢。”宝玉哭道：“凭他是谁，除了林妹妹，都不许姓林！”贾母道：“没姓林的来，凡姓林的我都打出去了。”一面吩咐众人：“以后别叫林之孝家的进园来，你们也别说‘林’字。好孩子们，你们听我一句话罢！”众人忙答应了，又不敢笑。一时宝玉又一眼看见了十锦格子上陈设的一只金西洋自行船，便指着乱叫说：“那不是接他们来的船来了，湾在那里呢。”贾母忙命拿下来。袭人忙拿下来，宝玉伸手要，袭人递过，宝玉便掖在被中，笑道：“这可去不成了！”一面说，一面死拉着紫鹃不放。



“If you go,” he shouted, “you must take me with you!”

No one could understand this till Zijuan, when questioned, explained her threat made in fun of going back to Suzhou.

“Is that all?” exclaimed the Lady Dowager, the tears running down her cheeks. “So it was because of a joke.” She scolded Zijuan, “You’re such a sensible girl normally, how could you tease him like that when you know how credulous he is?”

“Baoyu’s always been too trusting,” put in Aunt Xue soothingly. “And since Daiyu came here as a child and they’ve grown up together, they’re particularly close. This sudden talk of her leaving would have upset even a hard-hearted grown-up, let alone such a simple, credulous boy. But this disorder isn’t serious; you ladies mustn’t worry. One or two doses of medicine will set him right.”

Just then it was announced that the wives of Lin Zhixiao and Shan Daliang had come to inquire after the young master.

“Show them in,” said the old lady. “It’s thoughtful of them.”

But on hearing the name Lin, Baoyu grew frantic again.

“No, no!” he shouted from his bed. “The Lins have come to fetch her. Drive them away!”

Hastily chiming in, “Drive them away!” his grandmother assured him. “They’re not from the Lin family. All those Lins are dead. Nobody will ever come to fetch her. Don’t you worry.”

“Never mind who they are,” stormed Baoyu tearfully. “No one but Cousin Daiyu should have the name Lin.”

“There are no Lins here,” repeated the old lady. “They’re all been driven away.” She ordered the attendants, “In future don’t let Lin Zhixiao’s wife into the Garden. And never mention the name Lin again. Mind you all do as I say like good children.”

Suppressing their smiles at this, the others assented.

Baoyu’s eye now fell on a golden boat with an engine, a toy from the West, which was on his cabinet.

“Isn’t that the boat coming to fetch them?” he shouted, pointing at it. “It’s mooring there.”

The Lady Dowager ordered its instant removal, and when Baoyu reached out for it Xiren gave it to him. He tucked it under his bedding.



一时人回王太医来了，贾母忙命快进来。王夫人、薛姨妈、宝钗等暂避入里间，贾母便端坐在宝玉身旁。王太医进来见许多的人，忙上去请了贾母的安，拿了宝玉的手诊了一回。那紫鹃少不得低了头。王大夫也不解何意，起身说道：“世兄这症乃是急痛迷心。古人曾云，‘痰迷有别。有气血亏柔，饮食不能融化痰迷者，有怒恼中痰裹而迷者，有急痛壅塞者，’此亦痰迷之症，系急痛所致，不过一时壅蔽，较诸痰迷似略轻。”贾母道：“你只说怕不怕，谁同你背药书呢。”王太医忙躬身笑说：“不妨，不妨。”贾母道：“果真不妨？”王太医道：“实在不妨，都在晚生身上。”贾母道：“既如此，请到外面坐着，开药方。若治好了，我另外预备好谢礼，叫他亲自去磕头；若耽误了，我打发人去拆了太医院的大堂。”王太医只躬身笑说：“不敢，不敢。”他原听了说“另具上等谢礼命宝玉去磕头”，故满口说“不敢”，并未听见贾母后来说拆太医院之戏语，犹说“不敢”，贾母与众人反倒笑了。一时，按方煎了药服下去，果觉比先安静些。无奈宝玉只不肯放紫鹃，只说他去了便是回苏州去了。贾母、王夫人无法，只得命紫鹃守着他，另将琥珀去伏侍黛玉。





“Now they won’t be able to sail away,” he laughed. Seizing tight hold of Zijuan he refused to let her go.

At this point Doctor Wang was announced, and the old lady ordered him to be brought straight in. Lady Wang, Aunt Xue and Baochai withdrew to the inner room while the Lady Dowager seated herself by Baoyu. When Doctor Wang found such a company assembled, he paid his respects to the Lady Dowager before taking Baoyu’s hand to feel his pulse, while Zijuan had to stand there with lowered head, to the doctor’s astonishment.

Presently the doctor rose and declared, “The trouble with our honourable brother is that some sharp distress has clouded his mind. According to the ancients, ‘Disorders of the phlegm take different forms: indigestion owing to a weak constitution, derangement brought on by a sudden fit of anger, and obstruction caused by sudden distress.’ This is a disorder of the third kind. It is only a temporary blockage, however, less serious than the other types.”

“Just tell us if he’s in danger or not.” urged the Lady Dowager. “Who wants to hear this recital of medical lore?”

Doctor Wang bowed.

“He is in no danger, no.”

“Is that really true?” she persisted.

“There is really no danger, madam, I give you my word.”

“In that case, please take a seat in the outer room to make out your prescription. If you cure him, I shall prepare presents to show my gratitude and send him to kowtow to you in person. If you delay his recovery, though, I shall send to tear down the main hall of your Academy of Imperial Physicians!”

The doctor bowed again.

“You are too good, too good!”

For he had heard only the first part of her speech and not the jocular threat with which it concluded. He went on protesting his unworthiness until the old lady and all the rest burst out laughing.

When the medicine had been prepared according to the prescription and Baoyu had taken it, he did indeed calm down a little. He still refused to let go of Zijuan, however.



黛玉不时遣雪雁来探消息，这边事务尽知，自己心中暗叹。幸喜众人都知宝玉原有些呆气，自幼是他二人亲密，如今紫鹃之戏语亦是常情，宝玉之病亦非罕事，因不疑到别事去。

晚间宝玉稍安，贾母、王夫人等方回房去。一夜还遣人来问讯数次。李奶母带领宋嬷嬷等几个年老人用心看守，紫鹃、袭人、晴雯等日夜相伴。有时宝玉睡去，必从梦中惊醒，不是哭了说黛玉已去，便是说有人来接。每一惊时，必得紫鹃安慰一番方罢。彼时贾母又命将祛邪守灵丹及开窍通神散各样上方秘制诸药，按方饮服。次日又服了王太医的药，渐次好起来。宝玉心中明白。因恐紫鹃回去，故有时或作佯狂之态。紫鹃自那日也着实后悔，如今日夜辛苦，并没有怨意。袭人等皆心安神定，因向紫鹃笑道：“都是你闹的，还得你来治。也没见我们这呆子听见风就是雨，往后怎么好呢。”暂且不提。

此时却说湘云之症已愈，天天过来瞧看，见宝玉明白了，便将他病中狂态学与他瞧，引的宝玉自己伏枕而笑。原来他起先那样他竟是不知的，如今听人说还不信。无人时紫鹃在侧，宝玉又拉他的手问道：“你为什么唬我？”紫鹃道：“不过是哄你玩的话，你就认真了。”宝玉道：“你说的那样





“If she leaves here, they’ll go back to Suzhou!” he cried.

The Lady Dowager and Lady Wang had perforce to let Zijuan stay there. They dispatched Hupo in her place to look after Daiyu, who from time to time sent Xueyan over to ask for news and was deeply moved when she learned all that had happened.

As everyone knew how cranky Baoyu was, and how close he and Daiyu had been since they were children, they took Zijuan’s joke as quite natural and his illness as nothing out of the way either, not suspecting anything else.

That evening, as Baoyu was quieter, his grandmother and mother returned to their own quarters but sent several times during the night for reports from the sickroom. Nanny Li, Mrs. Song and some other matrons nursed the patient devotedly, while Zijuan, Xiren and Qingwen watched day and night by his bedside. Whenever he slept he had nightmares, and would wake up crying that Daiyu had gone or that people had come to fetch her. Each time this happened Zijuan had to comfort him.

Now his grandmother had Baoyu given all sorts of rare medicine-pills to dispel evil influences and powders to clear the mind. And the next day, after more of Doctor Wang’s medicine, his condition gradually improved; but although he was in his right senses again, he pretended from time to time to be delirious in order to keep Zijuan with him. As for her, thoroughly repenting the mischief she had caused she served him day and night without a murmur.

Xiren, herself once more, told her, “As you’re the one to blame for this, it’s up to you to cure him. I’ve never seen such a simpleton as our young master, the way he catches at shadows. What’s to become of him?” But enough of this.

By now Xiangyun was better, and she came every day to see Baoyu. Finding that he had recovered his faculties she mimicked his crazy behaviour during his illness until, lying on his pillow, he had to laugh. Having no idea himself of what had passed, he could hardly believe what was told him.

When no one else was about but Zijuan, he took her hand.

“Why did you frighten me?” he asked.



有情有理，如何是玩话？”紫鹃笑道：“那些玩话都是我编的。林家真没人了，纵有也是极远的。族中也都不在苏州住，各省流寓不定。纵有人来接，老太太也是不肯放去的。”宝玉道：“便老太太放去，我也不依。”紫鹃笑道：“果真你不依？只怕是口里的话。你如今也大了，连亲也定下了，过二三年再娶了亲，你眼里还有谁了？”宝玉听了，又惊问：“谁定了亲？定了谁？”紫鹃笑道：“年里我就听见老太太说，要定下琴姑娘呢。不然那么疼他？”宝玉笑道：“人人只说我傻，你比我更傻。不过是句玩话，他已经许给梅翰林家了。果然定下了他，我还是这个形景了？先是我发誓赌咒砸这劳什子，你都没劝过，说我疯了。刚刚的这几日才好了，你又来恼我。”一面说，一面咬牙切齿的，又说道：“我只愿这会子立刻我死了，把心拿出来你们瞧见了，然后连皮带骨一概都化成一股灰，灰还有形迹，不如再化一股烟，烟还有凝聚，人还看的见，须得一阵大风吹的四面八方，都登时散了，这才好！”一面说，一面又滚下泪来。紫鹃忙上来握他的嘴，替他擦眼泪，又忙笑解劝他道：“你不用着急。这原是我心里着急，故来试你。”宝玉听了，更又诧异，问道：“你又着什么急？”紫鹃笑道：“你知道，我并不是林家的人，我也和袭人、鸳鸯是一样的，偏把我给了林姑娘使。偏生他又和我极好，比他苏州带来的还好十倍，一时一刻我们两个离不开。我如今心里却愁，他倘或要去了，我必要跟了去的。我是合家在这里，我若不去，辜负了我们素日的情



"I only did it for fun," she replied. "But you took it seriously."

"You made it sound so convincing, how was I to know it was just a joke?" he retorted.

"Well, I made the whole thing up. There's really no one left in the Lin family except for some very distant relatives who no longer live in Suzhou but are scattered in different provinces. Even if one of them asked for her, the old lady would never let her go."

"Even if the old lady would let her go, *I* wouldn't."

"*You* wouldn't!" Zijuan laughed. "That's just talk, I'm afraid. You're growing up now and already engaged; in a couple of years you'll be marrying, and then you'll forget other people."

"Who's engaged?" asked Baoyu in dismay. "To whom?"

"Before New Year I heard the old lady say she wanted to engage Miss Baoqin to you. Why else would she make such a favourite of her?"

He laughed.

"People may call me crazy, but you're even crazier! That was just a joke. She's already engaged to the son of Academician Mei. If I were engaged to her, would I be in this state? Didn't you plead with me and say I was mad when I swore that oath and wanted to smash that silly jade? Now you've come to provoke me again just as I'm getting better." Through clenched teeth he added. "I only wish I could die this very minute and tear out my heart to show you. Then all the rest of me, skin and bones, could be turned into ashes — no, ashes still have form — better be turned into smoke. But smoke still congeals and can be seen by men — it would have to be scattered in a flash, by a great wind, to the four quarters. *That* would be a good death." Tears were running down his cheeks as he spoke.

Zijuan hastily put her hand to his mouth, then wiped away his tears.

"You needn't worry," she urged. "*I* was putting you to the test because I was worried."

"You worried? Why?" he asked in surprise.

"You know I don't belong to the Lin family. Like Xiren and Yuanyang, I was *given* to Miss Lin. And she couldn't have been kinder to me. She treats me ten times better than her own maids brought from Suzhou; we don't like being parted for a single moment. I'm worried now because, if



肠；若去，又弃了本家。所以我疑惑，故设出这谎话来问你，谁知你就傻闹起来。”宝玉笑道：“原来是你愁这个，所以你是傻子。从此后再别愁了。我只告诉你一句总话：活着，咱们在一处活着；不活着，咱们一处化灰化烟，如何？”紫鹃听了，心下暗暗筹画。忽有人回：“环爷、兰哥儿看来了。”宝玉道：“就说难为他们，我才睡了，不必进来。”婆子答应去了。紫鹃笑道：“你也好了，该放我回去瞧瞧我们那一个去了。”宝玉道：“正是这话。我昨日就要叫你去的，偏又忘了。我已经大好了，你就去罢。”紫鹃听说，方打叠铺盖妆奁之类，宝玉笑道：“我看见你文具里头有两三面镜子，你把那面小菱花的给我留下罢。我搁在枕头旁边，睡着好照，明儿出门带着也轻巧。”紫鹃听说，只得与他留下，先命人将东西送过去，然后别了众人，自回潇湘馆来。

林黛玉近日闻得宝玉如此形景，未免又添了些病，多哭几场。今见紫鹃来了，问其原故，已知大愈，仍遣琥珀去伏侍贾母。夜间人定后，紫鹃已宽衣卧下之时，悄向黛玉笑道：“宝玉的心倒实，听见咱们去就那样起来。”黛玉不答。紫鹃停了半晌，自言自语的说道：“一动不如一静。我们这里就算好人家，别的都容易，最难得的是从小儿一处长大的，脾气情性都彼此知道的了。”黛玉啐道：“你这几天还不乏，





she leaves, I shall have to go with her; but my whole family's here. If I don't go, I'll be unworthy of all her goodness; if I do, I shall have to abandon my own people. That's why, in my dilemma, I told you that fib to see how you felt about it. How was I to know you'd take it so hard?"

"So that's what's worrying you," Baoyu chuckled. "What a goose you are! Well, set your heart at rest. Let me just put it in a nutshell for you. If we live, we shall live together; and if we die, we shall turn into ashes and smoke together. What do you say to that?"

Zijuan was turning this over in her mind when suddenly Jia Huan and Jia Lan were announced. They had called to ask after Baoyu.

"Thank them for coming," he said. "But tell them I've just gone to bed and they needn't trouble to come in."

The woman who had brought the message assented and left.

"Now that you're better you should let me go back to see my own patient," said Zijuan.

"I know," he replied. "I meant to send you yesterday, but then I forgot. Go along then, since I'm completely well again."

She set about bundling together her bedding and dressing-cases.

"I see several mirrors in your cases," he commented laughingly. "Will you leave me that small one? I can keep it by my pillow to use in bed, and it will come in handy when I go out."

Zijuan had to do as he asked. Having sent her things on ahead, she took her leave of everyone and went back to Bamboo Lodge.

The news of Baoyu's disorder had made Daiyu suffer a relapse and brought on many bouts of weeping. Now she asked Zijuan why she had returned and, learning that he was better, sent Hupo back to wait on the Lady Dowager.

That night, when all was quiet and Zijuan had undressed and lain down, she whispered to Daiyu:

"Baoyu's heart is really true to you. Fancy his falling ill like that when he heard we were leaving!"

Daiyu made no answer to this.

Presently Zijuan went on, half to herself, "Moving isn't as good as staying put. This is a good family anyway. It's the hardest thing in the world to find people who've grown up together and know each other's



趁这会子不歇一歇，还嚼什么蛆。”紫鹃笑道：“倒不是白嚼蛆，我倒是一片真心为姑娘。替你愁了这几年了，无父母无兄弟，谁是知疼着热的人？趁早儿老太太还明白硬朗的时节，作定了大事要紧。俗语说，‘老健春寒秋后热’，倘或老太太一时有个好歹，那时虽也完事，只怕耽搁了时光，还不得趁心如意呢。公子王孙虽多，那一个不是三房五妾，今儿朝东，明儿朝西？娶一个天仙来，也不过三夜五夕，也丢在脖子后头了，甚至当作丫头使妾，反目成仇的。若娘家有人有势的还好些，若是姑娘这样的人，有老太太一日还好，若没了老太太，也只好凭人欺负罢了。所以说，拿主意要紧。姑娘是个明白人，岂不闻俗语说：‘万两黄金容易得，知心一个也难求’。”黛玉听了，便说道：“这丫头今儿可疯了？怎么去了几日，忽然变了一个人。我明儿必回老太太退回你去罢，我不敢要你了。”紫鹃笑道：“我说的是好话，不过叫你心里留神，并没叫你去为非作歹，何苦回老太太，叫我吃了亏，又有何好处？”说着，竟自己睡了。黛玉听了这话，口内虽如此说，心内未尝不伤感，待他睡了，便直哭泣了一夜，至天明方打了一个盹儿。次日勉强盥漱了，吃了些燕窝粥，便有贾母等亲来看视他，又嘱咐了许多话。

目今是薛姨妈的生日，自贾母起，诸人皆有祝贺的礼。黛玉亦备了两色针线送去。是日也定了一班小戏请贾母与王



character and ways.”

“Aren’t you tired after the last few days?” scoffed Daiyu. “Why don’t you sleep instead of talking such nonsense?”

“It isn’t nonsense. I was thinking of you. I’ve felt worried for you all these years with no father, mother or brothers to care for you. The important thing is to settle the main affair of your life in good time, while the old lady’s still clear-headed and healthy. The proverb says, ‘The healthiest old people last as long as a chilly spring or a hot autumn.’ If anything should happen to the old lady your marriage might be delayed, or else not turn out in the way you hoped.

“There’s no lack of young lordlings, but they all want three wives and five concubines and their affections change from one day to the next. They may bring home a wife as lovely as a fairy, yet after four or five nights they cast her off, treating her like an enemy for the sake of a concubine or a slave girl. If her family’s large and powerful, that’s not so bad; and for someone like you, miss, so long as the old lady lives you’ll be all right. Once she’s gone, you’ll have to put up with ill treatment. So it’s important to make up your mind. You’ve sense enough to understand the saying, ‘The thousand taels of gold are easier come by than an understanding heart.’”

“The girl’s crazy!” exclaimed Daiyu. “A few days away, and you’ve suddenly changed into a different person. Tomorrow I shall ask the old lady to take you back. I no longer dare keep you.”

“I meant well,” was the smiling answer. “I just wanted you to look out for yourself, not to do anything wrong. What good will it do if you report me to the old lady and get me into trouble?” With that Zijuan closed her eyes.

Although Daiyu had spoken so sharply, this talk had distressed her. After Zijuan went to sleep she wept all night, no dozing off until dawn. The next morning she found it an effort to wash herself, rinse her mouth and swallow her bird’s-nest broth. Then the Lady Dowager and others called to see her and urged her to take better care of herself.

That day was Aunt Xue’s birthday. Everyone from the Lady Dowager down gave her presents, and Daiyu also sent over two pieces of her



夫人等，独有宝玉与黛玉二人不曾得去。至晚散时，贾母等顺路又瞧他二人一遍，方回房去。次日，薛姨妈家又命薛蝌陪诸伙计吃了一天酒，连忙了四五天方完。

因薛姨妈看见邢岫烟生得端雅稳重，且家道贫寒，是个钗荆裙布的女儿，便欲说与薛蝌为妻。因薛蝌素习行止浮奢，又恐糟踏了人家的女儿。正在踌躇之间，忽想起薛蝌未曾娶亲，看他二人恰是一对天生地设的夫妻，因谋之于凤姐儿。凤姐儿叹道：“姑妈素知我们太太有些左性的，这事等我慢谋。”因贾母去瞧凤姐儿时，凤姐儿便和贾母说：“薛姑妈有件事求老祖宗，只是自己不好启齿的。”贾母忙问何事，凤姐便将求亲一事说了。贾母笑道：“这有什么不好启齿的？这是极好的事。等我和你婆婆说了，怕他不依？”因回房来，即刻就命人来请了邢夫人过来，硬作保山。邢夫人想了一想：薛家根基不错，且现大富大贵，薛蝌生得又好，且贾母硬作保山，将计就计便应了。贾母十分喜欢，忙命人请了薛姨妈来。二人见了，自然有许多谦辞。邢夫人即刻命人去告诉邢忠夫妇。他夫妇此来原是投靠邢夫人的，如何不依的，早极口的说“妙极”。贾母笑道：“我最爱管个闲事，今





own embroidery. Aunt Xue had hired a company of actresses and at her invitation the old lady, Lady Wang and the whole family except Baoyu and Daiyu went to watch the performance. On their way back from it that evening, the Lady Dowager and others dropped in to see the two patients again.

The next day Aunt Xue made Xue Ke keep their shop assistants company at a whole day's feasting. The celebrations lasted for three or four days.

Now Aunt Xue had been struck by Xiuyan's dignity and refinement; and as the girl was poor, having "only a thorn for a hair-pin, and plain cloth for a skirt," her habits were frugal. Thus Aunt Xue thought of betrothing her to her son. After some hesitation, however, she decided it would not be fair to the girl to marry her to a profligate like Xue Pan, and it occurred to her that Xiuyan and Xue Ke who was still unmarried would make a perfect match. She broached the subject to Xifeng.

"You know how crotchety my mother-in-law is, auntie," said Xifeng with a sigh. "You must give me time to manage it."

When the Lady Dowager called to see Xifeng, the matter was broached to her.

"Aunt Xue has something to ask our Old Ancestress, but doesn't know how to put it."

"What is it?" asked the old lady.

Xifeng explained the marriage proposal.

"Where's the difficulty?" The old lady smiled. "Nothing could please me better. Let me tell your mother-in-law and she's sure to agree."

Once back in her own apartments, she sent immediately to ask Lady Xing over and proposed the match herself. Since the Xues came of fairly good stock and were now very wealthy, while Xue Ke was a handsome young man, and the go-between, moreover, was no less a person than the Lady Dowager, a moment's thought convinced Lady Xing that this would be to her advantage. So she agreed.

