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A DREAM OF RED MANSIONS

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Chinese-English

红楼梦

A Dream of Red Mansions

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外文出版社

Foreign Languages Press

湖南人民出版社

Hunan People's Publishing House

目　录

CONTENTS

判決平行
寃獄兒權

第六十一回

投鼠忌器宝玉瞒赃　判冤决狱平儿行权

话说那柳家的笑道："好猴儿崽子，你亲婶子找野老儿去了，你岂不多得一个叔叔，有什么疑的！别讨我把你头上的枵子盖似的几根黄毛捋下来！还不开门让我进去呢。"这小厮且不开门，且拉着笑说："好婶子，你这一进去，好歹偷些杏子出来赏我吃。我这里老等，你若忘了时，日后半夜三更打酒买油的，我不给你老人家开门，也不答应你，随你干叫去。"柳氏啐道："发了昏的，今年不比往年，把这些东西都分给了众奶奶了。一个个的不像抓破了脸的，人打树底下一过，两眼就似那鸷鸡似的，还动他的果子！昨儿我从李子树下一走，偏有一个蜜蜂儿往脸上一过，我一招手儿，偏你那好舅母就看见了。他离的远看不真，只当我摘李子呢，就泼声浪嗓喊叫起来，又是'还没供佛呢'，又是'老太太、太太不在家还没进鲜呢，等进了上头，嫂子们都有分的'，倒像谁害了馋痨等李子出汗呢。叫我也没好话，抢白了他一顿。可是你舅母、姨娘两三个亲戚都管着，怎么不和他们要去，倒和我来要。这可是'仓老鼠和老鸹去借粮——守着的没有，飞着的有'。"小厮笑道："哎哟哟，没有罢了，说上这些闲话！我看你老以后就用不着我了？就便是姐姐有了好地

Chapter 61

Baoyu Covers Up a Girl's Theft to Protect His Sister
Pinger Wields Authority to Right a Wrong

"You monkey!" chuckled Mrs. Liu. "If your aunt goes to find a lover that means one more uncle for you — what's wrong with that? Don't make me tear out that tuft of mangy hair stuck on your head like the lid of chamberpot. Hurry up! Open the gate and let me in."

Instead of doing so, the young rascal went on teasing.

"When you go in, auntie, do filch a few apricots for me. I'll wait for you here. If you forget, don't expect me to open the gate for you in future, when you want to buy wine or oil in the middle of the night. I won't even *answer* you, just leave you to shout yourself hoarse."

Mrs. Liu spat.

"You're crazy!" she scoffed. "This year's not like the old days. Everything here has been put in the care of different women, every single one of them spoiling for a fight. Just walk under a tree, and they glare like broody hens. How can you touch their fruit?"

"The other day I was walking under a plum tree when a bee brushed past my face, and just as I flapped it away that aunt of yours spotted me. She was too far away to see what I was doing and thought I was picking plums, so she let out a screech, then started squawking at the top of her voice that this fruit hadn't yet been offered to Buddha, that Their Ladyships being away hadn't tasted it yet, and that after the best had been sent to the mistress the rest of us would get *our* share, carrying on as if I were dying for her plums! I didn't take it too kindly, so I gave her tit for tat.

"But you have several aunts in charge of things here. Why not ask them for what you want? Why apply to *me*? This is like the rat in the barn who asked a crow for grain, as if a bird on the wing had some while the rat living in the barn had none."

方，将来更呼唤着的日子多，只要我们多答应他些就有了。”柳氏听了，笑道：“你这个小猴精，又捣鬼吊白的，你姐姐有什么好地方了？”那小厮笑道：“别哄我了，早已知道了。单是你们有内牵，难道我们就没有内牵不成？我虽在这里听呵，里头却也有两个姊妹成个体统的，什么事瞒了我们？”

正说着，只听门内又有老婆子向外叫：“小猴儿们，快传你柳婶子去罢，再不来可就误了。”柳家的听了，不顾和小厮说话，忙推门进去，笑说：“不用忙，我来了。”一面来至厨房，——虽有几个同伴的人，他们俱不敢自专，单等他来调停分派——一面问众人：“五丫头那里去了？”众人都说：“才往茶房里找他们姊妹去了。”

柳家的听了，便将茯苓霜搁起，且按着房头分派菜馔。忽见迎春房里小丫头莲花儿走来说：“司棋姐姐说了，要碗鸡蛋，炖的嫩嫩的。”柳家的道：“就是这样尊贵。不知怎的，今年这鸡蛋短的很，十个钱一个还找不出来。昨儿上头给亲戚家送粥米去，四五个买办出去，好容易才凑了二千个来。我那里找去？你说给他，改日吃罢。”莲花儿道：“前儿要吃豆腐，你弄了些馊的，叫他说了我一顿。今儿要鸡蛋又没有

"*Aiyaya*!" chortled the boy. "If you can't help, you can't. Why all this palaver? Think you won't need me in future? If your daughter *does* get a good post, seems to me she'll be wanting our help even more often, and only if we give it will she do all right."

"So you're up to monkey tricks again, little wretch! What good post is my daughter going to get?"

The boy laughed.

"Don't try to fool me. I know all about it. Think you're the only ones with connections inside? We have ours too. Though my own post's out here, I have a couple of sisters who count for something in the Garden too. So, how can any secret be kept from us?"

Just then another old woman inside called out, "Hurry up, you young rascals, and go and fetch your Aunt Liu before it's too late."

Not stopping to bandy any more words with the boy, Mrs. Liu hastily opened the gate and went in, saying:

"Don't worry, I'm coming."

She headed straight for the kitchen, where some other cooks shirking responsibility had been waiting for her to decide what dishes to send to the different apartments.

"Where's Wuer?" Mrs. Liu asked.

"She's just gone to the boiler-house to look for the other girls," they told her.

Mrs. Liu, having put the *pachyma* flour away, was busy allotting the dishes for different quarters when Yingchun's little maid Lianhua came in.

"Sister Siqi says she wants a bowl of beaten eggs very lightly steamed," she announced.

"You *would* ask for a rarity!" remarked Mrs. Liu. "There's such a shortage of eggs this year, goodness knows why, they cost ten cash each, and even at that price they're hard to get. Yesterday the order came down to send food to the families of relatives, and several purveyors went out yet only managed to get two thousand eggs. So where am I to find eggs? Go and tell her she can have them some other time."

"The other day when she asked for beancurd, you sent over some which was rancid," protested Lianhua. "She gave me a scolding for that.

了。什么好东西，我就不信连鸡蛋都没有了，叫我翻出来。”一面说，一面真个走来，揭起菜箱一看，只见里面果有十来个鸡蛋，说道：“这不是?你就这么利害!吃的是主子的，我们的分例，你为什么心疼?又不是你下的蛋，怕人吃了。”柳家的忙丢了手里的活计，便上来说道：“你少满嘴里混唚!你娘才下蛋呢!通共留下这几个，预备接急的。你们吃了，倘或一声要起来，没有还了得。你们深宅大院，水来伸手，饭来张口，只知鸡蛋是平常物件，那里知道外头买卖的行市呢?别说这个，有一年连草根子还没了的日子还有呢。我劝他们，细米白饭，每日肥鸡大鸭子，将就些儿也罢了。吃腻了膈，天天又闹起故事来了。鸡蛋、豆腐，又是什么面筋、酱萝卜炸儿，敢自倒换口味。只是我又不是答应你们的，一处要一样，就是十来样。我倒别伺候头层主子，只预备你们二层主子了。”莲花儿听了，便红了脸，喊道：“谁天天要你什么来?你说上这两车子话!叫你来，不是为便宜却为什么?前儿小燕来说‘晴雯姐姐要吃芦蒿’，你怎么忙的还问肉炒，鸡炒?小燕说‘因荤的不好才另叫你炒个面筋的，少搁油才好’，你忙的倒说‘自己发昏’，赶着洗手炒了，狗颠儿似的亲捧了去。今儿反倒拿我作筏子，说我给众人听。”柳家的忙道：“阿弥陀佛!这些人眼见的。别说前儿一

Now she wants eggs and you say you haven't any. What's so precious about eggs? I don't believe you haven't even got eggs, I'll have a look."

She marched over to open the chest containing provisions, and sure enough found a dozen eggs in it.

"There you are!" she cried. "Why should you be so tightfisted? What we eat is the share given us by our mistresses; why should it worry *you*? You didn't lay those eggs. Why take on so if people eat them?"

Mrs. Liu at once put down what she was holding and went over to confront her.

"Stop talking rubbish!" she cried. "Your mother's the one who lays eggs! These few are all we've got left for making sauce with. They're for emergencies. Unless the young ladies ask for some, I won't use them. If you've eaten them all up, there'll be a fine to do!

"You girls living shut away in the inner compounds take everything for granted. You may think eggs are easily come by, knowing nothing about conditions outside in the market. Not to say eggs, there are some days when there's not so much as a blade of grass to be had. Take my advice and be satisfied with the fine rice, fat hens and big ducks you get every day. You're so sated with all that rich food, though, that you pester us all the time for something different: eggs and beancurd, or gluten of wheat and salted turnips. You certainly know how to vary your menu! But it's not my job to cater specially for *you*. If each place asks for a different dish, that comes to over ten dishes. I'd better stop looking after our first-grade mistresses so as to devote myself to you second-grade mistresses."

"Who's been asking for new dishes every day?" shouted Lianhua, her face scarlet. "Are you never going to stop ranting? If we get you a job here, of course we expect a little consideration. The other day when Xiaoyan told you that Sister Qingwen would like some artemisia, you immediately asked whether she wanted it fried with pork or with chicken. Xiaoyan said anything with meat was no good; what was why she asked for artemisia fried with gluten of wheat with as little oil as possible. At once you cursed yourself for being so dense and hastily washed your hands to cook the dish, taking it there yourself — like a dog wagging its tail. Yet today you pick on me in front of all these people!"

次，就从旧年一立厨房以来，凡各房里偶然间不论姑娘姐儿们要添一样半样，谁不是先拿了钱来，另买另添。有的没的，名声好听，说我单管姑娘的厨房省事，又有剩头儿，算起账来，惹人恶心：连姑娘带姐儿们四五十人，一日也只管要两只鸡，两只鸭子，十来斤肉，一吊钱的菜蔬。你们算算，够作什么的?连本项两顿饭还撑持不住，还搁的住这个点这样，那个点那样，买来的又不吃，又买别的去。既这样，不如回了太太，多添些分例，也像大厨房里预备老太太的饭，把天下所有的菜蔬用水牌写了，天天转着吃，吃到一个月现算倒好。连前儿三姑娘和宝姑娘偶然商议了要吃个油盐炒枸杞芽儿来，现打发个姐儿拿着五百钱来给我，我倒笑起来了，说:‘二位姑娘就是大肚子弥勒佛，也吃不了五百钱的去。这三二十个钱的事，还预备的起。’赶着我送回钱去，到底不收，说赏我打酒吃，又说‘如今厨房在里头，保不住屋里的人不去叨登，一盐一酱，那不是钱买的?你不给又不好，给了你又没的赔。你拿着这个钱，全当还了他们素日叨登东西的窝儿。’这就是明白体下的姑娘，我们心里只替他念佛。没的赵姨奶奶听了又气不忿，又说太便宜了我，隔不了十天，也打发个小丫头子来寻这样、寻那样，我倒好笑起来。你们竟成了例，不是这个，就是那个，我那里有这些赔的。”

"Gracious Buddha!" cried Mrs. Liu. "All those here can bear witness. Not to say the other day, but ever since this kitchen was set up last year, any apartment wanting something extra has always brought money to buy it. Sometimes we had what was wanted, sometimes we didn't. It may sound as if I've got a cushy job, with perks too, just catering for the young mistresses. Just work it out, though, and it's really sickening. The young ladies plus their maids come to forty or fifty people, yet each day we get only a couple of hens, a couple of ducks, some dozen catties of meat and one string of cash worth of vegetables. Figure it out for yourselves: how far will that go. It's not even enough for the two fixed meals, so how can it be stretched to cover extras ordered by you girls? And you won't take what we've bought but want us to go out and buy other things.

"The way things are, we'd better ask the mistress for more money so that we can do as they do in the big kitchen catering for the old lady: put down all the known dishes on the menu, prepare different dishes every day, and settle the accounts at the end of each month.

"The other day Miss Tanchun and Miss Baochai took it into their heads to have some fried wolfberry sprouts, and sent over a maid with five hundred cash. I couldn't help laughing and told her, 'Even if the two young ladies had bellies as big as a Buddha, they couldn't eat five hundred cash worth. It'll only cost twenty to thirty cash and that we can afford. '

"So I sent the money back, but they wouldn't take it, giving it to me as a tip to buy wine with. And they said, 'Now that the kitchen's inside the Garden, some of our people may go and pester you for things like salt or bean-sauce, all of which cost money. You can hardly refuse them; but if you give them what they want you'll lose out. So take this money to make good the arrears they've let you in for. '

"They're such considerate, understanding young ladies, those two, we can only pray to Buddha in our hearts to bless such kind mistresses. But when Concubine Zhao heard of this, she flew into a rage and fumed that I was getting too many perks. In less than ten days she kept sending over a maid to ask for this, that and the other. I laughed to myself: So you think this gives *you* the excuse to demand one thing after another. How

正乱时，只见司棋又打发人来催莲花儿，说他："死在这里，怎么就不回去?"莲花儿赌气回来，便添了一篇话，告诉了司棋。司棋听了，不免心头起火。此刻伺候迎春饭罢，带了小丫头们走来，见了许多人正吃饭，见他势头不好，都忙站起来陪笑让坐。司棋便喝命小丫头子动手，"凡箱柜所有的菜蔬，只管丢出来喂狗，大家赚不成。"小丫头子们巴不得一声，七手八脚抢上去，一顿乱翻乱掷的。慌的众人一面拉劝，一面央告司棋说："姑娘，别误听了小孩子的话。柳嫂子有八个头，也不敢得罪姑娘。说鸡蛋难买是真。我们才也说他不知好歹，凭是什么东西，也少不得变法儿去。他已经悟过来了，连忙蒸上了。姑娘不信瞧那火上。"

司棋被众人一顿好言，方将气劝的渐平。小丫头们也没得摔完东西，便拉开了。司棋连说带骂，闹了一回，方被众人劝去。柳家的只好摔碗、丢盘自己咕嘟了一回，蒸了一碗鸡蛋令人送去。司棋全泼在地下了。那人回来也不敢说，恐又生事。

柳家的打发他女儿喝了一碗汤，吃了半碗粥，又将茯苓霜一节说了。五儿听罢，便心下要分些赠芳官，遂用纸另包了一半，趁黄昏人稀之时，自己花遮柳隐的来找芳官。且喜无人盘问，一径到了怡红院门首，不好进去，只在一簇玫瑰花前站定，远远的望着。有一盏茶时，可巧小燕出来，忙上前叫住。小燕不知是那一个，至跟前方看真切，因问作什

can I afford so much?"

As they were arguing, Siqi sent someone over to find Lianhua. "Is she dead that she hasn't come back yet?" she asked.

Lianhua went back then in a huff to tell Siqi all that had been said, embroidering her account too. The result was that Siqi flared up. As soon as she had finished serving Yingchun's meal she took the young maids with her to the kitchen, where they found the kitchen-maids havimg their own meal. When Siqi stormed in, the women stood up and asked her to take a seat, but she ordered the younger maids to ransack the place.

"Just throw all the eatables in their chests and cupboards to the dogs," she cried, "so that no one gets any perks."

At the word of command, the young maids crowded forward and started turning the whole place upside down. The kitchen-maids tried frantically to stop them.

"Don't believe what those children say, miss," they begged Siqi. "Even if Mrs. Liu had nine lives she'd never dare offend you. Honestly, eggs are hard to buy this year. We've just been scolding her for being so stupid: whatever she's asked for, she ought to make shift to get it. Now she's realized her mistake and steamed the eggs. If you don't believe us, look on the stove."

This soft talk gradually mollified Siqi, and the young maids were led away before they could smash everything. Having continued to make a scene for a while, Siqi finally let herself be persuaded to leave. Mrs. Liu could only clatter bowls and dishes as she grumbled to herself; but when the bowl of eggs was steamed and sent over, Siqi emptied it on the ground. However, the maid who had taken it kept silent about this on her return, for fear of causing fresh trouble.

Mrs. Liu now gave her daughter some soup and half a bowl of porridge, then explained to her about the *pachyma* flour. Wuer decided to share the gift with Fangguan; so she wrapped up half of it in a piece of paper and as it was now growing dark, with few people about, slipped through the flowers and willows to find her friend. Luckily she was challenged by no one on her way to Happy Red Court. Once there, however, she was afraid to go in. She stood waiting in front of a rose bush some distance away until, after the time it would take for a cup of tea, Xiaoyan

么，五儿笑道："你叫出芳官来，我和他说话。"小燕悄笑道："姐姐太性急了，横竖等十来日就来了，只管找他做什么。方才使了他往前头去了，你且等他一等。不然，有什么话告诉我，等我告诉他。恐怕你等不得，只怕关园门了。"五儿便将茯苓霜递与了小燕，又说这是茯苓霜，如何吃，如何补益，"我得了些送他的，转烦你递与他就是了。"说毕，作辞回来。

正走蓼溆一带，忽见迎头林之孝家的带着几个婆子走来，五儿藏躲不及，只得上来问好。林之孝家的问道："我听见你病了，怎么跑到这里来?"五儿陪笑说道："因这两日好些，跟我妈进来散散闷。才因我妈使我到怡红院送家伙去。"林之孝家的说道："这话岔了。方才我见你妈出去，我才关门。既是你妈使了你去，他如何不向我说你在这里呢，竟出去让我关门，这个我就实在的不懂得他是何主意?可知是你扯谎。"五儿听了，没话回答，只说："原是我妈一早叫我送去的，我忘了，挨到这时我才想起来了。只怕我妈错当我先出去了，所以没和大娘说得。"

林之孝家的听他辞钝色虚，又因近日玉钏儿说那边正房内失落了东西，几个丫头对赖，没主儿，心下便起了疑。可巧小蝉、莲花儿并几个媳妇子走来，见了这事，便说道："林

happened to come out. Wuer ran forward to call her. Xiaoyan did not recognize who it was until Wuer came closer.

"What are *you* doing here?" she asked.

"Ask Fangguan to come out," urged Wuer. "I've something to tell her."

"You're too impatient, sister," Xiaoyan whispered. "Just another ten days and you'll be here. Why keep on looking for her? She was sent off on an errand to the front just now. You can either wait for her, or let me pass on your message if you're in a hurry. The Garden gate may be closed soon."

Wuer handed her the *pachyma* flour then, telling her how it should be taken and what it was good for.

"I'm just giving her part of some that was given to me," she explained. "Please be good enough to let her have it."

With that she took her leave and started back. She had just reached Smartweed Bank when along came Lin Zhixiao's wife with a few serving-women. Having no time to hide, Wuer had to step forward to greet them.

"I heard you were ill," said Mrs. Lin. "What are you doing here?"

"The last couple of days I've felt better, so I came here with my mother for a little change. Just now she sent me to Happy Red Court to deliver something."

"I don't believe it," replied Mrs. Lin. "I just saw your mother go out, so I locked the gate. If she'd sent you on an errand, why didn't she tell me you were here? Why should she let me lock the gate? I really can't understand this. You must be lying."

Wuer had nothing to say to that, so she faltered, "My mother told me to send those things this morning, but I forgot and only just remembered. I suppose she imagined I'd already left; that's why she didn't tell you."

Mrs. Lin saw how flustered and guilty she looked, and remembered Yuchuan telling her recently that things had disappeared from Lady Wang's rooms but the young maids there claimed to know nothing about it, and the culprit hadn't been found. All this made her suspicious. And just at this moment Chanjie and Lianhua arrived with several serving-women. When they understood the situation, they said:

奶奶倒要审审他。这两日他往这里头跑的不像，鬼鬼祟祟的，不知干些什么事?”小蝉又道:“正是。昨日玉钏姐姐说，太太耳房里的柜子开了，少了好些零碎东西。琏二奶奶打发平姑娘和玉钏姐姐要些玫瑰露，谁知也少了一罐子。若不是寻露，还不知道呢。”莲花儿笑道:“这话我没听见，今儿我倒看见一个露瓶子。”林之孝家的正因这些事没主儿，每日凤姐儿使平儿催逼他，一听此言，忙问在那里，莲花儿便说:“在他们厨房里呢。”林之孝家的听了，忙命打了灯笼，带着众人来寻。五儿急的便说:“那原是宝二爷屋里的芳官给我的。”林之孝家的说:“不管你方官圆官，现有了赃证，我只呈报了，凭你主子前辩去。”一面说，一面进入厨房，莲花儿带着，取出露瓶。恐还有偷的别物，又细细搜了一遍，又得了一包茯苓霜，一并拿了，带了五儿，来回李纨与探春。

那时李纨正因兰哥儿病了，不理事务，只命去见探春。探春已归房。人回进去，丫鬟们都在院内纳凉，探春在内盥沐，只有待书回进去。半日，出来说:“姑娘知道了，叫你们找平儿回二奶奶去。”林之孝家的只得领出来。到凤姐儿那边，先找着了平儿，平儿进去回了凤姐。凤姐方才歇下，听见此事，便吩咐:“将他娘打四十板子，撵出去，永不许进二

"You'd better cross-examine her, Mrs. Lin. She's been creeping in here the last couple of days in a very sneaky way. Goodness knows what she's up to."

"That's right," added Chanjie. "Yesterday Sister Yuchuan told me that cupboard in the mistress' annex had been opened and quite a few odd things were missing. And when Madam Lian sent Pinger to get some rose flavoured juice from Yuchuan, there was one bottle short. They wouldn't have known if they hadn't been looking for it."

"I didn't hear about that," put in Lianhua. "But today I saw a bottle of juice."

Since Xifeng had been sending Pinger every day to press Mrs. Lin to track down the thief, as soon as she heard this she asked:

"Where did you see it?"

"In their kitchen," was Lianhua's answer.

At once Mrs. Lin told them to light the lantern and set off at their head to make a search.

In desperation then Wuer confessed, "That was given me by Fangguan in Master Bao's place."

"I don't care who gave it you," snapped Mrs. Lin. "Now that we have evidence of the theft, I shall report it and you can explain it to the mistresses."

By this time they had entered the kitchen where Lianhua showed her the bottle. Suspecting there might be other stolen goods there, they made a thorough search and found a packet of *pachyma* flour as well. Picking up these things and taking Wuer with them, they went to report the business to Li Wan and Tanchun.

As Li Wan's son Lan was ill, she had stopped attending to household affairs and told them to go and see Tanchun. The latter had returned to her quarters, where she was washing in her room while her maids rested in the courtyard. Shishu went in alone to report, coming out again after some time to say:

"I've told the young mistress. She wants you to get Pinger to report this to Madam Lian."

Mrs. Lin had to lead them all off then to Xifeng's quarters. First she found Pinger, who went in to report the business to her mistress. Xifeng

门。把五儿打四十板子，立刻交给庄子上，或卖或配人。”平儿听了，出来依言吩咐了林之孝家的。五儿唬的哭哭啼啼，给平儿跪着，细诉芳官之事。平儿道：“这也不难，等明日问了芳官便知真假。但这茯苓霜前日人送了来，还等老太太、太太回来看了才敢动，这不该偷了去。”五儿见问，忙又将他舅舅送的一节说了出来。平儿听了，笑道：“这样说，你竟是个平白无辜之人，拿你来顶缸的。此时天晚，奶奶才进了药歇下，不便为这点子小事去絮叨。如今且将他交给上夜的人看守一夜，等明儿我回了奶奶，再做道理。”林之孝家的不敢违拗，只得带了出来，交与上夜的媳妇们看守，自便去了。

这里五儿被人软禁起来，一步不敢多走。又兼众媳妇也有劝他说，不该做这没行止之事；也有报怨说，正经更还坐不上来，又弄个贼来给我们看，倘或眼不见寻了死，逃走了，都是我们的不是。于是又有一干素日与柳家不睦的人，见了这般，十分称愿，都来奚落、嘲戏他。这五儿心内又气又受委屈，竟无处可诉；且本来怯弱有病，这一夜思茶无茶，思水无水，思睡无衾枕，呜呜咽咽直哭了一夜。

谁知和他母女不和的那些人，巴不得一时撵出他们去，深恐次日有变，大家先起了个清早，都悄悄的来买转平儿，

had just retired for the night. Upon hearing this news she ordered:

"Give Wuer's mother forty strokes with the cane and throw her out. She's never to set foot inside the inner gate again. Give Wuer forty strokes too, and pack her off at once to the manor to be sold or married off."

When Pinger came out and passed on these instructions to Mrs. Lin, Wuer burst out weeping for terror. Kneeling to Pinger she told her all that she and Fangguan had done.

"That's easily checked on," said Pinger. "We shall find out whether she's telling the truth or not by questioning Fangguan tomorrow. But this *pachyma* flour was sent in as a present only the other day, and it shouldn't have been unpacked until after Their Ladyships had come back and inspected it. You shouldn't have stolen it."

Wuer hastily explained how the *pachyma* flour had been given them by her uncle.

"If that's the case," said Pinger with a smile, "then you've done nothing wrong but are being used as a scapegoat. Well, it's late now and my mistress has just taken her medicine and gone to bed; we mustn't disturb her again over such a trifle. Let the night-watchers keep an eye on Wuer tonight, and tomorrow after I've told my mistress this we'll decide what to do."

Not daring to object, Mrs. Lin took Wuer out and handed her over to the women keeping watch that night, after which she went home.

Wuer, kept under guard, did not dare to stir hand or foot. Some of the women on duty berated her for her bad conduct. Others complained:

"It's bad enough having to keep watch at night without having to guard a thief too; if she should kill herself or escape while we weren't looking, we'd get into trouble."

Other women who were on bad terms with Mrs. Liu were delighted by this development, and they came to jeer at the girl too. Wuer who had always been delicate, having no water to drink and nowhere to sleep that night, felt angry at being so unfairly treated, but there was nobody to whom to complain. She sobbed the whole night through. All those women who had it in for her and her mother were longing to have them thrown out straight away, for fear the decision might be changed the next day. They got up early and went secretly to try to win Pinger over to their side,

一面送些东西，一面又奉承他办事简断，一面又讲述他母亲素日许多不好。平儿一一的都应着，打发他们去了，却悄悄的来访袭人，问他可果真是芳官给他露了。袭人便说："露却是给了芳官，芳官转给谁，我却不知。"袭人于是又问芳官，芳官听了，唬天跳地，忙应是自己送他的。芳官便又告诉了宝玉，宝玉也慌了，说："露虽有了，若勾起茯苓霜来，他自然也实供。若听见了是他舅舅门上得的，他舅舅又有了不是，岂不是人家的好意，反被咱们陷害了。"因忙和平儿计议："露的事虽完，然这霜也是有不是的。好姐姐，你叫他说也是芳官给他的就完了。"平儿笑道："虽如此，只是他昨晚上已经同人说是他舅舅给的了，如何又说你给的?况且那边所丢的正无主儿，如今有赃证的白放了，又去找谁?谁还肯认?众人也未必心服。"晴雯走来笑道："太太那边的露再无别人，分明是彩云偷了给环哥儿去了。你们可瞎乱说。"平儿笑道："谁不知是这个原故，但今玉钏儿急的哭，悄悄问着他，他若应了，玉钏儿也罢了，大家也就混着不问了。难道我们好意兜揽这事不成!可恨彩云不但不应，他还挤玉钏儿，说他偷了去了。两个人窝里发炮，先吵的合府里皆知，我们如何装没事人?少不得要查的。殊不知告失盗的就是贼人，又没赃证，怎么说他?"宝玉道："也罢，这件事我也应

taking her presents, complimenting her on her competence and good judgement, and telling her all kinds of tales about Mrs. Liu. Pinger heard them out in turn and sent them away. Then she slipped over to see Xiren and find out whether it was true that Fangguan had given Wuer the rose flavoured juice.

"I did give Fangguan some," said Xiren, "but I don't know what she did with it." Fangguan, when questioned, was startled into admitting that she had indeed given it to Wuer. Then Fangguan told Baoyu, and he was worried too.

"Though the rose juice business is cleared up," he said, "if the *pachyma* flour is brought into it she'll have to own up; and when they know that her uncle got it at the gate he'll be blamed. They meant well, but we'll be getting them into trouble."

He lost no time in talking it over with Pinger.

"The rose juice business is cleared up," he told her. "But they're still in the wrong over the *pachyma* flour. Why not just say, good sister, that this was given her by Fangguan too? Then it will be all right."

"That's all very well," smiled Pinger. "But yesterday evening Wuer already admitted that it was a gift from her uncle; so how can she say now that it was from *you*? Besides, before the thief who stole the juice has been found, how can we let off the one caught with evidence and go looking for other culprits? Who would own up? People wouldn't be convinced either."

Qingwen joined in at this point, saying. "That rose juice from the mistress' place must obviously have been taken by Caiyun — no one else could have stolen it — to give Master Huan. So stop making all these wild guesses."

Pinger chuckled, "Of course, we know that's the case. But now Yuchuan's so frantic, she's crying. If we asked Caiyun in confidence and she owned up, Yuchuan could stop worrying and everybody would forget about it. Who wants to stir up trouble anyway? But that wretch Caiyun not only won't admit it, she's accused Yuchuan of the theft. Because of their back-biting and bickering the whole mansion's heard of this business. So how can we pretend that nothing's happened? We shall have to make investigations. We all know that the one who reported the

起来，就说是我吓他们玩的，悄悄的偷了太太的来了。两件事都完了。”袭人道：“倒也是件阴骘事，保全人的贼名儿。只是太太听见，又说你小孩子气，不知好歹了。”平儿笑道：“这也是件小事。如今便从赵姨娘屋里起了赃来也容易，我只怕又伤着一个好人的体面。别人都别管，只这一个人岂不又生气？我可怜的是他，不肯为打老鼠伤了玉瓶。”说着，把三个指头一伸。袭人等听说，便知他说的是探春，大家都忙说：“可是这话。竟是我们这里应了起来的为是。”平儿又笑道：“也须得把彩云和玉钏儿两个孽障叫了来，问准了他方好。不然他们得了益，不说为这个，倒像我没了本事问不出来，烦出这里来完事，他们以后越发偷的偷，不管的不管了。”袭人等笑道：“正是，你也要留个地步。”

平儿便命人叫了他两个来，说道：“不用慌，贼已有了。”玉钏儿先问贼在那里？平儿道：“现在二奶奶屋里呢，你问他什么应什么。我心里明知不是他偷的，可怜他害怕都承认，这里宝二爷不过意，要替他认一半。我待要说出来，但只是这做贼的素日又是和我好的一个姊妹，窝主却是平常，里面又伤着一个好人的体面，因此为难，少不得央求宝二爷应了，大家无事。如今反要问你们二人，还是怎样？若

theft is the thief herself, but as there's no evidence how can we accuse her?"

"Never mind," said Baoyu. "I'll take the blame for that too. I'll say I filched it on the sly from my mother's place to frighten them for fun. Then both matters will be settled."

Xiren commented, "Of course that would be a kind deed, clearing their reputations. When the mistress hears about it, though, she'll scold you again for having no sense and acting so childishly."

"That doesn't matter so much," said Pinger with a smile. "Actually, I could easily find the evidence in Concubine Zhao's rooms, but I was afraid that would make another good person lose face. Other people wouldn't mind, but she'd certainly be angry. It was *her* I was thinking of. I didn't want to smash a jade vase to catch a rat." While saying this she held out three fingers to indicate to Xiren and the others that it was the third young mistress, Tanchun, whom she had in mind.

"Quite right," they said. "Better put the blame on us here."

"Even so," proposed Pinger, "we must call those two trouble-makers Caiyun and Yuchuan over, and get them to agree to this arrangement. Otherwise they'll get off unscathed without knowing the reason, thinking instead that because I hadn't the gumption to get at the truth, I had to beg you people here to cover up the theft. That would encourage one of them to go on stealing with impunity, the other to let things drift."

"That's true," agreed Xiren and the rest. "You must make it clear where we stand."

A messenger was sent by Pinger to fetch the two girls.

"You don't have to worry," they were told. "We're found the culprit."

"Where?" asked Yuchuan.

"In Madam Lian's place," Pinger told her. "She admits to everything, but I know quite well that she didn't steal those things; the poor creature's confessed to it because she's frightened. Master Bao here is sorry for her and means to take half the blame. I could, of course, name the real thief, but it so happens that she's a good friend of mine. I don't care much what happens to the receiver of the stolen goods, only this would damage a good person's reputation too; so being in a quandary

从此以后大家小心存体面，这便求宝二爷应了；若不然，我就回了二奶奶，别冤屈了好人。”彩云听了，不觉红了脸，一时羞恶之心感发，便说道：“好姐姐，放心，也别冤了好人，也别带累了无辜之人伤体面。偷东西原是赵姨奶奶央告我再三，我拿了些与环哥是情真。连太太在家我们还拿过，各人去送人，也是常事。我原说嚷过两天就罢了。如今既冤屈了好人，我心里也不忍。姐姐竟带了我回奶奶去，我一概应了完事。”众人听了这话，一个个都诧异，他竟这样有肝胆。宝玉忙笑道：“彩云姐姐果然是个正经人。如今也不用你应，我只说是我悄悄的偷了的，吓你们玩，如今闹出事来，我原该承认。只求姐姐们以后省些事，大家就好了。”彩云道：“我干的事为什么叫你应，死活我该去受。”平儿、袭人忙道：“不是这样说，你一应了，未免又叨登出赵姨奶奶来，那时三姑娘听了，岂不生气？竟不如宝二爷应了，大家无事，且除这几个人皆不得知道，这是何等的干净。但只以后千万大家小心些就是了。要拿什么，好歹等太太到家，那怕连这房子给了人，我们就没干系了。”彩云听了，低头想了一想，方依允。

于是大家商议妥贴，平儿带了他两个并芳官往前边来，至上夜房中叫了五儿，将茯苓霜一节也悄悄的教他说系芳官所赠，五儿感谢不尽。平儿带他们来至自己这边，已见林之孝家的带领了几个媳妇，押解着柳家的等够多时。林之孝家

I'm going to ask Master Bao to take the blame, so as to keep the rest of us out of trouble.

"Now I want to know what *you* intend to do. If you both agree to be more careful in future, so that nobody loses face, I'll ask Master Bao to take the blame. If not, I'll report the truth to Madam Lian rather than wrong an innocent person."

Caiyun, at this, blushed with shame.

"Don't worry, sister," she said. "There's no need to wrong an innocent person, or to make a young lady who wasn't involved lose face. It was Concubine Zhao who kept begging me to filch things, and I gave some of them to Master Huan — that's the truth. Even when the mistress is at home, we often take this or that to give to friends. I thought after a couple of days this storm would blow over; but I can't stand seeing an innocent person accused. You'd better take me to the Second Mistress, and I'll make a clean breast of everything to her."

The others hearing this were impressed by her courage.

"That's very decent of Sister Caiyun," said Baoyu. "But there's no need for you to admit it; I'll just say that I took it in secret to tease you all, and now that trouble's come of it I should own up. I simply ask you sisters to make less trouble in future. That would be best for us all."

"Why should you own up to something I did?" asked Caiyun. "I'm the one, if anyone, who deserves to be punished."

"That's not the way to look at it," interposed Pinger and Xiren. "If you were to admit it you'd have to let on about Concubine Zhao, and when Miss Tanchun heard of it she'd feel bad again. Better let Master Bao take the blame to keep us all out of trouble. Apart from the few of us here, no one else need know about it — isn't that much neater? In future, though, we must all of us be more careful. If you want to take anything, at least wait till the mistress is back; then even if you give the whole *house* away, it'll be no concern of ours."

Caiyun lowered her head in thought and then agreed. After their plans were laid, Pinger took the two of them with Fangguan to the front where women kept watch at night and, having summoned Wuer, gave her secret instructions to say that the *pachyma* flour had also been a present from Fangguan. After Wuer had poured out her thanks Pinger took them to

的又向平儿说："今儿一早押了他来，恐园里没人伺候姑娘们的饭，我暂且将秦显的女人派了去伺候。姑娘一并回明奶奶，他倒干净谨慎，以后就派他常伺候罢。"平儿道："秦显的女人是谁?我不大相熟。"林之孝家的道："他是园里南角门上夜的，白日里没什么事，所以姑娘不大认识。高高的孤拐，大大的眼睛，最干净爽利的。"玉钏儿道："是了。姐姐，你怎么忘了，他是跟二姑娘的司棋的婶娘。司棋的父母虽是大老爷那边的人，他这叔叔却是咱们这边的。"平儿听了，方想起来，笑道："哦，你早说是他，我就明白了。"又笑道："也太派急了些。如今的这事八下里水落石出了，连前儿太太屋里丢的也有了主儿。是宝玉那日过来和这两个孽障要什么的，偏他两个人怄他玩，说太太不在家不敢拿。宝玉便瞅着他两个不提防的时节，自己进去拿了些什么出来。这两个孽障不知道，就吓慌了。如今宝玉听见带累了别人，方细细的告诉了我，拿出东西来我瞧，一件不差。那茯苓霜也是宝玉外头得了的，他曾赏过许多人，不独园内人有，连妈妈子们讨了出去给亲戚们吃，又转送人，袭人也曾给过芳官之流的人。他们私情各相来往，也是常事。前儿那两篓还摆在议事厅上，好好的原封没动，怎么就混赖起人来?等我回了奶奶再说。"说毕，抽身进了卧房，将此事照前言回了凤姐儿一遍。

her own quarters, where Mrs. Lin and some other serving-women had long been waiting, holding Mrs. Liu.

Mrs. Lin told Pinger, "I brought her here first thing this morning. For fear nobody would see to the young ladies' morning meal, I sent Qin Xian's wife to the Garden to take charge for the time being. Why not suggest to the Second Mistress that Mrs. Qin, being clean and painstaking, might as well be assigned the job for keeps?"

"Who is Qin Xian's wife?" asked Pinger. "I don't seem to know her."

"She's one of those who keep watch at night at the south gate of the Garden," Mrs. Lin answered. "She has nothing to do in the day time; that's why you don't know her. She has high cheekbones and big eyes, and is very clean and spry."

"That's right," put in Yuchuan. "How could you forget, sister? She's the aunt of Siqi who serves Miss Yingchun. Though Siqi's parents belong to the Elder Master's household, her uncle works here."

Pinger recollectecd the woman then and smiled.

"Ah, if you'd said that before I'd have known," she said. "Still, you're in too much of a hurry to give her a job. The fact is, this business is more or less solved; we've even found out as well who took the things missing from the mistress' place the other day. It was Baoyu who went over there and asked those two wretched girls for something. To tease him they said they dared not take anything with the mistress away; so when they weren't looking he went in and took the things. Those silly creatures didn't know, that's why they got scared. Now that Baoyu knows this has involved other people, he's told me the whole story and shown me the things he took — there's nothing missing. He got that *pachyma* flour outside as well, and shared it out to a whole lot of people, not just the girls in the Garden. Even the nannies got some to take out for their relatives, some of whom passed it on to other people. Xiren gave some to Fangguan and others too. This was just doing friends a favour, nothing unusual. As for those two baskets brought the other day, they're still in the hall and the seals on them haven't been broken; so how can we accuse people of pilfering them? Wait till I've reported this to my mistress and then we'll see."

凤姐道："虽如此说，但宝玉为人不管青红皂白爱兜揽事情。别人再求求他去，他又搁不住人两句好话，给他个炭篓子戴上，什么事他不应承。咱们若信了，将来若大事也如此，如何治人？还要细细的追求才是。依我的主意，把太太屋里的丫头都拿来，虽不必擅加拷打，只叫他们垫着瓷瓦子跪在太阳地下，茶饭也别给他们吃。一日不说跪一日，便是铁打的，一日也管招了。又道是'苍蝇不抱没缝的鸡蛋'。虽然这柳家的没偷，到底有些影儿，人才说他。虽不加贼刑，也革出不用。朝廷家原有挂误的，倒也不算委屈了他。"平儿道："何苦来操这心！'得放手时须放手，'什么大不了的事，乐得不施恩呢。依我说，纵在这屋里操上一百分的心，终久咱们是往那边屋里去的。没的结些小人仇恨，使人含怨。况且自己又三灾八难的，好容易怀了一个哥儿，到了六七个月还掉了，焉知不是素日操劳太过，气恼伤着的。如今趁早儿见一半不见一半的，也倒罢了。"一席话，说的凤姐倒笑了，说道："凭你这小蹄子发放去罢。我才精爽些了，没的淘气。"平儿笑道："这不是正经！"说毕，转身出来，一一发放。要知端的，下回分解。

She went into the bedroom to tell Xifeng the same story.

"That's all very well," said Xifeng, "but we know Baoyu. He sticks up for those girls even if they're in the wrong. And if people appeal to him or flatter him — crowning him with a charcoal basket — he'll agree to anything. If we take *his* word for it and there's worse trouble of this kind in future, how are we to control these servants? We must go on making detailed investigations. My plan is to fetch all the maids from the mistress' house here. No need to torture or beat them; we can just make them kneel in the sun on shards of porcelain with nothing to eat or drink. If they don't come clean, they'll have to kneel all day. Then even if they're made of iron, in a day they're bound to confess."

She added, "Flies go for cracked eggs. Even if this Liu woman didn't steal anything, she must have been up to something or people wouldn't have accused her. Even if we don't punish her, we should dismiss her; that's the usual court procedure. It wouldn't be doing her an injustice."

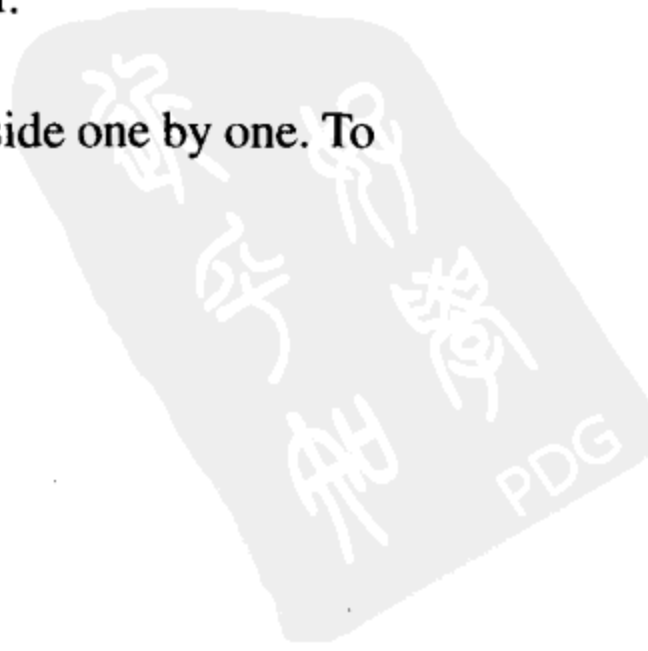
"Why trouble yourself over this?" countered Pinger. "We should be lenient whenever we can. This isn't anything so important that you can't overlook it. What I feel is this: however hard you work over here, you'll be going back eventually to the other house; so why make enemies of the servants here, making them bear you a grudge? It's not as if you haven't troubles enough of your own. You managed after years to conceive a son but lost him in the seventh month through a miscarriage brought on, for all we know, by overworking and getting too upset and worked up over things. Wouldn't it be better, while it's not too late, to shut your eyes to half of what's going on?"

This advice made Xifeng smile.

"All right, you little bitch," she said. "Do whatever you like. I'm just feeling slightly better; I don't want to lose my temper."

"That's the right way to talk!" chuckled Pinger.

With that she went out to deal with the women outside one by one. To know what happened later, read the next chapter.




憨湘
眠雪
葉酣
秋竹

第六十二回

憨湘云醉眠芍药茵　呆香菱情解石榴裙

话说平儿出来，吩咐林之孝家的道："大事化为小事，小事化为没事，方是兴旺之家。若得不了一点子小事，便扬铃打鼓的乱折腾起来，不成道理。如今将他母女带回，照旧去当差。将秦显家的仍旧退回。再不必提此事，只是每日小心巡察要紧。"说毕，起身走了。柳家的母女忙上来磕头，林家的带回园中，回了李纨、探春，二人皆说："知道了，能可无事，很好。"

司棋等人空兴头了一阵。那秦显家的好容易得了这个空儿钻了来，只兴头了半天。在厨房内正乱着接收家伙、米粮、煤炭等物，又查出许多亏空来，说："粳米短了两石，常用米又多支了一个月的，炭也欠着额数。"一面又打点送林之孝家的礼，悄悄的备了一篓炭，五百斤木柴，一担粳米在外边，就遣了子侄送入林家去了；又打点送账房的礼；又预备几样菜蔬请几位同事的人，说："我来了，全仗列位扶持。自今以后都是一家人了。我有照管不到的，好歹大家照管些儿。"正乱着，忽有人来说与他："看过这早饭就出去罢。柳

Chapter 62

Sweet Xiangyun Sleep Tipsily Among Peonies
Silly Xiangling Coyly Takes Off Her Pomegranate Skirt

Pinger, going out as we saw, told Lin Zhixiao's wife, "A prosperous family ought to minimize big scandals and overlook minor ones. It wouldn't look good if we were to ring bells, beat drums and raise a rumpus over a trifle. So take mother and daughter back now: they're to keep their jobs. And send Qin Xian's wife back as well. There's no need to say any more about this business. Just make a careful inspection every day." With that she left.

Mrs. Liu and Wuer hastily stepped forward to kowtow their thanks, after which Mrs. Lin took them back to the Garden and reported the matter to Li Wan and Tanchun, both of whom approved of the way it had been settled.

So Siqi and the rest had worked themselves up for nothing. And Qin Xian's wife, after this stroke of luck came her way, was able to gloat for no more than half a day. She had busily taken over and checked up on the utensils, rice, grain, charcoal and so forth in the kitchen, where she discovered serious shortages.

"There's two piculs of good rice short," she observed. "An extra month's supply of ordinary rice has been drawn in advance, and there's charcoal missing as well."

At the same time she prepared presents for Mrs. Lin, secretly getting ready a load of charcoal, five hundred catties of firewood and one picul of good rice outside the Garden for her nephew to take to the Lins' house. In addition, she prepared gifts to send the accountants and some dishes to treat her new colleagues. "My coming here is all thanks to your help," she told them. "In future we shall be one family. If I overlook anything, please see to it for me."

As she was bustling frantically about, a messenger suddenly arrived

嫂儿原无事，如今还交与他管了。”秦显家的听了，轰去魂魄，垂头丧气，登时掩旗息鼓，卷包而出。送人之物白丢了许多，自己倒要折变了赔补亏空。连司棋都气了个倒仰，无计挽回，只得罢了。

赵姨娘正因彩云私赠了许多东西，被玉钏儿吵出，生恐查诘出来，每日捏一把汗打听信儿。忽见彩云来告诉说：“都是宝玉应了，从此无事。”赵姨娘方把心放下来。谁知贾环听如此说，便起了疑心，将彩云凡私赠之物都拿了出来，照着彩云的脸摔了去，说：“这两面三刀的东西！我不稀罕。你不和宝玉好，他如何肯替你应？你既有担当给了我，原该不与一个人知道。如今你既然告诉了他，我再要这个也没趣。”彩云见如此，急的发身赌誓，以至于哭着百般解说。贾环执意不信，说：“不看你素日之情，去告诉二嫂子，就说你偷来给我，我不敢要。你细想去。”说毕，摔手出去了，急的赵姨娘骂：“没造化的种子，蛆心孽障。”气的彩云哭个泪干肠断，赵姨娘百般的安慰他：“好孩子，他辜负了你的心，我看的真。让我收起来，过两日，他自然回转过来了。”说着，便要收东西。彩云一顿赌气包起来，乘人不见时，来至园中，都撇在河内，顺水沉的沉、漂的漂了。自己气的夜间在被里暗哭。

to announce: "You're to leave after serving the morning meal. Mrs. Liu has been cleared and the job given back to her."

Thunderstruck and utterly cast down by this news, Qin Xian's wife made haste to pack up and beat a retreat. She was badly out of pocket over the presents, and now she had to make good that sum herself. Siqi too was completely taken aback, but fume as she might there was nothing she could do.

As for Concubine Zhao, because Caiyun had given her so many things on the sly and Yuchuan had raised such a fuss, she was afraid others would find out the truth. This kept her in a constant cold sweat as she waited to hear the upshot. When Caiyun assured her that there would be no further trouble as Baoyu had taken the blame, this took a great load off her mind. It only made Jia Huan more suspicious, however. He fetched out all Caiyun's secret gifts to him and threw them at her face.

"Sneaky double-crosser!" he swore. "I don't want this trash of yours. If you weren't on good terms with Baoyu, why should he cover up for you? If you had any guts, you wouldn't have let a single person know you'd given me these things. Now that you've blabbed about it I'd lose face if I kept them."

Caiyun frantically assured him that she was not on friendly terms with Baoyu, nor had she told anyone. Sobbingly she tried in all sorts of ways to convince him, but Jia Huan stubbornly refused to believe her.

"If not for our past friendship," he cried, "I'd go and tell sister-in-law Xifeng that you stole these things and offered them to me, but I dared not take them. Just think what would happen then!" With that he stormed out.

By this time Concubine Zhao was frantic too.

"Ungrateful brat!" she cursed. "Misbegotten monster!"

Caiyun, weeping her eyes out, looked quite heart-broken no matter how the concubine tried to comfort her.

"Good child, how ungrateful he is, after all your kindness!" she said. "But I know how it is. Let me put these things away, and in a couple of days he'll come to his senses again."

She wanted to take the things, but Caiyun in a fit of pique bundled them up together, and when no one was watching slipped into the Garden

当下又值宝玉生日已到，原来宝琴也是这日，二人相同。因王夫人不在家，也不像往年热闹。只有张道士送了四样礼，换的寄名符儿；还有几处僧尼庙内和尚、姑子送了供尖儿，并寿星纸马疏头，并本命星官值年太岁周年换的锁儿；家中常走的女先儿来上寿。王子腾那边，仍是一双鞋袜，一套衣服，一百寿桃，一百束上用银丝挂面。薛姨娘处减一等。其余家中人，尤氏仍是一双鞋袜；凤姐是一个宫制四面和合荷包，里面装一个金寿星，一件波斯国所制的玩器。各庙中遣人去放堂舍钱。又另有宝琴之礼，不能备述。姐妹中皆随便，或有一扇的，或有一字的，或有一画的，或有一诗的，聊复应景而已。

这日宝玉清晨起来，梳洗已毕，冠带出来。至前厅院中，有李贵等四五个人在那里设下天地香烛，宝玉炷了香。行礼毕，奠茶焚纸后，便至宁府宗祠祖先堂两处行礼毕，出至月台上，又朝上遥拜过贾母、贾政、王夫人等。一顺到尤氏房中，行过礼，坐了一回，方回荣府。先至薛姨妈处，薛姨妈再三拉着，然后又遇见薛蝌，让了一回，方进园来。晴雯、麝月二人，并些小丫头子夹着毡子，从李氏起，一一挨

and threw them all into the stream, where some sank and some floated away. That night, under her quilt, she secretly wept with rage.

By now Baoyu's birthday had come round again, and they found that Baoqin's birthday happened to fall on the identical day. As Lady Wang was away from home, however, it was not as lively as in previous years. Still, the Taoist priest Zhang sent over four gifts and a new charm with the boy's Buddhist name on it; then some monks and nuns from various abbeys, nunneries and temples brought sacrificial offerings of food, pictures of the God of Longevity, sacrificial paper for burning, the name of his own star god, the name of the star god presiding over that year, and lock-charms to safeguard Baoyu throughout the year. Men and women story-tellers who frequented the house came to offer congratulations.

Wang Ziteng sent his nephew his usual gifts: a pair of shoes and socks, a suit of clothes, a hundred longevity cakes in the shape of peaches, and a hundred bundles of "silver-silk" noodles of the kind used in the Palace. From Aunt Xue the boy received half this amount, appropriate to her status. As for the rest of the family, Madam You gave him her usual gift of a pair of shoes and socks, and Xifeng a pouch symbolizing harmony embroidered in the Palace, in which were a golden God of Longevity, as well as a toy from Persia. Alms and gifts were dispatched to various temples, and there were presents for Baoqin as well, but we need not enumerate these. The girls just sent whatever they pleased — a fan, some calligraphy, a painting or a poem — to mark the occasion.

Baoyu got up early that morning and as soon as his toilet was finished put on ceremonial dress and went to the front court. There Li Kui and four other stewards had set ready the incense and candles for the sacrifices to heaven and earth. Baoyu lit the incense, bowed, poured libations and burned sacrificial paper, then went to do obeisance in the clan temple and the ancestral hall in the Ning Mansion. This done, he came out to the terrace of the ancestral hall to bow in the direction of the Lady Dowager and his parents. Next he called on Madam You to pay his respects, and after sitting there for a while returned to the Rong Mansion.

Here, he called first on Aunt Xue, who held him in her arms to prevent him from kneeling to her. Then he saw Xue Ke and after an exchange of

着，比自己长的房中到过。复出二门，至李、赵、张、王四个奶妈家让了一回，方进来了。虽众人要行礼，也不曾受。回至房中，袭人等只都来说一声就是了。王夫人有言，不令年轻人受礼，恐折了福寿，故皆不磕头。

歇一时，贾环、贾兰等来了，袭人连忙拉住，坐了一坐，便去了。宝玉笑说走乏了，便歪在床上。方吃了半盏茶，只听外面咭咭呱呱，一群丫头笑了进来，原来是小螺、翠墨、翠缕、入画，邢岫烟的丫头篆儿，并奶子抱巧姐儿，彩鸾、绣鸾八九个人，都抱了红毡，笑着走来，说："拜寿的挤破了门了，快拿面来我们吃。"刚进门时，探春、湘云、宝琴、岫烟、惜春也都来了。宝玉忙迎出来，笑说："不敢起动，快预备好茶。"进入房中，不免推让一回，大家归坐。袭人等捧过茶来，才吃了一口，平儿也打扮的花枝招展的来了。宝玉忙迎出来，笑说："我方才到凤姐姐门上，回了进去，不能见，我又打发人进去让姐姐的。"平儿笑道："我正打发你姐姐梳头，不得闲出来回你。后来听见又说让我，我那里禁当的起，所以特赶来磕头。"宝玉笑道："我也禁当不起。"袭人早在外安坐，让坐。平儿便福下去，宝玉作揖不

courtesies went into the Garden attended by Qingwen, Sheyue and a small maid carrying a rug. He called to pay his respects in turn to all his seniors starting with Li Wan, and then went out of the inner gate to the outer courtyard to see his four old nannies Li, Zhao, Zhang and Wang. On his return, everyone wanted to kowtow their congratulations, but he would not let them do so.

On his return to his quarters, Xiren and the other maids simply offered him verbal congratulations, for Lady Wang had forbidden the young people to let others bow to them for fear of spoiling their luck; hence none of the maid-servants kowtowed to him. And when presently Jia Huan, Jia Lan and others called, Xiren promptly stopped them from bowing and made them sit down for a while before they left.

"I'm tired after walking," remarked Baoyu now.

He curled up on the bed and had just drunk half a cup of tea when gay chattering sounded outside and along came a troop of eight or nine laughing maids: Xiaoluo, Cuimo, Cuilu, Ruhua and Xiuyan's maid Zhuaner, as well as a nurse carrying little Qiaojie, and Cailuan and Xiuluan, each of whom had brought a red rug. They cried out merrily, "We've gate-crashed to offer our congratulations. Hurry up and bring us some of the birthday noodles!"

The next moment Tanchun, Xiangyun, Baoqin, Xiuyan and Xichun arrived too. Baoyu hurried out to meet his cousins, beaming.

"Thank you for coming!" he said. "Brew some good tea, quick!"

Once inside they deferred to each other, then all took seats. Xiren and some other maids handed round tea, and barely had they sipped it when Pinger approached, freshly made up and as pretty as a flower. Baoyu hastily went out to greet her with the words:

"I went just now to Cousin Xifeng's place, but was told she wasn't free to see me; so then I sent someone in to ask after you."

"I was helping your cousin do her hair," Pinger explained. "That's why I couldn't come out to speak to you. When I heard you'd asked after me I felt so honoured that I've come specially now to kowtow to you!"

"That would be doing me too much honour!" he chuckled.

By now Xiren had placed a seat in the outer room for Pinger. The

迭。平儿便跪下去，宝玉也忙还跪，平儿连忙又下了一福，宝玉又还了一揖。袭人笑推宝玉："你再作揖。"宝玉道："已经完了，怎么又作揖？"袭人笑道："这是他来给你拜寿。今儿也是他的生日，你也该给他拜寿。"宝玉听了，喜的忙作下揖去，说："原来今儿也是姐姐的芳诞。"平儿还福不迭。湘云拉宝琴、岫烟说："你们四个人对拜寿，直拜一天才是。"探春忙问："原来邢妹妹也是今日？我怎么就忘了。"忙命丫头："去告诉二奶奶，赶着补了一分礼，与琴姑娘的一样，送到二姑娘屋里去。"丫头答应着去了。岫烟见湘云直口说出来，少不得要到各房去让让。

探春笑道："倒有些意思，一年十二个月，月月有几个生日。人多了，便这等巧，有三个一日的、两个一日的。大年初一日也不白过，大姐姐占了去，怨不得福大，生日比别人就占先。又是太祖太爷的生日。过了灯节，就是老太太和宝姐姐，他们娘儿两个遇的巧。三月初一日是太太的，初九日是琏二哥哥。二月里没人。"袭人道："二月十二是林姑娘，怎么没人？就只不是咱们家的人。"探春笑道："我这个记性是怎么了！"宝玉笑指袭人道："他和林妹妹是一日，所以

latter curtseyed to Baoyu, who hastily bowed to her in return. Then Pinger knelt down and he at once followed suit. Pinger curtseyed again, and once again Baoyu bowed.

"Make another bow," prompted Xiren, nudging him.

"Why another? I've bowed already."

"She came to congratulate you," Xiren said, "but today is *her* birthday too. So it's up to you to congratulate her as well."

Baoyu bowed again in his delight and exclaimed, "So it's your birthday too, sister!"

As Pinger hastily curtseyed in return, Xiangyun took Baoqin and Xiuyan by the arm.

"You four had better spend the whole day bowing and curtseying to each other," she cried.

"Is it Cousin Xiuyan's birthday too?" asked Tanchun. "How could I have forgotten?" She ordered a maid, "Go and tell Madam Lian, and have another set of presents like Miss Baoqin's sent at once to Miss Yingchun's apartments."

When the maid had gone off on this errand Xiuyan, now that Xiangyun had disclosed that it was her birthday, had to make a round of courtesy calls too.

"This is rather intriguing," remarked Tanchun. "There are twelve months in a year with several birthdays in each. On account of there being so many people here some birthdays coincide, with two or three of them falling on the same day. Even on New Year's Day we celebrate one — that's Elder Sister's birthday. No wonder she's had such good fortune, with her birthday coming before anyone else's. It was great-great-grand-father's birthday too. Then comes the birthday of the old lady and cousin Baochai; there's one coincidence for you. The first of the third month is the mistress' birthday; the ninth is Cousin Jia Lian's. There's none in the second month...."

"The twelfth of the second month is Miss Lin's birthday," put in Xiren. "Only she isn't one of our family."

"Of course!" chuckled Tanchun. "What's wrong with my memory?"

Baoyu pointed at Xiren.

"She and Cousin Daiyu have the same birthday, that's why she re-

他记得。”探春笑道:“原来你两个倒是一日，每年连头也不给我们磕一个。平儿的生日我们也不知道，这也是才知道。”平儿笑道:“我们是那牌儿名上的人，生日也没有拜寿的福，也没有受礼的职分，可吵闹什么?可不悄悄的过去。今儿他又偏吵出来了，等姑娘们回房，我再行礼去罢。”探春笑道:“也不敢惊动。只是我今儿倒要替你过个生日，我心里才过得去。”宝玉、湘云等一齐都说:“很是。”探春便吩咐了丫头:“去告诉他奶奶，就说我们大家说了，今儿一日不放平儿出去，我们也大家凑了分子过生日呢。”丫头笑着去了，半日，回来说:“二奶奶说了，多谢姑娘们给他脸。不知过生日给他些什么吃，只别忘了二奶奶，就不来絮叨他了。”众人都笑了。

探春因说道:“可巧今儿里头厨房不预备饭，一应下面弄菜都是外头收拾。咱们就凑了钱叫柳家的来揽了去，只在咱们里头收拾倒好。”众人都说是极。探春一面遣人去问李纨、宝钗、黛玉，一面遣人去传柳家的进来，吩咐他内厨房中快收拾两桌酒席。柳家的不知何意，因说外厨房都预备了，探春笑道:“你原来不知道，今儿是平姑娘的华诞。外头预备的是上头的，这如今我们是私下的又凑了分子，单为平姑娘预备两桌请他。你只管拣新巧的菜蔬预备了来，开了账和我那里领钱。”柳家的笑道:“原来今日也是平姑娘的千秋，我竟不知道。”说着，便向平儿磕下头去，慌的平儿拉起他来。柳家的忙去预备酒席。

members it."

"The same birthday, do they?" cried Tanchun. "But you've never even kowtowed to us each year. We didn't know when Pinger's birthday was either. We've only just now learned it."

"We're nobodies," rejoined Pinger. "We haven't the luck to be congratulated on our birthdays or the rank to receive presents, so why trumpet the day abroad? Naturally we keep quiet about it. Now that she's given me away, I shall call on you young ladies later to pay my respects."

"We mustn't put you to such trouble," Tanchun demurred. "Instead we must celebrate your birthday too today, so as to make me feel better."

Baoyu, Xiangyun and the rest approving this, Tanchun sent a maid to report to Xifeng, "We've decided not to let Pinger go today, as we're all chipping in to celebrate her birthday."

The maid went off smiling, returning after some time with Xifeng's reply.

"Madam Lian thanks you young ladies for doing her such an honour. She wants to know what birthday treat you'll be giving Pinger, and says if you promise not to leave *her* out she won't come to plague her."

All laughed at this.

Tanchun said, "As it happens, our meals today aren't being prepared by the kitchen in the Garden. We're having noodles and dishes cooked outside. So we can whip round for the money, and get Mrs. Liu to take charge and prepare something here."

The others all agreed to this.

Tanchun then sent to invite Li Wan, Baochai and Daiyu, while another maid summoned Mrs. Liu who was instructed to lose no time in preparing in her kitchen a feast for two tables. Mrs. Liu was puzzled by this.

"The outside kitchen's got everything ready," she said.

"You don't understand," Tanchun told her. "Today is Miss Pinger's birthday. The meal prepared outside is provided by the chief accountant's office. Now we've raised the money ourselves for a special party for Pinger. You just choose and make some new appetizing dishes, and bring the bill to me later."

Mrs. Liu laughed.

"So it's Miss Pinger's birthday too, eh? I didn't know that." She

这里探春又邀了宝玉，同到厅上去吃面，等到李纨、宝钗一齐来全，又遣人去请薛姨妈与黛玉。因天气和暖，黛玉之疾渐愈，故也来了。花团锦簇，挤了一厅的人。谁知薛蝌又送了巾扇香帛四色寿礼与宝玉，宝玉于是过去陪他吃面。两家皆治了寿酒，互相酬送，彼此同领。至午间，宝玉又陪薛蝌吃了两杯酒。宝钗带了宝琴过来与薛蝌行礼，把盏毕，宝钗因嘱薛蝌："家里的酒也不用送过他那边去，这虚套竟可收了。你只请伙计们吃罢。我们和宝兄弟进去还要待人去呢，也不能陪你了。"薛蝌忙说："姐姐兄弟只管请，只怕伙计们也就好来了。"宝玉忙又告过罪，方同他姊妹回来。

一进角门，宝钗便命婆子将门锁上，把钥匙要了自己拿着。宝玉忙说："这一道门何必关，又没多的人走。况且姨娘、姐姐、妹妹都在里头，倘或家去取什么，岂不费事。"宝钗笑道："小心没过逾的。你瞧你们那边，这几日七事八事，竟没有我们这边的人，可知是这门关的有功效了。若是开着，保不住那起人图顺脚，抄近从这里走，拦谁的是？不如锁了，连妈和我也禁着些，大家别走。纵有了事，就赖不着这边的人了。"宝玉笑道："原来姐姐也知道我们那边近日丢了东西？"宝钗笑道："你只知道玫瑰露和茯苓霜两件，乃因人而及物。若非因人，你连这两件还不知道呢。殊不知还

approached Pinger to kowtow to her, and when Pinger stopped her went off to prepare the feast.

Tanchun had already invited Baoyu to have his noodles with them in the Council Hall; so as soon as Li Wan and Baochai had arrived, maids were sent to invite Aunt Xue and Daiyu over. As the day was mild and Daiyu was feeling better, she accepted the invitation. The hall was packed with people, gay with flowers and silks. But now Xue Ke sent Baoyu four birthday presents — a scarf, a fan, some scent and silk — so Baoyu went over to eat noodles with him. Both families had prepared feasts and exchanged gifts. At noon Baoyu drank a few cups of wine with Xue Ke, and Baochai took Baoqin to pay her respects to him too. After toasting Xue Ke, Baochai told him:

"There's no need to send a feast to the other house. Better dispense with those formalities and just invite the shop assistants to a meal. We're going to the Garden now with Cousin Baoyu, as we have others to look after; so we can't keep you company."