The Lady Dowager in high delight promptly asked Aunt Xue to come over, and there was the usual exchange of polite formalities between both parties. Lady Xing lost no time in informing her brother Xing Zhong and his wife; and since they had come there to throw themselves upon



儿又管成了一件事，不知得多少谢媒钱？”薛姨妈笑道：“这是自然的。纵抬了十万银子来，只怕不希罕。但只一件，老太太既是主亲，还得一位才好。”贾母笑道：“别的没有，我们家折腿烂手的人还有两个。”说着，便命人去叫贾珍婆媳二人来。贾母告诉他原故，彼此都忙道喜。贾母吩咐道：“咱们家的规矩你们是知道的，从没有两亲家争礼的理。如今你算在当中替我料理，也不可太俭，也不可太费，把他两家的事情周全了回我。”尤氏忙答应了。薛姨妈喜之不尽，回家来忙命写了请帖补送过宁府。尤氏深知邢夫人性情，本不欲管，无奈贾母嘱咐的，只得应了，惟有忖度邢夫人之意行事。薛姨妈是个无可无不可的人，倒还容易说，这且不在话下。

如今薛姨妈既定了邢岫烟为媳，合宅皆知。邢夫人本欲接出岫烟去住，贾母因说：“这又何妨，两个孩子又不能见面，就是姨太太和他一个大姑子，一个小姑子，又何妨？况且都是女儿，正好亲香呢。”邢夫人方罢。

蝌、岫二人前次途中皆曾有一面之遇，大约二人心中也皆如意。只是邢岫烟未免比先时拘泥些，不好与宝钗姊妹共处闲语；又兼湘云是个爱取笑的，更觉不好意思。幸他是个知书达礼的，虽有女儿身分，还不是那种佯羞诈愧一味轻薄造作之辈。宝钗自见他时，见他家业贫寒，二则别人之父母





her bounty, they were naturally more than happy to give their approval.

“I love meddling in other people’s affairs,” said the Lady Dowager. “Now that I’ve fixed this up, how much are you going to pay your go-between?”

“Don’t worry about that,” replied Aunt Xue. “Even if we brought you a hundred thousand taels of silver, I don’t suppose it would mean much to you. But since you’re the go-between, madam, will you find us someone to take charge of the betrothal ceremony?”

“Whatever else we’re short of, we can produce one or two helpers of a sort,” the old lady chuckled.

She sent for Jia Zhen’s wife and daughter-in-law. When they heard the news from her they offered their congratulations.

“You know our family ways,” she told Madam You. “The two families never squabble over betrothal gifts. You must handle this business for me, neither too stingily nor too lavishly. Report to me when everything is arranged.”

As soon as Madam You accepted this task, Aunt Xue went home overjoyed to write invitation cards for the Ning Mansion.

Madam You knew Lady Xing’s cantankerous temper and would have preferred to have nothing to do with the business, but she had to fall in with the old lady’s wishes. She did her best to please Lady Xing, aware that Aunt Xue was so easygoing there would be no problem there. But enough of this.

Now that the whole household knew that Xiuyan was to marry Aunt Xue’s nephew, Lady Xing wanted to move her out of the Garden.

“What does it matter if she stays?” demurred the Lady Dowager. “There’s no danger of the two young people meeting, and it shouldn’t worry you if she sees Aunt Xue and the two cousins of the other family every day. They’re all girls, aren’t they? They may as well get to know each other better.”

Lady Xing made no further objection then.

Xue Ke and Xiuyan had met once previously on their way to the capital, and in all probability they were pleased enough with the match; but naturally this made Xiuyan more reserved and tongue-tied in the presence of Baochai and the rest of the girls. She felt specially shy with



皆是年高有德之人，独他父母偏是酒糟透之人，于女儿分中平常；邢夫人也不过是脸面之情，亦非真心疼爱；且岫烟为人雅重，迎春是个有气的死人，连他自己尚未照管齐全，如何能照管到他身上？凡闺阁中家常一应需用之物，或有亏乏，无人照管，他又不与人张口，宝钗倒暗中每相体贴接济，也不敢与邢夫人知道，亦恐多心闲话之故耳。如今却是意外之奇缘，作成这门亲事。岫烟心中先取中宝钗，然后方取薛蝌。有时岫烟仍与宝钗闲话，宝钗仍以姊妹相呼。

这日宝钗因来瞧黛玉，恰值岫烟也来瞧黛玉，二人在半路相遇。宝钗含笑唤他到跟前，二人同走至一块石壁后，宝钗笑问他：“这天还冷的很，你怎么倒全换了夹的？”岫烟见问，低头不答。宝钗便知道又有了原故，因又笑问道：“必定是这个月的月钱又没得，凤丫头如今也这样没心没计了。”岫烟道：“他倒想着，不错日子给，因姑妈打发人和我说，一个月用不了二两银子，叫我省一两给爹妈送出去，要使什么，横竖有二姐姐的东西，啖着些儿，搭着就使了。姐姐想，二姐姐也是个老实人，也不大留心，我使他的东西，他虽不说什么，他那些妈妈丫头，那一个是省事的，那一个嘴里是不尖的？我虽在那屋里，却不敢很使唤他们，过三天五天，我倒得拿出些钱来给他们打酒买点心吃才好。因此，一月二两银子还不够使，如今又去了一两。前儿我悄悄的把棉衣服叫人当了几吊钱盘缠。”宝钗听了，愁眉叹道：“偏梅家



Xiangyun, who was such a tease. But being a well-brought up girl of some education, she showed no false modesty or silly coyness.

Baochai had realized from the start that Xiuyan's family was poor, and while the other girls' parents were respectable old people hers were penniless bobodies who cared little for their daughter; Lady Xing had no genuine feeling for her either, simply making a show of affection. And Xiuyan had a sense of self-respect. As Yingchun was too feeble even to take care of herself, let alone look after her cousin, whenever Xiuyan ran short of any daily necessities there was no one to see to it, and she was too unassuming to mention it. Baochai accordingly often helped her in secret, not letting Lady Xing know for fear of giving offence, with the result that now that this unexpected match had been arranged Xiuyan felt even more closely bound to Baochai than to Xue Ke. She often went to chat with her, and Baochai continued to address her as "cousin."

One day Baochai set out to call on Daiyu. Happening to meet Xiuyan on the way, she beckoned her with a smile and they walked on together. As they skirted the back of a rockery, Baochai inquired:

"Why have you changed out of padded clothes into lined ones, when the weather is still so cold?"

Xiuyan hung her head and said nothing.

Sensing some reason for this Baochai continued, "Don't tell me this month's allowance was held up again? Cousin Xifeng really is growing rather thoughtless."

"She issued it on the right date," rejoined Xiuyan. "But my aunt sent to tell me I shouldn't need two taels a month and must save one for my parents. She said if I was short of anything I could borrow from Yingchun and make do. But, you see, Yingchun is a simple soul who doesn't always think. She wouldn't mind my using her things, but those maids and nannies of hers are all troublemakers — you know what sharp tongues they have. Though I'm staying there, I dare not order them about; in fact, every few days I have to spend money on wine and cakes for them. I can't manage even on two taels a month, and now it's been cut to one. So the other day I got someone, on the sly, to pawn my padded clothes for a few strings of cash."

Hearing this, Baochai frowned and sighed in sympathy.



又合家在任上，后年才进来。若是在这里，琴儿过去了，好再商量你这事，离了这里就完了。如今不先完他妹妹的事，也断不敢先娶亲的。如今倒是一件难事。再迟两年，又怕你熬煎出病来。等我和妈再商议，有人欺负你，你只管耐些烦儿，千万别自己熬煎出病来。不如把那一两银子明儿也率性给了他们，倒都歇了心。你以后也不用白给那些人东西吃，他们刻薄你，你装听不见，各人走开就完了。倘或短了什么，你别存那小家儿女气，只管找我去。并不是作亲后方如此，你一来时咱们就好的。便怕人说闲话，你打发小丫头悄悄的和我说去就是了。”岫烟低头答应了。宝钗又指他裙上一个碧玉珮问：“这是谁给你的？”岫烟道：“这是三姐姐给的。”宝钗点头笑道：“他见人人皆有，独你一个没有，怕人笑话，故此送你一个。这是他聪明细致之处。但还有一句话你也要知道，这些妆饰原出于大官富贵之家，你看我从头至脚可有这些富丽妆饰么？然七八年之先，我也是这样来着，如今一时比不得一时了，所以我都自己该省的就省了。将来你过了我们家，这些没有用的东西，只怕还有一箱子。咱们如今比不得他们了，总要一色从实守分为主，不比他们才是。”岫烟笑道：“姐姐既这样说，我回去摘了就是了。”宝钗忙笑道：“你也太听说了。这是他的好意送你，你不佩着，他岂不疑心。我不过是偶然提到这里，以后知道就是了。”岫烟忙又答应，又问：“姐姐此时那里去？”宝钗道：“我到潇



“It’s too bad that the Mei family have all gone to the new post and won’t be back in the capital till the year after next,” she said. “If they were here, we could arrange Baoqin’s wedding and then yours. Once you leave here you’ll be all right. The trouble is that Xue Ke won’t consider getting married before his younge sister; yet if you have to put up with two more years of this, I’m afraid it may ruin your health. I must talk to my mother and see what can be done.

“If people bully you, just keep your temper and on no account fall ill. Actually you may just as well give them the other tael too, so that they stop pestering you; then you needn’t treat those creatures for nothing. If they make scathing remarks, just pretend not to hear and go about your own business. When you’re short of anything just apply to me. Don’t be finicky. It’s not because you’re engaged now to one of our family that I want you to treat me as your relative. Didn’t we become firends as soon as you arrived here? If you are afraid of gossip, just send your maid quietly to pass on messages to me.”

Xiuyan lowered her head and assented.

Then Baochai pointed at the green jade pendant hanging from her skirt.

“Who gave you that?”

“It’s a present from Cousin Tanchun.”

Baochai nodded.

“She must have noticed that you were the only one with no jade to wear; so to stop people laughing at you she gave you this. It shows how thoughtful and observant she is. Still, you should know that trinkets like these are only worn in big official families of rich nobles. Just look at me. Do *I* wear such magnificent ornaments? Seven or eight years ago I did, but not now that our family position’s changed. I economize whenever I can. In future, when you come to our family, I dare say you’ll find a whole chest of such trash still there. But nowadays our family’s not like theirs. We should after all dress more simply, not copy them.”

“If that’s how you feel, sister, I’ll go back and take it off.”

“No, that’s not what I meant,” disclaimed Baochai hastily. “Since she was kind enough to give you this, if you don’t wear it she’ll wonder why. I just happened to mention the matter for you to bear in mind later.”



湘馆去。你且回去把那当票子叫丫头送来，我那里悄悄的取出来，晚上再悄悄的送给你去，早晚好穿，不然冻病了事大。但不知当在那里了？”岫烟道：“叫作‘恒舒典’，是鼓楼西大街的。”宝钗笑道：“这闹在一家子去了。伙计们倘或知道了，好说‘人没过来，衣裳倒先来’了。”岫烟听说，便知是他家的本钱，也不觉红了脸一笑，二人走开。

宝钗就往潇湘馆来，正值他母亲也来瞧黛玉，正说闲话呢。宝钗笑道：“妈多早晚来的？我竟不知道。”薛姨妈道：“我这几天连日忙，总没来瞧瞧宝玉和他。所以今儿瞧他两个，也都好了。”黛玉忙让宝钗坐了，因向宝钗道：“天下的事真是人想不到的，怎么想的到姨妈和大舅母又作了一门亲家。”薛姨妈道：“我的儿，你们女孩家那里知道，自古道：‘千里姻缘一线牵’。管姻缘的有一位月下老人，预先注定，暗里只用一根红丝把这两个人的脚绊住，凭你两家隔着海，隔着国，有世仇的，也终久有机会作了夫妇。这一件事都是出人意料之外，凭你父母本人都愿意了，或是年年在一处的，以为是定了的亲事，若月下老人不用红线拴的，再不能到一处。比如你姐妹两个的婚姻，此刻也不知在眼前，也不知在山南海北呢。”宝钗道：“惟有妈，说动话就拉上我们。”一面说，一面伏在他母亲怀里笑说道：“咱们走罢。”黛玉笑道：“你瞧，这么大了，离了姨妈他就是个最老到的，



Xiuyan assented, then asked her where she was going.

“To Bamboo Lodge,” Baochai told her. “Slip back and send a maid over to our place with the pawn ticket. I’ll have the clothes redeemed quietly and sent to you this evening, so that you have something warm to wear; otherwise you’ll catch cold, and that would never do. Which shop is it, by the way?”

“A shop called Heng Shu on the main road west of the Drum Tower.”

“It happens to belong to our family.” Baochai smiled. “If the shop assistants knew they’d say, ‘Before the bride is fetched her clothes have arrived.’”

Xiuyan blushed when she realized that it was one of the Xues’ shops. Making no answer she went away with a smile.

At Bamboo Lodge, Baochai found her mother chatting with Daiyu.

“When did you get here, mother?” she asked. “I didn’t know you were coming.”

“I’ve been too busy till today to call to see her and Baoyu,” said Aunt Xue. “And now I find both of them are well again.”

Daiyu offered Baochai a seat. “Life is certainly full of surprises,” she said to her. “Take Aunt Xue and my Eldest Aunt, for instance. They’re going to be linked more closely still by marriage.”

“What do girls like you know about such things, child?” replied Aunt Xue. “There’s an old saying: ‘People a thousand *li* apart may be linked by marriage.’ It’s all the doing of the Old Man of the Moon. If he’s secretly fastened his red thread around the ankles of two young people, not even the ocean or a whole country, or even a family feud for generations can stop them from becoming husband and wife. It always comes as a surprise.

“On the other hand, if the Old Man of the Moon *doesn’t* do his part, even if the parents on both sides are willing and the young people have been brought up together and think themselves destined for each other, they’ll never be united.

“Take the case of you two girls. We don’t yet know whether you’ll marry someone close at hand or beyond mountains and seas.”

“Mother always drags us in!” protested Baochai. Resting her head against her mother’s breast she asked laughingly, “Shall we go now?”



见了姨妈他就撒娇儿。”薛姨妈用手摩弄着宝钗，叹向黛玉道：“你这姐姐就和凤哥儿在老太太跟前一样，有了正经事就和他商量，没了事幸亏他开开我的心。我见了他这样，任有多少愁也散了。”黛玉听说，流泪叹道：“他偏在这里这样，分明是气我没娘的人，故意来刺我的心。”宝钗笑道：“妈瞧他轻狂，倒说我撒娇儿。”薛姨妈道：“也怨不得他伤心，可怜没父母的，到底没个亲人。”又摩娑着黛玉笑道：“好孩子，别哭。你见我疼你姐姐你伤心了，你不知道我心里更疼你呢。你姐姐虽没了父亲，到底有我，有亲哥哥，这就比你强了。我常常和你姐姐说，心里很疼你，只是外头不好带出来。这里人多口杂，说好话的人少，说歹话的人多，不说你无依无靠，为人作人可配人疼，只说我们看老太太疼你了，我们也淤上水了。”黛玉笑道：“姨妈既这么说，我明日就认姨妈做娘，姨妈若是弃嫌我不认，便是假意疼我了。”薛姨妈道：“你不厌我，就认了才好呢。”宝钗忙道：“认不得的。”黛玉道：“怎么认不得？”宝钗笑问道：“我且问你，我哥哥还没定亲事，为什么反将邢妹妹先说与我兄弟了，是什么道理？”黛玉道：“他不在家，或是属相不对，所以先说与兄弟了。”宝钗笑道：“非也。我哥哥已经相准了，只等来年就下定了，也不必提出人来，我方才说你认不得娘，你细想去。”说着，便和他母亲挤眼儿发笑。黛玉听了，便也一头



“Look at her.” teased Daiyu. “Such a big girl, and when you’re not around, aunt, she looks very dignified; but when she’s with you she acts just like a baby.”

Caressing her daughter Aunt Xue told Daiyu, “This child means as much to me as Xifeng does to the old lady. When I’ve serious business, I consult her; when there’s none, she amuses me. When I see her like this all my troubles melt away.”

Tears came into Daiyu’s eyes.

“She’s doing this on purpose here, to wound me by reminding me that *I’ve* no mother.”

“Look, mother!” cried Baochai gaily. “Who’s acting like a baby now?”

“You can’t blame her for being upset,” replied Aunt Xue. “She has no parents, poor thing, no one to care for her.” She turned then to caress Daiyu as well. “Don’t cry, there’s a good child,” she urged. “It upsets you to see how fond I am of your cousin, but I love you even more if you only knew it. She’s better off than you, because though she’s lost her father she at least has me and her brother. I’ve often told her I can’t show how fond I am of *you*, for fear of the gossip it would cause. People like to put the worst interpretation on things. Instead of admitting that you’ve no one to turn to and behave in a way to make everybody love you, they’d accuse me of being good to you just because you’re the old lady’s favourite — so as to please *her*.”

“If you really love me, aunt, will you be my foster-mother?” pleaded Daiyu. “If you turn me down, that means you aren’t in earnest.”

“I’m willing, if you think I’m good enough.”

“No, that wouldn’t do,” put in Baochai.

“Why not?” Daiyu wanted to know.

“Let me ask you a question,” retorted Baochai with a smile. “why is Xiuyan engaged to my younger cousin before my brother’s engaged?”

“Because he’s not at home, I suppose. Or because the horoscopes don’t match.”

“No, it’s because my brother has already set his mind on someone, and it’ll be fixed up as soon as he returns. I needn’t name any names. Why did I say you couldn’t take her as your mother? Just work it out for yourself!” She winked at her mother and laughed.



伏在薛姨妈身上，说道：“姨妈不打他我不依。”薛姨妈便也搂他笑道：“你别信你姐姐的话，他和你玩呢。”宝钗笑道：“真个的，明儿妈和老太太说，求了他作媳妇，岂不比外头寻的好？”黛玉便够上来要抓他，口内笑说：“你越发疯了。”薛姨妈忙也笑劝，用手分开方罢。因又向宝钗道：“连那女儿我还怕你哥哥遭踏了他，所以给你兄弟说了。别说这孩子，我也断不肯给他。前儿老太太因要把你妹妹说给宝玉，偏生又有了人家，不然倒是一门好亲。前儿我说定了那女儿，老太太还取笑说：‘我原要说他的人，谁知他的人没到手，倒被他说了我们的一个去了。’虽是玩话，细想来倒有些意思。我想宝琴虽有了人家，我虽没人可给，难道一句话也不说？我想着，你宝兄弟老太太那样疼他，他又生的那样，若要外头说去，老太太断不中意。不如竟把你林妹妹定与他，岂不四角俱全？”林黛玉先还怔怔的听，后来见说到自己身上，便啐了宝钗一口，红了脸，拉着宝钗笑道：“我只打你！你为什么招出姨妈这些老没正经的话来？”宝钗笑道：“这可奇了！妈说你，为什么打我？”紫鹃忙也跑来笑道：“姨太太既有这个主意，为什么不和老太太说去？”薛姨妈哈哈笑道：“你这孩子，急什么，想必催着你姑娘出了阁，你也要早些寻一个小女婿去了？”紫鹃听了，也红了脸，笑道：“姨太太真个倚老卖老的起来。”说着，便转身去了。黛玉先骂：“又与你这小蹄子什么相干？”后来见了这样，也笑起来说：“阿弥陀佛！该，该，该！也臊了一鼻子灰去了！”薛姨妈母女二人及屋内婆子、丫鬟都笑起来。婆子们因也笑道：



Daiyu buried her face in Aunt Xue's lap protesting. "Aunt, if you don't spank her, I won't let her go!"

Aunt Xue put her arms round her and smiled.

"Don't believe a word of it. She's only teasing."

"But honestly!" Baochai giggled. "Mother's going to ask the old lady for your hand tomorrow. Why waste time looking elsewhere?"

Daiyu lunged out at her laughing, "You crazy thing!"

Aunt Xue hastily parted them and told Baochai, "I think even Xiuyan's too good for that brother of yours, that's why I asked for her for your cousin instead. How could I dream of giving your brother this child?"

"The other day, the old lady wanted your cousin Baoqin for Baoyu; and if she hadn't happened to be engaged it would have been a good match. When I fixed things up for Xiuyan the old lady quipped, 'I wanted one of your girls, but you've got one of ours instead.' There's something in that although she was only joking. Baoqin is engaged and I've no girl for her, but I can make a suggestion. Since the old lady is so fond of Baoyu and he's such a handsome boy, she'll never agree to a wife from outside for him. Then why not engage him to Baiyu? Wouldn't that please everyone?"

Daiyu had been listening intently, but now, at the mention of her own name, she spat in disgust and grabbed hold of Baochai.

"I'm going to teach you a lesson!" she cried, her cheeks burning. "Why should you provoke my aunt into rambling on in such an indelicate way?"

"That's strange." Baochai laughed. "Why spank me for something my mother said?"

Zijuan ran up to them and cried laughingly, "Since you have this idea, madam, why not propose it to the mistress?"

"What's the hurry, child?" asked Aunt Xue teasingly. "I suppose the sooner your mistress is married off, the sooner you can find yourself a young husband."

Zijuan flushed and flashed back, "You're presuming on your age, madam!" With that she flung off.

"What has this to do with you?" scolded Daiyu, and then laughed too at her discomfiture. "Amida Buddha! Serves her right!"



“姨太太虽是玩话，却倒也不差呢。闲了时和老太太商议商议，姨太太竟做媒保成这门亲事，是千妥万妥的。”薛姨妈道：“我一出这主意，老太太必喜欢的。”

一语未了，忽见湘云走来，手拿着一张当票，口内笑道：“这是什么账篇子？”黛玉瞧了，也不认得。地下婆子们都笑道：“这可是一件奇货，这个乖可不是白学的。”宝钗忙一把接了，看时，就是岫烟才说的当票子，忙折了起来。薛姨妈忙说：“那必定是那个妈妈的当票子失落了，回来急的他们找。那里得的？”湘云道：“什么是当票子？”众人都笑道：“真真是个呆子，连个当票子也不知道。”薛姨妈叹道：“怨不得他，真真是侯门千金，而且又小，那里知道这个？那里去看这个？便是家下人有这个，他如何得见？别笑话他是呆子，若给你们家姑娘们见了，也都成了呆子了。”众婆子笑道：“林姑娘方才也不认得，别说姑娘们。此刻宝玉他倒是外头常出去走的，只怕也还没见过呢。”薛姨妈忙将原故讲明。湘云、黛玉二人听了，方笑道：“原来为此。人也太会想钱了，姨妈家的当铺也有这个不成？”众人笑道：“这又呆了。‘天下老鸹一般黑’，岂有两样的？”薛姨妈又问道：“是





Aunt Xue, Baochai and all the attendants present joined in the merriment. Then some of the older maids said cheerfully:

“Though it was just said in fun, it’s a good idea. We hope, madam, when you have time, you’ll discuss this with the old lady. You can volunteer to be the go-between, then this marriage is bound to come off.”

“Yes,” agreed Aunt Xue. “If I make this suggestion, the old lady’s sure to be pleased.”

As they were talking Xiangyun came in, a pawn ticket in her hand.

“What’s this certificate for?” she asked.

Daiyu had a look but did not know what it was.

“It’s something marvellous,” the matrons laughed. “But we won’t teach you for nothing.”

Baochai took it and saw that it was the pawn ticket Xiuyan had mentioned. She hastily folded it up.

“It must be a pawn ticket some old nurse has lost,” suggested Aunt Xue. “She’ll be frantic when she can’t find it.”

“A pawn ticket? What’s that?” asked Xiangyun.

Everybody laughed.

“Little simpleton! She doesn’t even know what a pawn ticket is.”

“That’s quite natural,” remarked Aunt Xue. “As the daughter of a noble house, and still young, how could she know of such things? Where would she have seen one? Even if some one in their household had one, she wouldn’t set eyes on it. So don’t you go calling her a simpleton. If you showed your young mistresses this, that would make them all simpletons too.”

“Just now Miss Lin didn’t know it either,” agreed the women. “And not only the young ladies. We’d be surprised if Baoyu ever set eyes on such a thing, though he often goes outside.”

Aunt Xue then explained to Xiangyun and Daiyu what a pawn ticket was.

“So that’s it!” they exclaimed. “How clever people are at making money! Is your family shop the same, aunt?”

“Listen to them!” Everyone laughed. “‘All crows are black the world over.’ How could their shop be any different?”

“Where did you find this?” asked Aunt Xue.



那里拣的？”湘云方欲说时，宝钗忙说：“是一张死了没用的，不知那年勾了账的，香菱拿着哄他们玩的。”薛姨妈听了此话是真，也就不问了。一时人来回：“那府里大奶奶过来了，请姨太太说话呢。”薛姨妈起身去了。

这里屋内无人时，宝钗方问湘云何处拣的。湘云笑道：“我见你令弟媳的丫头篆儿悄悄的递与莺儿。莺儿便随手夹在书里，只当我没看见。我等他们出去了，我偷着看，竟不认得。知道你们都在这里，所以拿来大家认认。”黛玉忙问：“怎么，他也当衣裳不成？既当了，怎么又给你送去？”宝钗见问，不好隐瞒他两个，遂将方才之事都告诉了他二人。黛玉便说：“兔死狐悲，物伤其类。”不免感叹起来。史湘云便动了气，说：“等我问着二姐姐去！我骂那起老婆子、丫头一顿，给你们出气何如？”说着，便要走。宝钗忙一把拉住，笑道：“你又发疯了，还不给我坐下呢。”黛玉笑道：“你要是个男人，出去打一个报不平儿。你又充什么荆轲、聂政，真真好笑。”湘云道：“既不叫我问去，明儿也把他接到咱们园里一处住去，岂不好？”宝钗笑道：“明日再商量。”说着，人报：“三姑娘、四姑娘来了。”三人听了，忙掩了口不提此事。且听下回分解。





Before Xiangyun could answer, Baochai put in, "This ticket has expired. It was cancelled years ago. Xiangling must have given it them for fun."

Her mother, believing this, let the matter drop.

Just then someone reported that the mistress of the other house had called to see Aunt Xue, and she went home. When the others had left as well, Baochai asked Xiangyun where she had found the ticket.

"I saw your future sister-in-law's maid Zhuaner slip it to Yinger, who tucked it between the pages of a book, thinking I hadn't noticed. As soon as they'd gone I took a peep at it, but couldn't guess what it was. Knowing you were all here I brought it along to show you."

"Can she be pawning her things?" asked Daiyu. "If so, why send you this ticket?"

Realizing that she could no longer hide the truth from them, Baochai explained what had happened. Daiyu exclaimed in distress and sympathy, but Xiangyun grew most indignant.

"Wait till I go and take this up with Yingchun," she fumed. "I shall give those matrons and maids a piece of my mind. Won't that help us to get our own back?"

Baochai caught hold of her as she was starting off.

"Are you out of your mind again?" she cried. "Sit down."

"If you were a man, you could go out and right wrongs," teased Daiyu. "But you're not a Jing Ke or a Nie Zheng. Don't be ridiculous."

"If you won't let me have this out with them, shall we ask Xiuyan to come and stay with us in our apartments?" rejoined Xiangyun.

"We can discuss that later." Baochai smiled.

Tanchun and Xichun being announced at this point, they made haste to change the subject. If you want to know the upshot, read the next chapter.





杏子陰假鳳泣虛風



第五十八回

杏子阴假凤泣虚凰 茜纱窗真情揆痴理

话说他三人因见探春等进来，忙将此话掩住不提。探春等问候过，大家说笑了一会方散。

谁知上回所说的那位老太妃已薨，凡诰命等皆入朝随班按爵守制。敕谕天下：凡有爵之家，一年内不得筵宴音乐，庶民皆三月不许嫁娶。贾母、邢、王夫人、尤氏婆媳、祖孙等，皆每日入朝随祭，至未正以后方回。在偏殿二十一日后，方请灵入先陵，地名曰孝慈县。这陵离都来往得十来日之功，如今请灵至此，还要停放数日，方入地宫，故得一月光景。宁府贾珍夫妻二人，也少不得是要去的。两府无人，因此大家计议，家中无主，便报了尤氏产育，将他腾挪出来，协理荣、宁两府事体。因又托了薛姨妈在园内照管他姊妹丫鬟等。薛姨妈也只得挪进园来。因宝钗处有湘云香菱；李纨处目今李婶母女二人虽去，然亦时常来往住三五日不定，贾母又将宝琴送与他去照管；迎春处有岫烟；探春因家





Chapter 58

Under the Shade of an Apricot Tree an Actress Mourns Her Stage Lover The Master of Happy Red Court Sympathizes with the Girl's Infatuation

The subject of conversation was changed at the arrival of Tanchun and Xichun. The newcomers having asked after Daiyu's health, they all chatted for a while before dispersing.

Now the demise of the Grand Imperial Concubine mentioned earlier was announced, and all titled ladies were required to go to court to mourn according to their rank. Nobles throughout the empire were forbidden feasting and music for a year, while common citizens were debarred from marrying for three months.

The Lady Dowager, Lady Xing, Lady Wang, Madam You and her daughter-in-law née Xu — grandparents as well as grand-children of the Jia family — had to go to court every morning when sacrifice was offered, not returning until two in the afternoon. After twenty-one days of lying in state in the Great Inner Court of the Side Palace, the coffin would be conveyed to the Imperial Mausoleum in the county called Xiaoci; and as this was some ten days' journey from the capital, and the coffin would have to wait there for several days before it could be interred in the underground palace, the whole proceedings would occupy nearly one month.

By rights, Jia Zhen and his wife of the Ning Mansion should both have assisted at these obsequies; but as that would have left no one in charge at home, after much discussion they decided to beg leave from the court for Madam You on the plea that she was with child, so that she could take over the supervision of the two mansions.

Aunt Xue, having been prevailed upon to keep an eye on the girls and maids in the Garden, now had to move in there too. But at this juncture Baochai had Xiangyun and Xiangling with her; Li Wan, although her aunt and her aunt's two daughters were not staying with her, received visits



务冗杂，且不时有赵姨娘与贾环来嘈聒，甚不方便；惜春处房屋狭小；况贾母又千叮咛万嘱咐托他照管林黛玉，薛姨妈素习也最疼爱他的，今既巧遇这事，便挪至潇湘馆来和黛玉同房，一应药饵饮食十分经心。黛玉感激不尽，以后便亦如宝钗之呼，连宝钗前亦且以“姐姐”呼之，宝琴前直以“妹妹”呼之，俨似同胞共出，较诸人更觉亲切。贾母见如此，也十分喜悦放心。薛姨妈只不过照管他姊妹，禁约得丫头辈，一应家中大小事务也不肯多口。尤氏虽天天过来，也不过应名点卯，亦不肯乱作威福，且他家内上下也只剩他一人料理，再者每日还要照管贾母、王夫人的下处一应所需饮馔、铺设之物，所以也甚操劳。

当下宁、荣二府主人既如此不暇，并两处执事人等，或有人跟随入朝的，或有朝外照料下处的，又有先跣踏下处的，也都各有差使。因此两处下人无了正经头绪，也都偷安，或乘隙结党，与那现执事的窃弄威福。荣府只留得赖大，并几个管事的照管外务。这赖大手下常用的几个人已去，虽另委人，也都是些生的，只觉不顺手。且他们无知，或赚骗无节，或呈告无据，或举荐无因，种种不善，在在生事，也难备述。

又见各官宦家，凡有优伶男女者，一概蠲免遣发，尤氏等便议定，待王夫人回家回明，也欲遣发十二个女孩子。又



from them every few days, and she had been entrusted with Baoqin as well by the Lady Dowager; Yingchun had Xiuyan; Tanchun's apartments were not convenient either, as she was so occupied with household affairs and the trouble caused by Concubine Zhao and Jia Huan; and Xichun's space was limited. Besides, as the old lady had asked Aunt Xue to take special care of Daiyu, for whom she herself felt the deepest sympathy, under the circumstances she naturally moved into Bamboo Lodge where she shared Daiyu's room and kept a strict eye on the girl's medicine and diet. Daiyu was more grateful for this than words can tell. She began to treat Aunt Xue as her own mother and Baochai and Baoqin as her sisters, feeling closer to them than to all the other girls, to the Lady Dowager's great satisfaction.

Aunt Xue simply looked after the girls and controlled the younger maids, however, not interfering with other family business. And though Madam You came over every day she dealt only with routine matters, careful not to overstep her authority. In any case she was too busy, for besides being in sole charge of the Ning Mansion she had to see to the daily food and supplies for the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang in the hostel where they were staying.

While those in charge of the two mansions had their hands full in this way, all the chief stewards were busy too — those who had not left earlier to look for lodgings for their masters and mistresses during the funeral ceremonies, either accompanied their masters to court or were busy handling jobs in their hostel outside. And in the absence of proper supervision, the servants of both mansions slacked or ganged up under the provisory chief stewards to abuse their power. The only stewards left in the Rong Mansion were Lai Da and a few in charge of outside business. Deprived of his usual assistants, Lai Da delegated authority to some ignorant rogues who proved far from satisfactory, cheating him and sending in false accusations or recommendations. But we need not dwell here on all the trouble they caused.

As other official families were now disbanding their private opera troupes, Madam You and the others decided that when Lady Wang came home they would suggest dispensing with the services of their twelve child-actresses too.



说：“这些人原是买的，如今虽不学戏，尽可留着使唤，令其教习们自去也罢了。”王夫人因说：“这学戏的倒比不得使唤的，他们也是好人家的儿女，因无能，卖了做这件丑事，装神弄鬼的这几年。如今有这机会，不如给他们几两银子盘缠，各自去罢。当日祖宗手里都是有例的。咱们如今损阴坏德，而且还小器。如今虽有几个老的还在，那是他们各有原故，不肯回去的，所以才留下使唤使唤，大了配了咱们家的小厮们了。”尤氏道：“如今我们也问问他十二个女孩子，有愿意回去的，就带了信儿，叫上他的父母来亲自领回去，赏他们几两银子盘缠方妥当。若不叫上他的父母来，只怕有混账人顶名冒领出去，又转卖了，岂不辜负了这恩典？若有不愿意回去的，就留下。”王夫人笑道：“这话妥当。”尤氏等又遣人告诉了凤姐。一面说与总理房中，每教习给银八两，令其自便。凡梨香院一应物件，查清注册收明，派人上夜。将十二个女孩子叫来当面细问，倒有一多半不愿意回家的：也有说父母虽有，只以卖我姐妹为事，这一去还被他们卖了；也有父母已亡，或被叔伯、兄弟所卖的；也有说没人可投的；也有说恋恩不舍的；所愿去者止四五人。王夫人听了，只得留下。将去者四五人皆令其干娘领回家去，单等他亲父母来领；将不愿去者分散在园中使唤。贾母便留下文官自使，将正旦芳官指与宝玉，将小旦蕊官送了宝钗，将小生藕





"We bought those girls," they told her, "so even if we stop training them we can keep them on as maids, just dismissing their instructors."

"We can't treat them as servants," objected Lady Wang. "They're the daughters of respectable families, whose parents being unable to make a living sold them into this low trade to dress up as ghosts and demons for several years. Here's our chance to give them a few taels of silver as travelling-expenses would be unkind, and niggardly too. We still have a few old actresses here, it's true, but they had their own reasons for not wanting to leave, which is why we kept them on as attendants and eventually married them to our own servants."

"Let's find out which of these twelve girls want to go home," proposed Madam You. "Then we can send word to their parents to come and fetch them and give them a few taels of silver as travelling-expenses. But we must make sure that it's their parents who come for them, not some scoundrels who pretend to be their kinsmen and take them off merely to sell them all over again. For in that case, wouldn't our kindness come to nothing? Anyone who doesn't want to leave can stay."

When Lady Wang approved, Madam You sent to inform Xifeng and ordered the steward in charge to give each of the instructors an eight-tael gratuity with free permission to leave. Everything in Pear Fragrance Court was inventoried and put away, and some servants were appointed to guard the place at night.

More than half the twelve young actresses, when summoned and questioned, proved reluctant to go home. Some said that their parents were only out to make money, and if they went back they would be sold again; others that their parents were dead, and they had been sold by their uncles or their brothers; others that they had nowhere to go; yet others that they had no wish to leave this family which had been so good to them. In all, only four or five elected to leave.

When Lady Wang heard this she had to keep them. The few who chose to leave were instructed to stay with their foster-mothers until their own parents should come for them. Of those who chose to remain, Wenguan was kept by the Lady Dowager, most of the rest being sent to different apartments in the Garden. Fangguan who played the part of young ladies was assigned to Baoyu; Ruiguan who played pert maids to



官指与了黛玉，将大花面葵官送了湘云，将小花面荳官送了宝琴，将老外艾官与了探春，尤氏便讨了老旦茄官去。当下各得其所，就如倦鸟出笼，每日园中游戏。众人皆知他们不能针黹，不惯使用，皆不大责备。其中或有一二个知事的，愁将来无应时之技，亦将本技丢开，便学起针黹纺绩女工诸务来。

一日，正是朝中大祭，贾母等五更便去了，先到下处用些点心小食，然后入朝。早膳已毕，方退至下处，用过午饭，略歇片刻，复入朝待中晚二祭，完毕方出，至下处歇息，用过晚饭方回家。可巧这下处乃是一个大官的家庙，此内比丘尼焚修，房舍极多极净，东西二院。荣府便赁了东院，北静王府便赁了西院。太妃、少妃每日宴息，见贾母等在东院，彼此同出同人，都有照应。外面诸事不消细述。

且说大观园中因贾母、王夫人天天不在家内，又送灵去一月方回，各丫鬟、婆子皆有闲空，多在园内游玩，便又将梨香院内伏侍的众婆子一概撤回，都散在园内听使，更觉园内人多了几十个。因文官等一千人或心性高傲，或倚势凌下，或拣衣挑食，或口角锋芒，大概不安分循理者多，因此众婆子无不含怨，只是口中不敢与他们分证。如今散了学，大家称了愿，也有丢开手的，也有心地狭窄犹怀旧怨的，因





Baochai; Ouguan who played young gentlemen to Daiyu; Kuiguan who played the chief warriors to Xiangyun; Douguan who played lesser warriors to Baoqin; and Aiguan who played old men to Tanchun. Madam You then took Jiaguan whose role was old women.

Once places had been found for them, they were as merry the whole day long in the Garden as caged birds newly set free; for everyone showed them indulgence, knowing that they had never learned to sew or wait on other people. One or two of the more intelligent, however, were worried by their lack of useful skills now that they had given up acting; so they began to learn sewing, weaving and other tasks expected of girls.

Soon the day came for the great sacrifice at court. The Lady Dowager and her party went at dawn to the hostel, where they had some refreshments before proceeding to court. After breakfast they retired to the hostel for a short rest, returning to court after lunch and a nap for the noon and evening sacrifices, then going back for another rest and not returning home until after dinner. Their hostel, the family temple of a high official, had nuns in residence and scores of cells all of which were scrupulously clean. The Rong Mansion party had the use of the east courtyard, the Prince of Beijing's household that of the west. Since the Princess Dowager and the Princess Consorts also rested there every day, they daily met the Lady Dowager and her party in the east courtyard, and the two families travelled to court and back together, keeping each other company. But these happenings outside need not concern us.

To return to Grand View Garden. Since the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang were away for the whole month of the state funeral, the maid-servants at home had little to do but amuse themselves in the Garden, whose occupants were increased by several dozen now that the matrons from Pear Fragrance Court were dispersed among the different apartments there. Because Wenguan and most of the other actresses, owing to pride or their privileged position, had given themselves airs above their station, treated their inferiors badly, insisted on the best of everything and made cutting remarks, the matrons had always resented them, not that they dared to quarrel with them outright. Pleased by the disbanding of the



将众人皆分在各房名下，不敢来厮侵。

可巧这日乃是清明之日，贾璉已备下年例祭祀，带领贾环、贾琮、贾兰三人，去往铁槛寺祭柩烧纸。宁府贾蓉也同族中几人各办祭祀前往。因宝玉未大愈，故不曾去。饭后发倦，袭人因说：“天气甚好，你且出去逛逛，省得丢下饭碗就睡，存在心里可不好。”宝玉听说，只得拄了一支杖，鞞着鞋，步出院外。因近日将园中分与婆子料理，各司各业，皆在忙时，也有修竹的，也有剔树的，也有栽花的，也有种豆的，池中又有驾娘们行着船夹泥种藕的。湘云、香菱、宝琴与些丫鬟等都坐在山石上，瞧他们取乐。宝玉也慢慢行来。湘云见了他来，忙笑说：“快把这船打出去，他们是接林妹妹的。”众人都笑起来。宝玉红了脸，也笑道：“人家的病，谁是好意的，你也形容着取笑儿。”湘云笑道：“病也比人家另是一样，原招笑儿，反说起人来。”说着，宝玉便也坐下，看着众人忙乱了一回，湘云因说：“这里有风，石头上又冷，坐坐去罢。”

宝玉也正要去瞧林黛玉，便起身拄拐辞了他们，从沁芳桥一带堤上走来。只见柳垂金线，桃吐丹霞，山石之后，一株大杏树，花已全落，叶稠阴翠，上面已结了豆子大小的许多小杏。宝玉因想道：“我能病了几天，竟把杏花辜负了！不觉已到‘绿叶成荫子满枝’了！”因此仰望杏子不舍。又想





opera troupe, some of them let bygones be bygones; and though the more narrow-minded still bore a grudge, they were too scattered now to venture to get their own back.

Now the Clear and Bright Festival came round again. Jia Lian, having prepared the traditional offerings, took Jia Huan, Jia Cong and Jia Lan to Iron Threshold Temple to sacrifice to the dead. Jia Rong of the Ning Mansion did the same with other young men of the clan. Baoyu, not yet fully recovered, was the only one not to go.

After the midday meal he felt drowsy.

“Why not go out while it’s fine?” suggested Xiren. “Sleeping straight after lunch may give you indigestion.”

So taking a cane he strolled out in his slippers.

He found the matrons recently put in charge of different parts of the Garden busy at their various tasks, pruning bamboos and trees, planting flowers or sowing beans, while others in boats dredged mud from the lake or planted lotus there. Xiangyun, Xiangling, Baoqin and several young maids were sitting on the rocks enjoying the sight.

As Baoyu sauntered towards them Xiangyun laughed.

“Drive that boat away, quick!” she cried. “It’s come to fetch Cousin Lin.”

The general laughter this raised made Baoyu blush.

“Did I choose to fall ill?” he retorted. “It’s not kind to make fun of me.”

“Even in illness you had to be unique,” she teased. “How can you blame us for laughing?”

He sat down then to watch everyone hard at work.

“There’s a wind here and it’s cold sitting on the rock;” remarked Xiangyun presently. “We’d better go indoors.”

As Baoyu was eager to see Daiyu, he parted company with them and walked on with his cane along the dyke from Seeping Fragrance Bridge. The willows were trailing golden threads, peach-blossom made a red mist, and the big apricot tree behind an artificial mountain was already bare of flowers and covered with thick foliage. The apricots on it were no bigger than peas.

“Just a few days’ illness and I missed the apricot-blossom,” thought



起那岫烟已择了夫婿一事，虽说是男女大事，不可不行，但未免又少了一个好女孩儿，不过两年，便是“绿叶成荫子满枝”了。再过几日，这杏树子落枝空，再几年，岫烟未免乌发如银，红颜似槁了，因此不免伤心，只管对杏流泪叹息。正悲叹时，忽见一个雀儿飞来，落于枝上乱啼。宝玉又发了呆性，心下想道：“这雀儿必定是杏花正开时他曾来过，今见无花空有子叶，故也乱啼。这声韵必是啼哭之声，可恨公冶长不在眼前，不能问他。但不知明年再发时，这个雀儿可还记得飞到这里来与杏花一会否？”

正胡思间，忽见一股火光从山石那边发出，将雀儿惊飞。宝玉吃一大惊，又听那边有人喊道：“藕官，你要死，怎么弄些纸钱进来烧？我回奶奶们去，仔细你的肉！”宝玉听了，越发疑惑起来，忙转过山石看时，只见藕官满面泪痕，蹲在那里，手里还拿着火，守着些纸钱灰作悲。宝玉忙问道：“你与谁烧纸钱？快不要在这里烧。你或是为父母兄弟，你告诉我姓名，外头去叫小厮们打了包袱写上名姓去烧。”藕官见了宝玉，只不作一声。宝玉数问不答，忽见一婆子恶狠狠走来拉藕官，口内说道：“我已经回了奶奶们，奶奶们气的了不得。”藕官听了，终是孩子气，怕辱没了脸，便不肯去。婆子说：“我说你们别太兴头过余了，如今还比你们在外头随心乱闹呢。这是尺寸地方儿。”指宝玉道：“连我们的爷





Baoyu. "Now 'Green leaves make a shade and the boughs are filled with fruit. '"¹

Lost in contemplation of the tree, he thought of Xiuyan and her recent engagement. Though marriage was something everyone must go through with, this would mean one good girl the less; in just a couple of years she would be burdened with children as this tree was with fruit; and just as the apricots would soon be gone, leaving the branches bare, in a few more years Xiuyan's hair would be turning silver and she would lose her beauty too. He could not help shedding tears as he gazed at the tree. But as he was sighing, a bird alighting to chirp on one of its boughs set him indulging in foolish fancies again.

"This bird must have visited the tree when it was in bloom," he mused. "Now that there are no flowers left, only fruit and leaves, it's chirping like this by way of lamentation. Too bad Gongye Chang² isn't here to tell me what it's saying. Will it come back next year to see the blossom, I wonder?"

As he was occupied with these foolish fancies, a flame sprang up on the other side of the artificial mountain and frightened the bird away.

Startled, Baoyu heard a voice cry, "Do you want to die, Ouguan? How can you burn all this paper money here? I shall report this to the mistresses, so look out for a thrashing!"

Baoyu hurried in bewilderment to the other side of the rockery. There he discovered Ouguan, her face stained with tears, crouching over the ashes of some paper money, a light still in her hand.

"To whom are you making this offering?" he asked. "You mustn't do it here. If it's for your parents or brothers, tell me their names and I'll write them down on paper and get the page boys outside to do it properly for you."

Ouguan said nothing to this, not even when Baoyu repeated his question. Then up came an irate matron to drag her away.

"I've reported this to the mistresses. They're very angry!" she scolded.

Ouguan, being only a child, hung back for fear of being put to shame.