"Don't let me keep you, cousins," replied Xue Ke. "The shop assistants will be here any time."

Then Baoyu asked to be excused and left with the girls.

When they entered the side gate, Baochai ordered the women in charge there to lock it, and took the key herself.

"Why lock this gate?" asked Baoyu. "Hardly anyone uses it; but now auntie and you two are inside and it will be awkward if you want something fetched from your home."

"One can never be too careful," was Baochai's reply. "There's been all sorts of trouble in your house these last few days, but our household wasn't involved: that shows the advantage of keeping the gate shut. If it were left open, people might take a short cut through here, and then which of them should we stop? Better lock it, even if that's less convenient for mother and me. Don't let anyone through. Then whatever trouble there may be, our household won't be implicated."

"So you knew we'd lost some things recently," remarked Baoyu with a smile.

"You only heard about the rose flavoured juice and *pachyma* flour because of the girls involved," retorted Baochai. "If not for them, you

有几件比这两件大的呢。若以后叨登不出来，是大家的造化；若叨登出来，不知里头连累多少人呢。你也是不管事的人，我才告诉你。平儿是个明白人，我前儿也告诉了他，皆因他奶奶不在外头，所以使他明白了。若不闹破，大家乐得丢开手。若犯出来，他心里已有稿子，自有头绪，就冤屈不着平人了。你只听我说，以后留神小心就是了，这话也不可对第二个人讲。”

说着，来到沁芳亭边，只见袭人、香菱、待书、素云、晴雯、麝月、芳官、藕官、蕊官十来个人，都在那里看鱼作耍。见他们来了，都说：“芍药栏里头预备下了，快去上席罢。”宝钗等随携了他们同到芍药栏中红香圃三间小敞厅内。连尤氏已请过来了，诸人都在那里，只没平儿。

原来平儿出去，有赖、林诸家来送礼，连三接四，上中下三等家人来拜寿送礼的不少，平儿忙着打发赏钱道谢，一面又色色的回明凤姐儿，不过留下几样，也有不收的，也有收下即刻赏与人的。忙了一回，又直待凤姐吃过面，方换了衣裳往园里来。

刚进园门，就有几个丫鬟来找他，一同到了红香圃中。只见园中筵开玳瑁，褥设芙蓉。众人都笑：“寿星全来了。”上面四座定要让他四个人坐，四人皆不肯。薛姨妈说：“我老天拔地，又不合你们的群儿，我倒觉拘的慌，不如我到厅上随便躺躺去倒好。我又吃不下什么去，又不大喝酒，这里让

wouldn't even have known of those two things. Actually there have been losses more serious than that. If it isn't noised abroad, so much the better for everyone; otherwise, goodness knows how many people in the Garden would be implicated. I'm telling you this because you pay no attention to what goes on. I told Pinger the other day, too, because she's an intelligent person and as her mistress isn't here I wanted her to know. If word doesn't get out, we may as well do nothing; if there's a scandal, she'll have been forewarned and know what it's all about, then she won't wrong innocent people. Take my advice and be more careful in future. And don't repeat what I've told you to anyone else."

They now reached Seeping Fragrance Pavilion where a dozen or so girls were amusing themselves by watching the fish. Among them were Xiren, Xianling, Shishu, Suyun, Qingwen, Sheyue, Fangguan, Ouguan and Ruiguan. When they saw them approaching they said:

"Everything's ready in Peony Bower. Hurry up and go to the feast."

Baochai went with them to Peony Bower, a small three-frame hall in Red Fragrance Farm, where all the ladies of the house including even Madam You had assembled. Only Pinger was missing.

Pinger had gone out, as it happened, because the families of Lai Da, Lin Zhixiao and the other stewards had been sending presents over in turn, and many of the servants of the first, second and third rank had also come one after another with gifts to offer their congratulations. Pinger was kept busy dispatching the messengers with tips and thanks, and she also had to report each case to Xifeng. Only a few of the gifts did she keep for herself; some she declined, and the rest she immediately made over to others. After occupying herself in this way for a while, she waited on Xifeng while she had her noodles, then changed her clothes and went back to the Garden. As soon as she entered it, she was met by several maids who had come to fetch her. They escorted her to Red Fragrance Farm where a sumptuous feast had been spread.

"Now all the birthday stars are here," cried the others laughingly. They insisted that these four must take the seats of honour, but this they declined to do.

Aunt Xue declared, "I'm too old to mix in your crowd, and I feel very boxed up here too, I'd rather lie down in comfort in the Council Hall. I

他们倒便宜。”尤氏等执意不从，宝钗道：“这也罢了，倒是让妈在厅上歪着自如些，有爱吃的送些过去，倒自在了。且前头没人在那里，又可照应了。”探春等笑道：“既这样，恭敬不如从命。”因大家送了他到议事厅上，眼看着命小丫头铺了一个锦褥并靠背引枕之类，又嘱咐小丫头：“好生给姨妈捶腿，要茶要水别推三扯四的。回来送了东西来，姨太太吃了就赏你们吃。只别离了这里出去。”小丫头们都答应了。

探春等方回来。终究让宝琴、岫烟二人在上，平儿面西，宝玉面东坐，探春又接了鸳鸯来，二人并肩对面相陪。西边一桌，宝钗、黛玉、湘云、迎春、惜春，一面又拉了香菱、玉钏儿二人打横。三桌上，尤氏、李纨又拉了袭人、彩云陪坐。四桌上便是紫鹃、莺儿、晴雯、小螺、司棋等人围坐妥当。当下探春等还要把盏与众献寿，宝琴等四人都说：“这一闹，一日都坐不成了。”方才罢了。两个女先儿要弹词上寿，众人都说：“我们没人要听那些野话，你厅上去说给姨太太解闷儿去罢。”一面又将各色吃食拣了，命人送与薛姨妈去。

宝玉便说：“雅坐无趣，须要行令才好。”众人有的说行这个令好，那个又说行那个令好，黛玉道：“依我说，拿了笔

can't eat anything or drink much either, so I'll leave my place to them and that will suit everybody."

At first Madam You and the rest would not hear of this, but Baochai said, "That's all right. Why not let mother lie down in the hall where she can relax? We can send over any dishes she likes. She'll feel freer. Besides, there's nobody in front today, and she can keep an eye on things."

"In that case," agreed Tanchun, "we'd better do as she asks instead of standing on ceremony."

So they saw Aunt Xue to the hall, told the young maids to spread a silk mattress, back-rest and pillows for her, and instructed them:

"Mind you look after Madam Xue well. Massage her legs, serve her tea and don't shirk your work. We'll be sending food over later, and after she's eaten you can have what's left. But you mustn't leave this place."

The young maids promised to carry out these orders.

Then Tanchun and the others went back. Finally they made Baoqin and Xiuyan take the top seats at the first table with Pinger facing west and Baoyu facing east, while Tanchun got Yuanyang to join her at the lower side of the table. At the table on the west side sat Baochai, Daiyu, Xiangyun, Yingchun and Xichun in the same order, with Xiangling and Yuchuan on the fourth side. Madam You and Li Wan shared a third table with Xiren and Caiyun. At a fourth sat Zijuan, Yinger, Qingwen, Xiaoluo and Siqi.

When all were in place, Tanchun wanted to offer toasts, but Baoqin and the other three declined.

"If you start that," they objected, "we'll be standing here all day toasting again and again — and still never finish."

At that she did not insist. Then two women story-tellers offered to perform a ballad for the occasion.

"No one here wants to hear your wild talk," everyone said. "Go to the hall to amuse Madam Xue." They picked various dishes and had them sent to her.

"Just feasting quietly is no fun. Let's play some drinking games," Baoyu proposed.

All the rest agreed, and suggested different games.

砚将各色全都写了，拈成阄儿，咱们抓出那个来，就是那个。”众人都道妙极。即命拿了一副笔砚花笺。香菱近日学了诗，又天天学写字，见了笔砚便图不得了，连忙起身说：“我写。”大家想了一想，共得了十来个，念着，香菱一一的写了，搓成阄儿，掷在一个瓶中。探春便命平儿拣，平儿向前搅了一搅，用箸拈了一个出来，打开看，上写着“射覆”二字。宝钗笑道：“把个酒令的祖宗拈出来。‘射覆’从古有的，如今失了传，这是后人纂的，比一切的令都难。这里头倒有一半是不会的，不如毁了，另拈一个雅俗共赏的。”探春笑道：“既拈了出来，如何又毁。如今再拈一个，若是雅俗共赏的，便叫他们行去。咱们行这个。”说着又叫袭人拈了一个，却是“拇战”。史湘云笑着说：“这个简断爽利，合了我的脾气。我不行这个‘射覆’，没的垂头丧气闷人，我只猜拳去了。”探春道：“惟有他乱令，宝姐姐快罚他一钟。”宝钗不容分说，便灌了湘云一杯。

探春道：“我吃一杯，我是令官，也不用宣，只听我分派。”命取了令骰令盆来，“从琴妹妹掷起，挨下掷去，对了点的二人射覆。”宝琴一掷，是个三，岫烟、宝玉等皆掷的不对，直到香菱方掷了个三来。宝琴笑道：“只好室内生春，若说到外头去，可太没头绪了。”探春道：“自然。三次

"Let's write down the names of all sorts of games and draw lots to decide which one to play," said Daiyu.

This met with general approval and writing-brush, inkstone and fancy note-paper were sent for.

Now XiangLing had been learning to write poetry and practising her calligraphy every day. When the brush and inkstone arrived, she could not resist getting up at once and offering to act as amanuensis. As the others thought of and called out the names of a dozen games, she put them down on separate slips of paper, which were rolled into spills and put in a vase. Then Tanchun told Pinger to take one. Pinger stepped forward to mix the lots and picked one out with her chopsticks. When she unfolded it, she found written there "*She-fu* conundrums."

"You've picked the ancestor of all drinking games," chuckled Baochai. "It was played in ancient times, but the original rules have been lost now. What we have is a later version, more difficult than all other drinking games. Half of us here wouldn't be able to play it. Better scrap this and pick one to suit all tastes."

"As this has already been picked," Tanchun objected, "how can we scrap it? Pick another as well, and if that one's more popular let the others play that while we play this first one."

She told Xiren to draw another lot, and this proved to be the finger-guessing game.

"This is simple and quick, it suits me!" chortled Xiangyun. "I shan't play conundrums; that's too boring and depressing. I shall guess fingers."

"She's broken the rules," cried Tanchun. "Quick, Cousin Baochai, make her drink a cup as a forfeit."

Baochai laughingly forced Xiangyun to drain a cup.

"I'm taking charge so I'll drink a cup too," said Tanchun. "There's no need for any announcement, just do as I say. Fetch a dice-bowl and throw the dice in turn, starting with Baoqin. When two people throw the same number they must play conundrums."

Baoqin cast a "three"; Xiuyan and Baoyu threw different numbers; and Xiangling when it came to her turn threw another "three."

"We must stick to objects in this room," said Baoqin. "If things out-

不中者罚一杯。你覆，他射。”宝琴想了一想，说了个“老”字。香菱原生于这令，想着这满室满席都不见有与“老”字相连的成语。湘云先听了，便也乱看，忽见门斗上贴着“红香圃”三个字，便知宝琴覆的是“吾不如老圃”的“圃”字。见香菱射不着，众人击鼓又催，便悄悄的拉着香菱，叫他说“药”字。黛玉偏看见，说“快罚他，又在那里私相传递呢。”哄的众人都知道了，忙又罚了一杯，恨的湘云拿筷子敲黛玉的手。于是罚了香菱一杯。下则宝钗和探春对了点子。探春便覆了一个“人”字。宝钗笑道：“这个‘人’字泛的很。”探春笑道：“添一字，两覆一射也不泛了。”说着，便又说了一个“窗”字，宝钗一想，因见席上有鸡，便射着他是用“鸡窗”“鸡人”二典了，因射了一个“埘”字。探春知他射着，用了“鸡栖于埘”的典，二人一笑，各饮一口。

湘云等不得，早和宝玉“三”、“五”乱叫，划起拳来。那边尤氏和鸳鸯隔着席也“七”、“八”乱叫划起来。平儿、袭人也作了一对划拳，叮叮当当只听得腕上的镯子响。一时湘云赢了宝玉，鸳鸯赢了尤氏，袭人赢了平儿，三个人限酒底酒面，湘云便说：“酒面要一句古文，一句旧诗，

side were chosen, we wouldn't have a clue."

"Right," agreed Tanchun. "Anyone who makes three wrong guesses must drink a cup. Now give her a conundrum to guess."

Baoqin thought for a moment then said, "Old."

Xiangling, who was unfamiliar with this game, looked round the room and feasters but could see nothing fitting a classical allusion containing the word "old." But Xiangyun on hearing the clue had started staring around too. Catching sight of the name Red Fragrance Farm over the door, she realized that Baoqin had in mind the line "I am not as good as the old gardener." [1] As Xiangling could not guess the answer and they were beating the drum to hurry her, she quietly tugged at her sleeve.

"Say 'peony, '" she whispered.

Daiyu saw this and cried, "Quick, punish her! She's cheating."

That gave the game away and Xiangyun, forced to drink a cup of wine, in a huff rapped Daiyu's knuckles with her chopsticks. Then Xiangling had to drink a cup as a forfeit too.

Now Baochai and Tanchun threw the same number, and Tanchun gave the word "man."

"That's too general," protested Baochai.

"I'll add another word then," said Tanchun. "Two clues for one conundrum can't be considered too vague." This time she gave the word "window."

Baochai thought this over and, seeing chicken on the table, remembered the allusions "cock-window" and "cock-man," so she answered with the word "roost." Tanchun knew that Baochai had guessed right and had in mind the allusion "Chickens come home to roost." Smiling at each other both girls took a sip of wine.

Meanwhile Xiangyun, too impatient to wait, had started playing the finger-guessing game with Baoyu, shouting "three" or "five" at random. Madam You and Yuanyang, facing each other across the table to play the same game, were shouting now "seven" now "eight." Pinger and Xiren had paired off together too, and were indicating the numbers they guessed with their fingers, which set their bracelets tinkling. Xiangyun, beating Baoyu, was entitled to make him pay forfeits before and after drinking.

She announced, "Before drinking, the loser must quote one line from

一句骨牌名，一名曲牌名，还要一句时宪书上的话，共总凑成一句话。酒底要关人事的果菜名。”众人听了，都笑说：“惟有他的令也比人唠叨，倒也有意思。”便催宝玉快说，宝玉笑道：“谁说过这个，也等我想一想儿。”黛玉便道：“你多喝一钟，我替你说。”宝玉真个喝了酒，听黛玉说道：

落霞与孤鹜齐飞，风急江天过雁哀，却是一只折足雁，叫的人九回肠，这是鸿雁来宾。

说的大家笑了，说：“这一串子倒有些意思。”黛玉又拈了一个榛穰，说酒底道：

榛子非关隔院砧，何来万户捣衣声。

令完，鸳鸯袭人等皆说的是一句俗语，都带一个“寿”字的，不能多赘。

大家轮流乱划了一阵，这上面湘云又和宝琴对了手，李纨和岫烟对了点子。李纨便覆了一个“瓢”字，岫烟便射了一个“绿”字，二人会意，各饮一口。湘云的拳却输了，请酒面酒底。宝琴笑道：“请君入瓮。”大家笑起来，说：“这个典用的当。”湘云便说道：

a classical essay, one from an old poem, one domino's name, one name of a melody, and one line from the almanac. All these together must make up a sentence. The forfeit after drinking is to name some sweetmeat or dish and link it with human affairs."

The others hearing this laughed.

"Her forfeits are always more pernickety than other people's; still, they're fun," they remarked, then urged Baoyu to speak up quickly.

"We've never done this before. Give me a chance to think first," he begged.

Daiyu offered, "Drink an extra cup and I'll do it for you."

So Baoyu drank while Daiyu recited:

> "Sunset clouds float with the lone wild duck,
> The wild goose cries through the sky above wind-swept river;
> A wild goose with a broken leg,
> Its crying fills all hearts with sorrow.
> Such is the wild goose's return."

Amid general laughter the others commented, "Stringing lines together like this is rather fun."

Then Daiyu picked up a hazel-nut to pay the after-drinking forfeit and said:

> "Hazel-nuts having nothing to do with neighbourhood
> washing-blocks,
> Why with them comes the sound of clothes beaten by ten
> thousand households?"

After these forfeits had been paid, Yuanyang and Xiren who had also lost each recited a proverb alluding to "long life," which we need not repeat.

They went on playing the finger-guessing game for some time, Xiangyun pairing off with Baoqin. Then Li Wan and Xiuyan, casting dice, threw the same number. Li Wan gave the clue "gourd," which Xiuyan answered with "green," and as she had guessed correctly each took a sip of wine. By now Xiangyun had lost the finger-game and had to pay a forfeit.

Baoqin quipped, "Please get into the jar, sir!"[2]

奔腾而砰湃，江间波浪兼天涌，须要铁锁缆孤舟，

既遇着一江风，不宜出行。

说的众人都笑了，说："好个诌断了肠子的。怪道他出这个令，故意惹人笑。"又听他说酒底。湘云吃了酒，拣了一块鸭肉呷口，忽见碗内有半个鸭头，遂拣了出来吃脑子。众人催他："别只顾吃，你到底快说了。"湘云便用箸子举着说道：

这鸭头不是那丫头，头上那讨桂花油。

众人越发笑起来，引的晴雯、小螺、莺儿等一干人都走过来说："云姑娘会开心儿，拿着我们取笑儿，快罚他一杯才罢。怎见得我们就擦不起桂花油的？倒得每人给一瓶子桂花油擦擦。"黛玉笑道："他倒有心给你们一瓶子油，又怕挂误着打盗窃的官司。"众人不理论，宝玉却明白，忙低了头。彩云有心病，不觉的红了脸。宝钗忙暗暗的瞅了黛玉一眼。黛玉自悔失言，原是趣宝玉的，就忘了趣着彩云。自悔不及，忙一顿行令划拳岔开了。

底下宝玉可巧和宝钗对了点子。宝钗便覆了一个"宝"字，宝玉想了一想，便知是宝钗作戏指自己所佩通灵玉而言，便笑道："姐姐拿我作雅谑，我却射着了。说出来姐姐别恼，就是姐姐的讳'钗'字就是了。"众人道："怎么解？"

The rest laughed and cried, "Very apt!"

Then Xiangyun declaimed:

"Leaping and rushing,
The river's waves surge towards the sky;
An iron chain is needed to fasten the lonely boat,
Because there is wind on the river
It is not expedient to make a journey."

Roaring with laughter the rest said, "How side-splitting! No wonder she made up this forfeit. It was so as to make us laugh."

They waited then to hear her final line; but having tossed off her wine Xiangyun helped herself to a piece of duck, noticing as she did so that there was half a duck's head in the bowl. She picked this out and started eating the brain.

"Don't just eat," they scolded. "Finish your forfeit first."

Then holding up her chopsticks Xiangyun said,

"This duck's head is not that serving-maid, [2]
How can its head be smeared with oil of osmanthus?"

At that the rest laughed even louder, while Qingwen, Xiaoluo, Yinger and the other maids came over to protest:

"Miss Xiangyun, you've making fun of us. You must drink a cup by way of penalty. Why should we be smeared with osmanthus oil? You'd better give us each a bottle of it."

Daiyu chuckled, "She wouldn't mind giving you a bottle, if it weren't for fear of being suspected of theft!"

Most of the company paid no attention; but Baoyu, understanding, lowered his head while Caiyun, having a guilty conscience, blushed. Baochai shot Daiyu a warning glance, making her regret her indiscretion; for in her eagerness to tease Baoyu she had forgotten until it was too late how sensitive Caiyun was. Dropping the subject then, they went on with their games.

Presently Baoyu and Baochai threw dice with the same number. Baochai gave the clue "precious" and Baoyu after a little thought knew that this was a playful reference to his magic jade.

"You're making fun of me, cousin, and I've guessed the answer," he told her with a smile. "Don't be annoyed if I break your taboo by saying

宝玉道："他说'宝'，底下自然是'玉'了。我射'钗'字，旧诗曾有'敲断玉钗红烛冷'，岂不射着了。"湘云说道："这用时事却使不得，两个人都该罚。"香菱忙道："不是时事，这也有出处。"湘云道："'宝玉'二字并无出处，不过是春联上或有之，诗书纪载并无，算不得。"香菱道："前日我读岑嘉州五言律，现有一句说'此乡多宝玉'，怎么你倒忘了?后来又读李义山七言绝句，又有一句'宝钗无日不生尘'，我还笑说他两个名字原来在唐诗上呢。"众人笑说："这可问住了，快罚一杯。"湘云无语，只得饮了。大家又该对点的对点，划拳的划拳。这些人因贾母、王夫人不在家，没了管束，便任意取乐，呼三喝四，喊七叫八。满厅中红飞翠舞，玉动珠摇，真是十分热闹。玩了一回，大家方起席散了一散，倏然不见了湘云，只当他外头自便就来，谁知越等越没了影响，使人各处去找，那里找得着。

接着林之孝家的同着几个老婆子来，深恐有正事呼唤，二者恐丫鬟们年轻，乘王夫人不在家，不服探春等约束，恣意痛饮，失了体统，故来请问有事无事。探春见他们来了，便知其意，忙笑道："你们又不放心，来查我们来了。我们没

your own name *chai* — 'hairpin.'"

Asked what he meant he explained, "When she said 'precious' she naturally meant 'jade'; so I answered 'hairpin.' An old poem has the line 'The jade hairpin is broken, the red candle cold.' Isn't that the answer?"

"You're not allowed topical references," Xiangyun cried. "Both of you should pay a forfeit."

"It's not just topical," objected Xiangling. "There are classical sources too."

"Not for 'precious jade,'" retorted Xiangyun. "Only New Year congratulatory couplets pasted on gates may use it, but you won't find it in any classical records. This conundrum won't do."

Xiangling insisted, "The other day reading Cen Shen's poems I found the line 'There is much precious jade in these parts.' How could you have forgotten that? And then in one of Li Shangyin's poems I found another line, 'The precious hairpin daily gathers dust.' I remarked at the time that apparently both their names appeared in Tang poetry."

"This will silence her!" the others laughed. "Drink up, quick!"

Xiangyun having no more to say had to drain her cup.

So they went on dicing and playing finger-guessing games. And as there was nobody to control them in the absence of the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, they enjoyed themselves just as they pleased, shouting different numbers, the hall a scene of wild merriment filled as it was with the fluttering of red and green silk, the flashing of jade and pearl trinkets.

When at last the feast ended and they prepared to leave, they suddenly discovered that Xiangyun was missing. Thinking she had gone out to relieve herself and would soon be back, they waited and waited, but there was no sign of her. A general search was made, but she could not be found.

Presently the wife of Lin Zhixiao arrived with several old nannies. For fearing that the young ladies might want something, and that in the absence of Lady Wang the young maids might get out of hand or become tipsy and obstreperous, they had come to ask if they were needed. Tanchun realized the reason for their coming.

"So you've come to check up on us, being worried again!" she chuck-

有多吃酒，不过是大家玩笑，将酒作引子，妈妈们别耽心。”李纨、尤氏都也笑说：“你们歇着去罢，我们也不敢叫他们多吃酒。”林之孝家的等人笑说：“我们知道，连老太太叫姑娘吃酒，姑娘们还不吃呢，何况太太们不在家，自然是玩罢了。我们怕有事，来打听打听。二则天长了，姑娘们玩一回子，还该点补些小食儿。素日又不大吃杂东西，如今吃一两杯酒，若不多吃些东西，怕受伤。”探春笑道：“妈妈们说的是，我们正也要吃呢。”因回头命取点心来。两旁丫鬟们答应了，忙去传点心，探春又笑让：“你们歇着去罢，或是姨妈他那里说话儿去。我们即刻打发人送酒你们吃去。”林之孝家的等人笑回：“不敢领了。”又站了一回，方退了出去。平儿摸着脸笑道：“我的脸都热了，也不好意思见他们。依我说竟收了罢，别惹他们再来，倒没意思了。”探春笑道：“不相干，横竖咱们不认真喝酒就罢了。”

正说着，只见一个小丫头笑嘻嘻走来说：“姑娘们快瞧云姑娘去，吃醉了图凉快，在山子后头一块青石板凳上睡着了。”众人听说，都笑道：“快别吵嚷。”说着，都走来看时，果见湘云卧于山石僻处一个石凳子上，业经香梦沉酣，四面芍药花飞了一身，满头脸衣襟上皆是红香散乱，手中的扇子在地下，也半被落花埋了，一群蜂蝶闹嚷嚷的围着他，又用鲛帕包了一包芍药花瓣枕着。众人看了，又是爱，又是

led. "We haven't drunk much; we were just having fun together on the pretext of drinking. You nannies can set your minds at rest."

Li Wan and Madam You also said, "Go and rest. We wouldn't dream of letting them drink too much."

"We know that," answered Mrs. Lin and the others. "Even when the old lady wants them to drink they won't, much less so now that the mistress is away; of course this is just in fun. We came to find out if you need anything. The days are long now, and after amusing themselves all this time the young ladies ought to have some extra snack. Thay don't usually eat between meals, but unless they have something after a few cups of wine it may not be good for them."

Tanchun smiled.

"You're quite right. We were thinking of asking for something."

She turned to order some cakes. The maids standing on both sides assented and went off quickly to fetch them, while Tanchun urged the old women, "Go and rest or have a chat with Madam Xue. We'll send you some wine."

Mrs. Lin and the others politely declined and after a while withdrew.

As soon as they had gone Pinger felt her cheeks.

"My face is so hot I didn't like to let them see me," she said. "I suggest we wind up now to stop them from coming again — that would be awkward."

"Never mind," said Tanchun. "It's all right as long as we don't get really drunk."

As she was speaking a young maid came in, smiling.

"Go and have a look quick, miss, at Miss Xiangyun," she cried. "She's drunk, and she's picked a cool spot on a stone bench behind the rockery to sleep it off."

The rest laughed to hear this.

"Let's not make a noise," they said.

With that they went out to look, and sure enough found Xiangyun lying on a stone bench in a quiet spot behind an artificial mountain. She was sound asleep and covered with peony petals, which had floated over from all sides to scatter, red and fragrant, over her face and clothes. Her fan, dropped to the ground, was half buried in fallen blossoms too, while bees

笑，忙上来推唤扶挽。湘云口内犹作睡语说酒令，唧唧嘟嘟说道：

泉香而酒冽，玉碗盛来琥珀光，直饮到梅梢月上，醉扶归，却为宜会亲友。

众人笑推他，说道："快醒醒儿，吃饭去，这潮凳上还睡出病来呢。"湘云慢启秋波，见了众人，又低头看了一看自己，方知醉了。原来是纳凉避静的，不觉的因多罚了两杯酒，娇弱不胜，便睡着了，心中反觉自愧。连忙起身，扎挣着同人来至红香圃，用过水，吃了两盏浓茶。探春忙命将醒酒石拿来给他衔在口内，一时又命他喝了些酸汤，方才觉得好了些。

当下又选了几样果菜与凤姐送去，凤姐又送了几样来。宝钗等吃过点心，大家也有坐的，也有立的，也有在外观花的，也有扶栏观鱼的，各自取便，说笑不一。探春便和宝琴下棋，宝钗、岫烟观局。林黛玉和宝玉在一簇花下唧唧哝哝不知说些什么。只见林之孝家的和一群女人带了一个媳妇进来，那媳妇愁眉苦脸，也不敢进厅，只到了阶下，便朝上跪下了，碰头有声。探春因一块棋受了敌，算来算去总得了两个眼，便折了官着，两眼只瞅着棋枰，一只手却伸在盒内，只管抓弄棋子作想。林之孝家的站在旁边，站了半天，因回

and butterflies were buzzing and flitting around her. And she had wrapped up some peony petals in her handkerchief to serve as a pillow. They all thought she looked both sweet and comical. As they crowded round to wake her, Xiangyun was still mumbling lines for forfeits in her sleep:

> "Sweet the fountain, cold the wine
> Gleaming like amber in a cup of jade;
> The drinking lasts till the moon rises over the plum trees,
> Then the drunkards help each other back —
> An appropriate time to meet relatives and friends."

Laughing, they nudged her.

"Hurry up and wake up! We're going to eat. You'll make yourself ill if you sleep on this damp bench."

Xiangyun slowly opened her eyes then and saw them all, then looked down at herself and realized she was tipsy. She had come here in search of coolness and quiet, but as she had drunk so much wine by way of forfeits, overcome by dreamy inertia she had dozed off. Rather sheepishly, she hastily sat up, straightened her clothes and went back with the others to Red Fragrance Farm. There she had a wash and two cups of strong tea, and Tanchun sent for the "pebble to sober drunkards" for her to suck. Presently she made her drink some vinegar soup too, after which Xiangyun felt better.

Now they picked some sweetmeats and dishes to send to Xifeng, who sent them some food in return. After Baochai and the others had eaten some cakes, some of them sat or stood about in the hall while others went outside to enjoy the flowers or lean over the balustrade to watch the fish, laughing and chatting or doing whatever each pleased. Tanchun and Baoqin played draughts, with Baochai and Xiuyan looking on, while Daiyu and Baoyu engaged in a conversation under a flowering tree.

Then Lin Zhixiao's wife and some other matrons brought in another woman looking most upset, who would not venture to enter the hall but knelt down at the foot of the steps to kowtow.

Now one of Tanchun's positions on the draughtboard had been threatened, and although after putting up a struggle she had managed to win two spaces she was still losing the game. Her eyes intent on the board, she was thinking hard, toying with one hand with the draughtsmen in the

头要茶时才看见，问："什么事？"林之孝家的便指那媳妇说："这是四姑娘屋里小丫头彩儿的娘，现是园内伺候的人。嘴很不好，才是我听见了，问着他，他说的话也不敢回姑娘，竟要撵出去才是。"探春道："怎么不回大奶奶？"林之孝家的道："方才大奶奶都往厅上姨太太处去了，顶头看见，我已回明白了，叫回姑娘来。"探春道："怎么不回二奶奶？"平儿道："不回去也罢，我回去说一声就是了。"探春点点头，道："既这么着，就撵出他去，等太太回来，再作定夺。"说毕仍又下棋。这里林之孝家的带了那人出去不提。

黛玉和宝玉二人站在花下，遥遥知意，黛玉便说道："你家三丫头倒是个乖人。虽然叫他管些事，倒也一步儿不肯多走。差不多的人就早作起威福来了。"宝玉道："你不知道呢。你病着时，他干了好几件事。这园了也分了人管，如今多掐一草也不能了。又蠲了几件事，单拿我和凤姐姐作筏子禁止别人。最是心里有算计的人，岂只乖而已。"黛玉道："要这样才好，咱们家里也太花费了。我虽不管事，心里每常闲了，替算着，出的多进的少，如今若不省俭，必致后手不接。"宝玉笑道："凭他怎么后手不接，也短不了咱们两个人的。"黛玉听了，转身就往厅上寻宝钗去了。

box. When she finally turned her head to ask for tea and noticed Mrs. Lin, the latter had been standing there a long time. Asked her business, Mrs. Lin pointed at the woman.

"This is the mother of young Caier who works for Miss Xichun," she reported. "She'e one of those looking after the Garden, and a fearful gossip. Just now I overheard her saying something which I dare not repeat to you, miss. She ought to be dismissed."

"Why no report this to Madam Zhu?" asked Tanchun.

"I met her just now on her way to the Council Hall to see Madam Xue, and told her about it. She sent me to tell you."

"Why not go to Madam Lian?"

"There's no need for that," interposed Pinger. "I'll just tell her when I go back."

Tanchun nodded.

"In that case, dismiss her now and wait until the mistress comes back to make a final decision." This said, she went on with her game, while Mrs. Lin took the woman away.

Daiyu and Baoyu standing under the blossoms had watched this from a distance.

"Your third sister's rather smart," remarked Daiyu. "Although she's been put in charge of things, she never oversteps her authority. Most people would have given themselves big airs long ago."

"You don't know that while you were unwell she did quite a few things, putting different people in charge of various parts of the Garden, so that now you can't pick one extra blade of grass. She scrapped a few things too, taking me and Xifeng as her main targets. She's very calculating, not simply smart."

"So much the better," said Daiyu. "This household of ours is too extravagant. Though I'm not in charge, when I've nothing to do and reckon things up I can see that the expenditure here exceeds the income. If expenses aren't cut down now, a time will come when there'll be nothing left."

Baoyu chuckled. "Never mind. Whatever happens, the two of us won't go short."

Daiyu hearing this turned and went to the hall to join Baochai.