"I always said you were riding for a fall," stormed the woman. "You can't fool around here the way you did outside. You have to watch your



还守规矩呢，你是什么阿物儿，跑来胡闹。怕也不中用，跟我快走罢！”宝玉忙道：“他并没烧纸钱，原是林妹妹叫他来烧烂字纸的。你没看真，反错告了他。”藕官正没了主意，见了宝玉，又正添了畏惧，忽听他反掩饰，心内转忧成喜，也便硬着口说道：“你很看真是纸钱了么？我烧的是林姑娘写坏了的字纸！”那婆子听如此说，益发狠起来，便弯腰向纸灰中拣那不曾化尽的遗纸，拣了两块在手内，说道：“你还嘴硬，有据有证在这里。我只和你厅上讲去！”说着，拉了袖子，就拽着要走。宝玉忙把藕官拉住，用拄杖敲开那婆子的手，说道：“你只管拿了那个回去。我实告诉你：我昨夜作了一个梦，梦见杏花神和我要一挂白纸钱，不可叫本房人烧，要一个生人替我烧了，我的病就好的快。所以我请了这白钱，巴巴儿的和林姑娘烦了他来，替我烧了祝赞。原不许一个人知道的，所以我今日才好些，偏你看见了。我这会子又不好了，都是你冲了！你还要告他去！藕官，只管去，见了他们你就照依我这话说。等老太太回来，我就说他故意来冲神祇，保佑我早死。”藕官听了越发得了主意，反倒拉着婆子要走。那婆子听了这话，忙丢下纸钱，陪笑央告宝玉道：“我原不知道，二爷若回了老太太，我这老婆子岂不完了？我如今回奶奶们去，就说是爷祭神，我看错了。”宝玉道：“你也不许再回去了，我便不说。”婆子道：“我已经回了，叫我来带他，我怎好不回的。也罢，就说我已经叫到了他，又被林姑

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step.” Pointing at Baoyu she continued, “Even our young master has to observe the rules. Who do you think you are to fool around here? It’s no use being afraid. Come along with me.”

“She wasn’t burning paper coins but waste paper for Miss Lin,” put in Baoyu quickly. “You didn’t see clearly and accused her wrongly.”

Ouguan had been at a loss, and Baoyu’s appearance had frightened her even more; but she took heart when he covered up for her like this and started defending herself.

“Just look, is this paper money?” she demanded. “Miss Lin spoiled some paper when writing — that’s what I’ve been burning.”

The woman, even more provoked by this, stooped to pick up two unburned paper coins from the ashes.

“Still trying to deny it?” she snapped. “Here’s the evidence. We’ll discuss it in front of the mistresses.” She caught hold of the girl’s sleeve to drag her off.

Baoyu quickly pulled Ouguan back, knocking the woman’s hand away with his cane.

“Take that if you want to,” he said. “I’ll tell you the truth. Last night I dreamed that the spirit of the apricot tree came to ask me for a string of white paper money, saying that if it was burns for me by a stranger, not by anyone in my apartments, my sickness would be cured faster. That’s why I got this paper, then asked Miss Lin’s permission to have her come and burn it for me to make my dream come true. It had to be kept a secret, and I was just beginning to feel better, able to get out of bed. But now, by butting in like this, you’ve gone and spoiled everything. And do you still mean to report her? Go with her, Ouguan, and tell them what I’ve just said. When the old lady comes back, I’ll report her for deliberately spoiling my sacrifice so as to make me die early.”

Emboldened by this, Ouguan started tugging the woman away. The latter hastily dropped the paper money.

“How was I to know?” she asked Baoyu meekly. “If you tell the old lady, Second Master, it will be the end of me! I’ll go and tell the mistresses that I made a mistake — it was you burning sacrificial paper.”

“Don’t say anything about it and I won’t tell her,” he promised.

“But I’ve already reported it, and they ordered me to take her there.



娘叫了去了。”宝玉想一想，方点头应允，那婆子只得去了。

这里宝玉问他：“到底是为谁烧纸？我想来若是为父母兄弟，你们皆烦人外头烧过了，这里烧这几张，必有私自的情理。”藕官因方才护庇之情感激于衷，便知他是自己一流的人物，便含泪说道：“我这事，除了你屋里的芳官并宝姑娘的蕊官，并没第三个人知道。今日忽然被你遇见，又有这段意思，少不得也告诉你，只不许再对一人言讲。”又哭道：“我也不便和你面说，你只回去背人悄悄问芳官就知道了。”说毕，佯常而去。

宝玉听了，心下纳闷，只得踱到潇湘馆，瞧黛玉越发瘦的可怜，问起来，比往日已算大好了。黛玉见他也比先大瘦了，想起往日之事，不免流下泪来，些微谈了一谈，便催宝玉去歇息调养。宝玉只得回来。因记挂着要问芳官那原委，偏又有湘云、香菱来了，正和袭人、芳官一处说笑，不好叫他，恐人又盘问，只得耐着。

一时芳官又跟了他干娘去洗头。他干娘偏又先叫了他亲女儿洗过了后，才叫芳官洗。芳官见了这般，便说他偏心，“把你女儿的剩水给我洗。我一个月的月钱都是你拿着，沾我的光不算，反倒给我剩东剩西的。”他干娘羞愧变成怒，便骂他：“不识抬举的东西！怪不得人人说戏子没一个好缠的。凭你什么好人，入了这一行，都弄坏了。这一点子猴崽子，挑么挑六，咸嘴淡舌，咬群的骡子似的！”娘儿两个吵



How can I say nothing? All right, I'll tell them Miss Lin sent for her."

Baoyu thought for a while then nodded, and the woman went away.

Then he asked again: "Whom was the offering for? I'm sure it can't have been for your own people, as in that case you'd have asked others to burn it for you. There must be a story behind it."

Ouguan, grateful for his championship, began to feel that they were kindred spirits. Tears sprang to her eyes.

"Only two people know this," she said, "Fangguan in your place and Miss Baochai's Ruiguan. As you happened to spot me today and you've just helped me, I shall have to let you into my secret. You mustn't tell a soul though." Then, sobbing again, she added, "I can't bring myself to tell you. If you must know, go back and ask Fangguan when no one else is about." With that she went abruptly away.

Baoyu was very puzzled as he went on to Bamboo Lodge. He found Daiyu looking more pathetically frail than ever, although she insisted that her health was much better. She saw that he too was much thinner, and could not help shedding tears at the thought of the reason. After a brief chat she urged him to go back and rest, and Baoyu took her advice, being eager to question Fangguan. But it so happened that Xiangyun and Xiangling had called and were chatting with her and Xiren. He could not call her aside for fear of arousing their curiosity. All he could do was to wait.

After a while Fangguan went out with her foster-mother to have her hair washed. When the woman made her own daughter wash first, Fangguan accused her of showing favouritism.

"So I'm to wash with the water your daughter has used, am I?" she complained. "You grab my whole monthly allowance, and on top of taking advantage of me like that expect me to be content with other people's leavings!"

"You don't know when you're well off, you wretch," blustered the discomfited woman. "No wonder everyone says: 'Don't tangle with actresses'; even the best of them go to the bad once they take to the stage. Who do you think you are, you little monkey, to pick and choose like this and give *me* the rough side of your tongue? You're like a mule biting its mates."



起来。袭人忙打发人去说：“少乱嚷，瞅着老太太不在家，一个个连句安静话也不说。”晴雯因说：“都是芳官不省事，不知狂的是什么？也不过是会两出戏，倒像杀了贼王，擒了反叛来的。”袭人道：“一个巴掌拍不响，老的也太不公些，小的也太可恶些。”宝玉道：“怨不得芳官。自古说：‘物不平则鸣’。他少亲失眷的在这里，没人照看，反倒赚了他们的钱，又作践他，这如何怪得他。”因又向袭人道：“他一月多少钱？以后不如你收了过来照管他，岂不省事？”袭人道：“我要照看他，那里照看不了，又要他那几个钱才照看他？没的讨人骂去了。”说着，便起身走至那屋里取了一瓶花露油并些鸡蛋、香皂、头绳之类，叫了一个婆子来送给芳官去，叫他另要水自己洗，不许吵闹了。他干娘益发羞愧，便说芳官“没良心，花摆我克扣你的钱”，便向他身上拍了几下，芳官便哭起来。宝玉便走出来，袭人忙劝：“作什么？我去说他。”晴雯忙先过来，指他干娘说道：“你老人家太不懂事。你不给他好好的洗，我们饶给他东西，你不害臊，还有脸打他。他要还在学里学艺，你也敢打他不成！”那婆子便说：“一日叫娘，终身是母。他排场我，我就打得。”袭人唤麝月道：“我不会和人拌嘴，晴雯性太急，你快过去震吓他几句。”麝月听了，忙过来说道：“你且别嚷。我且问你，别说





Then the two of them started quarrelling in earnest.

Xiren sent a maid to urge them, "Stop that noise. Can't you keep quiet when the old lady's away?"

"Fangguan's too fussy," said Qingwen. "Why should she be so cocky? All she's done is sing in a couple of operas; she's not killed a traitor or captured a rebel chief."

"You can't clap with one hand," quoted Xiren. "The old one's too unfair and the young one's too tiresome."

"You mustn't blame Fangguan," Baoyu expostulated. "As the proverb says, 'Injustice will cry out.' She has no folk of her own, no one to care for her here; and that woman takes her money yet still treats her so badly. How can you say it's her fault?" He asked Xiren, "How much is her monthly allowance? Why don't you take it and look after her? Wouldn't that save trouble all round?"

"If I want to look after her, I can anyway. Why should I need her bit of money to do it?" replied Xiren. "That would simply set tongues wagging."

She got up and fetched from her room a bottle of scent and pomade, as well as some eggs, soap and hair-ribbons.

"Give these to Fangguan," she told one of the matrons. "Tell her to send for some more water to wash her hair. They must stop quarrelling."

This only incensed and humiliated the foster-mother even more.

"You ungrateful slut," she swore at Fangguan. "So now you're accusing me of robbing you!" She slapped the girl and set her wailing.

Baoyu started towards the outer room, but Xiren hastily stopped him.

"Stay where you are," she urged. "I'll see to this."

Qingwen had already gone out to confront the woman, however.

"Old as you are, you have no sense," she scolded. "We only gave her those things because you don't take proper care of her. But instead of feeling ashamed of yourself, you have the nerve to slap her! Would you dare do such a thing if she were still training in the opera troupe?"

"She accepted me as her mother, so she's my daughter," was the reply. "If she talks back at me, I've the right to beat her."

Xiren told Sheyue, "I'm no good at arguing, and Qingwen's too hot-tempered. Why don't you go and give her a good scare?"



我们这一处，你看满园子里，谁在主子屋里教导过女儿的？便是你的亲女儿，既分了房，有了主子，自有主子打得骂得，再者大些的姑娘、姐姐们打得骂得，谁许他本人的老子娘又中间管闲事了？都这样管起来，又要叫他们跟着我们学什么？越老越没了规矩！你见前儿坠儿妈来吵来着，你也跟着他学？你们放心，因连日这个病那个病，老太太又不得闲心，所以我没回。等两日，咱们痛回一回，大家把威风煞一煞才好。宝玉才好了些，连我们不敢大声说话，你反打的人狼号鬼叫的。上头能出了几日门，你们就无法无天的，眼睛里没了我们，再两天你们就该打我们了。他不要你这干娘，怕粪草埋了他不成？”宝玉恨的用拄杖敲着门槛子说道：“这些老婆子们都是些铁心石头肠子，也是件大奇的事。不能照管，反倒锉磨，天长地久，如何是好！”晴雯道：“什么‘如何是好’，都撵了出去，不要这些中看不中吃的！”那婆子羞愧难当，一言不发。那芳官只穿着海棠红的小棉袄，底下绿绸洒花夹裤，敞着裤腿，一头乌油似的头发披在脑后，哭的泪人一般。麝月笑道：“把一个莺莺小姐，反弄成了拷打红娘了！这会子又不妆，就是活现的，还是这么松怠怠的。”宝玉道：“他这本来面目极好，倒别弄紧衬了。”晴雯过去拉了他，替他洗净了发，方才用手巾拧干，松松的挽了一个慵妆髻，命他穿了衣服过这边来。





Theyue at once went out.

“Stop that noise and answer me this,” she said to the woman. “In all the Garden, not just these apartments, which servant have you ever seen reprimand her children in the master’s rooms? Even if she were your own daughter, once she’s in service here it’s up to the master or the senior girls to punish her or scold her. It’s not for her parents to meddle with our affairs. If everybody butted in like you, what are we here supposed to do? The older you get, the less you respect the rules.

“You saw Zhuier’s ma make a scene here the other day, so now you’re following suit. Well, just you wait! These last few days, with so many people ill and the old lady so busy, I haven’t reported this yet. In a couple of days I shall make a full report, and that will take the wind out of your sails. Baoyu’s just getting better, and we’ve all been trying to keep our voices down; yet you raise a rumpus fit to wake the dead. If the higher-ups are away just a few days, you lot run completely wild with no respect for anyone at all. In another day or two, I suppose, you’ll be slapping us as well. She doesn’t need a foster-mother like you to muck her up!”

Baoyu, in the doorway, pounded the sill with his cane.

“How can these old women be so heartless?” he fumed. “Fantastic! Instead of looking after the girls in their charge, they torment them. If this goes on, what’s to be done?”

“What’s to be done?” echoed Qingwen. “Drive all those humbugs out, I say. We don’t need such good-for-nothings here.”

The woman was too deflated to say a word. Meanwhile Fangguan, wearing only a cerise padded jacket and flowered green silk lined-trousers, loose round the ankles, her glossy black hair streaming over her shoulders, had given way to floods of tears.

Theyue teased, “Miss Yingying has turned into Hongniang after a beating.³ Although you’re not on the stage now, you look just like her. Aren’t you going to tidy yourself up?”

“No, she’s fine as she is,” objected Baoyu. “She looks completely natural. Why should she spruce up?”

Qingwen led Fangguan away to wash her hair and dry it with a towel for her, after which she fastened it in a loose knot. Then she told her to



接着厨房内的婆子来问：“晚饭有了，可送不送？”小丫头们听了，进来问袭人。袭人笑道：“方才胡吵了一阵，也没留心听钟几下了。”晴雯道：“那钟又不知怎么了，又得去收拾。”说着，拿过表来瞧了一瞧，说：“再略等半钟茶的工夫就是了。”小丫头去了。麝月笑道：“提起淘气，芳官也该打几下。昨儿是他摆弄了那坠子，半日就坏了。”说话之间，便将食具打点现成，一时小丫头子捧了盒子进来站住。晴雯、麝月揭开看时，还是只四样小菜，晴雯笑道：“已经好了，还不给两样清淡菜。这稀饭咸菜闹到多早晚？”一面摆，一面又看那盒子内，却有一碗火腿鲜笋汤，忙端了放在宝玉跟前。宝玉便就桌上喝了一口，说：“好烫！”袭人笑道：“几日不见荤腥，馋的这样起来？”一面说，一面忙端起，轻轻用口吹油。因见芳官在侧，便递与芳官，笑道：“你也学着些伏侍，别一味呆憨呆睡的。口劲轻着，别吹上唾沫星儿。”芳官依言果吹了几口，甚妥。

他干娘也忙端饭在门外伺候。原来芳官等初到时，原从外边认的，就同往梨香院去了。这婆子原系荣府三等人物，





change her clothes before rejoining them.

The old kitchen-maids now reported that dinner was ready, and asked whether it should be sent in or not. A young maid brought in this message to Xiren.

“With all that racket just now I forgot to listen for the clock,” she said. “What time is it?”

“Something’s wrong with that silly clock, it needs mending again,” answered Qingwen. Having looked at a watch she said, “Just wait for the time for half a cup of tea.”

As the young maid withdrew, Sheyue remarked, “Fangguan does deserve a spanking for being naughty. She was playing with the pendulum yesterday; that’s how the clock got broken.” While speaking she laid the table.

The young maid came back with a hamper for their inspection. And Qingwen and Sheyue, opening it, found the usual four kinds of pickles inside.

“He’s better now, but they keep serving this rice gruel and pickles,” grumbled Qingwen. “Why not send a couple of easily digested dishes instead?”

Just then, however, at the bottom of the hamper, she discovered a bowl of ham-and-fresh-bamboo-shoot soup. She put this before Baoyu, who took a sip.

“It’s too hot!” he exclaimed.

Xiren laughed.

“A few days without meat and you’ve grown so greedy!”

She took the bowl and blew gently at the film of oil on the surface. Then, noticing Fangguan standing near by, she passed the bowl to her.

“You can do this, ” she said. “Time you learned to make yourself useful, instead of acting like a silly goose. Mind you blow gently though. Don’t spit into the soup.”

Fangguan did as she was told, and was managing quite well, when in rushed her foster-mother who had been waiting outside with the rice.

Now when Fangguan and the others first arrived they had been assigned foster-mothers outside, who had later accompanied them to Pear Fragrance Court. This woman had originally been a third-class servant in



不过令其与他们浆洗，皆不曾入内答应，故此不知内帏规矩。今亦托赖他们方入园中，随女归房。这婆子先领过麝月的排场，方知了一二分，深恐不令芳官认他做干娘，便有许多失利之处，故心中只要买转他们。今见芳官吹汤，便忙跑进来笑道：“他不老成，仔细打了碗，让我吹罢。”一面说，一面就接，晴雯忙喊：“出去！你让他砸了碗，也轮不到你吹。你什么空儿跑到内榻里来了？还不出去！”一面又骂小丫头们：“瞎了心的，他不知道，你们也不说给他！”小丫头们都说：“我们撵他，他不出去；说他，他又不信。如今带累我们受气，你可信了？我们到的地方儿，有你到的一半儿，还有你一半到不去的呢。何况又跑到我们到不去的地方，还不算，又去伸手动嘴的了。”一面说，一面推他出去。阶下几个等空盒家伙的婆子见他出来，都笑道：“嫂子也没有用镜子照一照，就进去了。”羞的那婆子又气又恨，只得忍耐下去了。

芳官吹了几口，宝玉笑道：“好了，仔细伤了气。你尝一口，可好了？”芳官只当是玩话儿，只是笑看着袭人等，袭人道：“你就尝一口何妨。”晴雯笑道：“你瞧我尝。”说着就喝了一口。芳官见如此，自己也便尝了一口，说：“好了。”递与宝玉。宝玉喝了半碗，吃了几片笋，又吃了半碗粥就罢





the Rong Mansion, only doing some laundry work and never entering the inner apartments, so that she did not know the rules of the house. Once the actresses were taken into the Garden, however, their foster-mothers had gone with them to the different apartments. After being told off by Sheyue, this woman was afraid that she might not be allowed to remain in charge of Fangguan, and that would be very much to her disadvantage. So she was determined now to win them round. Seeing Fangguan blowing on the soup, she hurried in.

"Let me do that!" she cried with a smile. "She's so green she may break the bowl." She reached out for it.

"Get out!" shouted Qingwen. "Even if you make her smash it, this is no job for *you*. How dare you sneak into this room? Out you go at once!" She scolded the younger maids, "Are you all blind? If she doesn't know any better, you should have told her."

"We tried to chase her away but she wouldn't go," they protested. "She didn't believe us. And now she's got us into trouble too." They rounded on the woman. "*Now* do you believe us? Half the places we're allowed in are out of bounds to you, yet here you come bursting in where even *we* are forbidden to go. As if that weren't enough, you start reaching out and opening your big mouth!" They bundled the woman off.

The matrons waiting at the foot of the steps for the hampers greeted her with mocking laughter.

"You should have looked in the mirror before butting in there, sister," one of them sniggered.

The woman, torn between rage and shame, had to control herself as best she could.

By now, Fangguan had blown on the soup several times.

"That'll do," said Baoyu. "Don't tire yourself. Taste it to see if it's cool enough."

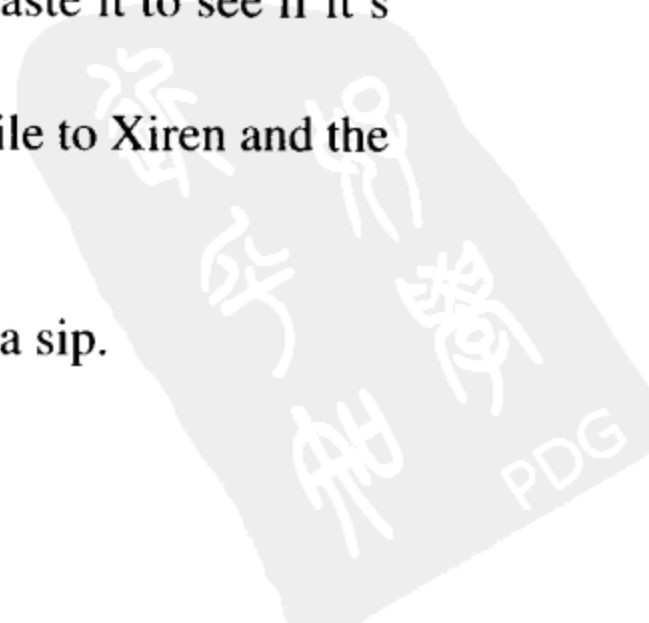
Thinking he must be joking, she turned with a smile to Xiren and the other girls.

"Go on, taste it," urged Xiren.

"Let me show you," offered Qingwen, then took a sip.

Fangguan followed her example.

"It's all right," she said.





了。众人拣收出去了。小丫头子又捧了沐盆，盥漱已毕，袭人等出去吃饭。宝玉使个眼色与芳官，芳官本来伶俐，又学几年戏，何事不知？便装头疼说不吃饭了。袭人道：“既不吃饭，你就在这屋里作伴儿，把这粥给你留着，一会儿饿了再吃。”说着，都去了。

这里宝玉和他只二人，宝玉便将方才从火光发起，如何见了藕官，又如何谎言护庇，又如何藕官叫我问你，从头至尾，细细的告诉他一遍，又问他祭的果系何人。芳官听了，满面含笑，又叹一口气，说道：“这事说来可笑又可叹。”宝玉听了，忙问他到底祭的是谁？芳官笑道：“他祭的是死了的菂官。”宝玉道：“这是友谊，也是应当的。”芳官笑道：“那里是友谊？竟是疯傻的想头，说他自己是小生，菂官是小旦，常做夫妻，虽说是假的，每日演那曲文排场，皆是真正温柔体贴之事，故此二人就疯了，虽不做戏，寻常饮食起居，两个人竟是你恩我爱。菂官一死，他哭的死去活来，至今不忘，所以每节烧纸。后来补了蕊官，我们见他一般的温柔体贴，也曾问他得新弃旧的。他说：‘这又有个大道理。比如男子丧了妻，或有必当续弦者，也必要续弦为是。便只是不把死的丢开不提，便是情深意重了。若一味因死的不续，孤守一世，妨了大节，也不是礼，死者反不安了。’你说可





She passed the soup to Baoyu, who drank half a bowl and ate a few bamboo shoots with half a bowl of rice gruel. After that they cleared the table, some young maids brought in a basin, and as soon as he had rinsed his mouth and washed it was time for Xiren and the others to have their meal.

Baoyu signalled at this point to Fangguan. And since she was quick in the uptake and had learned a good deal in her few years as an actress, she pretended that she had a headache and had lost her appetite.

“Then you may as well stay here and keep him company,” said Xiren. “I’ll leave you the gruel, in case you feel like it later.” With that the other girls left.

When the two of them were alone, Baoyu described in detail how he had noticed something burning and spotted Ouguan, how he had lied to cover up for her, and how Ouguan had told him to ask her, Fangguan, for an explanation.

“For whom were those offerings?” he asked.

Fangguan heard him out with a smile, then heaved a sigh.

“It’s a funny business but pathetic too.”

“What do you mean?”

“That offering was for Diguan, who died.”

“Why not, if they were friends?”

“They weren’t just ordinary friends. Ouguan had the fantastic notion that as she used to play young men and Diguan young ladies, and as they were often cast as husband and wife, although it was make-believe they should act the part every day as if they were really in love. So they became so crazy about each other that even offstage they were for ever together. In the end they were so devoted that when Diguan died she nearly cried her heart out, and to this day she’s never forgotten her. That’s why she burns paper money at all the festivals. When Ruiguan later took Diguan’s place, we found that Ouguan was just as attached to *her*.

“Has your new sweetheart made you forget the old one?” we asked.

“No, but there’s a very good reason for this,” she told us. “I’m like a widower who marries again. If he doesn’t forget his first wife, he’s still true to her. But if he insists on remaining single all the rest of his life,



是又疯又呆?说来可是好笑?”宝玉听说了这篇呆话，独合了他的呆性，不觉又是欢喜，又是悲叹，又称奇道绝，说：“天既生这样人，又何用我这须眉浊物玷辱世界。”因又拉芳官嘱咐道：“既如此说，我也有一句话嘱咐他，我若亲对与他讲未免不便，须得你告诉他。”芳官问何事?宝玉道：“以后断不可烧纸钱。这纸钱原是后人的异端，不是孔子的遗训。以后逢时按节，只备一个炉，到日随便焚香，一心虔诚，就可感格了。愚人原不知，无论神佛、死人，必要分出等例，各式各样来的。殊不知只以‘诚信’二字为主。即值仓皇流离之日，虽连香亦无，随便有土有草，只以洁净，便可为祭，不独死者享祭，便是鬼神皆是来享的。你瞧瞧我那案上，只设一炉，不论日期，时常焚香。他们皆不知原故，我心里却各有所因。随便有新茶新水供一钟两盏，或有鲜花鲜果，甚至于荤羹腥菜，只要心诚意洁，便是佛也都可来享，所以说，只在敬不在虚名。以后快命他不可再烧纸钱了。”芳官听了，便答应着。一时吃过饭，便有人回：“老太太、太太回来了。”要知端的，且听下回分解。



that's against the rules of propriety too, and how could his dead wife rest in peace in her grave?

"Don't you call that crazy and senseless? It's really ridiculous!"

However, such foolish talk was precisely the kind to appeal to foolish Baoyu. He exclaimed in wonder, torn between sadness and joy.

"Since Heaven creates such wonderful girls, what use are we filthy males except to contaminate the world?" he cried.

He took Fangguan's hand and urged her, "If that's how things are, you must tell her something from me. I can't very well tell her directly."

"What is it?" asked Fangguan.

"In future, she mustn't burn paper coins. That's a later practice and a heretical one, not based on the instructions of Confucius. At all future festivals she need only burn some incense in a censer; and if her heart is pure, Diguang's spirit will know it. Foolish people don't understand and have different sorts of sacrifices for the gods, Buddha and the dead; whereas actually the important thing is just sincerity. Even if you're in a hurry, or away from home and unable to find incense, you can offer a clod of earth or a blade of grass, provided that it's clean. Not only will the spirits of the dead accept such a sacrifice, even the gods will too.

"Haven't you seen that censer on my desk? Whenever I miss some dead friend, whatever the date, I burn incense and offer some fresh water or tea, or maybe flowers or fruit, or even meat or vegetables. As long as your heart is pure, Buddha himself will come to the sacrifice. That's why we say: 'It's the intention that counts, not the empty form.' So go presently and tell her not to burn any more paper money in future."

Fangguan promised to do this and then ate the rice gruel.

Just at that moment someone announced that Their Ladyships were back. To know what happened after, read the next chapter.





絳軒名飛
芸裏將行



第五十九回

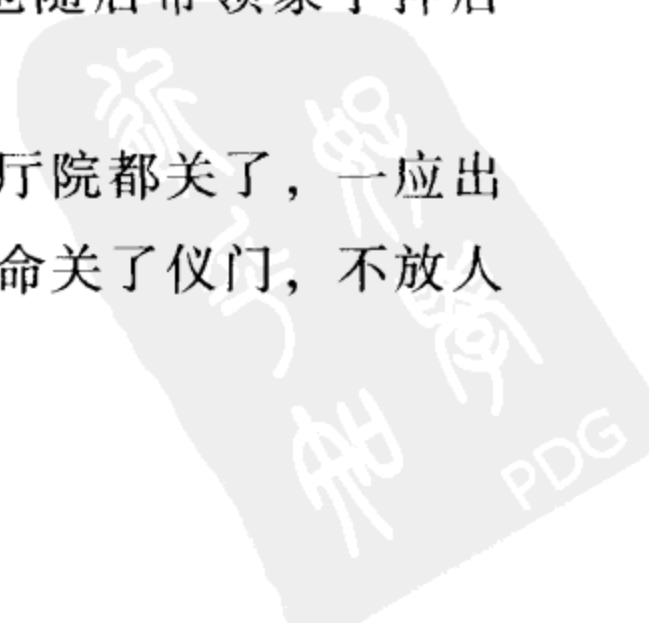
柳叶渚边嗔莺咤燕 绛云轩里召将飞符

话说宝玉听说贾母等回来了，遂多添了一件衣服，拄杖前边来，都见过。贾母等因每日辛苦，都要早些歇息，一宿无话，次日五鼓，又往朝中去。

离送灵日不远，鸳鸯、琥珀、翡翠、玻璃四人都忙着打点贾母之物，玉钏、彩云、彩霞等皆打点王夫人之物，当面查点与跟随管事媳妇们。跟随的一共大小六个丫鬟，十个老婆子、媳妇子，男人不算。连日收拾驮轿器械。鸳鸯与玉钏儿皆不随去，只看屋子。一面先几日预发帐幔铺陈之物，先有四五个媳妇并几个男人领了出来，坐了几辆车绕道先至下处，铺陈安插等候。

临日，贾母带着蓉妻坐一乘驮轿，王夫人在后亦坐一乘驮轿，贾珍骑马率领众家丁围护。又有几辆大车与婆子、丫鬟等坐，并放些随换的衣服等件。是日薛姨妈、尤氏率领诸人直送至大门外方回。贾琏恐路上不便，一面打发了他父母起身赶上贾母、王夫人驮轿，自己也随后带领家丁押后跟来。

荣府内赖大添派人丁上夜，将两处厅院都关了，一应出入人等，皆走西边小角门。日落时，便命关了仪门，不放人





Chapter 59

Yinger and Chunyan Are Scolded by Willow Bank And Red Rue Studio Sends for Reinforcements

Baoyu put on a coat and went over with his cane to pay his respects to Their Ladyships. Tired out after their recent exertions, they went to bed unusually early and after an uneventful night returned to the court at dawn.

The day for the funeral cortège to set off to the Imperial Tombs was now approaching. Yuanyang, Hupo, Feicui and Boli were busy packing the Lady Dowager's things while Yuchuan, Caiyun and Caixia packed for Lady Wang, after which they checked through the baggage with the stewards' wives who would be accompanying their mistresses. Six maids and ten stewards' wives in all would be going, in addition to men-servants; but Yuanyang and Yuchuan were to stay behind to see to things at home. Horse-borne litters and harness had been made ready. And the curtains and bedding which had been prepared a few days previously were taken on ahead in carts by four or five women and a few men to the hostel, ready for the main party's arrival.

When the day came, the Lady Dowager and Jia Rong's wife took a horse-borne litter, with Lady Wang behind in another, while Jia Zhen rode at the head of an escort of servants. There were several big carts too for serving-women and maids which also carried changes of clothing. Aunt Xue and Madam You, at the head of the rest of the household, saw them off from outside the main gate. And Jia Lian, to smooth their journey for them, having seen his parents off caught up with the litters and followed behind with the escort.

In the Rong Mansion, Lai Da posted extra night-watchmen and locked the two main gates so that the only way in or out was through the small west side gate; and at sunset he had the ceremonial gate closed, allowing no entrance or exit. The front and back side gates and those to the east



出入。园中前后东西角门亦皆关锁，只留王夫人大房之后常系他姊妹出入之门，东边通薛姨妈的角门，这两门因在内院，不必关锁。里面鸳鸯和玉钏儿也各将上房门关了，自领丫鬟婆子下房去安歇。每日林之孝之妻进来，带领十来个婆子上夜，穿堂内又添了许多小厮们坐更打梆子，已安插得十分妥当。

一日清晓，宝钗春困已醒，拈帷下榻，微觉轻寒，及启户视之，见园中土润苔青，原来五更时落了几点微雨。于是唤起了湘云等人来，一面梳洗，湘云因说两腮作痒，恐又犯了杏癩癣，因问宝钗要些蔷薇硝擦。宝钗道：“前儿剩的都给了妹子。”因说：“颦儿配了许多，我正要和他要些，因今年竟不发痒，就忘了。”因命莺儿去取些来。莺儿应了才要去，蕊官便说：“我同你去，顺便瞧瞧藕官。”说着，一径同莺儿出了蘅芜院。

二人你言我语，一面行走，一面说笑，不觉到了柳叶渚，顺着柳堤走来。因见柳叶才吐浅碧，丝若垂金，莺儿便笑道：“你会拿这柳条子编东西不会？”蕊官笑道：“编什么东西？”莺儿道：“什么编不得？玩的、使的都可。等我摘些下来，带着叶子编他一个花篮，采了各色花放在里头，才是好玩呢。”说着，且不去取硝，且伸手挽翠披金，采了许多嫩条，命蕊官拿着。他却一行走一行编花篮，随路见花便采



and west of the Garden were also locked, except for that leading to the back of Lady Wang's compound, which was used by the girls, and the gate on the east to Aunt Xue's compound. These two, being in the inner court, did not have to be locked.

Inside, Yuanyang and Yuchuan also closed their mistresses' main apartments, and took the other maids and matrons from there to stay in the servants' quarters; while every night Lin Zhixiao's wife brought some dozen old serving-women to keep watch, and all the entrance halls were patrolled by extra pages with clappers. In this way excellent order was maintained.

Early one spring morning when Baochai awoke, parted her bed-curtains and got up, she found it rather chilly. She opened the door and looked out. The soil in the courtyard was moist, the moss on it green, for a light rain had fallen at dawn. She then woke Xiangyun and the others.

As they were dressing, Xiangyun remarked that her cheeks itched. She was afraid she had a spring rash again, and would like some rose-nitric powder to apply to it.

"I gave all I had left the other day to Baoqin," Baochai told her. "Daiyu had a good deal made and I was meaning to ask her for some, but not having felt any itching this spring I forgot." She ordered Yinger to go and fetch some of this powder.

As Yinger was about to leave on this errand, Ruiguan offered to go with her, as that would give her a chance to see Ouguan. So the two of them set off from Alpinia Park.

Chatting as they strolled, the girls soon reached Willow Bank. As they walked along it they saw that the willows, now turning green, seemed hung with golden threads.

"Can you weave things out of osiers?" Yinger asked.

"What sort of things?"

"Oh, anything — little toys or useful objects. Wait till I've picked a few twigs with leaves and I'll make a basket to fill with different flowers. That should be fun."

So instead of fetching the powder, Yinger plucked an armful of tender twigs which she made Ruiguan carry, and started to weave a basket as



一二枝，编出一个玲珑过梁的篮子。枝上自有本来的翠叶满布，将花放上，却也别致有趣。喜的蕊官笑道：“好姐姐，给了我罢。”莺儿道：“这一个咱们送林姑娘，回来咱们再多采些，编几个大家玩。”说着，来至潇湘馆中。

黛玉也正晨妆，见了篮子，便笑说：“这个新鲜花篮是谁编的？”莺儿笑说：“我编了送姑娘玩的。”黛玉接了笑道：“怪道人人赞你的手巧，这玩意儿却也别致。”一面瞧了，一面便命紫鹃挂在那里。莺儿又问候了薛姨妈，方和黛玉要硝。黛玉忙命紫鹃包了一包，递与莺儿。黛玉又说道：“我好了，今日要出去逛逛。你回去说与姐姐，不用过来问候妈妈，也不敢劳他来瞧我，我梳了头同妈都过往你们那里去，连饭也端了那里去吃，大家热闹些。”

莺儿答应了出来，便到紫鹃房中找蕊官，只见藕官与蕊官二人正说得高兴，不能相舍，因说：“姑娘也去呢，藕官先同我们去等着岂不好？”紫鹃听如此说，便也说道：“这话倒是，他这里淘气的也可厌。”一面说，一面便将黛玉的匙箸用一块洋巾包了，交与藕官道：“你先带了这个去，也算一趟差了。”

藕官接了，笑嘻嘻同他二人出来，一径顺着柳堤走来。莺儿便又采些柳条，越性坐在山石上编起来，又命蕊官先送了硝去再来。他二人只顾爱看他编，那里舍得去，莺儿只顾催他们说：“你们再不去，我也不编了。”藕官便说：“我同你去了再快回来。”二人方去了。



on they walked, stopping now and then to pick flowers. The dainty little basket was soon completed. Covered with its own fresh green leaves and filled with flowers, it made a charming and original toy. Ruiguan was delighted with it.

“Do be a dear and give it to me!” she begged.

“No, this is for Miss Lin. We’ll pick more to make some for the rest of us later.”

By now they had reached Bamboo Lodge, where they found Daiyu at her toilet. At sight of the basket she exclaimed with pleasure.

“Who made this pretty thing?”

“I did,” said Yinger. “It’s a present for you, miss.”

Daiyu took it, remarking, “No wonder everyone says you have clever fingers. This is really original.” After examining it she made Zijuan hang it up.

Yinger, having asked after Aunt Xue, disclosed her errand. Then Daiyu got Zijuan to wrap up a packet of the powder for her.

“I’m better today,” remarked Daiyu. “I mean to go for a stroll. Go back and tell Cousin Baochai there’s no need for her to come and pay her respects to Aunt Xue or trouble to call on me either. As soon as I’ve done my hair, we’re both going, over to your place. We shall have our breakfast taken over there too. It will be livelier having it together.”

Yinger assented, then went to Zijuan’s room where she found Ruiguan unwilling to leave, so engrossed was she in her conversation with Ouguan.

“Miss Daiyu is coming to our place,” Yinger told them. “Why not come with us, Ouguan, and wait for her there?”

“That’s a good idea,” said Zijuan. “She’s just a nuisance here.” She wrapped up Daiyu’s spoon and chopsticks in a table napkin and gave it to Ouguan saying, “Here’s a job for you. Take this along first.”

Ouguan went off cheerfully with the other two. As they walked along Willow Bank, Yinger picked some more twigs, then sat down on a rock to plait them, telling Ruiguan to deliver the powder first and then come back. But the two other girls were too intrigued by what she was making to leave. To hurry them she threatened:

“If you don’t go now, I’ll stop.”

“I’ll go with you,” volunteered Ouguan. “Then we can hurry back.”



这里莺儿正编，只见何婆的小女春燕走来，笑问：“姐姐编什么呢？”正说着，蕊、藕二人也到了。春燕便向藕官道：“前儿你到底烧什么纸？被我姨妈看见了，要告你没告成，倒被宝玉赖了他一大些不是，气的他一五一十告诉我妈。你们在外头这二三年积了些什么仇恨，如今还不解开？”藕官冷笑道：“有什么仇恨？他们不知足，反怨我们了。在外头这两年，别的东西不算，只算我们的米菜，不知赚了多少钱去，合家子吃不了，还有每日买东买西赚的钱在外。逢我们使他们一使儿，就怨天怨地的。你说说可有良心？”春燕笑道：“他是我的姨妈，也不好向着外人反说他的。怨不得宝玉说：‘女孩儿未出嫁，是颗无价的宝珠；出了嫁，不知怎么就变出许多的不好的毛病来，虽是颗珠子，却没有光彩宝色，是颗死珠子；再老了，更变的不是珠子，竟是鱼眼睛了。分明一个人，怎么变出三样来？’这话虽是混话，倒也有些不差。别人不知道，只说我妈和姨妈，他老姊妹两个，如今越老了越把钱看的真了。先时老姐儿两个在家抱怨没个差使，没个进益，幸亏有了这园子，把我挑进来，可巧把我分在怡红院。家里省了我一个人的费用不算外，每月还有四五百钱的余剩，这也还说不够。后来老姊妹二人都派到梨香院去照看他们。藕官认了我姨妈，芳官认了我妈，这几年着实宽裕了。如今挪进来也算撒开手了，还只无厌。你说好笑不好笑？我姨妈刚和藕官吵了，接着我妈为洗头就和芳官吵，芳官连要洗头也不给他洗。昨日得了月钱，推不去了，买了东



And with that they went off.

Presently along came Mother He's young daughter Chunyan, who wanted to know what Yinger was making. Just at that moment the other girls returned.

"What was that paper you were burning the other day when my aunt spotted you?" Chunyan asked Ouguan. "Before she could report you, Baoyu gave her such a dressing-down that she went off in a huff and told my mother all about it. What feud did you have with them those few years in the troupe outside the Garden that you're still at loggerheads?"

"What feud?" Ouguan snorted. "There's just no satisfying them — they're for ever nagging at us. Not to mention anything else, goodness knows how much they made the last two years out of our daily food allowance outside — more than enough to feed their own families — in addition to their rakeoff on purchases. Yet any job we give them, they complain to high heaven. What sort of behaviour is that?"

Chunyan smiled.

"She's my aunt, so I can't run her down to outsiders. But no wonder Baoyu says: 'A girl before marriage is a precious pearl; after marriage, she somehow picks up all sorts of bad habits so that the pearl loses its lustre — it's a dead pearl; and as she grows still older, the pearl changes into a fish-eye. What a metamorphosis!'

"That's silly talk maybe, still there's something in it. I don't know about other people, but as for my mother and her sister, my aunt, it's true that the older they grow the madder they get for money. First, at home, the two of them groused that they had no fat jobs; then luckily there was this Garden and I happened to be assigned to Happy Red Court; so apart from saving my keep, the family got four or five hundred cash extra a month. But they still said that wasn't enough. Later both were assigned to Pear Fragrance Court to look after the actresses. My aunt had Ouguan as her foster-daughter; my mother, Fangguan; so for the last few years they were in clover. Since the actresses have moved into the Garden, they've been living separately, but they're still just as greedy. Ridiculous, isn't it?"

"The other day my aunt scolded Ouguan; then my mother squabbled with Fangguan — wouldn't even let her wash her hair. Yesterday being



西先叫我洗。我想了一想：我自己有月钱，就没了钱要洗时，不管袭人、晴雯、麝月，那一个跟前和他们说一声，也都容易，何必借这个光儿？好没意思，所以我不洗。他又叫我妹妹小鸠儿洗了，才叫芳官，果然就吵起来。接着又要给宝玉吹汤，你说可笑死了人？我见他一进来，我就告诉那些规矩，他只不信，只要强做知道的，足的讨个没趣儿。幸亏园里的人多，没人分记的清楚谁是谁的亲故。若有人记得，只有我们一家人吵，什么意思呢？你这会子又跑来弄这个。这一带地上的东西都是我姑娘管着，一得了这地方，比得了永远基业还利害，每日起早睡晚，自己辛苦了还不算，每日逼着我们照看，深恐有人遭踏，我又怕误了我的差使。如今我们进来，老姑嫂两个照看得谨谨慎慎，一根草儿也不许人动。你还掐这些花儿，又折他的嫩树，他们即刻就来，仔细他们抱怨。”莺儿道：“别人乱折乱掐使不得，独我使得。自从分了地基之后，每日里各房皆有分例，吃的不用算，单算花草玩意儿。谁管什么，每日谁就把各房里姑娘丫头戴的，必要各色送些折枝的去，另外还有插瓶的。惟有我们姑娘说了：‘一概不用送，等要什么再和你们要。’究竟没有要过一次。我今儿便掐些，他们也不好意思说的。”

一语未了，他姑娘果然拄了拐走来，莺儿、春燕等忙让坐。那婆子见采了许多嫩柳，又见藕官等都采了许多鲜花，心内便不受用；看着莺儿编，又不好说什么，便说春燕道：

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pay-day, my mother got Fangguan's monthly allowance. As she couldn't get out of buying her some things, she told me I could wash first. I thought: I've my own monthly allowance, and even if I hadn't I could wash my hair any time simply by asking Xiren, Qingwen or Sheyue. Why should I accept this as a favour? How futile! When I refused, she made my younger sister Xiaojiu wash before Fangguan. Then naturally there was a row. And next she wanted to blow on Baoyu's soup — it's enough to make you split your sides laughing.

"As soon as she came in here I told her the rules; but she didn't believe me, insisted she knew better. She's simply been asking for a snub. It's a good thing there are so many people in the Garden that no one remembers different relationships clearly. If they did, and it appeared that ours was the only quarrelsome family, I'd feel bad about these squabbles.

"Now you're playing about here where everything's in the charge of my paternal aunt, who's stricter about it, ever since it was put in her care, than about her own property. Apart from getting up early and turning in late so as to watch over it, she makes us keep an eye on things too for fear any damage is done, interfering, I'm afraid, with my own work. Now that they've both moved in here, the two sisters-in-law keep such a careful watch, they won't allow a single blade of grass to be touched; yet you've plucked all these flowers and twigs! They'll be here any minute now — you'd better watch out!"

"Others may not be allowed to pick what they like, but I am," retorted Yinger. "After the different places were allotted, each household was assigned its share of the produce. Not counting edibles, just take flowers for example. Those in charge have to send some over every day for the young ladies and maids to wear, as well as to put in their vases. My young lady was the only one who told them not to send any. She said she'd ask for what she needed, but in fact she never once has. So how can they scold me for picking a few flowers now?"

While she was still speaking, sure enough, along came Chunyan's aunt leaning on her cane. Yinger and Chunyan at once urged her to be seated. The sight of all the willow twigs and flowers which Ouguan and the others had picked vexed the woman, but not liking to say anything



“我叫你来照看照看，你就贪住玩不去了。倘或叫起你来，你又说我使你了，拿我做隐身符儿，你来乐。”春燕道：“你老又使我，又怕，这会子反说我。难道把我劈做八瓣子不成？”莺儿笑道：“姑妈，你别信小燕的话。这都是他摘下来的，烦我给他编，我撵他，他不去。”春燕笑道：“你可少玩儿，你只顾玩儿，老人家就认了真了。”那婆子本是愚顽之辈，兼之年近昏愤，惟利是命，一概情面不管，正心疼肝断，无计可施，听莺儿如此说，便以老卖老，拿起拄杖来向春燕身上击上几下，骂道：“小蹄子，我说着你，你还和我强嘴儿呢。你妈恨的牙根痒痒，要撕你的肉吃呢。你还来和我梆子似的。”打的春燕又羞、又愧、又急，哭道：“莺儿姐姐玩话，你老就认真打我。我妈为什么恨我？我又没烧胡了洗脸水，有什么不是！”莺儿本是玩话，忽见婆子认真动了气，忙上去拉住，笑道：“我才是玩话，你老人家打他，我岂不愧？”那婆子道：“姑娘，你别管我们的事，难道为姑娘在这里，不许我管孩子不成？”莺儿听见这般蠢话，便赌气红了脸，撒了手冷笑道：“你老人家要管，那一刻管不得，偏我说了一句玩话就管他了。我看你老管去！”说着，便坐下，仍编柳篮子。





against Yinger, who was making a basket, she rounded on her niece.