宝玉正要走时，只见袭人走来，手内捧着一个小连环洋漆茶盘，里面放着两钟新茶，因问："他往那去了？我见你两个半日没吃茶，巴巴的倒了两钟来，他又走了。"宝玉道："那不是他？你给他送去。"说着自拿了一钟。袭人便送了那钟去，偏和宝钗在一处，只得一钟茶，便说："那位渴了那位先接了吃，我再倒去。"宝钗笑道："我却不渴，只要漱一漱口就够了。"说着先拿起来喝了一口，剩下了半杯递在黛玉手内。袭人笑说："我再倒去。"黛玉笑道："你知道我这病，大夫不许我多吃茶，这半钟尽够了，难为你想的到。"说毕，饮干，将杯放下。袭人又来接宝玉的，宝玉因问："这半日没见芳官，他在那里呢？"袭人四顾一瞧说："才在这里几个人斗草的，这会子不见了。"

宝玉听说，便忙回至房中，果见芳官面向里睡在床上。宝玉推他说道："快别要睡觉，咱们外头玩去，一会儿就该吃饭了。"芳官道："你们吃酒不理我，叫我闷了半日，可不来睡觉罢了。"宝玉拉了他起来，笑道："咱们晚上家里再吃，回来我叫袭人姐姐带了你桌子上吃饭，何如？"芳官道："藕官、蕊官都不上去，单我在那里也不好。我也不惯吃那个面条子，早起也没好生吃。才刚饿了，我已告诉了柳嫂子，先

Baoyu was about to leave too when Xiren came along carrying a small carved, double-circle foreign lacquer tray on which were two cups of newly brewed tea.

"Where has she gone?" she asked. "I noticed that the two of you had had no tea for a long time, so I specially brought you two cups — only to find her gone."

"She's over there; take it to her."

With that he took one of the cups. Xiren, going off with the other, found Daiyu with Baochai.

"I've only the one cup of tea," she said. "Which ever of you is thirsty can drink this first, and I'll go to fetch another."

"I'm not thirsty," answered Baochai. "I'll just take a sip."

She took the cup and drank one mouthful, leaving half a cup which she handed to Daiyu.

"I'll get you some more," Xiren offered.

But Daiyu said, "You know the doctor won't let me drink too much tea on account of my illness, so this half cup is plenty. Thank you for bringing it."

She drained the cup and put it down, after which Xiren went to collect Baoyu's cup.

He asked her, "Where's Fangguan? I haven't seen her all this time."

Xiren looked around as she answered, "She was here a moment ago. A few of them were playing the 'matching-herbs' game, but I don't see her now."

Then Baoyu hurried back to his compound and found Fangguan lying on the bed with her face to the wall.

"Don't go to sleep," he said nudging her. "Let's amuse ourselves outside. It'll soon be time for dinner."

"You were all drinking and ignoring me; so having nothing to do all that time naturally I came to lie down," Fangguan retorted.

Baoyu pulled her up.

"We'll have another drink later at home, and I'll tell Sister Xiren to bring you to the dinner table. How's that?"

"If Ouguan and Ruiguan aren't there, only me, that's no good. Besides, I don't like noodles. I didn't have a proper meal this morning and

给我做碗汤盛半碗粳米饭送来，我这里吃了就是了。若是晚上吃酒，不许叫人管着我，我要尽力吃够了才罢。我先在家里，吃二三斤好惠泉酒呢。如今学了这劳什子，他们说怕坏嗓子，这几年也没闻见，乘今儿我是要开斋了。”宝玉道：“这个容易。”

说着，只见柳家的果遣了人送了一个盒子来，小燕接着揭开，里面是一碗虾丸鸡皮汤，又是一碗酒酿清蒸鸭子，一碟腌肉，又一碟腌的脂鹅脯，还有一碟四个奶油松瓤卷酥，并一大碗热腾腾、碧荧荧蒸的绿畦香稻粳米饭。小燕放在案上，走去拿了小菜并碗箸过来，拨了一碗饭，芳官便说：“油腻腻的，谁吃这些东西！”只将汤泡饭吃了一碗，拣了两块腌鹅就不吃了。宝玉闻着，倒觉比往常之味又胜些似的，遂吃了一个卷酥，又命小燕也拨了半碗饭，泡汤一吃，十分香甜可口。小燕和芳官都笑了。吃毕，小燕便将剩的要交回去。宝玉道：“你吃了罢，若不够再要些来。”小燕道：“不用要，这就够了。方才麝月姐姐拿了两盘子点心给我们吃了，我再吃了这个，尽够了，不用再吃了。”说着，便站在桌子旁一顿吃了。又留下两个卷酥，说：“这个留着给我妈吃。晚上要吃酒，给我两碗酒吃就是了。”宝玉笑道：“你也爱吃酒？等着咱们晚上痛喝一阵。你袭人姐姐和晴雯姐姐量也好，也要喝，只是每日不好意思。今儿大家开斋。还有一件事，想着嘱咐你，我竟忘了，此刻才想起来。以后芳官全要你照看他，他或有不到处，你提他，袭人照顾不过这些人来。”小燕道：“我都知道，都不用操心。但只这五儿怎么

I'm hungry, so I've told Mrs. Liu to prepare me a bowl of soup and half a bowl of rice and send them here. I'll eat here. If we're drinking tonight you mustn't let anyone stop me — I mean to drink my fill. At home, in the old days, I used to be able to drink two or three catties of good Huiquan wine; but after I learned this wretched singing they said drinking might spoil my voice, so for the last few years I haven't so much as smelt a whiff of wine. I shall take the chance today to break my fast."

"That's simple," he said.

Now a maid arrived with a hamper from Mrs. Liu. Xiaoyan took it and opened it, then put on the table one bowl of chickenskin soup with shrimp balls, one bowl of steamed duck with wine sauce, one of salted goose and another of four pine-kernel cream puffs, as well as a big bowl of hot green rice. She then fetched pickles, bowls and chopsticks, and filled one small bowl with rice.

"Who wants such greasy stuff?" complained Fangguan, just ladling some soup on the rice and eating a bowlful with two pieces of goose.

To Baoyu, the food smelled more appetizing than his usual fare, so first he ate one cream puff, then asked Xiaoyan for half a bowl of rice which he ate with soup and found delicious, exactly to his taste, much to the two girls' amusement. After he had finished, Xiaoyan prepared to take back what was left.

"You may as well finish it off," proposed Baoyu. "If it's not enough ask for some more."

"There's no need for that; this is plenty for me," she answered. "Just now Sister Sheyue brought us two plates of cakes. After eating this I'll have had enough and shan't need any more." So standing there by the table she finished all the food except two cream puffs, saying, "I'll keep these for my mother. If you're drinking tonight, give me a couple of bowls."

"So you like wine too?" exclaimed Baoyu. "Wait till this evening then, and we'll have a good bout of drinking. Your sisters Xiren and Qingwen have a good capacity and enjoy drinking too, only normally they don't feel they should. Well, today everyone can break her fast. There's another thing I meant to tell you which I've only just remembered. In future you must take good care of Fangguan, and tell her if she does anything wrong. Xiren hasn't time to look after so many girls."

样?”宝玉道:“你和柳家的说去，明儿直叫他进来罢，等我告诉他们一声就完了。”芳官听了，笑道:“这倒是正经。”小燕又叫进两个丫头来，服侍洗了手，倒茶，自己收了家伙，交与婆子，也洗了手，便去找柳家的。不在话下。

宝玉便出来，仍往红香圃寻众姐妹，芳官在后拿着巾扇。刚出了院门，只见袭人、晴雯二人携手回来，宝玉问:“你们做什么?”袭人道:“摆下饭了，等你吃饭呢。”宝玉便笑着将方才吃饭一节告诉了他两个，袭人笑道:“我说你是猫儿食，闻见了就是好的。隔锅饭儿香。虽然如此，也该上去陪他们多少应个景儿。”晴雯用手指戳在芳官额上，说道:“你就是个狐媚子，什么空儿跑了去吃饭，两个人怎么就约下了，也不告诉我们一声儿。”袭人笑道:“不过是误打误撞的遇见了，说约下了可是没有的事。”晴雯道:“既这么着，要我们无用。明儿我们都走了，让芳官一个人就够使了。”袭人笑道:“我们都去了使得，你却去不得。”晴雯道:“惟有我是第一个要去的，又懒又笨，性子又不好，又没用。”袭人笑道:“倘或那孔雀褂子角儿再烧个窟窿，你去了谁可会补呢?你倒别和我拿三撇四的，我烦你做个什么，把你懒的横针不拈，竖线不动。一般也不是我的私活烦你，横竖都是他的，你就都不肯做。怎么我去了几天，你病的七死八活，一夜连

"I know all that," said Xiaoyan. "You don't have to worry. But what about Wuer?"

"Tell Mrs. Liu to send her here tomorrow. I'll inform them about it later and that will be that."

Fangguan hearing this exclaimed, "Now *that's* something really important!"

Xiaoyan called in two young maids then to wait on them while they washed their hands and to pour them tea while she herself cleared the table, gave the dishes to a serving-woman, washed her hands and went to see Mrs. Liu.

Baoyu started back then to Red Fragrance Farm to rejoin the girls, followed by Fangguan carrying his handkerchief and fan. As they went out of the gate they met Xiren and Qingwen, coming back hand in hand.

"What are you two doing?" Baoyu asked them.

"The meal's on the table waiting for you," Xiren said.

Smiling, Baoyu told them what he had just eaten.

"I always say you're as bad as a cat," Xiren laughed. "Whatever you smell takes your fancy. Other people's food tastes better to you than your own. Still, you'd better go and keep them company and make a show of eating."

Qingwen stabbed at Fangguan's forehead with her finger.

"You vamp!" she cried. "When did you sneak off to have a meal? How did you two arrange it? Why didn't you let us know?"

"They just happened to meet," said Xiren soothingly. "They certainly didn't arrange it in advance."

"If that's how it is, he doesn't need *us*," said Qingwen. "Tomorrow we'll all clear out, leaving just Fangguan here to wait on him."

Xiren chuckled, "All the rest of us can go, but not you."

Qingwen retorted, "I should be the first to go, lazy, stupid, bad-tempered and useless as I am."

"Supposing that peacock-feather cape gets burned again, who can mend it if you're gone?" asked Xiren. "Don't give me that silly talk. When *I* ask you to do anything, you're too lazy to thread a needle. And I never trouble you with sewing for me, only with things for *him*, yet you still refuse. How come then that when I was away for a few days and

命也不顾给他做了出来，这又是什么原故?你到底说话，别只佯憨，和我笑，也当不了什么。”大家说着，来至厅上。薛姨妈也来了，大家依序坐下吃饭。宝玉只用茶泡了半碗饭，应景而已。一时吃毕，大家吃茶闲话，又随便玩笑。

外面小螺和香菱、芳官、蕊官、藕官、荳官等四五个人，都满园中玩了一回，大家采了些花草来兜着，坐在花草堆中斗草。这一个说:“我有观音柳。”那一个说:“我有罗汉松。”那一个又说:“我有君子竹。”这一个又说:“我有美人蕉。”这一个说:“我有星星翠。”那一个又说:“我有月月红。”这一个又说:“我有《牡丹亭》上的牡丹花。”那一个又说:“我有《琵琶记》里的枇杷果。”荳官便说:“我有姊妹花。”众人没了，香菱便说:“我有夫妻蕙。”荳官说:“从没听见有个夫妻蕙。”香菱道:“一箭一花为兰，一箭数花为蕙。凡蕙有两枝，上下结花者为兄弟蕙，有并头结花者为夫妻蕙。我这一枝并头的，怎么不是?”荳官没的说了，便起身笑道:“依你说，若是这两枝一大一小，就是老子、儿子蕙了?若两枝背面开的，就是仇人蕙了?你汉子去了大半年，你想夫妻了?便扯上蕙也有夫妻，好不害羞!”香菱听了，红了脸，忙要起身拧他，笑骂道:“我把你这个烂了嘴的小蹄子!

you were laid up, practically at death's door, you mended that cape for him with no thought of your health? What made you do that? Come on, speak up! Don't pretend not to understand and just keep on smiling."

While talking together they had reached the hall. Aunt Xue had already come, so all took their seats and started the meal, Baoyu just eating half a bowl of rice steeped in tea to keep them company. Afterwards they sipped tea and chatted or amused themselves as they pleased.

Xiaoluo, Xiangling, Fangguan, Ruiguan, Ouguan and Douguan had been romping all over the Garden and picking flowers and herbs. Now they sat down on the grass holding these on their laps to play the game "matching herbs."

One said, "I've bodhisattva-willow."

This was capped by "I've arhat-pine."

Another said, "I've gentleman-bamboo."

Yet another answered, "I've lovely-lady plantain."

"I've starry-green."

"I've monthly-crimson."

"I've the peony of *Peony Pavilion.*"

"I've the loquat of the *Romance of the Lute.*"

Then Douguan said, "I've a sister-flower," and nobody could match that until Xiangling said:

"I've a husband-and-wife orchid."

"I've never heard of such an orchid," Douguan protested.

"A stem bearing one flower is the *lan* orchid, and a stem bearing several flowers is the *hui* orchid," Xiangling told them. "When there are flowers above and below that's brothers-orchid; when two flowers bloom side by side that's a husband-and-wife orchid. This one of mine is like that, with two flowers side by side. How can you deny it?"

Unable to refute her, Douguan rose to her feet and teased, "In that case, if one flower is large, the other small, it should be a father-and-son orchid. Two flowers confronting each other should be an enemy orchid. Your husband's been away for nearly a year and you're longing for him, so you dream up a husband-and-wife orchid. For shame!"

Blushing, Xiangling got ready to spring up to pinch her.

满嘴里汗憋的胡说了。”荳官见他来要拧，怎容他起身，便连忙欠身将他压倒，回头笑着央告蕊官等:“你们来，帮着我拧他这诌嘴。”两个人滚在草地下，众人拍手笑说:“了不得了，那是一洼子水，可惜污了他的新裙子了。”荳官回头看了一看，果然旁边有一汪积雨，香菱的半扇裙子都污湿了，自己不好意思，忙夺了手跑了。众人笑个不住，怕香菱拿他们出气，也都哄笑一散。

香菱起身，低头一瞧，那裙上犹滴滴点点流下绿水来，正恨骂不绝，可巧宝玉见他们斗草，也寻了些花草来凑戏，忽见众人跑了，只剩了香菱一个低头弄裙，因问:“怎么散了?”香菱便说:“我有一枝夫妻蕙，他们不知道，反说我诌，因此闹起来，把我的新裙子也脏了。”宝玉笑道:“你有夫妻蕙，我这里倒有一枝并蒂莲。”口内说，手内却真个拈着一枝并蒂莲花，又拈了那枝夫妻蕙在手内。香菱道:“什么夫妻不夫妻，并蒂不并蒂，你瞧瞧这裙子。”宝玉方低头一瞧，便“嗳哟”了一声，说:“怎么就拖在泥里了?可惜这石榴红绫裙最不经染。”香菱道:“这是前儿琴姑娘带来的。姑娘做了一条，我做了一条，今儿才上身。”宝玉跌脚叹道:“若你们家，一日遭踏这一百条也不值什么。只是头一件，既系琴姑娘带来的，你和宝姐姐每人才一件，他的尚好着，你的先脏了，岂不辜负了他的心。二则姨妈老人家嘴碎，饶这么样，我还听见常说你们不知过日子，只会遭踏东西，不

"You foul-mouthed bitch!" she swore, laughing. "What drivel you talk!"

Seeing she was about to spring up, Douguan promptly stooped to hold her down, turning to appeal to Ruiguan and the rest:

"Come and help me pinch her foul mouth!"

The two of them rolled over on the grass while the others laughed and clapped.

"Look out!" cried one. "There's a puddle there. It would be a pity to dirty her new skirt."

Douguan turned and saw just beside them a puddle of rain water which had already muddied half Xiangling's skirt. Disconcerted, she let go of her and ran off. The others could not help laughing, but afraid Xiangling might vent her annoyance on them they too scampered away giggling.

Xiangling got up now and started cursing when she looked down and saw water dripping from her skirt. Just at this moment, along came Baoyu with some herbs and flowers he had picked, intending to join in their game. He saw the rest running away leaving Xiangling there, her head lowered, fingering her skirt.

"Why have they all gone?" he asked.

"I had a husband-and-wife orchid," she told him. "They'd never heard of it and said instead I was cheating, so we started squabbling and I've spolit my new skirt."

"You have a husband-and-wife orchid and I've a neck-to-neck caltrop flower here," he answered, showing her the caltrop and taking the orchid from her.

"Never mind about husband-and-wife or neck-to-neck," she grumbled. "Look at my skirt."

Baoyu bent to look, then exclaimed, "*Aiya*! How did you get it in the mud? It's too bad, this pomegranate-red silk shows the dirt so."

"This silk was brought the other day by Miss Baoqin. Miss Baochai made one skirt and I made another, which I put on today for the first time."

Baoyu stamped his foot.

"Your family can well afford to spoil a hundred skirts like that each day. Only this was given you by Miss Baoqin, and you and Cousin Baochai both have one; if hers is still all right while yours gets dirtied first, that

知惜福呢。这叫姨妈看见了，又说一个不清。”香菱听了这话，却碰在心坎儿上，反倒喜欢起来了，因笑道：“就是这话了。我虽有几条新裙子，都不和这一样的，若也有一样的，赶着换了，也就好了。过后再说。”宝玉道：“你快休动，只站着方好，不然连小衣儿膝裤鞋面都要拖脏了。我有个主意：袭人上月做了一条和这个一模一样的，他因有孝，如今也不穿。竟送了你换下这个来，如何？”香菱笑着摇头说：“不好。倘或他们要听见了倒不好。”宝玉道：“这怕什么。等他孝满了，他爱什么，难道不许你送他别的不成？你若这样，不是你素日为人了！况且不是瞒人的事，只管告诉宝姐姐也可，只不过怕姨妈老人家生气罢了。”香菱想了一想有理，便点头笑道：“就是这样罢了，别辜负了你的心。我等着你，千万叫他亲自送来才好。”

宝玉听了，欢喜非常，答应了忙忙的回来。一面低头暗算：“可惜这么一个人，没父母，连自己本姓都忘了，被人拐出来，偏又卖与了这个霸王。”因又想起上日平儿也是意外想不到的，今日更是意外之意外的事了。一面胡思乱想，来至房中，拉了袭人，细细的告诉他原故。香菱之为人，无人不怜爱的。袭人本又是个手中撒漫的，况与香菱素相交好，一闻此言，忙就开箱取了出来折好，随了宝玉来寻着香菱，他还站在那里等呢。袭人笑道：“我说你太淘气了，到底淘出个故事来才罢。”香菱红了脸，笑说：“多谢姐姐了，谁知那起促狭鬼使黑心。”说着，接了裙子，展开一看，果然同自

looks ungrateful. Besides, dear old Auntie's a fuss-pot. Even when you're careful, I've often heard her complaining that you're a poor manager and don't know how to save but just waste things all the time. If she sees this, you'll never hear the end of it."

Xiangling was pleased and struck by his understanding.

"That's just it," she replied. "I have several new skirts, but none like this. If I had, I'd change it quickly and things would be all right for the time being."

"Better not move," Baoyu warned her. "Just stay put, otherwise you'll muddy your underclothes and shoes as well. I have an idea. Last month Xiren made a skirt exactly like this. As she's still in mourning she isn't wearing it. How about letting her give you hers instead?"

Xiangling smiled and shook her head.

"No, if others heard about it, that would be worse."

"What would it matter? After her mourning ends, if she fancies something you can surely give it her, can't you? The way you're behaving isn't like your usual self. Besides, this isn't anything that need be kept secret; you can tell Cousin Baochai about it. We just don't want to vex dear old Auntie."

Xiangling thought this made good sense.

Nodding she said, "All right then. To show how grateful I am to you I'll wait here. But be sure you get her to bring it here herself."

Baoyu was delighted and agreed to this, musing as he hurried back with lowered head, "Poor girl, with no parents, not even knowing her family name after being kidnapped and sold to this Tyrant King." Then he thought, "What I did for Pinger last time was unexpected; now this is even more of a pleasant surprise." His thoughts wandering in this foolish way, he went back to his room and got hold of Xiren to explain the situation. As Xiangling was a general favourite and open-handed Xiren was a good friend of hers, as soon as she knew what had happened she opened her case, took the skirt out and folded it, then went off with Baoyu to find Xiangling still standing in the same spot.

"I always said you were naughty," teased Xiren. "Now see what a mess you've landed yourself in."

Xiangling blushed and said, "Thank you, sister. I never thought those

己的一样。又命宝玉背过脸去，自己叉手向内解下来，将这条系上。袭人道："把这脏了的交与我拿回去，收拾了再给你送来。你若拿回去，看见了也是要问的。"香菱道："好姐姐，你拿去不拘给那个妹妹罢。我有了这个，不要他了。"袭人道："你倒大方的很。"香菱忙又万福道谢，袭人拿了脏裙便走。

香菱见宝玉蹲在地下，将方才的夫妻蕙与并蒂莲用树枝抠了一个坑，先抓些落花来铺垫了，将这莲蕙安放好，又将些落花来掩住了，方撮土掩埋平复。香菱拉他的手，笑道："这又做什么?怪不得人人说你惯会鬼鬼祟祟做这使人肉麻的事。你瞧瞧，你这手弄的泥乌苔滑的，还不快洗去。"宝玉笑着，方起身走了去洗手，香菱也自走开。二人已走远了数步，香菱复转身回来叫住宝玉。宝玉不知有何话，扎着两只泥手，笑嘻嘻的转来问："什么?"香菱只顾笑。因那边他的小丫头臻儿走来说："二姑娘等你说话呢。"香菱方向宝玉道："裙子的事可别和你哥哥说才好。"说毕，即转身走了，宝玉笑道："可不我疯了，往虎口里探头儿去呢。"说着，也回去洗手去了。要知端的，下回分解。

mischievous imps would play such a dirty trick on me." When she took the skirt and unfolded it, she found it was just like her own. She made Baoyu look the other way and, turning her back on him, took off her skirt and slipped into the clean one.

"Give me the dirty one to take back," said Xiren. "I'll have it cleaned, then return it. If you take it back, they may see it and ask questions."

"You take it and give it to one of the girls. Now that I've got this one, I don't need it any more."

"That's very generous of you," said Xiren.

"Then Xiangling curtseyed her thanks, and Xiren went off with the soiled skirt.

Now Xiangling saw that Baoyu was squatting on the ground using a twig to scrape a little pit in which to bury her orchid and his caltrop flower together. First he lined the bottom of the pit with fallen blossoms then laid the flowers in it, strewed them with more blossoms, then filled in the pit with earth.

Xiangling pulled him by the hand saying, "What's the idea? No wonder people say you're always up to underhand tricks. Look, your hands are all muddy and filthy. Go and wash them, quick."

Baoyu got up smiling and set off to wash his hands while Xiangling walked away too. They had neither of them gone far when she turned back and called him to stop. Not knowing the reason, Baoyu turned back grinning, holding his muddy hands away from himself.

"What is it?" he asked.

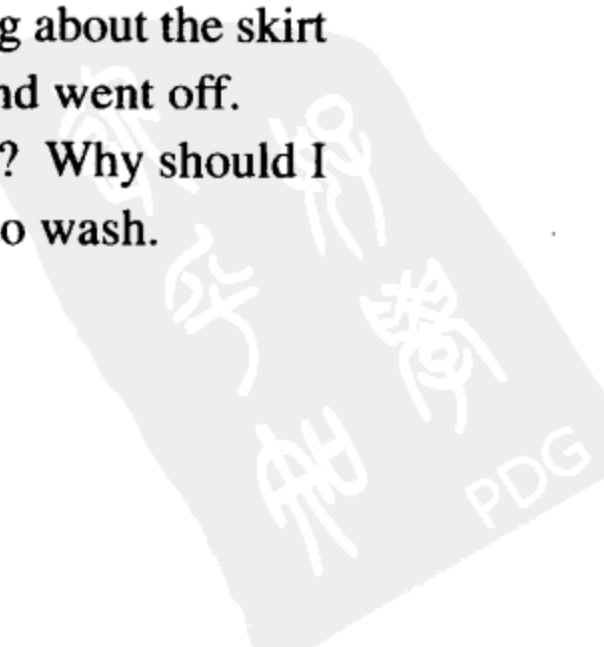
But Xiangling simply giggled. Just then her young maid Zhener appeared.

"Miss Baoqin wants you," she said.

Xiangling urged Baoyu then, "Just don't say anything about the skirt to your Cousin Pan. That's all." With that she turned and went off.

Baoyu called laughingly after her, "Think I'm crazy? Why should I put my head in a tiger's mouth?" Then he went home to wash.

To know what happened later, read the next chapter.



PDG


壽怡紅羣芳開夜宴

第六十三回

寿怡红群芳开夜宴　死金丹独艳理亲丧

话说宝玉回至房中洗手，因与袭人商议："晚间吃酒，大家取乐，不可拘泥。如今吃什么，好早说给他们备办去。"袭人笑道："你放心，我和晴雯、麝月、秋纹四个人，每人五钱银子，共是二两。芳官、碧痕、小燕、四儿他每人三钱银子，其余告假的不算，共是三两二钱银子，早已交给了柳嫂子，预备四十碟果子。我和平儿说了，已经抬了一坛好绍兴酒藏在那边了。我们八个人单替你过生日。"宝玉听了，喜的忙说："他们是那里的钱，不该叫他们出才是。"晴雯道："他们没钱，难道我们是有钱的！这原是各人的心。那怕他偷的呢，只管领他们的情就是。"宝玉听了，笑说："你说的是。"袭人笑道："你一天不挨他两句硬话儿，蠢蠢的你再过不去。"晴雯笑道："你如今也学坏了，专会架桥拨火儿。"说着，大家都笑了。宝玉说："关院门罢。"袭人笑道："怪不得人说你是'无事忙'，这会子关了门，人倒疑惑，越性再等一等。"宝玉点头，因说："我出去走走，四儿舀水去，小

Chapter 63

Girls Feast at Night to Celebrate Baoyu's Birthday
Jia Jing Dies of an Elixir and Madam You Manages the Funeral Single-Handed

Baoyu going back to his room to wash up told Xiren, "We mustn't stand on ceremony tonight but drink and enjoy ourselves. Let them know in good time what dishes we want so that they'll have them ready."

"Don't worry," she replied. "Qingwen, Sheyue, Qiuwen and I have contributed half a tael of silver each, which makes two taels; and Fangguan, Bihen, Xiaoyan and Sier have each given thirty cents. So, apart from those who are away, we've raised three taels and twenty cents which we've already given to Mrs. Liu, who's preparing forty dishes. I've also arranged with Pinger to have a vat of good Shaoxing wine smuggled in. The eight of us are going to throw a birthday party for you."

Baoyu was delighted but demurred, "How can they afford it? You shouldn't have made them chip in."

Qingwen demanded, "Do we have money and not they? All of us are just showing our feeling. Never mind whether they can afford it. Even if they steal the money, just you accept it."

"That's right," said Baoyu.

"It seems that you can't be satisfied unless she gives you a few digs every day, " chuckled Xiren.

"Now you're learning bad ways too," shot back Qingwen. "Always goading others on to stir up trouble!"

At that all three laughed, after which Baoyu proposed locking the courtyard gate. But Xiren objected:

"No wonder people say you're for ever making a great ado about nothing. If we lock the gate now that will arouse suspicion. Better wait a bit."

Baoyu nodded.

"I'll take a stroll outside then," he said, "while Sier fetches water.

燕一个跟我去罢。”说着，走至外边，因见无人，便问五儿之事，小燕道:“我才告诉了柳嫂子，他倒喜欢的很。只是五儿那夜受了委屈烦恼，回家去又气病了，那里来得，只等好了罢。”宝玉听了，不免后悔长叹，因又问:“这事袭人知道不知道?”小燕道:“我没告诉，不知芳官可说了不曾。”宝玉道:“我却没告诉过他，也罢，等我告诉他就是了。”说毕，复走进来，故意洗手。

已是掌灯时分，听得院门前有一群人进来。大家隔窗悄视，果见林之孝家的和几个管事的女人走来，前头一人提着大灯笼。晴雯悄笑道:“他们查上夜的人来了。这一出去，咱们好关门了。”只见怡红院凡上夜的人都迎了出来，林之孝家的看了不少。林之孝家的吩咐:“别要钱吃酒，放倒头睡到大天亮。我听见是不依的。”众人都笑说:“那里有那样大胆子的人?”林之孝家的又问:“宝二爷睡下了没有?”众人都回不知道。袭人忙推宝玉，宝玉靸了鞋，便迎出来，笑道:“我还没睡呢，妈妈进来歇歇。”又叫:“袭人倒茶来。”林之孝家的忙进来，笑说:“还没睡呢?如今天长夜短了，该早些睡，明儿起的方早。不然到了明日起迟了，被人笑话说不是个读书上学的公子了，倒像那起挑脚汉子。”说毕，又笑。

Xiaoyan can come with me."

He went out, and as there was nobody else about asked when Wuer would be coming.

"I told Mrs. Liu just now, and of course she's very pleased," Xiaoyan informed him. "Only Wuer got so worked up that night she was hauled over the coals that as soon as she got home she fell ill again. She can't come until she's better."

Baoyu sighed in disappointment.

"Does Xiren know this?" he asked.

"I didn't tell her," was the reply. "But Fangguan may have done for all I know."

"Well, I never told her. All right, I'll let her know now."

He went back inside on the pretext of washing his hands.

Now, as the time came to light the lamps, they heard people approaching the courtyard gate and when they peeped through the window saw Mrs. Lin with a few other stewards' wives, the one in front carrying a big lantern.

"They're making their nightly check-up of those on duty," whispered Qingwen. "Once they've gone we can close the gate."

All the servants on night duty in Happy Red Court had gone out to meet these women. After checking that they were all present Mrs. Lin warned them:

"No gambling or drinking now, and no sleeping till morning! If I hear of such goings-on I'll have something to say."

"Which of us would dare?" they answered laughingly.

Then Mrs. Lin asked, "Is Master Bao in bed yet?"

As they replied that they did not know, Xiren nudged Baoyu, who put on slippers to go out to greet them.

"No, I'm not in bed yet," he called. "Come in and sit down." Looking towards the house, he ordered: "Serve tea, Xiren."

Mrs. Lin entered then, smiling.

"Still up!" she exclaimed. "Now the days are long, the nights short, you should go to bed early so as to get up early tomorrow. Otherwise you may oversleep, and people will jeer that you don't behave like a scholarly young gentleman but like a common coolie." Having said this she laughed.

宝玉忙笑道："妈妈说的是。我每日都睡的早，妈妈每日进来多是我不知道的，已经睡了。今儿因吃了面怕停住食，所以多玩一会。"林之孝家的又向袭人等笑说："该沏些个普洱茶吃。"袭人、晴雯二人忙笑说："沏了一盅子女儿茶，已经吃过两碗了。大娘也尝一尝，都是现成的。"说着，晴雯便倒了一碗来。林之孝家的又笑道："这些时我听见二爷嘴里都换了字眼，赶着这几位大姑娘们竟叫起名字来。虽然在这里，到底是老太太、太太的人，还该嘴里尊重些才是。若一时半刻偶然叫一声使得，若是只管叫起来，怕以后兄弟侄儿照样，便惹人笑话，说这家子的人眼里没有长辈。"宝玉笑道："妈妈说的是。我原不过是一时半刻的。"袭人、晴雯都笑说："这可别委屈了他。直到如今，他还姐姐不离口。不过玩的时候叫一声半声名字，若当着人却是和先一样。"林之孝家的笑道："这才好呢，才是读书知礼的呢。越自己谦逊越尊重，别说是三五代的陈人，现从老太太、太太屋里拨过来的，便是老太太、太太屋里的猫儿狗儿，轻易也伤他不得。这才是受过调教的公子行事。"说毕，吃了茶，便说："请安歇罢，我们走了。"宝玉还说："再歇歇。"那林之孝家的已带了众人，又查别处去了。

这里晴雯等忙命关了门，进来笑说："这位奶奶那里吃了一杯来了?唠三叨四的，又排场了我们一顿去了。"麝月笑道："他也不是好意的，少不得也要常提着些儿。也提防着怕走了大褶儿的意思。"说着，一面摆上酒果。袭人道："不用围桌，咱们把那张花梨圆炕桌子放在炕上坐，又宽绰，又便

Baoyu promptly agreed, "You're right, nanny. I do generally go to bed early, so that I don't know when you come every evening because I'm already asleep. But today after eating noodles I was afraid of getting indigestion; that's why I've stayed up a bit."

Mrs. Lin advised Xiren and Qingwen to brew him some *puer* tea.

"We've made him some *nuer* tea[1] and he's drunk two bowls. Won't you try some, madam?" they answered. "It's already brewed."