"I told you to keep an eye on things, but you take that as a chance to play around and not go back to your apartments. When they want you there, you say you've been working for me. Using me as your cover, eh?"

"You order me about yet you're afraid, and now you're scolding me," protested Chunyan. "I can't be everywhere at once, can I?"

"Don't you believe her, aunt," chuckled Yinger. "She was the one who picked all these and asked me to make her a basket. When I tried to chase her away, she wouldn't go."

"Don't talk such nonsense!" cried Chunyan. "My aunt can't take a joke, she'll believe you."

Indeed, her aunt had been born stupid, and now that age had addled her wits her one interest in life was money: she had no consideration at all for others. Inwardly fuming, she had not known how to retaliate until Yinger made this joke. Now, presuming on her seniority, she raised her cane and struck her niece several blows.

"Little bitch!" she swore. "I'll teach you to talk back! Your mother's grinding her teeth, itching to tear you to pieces and chew you up. Yet you still answer me back in that pert way!"

Hurt and humiliated, Chunyan sobbed, "Sister Yinger was only joking, yet you believed her and beat me. Why should my mother be angry? I've not boiled away her water or burned her pan. What have I done wrong?"

Yinger, seeing that her teasing had really angered the woman, now caught her by the arm.

"I was only joking," she said soothingly. "By beating her you make *me* feel bad too."

"Don't meddle with our affairs, miss," snapped the other. "Can't we punish our own children just because you're here?"

This stupid gibe made Yinger flush with anger. She let go of the woman with a scornful laugh.

"You can punish her any time you please. Why do it just after I make a joke? All right — go ahead."

With that she sat down again and was going on making her basket when who should appear but Chunyan's mother in search of her daugh-



偏又有春燕的娘出来找他，喊道：“你不来舀水，在那里做什么呢？”那婆子便接声儿道：“你来瞧瞧，你的女儿连我也不服了！在那里排揎我呢。”那婆子一面走过来，说：“姑奶奶，你又怎么了？我们丫头眼里没娘罢了，连姑妈也没了不成？”莺儿见他娘来了，只得又说原故。他姑娘那里容人说话，便将石上的花柳与他娘瞧，道：“你瞧瞧，你女儿这么小孩子玩的。他先领着人遭踏我，我怎么说人？”他娘也正为芳官之气未平，又恨春燕不随他的心，便走上来打耳刮子，骂道：“小娼妇，你能上去了几年？你也跟那起轻狂浪小妇学，怎么就管不得你们了？干的我管不得，你是我肚里掉出来的，难道也不敢管你不成！既是这样，你们这起蹄子到的去的地方我到不去，你就该死在那里伺候，又跑出来浪汉子么？”一面又抓起柳条子来，直送到他脸上，问道：“这叫作什么？这编的是你娘的屁！”莺儿忙道：“那是我们编的，你老别指桑骂槐。”那婆子深妒袭人、晴雯一千人，已知凡房中大些的丫头都比他们有些权势，凡见了这一千人，心中又畏又让，未免又气又恨，亦且迁怒于众，复又看见了藕官，又是他令姊的冤家，四处凑成一股怒气。

那春燕啼哭着往怡红院去了。他娘又恐问他为何哭，怕他又说出自己打他，又要受晴雯等之气，不免着急起来，又忙喊道：“你回来！我告诉你再去。”春燕那里肯回来？急的他





ter.

“Why haven’t you fetched water yet?” she called. “What are you doing there?”

“Come and look at this minx!” her sister-in-law chimed in. “She won’t obey even *me*. She keeps answering back.”

Mother He came over to them.

“Now what’s the girl up to?” she demanded. “You may have no respect for your own mother, but you should at least show some respect to your aunt.”

Yinger tried to explain what had happened, but Chunyan’s aunt would not let her get a word in. Pointing to the flower basket on the rock she fumed:

“See! Your girl’s not a child any more, yet she still fools about. When *she* brings people here to wreck the place, how can I tell them off?”

Mother He’s tiff with Fangguan still rankled, and Chunyan’s waywardness made her even angrier. Stepping forward she boxed her ears.

“You bitch!” she cried. “A few years in high society and you imitate the ways of those loose women. I’ll have to teach you a lesson. I may not be able to control my foster-child but you’re my own spawn. I’m not afraid of *you*! Even if I can’t go where you young bitches go, why don’t you stay put there, waiting on your mistress? Why gad about outside so shamelessly?” Grabbing the osiers she brandished them in Chunyan’s face. “What’s this you’re making? Your mother’s arse?”

“*We* made that,” cut in Yinger. “Don’t ‘scold the locust while pointing at the mulberry.’”

Mother He was eaten up with jealousy of senior maids such as Xiren and Qingwen, who had more prestige and authority in the different compounds than she. Fearing them and forced to defer to them, she could only work off her rage and resentment on others. Now the sight of Ouguan, to whom her sister had such an aversion, added fuel to the fire of the anger.

Chunyan set off in tears to Happy Red Court. Afraid that if questioned she would explain why she was crying and make Qingwen angry again, her mother shouted frantically:

“Come back! I’ve something to tell you.”



娘跑了去又拉他。他回头看见，便也往前飞跑。他娘只顾赶他，不防脚下被青苔滑倒，引的莺儿三个人反都笑了。莺儿便赌气将花柳皆掷于河中，自回房去。这里把个婆子心疼的只念佛，又骂：“促狭小蹄子！糟踏了花儿，雷也是要打的。”自己且掐花儿与各房送去，不提。

却说春燕一直跑入院中，顶头遇见袭人往黛玉处去问安。春燕便一把抱住袭人，说：“姑娘救我！我娘又打我呢。”袭人见他娘来了，不免生气，便说道：“三日两头儿打了干的打亲的，还是卖弄你女儿多，还是认真不知王法？”这婆子来了几日，见袭人不言不语是好性子的，便说道：“姑娘，你不知道，别管我们闲事！都是你们纵的，这会子还管什么？”说着，便又赶着打。袭人气的转身进来，见麝月正在海棠下晾手巾，听得如此喊闹，便说：“姐姐别管，看他怎样。”一面使眼色与春燕，春燕会意，便直奔了宝玉去。众人都笑说：“这可是没有的事都闹出来了。”麝月向婆子道：“你再略煞一煞气儿，难道这些人的脸面，和你讨一个情还讨不下来不成？”那婆子见他女儿奔到宝玉身边去，又见宝玉拉了春燕的手说：“你别怕，有我呢。”春燕又一行哭，又一行说，将方才莺儿等事都说出来。宝玉越发急起来，说：“你只在这里闹也罢了，怎么连亲戚也都得罪了？”麝月又向





But Chunyan kept right on. Her mother in desperation chased after her. When the girl turned and saw her, she broke into a run; then Mother He, in hot pursuit, slipped on the moss and fell — at which the other three girls burst out laughing.

In disgust, Yinger tossed all her flowers and twigs into the stream and went back to her room, while Chunyan's aunt crossly invoked the aid of Buddha.

"May a thunderbolt strike the wicked little bitch, spoiling all those flowers!" she swore. She then picked more flowers to take to the various apartments.

Meanwhile Chunyan, running into Happy Red Court, bumped into Xiren setting off to call on Daiyu. She caught hold of her, begging:

"Save me, miss! My mother's beating me again."

Annoyed to see Mother He close behind, Xiren said, "You beat your foster-daughter one day, your own daughter the next. Are you showing off how many daughters you have? Or do you really not know the rules here?"

The woman, although only recently come to the Garden, had sized up Xiren as quiet and good-tempered.

"You don't understand, miss, so don't meddle in our affairs," she retorted. "You're the ones who spoil them. Just mind your own business."

She chased after Chunyan then to beat her again. While Xiren indignantly turned back into the courtyard. Sheyue, hanging up handkerchiefs under the crab-apple tree, had overheard the commotion.

"Never mind her, sister," she said. "What can she do?"

She signed to Chunyan, who took the hint and ran straight to Baoyu.

"Well, wonders will never cease!" declared the maids.

Sheyue urged the woman, "Steady on. Do us a favour, won't you, and calm down."

Mother He saw that her daughter had darted up to Baoyu, who had taken her hand.

"Don't be afraid; I'll protect you," he promised her.

Chunyan told him tearfully all that had just happened to her and Yinger. This only made Baoyu more exasperated.



婆子及众人道：“怨不得这嫂子说我们管不着他们的事，我们虽无知错管了，如今请出一个管得着的人来管一管，嫂子就心伏口伏，也知道规矩了。”便回头叫小丫头子：“去把平儿给我们叫来！平儿不得闲就把林大娘叫来。”那小丫头应了就走。众媳妇上来笑说：“嫂子，快求姑娘们叫回那孩子罢。平姑娘来了，可就不好了。”那婆子说道：“凭是那个平姑娘来也平个理，没有个娘管女儿，大家管着娘的。”众人笑道：“你当是那个平姑娘？是二奶奶屋里的平姑娘。他有情呢，说你两句；他一翻脸，嫂子你吃不了兜着走！”

说话之间，只见小丫头子回来说：“平姑娘正有事，问我做什么，我告诉了他，他说：‘既这样，且撵他出去，告诉与林大娘，在角门外打他四十板子就是了。’”那婆子听如此说，自不舍得出去，便又泪流满面，央告袭人等说：“好容易我进来了，况且我是寡妇，家里没人，正好一心无挂的在里头伏侍姑娘们。姑娘们也便宜，我家里也省些交过。我这一去，又要去自己生火过活，将来不免又没了过活。”袭人见他如此，早又心软了，便说：“你既要在这里，又不守规矩，又不听说，又乱打人。那里弄你这个不晓事的来，天天斗口，也叫人笑话，失了体统。”晴雯等道：“理他呢，打发去了是正经。谁和他去对嘴对舌的。”那婆子又央众人道：“我





“Why not simply fool about here?” he asked. “Why must you even annoy our relative?”

Sheyue observed to the company at large, “We can’t blame her for telling us not to meddle in their business. Not knowing the facts, we’ve no right to interfere. We’d better ask someone who can cope to come and deal with this. That’s the only way to convince her and teach her manners.” She turned and ordered a young maid, “Go and fetch Pinger here. If she’s busy, ask Mrs. Lin to come.”

As the little girl left on this errand, the older servant-maids gathered round Mother He.

“Quick, sister!” they urged. “Ask the young ladies to call that child back. If Miss Pinger comes, you’re in for trouble.”

“Whichever Miss Pinger comes I must have justice,” blustered the woman. “No one has any right to stop a mother teaching her own daughter a lesson.”

“Don’t you know who this Miss Pinger is?” the others retorted. “She’s the one in Madam Lian’s household. If she’s in a good mood she may let you off with a short scolding. If she’s in a bad mood, sister, you’re in for it!”

The little maid came back at this point to report, “Miss Pinger’s busy just now. When she asked what had happened and I told her, she said: ‘In that case drive her out, and tell Mrs. Lin to give her forty strokes with a cane at the side gate.’”

Dismissal was the last thing Mother He wanted. Tears streaming down her cheeks, she pleaded with Xiren and the rest:

“It wasn’t easy for me to get this job. I’m a lone widow doing my very best to serve you all faithfully here and save my family a little expense. If I leave, I shall have to fend for myself and won’t be able to manage.”

Seeing the state she was in, Xiren relented.

“You want to stay yet won’t keep the rules or do as you’re told, beating people right and left,” she said. “How did we come to take on someone so stupid? These endless rows make people laugh at us.”

“Don’t listen to her,” put in Qingwen. “Send her packing, that’s the only thing to do. Who has the time to argue with her?”



虽错了，姑娘吩咐了，我以后改过。姑娘们那不是行好积德？”一面又央春燕道：“原是我为打你起的，究竟没打成你，我如今反受了罪。你也替我说说。”宝玉见如此可怜，只得留下，吩咐他不可再闹，那婆子一一谢过了下去。

只见平儿走来，问系何事。袭人等忙说：“已完了，不必再提。”平儿笑道：“‘得饶人处且饶人’，得省的将就省些事儿也罢了。能去了几日，只听各处大小人儿都作起反来了，一处不了又一处，叫我不知管那一处的是。”袭人笑道：“我只说我们这里反了，原来还有几处。”平儿笑道：“这算什么。正和珍大奶奶算呢，这三四日的工夫，一共大小出来了八九件了。你这里是极小的，算不起数儿来，还有大的可气可笑之事。”不知袭人问他果系何事，且听下回分解。





“Be kind!” the woman pleaded. “Lay up virtue in heaven! I was wrong, but in future I’ll do whatever you young ladies tell me.” She prompted Chunyan, “This comes of my beating you. Not really beating you either, yet now I’m the one smarting for it. Put in a good word for me too.”

Baoyu took pity on her then and agreed to let her stay on.

“But no more of these scenes!” he warned her.

After thanking them each in turn, Mother He left. And then Pinger arrived on the scene to ask what had happened.

“It’s all over now,” Xiren told her. “We can forget it.”

Pinger smiled.

“It’s best to be easy on people — saves trouble,” she approved. “The mistresses have been away for a few days only, yet we’ve heard of nothing but squabbles of all sorts in every household — before one’s over the next one crops up. I just don’t know how I’m to cope.”

“I thought we were the only ones,” remarked Xiren. “I didn’t know there’d been other rows too.”

“This business of yours is nothing,” rejoined Pinger. “I was just listing to Madam You all the troubles there’ve been in the last three or four days — eight or nine of them big and small. This little tiff of yours is nothing — it doesn’t count. There’ve been far more serious or ridiculous rows.”

Xiren asked what she was referring to. To know Pinger’s answer you must read the next chapter.



第六十回

茉莉粉替去蔷薇硝 玫瑰露引来茯苓霜

话说袭人因问平儿，何事这等忙乱。平儿笑道：“都是世人想不到的，说来也好笑，等几日告诉你，如今没有头绪呢，且也不得闲呢。”一语未了，只见李纨的丫鬟来了，说：“平姐姐可在这里，奶奶等你，你怎么不去了？”平儿忙转身出来，口内笑说：“来了！来了！”袭人等笑道：“他奶奶病了，他又成了个香饽饽了，都抢不到手。”平儿去了不提。

宝玉便叫春燕：“你跟了你妈去，到宝姑娘房里给莺儿几句好话听听，也不可白得罪了他。”春燕答应了，和他妈出去。宝玉又隔窗说道：“不可当着宝姑娘说，仔细反叫莺儿受教导。”

娘儿两个应了出来，一面走着，一面说闲话儿，春燕因向他娘道：“我素日劝你老人家再不信，何苦闹出没趣来才罢。”他娘笑道：“小蹄子，你走罢，俗语道‘不经一事，不长一智’。我如今知道了。你又该来质问着我。”春燕笑道：“若妈安分守己，在这屋里长久了，自有许多的好处。我且告诉你一句话：宝玉常说，将来这屋里的人，无论家里外头的，一应我们这些人，他都要回太太全放出去，与本人父母自便呢。你只说这一件可好不好？”他娘听说，喜的忙问：



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Chapter 60

Jasmine Powder Is Substituted for Rose-Nitric Powder Rose Flavoured Juice Is Repaid with Pachyma Cocos

Xiren asked Pinger what trouble there had been.

“Oh, a lot of nonsense that no one could conceive of!” was the reply. “I’ll tell you some other day. Right now I’m too busy, and things aren’t straightened out either.”

As she was speaking, in came a maid sent by Li Wan.

“Is Sister Pinger here?” she asked. “My mistress is waiting for you. “What’s keeping you?”

“Coming, coming!” responded Pinger, hurrying out.

Xiren and the others commented jokingly, “With her mistress ill she’s in such great demand, everyone’s trying to grab her.”

Once Pinger had gone, Baoyu suggested to Chunyan, “Why not take your mother over to Miss Baochai’s place to say a few kind words to Yinger, so that she doesn’t feel too wronged.”

Chunyan agreed to this, going out with her mother, and Baoyu called again to her through the window, “Mind you don’t mention it in front of Miss Baochai, or Yinger may get scolded instead!”

Mother He and her daughter assented and left, chatting as they walked along.

“I kept *telling* you, ma, but you never believed me,” said Chunyan. “Why land yourself in trouble like this?”

“Go on, you little bitch,” chuckled her mother. “As the proverb says: ‘We learn from experience.’ I understand now, so don’t keep on at me.”

“If you’d just know your place and mind your own business here, ma, in the long run you’d gain a whole lot by it,” went on Chunyan. “Let me tell you something: Baoyu often says that he’s going to ask the mistress to send all of us working here — whether inside or outside — back to our



“这话果真么？”春燕道：“谁可扯这谎做什么？”婆子听了，便念佛不绝。

当下来至蘅芜院中，正值宝钗、黛玉、薛姨妈等吃饭。莺儿自去泡茶，春燕便和他妈一径到莺儿前，陪笑说“方才言语冒撞了，姑娘莫嗔莫怪，特来陪罪”等语。莺儿忙笑让坐，又倒茶。他娘儿两个说有事，便作辞回来，忽见蕊官赶出叫：“妈妈，姐姐，略站一站。”一面走上来，递了一个纸包与他们，说是蔷薇硝，带与芳官去擦脸。春燕笑道：“你们也太小器了，还怕那里没有这个与他，巴巴的你又弄一包给他去。”蕊官道：“他是他的，我送的是我的。好姐姐，千万带回去罢。”春燕只得接了。娘儿两个回来，正值贾环、贾琮二人来问候宝玉，也才进来，春燕便向他娘说：“只我进去罢，你老不用去。”他娘听了，自此便百依百随的，不敢倔强了。

春燕进来，宝玉知道回复，便先点头。春燕会意，便不再说一语，略站了一站，便转身出去，使眼色与芳官。芳官出来，春燕方悄悄的说与他蕊官之事，并与了他硝。宝玉并无与琮、环可谈之语，因笑问芳官手里是什么，芳官便忙递与宝玉瞧，又说是擦春癣的蔷薇硝，宝玉笑道：“难为他想得到。”贾环听了，便伸着头瞧了一瞧，又闻得一股清香，便弯腰向靴桶内掏出一张纸来托着，笑说：“好哥哥，给我一半





own parents. Isn't that fine?"

"Did he really say that?" her mother asked eagerly.

"Why should anyone tell such a lie?" Chunyan retorted.

"Buddha be praised! Buddha be praised!" cried her mother.

When they reached Alpinia Park, Baochai, Daiyu and Aunt Xue were having a meal. As Yinger had gone to make tea, the two of them went straight to find her.

"I was talking too wildly just now," said Mother He ingratiatingly. "Please don't hold it against me, miss. I've come now specially to apologize."

Yinger, smiling, offered them seats and poured them some tea. But saying that they had business they took their leave and were starting back when Ruiguan hurried out after them.

"Auntie! Sister!" she called. "Wait a minute."

Coming up to them she gave them a packet, explaining that this was some rose-nitric powder for Fangguan.

"How small-minded of you, really!" chuckled Chunyan.

"Do you imagine she can't get this in our place that you have to send her a packet?"

"What she gets there is one thing," retorted Ruiguan, "but this is a present from *me*. Do take it back for her."

Chunyan had to accept it then. When she and her mother got back, Jia Huan and Jia Cong had just called to see Baoyu.

"I'll go in by myself, ma," said Chunyan. "You'd better keep out."

Her mother, now completely under her thumb, did not venture to oppose her.

When Baoyu saw that Chunyan was back he nodded to her and she took the hint, holding her tongue. After standing there for a few minutes she turned and went out, signalling to Fangguan to join her, then quietly told her what Ruiguan had said and handed over the powder.

Baoyu, having nothing to say to Cong and Huan, asked Fangguan presently what she had in her hand; and readily showing it to him she explained that it was rose-nitric powder for a spring rash.

"It was kind of her to think of it," he remarked.

Jia Huan hearing this craned his neck to have a look, and when he



儿。”宝玉只得要与他，芳官心中因是蕊官相赠，不肯与别人，连忙拦住，笑说道：“别动这个，我另拿出些来。”宝玉会意，忙笑包上，说道：“快取来。”

芳官接了这个，自去收好，便从奁中去寻自己常使的。启奁看时，盒内已空，心中疑惑，早间还剩了些，如何没了？因问人时，都说不知。麝月便说道：“这会子且忙着问这个，不过是这屋里人一时短了使了。你不管拿些什么给他们，他们那里看得出来？快打发他们去了，咱们好吃饭。”芳官听说，便将些茉莉粉包了一包拿来。贾环见了，喜的就伸手来接，芳官便忙向炕上一掷，贾环只得向炕上拾了，揣在怀内，方作辞而去。

原来贾政不在家，且王夫人等又不在家，贾环连日也便装病逃学。如今得了硝，兴兴头头来找彩云。正值彩云和赵姨娘闲谈，贾环嘻嘻笑向彩云道：“我也得了一包好的，送你擦脸。你常说，蔷薇硝擦癣，比外头的银硝强。你且看看，可是这个？”彩云打开一看，“嗤”的一声笑了，说道：“你是和谁要来的？”贾环便将方才之事说了，彩云笑道：“这是他们哄你这乡老呢。这不是硝，这是茉莉粉。”贾环看了一





smelt how fragrant the powder was he stooped to pull a sheet of paper out of his boot.

“Give me half of it, won’t you, good brother?” he wheedled.

Baoyu felt obliged to comply, but Fangguan was unwilling to part with a gift from Ruiguan.

“Don’t you touch this!” she cried. “I’ll fetch you some from elsewhere.”

Baoyu smiled understandingly as he wrapped the powder up again.

“Bring it quickly then,” he said.

Fangguan took the packet and put it away, then went to her dressing-case to look for her own powder. When she opened the case, however, she found the box empty. “There was still some this morning. Where has it all gone?” she wondered. The other maids when questioned did not know.

“Why try to track it down just now?” asked Sheyue. “Someone in this place must have run out of hers and taken it. Just give them something else, it doesn’t matter what — they won’t know the difference. Hurry up and get rid of those boys so that we can have our meal.”

So Fangguan wrapped up a packet of jasmine powder and took it to Jia Huan; but when he eagerly held out his hand for it she tossed it on to the *kang*, forcing him to pick it up himself. Having put it in his pocket he took his leave.

In the absence of Jia Zheng, Lady Wang and the rest, Jia Huan had been playing truant from school for several days on the pretext of illness. Now that he had this powder he went off in high spirits to find Caiyun, who happened just then to be chatting with Concubine Zhao. Beaming, he told the girl:

“I’ve got something good here for you to powder your face with. You’ve often said that rose-nitric powder is better for skin trouble than that nitric concoction bought outside. Have a look and see if this is the right stuff.”

Caiyun opened the packet and promptly burst out laughing.

“Who gave you this?” she asked.

Jia Huan explained how he had acquired it.

“They were fooling you because you’re such a bumpkin,” she chuck-



看，果然比先的带些红色，闻闻也是喷香，因笑道：“这也是好的，硝粉一样，留着擦罢，自是比外头买的高便好。”彩云只得收了。赵姨娘便说：“他有好的给你！谁叫你要去了，怎怨他们耍你！依我，拿了去照脸摔给他，趁着这回子撞尸的撞尸去了，挺床的挺床，吵一出子，大家别心净，也算是报仇。莫不成两个月之后，还找出这个碴儿来问你不成？便问你，你也有话说。宝玉是哥哥，不敢冲撞他罢了；难道他屋里的猫儿狗儿，也不敢去问问他不成！”贾环听了，便低了头，彩云忙说：“这又何苦生事，不管怎样，忍耐些罢了。”赵姨娘道：“你快休管，横竖与你无干。乘着抓着了理，骂他那些浪淫妇们一顿也是好的。”又指贾环道：“呸！你这下流没刚性的，也只好受这些毛崽子的气！平白我说你一句儿，或无心错拿了一件东西给你，你倒会扭头暴筋、瞪着眼墩摔！这会子被那起毛崽子耍弄就罢了，你明儿还想这些家里人怕你呢？你没有这本事，我也替你羞。”贾环听了，不免又愧又急，又不敢去，只摔手说道：“你这么会说，你又不肯去，指使了我去闹他们。倘或往学里告我去，我捱了打，你敢是不疼我？你遭遭调唆我去，闹出事来，我捱了打骂，你一般也低了头。这会子又调唆我和毛丫头们去闹，





led. "This isn't rose-nitric powder, it's jasmine powder."

Jia Huan examined it, and saw that it was pinker than the powder he had been shown, but equally fragrant.

"Well, it's good stuff just the same," he retorted. "Keep it to powder your face. It's better than anything you can get outside."

So Caiyun accepted it.

"How could she give *you* anything good?" sneered Concubine Zhao at this point. "Who told you to go there begging? No wonder they made a fool of you. If I were you, I'd take it back and throw it in her face. Now's the time, while some have gone to the funeral and others are ill in bed, to raise a rumpus and let no one have any peace. This way we can get our own back. Two months from now they won't rake it up again. Even if they do, you can have an answer ready. Baoyu is your elder brother, so if you don't dare tackle him, never mind; but are you afraid of those cats and dogs in his place too?"

Jia Huan hung his head.

"Why stir up more trouble?" put in Caiyun quickly. "Whatever happens, we'd better put up with it."

"Don't you barge in," retorted Concubine Zhao. "This has nothing to do with *you*. Better seize this chance, while we've got a good excuse, to bawl out those dirty bitches." Pointing at Jia Huan she spat out, "You spineless wretch, you *deserve* to be bullied by that scum! If I say a word against you or give you the wrong thing by mistake, you toss your head in a rage and throw a tantrum, your eyes popping out of your head; but now that these sluts make fun of you, you take it lying down. Do you expect anyone in this family to have any respect for you in future? You're so useless, I blush for you."

Jia Huan, though ashamed and annoyed, was afraid to do as she said. He brushed it aside.

"You can talk, but you don't dare go either," he muttered. "You just want me to go and have a row with them. If they report me to our school and I get a beating, of course you won't feel the pain. Each time you've egged me on and trouble came of it so that I got beaten or cursed, you've always kept quiet. Now you're egging me on again to quarrel with those servant-girls. Aren't you afraid of Third Sister? If *you* have the guts to



你不怕三姐姐，你敢去，我就服你。”只这一句话，便戳了他娘的肺，便喊说：“我肚子里爬出来的，我再怕不成？这屋里越发有的活了。”一面说，一面拿了纸包子，便飞跑往园中去了。彩云死劝不住，只得躲入别房。贾环便也躲出仪门，自去玩耍。

赵姨娘直进园子，正是一头火，顶头正遇见藕官的干娘夏婆子走来，见赵姨娘气恨恨的走来，因问：“姨奶奶那去？”赵姨娘又说：“你瞧瞧，这屋里连三日两日进来的唱戏的小粉头们，都三般两样的掂人分两，放小菜碟儿了。若是别一个，我还不恼，若叫这些小媚妇捉弄了，还成了个什么！”夏婆子听了，正中己怀，忙问因何？赵姨娘悉将芳官以粉作硝轻侮贾环之事说了，夏婆子道：“我的奶奶，你今儿才知道，这算什么事？连昨儿这个地方他们私自烧纸钱，宝玉还拦到头里。人家还没拿进个什么来，就说使不得，不干不净的东西忌讳。这烧纸倒不忌讳？你老想一想，这屋里除了太太，谁还大似你？你老自己撑不起来；但凡撑的起来，谁还不怕你老人家？如今我想，乘着这几个小粉头儿都不是正头货，得罪了他们也有限的，快把这两件事抓着理，扎个筏子，我在旁帮着作个证据，你老把威风抖抖，也好争别的理。便是奶奶、姑娘们，也不好为那起小粉头子，说你老不是。”赵姨娘听了这话，益发有理，便说：“烧纸的事我不知道，你却细细的告诉我。”夏婆子便将前事一一的说了，又

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go, I'll have more respect for you."

This touched his mother on the raw.

"Why should I be afraid of a creature I spawned myself?" she snapped. "If I were there'd be even more rows here."

She grabbed the packet and dashed off towards the Garden. Caiyun, unable to stop her no matter how hard she tried, made herself scarce while Jia Huan slipped out of the ceremonial gate and went off to amuse himself elsewhere.

Concubine Zhao stormed straight into the Garden where she ran into Mother Xia, Ouguan's foster-mother, who seeing the rage she was in asked where she was going.

"Just look at this household!" fumed the concubine. "Even those little singsong girls brought in to put on shows every other day treat some people better than others, taking advantage of those who have less weight. If it had been anyone else I wouldn't have minded, but how can I let that little whore get the upper hand of *us*?"

This struck a chord in Mother Xia's heart. She hastily asked what had happened, and was told how Fanguan had made a fool of Jia Huan by giving him jasmine powder instead of rose-nitric powder.

"Is that all, madam?" exclaimed Mother Xia. "Have you only just woken up to them? Why, that's nothing! Yesterday they were even burning paper money here on the sly, and Baoyu stood up for them. But if other people bring something in they say it's forbidden, unclean or taboo. So isn't burning paper money taboo here? Just think, apart from the mistress, there's nobody higher than you in this house; only you won't use your authority, so nobody's afraid of you.

"Now what I suggest is this. As those young whores are low-class girls it won't matter offending them. So seize hold of these two things they've done to teach them a lesson, and I'll back you up as a witness. This way you can assert your authority, and other issues will be easier to handle. The mistresses and the young ladies can hardly side with those singsong girls against you."

This made Concubine Zhao feel in a stronger position.

"I didn't know about that business of burning paper. Tell me the details," she said.



说：“你只管说去，倘或闹起来，还有我们帮着你呢。”赵姨娘听了越发得了意，仗着胆子，便一径到了怡红院中。

可巧宝玉听见黛玉在那里，便往那里去了。芳官正与袭人等吃饭，见赵姨娘来了，便都起身笑让道：“姨奶奶吃饭，有什么事这么忙？”赵姨娘也不答话，走上来便将粉照着芳官脸上撒来，指着芳官骂道：“小淫妇！你是我银子钱买来学戏的，不过娼妇粉头之流！我家里下三等奴才也比你高贵些，你都会看人下菜碟儿！宝玉要给东西，你拦在头里，莫不是要了你的了？拿这个哄他，你也只当他不认得呢！好不好，他们是手足，都是一样的主子，那里有你小看他的！”芳官那里禁得住这话，一行哭，一行便说：“没了硝我才把这个给他的。若说没了，又恐他不信，难道这不是好的？我便学戏，也没往外头唱去。我一个女孩儿家，知道什么是粉头、面头的！姨奶奶犯不着来骂我，我又不是姨奶奶家买的。‘梅香拜把子——都是奴才’呢！”袭人等拉他说道：“休胡说！”赵姨娘气的上来便打了两个耳刮子，袭人等忙上来拉劝，说：“姨奶奶，别和小孩子一般见识，等我们说他。”芳官挨了两下打，那里肯依，便撞头打滚，泼哭泼闹起来。口内便道：“你打得起我么？你照照那模样儿再动手！我叫你打了去，我还活着！”便撞在他怀里叫他打。众人一面劝，一





Mother Xia accordingly told her all that had happened. “Just go ahead and trounce them,” she concluded. “If there’s a row, we’ll back you up.”

Emboldened by this, Concubine Zhao made her way confidently to Happy Red Court. It so happened that Baoyu had gone to call on Daiyu, having heard that she was in, and Fangguan was having a meal with Xiren and the others. When the concubine came in they all stood up to greet her and offer her a seat, after which they asked her her business. Instead of answering, she stepped forward and threw the powder in Fangguan’s face.

“You trollop!” she swore, pointing a finger at her. “We bought you with our money to train as an actress. You’re nothing but a painted whore. Even the lowest slave in our house ranks higher than *you*, yet you make up to some people and look down on others. When Baoyu wants to give someone a present you stop him, as if it were *your* property. And you fob this stuff off on my son, imagining he doesn’t know the difference. They’re both sons of the house, young masters. Who are *you* to treat him like dirt?”

This was more than Fangguan could take.

“There was no rose powder left,” she sobbed. “That’s why I gave him this. If I’d told him there wasn’t any more, he most likely wouldn’t have believed me. Isn’t this good powder too?”

“Even if I did train as an actress, I never performed outside. I’m only a girl; what do I know about painted whores? You’ve no call to swear at me, madam. *You* didn’t buy me. We’re all birds of a feather — all slaves here. Why go for me?”

Xiren pulled her away, remonstrating, “Don’t talk such nonsense!”

The concubine was so angry that she darted forward and slapped Fangguan on both cheeks. Xiren hastily intervened.

“She’s just a child with no sense, madam. Let her be! We’ll give her a good talking to presently.”

After being slapped, however, Fangguan would not keep quiet. She flew into a tantrum, wailing and screaming:

“Who are you to beat me? Take a look at yourself in the mirror first. I’d sooner die than let a hag like you beat me!”



面拉他。晴雯悄拉袭人说：“别管他们，让他们闹去，看怎么开交！如今乱为王了，什么你也来打，我也来打，都这样起来还了得呢！”

外面跟着赵姨娘来的一干的人听见如此，心中各各称愿，都念佛说：“也有今日！”又有那一干怀怨的老婆子见打了芳官，也都称愿。

当下藕官、蕊官等正在一处作耍，湘云的大花面葵官，宝琴的荳官，两个人闻了此信，慌忙找着藕、蕊二人说：“芳官被人欺负，咱们也没趣，须得大家破着脸大闹一场，方争过气来。”四人终是小孩子心性，只顾他们情分上义愤，便不顾别的，一齐跑入怡红院中。荳官先便一头，几乎不曾将赵姨娘撞了一跤；那三个也便拥上来，放声大哭，手撕头撞，把个赵姨娘裹住。晴雯等一面笑，一面假意去拉，劝他们众人。急的袭人拉起这个，又跑了那个，口内只说：“你们要死！有委屈只好说，这没理的事如何使得！”赵姨娘反没了主意，只好乱骂。蕊官、藕官两个一边一个，抱住左右手；葵官、荳官前后头顶住。四人只说：“你只打死我们四个就罢！”芳官直挺挺的躺在地下，哭得死过去。





She threw herself at Concubine Zhao and dared her to slap her again. As the others tried to quiet her and pull her away, Qingwen gently tugged at Xiren's sleeve.

"Leave them alone," she whispered. "Let them make a row and see what comes of it. Everything's at sixes and sevens now, with so many people trying to have the whip hand, taking it in turn to throw their weight about. This sort of thing can't go on."

The attendants outside who had come with Concubine Zhao were each and all delighted to hear this row.

"High time too!" they crowed. "Buddha be praised!"

As for the old women who had a grudge against the actresses, they all gloated too at the sight of Fangguan being beaten.

Meanwhile Ouguan and Ruiguan were amusing themselves together. When Kuiguan, the "warrior" actress assigned to Xiangyun, and Douguan assigned to Baoqin heard of this fracas, they rushed to find the two of them.

"Fangguan's being bullied!" they cried. "How can we put up with that? Let's all go and have a first-class row to get our own back!"

Being all of them so childish, their one thought was to avenge their friend without worrying about the consequences, and so they ran together to Happy Red Court. First Douguan butted Concubine Zhao with her head, very nearly knocking her down. The other three swarmed round as well, weeping and wailing, tearing at her and butting her, so that she was surrounded on all sides. Qingwen and the other maids, laughing, only made a show of trying to intervene. As for Xiren, she was frantic. But as she pulled one away another rushed forward.

"Are you out of your minds?" she demanded. "If you have some complaint, say so quietly. How can you carry on in this crazy way?"

Concubine Zhao was helpless. All she could do was pour out a flood of abuse. Ruiguan and Ouguan, one on each side of her, had pinioned both her arms while Kuiguan and Douguan, one in front and one behind, were butting her with their heads.

"You'll have to kill all four of us!" they swore.

Fangguan, stretched out on the ground, was crying as if she were about to die.



正没开交，谁知晴雯早遣春燕回了探春。当下尤氏、李纨、探春三人带着平儿与众媳妇走来，将四个喝住。问起原故，赵姨娘便气的瞪着眼粗了筋，一五一十说个不清。尤、李两个不答言，只喝禁他四人。探春便叹气说道：“这是什么大事，姨娘也太肯动气了！我正有一句话要请姨娘去商议，怪道丫头们说不知在那里，原来在这里生气呢，姨娘快同我来。”尤氏、李氏都笑说：“姨娘请到厅上来，咱们商量。”

赵姨娘无法，只得同他三人出来，口内犹说长说短。探春便说：“那些小丫头们原是个玩意儿，喜欢呢，和他说说笑笑；不喜欢，便可以不理他。便他不好了，也如同猫儿狗儿抓咬了一下子，可怨就怨，不怨时也只好叫了管家媳妇们去说给他去责罚，何苦自己不尊重，大吆小喝也失了体统。你瞧周姨娘，怎不见人欺他，他也不寻人去？我劝姨娘且回房去煞煞性儿，别听那些混账人的调唆，没的惹人笑话，自己呆白给人作粗活。心里有二十分的气，也忍耐这几天，等太太回来自自然料理。”一席话说得赵姨娘闭口无言，只得回房去了。

这里探春气得和尤氏、李纨说：“这么大年纪，行出来的事总不叫人敬服。这是什么意思，也值得吵一吵，并不留体统，耳朵又软，心里又没有计算。这又是那起没脸面的奴才们调停的，作弄出个呆人替他们出气。”越想越气，因命人



During this hurly-burly, Qingwen had sent Chunyan to report it to Tanchun. So now Madam You, Li Wan and Tanchun came over with Pinger and some older serving-women. They ordered the four actresses to lay off, and asked what the trouble was. Concubine Zhao, nearly bursting with rage, her eyes, bulging, broke into an incoherent diatribe. Madam You and Li Wan paid no attention to her, simply ordering the four girls to keep quiet. Tanchun sighed.

“What a fuss about nothing!” she said. “You lose your temper, madam, too easily. I was just wanting to consult you about something, and was surprised when the maids told me they couldn’t find you. So you were here all the time in one of your rages. Please come along with me.”

Madam You and Li Wan chimed in with a smile, “Please come to the hall, and we can talk things over.”

Concubine Zhao had no choice but to go with the three of them, still muttering and maundering.

“Those girls are playthings,” said Tanchun. “If we like them we can chat and joke with them; if we don’t we can ignore them. If they misbehave it’s like being scratched by a cat or a puppy, and we should overlook it whenever possible. If it’s something inexcusable, we should just tell the stewards’ wives to punish them. Why lower ourselves to raise a hullabaloo? This is so undignified!

“Look at Concubine Zhou. Why is it that no one takes advantage of *her*, and she doesn’t go round hounding other people either? My advice to you, madam, is to go back to your rooms and get your temper under control. Don’t listen to malicious trouble-makers, or you’ll just make *yourself* a laughing-stock by doing other people’s dirty work for nothing. Even if you’re bursting with anger, put up with it for a few days. When the mistress comes back she’ll straighten everything out.”

Concubine Zhao had nothing to say in reply to this lecture and had to go home. Then Tanchun turned indignantly to Li Wan and Madam You.

“She’s so old, yet the way she carries on makes it impossible for *anyone* to respect her. Was it worth rampaging in such an undignified fashion over such a trifle? She has no sense of dignity and is too gullible — she *never* uses her head. Those shameless slaves must have egged



查是谁调唆的。媳妇们只得答应着，出来相视而笑，都说是“大海里那里寻针去”？只得将赵姨娘的人并园中人唤来盘诘，都说不知道。众人也无法，只得回探春：“一时难查，慢慢的访查，凡有口舌不妥的，一总来回责罚。”

探春气渐渐的平服方罢。可巧艾官便悄悄的回探春说：“都是夏妈素日和我们不对，每每的造言生事。前儿赖藕官烧纸，幸亏是宝玉叫他烧的，宝玉自己应了，他才没话说。今儿我与姑娘送手帕去，看见他和姨奶奶在一处说了半天，嘁嘁喳喳的，见了我才走开了。”探春听了，虽知情弊，亦料定他们皆是一党，本皆淘气异常，便只答应，也不肯据此为实。谁知夏婆子的外孙女儿蝉姐儿便是探春处当役的，时常与房中丫鬟们买东西呼唤人，众女孩儿皆待他好。这日饭后，探春正在厅上理事，翠墨在家看屋子，因命蝉姐儿出去叫小么儿买糕去。蝉姐儿便笑说：“我才扫了一个大院子，腰腿生疼的，你叫个别的人去罢。”翠墨笑道：“我又叫谁去？你趁早儿去，我告诉你一句好话，你到后门顺路告诉你老娘防着些儿。”说着，便又将艾官告他老娘的话告诉了他。蝉姐听了，忙接了钱道：“这个小蹄子也要捉弄人，等我告诉





her on again to do this, using her — because she's a fool — to get their own back."

The more she thought about it, the angrier she felt. So she ordered the serving-women to find out who was at the bottom of this business. They had to agree, but once outside they smiled at each other and said:

"This is like looking for a needle in the ocean!"

They summoned Concubine Zhao's maids and all those in the Garden for questioning, but each denied any knowledge of how this had started. At a loss, they had to report to Tanchun their failure to find the culprit, but promised to make further investigations, to inform her of any irresponsible talk, and to have the offender punished. Tanchun was gradually calming down when Aiguan slipped in to see her.

"It's Mother Xia who's got her knife into us all and is always stirring up trouble," she confided. "The other day, she accused Ouguan of burning sacrificial paper; but luckily Baoyu said he'd asked her to do it, and that silenced the old creature. Today, when I brought you your handkerchief, I noticed her gabbing away with Concubine Zhao. She only went away when she saw me coming."

Although this sounded suspicious to Tanchun, she knew that Aiguan and the other girls belonged to one set and were very mischievous too; so after hearing her out, she was unwilling to use this as proof.

Now Mother Xia's grand-daughter Chanjie also served in Tanchun's apartments and often bought things or ran errands for the maids there, all of whom liked her. After her meal that day, Tanchun went to the hall to attend to some business; and Cuimo, left at home in charge, told Chanjie to go and send a page to buy some cakes.

"I've just swept a whole big courtyard and my legs and back are aching," objected Chanjie. "Can't you get someone else to go?"

"Who else is there?" countered Cuimo. "Go while it's still early. And let me give you a word of advice: on your way to the back gate, tell your grandma to be on her guard."

Then she explained how Aiguan had been telling tales about Mother Xia.

Taking the money from her Chanjie snorted, "So that little bitch wants to get us into trouble too! Wait till I tell my grandma this."



去。”说着，便起身出来。至后门边，只见厨房内此刻手闲之时，都坐在阶砌上说闲话，那时他老娘亦在内。蝉姐便命一个婆子出去买糕，他且一行骂，一行说，将方才之话告诉与夏婆子。夏婆子听了，又气又怕，便欲去找艾官问他，又要往探春前诉冤。蝉姐忙拦住了说：“你老人家去怎么说呢？这话怎么知道的，可又叨登不好了。说给你老防着就是了，那里忙到这一时儿？”

正说着，忽见芳官走来，扒着院门，笑向厨房中柳家媳妇说道：“柳嫂子，宝二爷说了，晚饭的素菜要一碗凉的、酸酸的东西，只别搁上香油弄腻了。”柳家的笑道：“知道，今儿怎么遣你来告诉我这么一句要紧话。你不嫌脏，进来逛逛儿不是？”芳官才进来，忽有一个婆子手里托着一碟糕来，芳官便戏道：“谁买的热糕？我先尝一块。”蝉姐一手接了道：“这是人家买的，你们还稀罕这个。”柳家的见了，忙笑道：“芳姑娘，你喜吃这个？我这里才有买下给你姐姐吃的，他不曾吃，还收在那里，干干净净没动呢。”说着，便拿了一碟出来，递与芳官，又说：“你等我进去替你炖口好茶来。”一面进去，现通开火炖茶。芳官便拿着热糕，问到蝉姐脸上说：“谁稀罕吃你那糕，这个不是糕不成？我不过说着玩罢了，你给我磕个头，我也不吃。”说着，便把手内的糕一块一块的掰了，掷着打雀儿玩，口内笑说：“柳嫂子，你别心疼，我回来买二斤给你。”小蝉姐气的怔怔的，瞅着冷笑



With that she went off to the back gate. She found all the kitchen-maids, Mother Xia among them, sitting chatting on the steps there, as they were free for a while. She asked one of the women to go and buy the cakes. Then, fulminating, she passed on to her grandmother what she had just been told. Mother Xia, both angry and frightened, wanted to go and challenge Aiguan and to complain to Tanchun. Chanjie quickly stopped her.

“What would you say if you went, grandma?” she asked. “How did you get to know about it? Carping and complaining would only cause more trouble. I’m just telling you so that you’ll be on your guard. Don’t go rushing off in such a hurry.”

As she was speaking, along came Fangguan. Leaning on the gate she called pleasantly to Mrs. Liu in the kitchen:

“Mrs. Liu, Master Bao says he’d like a cool, vinegary vegetable dish for supper; but don’t put in sesame oil — that would make it greasy.”

“All right,” answered Mrs. Liu. “How come you were sent on this errand today? If you don’t think our place too dirty, come in and chat for a bit.”

Fangguan had just entered the kitchen when a woman came along carrying a plate of cakes.

“Whose hot cakes are these?” asked the girl jokingly. “Let me try one.”

Chanjie promptly took the plate.

“These were bought for other people,” she said. “You wouldn’t care for this stuff.”

Mrs. Liu seeing this quickly put in, “If you like such things, miss, I’ve some here freshly bought for my daughter. She hasn’t eaten any yet so they’re still here, clean and untouched.” She brought out another plate for Fangguan, adding, “Wait, I’ll brew you some good tea.”

While she went in to poke up the fire and make tea, Fangguan took a cake and thrust it under Chanjie’s nose.