As Qingwen poured a bowl Mrs. Lin observed, "Recently I've noticed that the Second Master always calls you girls by your names. Though you're working here you belong to Their Ladyships, so he should show more respect. If once in a while he happens to use your names, that doesn't matter; but if this becomes a habit then his cousins and nephews may follow suit, and then people will laugh at us and say we've no respect for elders in our household."

"You're right, nanny," agreed Baoyu again. "Actually I only do that once in a while."

The two girls put in, "You must be fair to him. Even now he still refers to us as 'elder sisters,' only using our names occasionally in fun. In front of others he always addresses us as he did before."

"That's good," approved Mrs. Lin. "That's how someone with education and good manners ought to behave. The more modest you are, the more respected you'll be. Not to say members of the staff of long standing or those transferred from Their Ladyships' apartments, but even the dogs and cats from there mustn't be badly treated. That's the way a well brought up young gentleman should behave." She then drank up her tea and said, "We must be off now. I'll wish you a good night."

Baoyu pressed them to stay, but Mrs. Lin had already led her party off to finish making their rounds. At once Qingwen and others ordered the gate to be locked, and coming back Qingwen said:

"That grandame must have been drinking, gabbing away and nagging at us like that."

"She means well anyway," remarked Sheyue as she started to lay the table. "She has to remind us from time to time to be on our guard and not overstep the limits."

"We don't need that high table," put in Xiren. "Let's put that round

宜。”说着，大家果然抬来。麝月和四儿那边去搬果子，用两个大茶盘做四五回搬运了来。两个老婆子蹲在外面火盆上烫酒。宝玉说：“天热，咱们都脱了大衣裳才好。”众人笑道：“你要脱你脱，我们还要轮流安席呢。”宝玉笑道：“这一安就要安到五更天了。知道我最怕这些俗套子，在外人跟前不得已的，这会子还怄我就不好了。”众人听了，都说：“依你。”于是先不上坐，且忙着卸妆宽衣。

一时将正装卸去，头上只随便挽着鬟儿，身上皆是长裙短袄。宝玉只穿着大红棉纱小袄子，下面绿绫弹墨夹裤，散着裤脚，倚着一个各色玫瑰芍药花瓣装的玉色夹纱新枕头，和芳官两个先划拳。当时芳官满口嚷热，只穿着一件玉色红青驼绒三色缎子斗的水田小夹袄，束着一条柳绿汗巾，底下是水红撒花夹裤，也散着裤脚。头额编一圈小辫，总归至顶心，结一根鹅卵粗细的总辫，拖在脑后。右耳眼内只塞着米粒大小的一个小玉塞子，左耳上单带着一个白果大小的硬红镶金大坠子，越显的面如满月犹白，眼如秋水还清。引的众人笑说：“他两个倒像是双生的弟兄两个。”袭人等一一的斟了酒来，说：“且等等再划拳，虽不安席，每人在手里吃我们一口罢了。”于是袭人为先，端在唇上吃了一口，余依次下去，一一吃过，大家方团团坐定。小燕、四儿因炕沿坐不下，便端了两张椅子，近炕放下。那四十个碟子，皆是一色白粉定窑的，不过只有小茶碟大，里面不过是山南海北，中

low pear-wood one on the *kang*. There's room for all of us at it, and it's more convenient."

So they carried the table over, after which Sheyue and Sier fetched the dishes, making four or five trips with two big trays while two old women squatting outside by the brazier warmed the wine.

"It's so hot, let's take off our outer clothes," Baoyu suggested.

"You can if you want to," said the girls, "but we have to take it in turns to offer toasts."

"If you do that it'll take all night," he objected. "You know how much I dislike those vulgar conventions. We may have to observe them in front of outsiders, but if *you* provoke me like that it won't be nice."

"We'll do as you say," they agreed.

So before taking seats they first divested themselves of their outer things and had soon laid aside their formal gowns and trinkets, leaving their hair to hang free and wearing only long skirts and bodices. Baoyu himself stripped down to a scarlet linen jacket and green dotted satin trousers, letting the ends of the trouser legs hang loose. Leaning on a jade-colored gauze cushion filed with all sorts of fresh rose and peony petals, he started playing the finger-guessing game with Fangguan.

Fangguan, who had also been complaining of the heat, had on only a short lined satin jacket — a patchwork of red, blue and jade-coloured squares, a green sash, and pink trousers with a floral design left untied at her ankles. Her hair, woven in small plaits, was gathered on the crown of her head into a thick braid hanging down at the back. In her right ear she wore a jade stop no bigger than a grain of rice, in her left a ruby-ear-ring set in gold the size of a gingko nut, making her face seem whiter than the full moon, her eyes clearer than water in autumn.

"The two of them look like twin brothers!" chuckled the others.

Xiren and the rest poured wine for each.

"Wait a bit before you start the finger-guessing game," they said. "Though we're dispensing with the usual toasts, you must each take a sip from our cups."

Xiren held the first cup to her lips and took a sip, to be followed by the others, after which all sat down in a circle. As there was insufficient room on the *kang*, Xiaoyan and Sier set two chairs beside it. The forty

原外国，或干或鲜，或水或陆，天下所有的酒馔果菜。宝玉因说："咱们也该行个令才好。"袭人道："斯文些的才好，别大呼小叫，惹人听见。二则我们不识字，可不要那些文的。"麝月笑道："拿骰子咱们抢红罢。"宝玉道："没趣，不好。咱们占花名儿好。"晴雯笑道："正是早已想弄这个玩意儿。"袭人道："这个玩意儿虽好，人少了没趣。"小燕笑道："依我说，咱们竟悄悄的把宝姑娘、林姑娘请了来玩一回子，到二更天再睡不迟。"袭人道："又开门喝户的闹，倘或遇见巡夜的问呢?"宝玉道："怕什么，咱们三姑娘也吃酒，再请他一声才好。还有琴姑娘。"众人都道："琴姑娘罢了，他在大奶奶屋里，叨登的大发了。"宝玉道："怕什么，你们就快请去。"小燕四儿都得不了一声，二人忙命开了门，分头去请。

晴雯、麝月、袭人三人又说："他两个去请，只怕宝、林两个不肯来，须得我们请去，死活拉他来。"于是袭人、晴雯忙又命老婆子打个灯笼，二人又去。果然宝钗说夜深了，黛玉说身上不好，他二人再三央求说："好歹给我们一点体面，略坐坐再来。"探春听了却也欢喜，因想："不请李纨，倘或被他知道了倒不好。"便命翠墨同了小燕也再三的请了李纨和宝琴二人，会齐，先后都到了怡红院中，袭人又死活拉了香菱来。炕上又并了一张桌子，方坐开了。

white *Ding* ware dishes no bigger than saucers held all manner of sweetmeats and delicacies of land and sea, fresh or preserved, from every part of the country and from abroad. And now Baoyu proposed playing some drinking games.

"Something quiet, not too rowdy," advised Xiren. "We don't want people to hear us. And nothing too literary either, as we're no scholars."

"How about the dice game 'Grabbing the Red'?" said Sheyue.

"That's no fun," objected Baoyu. "Better play the 'Flower Game.'"

"Yes, do let's!" cried Qingwen. "I've always wanted to play that."

"It's a good game," agreed Xiren, "but no fun for just a few people."

"I've an idea," put in Xiaoyan. "Let's quietly invite Miss Baochai and Miss Daiyu over to play for a short time. It won't matter if we go on till the second watch."

"If we go around knocking different people up, we may run into some night-watchers," Xiren pointed out.

"Don't be afraid," said Baoyu. "My Third Sister likes drinking too; we should count her in. And Miss Baoqin as well."

"Not Miss Baoqin," the others demurred. "She's with Madam Zhu, so that would make too much of a stir."

"Never mind," insisted Baoyu. "Hurry up and invite them."

Xiaoyan and Sier, who had been awaiting this order, immediately called for the gate to be unlocked and went off to the different apartments.

"They may not be able to get Miss Baochai and Miss Daiyu," predicted the senior maids. "We'll have to go and drag them here by main force." So, telling an old woman to bring a lantern, Xiren and Qingwen went off as well.

Sure enough, Baochai objected that it was too late while Daiyu pleaded poor health, but the two maids begged them:

"Do give us a little face. Just go and sit there for a while."

As for Tanchun, she was eager to come but felt that if Li Wan were left out and came to hear of it later that wouldn't be good; so she told Zuimo and Xiaoyan to insist that Li Wan and Baoqin should both be invited. Presently they all arrived, one by one, at Happy Red Court, where Xiren had dragged Xiangling over as well. Another table had to be put on the *kang* before they could all sit down.

宝玉忙说："林妹妹怕冷，过这边靠板壁坐。"又拿个靠背垫着些。袭人等都端了椅子在炕沿下一陪。黛玉却离桌远远的靠着靠背，因笑向宝钗、李纨、探春等道："你们日日说人夜聚饮博，今儿我们自己也如此，以后怎么说人。"李纨笑道："这有何妨？一年之中不过生日、节间如此，并无夜夜如此，这倒也不怕。"说着，晴雯拿了一个竹雕的签筒来，里面装着象牙花名签子，摇了一摇，放在当中。又取过骰子来，盛在盒内，摇了一摇，揭开一看，里面是五点，数至宝钗。宝钗便笑道："我先抓，不知抓出个什么来。"说着，将筒摇了一摇，伸手掣出一根，大家一看，只见签上画着一枝牡丹，题着"艳冠群芳"四字，下面镌刻的小字一句唐诗，道是：

任是无情也动人。

又注着："在席共贺一杯，此为群芳之冠，随意命人，不拘诗词歌曲，道一则以侑酒。"众人看了，都笑说："巧的很，你也原配牡丹花。"说着，大家共贺了一杯。宝钗吃过，便笑说："芳官唱一支我们听罢。"芳官道："既这样，大家吃了门杯好听。"于是大家吃酒。芳官便唱："寿筵开处风光好。"众人都道："快打回去。这会子很不用你来上寿，拣你极好的唱来。"芳官只得细细的唱了一支《赏花时》：

"Cousin Daiyu feels the cold," said Baoyu. "Come and sit by the partition."

She was given a cushion for her back while Xiren and the other maids fetched chairs and seated themselves beside the *kang*.

Leaning against her back-rest some way from the table, Daiyu teased Baochai, Li Wan and Tanchun, "You're always accusing people of drinking and gambling at night, and now that's just what *we're* doing. How can we blame others in future?"

"It doesn't matter," replied Li Wan, "if we only do this on birthdays or festivals, not every night. There's nothing to be afraid of."

As she was speaking, Qingwen brought in a carved bamboo container filled with ivory slips bearing the names of flowers. Having shaken this she put it down in the middle. Next she brought the dice-box and shook it, and upon opening the box saw that the number on the dice was five. She counted, starting from herself, and Baochai being the fifth was the one who should start.

"I'll draw," said Baochai. "I wonder what I shall get."

She shook the container and took out a slip on which they saw the picture of a peony with the words "Beauty surpassing all flowers." Inscribed in smaller characters beneath was the line of Tang poetry, "Though heartless she has charm." The instructions read, "All the feasters must drink a cup by way of congratulations, for this is the queen of the flowers. She can order anyone to compose a poem or tell a joke to enliven the drinking."

"What a coincidence!" all exclaimed laughingly. "A peony is just the flower for you." With that they drank a cup each.

After Baochai had drunk she decreed, "Let Fangguan sing us a song."

"In that case," said Fangguan, "you must all finish your cups."

When all had drained them, Fangguan started singing *The Birthday Feast Is Spread in a Fine Season.*

"Not that song," protested the others. "We don't want you, right now, to congratulate him on his birthday. Sing us your best song instead."

Then Fangguan had to give them a careful rendering of a verse set to the melody *The Season for Enjoying Flowers.* [2]

With a broom of green phoenix feathers,

翠凤毛瓴扎帚叉，闲为仙人扫落花。您看那风起玉尘沙。猛可的那一层云下，抵多少门外即天涯。您再休要剑斩黄龙一线儿差，再休向东老贫穷卖酒家。您与俺眼向云霞。洞宾呵，您得了人可便早些儿回话；若迟呵，错教人留恨碧桃花。

才罢。宝玉却只管拿着那签，口内颠来倒去念“任是无情也动人”，听了这曲子，眼看着芳官不语。湘云忙一手夺了，递与宝钗。宝钗又掷了个十六点，数到探春。探春笑道：“我还不知得个什么呢。”伸手掣了一根出来，自己一瞧，便掷在地下，红了脸，笑道：“这东西不好，不该行这令。这原是外边男人们行的令，许多混话在上头。”众人不解，袭人等忙拾了起来，众人看上面是一枝杏花，那红字写着“瑶池仙品”四字，诗云：

日边红杏倚云栽。

注云：“得此签者，必得贵婿，大家恭贺一杯，共同饮一杯。”众人笑道：“我说是什么呢。这签原是闺阁中取戏的，除了这两三根有这话的，并无杂话，这有何妨。我们家已有了个王妃，难道你也是王妃不成?大喜，大喜。”说着，大家来敬。探春那里肯饮，却被史湘云、香菱、李纨等三四人强死强活灌了下去。探春只命斟了这个，再行别的，众人断不肯依。湘云拿着他的手强掷了个十九点出来，便该李氏掣。李氏摇了一摇，掣出一根来一看，笑道：“好极。你们瞧

I leisurely sweep fallen blossoms for immortals;
Lo, a wind rising all of a sudden
Swirls jade dust under the clouds,
So far removed though just outside the gate.
Do not miss by an inch again your slash at the yellow dragon,
Nor return to the poor wine-vendor in the east.
But let us turn our eyes to the roseate clouds.
Ah, Lü Dongbin,
Hasten back when you have found one to replace me!
If you delay,
I shall nurse my grief for ever by the peach-blossom.

Baoyu, holding the slip of ivory, had been softly repeating to himself. "Though heartless she has charm," gazing at Fangguan as she sang, lost in thought. Now Xiangyun snatched the slip from him and gave it to Baochai who threw sixteen, which made it Tanchun's turn.

"I wonder what I'll get," she said with a smile.

But having drawn a slip out and seen what it was, she threw it down.

"We shouldn't play this game," she declared with a blush. "It's a game for those men outside, a whole lot of silly nonsense."

The others were wondering what she meant when Xiren picked up the slip for all to see. Under the picture of an apricot-blossom were the words in red "Fairy flower from paradise" and the verse "A red apricot by the sun grows in the clouds." The directions were: "Whoever draws this will have a noble husband. All must drink to her, then drink another cup together."

"Is that all?" they laughed. "This is a game for the inner apartments. Apart from a couple of slips with mottoes like these, there's nothing improper; so what does it matter? Our family already has one Imperial Consort; are you going to be another? Congratulations!"

They all raised their cups, but Tanchun would not drink this toast until compelled to by Xiangyun, Xiangling and Li Wan .

When she protested, "Let's give up this game and play another," they would not agree, and Xiangyun held her hand, forcing her to throw the dice. The number nineteen coming up, it was Li Wan's turn. She shook the container, took out a slip, and smiled when she saw what it was. "Excellent!" she crowed. "Just see what I've got. This is fun."

瞧，这劳什子竟有些意思。”众人瞧那签上，画着一枝老梅，是写着“霜晓寒姿”四字，那一面的旧诗是：

竹篱茅舍自甘心。

注云：“自饮一杯，下家掷骰。”李纨笑道：“真有趣，你们掷去罢。我只自吃一杯，不问你们的废与兴。”说着，便吃酒，将骰过与黛玉。黛玉一掷，是个十八点，便该湘云掣。湘云笑着，揎拳掳袖的伸手掣了一根出来。大家看时，一面画着一枝海棠，题着“香梦沉酣”四字，那一面诗道是：

只恐夜深花睡去。

黛玉笑道：“‘夜深’两个字，改‘石凉’两个字。”众人便知他打趣白日间湘云醉卧的事，都笑了。湘云笑指那自行船与黛玉看，又说“快坐上那船家去罢，别多说了。”众人都笑了。因看注云：“既云‘香梦沉酣’，掣此签者不便饮酒，只令上下二家各饮一杯。”湘云拍手笑道：“阿弥陀佛，真真好签！”恰好黛玉是上家，宝玉是下家，二人斟了两杯只得要饮。宝玉先饮了半杯，瞅人不见，递与芳官，端起来便一扬脖。黛玉只管和人说话，将酒全折在漱盂内了。湘云便绰起骰子来一掷个九点，数去该麝月。麝月便掣了一根出来。大家看时，这上面是一枝荼蘼花，题着“韶华胜极”四字，那边写着一句旧诗，道是：

开到荼蘼花事了。

注云：“在席各饮三杯送春。”麝月问怎么讲，宝玉皱着眉忙将签藏了，说：“咱们且喝酒。”说着，大家吃了三口，以充

They saw the picture of an old plum-tree with the motto "Cold beauty in frosty dawn" and the line of verse "Content to stay by the bamboo fence and thatched hut." The instructions were: "Whoever draws this lot must drink a cup, then the one whose turn comes next must throw the dice."

"That's fine," said Li Wan. "You go on dicing while I just drink one cup without worrying how the rest of you get on."

She drained her cup and passed the dice to Daiyu, who threw eighteen, making it Xiangyun's turn. Xiangyun rolled up her sleeves to draw her lot, a picture of crab-apple-blossom with the motto "Deep in a fragrant dream" and the line "So late at night the flower may fall asleep."

Daiyu teased, "The words 'late at night' should be changed to 'cool on the stone.'"

At that everyone laughed, knowing that she was referring to how Xiangyun had fallen asleep earlier that day on a stone.

Giggling, Xiangyun pointed at the mechanical boat.

"Hurry up and leave by that boat, and stop talking nonsense!"

she retorted.

Amid more laughter they read the instructions, "As she is deep in a fragrant sleep and cannot drink, the two next to her must each drink a cup instead."

Xiangyun clapped her hands.

"Amida Buddha!" she cried. "This is really a lucky dip!"

It so happened that Daiyu and Baoyu were one either side of her, so they both filled their cups. Baoyu first drank half the cup, as no one was watching, then passed the rest to Fangguan, who drained the cup. As for Daiyu, while chatting with the others she quietly poured her drink into a rinse-bowl. Xiangyun then threw a nine, which made it Sheyue's turn. On the lot she drew they saw a rose with the motto "Flower of final splendour " and the line "When the rose blooms, spring flowers fade."

Below was written, "All at the feast should drink three cups each to farewell the spring."

When Sheyue asked what was written there, Baoyu frowned and hid the slip, saying, "We must all drink." So they took three sips each to symbolize three cups.

三杯之数。麝月一掷个十九点，该香菱。香菱便掣了一根并蒂花，题着“联春绕瑞”，那面写着一句诗，道是：

连理枝头花正开。

注云：“共贺掣者三杯，大家陪饮一杯。”香菱便又掷了一个六点，该黛玉掣。黛玉默默的想道：“不知还有什么好的被我掣着方好。”一面伸手取了一根，只见上面画着一枝芙蓉，题着“风露清愁”四字，那面一句旧诗，道是：

莫怨东风当自嗟。

注云：“自饮一杯，牡丹陪饮一杯。”众人笑说：“这个好极。除了他，别人不配作芙蓉。”黛玉也自笑了。于是饮了酒，便掷了个二十点，该着袭人。袭人也伸手取了一根出来，却是一枝桃花，题着“武陵别景”四字，那一面旧诗写着道是：

桃红又是一年春。

注云：“杏花陪一盏，坐中同庚者陪一盏，同辰者陪一盏，同姓者陪一盏。”众人笑道：“这一回热闹有趣。”大家算来，香菱、晴雯、宝钗三人皆与他同庚，黛玉与他同辰，只无同姓者。芳官忙道：“我也姓花，我也陪他一钟。”于是大家斟了酒，黛玉因向探春笑道：“命中该着招贵婿的，你是杏花，快喝了，我们好喝。”探春笑道：“你说的是什么，大嫂子顺手给他一下子。”李纨笑道：“人家不得贵婿反挨打，我也不忍的。”说的众人都笑了。

袭人才要掷，只听有人叫门。老婆子忙出去问时，原来

Then Sheyue threw nineteen and it was Xiangling's turn. She drew a picture of two flowers on one stem with the motto "Double beauty linked with good fortune" and the line "Double flowers bloom on a single stem." The instructions were: "All must congratulate the one who draws this lot and make her drink three cups, drinking one each themselves."

Xiangling then threw a six, making it Daiyu's turn. "I hope I get something good," she thought while drawing a lot. It showed a hibiscus flower with the motto "Quiet and sad in wind and dew" and the line "Blame not the east wind but yourself." The instruction was: "Both hibiscus and peony must drink a cup."

"Fine!" cried the others. "She's the only one here fit to be compared to a hibiscus."

Daiyu smiled too as she drank, then threw a twenty which made it Xiren's turn.

Xiren drew a picture of peach-blossom wiht the motto "Exotic scene at Wuling" and the line "Another spring returns and the peach blooms red." The instructions were, "The apricot-blossom, as well as those born in the same year, on the same day and those with the same surname must drink one cup."

"This one is lively and good fun," cried the rest.

They worked it out that Xiangling, Qingwen and Baochai were the same age as Xiren, while Daiyu's birthday fell on the same day; but they could not think of anyone with the same name until Fangguan said:

"My family name is Hua. I'll drink with her."

As they filled their cups Daiyu remarked to Tanchun, "You're the apricot-blossom destined to have a noble husband. So drink up quickly and we'll follow suit."

"Stop talking nonsense!" retorted Tanchun. "Sister-in-law, give her a slap."

"She hasn't got a noble husband and now you want me to beat her," teased Li Wan. "No, I can't bring myself to do it."

At that they all laughed.

Xiren was about to throw the dice when they heard someone at the gate. An old woman went to see who was there and found it was a maid sent by Aunt Xue to fetch Daiyu back.

是薛姨妈打发人来接黛玉的。众人因问几更了，人回："二更以后了，钟打过十一下了。"宝玉犹不信，要过表来瞧了一瞧，已是子初初刻十分了，黛玉便起身说："我可撑不住了，回去还要吃药呢。"众人说："也都该散了。"袭人、宝玉等还要留着众人，李纨、宝钗等都说："夜太深了不像，这已是破格了。"袭人道："既如此，每位再吃一杯再走。"说着，晴雯等已都斟满了酒，每人吃了，都命点灯。袭人等直送过沁芳亭河那边方回来。

关了门，大家复又行起令来。袭人等又用大钟斟了几钟，用盘攒了各样果菜与地下的老嬷嬷们吃。彼此有了三分酒，便猜拳赢唱小曲儿。那天已四更时分，老嬷嬷们一面明吃，一面暗偷，酒坛已罄，众人听了纳罕，方收拾盥漱睡觉。芳官吃的两腮胭脂一般，眉梢眼角越添了许多丰韵，身子困不得，便睡在袭人身上，道"好姐姐，心跳的很。"袭人笑道："谁许你尽力灌起来。"小燕、四儿也困不得，早睡了。晴雯还只管叫，宝玉道："不用叫了，咱们且胡乱歇一歇罢。"自己便枕了那红香枕，身子一歪，便也睡着了。袭人

"What time is it?" everyone asked.

"After the second watch," the maid informed them. "The clock's just struck eleven."

Baoyu could not believe it was so late, but when he called for his watch and looked at the time it was ten past eleven.

"I can't stay up any longer," said Daiyu getting up. "I have to take medicine too after I go back."

All agreed that it was time to disperse, so when Xiren and Baoyu tried to keep them Li Wan and Baochai demurred:

"It doesn't look right being so late. We've already made an exception to our rule."

"In that case," said Xiren, "let's each have one final cup."

Qingwen and the others filled the cups, and after drinking them they called for lanterns. Xiren and the rest, having seen the visitors past Seeping Fragrance Pavilion to the other side of the stream, came back and locked the gate, then continued their game. They also filled several big goblets and selected several dishes for the old maid-servants waiting on them. And now, being slightly tipsy, they played the finger-guessing game and made the losers sing songs. By the time of the fourth watch, the old women in addition to drinking their share had stolen more wine on the sly so that the whole vat was empty. When they learned to their surprise that the wine was finished, they cleared the table, washed and made ready for bed.

Fangguan's cheeks after drinking were as red as rouge, making her look still more charming. Unable to hold herself steady she leaned on Xiren.

"Dear sister," she murmured, "my heart's beating ever so fast!"

"Who gave you permission to drink so much?" Xiren retorted.

Xiaoyan and Sier, who had felt dizzy too, had already gone to bed. Only Qingwen was still trying to rouse them.

"No need to wake them," Baoyu remonstrated. "Let's just get some rest anyhow."

With that, lying back on his pillow of fragrant red petals, he curled up and went to sleep too.

Xiren feared that Fangguan was so drunk that she might be sick, so

见芳官醉的很，恐他闹酒，只得轻轻的起来，就将芳官扶在宝玉之侧，由他睡了。自己却在对面榻上倒下。

大家黑甜一觉，不知所之。及至天明，袭人睁眼一看，只见天色晶明，忙说："可迟了。"向对面床上瞧了一瞧，只见芳官头枕着炕沿上，睡犹未醒，连忙起来叫他。宝玉已翻身醒了，笑道："可迟了！"因又推芳官起身。那芳官坐起来，犹发怔揉眼睛，袭人笑道："不害羞，你吃醉了，怎么也不拣地方儿，乱挺下了。"芳官听了，瞧了一瞧，方知是和宝玉同榻，忙笑的下地来，说："我怎么吃的都不知道了。"宝玉笑道："我竟也不知道了。若知道，给你脸上抹些黑墨。"说着，丫头进来伺候梳洗，宝玉笑道："昨日有扰，今儿晚上我还席。"袭人笑道："罢罢罢，今儿可别闹了，再闹就有人说话了。"宝玉道："怕什么，不过才两次罢了。咱们也算是会吃酒了，那一坛子酒，怎么就吃光了。正是有趣，偏又没了。"袭人笑道："原要这样才有趣。必至兴尽了，反无后味了。昨儿都好上来了，晴雯连臊也忘了，我记得他还唱了一个曲儿。"四儿笑道："姐姐忘了，连姐姐还唱了一个呢。在席的谁没唱过！"众人听了，俱红了脸，用两手握着笑个不住。

忽见平儿笑嘻嘻的走来，说亲自来请昨日在席的人：

she quietly helped her over to lie down next to Baoyu, then sank down on the opposite couch herself. They all slept then, oblivious of everything around them.

When Xiren next opened her eyes the day was bright.

"So late!" she exclaimed.

Seeing Fangguan still sleeping on the edge of the *kang* she got up quickly to wake her. But by this time Baoyu had turned over and woken up.

"It *is* late!" he chuckled, nudging Fangguan to make her get up.

Fangguan sat up, still drowsy, rubbing her eyes.

"Aren't you ashamed?" Xiren laughed. "You were so drunk you didn't care where you flopped down to sleep."

Fangguan stared round, and when she discovered that she had shared Baoyu's bed she at once scrambled up.

"How is it that I don't remember a thing?" she answered laughingly.

"That goes for me too," rejoined Baoyu. "If I'd known, I'd have blackened your face with ink."

Some young maids came in now to help them with their toilet.

"I gave you a lot of trouble yesterday," declared Baoyu. "Tonight I'm going to throw a return party."

"No, we mustn't raise another rumpus today," said Xiren. "If we did, people would complain."

"Why should we care?" he retorted. "It's only a couple of times. But we must be good drinkers if we managed to finish that whole vat of wine. Things were just getting lively when we ran out of wine."

"That's what made it so good," said Xiren. "If we'd drunk to our full capacity, it wouldn't seem such fun looking back. Yesterday we all did fine, and Qingwen actually forgot her scruples. I remember that she even sang a song."

"Have you forgotten, sister, that even *you* sang one too?" demanded Sier. "Everyone at the party sang."

They all blushed then, hiding their faces in their hands, and were giving way to fits of laughter when Pinger came in .

"I've come in person," she announced merrily, "to invite all the people at the party yesterday. Today I'm standing treat. Everybody must

“今儿我还东，短一个也使不得。”众人忙让坐吃茶。晴雯笑道：“可惜昨夜没他。”平儿忙问：“你们夜里做什么来？”袭人便说：“告诉不得你。昨儿夜里热闹非常，连往日老太太、太太带着众人玩也不及昨儿这一玩。一坛酒我们都鼓捣光了，一个个吃的把臊都丢了，三不知的又都唱起来咧。四更多天，才横三竖四的打了一个盹儿。”平儿笑道：“好，白和我要了酒来，也不请我，还说着给我听，气我。”晴雯道：“今儿他还席，必来请你的，等着罢。”平儿笑问道：“他是谁，谁是他？”晴雯听了，赶着笑打，说道：“偏你这耳朵尖，听得真。”平儿笑道：“这会子有事不和你说，我干事去了。迟一回再打发人来请，一个不到，我是打上门来的。”宝玉等忙留，他已经去了。

这里宝玉梳洗了正吃茶，忽然一眼看见砚台底下压着一张纸，因说道：“你们这随便混压东西也不好。”袭人、晴雯等忙问：“又怎么了，谁又有了不是了？”宝玉指道：“砚台底下是什么？一定又是那位的样子忘记了收的。”晴雯忙启砚拿了出来，却是一张字帖儿，递与宝玉看时，原来是一张粉笺子，上面写着“槛外人妙玉恭肃遥叩芳辰”。宝玉看毕，直跳了起来，忙问：“这是谁接了来的？也不告诉。”袭人、晴雯等见了这般，不知当是那个要紧的人来的帖子，忙

come."

They asked her to take a seat and drink some tea.

"It's a pity we didn't have her here last night," observed Qingwen.

"What did you do last night?" she asked.

"We can't tell you," Xiren replied. "Things were so lively, it was far more fun than even those times when Their Ladyships gave us parties. We finished up a whole vat of wine; then after drinking we all forgot ourselves and started singing, really let ourselves go! Finally — not till after the fourth watch — we lay down just anywhere to sleep it off."

"Fine goings-on!" exclaimed Pinger. "You asked me for the wine but didn't invite me, then tell me this to provoke me."

"He's giving a return party today and is sure to invite you," Qingwen assured her. "Just wait."

"'He'? Who is 'he'?" asked Pinger with a smile.

Qingwen made as if to slap her, protesting laughingly, "Why do you have such sharp ears?"

"I'm too busy to bandy words with you now," Pinger told her. "I must be off to see to some business. Later on I'll send to invite you. If anyone fails to turn up, I'll come and knock down your door."

Baoyu wanted to urge her to stay, but she was already gone. After he had finished his toilet and was drinking tea he suddenly caught sight of a piece of paper under the inkstone.

"It's no good," he scolded, "the way you stuff things carelessly just anywhere you please."

Xiren and Qingwen hastily asked what was wrong. Baoyu pointed at the paper.

"What's this under the inkstone? One of you must have forgotten to put your patterns away."

Qingwen took the paper from under the inkstone and saw it was a greeting card on a sheet of pink stationery. She passed it to Baoyu who read: "Miaoyu, the one outside the threshold, sends respectful greetings on the young master's birthday."

At once he sprang to his feet.

"Who brought this in?" he demanded. "Why wasn't I told?"

The state he was in made Xiren and Qingwen suppose that this was a

一齐问："昨日谁接下了一个帖子？"四儿忙飞跑进来，笑说："昨儿妙玉并没亲来，只打发个妈妈送来。我就搁在那里，谁知一顿酒就忘了。"众人听了，道："我当谁的，这样大惊小怪。这也不值的。"宝玉忙命："快拿纸来。"当时拿了纸，研了墨看他下着"槛外人"三字，自己竟不知回帖上回个什么字样才相敌。只管提笔出神，半天仍没主意。因又想："若问宝钗去，他必又批评怪诞，不如问黛玉去。"

想罢，袖了帖儿，径来寻黛玉。刚过了沁芳亭，忽见岫烟颤颤巍巍的迎面走来，宝玉忙问："姐姐那里去？"岫烟笑道："我找妙玉说话。"宝玉听了诧异，说道："他为人孤癖，不合时宜，万人不入他的目。原来他推重姐姐，竟知姐姐不是我们一流的俗人。"岫烟笑道："他也未必真心重我，但我和他做过十年的邻居，只一墙之隔。他在蟠香寺修炼，我家原寒素，赁房居住，就赁的是他庙里的房子。住了十年，无事到他庙里去作伴。我所认的字都是承他所授。我和他又是贫贱之交，又有半师之分。因我们投亲去了，闻得他因不合时宜，权势不容，竟投到这里来。如今又天缘凑巧，我们得遇，旧情竟未易。承他青目，更胜当日。"宝玉听了，恍如听了焦雷一般，喜的笑道："怪道姐姐举止言谈，超然如野鹤闲云，原来有本而来。正因他的一件事我为难，要请教别

greeting from someone of consequence.

"Who accepted this card yesterday?" they both asked together.

Sier rushed in to explain, "Miaoyu didn't come herself but sent an old servant with this, so I put it there. But after all that drinking I forgot it."