“Who wants your cake? Isn’t this cake too?” she demanded. “I was only joking, but I wouldn’t eat *yours* even if you kowtowed to me.” She crumbled the cake into pieces then and tossed these to the sparrows, calling out, “You mustn’t feel hurt, Mrs. Liu. I’ll buy you another two



道：“雷公老爷也有眼睛，怎不打这作孽的！他还气我呢。我可拿什么比你们，又有人进贡，又有人作干奴才，溜溜你们好上好儿，帮衬着说句话儿。”众媳妇都说：“姑娘们，罢哟，天天见了就咕唧。”有几个伶俐的，见他们对了口，怕又生事，都拿起脚来各自走开了。当下蝉姐也不敢十分说，一面咕唧着去了。

这里柳家的见人散了，忙出来和芳官说：“前儿那话说了不曾？”芳官道：“说了。等一二日再提这事。偏那赵不死的又和我闹了一场。前儿那玫瑰露，姐姐吃了不曾，他到底可好些？”柳家的道：“可不都吃了。他爱的什么似的，又不好问你再要的。”芳官道：“不值什么，等我再要些来，给他就是了。”

原来这柳家的有个女儿，今年才十六岁，虽是厨役之女，却生的人物与平、袭、紫、鸳皆类同。因他排行第五，因叫做五儿。因素有弱疾，故没得差。近因柳家的见宝玉房中差轻人多，且又闻得宝玉将来都要放他们，故如今要送他到那里去应名儿。正无头路，可巧这柳家的是梨香院的差役，他最小意殷勤，伏侍得芳官一千人比别的干娘还好。芳官等亦待他们极好，如今便和芳官说了，央芳官去与宝玉说。宝玉虽是依允，只是近日病着，又见事多，尚未说得。





catties presently.”

Chanjie was first speechless with anger. Then she snorted:

“If the thunder god has eyes, why doesn’t he strike such wicked people dead? She’s deliberately needling me! Of course, I can’t compare with the likes of *you* who have people sending you presents, offering to be your slaves and flattering you, in the hope that, if need be, you’ll put in a good word for them.”

The older women intervened, “Enough of that, you two. Why bicker every time you meet?”

A few of the more quick-witted, afraid this argument would lead to further trouble, quietly slipped away. Chanjie, however, dared not say any more. Grumbling to herself she went off.

When Mrs. Liu saw there was nobody about, she came out of the kitchen and asked Fangguan, “Did you mention that matter I spoke of the other day?”

“Yes, I did,” was the answer. “And I’ll bring it up again in a couple of days. But that old hag *Zhao* would choose this time for another row with me. Did sister take that rose flavoured juice I brought the other day? Is she any better?”

“Oh, yes, she drank it all and just loved it, but she doesn’t like to ask you for more.”

“That’s nothing. I’ll get her some more.”

The fact was that Mrs. Liu had a daughter just turned sixteen. Although the daughter of a cook, she was just as good-looking as Pinger, Xiren, Yuanyang or Zijuan. As she was the fifth child they called her Wuer; but being delicate, she had never been given a job. Recently Mrs. Liu had noticed that Baoyu had many attendants, whose work was light; and she had heard that he meant to let all the girls in his service return to their own homes in future. She wanted to send Wuer there as a maid but had no one to recommend her. It so happened that she had worked in Pear Fragrance Court and been more assiduous than their foster-mothers in waiting on Fangguan and the other actresses, with the result that they were good to her too. So now she had mentioned this request to Fangguan, asking her to pass it on to Baoyu. And he had agreed. Only, having been unwell recently and in view of all the troubles in the house-



前言少述，且说当下芳官回至怡红院，回复了宝玉。宝玉前在正厅，见赵姨娘厮吵，心中自是不悦，说又不是，不说又不是，只得等他吵完了，打听着探春劝了他去后，方从蘅芜院回来，劝了芳官一阵，方大家安妥。今见他回来，又说还要些玫瑰露与柳五儿吃去，宝玉忙道：“有的，我又不大吃，你都给他去罢。”说着命袭人取了出来，见瓶中亦不多，遂连瓶与了他。

芳官便自携了瓶与他去。正值柳家的带进他女儿来散闷，在那边犄角子上一带地方儿逛了一回，便回到厨房内，正吃茶歇脚儿。芳官拿了一个五寸来高小玻璃瓶来，迎亮照着，里面小半瓶胭脂一般的汁子，还当是宝玉吃的西洋葡萄酒。母女两个忙说：“快拿旋子来烫滚水，你且坐下。”芳官笑道：“就剩了这些，连瓶子都给你们罢。”五儿听了，方知是玫瑰露，忙接了，谢了又谢。芳官又问他：“好些？”五儿道：“今儿精神好些，进来逛逛。这后边一带，也没什么意思，不过见些大石头、大树和房子后墙，正经好景致也没看见。”芳官道：“你为什么不往前去？”柳家的道：“我没叫他往前去。姑娘们也不认得他，倘有不对眼的人看见了，又是一番口舌。明儿托你携带他有了房头，怕没有人带着他逛呢，只怕逛腻了的日子还有呢。”芳官听了，笑道：“怕什





hold, he had not yet referred the matter higher up. Enough, however, of this.

Fangguan returned now to Happy Red Court and broached the subject again to Baoyu. He had been away when Concubine Zhao made such a scene, and found himself in a difficult position, not knowing whether to intervene or not. After the uproar died down and he heard that Tanchun had persuaded her to leave, he returned from Alpinia Park to comfort Fangguan, and at last everybody had calmed down again.

Now Fangguan came back and told him that she wanted some more rose flavoured juice for Liu Wuer.

He answered readily enough, "There's plenty. I seldom drink it. You can take her the whole lot."

He told Xiren to fetch it. And seeing that there was not much left, he gave the whole bottle to Fangguan who took it away.

Mrs. Liu had just taken her daughter into the Garden to amuse her. After strolling for a while in an out-of-the-way corner, they went back to the kitchen to rest and have some tea. Now Fangguan came in with a small glass bottle about five inches high. The light falling on it showed that it was almost half full of some red juice, which they assumed to be some of the Western port which Baoyu drank.

"Sit down, while we fetch the pewter heater to warm it in a jiffy with hot water," they said.

"This is all there is left, so he's given it you with the bottle," Fangguan explained.

Wuer realized then that it was the juice and accepted it with profuse thanks.

Asked if she was better she said, "I do feel a bit more energetic today; that's why I came here for a stroll. There's not much of interest at the back, though, only some big rocks and big trees and the back walls of the buildings. I haven't seen any of the real beauty spots yet."

"Why didn't you go to the front?" asked Fangguan.

"I wouldn't let her," said Mrs. Liu. "The young ladies don't know her. If someone who has it in for us were to see her, that would lead to another row. If in future, with your help, she gets a job, she'll have so many chances to stroll around she may even get tired of the place."



么，有我呢。”柳家的忙道：“暖哟哟，我的姑娘，我们的头皮儿薄，比不得你们。”说着，又倒了茶来。芳官那里吃这茶，只漱了一口就走了。柳家的说道：“我这里占着手，五丫头送送。”

五儿便送出来，因见无人，又拉着芳官说道：“我的话到底说了没有？”芳官笑道：“难道还哄你不成？我听见屋里正经还少两个人的窝儿，并没补上。一个是红玉的，璉二奶奶要了去还没给人来；一个是坠儿的，也还没补。如今要你一个不算过分。皆因平儿每每的和袭人说，凡有动人动钱的事，得挨的且挨一日更好。如今三姑娘正要拿人扎筏子呢，连他屋里的事都驳了两三件，如今正要寻我们屋里的事没寻着，何苦来往网里碰去。倘或说些话驳了，那时老了，倒难回转。不如等冷一冷，老太太、太太心闲了，凭是天大的事先和老的一说，没有不成的。”五儿道：“虽如此说，我却性急等不得了。趁如今挑上来了，一则给我妈争口气，也不枉养我一场；二则我添了月钱，家里从容些；三则我的心开一开，只怕这病就好了。便是请大夫吃药，也省了家里的钱。”芳官道：“我都知道了，你只放心。”二人别过，芳官自去不提。

单表五儿回来，与他娘深谢芳官之情，他娘因说：“再不承望得了这些东西，虽然是个金贵物儿，却是吃多了也最动





“Don’t worry,” replied Fangguan. “You can count on me.”

“*Aiya*, miss!” exclaimed Mrs. Liu. “We’re of no account, not like you.”

With that she served tea. But as it was not to Fangguan’s taste, after just one sip she rose to take her leave.

“I have my hands full here,” said Mrs. Liu. “Wuer will see you off.”

So Wuer went out with Fangguan, and seeing there was nobody about she tugged at her sleeve.

“Did you really put in a word for me?” she asked.

Fangguan laughed.

“Why should I fool you? I’ve heard there are definitely two vacancies in our compound. One is Hongyu’s place: Madam Lian took her away but hasn’t yet sent anyone to replace her. The other is Zhuier’s, which is still vacant too. So merely taking *you* on wouldn’t count as too many. It’s just that Pinger keeps telling Xiren that any new requests for people or money shouldn’t be raised yet awhile if possible, because Miss Tanchun’s looking for someone to make an example of. Even in her own quarters she’s turned down two or three requests. Right now she’s on the look-out for something in *our* place to make an issue of; so why should we jump into her trap? And if we were turned down now, it would be hard to get the decision changed later. Better wait for things to cool down. When the old lady and the mistress are free, if we approach *them* first, no matter how big a favour we ask they’re bound to agree to it.”

“Even so, I’m feeling too impatient to wait,” said Wuer. “If I were to be chosen now, in the first place my mother’d be able to hold up her head and feel she hadn’t brought me up for nothing; in the second, my monthly allowance would make things easier for our family; in the third, I’d feel happier myself and my health might well improve. Even if I still had to see doctors and buy medicine, I needn’t spend the family’s money on it.”

“I understand,” said Fangguan. “Just don’t worry.”

Then the two of them went their different ways.

Wuer, back home, told her mother how very grateful she was to Fangguan.

“I never thought we’d get all that juice,” said Mrs. Liu. “Though this is expensive stuff, if you take too much it will increase the hot humours,



热。竟把这个倒些送个人去，也是个大情。”五儿问：“送谁？”他娘道：“送你舅舅的儿子，昨日热病，也想这些东西吃。如今我倒半盏与他去。”五儿听了，半日没言语，随他妈倒了半盏子去，将剩的连瓶便放在家伙厨内。五儿冷笑道：“依我说，竟别给他也罢了。倘或有人盘问起来，倒又是一场事了。”他娘道：“那里怕起这些来，还了得了？我们辛辛苦苦的，里头赚些东西，也是应当的。难道是贼偷的不成？”说着，不听，一径去了。直至外边他哥哥家中，他侄子正躺着，一见了这个，他哥嫂、侄男无不欢喜。现从井上取了凉水，和吃了一碗，心中一畅，头目清凉。剩的半盏，用纸盖着，放在桌上。

可巧又有家中几个小厮同他侄儿素日相好的，走来问候他的病。内中有一小伙名唤钱槐者，乃系赵姨娘之内侄。他父母现在库上管账，他本身又派跟贾环上学。因他有些钱势，尚未聚亲，素日看上了柳家的五儿标致，一心和父母说了，欲娶他为妻。也曾央托中保媒人再四求告。柳家父母却也情愿，争奈五儿执意不从，虽未明言，却行止中已带出，父母未敢应允。近日又想往园中去，越发将此事丢开，只等三五年后放出时，自向外边择婿了。钱家见他如此，也就罢了。怎奈钱槐不得五儿，心中又气又愧，发恨定要弄取成配，方了此愿。今也同人来瞧望柳侄，不期柳家的在内。





so why not give some away? That would make a very handsome gift.”

“Give it to whom?”

“To your cousin. He’s been having a fever and was wanting something like this. I’ll take him half a cup.”

Wuer remained silent while her mother poured out half a cup and put the bottle with what was left in the cupboard. Then she said with a faint smile:

“If I were you, I wouldn’t send it. If people asked where it came from there’d be more trouble.”

“Why should we be afraid of that? After all our hard work, if our masters give us something it’s only right. We didn’t *steal* this, did we?”

So ignoring her daughter’s advice, she went straight off to the house of her elder brother outside, where her nephew was lying in bed. When they saw what she had brought, her brother, sister-in-law and nephew were all delighted. Cold water was drawn from the well to mix with the tonic, and the invalid drinking a bowl of it found it extremely refreshing. What was left in the cup was covered with a piece of paper and put on the table.

Now it happened that a few of the Jia family pages who were friendly with the young patient called to see how he was. Among them was Qian Huai, a nephew of Concubine Zhao, both of whose parents worked in the counting-house, and whose own job was escorting Jia Huan to school. No wife had yet been found for him and as he had taken a fancy to pretty Wuer he told his parents he would like to marry her. Time and again they had sent a go-between to propose the match; and as they were in easy circumstances and fairly well connected, Liu and his wife were quite willing, but they could not get Wuer’s consent. Though she did not say so outright, her attitude was so clear that her parents could not accept the offer for her. Recently, moreover, since they hoped she would get a job in the Garden they had let the matter drop, assuming that after a few years when she was released from service she would choose someone else outside. And the Qian family, in view of this situation, had given up the idea too. Only Qian Huai, angry and mortified by his failure, had resolved that he must have his way and get Wuer as his wife. He had come with the others today to see his friend, never expecting to find Mrs. Liu there too.



柳家的忽见一群人来了，内中有钱槐，便推说不得闲，起身便走了。他哥嫂忙说：“姑妈怎么不吃茶就走？倒难为姑妈记挂。”柳家的因笑道：“只怕里面传饭，再闲了出来瞧侄子罢。”他嫂子因向抽屉内取了一个纸包出来，拿在手内送了柳家的出来，至墙角边递与柳家的，又笑道：“这是你哥哥昨儿在门上该班儿，谁知这五天一班子冷淡，一个外财没发。只有昨儿有粤东的官儿来拜，送了上头两小簋子茯苓霜。余外给了门上人一簋作门礼，你哥哥分了这些。这地方千年松柏最多，所以单取了这茯苓的精液和了药，不知怎么弄出这怪俊的白霜儿来。说第一用人乳和着，每日早起吃一钟，最补人的；第二用牛奶子；万不得，滚白水也好。我们想着，正宜外甥女儿吃。原是上半日打发小丫头子送了家去的，他说锁着门，连外甥女儿也进去了。本来我要瞧瞧他去，给他带了去的，又想着主子们不在家，各处严紧，我又没什么差使，有要没紧跑些什么。况且这两日风声，闻得里头家反宅乱的，倘或沾带了倒值多了。姑妈来的正好，亲自带去罢。”

柳氏道了生受，作别回来。刚到了角门前，只见一个小么儿笑道：“你老人家那里去了？里头三次两趟叫人传呢，我们的三四个人都找你老去了，还没来。你老人家却从那里来了？这条路又不是家去的路，我倒疑心起来。”那柳家的笑骂道：“好猴儿崽子……”要知端的，下回分解。

数字水印
PDG



When Mrs. Liu saw all these new arrivals, with Qian Huai among them, she rose on the pretext of business to take her leave.

“Have some tea first,” her brother and sister-in-law urged her. “It was very good of you to think of your nephew.”

“It’ll soon be time to serve dinner in the Garden. I’ll come to see him again when I’m free,” she answered.

Then her sister-in-law took a packet from a drawer and saw her out. Having reached the corner of the wall, she gave the packet to Mrs. Liu.

“Yesterday your brother was on duty at the gate,” she said. “For five days before that everything was so quiet that he didn’t get any tips; only yesterday an official from Guangdong called and presented two small baskets of *pachyma cocos* for the masters, and another basket for the men at the gate. This is your brother’s share. Down south there they have so many ancient firs, they just extract the essence of the fungus on the roots and mix it with some kind of medicine to make this handsome snowy white *pachyma cocos* powder. They say if you mix it with human milk and drink a cup first thing every day, it’s the best tonic you could have. If you haven’t human milk, cow’s milk is next best; or failing that even boiling water will do. We thought it would be just the thing for your daughter, and I sent a maid this morning to take it to you; but she said your door was locked and you’d taken Wuer with you into the Garden. I’d been meaning to call to see how she was and take it her myself. But knowing that with the mistresses away there’s a strict watch everywhere, I thought as I’d no special business I’d better not go. Besides, I’ve heard that the last two days you’ve had a lot of upsets in the Garden; and I didn’t want to get mixed up in anything. So I’m very glad you came. You can take this back now yourself.”

Mrs. Liu thanked her, took her leave and went back. As she approached the side gate, a boy called out to her:

“Where have you been, auntie? They’ve been asking for you several times inside. Three or four of us have been looking for you everywhere — the others aren’t back yet. But this isn’t the way to your house. This seems rather suspicious.”

“You monkey!” chuckled Mrs. Liu.

To know what followed, read the next chapter.



NOTES

Chapter 41

¹ 1465-1487

² 1082

Chapter 42

¹ *Qiao* means “happy coincidence,” *ge*, “boy.” It flattered a girl in old China to call her *ge*.

² A chronicle of the Kingdom of Lu from 722 to 481 B.C. compiled by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) to praise or censure historical figures, passing judgement by implication.

³ Presumably a kind of painting paper produced in Xuancheng, Anhui.

Chapter 43

¹ Cao Zhi (192-232), Cao Cao’s son and a noted poet, wrote a poem on the Goddess of the River Luo.

² These are lines from Cao Zhi’s poem.

Chapter 44

¹ 1426-1435.

Chapter 47

¹ The surname *bao* (鮑) has the same pronunciation as *bao* (抱) meaning “to carry in the arms,” which is contrasted with *bei* (背) — “to carry on the back.”

Chapter 48

¹ Regulated verse, originating in the Tang Dynasty, is a pentasyllabic or heptasyllabic eight-line verse form, with the third and fourth lines and the fifth and sixth lines forming two antithetical couplets.

² Lu You (1122-1210), a patriotic Southern Song Dynasty poet. Wang Wei (699-760), Du Fu (712-770) and Li Bai (701-762) were famous Tang Dynasty poets.

³ Chinese poets of the third to the sixth centuries.

Chapter 49

¹ This and the previous line are from *The Western Chamber*. Liang Hong, a poor scholar of the Eastern Han Dynasty, married swarthy 30-year-old Meng Guang but paid her little attention for seven days on end though she decked herself out in her best finery. Then the bride changed into homespun clothes and busied herself with household chores, and Liang Hong praised her, saying: “This is how my wife should be.” In *The Western Chamber*, the heroine Cui Yingying feigned annoyance when her maid Hongniang tried to bring her and the young scholar Zhang together, as they were secretly in love. Learning that Yingying had already arranged a meeting with Zhang, the maid taunted her mistress by using the classical allusion about Meng Guang and Liang Hong. “Being young and talking too freely” is here quoted by Baoyu to tease Daiyu for previously repeating lines from *The Peony Pavilion* and

The Western Chamber, both considered improper books.

Chapter 50

¹ Ming Dynasty portrait-painter.

² Name of a Jin Dynasty eccentric. "Shan" means mountain and "Tao" torrent.

³ The *Book of Rites* says: "Rotting grass turns into glow-worms."

Chapter 51

¹ Red Cliff is on the south bank of the Yangtze, northeast of Jiayu, Hubei. In A.D. 208 Cao Cao led an army of over 500, 000 men to launch an attack on Sun Quan. The latter, in alliance with Cao Cao's antagonist Liu Bei, mustered 30, 000 men. Knowing that Cao Cao's army was weakened by epidemics and unaccustomed to action afloat, the allied forces of Sun Quan and Liu Bei set fire to Cao Cao's fleet and crushed his army.

² Emperor Guangwu of the Han Dynasty sent his general Ma Yuan (14 B.C. -A.D. 49) to suppress the people of Cochin China in A.D. 42.

³ Zhang Liang (?-189. B.C.), one of the advisors and generals of Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty, laid siege to Xiang Yu, the Conqueror of Chu, at Gaixia (present-day Linbi, Anhui). Zhang Liang made his men play iron flutes and sing Chu folksongs every night, making the Chu troops so homesick that their morale was undermined and they were finally defeated by the Han troops.

⁴ This poem is about Zhou Yong of the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-501), who lived as a hermit on Zhongshan, Nanjing, and once summoned to court abandoned all pretence of being high-minded and unworldly. His contemporary Kong Zhigui wrote an essay exposing his hypocrisy.

⁵ Han Xin, a native of Huaiyin, was so poor in his early days that he asked a washerwoman to share her meal with him. He later helped Liu Bang defeat Xiang Yu and was entitled Prince of Qi, but then he was killed for plotting against Liu Bang.

⁶ Guangling was the ancient name for Yangzhou, Jiangsu, where the Grand Canal built in the Sui Dynasty flowed to the Yangtze. The canal banks, flanked with willow trees, were made into imperial highways and named the Sui Dyke.

⁷ This was by Qinhuai Creek, Nanjing, where the famous calligrapher Wang Xianzhi (344-386), saw his concubine Peach Leaf off and wrote a song to her. The portrait in the poem is that of Peach Leaf.

⁸ This is the tomb of Wang Zhaojun in Huhhot, Inner Mongolia, which was said to be covered with evergreen grass. A palace maid, she was sent by the Han Emperor Yuandi (reigned 48-33 B.C.) to marry a Hunnish chieftain in order to pacify the borderland tribesmen. When Zhaojun passed the Great Wall, the sad note of her lute was said to have stopped the flow of the stream.

⁹ In Xingping County of present-day Shaanxi, where Lady Yang, favourite of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong who reigned from 713 to 756, hanged herself on the demand of the Imperial Guards who were escorting the emperor from the capital Chang'an, where a rebellion was raging, to Chengdu.

¹⁰ According to *The Western Chamber*, this monastery in Puzhou, Shanxi, was where the young scholar Zhang first met Yingying. They fell in love and her maid Hongniang arranged





for them to meet every evening.

¹¹ The tomb of Du Liniang, heroine of *The Peony Pavilion*, was said to be in this nunnery in the Dayu Mountains, Jiangxi. The first line of this poem was written by Liniang on her portrait which was picked up by Liu Mengmei, the young scholar who later married her.

Chapter 52

¹ An exposition of the ancient *Book of Changes* by Zhou Dunyi of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127).

² According to *Journey to the West*, a 16th-century novel by Wu Cheng'en, the founder of Taoism Lao Jun became an immortal after his death and distilled elixirs in the Celestial Region.

Chapter 53

¹ By Yuan Yulin, a Qing playwright.

Chapter 54

¹ Yuanyang's family name was Jin and Xiren's Hua. The Goddess Jinhua was the goddess of water in *The Magic Box*, a mythological opera by an anonymous playwright of the late Ming or early Qing Dynasty.

² In feudal China, the names of superiors were taboo. If inferiors could not avoid using them, they had to do so in an altered form.

³ *Chu* means a fledgling, and *luan* a female phoenix, whereas *feng* in Wang Xifeng means a male phoenix.

⁴ Here Xifeng has been using the introductory patter of professional storytellers.

⁵ Compiled by Guo Juye of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

⁶ Referring to Lao Laizi of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.).

⁷ A scene from *The Peony Pavilion*.

⁸ From *The Western Chamber*.

⁹ By the Ming playwright Gao Lian.

¹⁰ By Cao Yin, Cao Xueqin's grandfather.

Chapter 56

¹ From *Commentaries on Mencius* by Zhu Xi, a Northern Song Confucianist.

² An unknown work. It may have been invented by the author.

³ A sentence from the *Analects of Confucius*.

Chapter 57

¹ Two ancient assassins who attempted to avenge their masters.

² Line from a poem by Du Mu (803-852).

³ Confucius' disciple and son-in-law who was said to know the language of birds.

⁴ Yingying was the heroine of *The Western Chamber*, and Hongniang was her maid. See Note 1 in Chapter 49.