When the other girls heard this they commented, "We thought it was someone who mattered, the way you were carrying on; but this isn't worth making such a fuss about."

Baoyu, however, immediately asked for some paper and while spreading it out and grinding ink wondered how to word a reply matching that phrase "outside the threshold." Brush in hand he thought hard for a long time, but could not hit on anything appropriate. He reflected, "If I consult Baochai, she's bound to criticize this as eccentric. I'd better ask Daiyu." So tucking the card up his sleeve he set off to find her and had just passed Seeping Fragrance Pavilion when he saw Xiuyan approaching with swaying steps.

"Where are you going, cousin?" he inquired.

"To have a chat with Miaoyu," was the answer.

In surprise he remarked, "She's so aloof and unconventional that she looks down on everybody. If she thinks so highly of you, this shows you're not vulgar like the rest of us."

"She may not really think highly of me," replied Xiuyan with a smile, "but we were next-door neighbours for ten years when she was practising asceticism in Curly Fragrance Nunnery. My family was poor, and we lived for ten years in a house rented from the nunnery; so I often went in to see her when I was free, and she's the one who taught me all the characters I know. Apart from being friends in poverty, she was half my teacher too. After we had left the nunnery to join our relatives, I heard that because she'd offended certain powerful people by her eccentric ways she had to come here for protection too. So as luck would have it we met again, and our old feeling for each other hadn't changed — in fact she's even kinder to me than before."

Much impressed by this account Baoyu said with delight, "No wonder your own behaviour and conversation are as unworldly as a wild stork or floating clouds! So this is the reason, I'm stumped just now by something connected with her and was on my way to ask somebody's

人去。如今遇见姐姐，真是天缘巧合，求姐姐指教。”说着，便将拜帖取与岫烟看，岫烟笑道：“他这脾气竟不能改，竟是生成的这等放诞诡僻了。从来没见拜帖上写别号的，这可是俗语说的‘僧不僧，俗不俗，女不女，男不男’，成个什么道理。”宝玉听说，忙笑道：“姐姐不知道，他原不在这些人中算，他原是世人意外之人。因取我是个些微有知识的，方给我这帖子。我因不知回什么字样才好，竟没了主意，正要去问林妹妹，可巧遇见了姐姐。”岫烟听了宝玉这话，且只顾用眼上下细细打量了半日，方笑道：“怪道俗语说的‘闻名不如见面’，又怪不得妙玉竟下这帖子给你，又怪不得上年竟给你那些梅花。既然连他都这样，少不得我告诉你原故。他常说：‘古人中自汉晋五代唐宋以来，皆无好诗，只有两句好，说是：“纵有千年铁门槛，终须一个土馒头。”’所以他自称‘槛外之人’。又常赞文是庄子的好，故又或称为‘畸人’。他若帖子上是自称‘畸人’的，你就还他个‘世人’。畸人者，他自称是畸零之人；你谦自己乃世中扰扰之人，他便喜了。如今他自称‘槛外之人’，是自谓蹈于铁槛之外了；故，你如今只下‘槛内人’，便合了他的心了。”宝玉听了，如醍醐灌顶，“嗳哟”了一声，方笑道：“怪道我们家庙说是‘铁槛寺’呢，原来有这一说。姐姐就请，让我去写回帖。”岫烟听了，便自往栊翠庵来。宝玉回房写了帖子，上面只写“槛内人宝玉熏沐谨拜”几个字，亲自拿了到栊翠庵，只隔门缝儿投进去，便回来了。

advice. Meeting you is a heaven-sent chance. You must tell me what to do."

Then he showed the card to Xiuyan.

"She hasn't changed in the least," observed Xiuyan with a smile. "She was born like this — headstrong and eccentric. I've never seen other people use appellations like this in greeting cards. Why, this, as the saying goes, is neither fish, flesh nor fowl! It doesn't make sense."

"But you see she's not one of us," Baoyu put in. "She's outside the mundane crowd. She's only sent me this greeting because she thinks I have some slight discernment. But I'm at a loss as to how to word my reply. I was on my way to ask Cousin Daiyu when luckily I met you."

Hearing this, Xiuyan looked him up and down for a while.

She then said cheerfully, "As the proverb says, 'To know someone by repute is not as good as meeting face to face.' No wonder Miaoyu sent you this greeting card; no wonder she gave you that plum-blossom last year. As even *she* shows you special consideration, I shall have to explain this to you. She often says that the only good poetry written by the ancients from the times of Han, Jin, the Five Dynasties, Tang and Song, was the two lines:

> For a thousand years you may have an iron threshold.
> But the end must be a mound of earth.

This is why she calls herself the one outside the threshold. She likes the writings of Zhuang Zi, from which she took that term 'the odd person.' If she called herself 'the odd person' in her card, you could call yourself 'the mundane person,' meaning you're one of the common herd, and that would please her. Now that she's called herself the 'one outside the threshold,' meaning she's outside the iron threshold, to fall in with her you should call yourself the 'one inside the threshold. '"

Baoyu felt as if Buddha had suddenly shown him the light.

"*Aiya*!" he exclaimed. "No wonder our family temple is called Iron Threshold Temple. So that's the origin of the name. Well, cousin, I won't hold you up any longer. I must go and write a reply."

Then Xiuyan went on to Green Lattice Nunnery while Baoyu went back to write on a card: "With the deepest respects of Baoyu, the one inside the threshold." Taking this himself to the nunnery, he slipped it

因又见芳官梳了头，挽起鬟来，带了些花翠，忙命他改妆。又命将周围的短发剃了去，露出碧青头皮来，当中分大顶。又说："冬天作大貂鼠卧兔儿带，脚上穿虎头盘云五彩小绒鞋，或散着裤腿，只用净袜厚底镶鞋。"又说："芳官之名不好，竟改了男名才别致。"因又改作"雄奴"。芳官十分称心，又说："既如此，你出门也带我出去。有人问，只说和茗烟一样的小厮就是了。"宝玉笑道："到底人看的出来。"芳官笑道："我说你是无才的，咱们家现有几家土番，你就说我是个小土番儿。况且人人说我打联垂好看，你想这说的可不妙么？"宝玉听了，喜出意外，忙笑道："这却很好。我亦常见官员人等多有跟从外国献俘之种，图其不畏风霜，鞍马便捷。既这等，再起个番名，叫作'耶律雄奴'。'雄奴'二音，又与匈奴相通，都是犬戎名姓。况且这两种人自尧舜时便为中华之患，晋唐诸朝，深受其害。幸得咱们有福，生在当今之世，大舜之正裔，圣虞之功德仁孝，赫赫格天，同天地日月亿兆不朽。所以凡历朝中跳梁猖獗之小丑，到了如今竟不用一干一戈，皆天使其拱手俛头，缘远来降。我们正该作践他们，为君父生色。"芳官笑道："既这样着，你该去操习弓马，学些武艺，挺身出去拿几个反叛来，岂不尽忠效力了。何必借我们，你鼓唇摇舌的，自己开心作戏，却说是

through a crack in the gate, then went back.

He found that Fangguan had finished doing her hair, which was fastened up in a knot, and she was wearing some trinkets. At once he insisted on her dressing in a different style. He urged her to shave off her fringe completely, exposing her bluish scalp, and to part her hair in the middle. He also said that in winter she should wear a sable cap in the shape of a crouching hare and small tiger-head battle boots decorated with multicoloured curling clouds, or leave her trouser ends loose and wear white socks and thick-soled boots. He objected to the name Fangguan as well, saying it would be more original to take a man's name instead, and proposing the name Xiongnu.[3] Fangguan was delighted.

"In that case," she said, "when you go out you must take me along, and if anyone asks who I am just tell them I'm a page like Mingyan."

"Still, people will be able to see who you are," he chuckled.

"How dense you are, I must say!" she retorted. "We have some families of tribesmen here — just say I'm from one of those. Besides, everyone tells me I look better with my hair plaited. Wouldn't that be the smart thing to do?"

"Splendid!" approved Baoyu elatedly. "I've often seen officials with followers captured from abroad, as such people can stand wind and frost and are excellent horsemen. In that case, I'll give you a tribal name — Yelü Xiongnu. Those are names used by the tribes who have been a scourge to China since the days of Yao and Shun, and who plagued us so much during the Jin and Tang dynasties.

"We're lucky to be living now under the rule of an Emperor directly descended from the sage king Shun, an age when virtue, humanity and filial piety as vast as Heaven are manifest, and in a dynasty which will endure as long as the sun and moon. That's why all the unruly barbarians who made such trouble in previous dynasties now submit to us with folded hands and bowed heads according to Heaven's will, without our having to resort to arms; and distant tribes have surrendered to our rule. So we *should* make fun of them to add to the glory of our sovereign."

"If that's how you feel," countered Fangguan, "you should go and practise archery and horsemanship and learn other martial arts, then set off to the border to capture some rebels! Wouldn't that show your loy-

称功颂德呢。”宝玉笑道:“所以你不明白。如今四海宾服，八方宁静，千秋万载不用武备。咱们虽一戏一笑，也该称颂，方不负坐享升平了。”芳官听见说的有理，二人自为妥贴合宜。宝玉便叫他“耶律雄奴。”

究竟贾府二宅皆有先人当年所获之囚赐为奴隶，只不过令其饲养马匹，皆不堪大用。湘云素习憨戏异常，他也最喜武扮，每每自己束銮带，穿折袖。近见宝玉将芳官扮成男子，他便将葵官也扮了个小子。那葵官本是常刮剃短发，好便于面上粉墨油彩，手脚又伶便，打扮了又省一层手。李纨探春见了也爱，便将宝琴的荳官也就命他打扮了一个小童，头上两个丫髻，短袄红鞋，只差了涂脸，便俨然是戏上的一个琴童。湘云将葵官改了，唤作“大英”。因他姓韦，便叫他作韦大英，方合自己的意思，暗藏“惟大英雄能本色”之语，何必涂朱抹粉，本是男子。荳官身量、年纪皆极小，又极鬼灵，故曰荳官。园中人也有唤他作“阿荳”的，也有唤作“炒豆子”的。宝琴反说琴童、书童等名太俗了，竟是荳字别致，便唤作“荳童”。

因饭后平儿还席，说红香圃太热，便在榆荫堂中摆了几

alty better than using us to do it? You're simply wagging your tongue for your own amusement, on the pretext of praising the state's achievements and virtue."

"That's exactly what you don't understand," replied Baoyu laughingly. "Now the Four Seas have submitted to our rule and peace reigns everywhere; so for ages to come there will be no need for arms. And even when having fun we should praise the court, so as not to be unworthy to enjoy the fruits of peace."

Fangguan agreed to this, and as both of them felt it quite appropriate he started addressing her as Yelü Xiongnu. Actually the two Jia mansions had been presented by the court with slaves who had been captured by their ancestors; but these were only used as grooms, not being fit for other work.

Now Xiangyun was a madcap who loved to dress up as a warrior in a belted, tight-sleeved jacket. When she saw Baoyu fit Fangguan out as a boy, she followed suit by dressing Kuiguan up as a page too. Kuiguan, who had played warriors, kept her hair shaved over her temples and forehead as that had made it easier to paint a warrior's face, and she was nimble too. So it was easy to dress her up as a page. Then Li Wan and Tanchun, also thinking it a good idea, made Baoqin's Douguan dress up as a boy too in a short jacket and red shoes with her hair in two tufts. Had her face been painted, she would have been the spit of the Taoist priest's acolyte who carries his master's lyre on the stage.

Xiangyun changed Kuiguan's name to Daying, and as her family name was Wei she was called Wei Daying;[4] for in choosing this name Xiangyun had in mind the phrase "Only a true hero can keep his true colour." Why, to appear a man, should one resort to rouge or powder?

Douguan [5] had been given that name because she was both small and young and a clever little imp. So in the Garden she was also called Adou or Fried Pea. Thinking that to give her a name like "Lyre-boy" or "book-boy" would sound vulgar, and that "Dou" was more original, Baoqin called her Doutong. [6]

That afternoon when Pinger gave a return feast she had several tables of new wine and good dishes set out in Elm Shade Hall, saying that it was too warm in Red Fragrance Farm. To everydody's delight, Madam You

席新酒佳肴。可喜尤氏又带了佩凤、偕鸳二妾过来游玩。这二妾亦是青年姣憨女子，不常过来的。今既入了这园，再遇见湘云、香菱、芳、蕊一干女子，所谓“方以类聚，物以群分”二语不错，只见他们说笑不了，也不管尤氏在那里，只凭丫鬟们去服侍，且同众人一一的游玩。一时到了怡红院，忽听宝玉叫“耶律雄奴”，把佩凤、偕鸳、香菱三个人笑在一处，问是什么话，大家也学着叫这名字，又叫错了音韵，或忘了字眼，甚至于叫出“野驴子”来，引的合园中人凡听见者无不笑倒。宝玉又见人人取笑，恐作践了他，忙又说：“海西福朗思牙，闻有金星玻璃宝石，他本国番语以金星玻璃名为‘温都里纳’。如今将你比作他，就改名唤叫‘温都里纳’可好?”芳官听了更喜，说:“就是这样罢。”因此又唤了这名。众人嫌拗口，仍翻汉名，就唤“玻璃”。

闲言少述，且说当下众人都在榆荫堂中以酒为名，大家玩笑，命女先儿击鼓。平儿采了一枝芍药，大家约二十来人传花为令，热闹了一回。因人回说:“甄家有两个女人送东西来了。”探春和李纨、尤氏三人出去议事厅相见，这里众人且出来散一散。佩凤、偕鸳两个去打秋千玩耍，宝玉便说：“你两个上去，让我送。”慌的佩凤说:“罢了，别替我们闹乱了，倒是叫‘野驴子’来送送使得。”宝玉忙笑说:“好姐姐们别玩了，没的叫人跟着你们学着骂他。”偕鸳又说：“笑软了，怎么打呢。掉下来栽出你的黄子来。”佩凤便赶着他打。

brought over her husband's two concubines Peifeng and Xieyuan, two attractive young women who seldom had a chance to enjoy themselves in the Garden. Coming here now and meeting Xiangyun, Xiangling, Fangguan, Ruiguan and the other girls, it was a genuine case of "like attracts like" or "birds of a feather flock together." Chatting and laughing with each other they paid no attention to Madam You, leaving it to the maids to wait on her while they amused themselves with the other girls.

When presently they went to Happy Red Court and heard Baoyu call Yelü Xiongnu, the two concubines and Xiangling burst out laughing and asked what language this was. They tried to say this name themselves but kept getting it wrong, sometimes forgetting one character or even calling her Yelü,[7] which made all who heard them double up with mirth. Fearing that Fangguan might feel hurt, Baoyu hastily interposted:

"I've heard that west of the ocean, in France, they've a type of precious golden-starred glass which in their language they call *venturina*. Suppose we compare you with that and change your name to Venturina?"

Fangguan was pleased and readily agreed. Accordingly they changed her name again. However, the others still found this a tongue-twister, so they translated it into Chinese and took to calling her Boli.[8] But enough of this.

They returned now to Elm Shade Hall to amuse themselves there on the pretext of drinking. Some women story-tellers were told to beat the drum and Pinger plucked a spray of peony; then everyone — twenty or so in all — passed this round and the one who had it when the drumming stopped had to drink. They had been making merry for some time when it was announced that two serving-women had come with presents from the Zhen family. Tanchun, Li Wan and Madam You went to the hall to receive them, and the rest left Elm Shade Hall to stroll outside. Peifeng and Xieyuan went to take turns on the swing.

"Both get on together and I'll push you," offered Baoyu.

"Oh no," said Peifeng in dismay. "Don't get us into trouble. Better ask your Wild Ass to come and push us instead."

"Stop teasing, sister," he begged. "Otherwise other people will follow your example and make fun of her too."

"If you're limp from laughing, how can you swing?" warned Xieyuan.

正玩笑不绝，忽见东府中几个人慌慌张张跑来说："老爷仙逝了。"众人听了，唬了一大跳，忙都说："好好的并无疾病，怎么就没了？"家下人说："老爷天天修炼，定是功行圆满，升仙去了。"尤氏一闻此言，又见贾珍父子并贾琏等皆不在家，一时竟没个着己的男子来，未免忙了。只得忙卸去了妆饰，命人先到玄真观，将所有的道士都锁了起来，等大爷来家审问。一面忙忙坐车，带了赖升一干家人媳妇出城。又请太医看视到底是何病。大夫们见人已死，何处诊脉来，素知贾敬导气之术总属虚诞，更至参星礼斗，守庚申，服灵砂等，妄作虚为，过于劳神费力，反因此伤了性命的。如今虽死，肚中坚硬似铁，面皮嘴唇烧的紫绛皱裂。便向媳妇回说："系玄教中吞金服砂，烧胀而殁。"众道士慌的回说："原是老爷秘法新制的丹砂吃了坏事，小道们也曾劝说'功行未到且服不得'，不承望老爷于今夜守庚申时悄悄的服了下去，便升仙了。这恐是虔心得道，已出苦海，脱去皮囊，自了去也。"尤氏也不听，只命锁着，等贾珍来发落，且命人去飞马报信。一面看视这里窄狭，不能停放，横竖也不能

"You'll fall off and get smashed like an egg!"

Peifeng ran to catch her, and they were scuffling in fun when some servants from the Eastern Manison came rushing up frantically. "The old master's ascended to Heaven!" they announced.

Everybody was consternated.

"He wasn't even ill, how could he pass away so suddenly?" they exclaimed.

The servants explained, "His Lordship took elixirs every day; now he must have achieved his aim and become an immortal."

Madam You was most worried by this news; for as her husband Jia Zhen, their son Rong, and Jia Lian too were all away, there was no man at home to take charge. She hurriedly took off her finery and sent a steward to Mysterious Truth Temple to have all the Taoist priests there locked up until her husband came back to question them. Then she hastily went by carriage out of the city with the wives of Lai Sheng and some other stewards, having also sent for doctors to see what illness her father-in-law had succumbed to.

As Jia Jing was dead it was no use for the doctors to feel his pulse. They knew, however, that for years he had been practising absurd Taoist breathing exercises. As for his yoga, worship of the stars, keeping vigil on certain nights, taking sulphide of mercury and wearing himself out with his senseless striving for immortality — these were what had carried him off. His belly after death was hard as iron, the skin of his face and lips parched, cracked and purple. They reported to the serving-women that he had died of excessive heat as a result of taking Taoist drugs.

The Taoist priests in their panic confessed, "His Lordship had just concocted a new elixir with some secret formula, and that was his undoing. We'd warned him not to take such things before achieving a certain potency; but last night, during his vigil, unknown to us he took some and became an immortal. Doubtless he has attained immortality owing to his piety, leaving this sea of woe and sloughing his earthly integument to fare forth at will."

Madam You, shutting her ears to this, ordered them to be immured until Jia Zhen's return. And she sent messengers posthaste to take the news. Seeing that the temple was too cramped for the coffin to be left

进城的，忙装裹好了，用软轿抬至铁槛寺来停放。掐指算来，至早也得半月的工夫，贾珍方能来到。目今天气炎热，实不得相待，遂自行主持，命天文生择了日期入殓。寿木已系早年备下寄在此庙的，甚是便宜。三日后，便开丧破孝。一面且做起道场来等贾珍。

荣府中凤姐儿出不来，李纨又照顾姊妹，宝玉不识事体，只得将外头之事暂托了几个家中二等管事人。贾瑞、贾珑、贾珩、贾璎、贾菖、贾菱等，各有执事。尤氏不能回家，便将他继母接来在宁府看家。他这继母只得将两个未出嫁的小女带来，一并起居才得放心。

且说贾珍闻了此信，即忙告假，并贾蓉是有职之人。礼部因当今隆敦孝弟，不敢自专，具本请旨。原来天子极是仁孝过天的，且更隆重功臣之裔，一见此本，便诏问贾敬何职。礼部代奏："系进士出身，祖职已荫其子贾珍。贾敬因年迈多病，常养静于都城之外玄真观。今因病殁于寺中，其子珍，其孙蓉，现因国丧随驾在此，故乞假归殓。"天子听了，忙下额外恩旨曰："贾敬虽白衣，无功于国，念彼祖父之功，追赐五品之职。令其子孙扶柩，由北下之门进都，入彼

there, and as it could not be taken into the city, she had the corpse shrouded and conveyed by sedan-chair to Iron Threshold Temple. She reckoned that her husband could not be back for another fortnight at least, and as the weather was too hot for the funeral to be delayed she decided to get an astrologer to choose a day for it. As the coffin had been prepared many years ago, and kept ever since in the temple, the funeral was easily managed. Three days later a mourning service was held and further masses were performed while waiting for Jia Zhen. Since Xifeng of the Rong Mansion could not leave home and Li Wan had to look after the girls, while Baoyu knew nothing of practical affairs, the work outside was entrusted to a few second-rank stewards. Jia Bin, Jia Guang, Jia Heng, Jia Ying, Jia Chang and Jia Ling also had their different assignments. Madam You, being unable to go home, invited her step-mother old Mrs. You to come and keep an eye on things in the Ning Mansion. And Mrs. You, to be easy in her mind, had to bring her two unmarried daughters with her.

When Jia Zhen heard of his father's death he immediately asked for leave, as did Jia Rong who also had official duties. The Board of Ceremony, well aware that the Emperor set great store by filial piety, dared make no decision themselves but reported the request to the throne. The Emperor, with his transcendent benevolence and filial piety, always treated the descendants of meritorious ministers with special consideration. As soon as he saw the memorial he asked what official post Jia Jing had held, and the Board of Ceremony reported that he had been a Palace Graduate, whose ancestor's noble title had passed on to his son Jia Zhen. Being old and infirm Jia Jing had retired to live quietly in Mysterious Truth Temple outside the city, where he had now died of illness. His son Zhen and his grandson Rong were both at court on account of the state obsequies. They had therefore asked leave to return to attend to the funeral.

When the Emperor heard this, in his exceeding kindness he decreed: "Though Jia Jing was an ordinary citizen who performed no special service for the state, in view of his grand-father's merit he is to be promoted posthumously to the fifth rank. His son and grandson are to escort his coffin through the lower north gate into the capital for a funeral ceremony at his own home, so that his descendants can mourn for him as is

私第殡殓。任子孙尽丧礼毕扶柩归籍外，着光禄寺按上例赐祭。朝中自王公以下准其祭吊。钦此。”此旨一下，不但贾府中人谢恩，连朝中所有大臣皆嵩呼称颂不绝。

贾珍父子星夜驰回，半路中又见贾瑞、贾珖二人领家丁飞骑而来，看见贾珍，一齐滚鞍下马请安。贾珍忙问：“作什么？”贾瑞回说：“嫂子恐哥哥和侄儿来了，老太太路上无人，叫我们两个来护送老太太的。”贾珍听了，称赞不绝，又问家中如何料理。贾瑞等便将如何拿了道士，如何挪至家庙，怕家内无人，接了亲家母和两个姨娘在上房住着。贾蓉当下也下了马，听见两个姨娘来了，便和贾珍一笑。贾珍忙说了几声“妥当”，加鞭便走，店也不投，连夜换马飞驰。一日到了都门，先奔入铁槛寺。那天已是四更天气，坐更的闻知，忙喝起众人来。贾珍下了马，和贾蓉放声大哭，从大门外便跪爬进来，至棺前稽颡泣血，直哭到天亮喉咙都哑了方住。尤氏等都一齐见过。贾珍父子忙按礼换了凶服，在棺前俯伏，无奈自要理事，竟不能目不视物，耳不闻声，少不得减些悲戚，好指挥众人。因将恩旨备述与众亲友听了。一

fitting before escorting his remains to their ancestral district. Let the office of Imperial Banquets bestow on the deceased a sacrificial feast of the first grade, and let all at court from princes and dukes downwards be granted leave to offer their condolences. By Imperial Decree!"

As soon as this decree was issued, not only did the Jia family express thanks for the Emperor's goodness, all the high ministers at court were loud in their praise.

Jia Zhen and his son were speeding home posthaste when they saw Jia Bin and Jia Guang galloping towards them, attended by some servants. At sight of Jia Zhen they hastily dismounted to pay their respects.

Asked their errand Jia Bin reported, "Sister-in-law was afraid that after you and our nephew came back there would be nobody to travel with the old lady, so she sent us to escort Her Ladyship."

Jia Zhen expressed full approval, then asked how matters had been arranged at home, and Jia Bin described how the Taoist priests had been detained and the corpse taken to the family temple; and how, as there was no one in charge at home, old Mrs. You and her two daughters had been invited to stay and accommodation found for them in the main building.

Jia Rong had also dismounted. When he heard of the arrival of his two young aunts, he grinned at his father who was reiterating:

"Well done, well done!"

They galloped on then, not stopping at any inns but changing horses at different post-houses as they sped back through the night. And upon reaching the capital they went straight to Iron Threshold Temple. It was then the fourth watch and the watch-men, hearing them, aroused everyone in the place. Jia Zhen alighted and with Jia Rong wailed aloud, both advancing on their knees from outside the gate to where the coffin was resting, kowtowing and lamenting all the way. They went on wailing till dawn, by which time their voices were hoarse.

Madam You and the others all came to meet them. Then Jia Zhen and his son, having changed into mourning according to the rites, prostrated themselves before the coffin. However, since they had business to attend to which they could not ignore, they had to curtail their mourning in order to issue instructions. Jia Zhen read out the Imperial Decree to their rela-

面先打发贾蓉家中料理停灵之事。

贾蓉巴不得一声儿，先骑马飞来至家，忙命前厅收桌椅，下槅扇，挂孝幔子，门前起鼓手棚牌楼等事。又忙着进来看外祖母、两个姨娘。原来尤老安人年高喜睡，常歪着，他两个姨娘都和丫头们作活计，见他来了都道烦恼。贾蓉且嘻嘻的望他二姨娘，笑说："二姨娘，你又来了，我们父亲正想你呢。"尤二姐便红了脸，骂道："蓉小子，我过两日不骂你几句，你就过不得了。越发连个体统都没了。还亏你是大家公子哥儿，每日念书学礼的，越发连那小家子刨坎的也跟不上。"说着顺手拿起一个铜熨斗来，兜头就打，吓的贾蓉抱着头滚到怀里告饶。尤三姐便上来撕嘴，又说："等姐姐来家，咱们告诉他。"贾蓉忙笑着跪在炕上求饶，他两个又笑了。贾蓉又和二姨抢砂仁吃，尤二姐嚼了一嘴渣子，吐了他一脸。贾蓉用舌头都舔着吃了。众丫头看不过，都笑说："热孝在身上，老娘才睡着了，他两个虽小，到底是姨娘家，你太眼里没有奶奶了。回来告诉爷，你吃不了兜着走。"贾蓉撇下他姨娘，便搂着那丫头亲嘴，说："我的心肝，你说的很是。咱们饶那两个。"众丫头忙推他，恨得

tives and friends, then sent Jia Rong home first to arrange for the removal of the coffin there.

Jia Rong had been eagerly awaiting this order. He rode swiftly home and hastily gave instructions for the tables and chairs to be cleared away from the front hall, the partitions removed, white mourning curtains hung up, and a shed for musicians as well as an arch erected in front of the gate. This done, he hurried in to greet his step-grandmother and two aunts.

Now Mrs. You, being old and fond of sleeping, often lay down on the couch to have a nap while her two daughters were sewing with the maids. When they saw Jia Rong they expressed their condolences. Beaming all over his face he said to his second aunt:

"So you're here again, Second Auntie. My father's been longing for you!"

Second Sister You blushed.

"You rascal!" she swore at him. "You can't get by if I don't curse you every other day! You're going from bad to worse, with absolutely no sense of what's proper. Imagine the son of a good family, who studies and is taught manners all the time, not even being up to low-class riff-raff."

She picked up an iron and grabbed his head as if to hit him, whereupon, shielding his head, he nestled close to her and begged for mercy. Third Sister You reached out to pinch his lips.

"Wait till our elder sister hears of this," she scolded.

Chuckling, Jia Rong knelt on the *kang* to ask their pardon, at which both the sisters laughed. Then he tried to snatch some cardamom from his second aunt, who spat what she was chewing all over his face; but he just licked it off and ate it, shocking the maids who were there.

"You're wearing mourning and your grandmother is napping here," one of them remonstrated. "And after all they're your aunts, for all they're young. You really haven't much respect for your mother. Presently we shall tell the master, and then you'll be in big trouble."

Jia Rong let go of his aunt then and grabbing hold of the maid kissed her on the mouth.

"You're quite right, sweetheart," he cried. "Now let's make both

骂："短命鬼儿，你一般有老婆丫头的，只和我们闹。知道的说是玩；不知道的人，再遇见那脏心烂肺的爱多管闲事嚼舌根子的人，吵嚷的那府里谁不知道，谁不背地里嚼舌说咱们这边混账。"贾蓉笑道："各门另户，谁管谁的事，都够使的了。从古至今，连汉朝和唐朝，人还说脏唐臭汉，何况咱们这宗人家。谁家没风流事，别讨我说出来。连那边大老爷这么利害，琏叔还和那小姨娘不干净呢。凤姐那样刚强，瑞叔还想他的账。那一件瞒了我！"

贾蓉只管信口开合，胡言乱道之间，只见他老娘醒了，请安问好，又说："难为老祖宗劳心，又难为两位姨娘受委屈，我们爷儿们感戴不尽。惟有等事完了，我们合家大小，登门去磕头。"尤老人点头道："我的儿，倒是你们会说话。亲戚们原是该的。"又问："你父亲好，几时得了信赶到的？"贾蓉笑道："才刚赶到的，先打发我瞧你老人家来了。好歹求你老人家事完了再去。"说着，又和他二姨挤眼，那尤二姐便悄悄咬牙含笑骂："很会嚼舌头的猴儿崽子，留下我们给你爹作娘不成！"贾蓉又戏他老娘道："放心罢，我父亲每日为两位姨娘操心，要寻两个又有根基又富贵又年青又俏皮的两位姨爹，好聘嫁这二位姨娘的。这几年总没拣得，可

their mouths water!"

The maids pushed him away. "You short-lived devil!" they cursd. "You've a wife and maids of your own just like anyone else — why come to plague *us*? Some people may know this is just fooling about; but there are other dirty-minded busybodies who like to gossip. They may spread so much talk that everyone in the other house hears about it. They'll be saying we're all fast and loose here."

"We're two different households," scoffed Jia Rong. "We should both mind our own business. Haven't we all enough troubles of our own? Since ancient times, even the Han and Tang dynasties have been described as 'filthy Tang and stinking Han,' to say nothing of families like ours. Which household hasn't its share of philanderers? Shall I give you a few examples? Even though the Elder Master over there is so strict, Uncle Lian carried on with his young concubines; and though Aunt Xifeng is so stern, Uncle Rui tried to make her. Neither affair was any secret to me...."

As Jia Rong was rattling away so wildly he noticed that the old lady had woken up, and made haste to pay his respects.

"Sorry to have put you to so much trouble, Old Ancestress," he said. "And my two anuts as well. My father and I are most grateful. When this business is over, we shall take the whole family, young and old, to your place to kowtow our thanks."

Old Mrs. You nodded.

"It's good of you to say that, my child," she replied. "We're only acting as relatives should." Then she asked, "Is your father well? When did you get the message and hurry back?"

"We've only just arrived," he told her. "He sent me on ahead to see how you are, madam, and to beg you to stay till the whole business is finished." As he said this he winked at his second aunt.

Gritting her teeth and smiling, Second Sister You scolded softly, "You glib-tongued monkey! Are you keeping us here to be your father's mothers?"

"Don't worry, madam," said Jia Rong to old Mrs. You. "Not a day goes by but my father is thinking of my two aunts and looking for two well-born, handsome young gentlemen from rich and noble families to

巧前日路上才相准了一个。”尤老只当真话，忙问是谁家的。尤二姊妹丢了活计，一头笑，一头赶着打。说：“妈别信这雷打的。”连丫头们都说：“天老爷有眼，仔细雷要紧！”又值人来回话：“事已完了，请哥儿出去看了，回爷的话去。”那贾蓉方笑嘻嘻的去了。未知如何，且听下回分解。

arrange two matches for them. For some years he couldn't find anyone suitable. Luckily, on his way home this time, he met just the right man."

Old Mrs. You was only too ready to believe him.

"What family is he from?" she promptly asked.

The two sisters put down their sewing at this to chase him playfully and pummel him.

"Don't you believe the rascal, mother," one of them cried.

Even the maids protested, "Old Man Heaven has eyes. Look out, or you'll be struck by a thunderbolt!"

Just then someone came in to announce, "We've made everything ready. Please go and have a look, Master Rong, and report it to His Lordship."

Then Jia Rong went out chuckling to himself. To know what happened later, read the next chapter.

第六十四回

幽淑女悲题五美吟　浪荡子情遗九龙佩

话说贾蓉见家中诸事已妥，连忙赶至寺中，回明贾珍。于是连夜分派各项执事人役，并预备一切应用幡杠等物。择于初四日卯时请灵柩进诚，一面使人知会诸位亲友。是日，其丧仪炫耀，宾客如云，自铁槛寺至宁府，夹路而观者何止万数。也有嗟叹的，也有羡慕的，又有一等半瓶醋的读书人，说是“丧礼与其奢易莫若俭戚”的，一路纷纷议论不一。至未申时方到，将灵柩停放在正堂之内。供奠举哀已毕，亲友渐次散回，只剩族中人分理迎宾送客等事。近亲只有邢大舅等相伴未去。贾珍、贾蓉此时为礼法所拘，不免在灵旁藉草枕苫，恨苦居丧。人散后，仍乘空寻他小姨厮混。宝玉亦每日在宁府穿孝，至晚人散，方回园里。凤姐身体未愈，虽不能时常在此，或遇开坛诵经亲友行祭之日，亦扎挣过来，相帮尤氏料理料理。

一日，供毕早饭，因此时天气尚长，贾珍等连日劳倦，不免在灵旁假寐。宝玉见无客到，遂欲回家看视黛玉，因先回至怡红院中。进入门来，只见院中寂静，悄无人声，有几

Chapter 64

A Chaste Girl in Sad Seclusion Writes Poems on Five Beauties
An Amorous Libertine Drops His Nine-Dragon Pendant

Jia Rong hurried back to the temple to report to his father that all was ready at home; and that same night they assigned the various tasks and prepared all the pennons, poles and other essential paraphernalia. Five o'clock in the morning of the fourth day was fixed upon as the hour to have the coffin taken into the city, and all relatives and friends were informed of this.

When the time arrived, with its splendid funeral rites, a host of guests assembled, and tens of thousands of spectators lined the road all the way from Iron Threshold Temple to the Ning Mansion, some sighing in admiration, others in envy, while crabbed pedants argued that frugality in the funeral rites would have been better than such extravagance. Endless different comments were made as the cortège passed; and not till nearly three in the afternoon did it finally reach the Ning Mansion, where the coffin was deposited in the main hall. After the sacrifice and mourning ended, the relatives and friends gradually dispersed, leaving only members of the Jia clan to see to the entertaining of guests. The sole close relative to remain was Lady Xing's elder brother.

Jia Zhen and Jia Rong, by duty bound to keep vigil by the coffin and mourn, nevertheless seized the chance once the guests had gone to fool around with old Mrs. You's two daughters. Baoyu, wearing mourning, also went every day to the Ning Mansion, not returning to the Garden till the evening after the guests had left. Xifeng was still not well enough to stay there all the time; but when Buddhist masses were held and sutras read, or when visitors came to offer sacrifices, she made the effort to come over to help Madam You cope.

One day after the morning sacrifice, at a time when the days were

个老婆子与小丫头们在回廊下取便乘凉，也有睡卧的，也有坐着打盹的，宝玉也不去惊动。只有四儿看见，连忙上前来打帘子。将掀起时，只见芳官自内带笑跑出，几乎与宝玉撞个满怀。一见宝玉，方含笑站住，说道："你怎么来了？你快与我拦住晴雯，他要打我呢。"一语未了，只听得屋内嘻嘻哗喇的乱响，不知是何物撒了一地。随后晴雯赶来骂道："我看你这小蹄子往那里去，输了不叫打。宝玉不在家，我看你有谁来救你。"宝玉连忙带笑拦住，说道："你妹子小，不知怎么得罪了你，看我的分上，饶了他罢。"晴雯也不想宝玉此时回来，乍一见，不觉好笑，遂笑说道："芳官竟是个狐狸精变的，竟是会拘神遣将的符咒也没有这样快。"又笑道："就是你请了神来，我也不怕。"遂夺手仍要捉拿芳官。芳官早已藏在宝玉身后，宝玉遂一手拉了晴雯，一手携了芳官，进入屋内。看时，只见西边炕上麝月、秋纹、碧痕、紫绡等正在那里抓子儿赢瓜子呢。却是芳官输与晴雯，芳官不肯叫打，跑了出去。晴雯因赶芳官，将怀内的子儿撒了一地，宝玉欢喜道："如此长天，我不在家，正恐你们寂寞，吃了饭睡觉睡出病来，大家寻一件事玩笑消遣甚好。"因不见袭人，又问道："你袭人姐姐呢？"晴雯道："袭人么，越发道

still long, Jia Zhen worn out after his recent exertions was dozing by the coffin and Baoyu, seeing that no guests had come, decided to go back to call on Daiyu.

He went first to Happy Red Court. As he stepped through the gate he found the court quiet and empty except for a few old women and young maids resting in the shade of the verandah, some asleep and others nodding drowsily. He did not go to disturb them, and only Sier noticed his arrival. As she hurried over to lift the portière for him, Fangguan came dashing out, laughing, and nearly knocked full tilt into Baoyu.

At sight of him she pulled up.

"Why are you here?" she asked. "Hurry up and stop Qingwen from spanking me!"

As she was speaking they heard a clattering as if some things had fallen to the ground, and the next minute Qingwen appeared.

"Where are you going, you bitch?" she swore. "You've lost, yet you want to escape a spanking. With Baoyu out who's going to come to your rescue?"

Baoyu hastly intercepted her.

"She's still young," he said with a smile. "If she's offended you in some way, do let her off for my sake."

Qingwen had never expected him back so soon. Amused by his sudden appearance, she exclaimed, "Fangguan must be a fox-fairy! Why, not even a magic charm to conjure spirits could work so fast." She added, "But I'm not afraid, even if you've called in a god."

She made a grab at Fangguan, who had taken refuge behind Baoyu. Holding each girl by the hand he led them inside. On the western *kang* there he found Sheyue, Qiuwen, Bihen and Zixiao playing knuckle-bones for melon-seeds. Apparently Fangguan had lost to Qingwen, then refused to accept a spanking and run away; and Qingwen, jumping up to chase her, had scattered the knuckle-bones on her lap all over the floor.

Baoyu told them with a chuckle. "Now the days are so long, I was afraid you might all be bored while I was out and go to bed after your meal, which might make you fall ill, I'm glad you found a way to amuse yourselves." As there was no sign of Xiren, he asked, "Where's your sister Xiren?"

"Her?" said Qingwen. "She's becoming more and more of a Confu-

学了，独自个在屋里面壁呢。这好一会我们没进去，不知他作什么呢，一些声气也听不见。你快瞧瞧去罢，或者此时参悟了，也未可定。”

宝玉听说，一面笑，一面走至里间。只见袭人坐在近窗床上，手中拿着一根灰色绦子，正在那里打结子呢。见宝玉进来，连忙站起来，笑道：“晴雯这东西编派我什么呢。我因要赶着打完这结子，没工夫和他们瞎闹，因哄他道：‘你们玩去罢，趁着二爷不在家，我要在这里静坐一坐，养养神。’他就编派了我这些混话，什么‘面壁了’‘参禅了’的，等一会我不撕他那嘴！”宝玉笑着挨近袭人坐下，瞧他所打的结子，问道：“这么长天，你也该歇息歇息，或和他们玩笑，要不，瞧瞧林妹妹去也好。怪热的，打这个那里使？”袭人道：“我见你带的扇套，还是那年东府里蓉大奶奶的事情上作的。那个青东西，除族中或亲友家夏天有丧事方带得着，一年遇着带一两遭，平常又不犯做。如今那府里有事，这是要过去天天带的，所以我赶着另作一个。等打完了结子，给你换下那旧的来。虽然你不讲究这个，若叫老太太回来看见，又该说我们躲懒，连你的穿带之物都不经心了。”宝玉笑道：“这真难为你想的到，只是也不可过于赶，热着了倒是大事。”说着，芳官早托了一杯凉水内新湃的茶来。因宝玉素昔秉赋柔脆，虽暑月不敢用冰，只以新汲井水将茶连壶浸在盆内，不时更换，取其凉意而已。宝玉就芳官手内吃了半盏，遂向袭人道：“我来时已吩咐了焙茗，若珍大哥那边有要紧的客来时，叫他即刻送信；若无甚要紧的事，我就不过去了。”说毕，遂出了房门，又回头向碧痕等道：“如有事往林

cian, sitting meditating alone with her face to the wall in the inner room. We haven't been in for some time and don't know what she's up to. She hasn't made a sound. Go on in, quick, and see if she's attained sainthood yet."

Laughing, Baoyu went inside and saw Xiren seated on the couch by the window, in her hand a skein of grey silk which she was netting. At sight of him she stood up. "What fibs has that creature Qingwen been telling about me?" she asked. "I was in a hurry to finish this net and had no time to fool around with them, so I told them, 'You amuse yourselves. While the Second Master's out I want to sit quietly here for a while to rest.' Then she made up all that nonsense about me meditating and attaining sainthood. By and by I must go and pinch her lips!"

Baoyu smiled as he sat down beside her to watch her at work.

"The days are so long, you should rest or amuse yourself with the others," he advised. "Or else go to see Cousin Daiyu. Why work at this in such hot weather? What's it for?"

"I noticed that you're still using the fan case made that year when Madam Rong of the East Mansion died. As it's blue it should only be used while mourning in summer for one of our clan or for relatives and friends outside. It shouldn't normally be needed more than once or twice a year. Now there's mourning in the other house, of course you should wear it every day when you go over; so I'm hurrying to finish another for you to replace that old one. *You* don't care about such things, but if the old lady were to come back and see it, she'd scold us for being too lazy to fit you out properly."

"It's good of you to think of such things, but you mustn't overwork," he answered. "We don't want you knocked out by the heat."

Now Fangguan brought in a cup of freshly brewed tea which had been cooled in cold water; for even in summer they dared not use ice, as Baoyu was so delicate. Instead they immersed the tea-pot in water fresh from the well, changing the water from time to time until the tea was cool. Fangguan held the cup to Baoyu's lips and he drank half of it.

Then he told Xiren, "When I came, I left word with Beiming that if any important visitors come to Cousin Jia Zhen's place he must let me know directly. If nothing urgent crops up I won't go back." As he turned

姑娘处来找我。”于是一径往潇湘馆来看黛玉。

将过了沁芳桥，只见雪雁领着两个老婆子，手中都拿着菱藕瓜果之类。宝玉忙问雪雁道：“你们姑娘从不大吃这些凉东西的，拿这些瓜果何用?莫非要请那位姑娘、奶奶么?”雪雁笑道：“我告诉你，可不许你对姑娘说去。”宝玉点头应允。雪雁便命两个婆子：“先将瓜果送去交与紫鹃姐姐。他要问我，你就说我做什么呢，就来。”那婆子答应着去了。雪雁方说道：“我们姑娘这两日方觉身上好些了。今日饭后，三姑娘来会着要瞧二奶奶去，姑娘也没去。又不知想起了什么来，自己伤感了一回，提笔写了好些，不知是诗啊词啊。叫我传瓜果去时，又听叫紫鹃将屋内摆着的小琴桌上的陈设搬了下来，将桌子挪在外间当地，又叫将那龙文鼎放在桌上，等瓜果来时听用。若说是请人呢，不犯先忙着把个炉摆出来。若说是点香呢，我们姑娘素日屋内除摆新鲜花果木瓜之类，又不大喜熏衣服；就是点香，亦当点在常坐卧之处。难道是老婆子们把屋子熏臭了，要拿香熏熏不成?究竟连我也不知何故?”说毕，便连忙的去了。

宝玉这里不由的低头，心内细想道：“据雪雁说来，必有原故。若是同那一位姊妹们闲坐，亦不必如此先设馔具。或者是姑爹、姑娘的忌辰，但我记得每年到此日期，老太太都吩咐另外整理肴馔送去林妹妹私祭，此时已过。大约必是七

to go out he instructed Bihen and the others, "If anything happens you can find me in Miss Lin's place. " With that he set off for Bamboo Lodge to find Daiyu.

As he was crossing Seeping Fragrance Bridge he saw Xueyan approaching, behind her two old women who were carrying caltrops, lotus-root, melons and other fruit.

"Your mistress hardly ever eats cold things like these. What are you going to do with all this?" he asked. "Are you inviting some of the other young ladies?"

"If I tell you, you mustn't let her know," said Xueyan. Baoyu nodded.

Then she told the two women, "Take this fruit to Sister Zijuan. If she asks for me, tell her I've something to do and will soon be back."

The women assented and went on their way. "Our young lady's been feeling better the last few days," said Xueyan when they had gone. "After lunch today Miss Tanchun came to ask her to go with her to see Madam Lian, but she didn't go. And then — I don't know what she was thinking of — she had a fit of depression, after which she took up her brush and wrote something — wherther poetry of something else I don't know. When she sent me to fetch this fruit I also heard her tell Zijuan to clear away the things on the small lyre table and move it outside, then to put the tripod with dragon designs on the table ready for the melons and fruit. If she were going to entertain visitors, she wouldn't bother to set out an incense-burner first; if she were going to burn incense, she's not in the habit of scenting her clothes with it or having anything in the room except fresh flowers and fruit. Even when she *does* burn incense for the fragrance, it's usually in her sitting room or bedchamber. Could it be that she has to scent the place with incense because the old serving-women have made it smelly? I really don't know why else she's doing this." Having said this she hurried away.

Baoyu involuntarily lowered his head to think this over.

"Judging by what Xueyan said, there must be a reason," he thought. "If Daiyu were expecting one of the girls to call, she'd hardly make such elaborate preparations. Can this be the anniversary of her father's or mother's death? But in the past, on those days, I remember the old lady

月因为瓜果之节，家家都上秋祭的坟，林妹妹有感于心，所以在私室自己奠祭，取《礼记》：'春秋荐其时食'之意，也未可定。但我此刻走去，见他伤感，必极力劝解，又怕他烦恼郁结于心；若竟不去，又恐他过于伤感，无人劝止。两件皆足致疾。莫若先到凤姐姐处一看，在彼稍坐即回，如若见林妹妹伤感，再设法开解，既不至使其过悲，而哀痛稍伸，亦不至抑郁致病。"想毕，遂出了园门，一径到凤姐处来。

正有许多执事婆子们回事毕，纷纷散出。凤姐儿正倚着门和平儿说话呢，一见了宝玉，笑道："你回来了么。我才吩咐了林之孝家的，叫他使人告诉跟你的小厮，若没什么事，趁便请你回来歇息歇息。再者那里人多，你那里禁得住那些气味?不想恰好你倒来了。"宝玉笑道："多谢姐姐记挂。我也因今日没事，又见姐姐这两日没往那府里去，不知身上可大愈否，所以回来看视看视。"凤姐道："左右也不过是这样，三日好两日不好的。老太太、太太不在家，这些大娘们，嗳，那一个是安分的，每日不是打架，就拌嘴，连赌博偷盗的事情，都闹出来了两三件了。虽说有三姑娘相帮办理，他又是个没出阁的姑娘。也有叫他知道得的，也有对他说不得的事，也只好强扎挣着罢了。总不得心静一会儿。别说想病好，求其不添，也罢了。"宝玉道："虽如此说，姐姐

always had dishes specially prepared for her to offer as a private sacrifice; and both those dates have passed. More likely, as the seventh month is the season for melons and fruit and every family is making an antumn sacrifice at its graves, she's felt moved to sacrifice privately in her own quarters, according to the precept in the *Book of Rites* that in autumn and spring one should offer the food in season. That may be it.

"But if I go there now and find her upset, I shall have to do my best to comfort her; then she may try to hide her unhappiness, so that it rankles. On the other hand, if I don't go, there'll be no one to stop her grieving too much. Either way, she may fall ill. The best thing would be to call on Xifeng first, just for a short while, then come back. If I find Daiyu still upset I can try to console her. That way, she won't give way to grief too long, but by having a good cry she'll have vented her feelings without injuring her health."

Having reached this decision he left the Garden and went to Xifeng's place. A number of serving-women were coming out after having reported on the business in their charge, and Xifeng, leaning against the door, was chatting with Pinger. At sight of Baoyu she smiled.

"So you're back," she said. "I've just told Lin Zhixiao's wife to send word to your pages that if there was nothing much to do you should take the chance to come back and rest a bit. Besides, with all that crowd there, the place is too stifling for you. Well, I'm glad you've come back of your own accord."

"Thank you for your concern," he answered. "It was because there was nothing to do today and I was wondering whether you were better, as you hadn't been over for a couple of days, that I came back to have a look."

"That's just the way it is with me," Xifeng told him. "I have my good days and my bad days. With Their Ladyships away from home, these women — *ai*! — not a single one of them behaves herself. Every day they either fight or squabble, and there've even been several cases of gambling and theft. Although Tanchun's helping me see to things, she's an unmarried girl. There are some things I can tell her, others I can't. So I just have to bear up as best I can, and never have a moment's peace. Don't talk about getting better — if I don't get worse that's good enough

还要保重身体，少操些心才是。”说毕，又说了些闲话，别了凤姐，一直往园中走来。

进了潇湘馆院门看时，只见炉袅残烟，奠余玉醴。紫鹃正看着人往里收桌子，搬陈设呢。宝玉便知已经祭完了，走入屋内，只见黛玉面向里歪着，病体恹恹，大有不胜之态。紫鹃连忙说道：“宝二爷来了。”黛玉方慢慢的起来，含笑让坐，宝玉道：“妹妹这两日可大好些了？气色倒觉比先静些，只是为何又伤心了？”黛玉道：“可是你没的说了，好好的我多早晚又伤心了？”宝玉笑道：“妹妹脸上现有泪痕，如何还哄我呢。只是我想妹妹素日本来多病，凡事当各自宽解，不可过作无益之悲。若作践坏了身子，将来使我……”说到这里，觉得以下的话有些难说，连忙咽住。只因他虽说和黛玉一处长大，情投意合，又愿同生死，却只是心中领会，从来未曾当面说出。况兼黛玉心多，每每说话造次，得罪了他。今日原为的是来劝解，不想把话又说造次了，接不下去，心中一急，又怕黛玉恼他。又想一想，自己的心实在的是为好。因而转急为悲，早已滚下泪来。黛玉起先原恼宝玉说话不论轻重，如今见此光景，心有所感，本来素习爱哭，此时亦不免无言对泣。

却说紫鹃端了茶来，打谅他二人不知又为何事角口，因说道：“姑娘才身上好些，宝二爷又来怄来了，到底是怎么

for me."

"Even so, you must take good care of your health and worry less," he urged her.

After a little further chat he took his leave of Xifeng and went back to the Garden.

When he entered Bamboo Lodge, he saw that the incense in the burner was nearly burnt out and the libation had already been poured. Zijuan was supervising the maids carrying the table inside and replacing the ornaments on it. Knowing that the sacrifice was over, Baoyu went in and found Daiyu reclining on the couch, her face to the wall. She looked ill and exhausted.

Zijuan announced, "Master Bao is here."

Daiyu got up slowly then and with a smile invited him to sit down.

"You seem much better recently," he remarked. "You look less flushed. But what's upset you again?"

"That's no way to talk," she retorted. "There's nothing wrong with me. Why should I be uspset?"

"You've tear-stains on your face, why try to fool me? I just thought that being so delicate you should take things easy, not distress yourself for no purpose. If you spoil your health, I'll be...." He broke off here, finding it difficult to go on.

Though he and Daiyu had grown up side by side and were kindred spirits who longed to live and die together, this was simply tacitly understood by both but had never been put into words. Moreover Daiyu was so sensitive that his careless way of talking always offended her or even reduced her to tears. Today he had come to comfort her; but again, without meaning to, had spoken too hastily so that he had to break off, desperately afraid that Daiyu would be angry. And when he reflected that he had really meant well, he started shedding tears of distress. Daiyu had been annoyed at first by Baoyu's immoderate language. Now, touched by the state he was in, being prone to weeping herself, she started shedding tears in silence too.

Zijuan, arriving with tea for them, supposed they were bickering over something again.

"Our young lady's just getting better, Master Bao," she said. "What

样?”宝玉一面拭泪笑道:“谁敢怄妹妹了。”一面搭讪着起来闲步，只见砚台底下微露一纸角，不禁伸手拿起。黛玉忙要起身来夺，已被宝玉揣在怀内，笑说道:“好妹妹，赏我看看罢。”黛玉道:“不管什么，来了就混翻。”一语未了，只见宝钗走来，笑道:“宝兄弟要看什么?”宝玉因未见上面是何言词，又不知黛玉心中如何，未敢造次回答，却望着黛玉笑。黛玉一面让宝钗坐，一面笑说道:“我曾见古史中有才色的女子，终身遭际令人可欣可羡、可悲可叹者甚多。今日饭后无事，因欲择出数人，胡乱凑几首诗以寄感慨，可巧探丫头来会我瞧凤姐姐去，我也身上懒懒的没同他去。才将做了五首，一时困倦起来，撂在那里，不想二爷来了就瞧见了。其实给他看也倒没有什么，但只我嫌他是不是的写了给人看去。”宝玉忙道:“我多早晚给人看了呢。昨日那把扇子，原是我爱那几首白海棠的诗，所以我自己用小楷写了，不过为的是拿在手中看着便宜。我岂不知闺阁中诗词字迹是轻易往外传诵不得的。自从你说了，我总没拿出园子去。”宝钗道:“林妹妹这虑的也是。你既写在扇子上，偶然忘记了，拿在书房里去被相公们看见了，岂有不问是谁做的呢。倘或传扬开了，反为不美。自古道‘女子无才便是德’，总以贞静为主，女工次之。其余诗词之类，不过是闺中游戏，原可以

do you mean by coming to provoke her again?"

Baoyu wiped his tears and smiled.

"I wouldn't dream of provoking her," he protested, getting up to wander around.

He noticed a sheet of paper under the inkstone and reached out for it. At once Daiyu started up to stop him, but he had already tucked it inside his clothes.

"Do let me see it, dear cousin," he begged with a smile.

"Regardless of when you come you ransack this place."

As Daiyu was saying this Baochai dropped in.

"What is it that Cousin Bao wants to read?" she asked.

As Baoyu had not yet seen what was on the paper and did not know what Daiyu's reaction would be, he dared not answer outright. Instead, he looked at Daiyu with a smile.

Daiyu offered Baochai a seat.

"I've read of many talented beauties in ancient history," she said, "whose lives were sometimes enviable, sometimes tragic. As I'd nothing to do today after my meal, I decided to choose a few of them and dash off some verses about them to express my feelings. Then Tanchun came to ask me to call on Xifeng with her, but I felt too lazy to go. I'd just written half a dozen poems when I felt sleepy, so I tossed them aside, not expecting the Second Master to come in and see them. Actually I don't mind *him* reading them, but I don't want him to copy them out and go showing them to other people."

"When have I ever done such a thing?" asked Baoyu. "As for that fan, because I liked those poems about white begonia I copied them out neatly on it just for my own convenience when I have it in my hands. Of course I know that the poems and calligraphy from our inner apartments mustn't be lightly taken outside. And remembering that time you ticked me off I've never taken it out of the Garden."

"Cousin Lin's right to have such scruples," said Baichai. "As you've written our poems on your fan, you may forget and take it to your study where the secretaries may see them and ask who wrote them. If word spread, it wouldn't look good. As the old saying goes, 'Lack of talent in a woman is a virtue. ' The important thing for us is to be chaste and

会，可以不会。咱们这样人家的姑娘，倒不要这些才华的名誉。”因又笑向黛玉道：“拿出来给我看看无妨，只不叫宝兄弟拿出去就是了。”黛玉笑道：“既如此说，连你也可以不必看了。”又指着宝玉笑道：“他早已抢了去了。”宝玉听了，方自怀内取出，凑至宝钗身旁，一同细看。只见写道：

西　施

一代倾城逐浪花，吴宫空自忆儿家。
效颦莫笑东村女，头白溪边尚浣纱。

虞　姬

肠断乌骓夜啸风，虞兮幽恨对重瞳。
黥彭甘受他年醢，饮剑何如楚账中。

明　妃

绝艳惊人出汉宫，红颜薄命古今同。
君王纵使轻颜色，予夺权何畀画工？

绿　珠

瓦砾明珠一例抛，何曾石尉重娇娆。
都缘玩福前生造，更有同归慰寂寥。

红　拂

长揖雄谈态自殊，美人巨眼识穷途。
尸居余气杨公幕，岂得羁縻女丈夫。

quiet, feminine accomplishments being secondary. As for versifying and the like, we simply do that for fun in the inner apartments; and whether we're good or not at it doesn't matter. Girls from families like ours don't want to have a reputation for brilliance." Then she said to Daiyu with a smile, "Still it doesn't matter if you show them to *me*, provided Cousin Bao doesn't take them outside."

"In that case you needn't see them either," said Daiyu. Pointing at Baoyu she added, "He's already snatched them."

At that Baoyu took the poems out of his pocket and stepped to Baochai's side to read them with her. The poems were as follows:

XI SHI[1]

Gone with the foam the beauty who felled cities,
Her longing for home in Wu's palace an empty dream,
Laugh not at the East Village girl who aped her ways,
White-haired, she still washed clothes beside the stream.

LADY YU[2]

Heart-broken as black steed neighing at night in the wind,
In silent grief she stayed beside her lord;
The renegades Qing Bu and Peng Yue were doomed to be slaughtered;
Better, then, in Chu's tent to fall on her own sword.

WANG ZHAOJUN[3]

A breath-taking beauty banished from the Han palace —
From of old lovely girls have shared a sorry fate;
Even if the sovereign set little store by his beauties,
Why give a painter the power to arbitrate?

GREEN PEARL[4]

Rubble and pearls alike were cast away,
Shi Chong used this fair maid so slightingly;
Predestined he was to good fortune —
Together they died, but still lonely in death was she.

RED WHISK[5]

From his low bows, proud talk and air of distinction
The discerning beauty his true worth foretold;
The grand duke Yang Su was a living corpse,
How could he keep a girl so staunch and bold?

宝玉看了，赞不绝口，又说道："妹妹这诗恰好只做了五首，何不就命曰《五美吟》。"于是不容分说，便提笔写在后面。宝钗亦说道："做诗不论何题，只要善翻古人之意。若要随人脚踪走去，纵使字句精工，已落第二义，究竟算不得好诗。即如前人所咏昭君之诗甚多，有悲挽昭君的，有怨恨延寿的，又有讥汉帝不能使画工图貌贤臣而画美人的，纷纷不一。后来王荆公复有'意态由来画不成，当时枉杀毛延寿'，永叔又有'耳目所见尚如此，万里安能制夷狄'，二诗各能俱出己见，不与人同。今日林妹妹这五首诗，亦可谓命意新奇，别开生面了。"

仍欲往下说时，只见有人回道："琏二爷回来了。适才外间传说，往东府里去了好一会子，想必就回来的。"宝玉听了，连忙起身，迎至大门以内等待。恰好贾琏自外下马进来，于是宝玉先迎着贾琏跪下，口中给贾母、王夫人等请了安，又给贾琏请了安。二人携手走了进来，只见李纨、凤姐、宝钗、黛玉、迎、探、惜等早在中堂等候，一一相见已毕。因听贾琏说道："老太太明日一早到家，一路身体甚好。今日打发我先回家来看视，明日五更，仍要出城迎接。"说

Baoyu having read these poems was loud in his praise. "You've written just five poems, cousin," he said. "So why not call the whole *An Ode to Five Beauties*?" Without giving her time to object, he picked up a brush and added this title.

Baochai observed, "In writing poetry, no matter what the subject, the important thing is to express some original ideas. If we tread in other people's footsteps, even if the lines are polished they're still second-rate and can't be considered good poetry.

"Take, for example, the poems on Wang Zhaojun, all expressing different opinions. Some lamented her fate, some blamed Mao Yanshou the painter, and others reproached the Han emperor for making him paint portraits of palace beauties instead of good ministers. Then Wang Anshi [6] wrote:

> A painting can never succeed in catching the spirit;
> Unjust it was to execute Mao Yanshou.

And Ouyang Xiu[7] wrote:

> If the Emperor treated those in his presence like this.
> How could he control tribesmen ten thousand *li* away?

Both those poems were original, not mere plagiarizing. And these five Cousin Lin has written today can also be considered as fresh and original, a quite new approach to the subject."

She would have said more, but someone came in to announce Jia Lian's return. It had just been reported outside that he had gone to the East Mansion, and as he had now been there for some time he could be expected back soon. When Baoyu heard this he hastily got up and went to the main gate to wait for his cousin's arrival, just as Jia Lian, having dismounted outside, came in. Baoyu knelt down and first asked after Their Ladyships' health, then inquired after Jia Lian's health. The two of them went hand in hand into the hall, where they found assembled Li Wan, Xifeng, Baochai, Daiyu, Yingchun, Tanchun and Xichun, and greetings were exchanged.

"The old lady will be back tomorrow morning," said Jia Lian. "She's kept very well all through the journey. Today she sent me back ahead to have a look, and I'm to go out of the city at the fifth watch tomorrow to

毕，众人又问了些路途的光景。因贾琏远路才归，遂大家别过，让贾琏回房歇息。一宿晚景，不必细述。

至次日饭时前后，果见贾母、王夫人等到来。众人接见已毕，略坐了一坐，吃了一杯茶，便领了王夫人等人过宁府中来。只听见里面哭声震天，却是贾瑞、贾珖送贾母到家即过这边来了。当下贾母进入里面，早有贾赦率领族中人哭着迎了出来。贾瑞、贾珖一边一个，挽了贾母，走至灵前，又有贾珍、贾蓉跪着扑入贾母怀中痛哭。贾母暮年之人，见此光景，亦搂了珍、蓉等痛哭不已。贾赦合众人苦劝，方略略止住。又转至灵右，见了尤氏婆媳，不免又相持大痛一场。哭毕，众人方上前一一请安问好。贾珍因贾母才回家来，未得歇息，坐在此间，看着未免要伤心，遂再三求贾母回家；王夫人等亦再三相劝。贾母不得已，方回来了。果然年迈的人禁不住风霜伤感，至夜间便觉头闷目酸，鼻塞声重。连忙请了医生来诊脉下药，足足的忙乱了半夜。幸而发散的快，未曾传经，至三更天，些须发了点汗，脉静身凉，大家方才放心。至次日仍服药调理。

又过了数日，乃贾敬送殡之期，贾母犹未大愈，遂留宝玉在家侍奉。凤姐因未曾甚好，亦未去。其余贾赦、贾琏、邢夫人、王夫人等率领家人仆妇，都送至铁槛寺，至晚方

meet her."

Next they questioned him about the journey and then, as he was just back from such a long trip, took their leave and left him to go home to rest. No need to go into details about that evening.

About noon the next day, sure enough, the old lady, Lady Wang and others arrived. After the whole family had paid their respects they sat down just long enough for a cup of tea, then excorted Lady Wang and the others to the Ning Mansion. They heard loud wailing inside; for as soon as Jia Bin and Jia Guang had brought the Lady Dowager home they had come over, and Jia She and other members of the clan had come out to meet the old lady, shedding tears. Jia Bin and Jia Guang, each holding her by one arm, helped her to the shrine while Jia Zhen and Jia Rong approached on their knees and threw themselves into her arms, wailing bitterly. At this sight the old lady clasped them to her and gave way to a storm of grief, until finally Jia She, Jia Lian and the others prevailed on her to stop weeping. She then went to the right side of the shrine to see Madam You and her daughter-in-law, and inevitably as they embraced they started wailing again. When these lamentations were over, the others went forward to pay their respects in turn. As the Lady Dowager had just come home and had as yet had no time to rest, Jia Zhen, afraid that sitting there watching this scene would distress her too much, urged her repeatedly to go back. Lady Wang and others added their persuasions, and the old lady had to comply.

Indeed, on account of her age, she succumbed to her grief and the fatigue of the journey. That night she had a headache, a pain in her chest and sore throat, and found difficulty in breathing. A doctor was hastily summoned to feel her pulse and prescribe medicine, so that everyone was kept busy half the night. Luckily the cold was staved off, and the viscera proved to have been unaffected. And when at midnight she perspired a little her temperature went down and her pulse returned to normal, to everybody's relief. The following day she took more medicine and rested.

A few days later it was time for Jia Jing's coffin to be taken to the temple. As the old lady was still not completely recovered, she kept Baoyu at home to keep her company. And Xifeng, not being too well, did not go either. Jia She, Jia Lian, Lady Xing, Lady Wang and the rest, accompa-

回。贾珍、尤氏并贾蓉仍在寺中守灵，等过百日后，方扶柩回籍。家中仍托尤老娘并二姐、三姐照管。

却说贾琏素日既闻尤氏姊妹之名，恨无缘得见。近因贾敬停灵在家，每日与二姐、三姐相认已熟，不禁动了垂涎之意。况知与贾珍、贾蓉等素有聚麀之诮，因而乘机百般撩拨，眉目传情。那三姐却只是淡淡相对，只有二姐也十分有意。但只是眼目众多，无从下手。贾琏又怕贾珍吃醋，不敢轻动，只好二人心领神会而已。此时出殡以后，贾珍家下人少，除尤老娘带领二姐、三姐并几个粗使的丫鬟、老婆子在正室居住外，其余婢妾，都随在寺中。外面仆妇，不过晚间巡更，日间看守门户。白日无事，亦不进里面去。所以贾琏便欲趁此下手。遂托相伴贾珍为名，亦在寺中住宿，又时常借着替贾珍料理家务，不时至宁府中来勾搭二姐。

一日，有小管家俞禄来回贾珍道："前者所用棚杠孝布并幡杠人青衣，共使银一千两，除给银五百两外，仍欠五百两。两处买卖人俱来催讨，小的特来讨爷的示下。"贾珍道："你且向库上去领就是了，这又何必来回我？"俞禄道：

nied by their stewards and serving-women, escorted the coffin to Iron Threshold Temple, not getting home till the evening. As for Jia Zhen, Madam You and Jia Rong, they stayed in the temple to keep vigil. After a hundred days the coffin would be taken to their ancestral district; in the meantime the Ning Mansion was left in the charge of old Mrs. You and her two daughters.

Now Jia Lian had long heard of Madam You's lovely step-sisters and longed to meet them. Recently, with Jia Jing's coffin in the house, he had been seeing Second Sister and Third Sister every day so that he was on familiar terms with them and had designs on them too. Knowing how free and easy both girls were with Jia Zhen and Jia Rong, he tried in a hundred ways to convey his own feelings, casting arch glances at them. Third Sister only treated him coolly, however, while Second Sister appeared very interested; but since there were so many people about he could not make any advances. Fear of arousing Jia Zhen's jealousy also kept him from acting too rashly. So the two of them had to be content with a secret understanding.

After the funeral, however, there were few people left in Jia Zhen's house. The main quarters were occupied only by old Mrs. You and her two daughters attended by a few of the maids and serving-women who did the rough work, all the senior maids and concubines having gone to the temple. As for the female servants who lived outside, they simply kept watch at night and minded the gate in the daytime, and would not go inside unless they had business. So Jia Lian was eager to make good use of this chance. He spent the nights in the temple too, on the pretext of keeping Jia Zhen company; but he often slipped back to the Ning Mansion to inveigle Second Sister, telling Jia Zhen that he was going to see to the family affairs for him.

One day the young steward Yu Lu came to report to Jia Zhen, "The funeral sheds, mourning clothes and blue uniforms for attendants and carriers cost a thousand taels in all, of which we've paid five hundred; so we're still five hundred short, and the tradesmen have sent to ask for payment. That's why I've come for your instructions, sir."

"Just get the money from the treasury. Why come and ask me for

“昨日已曾向库上去领，但只是老爷仙逝以后，各处支领甚多，所剩还要预备百日道场及庙中用度，此时竟不能给发。所以小的今日特来回爷，或者爷内库里暂且给发，或者挪借何项，吩咐了小的好办去。”贾珍笑道：“你还当是先呢，有银子放着不使。你无论那里暂且借了给他罢。”俞禄笑回道：“若说一二百两，小的还可以挪借；这四五百两，小的一时那里办得来？”贾珍想了一回，向贾蓉道：“你问你娘去，昨日出殡以后，有江南甄家送来打祭银五百两，未曾交到库上去，你先要了来，给他去罢。”贾蓉答应了，连忙过这边来回了尤氏，复转来回他父亲道：“昨日那项银子已使了二百两，下剩的三百两，令人送至家中交与老娘收了。”贾珍道：“既然如此，你就带了他去，向你老娘要了出来交给他。再也瞧瞧家中有事无事，问你两个姨娘好。下剩的，俞禄先借了添上罢。”

贾蓉与俞禄答应了，方欲退出，只见贾琏走了进来，俞禄忙上前请了安。贾琏便问何事，贾珍一一告诉了。贾琏心中想道：“趁此机会正可至宁府寻二姐。”一面遂说道：“这有多大事，何必向人借去。昨日我方得了一项银子还没使呢，莫若给他添上，岂不省事。”贾珍道：“如此甚好。你就吩咐了蓉儿，一并令他取去。”贾琏忙道：“这必得我亲身取去。再我这几日没回家了，还要给老太太、老爷、太太们请请安。到大哥那边查查家人们有无生事，再也给亲家太太请请

it?" said Jia Zhen.

"I did go to the treasury yesterday," Yu Lu replied. "But since His Lordship's demise there have been all sorts of expenses, and the money on hand is being kept for the hundred days' masses and for use in the temple; so for the moment they can't issue me any. That's why I've come specially to report to you. Perhaps this sum could be taken from the inner treasury for the time being, or raised some other way. Just give me your orders and I'll carry them out."

"Do you think this is like the old days when we had silver lying idle?" retorted Jia Zhen. "Go and borrow some for the time being. I don't care from where."

Yu Lu smiled.

"I can probably raise a couple of hundred taels somewhere," he said. "But how can I get hold of four or five hundred so fast?"

Jia Zhen thought it over, then instructed Jia Rong, "Go and ask your mother for this sum. After the funeral the Zhen family in the south sent us five hundred taels for a sacrifice. That money arrived yesterday, and we haven't sent it to the treasury yet. Get that first and give it to him."

Jia Rong assented and went over to tell his mother, coming back to report:

"We've already spent two hundred of the five that arrived yesterday. The remaining three hundred were sent home today to be kept by granny."

"In that case, take Yu Lu along and get it from her. You can also make sure that all's well at home and ask after your two aunts. Yu Lu can borrow the rest."

Jia Rong and Yu Lu agreed and were just starting out when Jia Lian came in. Yu Lu stepped forward to pay his respects. Jia Lian asked what he had come for, and Jia Zhen told him. At once Jia Lian thought, "This is a chance for me to go to the Ning Mansion and see Second Sister."

"This is a small sum," he said. "Why borrow from others?" Yesterday I received some silver which I haven't spent yet. Better give him that for this payment to save trouble."

"Fine," said Jia Zhen. "Send Rong along and tell him how to get it."

"I shall have to get it myself." said Jia Lian hastily. "Besides, I haven't been home these last few days; I ought to go and pay my respects to the

安。”贾珍笑道:“只是又劳动你，我心里倒不安。”贾琏也笑道:“自家兄弟，这有何妨呢。”贾珍又吩咐贾蓉道:“你跟了你叔叔去，也到那边给老太太、老爷、太太们请安，说我和你娘都请安，打听打听老太太身上可大安了?还服药呢没有?”贾蓉一一答应了，跟随贾琏出来，带了几个小厮，骑上马一同进城。

在路间叔侄闲话，贾琏有心，便提到尤二姐，因夸说如何标致，如何做人好，举止大方，言语温柔，无一处不令人可敬可爱，“人人都说你婶子好，据我看那里及你二姨一零儿呢。”贾蓉揣知其意，便笑道:“叔叔既这样爱他，我给叔叔作媒，说了做二房，何如?”贾琏笑道:“你这是玩话还是正经话?”贾蓉道:“我说的是当真的话。”贾琏又笑道:“敢是好呢，只是怕你婶子不依，再也怕你老娘不愿意。况且我听见说你二姨已有了人家了。”贾蓉笑道:“这都无妨。我二姨儿、三姨儿都不是我老爷养的，原是我老娘带了来的。听见说，我老娘在那一家时，就把我二姨儿许给皇粮庄头张家，指腹为婚。后来张家遭了官司败落了，我老娘又自那家嫁了出来，如今这十数年，两家音信不通。我老娘时常报怨，要与他家退婚，我父亲也要将二姨转聘。只等有了好人家，不过令人找着张家，给他十数两银子，写上一张退婚的字儿。想张家穷极了的人，见了十数两银子，有什么不依的。再他也知道咱们这样的人家，也不怕他不依。又是叔叔

old lady and my other elders. Then I'll go to your place to make sure that the servants aren't making trouble, and call on old Mrs. You as well."

"I don't like putting you to so much trouble," objected Jia Zhen.

"What does it matter between cousins?" Jia Lian answered.

So Jia Zhen told his son, "Go with your uncle, and mind you go too to pay your respects to the old lady, master and mistresses of the other house. Give them our regards and ask if the old lady is better now or still taking medicine."

Jia Rong assented and went off with Jia Lian. Taking a few pages with them, they mounted their horses and rode back to the city, chatting idly on the way.

Then Jia Lian deliberately mentioned Second Sister You, praising her for her good looks and modest behaviour, her lady-like ways and gentle speech, as if she were a paragon admired and loved by all.

"Everyone praises your Aunt Xifeng," he said, "but to my mind she can't stand comparison with your Second Aunt."

Jia Rong, knowing his game, rejoined, "If you've taken such a fancy to her, uncle, I'll act as your go-between to make her your secondary wife. How about that?"

"That would be fine!" Jia Lian beamed. "I'm only afraid your Aunt Xifeng wouldn't agree, and neither might your grandmother. Besides I heard that your Second Aunt is already engaged."

"That doesn't matter," Jia Rong assured him. "My second and third aunts aren't my grandfather's daughters but only stepdaughters. I've been told that while old Mrs. You was in the other family she promised her second daughter, before the child was born, to the Zhang family who managed the Imperial Farm. Later the Zhangs were ruined by a lawsuit, and she herself married again into the You family. Now, for the last ten years or so, the two families have lost touch completely. Old Mrs. You often complains that she'd like to break off the engagement, and my father also wants to find Second Aunt a dfifferent husband. As soon as they've picked a suitable family, all they need do is send someone to find the Zhangs, pay them a dozen or so taels of silver, and have a deed written breaking off the betrothal. The Zhangs are so hard up that when they see the silver they're bound to agree; on top of which they'll know

这样人说了做二房，我管保我老娘和我父亲都愿意。倒只是婶子那里却难。”贾琏听到这里，心花都开了，那里还有什么话说，只是一味呆笑而已。贾蓉又想了一想，笑道：“叔叔若有胆量，依我的主意行去，管保无妨，不过多花上几个钱。”贾琏忙道：“有何主意，快些说来，我没有不依的。”贾蓉道：“叔叔回家，一点声色也别露，等我回明了我父亲，向我老娘说妥，然后在咱们府后坊近左右，买上一所房子及应用家伙什物。再拨两窝子家人过去服侍。择了日子，人不知鬼不觉娶了过去，嘱咐家下人不许走漏风声。婶子在里面住着，深宅大院，那里就得知道了。叔叔两下里住着，过个一年半载，即或闹出来，不过挨上老爷一顿骂。叔叔只说婶子总不生育，原是为子嗣起见，所以私自在外面作成此事。就是婶子，见生米做成熟饭，也只得罢了。再求一求老太太，没有不完的事。”自古道“欲令智昏”，贾琏只顾贪图二姐美色，听了贾蓉一篇话，遂为计出万全，将现今身上有服，并停妻再娶，严父妒妻种种不妥之处，皆置之度外了。却不知贾蓉亦非好意，素日因同他两个姨娘有情，只因贾珍在内，不能畅意。如今若是贾琏娶了，少不得在外居住，趁贾琏不在时，好去鬼混之意。贾琏那里意想及此，遂向贾蓉致谢道：“好侄儿，你果然能够说成了，我再买两个绝色的丫头谢你。”说着，已至宁府门首。贾蓉说道：“叔叔进去，向

that in dealing with a family like ours they can't do anything else. If a gentleman like you, uncle, wants her as a secondary wife, I guarantee both her mother and my father will be willing. The only problem is my Aunt Xifeng."

At this Jia Lian was too overjoyed to speak and could only grin foolishly.

After a little reflection Jia Rong continued, "If you have the nerve to do as I say, uncle, I guarantee it will be all right. It will simply mean spending a little extra money."

"What's your plan? Out with it quick! Of course I'll agree."

"Don't let on a word about this when you go home. Wait till I've told my father and settled it with my grandmother; then we'll buy a house and the furnishings for it somewhere near the back of our mansion, and install a couple of our servants and their wives there. That done, we'll choose a day and you can get married on the sly. We'll forbid the servants to tell anyone about it. As Aunt Xifeng lives tucked away inside the big mansion, how can she possibly get to know of it? Then you'll have *two* homes, uncle. After a year or so, if word does get out, at most you'll get reprimanded by your father; but you can say that as my aunt had no son you arranged this in secret outside, in the hope of having descendants. When Aunt Xifeng sees that the rice is already cooked, she'll have to put up with it; and if you ask the old lady then to put in a word for you, the whole thing will blow over."

As the old proverb says, "Lust befuddles the mind." Jia Lian was so infatuated by Second Sister's beauty that he felt Jia Rong's plan was foolproof, completely forgetting that he was in mourning and how inappropriate it was to have a concubine outside when he had a stern father and jealous wife at home.

As for Jia Rong, he had ulterior motives. He was attached to both his young aunts, but his father's presence at home cramped his style. If Jia Lian married Second Sister he would have to have a separate establishment outside, where Jia Rong could go to fool about in his absence.

Of course none of this occurred to Jia Lian, who thanked him saying, "Good nephew, if you fix this up I'll buy you two really ravishing maids."

By now they had reached the Ning Mansion and Jia Rong said, "Uncle,

我老娘要出银子来，就交给俞禄罢。我先给老太太请安去。”贾琏含笑点头道：“老太太跟前别提我和你一同来的。”贾蓉道：“知道。”又附耳向贾琏道：“今日要遇见二姨，可别性急了，闹出事来，往后倒难办了。”贾琏笑道：“少胡说，你快去罢。我在这里等你。”于是贾蓉自去给贾母请安。

贾琏进入宁府，早有家人头儿率领家人等请安，一路围随至厅上。贾琏一一的问了些话，不过塞责而已，便命家人散去，独自往里面走来。原来贾琏、贾珍素日亲密，又是弟兄，本无可避忌之人，自来是不等通报的。于是走至上房，早有廊下伺候的老婆子打起帘子，让贾琏进去。贾琏进入房中一看，只见南边炕上只有尤二姐带着两个丫鬟一处做活，却不见尤老娘与三姐。贾琏忙上前问好相见。尤二姐含笑让坐，便靠东边板壁坐下了。贾琏仍将上首让与二姐儿，寒温毕，贾琏笑问道：“亲家太太和三妹妹那里去了，怎么不见？”尤二姐笑道：“才有事往后面去了，也就来的。”此时伺候的丫鬟因倒茶去，无人在跟前，贾琏睨视二姐一笑。二姐低了头，只含笑不理。贾琏又不敢造次动手动脚，因见二姐手中拿着一条拴着荷包的手巾摆弄，便搭讪着，往腰里摸了一摸，说道：“槟榔荷包也忘了带来了，妹妹有槟榔，赏我一口吃。”二姐道：“槟榔倒有，只是我的槟榔从来不给人吃。”贾琏便笑着欲近身来拿，二姐怕人看见不雅，便连忙一笑，撂了过来。贾琏接在手中，都倒了出来，拣了半块吃

while you go in to get the silver from my grandmother and give it to Yu Lu, I'll go on ahead to call on the old lady."

Jia Lian nodded, then said with a smile, "Don't tell the old lady that I've come with you."

"I know." Jia Rong whispered then into his ear, "If you see Second Aunt today, don't act too rashly. If there's any trouble now, it will make things more difficult in future."

"Don't talk rot," chuckled Jia Lian. "Go on. I'll wait for you here."

Jia Rong accordingly went to pay his respects to the Lady Dowager.

When Jia Lian entered the Ning Mansion, some of the stewards stepped forward with other servants to pay their respects and followed him to the hall. Jia Lian questioned them briefly for appearance's sake, then dismissed them and went in alone. As he and Jia Zhen were cousins and on a close footing, he was not subject to any restrictions here and did not need to wait to be announced. He went straight to the main apartment. The old woman on duty in the corridor lifted the portiere as soon as she saw him; and on entering the room he saw Second Sister sewing with two maids on the couch on the south side, but of old Mrs. You and Third Sister there was no sign. Jia Lian went forward to greet Second Sister, who asked him to take a seat, and he sat down with his back to the east partition.

After an exchange of civilities he asked, "Where are your mother and Third Sister? Why aren't they here?"

"They just went to the back for something; they'll be here soon," she told him.

As the maids had gone to fetch tea and there was no one else present, Jia Lian kept darting smiling glances at Second Sister, who lowered her head to hide a smile but did not respond, and he dared not make any further advances. Seeing that she was toying with the handkerchief to which her pouch was fastened, he felt his waist as if groping for his own pouch.

"I've forgotten to bring my pouch of betel-nuts," he said. "Will you let me try one of yours, sister?"

"I have some, but I never give mine away."

Smiling, he approached her to take one; and afraid this would look bad

剩下的，撂在口中吃了，又将剩下的都揣了起来。刚要把荷包亲身送过去，只见两个丫鬟倒了茶来。贾琏一面接了茶吃茶，一面暗将自己带的一个汉玉九龙佩解了下来，拴在手巾上，趁丫鬟回头时，仍撂了过去。二姐亦不去拿，只装看不见，坐着吃茶。只听后面一阵帘子响，却是尤老娘、三姐带着两个小丫头自后面走来。贾琏送目与二姐，令其拾取，这尤二姐只是不理。贾琏不知二姐何意，甚是着急，只得迎上来与尤老娘、三姐相见。一面又回头看二姐时，只见二姐笑着，没事人似的；再又看一看，手巾已不知那里去了，贾琏方放了心。

于是大家归坐后，叙了些闲话。贾琏说道："大嫂子说，前日有一包银子交给亲家太太收起来了，今日因要还人，大哥令我来取。再也看看家里有事无事。"尤老娘听了，连忙使二姐拿钥匙去取银子。这里贾琏又说道："我也要给亲家太太请请安，瞧瞧二位妹妹。亲家太太脸面倒好，只是二位妹妹在我们家里受委屈。"尤老娘笑道："咱们都是至亲骨肉，说那里的话。在家里也是住着，在这里也是住着。不瞒二爷说，我们家里自从先夫去世，家计也着实艰难了，全亏了这里姑爷帮助。如今姑爷家里有了这样大事，我们不能别的出力，白看一看家，还有什么委屈了的呢。"正说着，二姐已取了银子来，交与尤老娘。尤老娘便递与贾琏。贾琏又命一

if someone came in, she laughingly tossed him her pouch. Having caught it he emptied it out, chose one half-eaten nut which he popped into his mouth, then pocketed all the others. He was about to return the pouch when the two maids came back with the tea. As Jia Lian sipped his tea, he surreptitiously took off a Han-Dynasty jade pendant carved with nine dragons and tied this to her handkerchief. And when both maids were looking the other way, he tossed the handkerchief back. Second Sister just let it lie and went on drinking her tea, as if she had not noticed. Then the portiere behind them swished and in came old Mrs. You and Third Sister with two young maids. With a wink Jia Lian signalled to Second Sister to pick up the handkerchief, but she simply paid no attention; and not knowing what she meant by this he felt frantic. He had to step forward to greet the newcomers. As he did so, he glanced back at Second Sister, who was still smiling as if nothing had happened. But looking again he noticed with relief that the handkerchief had vanished. They all sat down now and chatted for a while.

"My sister-in-law says she gave you some silver the other day to keep for her, madam," said Jia Lian. "Today they have to settle an account, so Cousin Zhen sent me to fetch it and to see if everything is all right at home."

On hearing this old Mrs. You immediately sent Second Sister to fetch the key and get the silver.

Jia Lian went on, "I wanted to come anyway to pay my respects to you and see both the young ladies. It's good of you to have come here, madam, but we're sorry to be putting our two cousins to such trouble too."

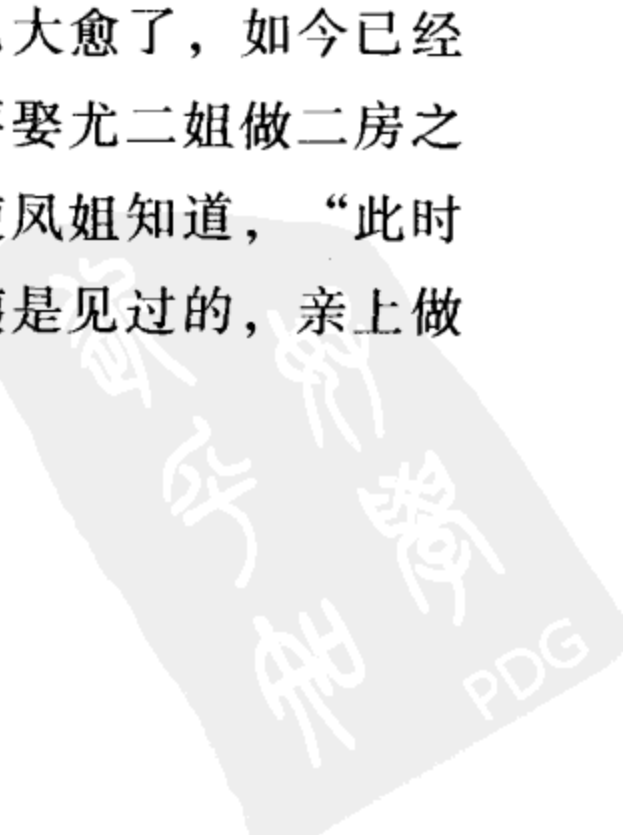
"What way is that for close relatives to talk!" she protested. "We've made ourselves at home here. The truth is, sir, that since my husband died we've found it hard to make ends meet, and we've only managed thanks to my son-in-law's help. Now that they have their hands full, we can't help in any other way but at least we can keep an eye on things here for them — how can you talk of putting us to trouble?"

By now Second Sister had brought the silver and given it to her mother, who passed it to Jia Lian. He sent a young maid to fetch a serving-woman.

个小丫头叫了一个老婆子来，吩咐他道："你把这个交给俞禄，叫他拿过那边去等我。"老婆子答应了出去。

只听得院内是贾蓉的声音说话。须臾进来，给他老娘、姨娘请了安，又向贾琏笑道："才刚老爷还问叔叔呢，就是什么事情要使唤。原要使人到庙里去叫，我回老爷说叔叔就来。老爷还吩咐我，路上遇着叔叔叫快去呢。"贾琏听了，忙要起身，又听贾蓉和他老娘说道："那一次我和老太太说的，我父亲要给二姨说的姨爹，比起来，就和我这叔叔的面貌、身量差不多儿。老太太说好不好？"一面说着，又悄悄的用手指着贾琏和他二姨努嘴儿。二姐倒不好意思说什么，只见三姐笑骂道："坏透了的小猴儿崽子！没了你娘的说了。等我撕他那嘴！"一面说着，便赶了过来。贾蓉早笑着跑了出去，贾琏也笑着辞了出来。走至厅上，又吩咐了家人些不可耍钱吃酒等话。又悄悄的央贾蓉，回去急速和他父亲说。一面便带了俞禄过来，将银子添足，交给他拿去。一面自己见他父亲，给贾母去请安，不提。

却说贾蓉见俞禄跟了贾琏去取银子，自己无事，便仍回至里面，和他姨娘嘲戏了一回，方起身。至晚到寺，见了贾珍回道："银子已经交给俞禄了。老太太已大愈了，如今已经不服药了。"说毕，又趁便将路上贾琏要娶尤二姐做二房之意说了。又说如何在外面置房子住，不使凤姐知道，"此时总不过为的是子嗣艰难起见。为的是二姨是见过的，亲上做



"Give this to Yu Lu," he ordered her. "Tell him to take it back to the other house and wait for me there."

As the old woman assented and left, they heard Jia Rong's voice in the courtyard; and presently in he came to pay his respects to the ladies.

"Just now His Lordship your father was asking about you, uncle," he said. "He has some business he wants you to see to and was gong to send to the temple to fetch you, but I told him you'd be coming presently. His Lordship told me, if I met you, to ask you to hurry."

As Jia Lian rose to leave he heard Jia Rong tell old Mrs. You, "The young man I told you about the other day, grandmother, the one my father has in mind for Second Aunt, has much the same features and build as this uncle of mine. How does he strike you, madam?"

As he said this he pointed slyly at Jia Lian and motioned with his lips at Second Sister. She was too embarrassed to say anything, but her sister scolded:

"What a devilish monkey you are! Have you nothing else to talk about? Just wait, I'm going to pull out that tongue of yours."

She ran towards him but Jia Rong had slipped out, laughing, and now Jia Lian took his leave of them with a smile. In the hall he cautioned the servants not to gamble and drink, then secretly urged Jia Rong to hurry back and take the matter up with his father. Next he took Yu Lu over to the other house to make up the sum of silver needed; and while the steward went off with this he paid his respects to his father and the Lady Dowager.

To return to Jia Rong, when he saw that Yu Lu and Jia Lian had gone for the money and he had nothing to do, he went in again to fool around with his two aunts before leaving.

It was evening by the time he got back to the temple and reported to his father, "The money's been given to Yu Lu. The old lady's much better now and has stopped taking medicine." He then took this opportunity to describe how Jia Lian had told him on the road of his wish to make Second Sister You his secondary wife and set up house outside, so that Xifeng should know nothing about it.

"This is just because he's worried at having no son," Jia Rong ex-

亲，比别处不知道的人家说了来的好。所以二叔再三央我对父亲说。”只不说是他自己的主意。贾珍想了一想，笑道：“其实倒也罢了。只不知你二姨心中愿意不愿意。明日你先去和你老娘商量，叫你老娘问准了你二姨，再作定夺。”于是又教了贾蓉一篇话，便走过来将此事告诉了尤氏。尤氏却知此事不妥，因而极力劝止。无奈贾珍主意已定，素日又是顺从惯了的，况且他与二姐本非一母，不便深管，因而也只得由他们闹去了。

至次日一早，果然贾蓉复进城来见他老娘，将他父亲之意说了。又添上许多话，说贾琏做人如何好，目今凤姐身子有病，已是不能好的了，暂且买了房子在外面住着，过个一年半载，只等凤姐一死，便接了二姨进去做正室。又说他父亲此时如何聘，贾琏那边如何娶，如何接了你老人家养老，往后三姨也是那边应了替聘，说得天花乱坠，不由得尤老娘不肯。况且素日全亏贾珍周济，此时又是贾珍作主替聘，而且妆奁不用自己置买，贾琏又是青年公子，比张华胜强十倍，遂连忙过来与二姐商议。二姐又是水性的人，在先和姐夫不妥，又常怨恨当时错许张华，致使后来终身失所。今见贾琏有情，况是姐夫将他聘嫁，有何不肯，也便点头依允。当下回复了贾蓉，贾蓉回了他父亲。

plained. "And as he's seen Second Aunt, who's already related to our family, marrying her would be better than getting some girl from a family about which we know nothing. So uncle repeatedly begged me to propose this to you, father." He omitted to say that this idea had originated with him.

Jia Zhen thought it over.

"Actually, it would be just as well," he said finally. "But we don't know whether your Second Aunt would be willing. Go and talk it over first with your old granny tomorrow. Get her to make sure your Second Aunt agress before we make any decision."

Then, having given his son some further instructions, he went to broach the matter to his wife. Madam You, knowing that this would be improper, did her best to dissuade him; but as Jia Zhen had already made up his mind and she was in the habit of falling in with his wishes, and as Second Sister was only her step-sister and she was therefore not so responsible for her, she had to let them go ahead with this preposterous scheme.

Accordingly, the first thing the next day, Jia Rong went back to the city to see old Mrs. You and tell her his father's proposal. In addition, he expatiated on Jia Lian's good qualities and declared that Xifeng was mortally ill and, if they bought a house to live in outside for the time being, after a year or so when Xifeng died his Second Aunt could move in as the proper wife. He also described the betrothal presents his father would give, and the wedding ceremony Jia Lian would arrange.

"They'll take you in to live in comfort in your old age, madam," he assured her. "And later they'll see to Third Aunt's marriage too."

He painted such a glowing picture that naturally old Mrs. You agreed. Besides, she was wholly dependent on Jia Zhen for money, and now that he had proposed this match she would not have to provide any dowry. Furthermore, Jia Lian was a young gentleman from a noble family, ten times better than the wretched Zhang family. So she went straight to discuss it with her second daughter.

Second Sister was a coquette. She had already had an affair with Jia Zhen, and it was her constant regret that her betrothal to Zhang Hua prevented her from making a better marriage. Now that Jia Lian had taken a fancy to her and her brother-in-law himself had proposed the

次日命人请了贾琏到寺中来，贾珍当面告诉了他尤老娘应允之事。贾琏自是喜出望外，感谢贾珍、贾蓉父子不尽。于是二人商量着，使人看房子打首饰，给二姐置买妆奁及新房中应用床账等物。不过几日，早将诸事办妥。已于宁荣街后二里远近，小花枝巷内，买定一所房子，共二十余间。又买了两个小丫头。贾珍又给了一房家人，名叫鲍二，夫妻两口，以备二姐过去时服役。又使人将张华父子叫来，逼勒着与尤老娘写退婚书。却说张华之祖，原当皇粮庄头，后来死去。至张华父亲时，仍充此役，因与尤老娘前夫相好，所以将张华与尤二姐指腹为婚。后来不料遭了官司，败落了家产，弄得衣食不周，那里还娶得起媳妇呢。尤老娘又自那家嫁了出来，两家有十数年音信不通。今被贾府家人唤至，逼他与二姐退婚，心中虽不愿意，无奈惧怕贾珍等势焰，不敢不依，只得写了一张退婚文约。尤老娘与银十两，两家退亲不提。

这里贾琏等见诸事已妥，遂择了初三黄道吉日，娶二姐过门。下回便见。

正是：

只为同枝贪色欲，致教连理起干戈。

match, of course she was only too willing. She nodded in assent, and this was at once reported to Jia Rong, who went back to inform his father.

The next day they sent to invite Jia Lian to the temple. When Jia Zhen told him that old Mrs. You had given her consent, he was so overjoyed that he could not thank Jia Zhen and Jia Rong enough. They made plans then to send stewards to find a house, have trinkets made and the bride's trousseau prepared, as well as the bed, curtains and other furnishings for the bridal chamber.

Within a few days everything was ready. The house they bought was in Flower Spring Lane about two *li* behind the Ning and Rong Street. It had over twenty rooms. They also bought two young maids. In addition, Jia Zhen installed his own servant Bao Er and his wife there to wait on Second Sister after she moved in. He then sent for Zhang Hua and his father and ordered them to write a deed cancelling the betrothal for old Mrs. You.

Now Zhang Hua's grandfather had been in charge of the Imperial Farm. After his death Zhang Hua's father had taken his place, and as he was a good friend of old Mrs. You's first husband, Zhang Hua and Second Sister You had been engaged to each other before they were born. Later the Zhangs became involved in a lawsuit which ruined their family, leaving them too poor to feed and clothe themselves well, to say nothing of bringing home a bride for their son. And as old Mrs. You had left her first husband's home, the two families had lost touch for more than ten years. When the Jia family's stewards summoned Zhang Hua and ordered him to renounce his betrothal to Second Sister You, although unwilling he had to agree for fear of the power which Jia Zhen and the others wielded. He accordingly wrote a deed cancelling the engagement, and old Mrs. You gave him ten taels of silver, after which the matter was settled.

When Jia Lian saw that all preparations were ready, he chose the third of the next month, an auspicious day, for the wedding, of which more will be told in the next chapter.

Truly:

Because he lusted after a kinswoman,
Husband and wife fell out.

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1935

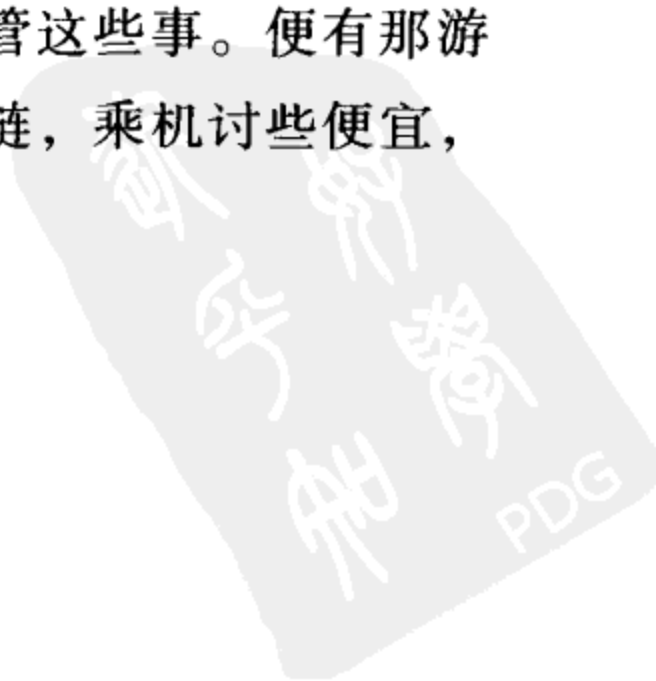
賈二舍
倫要
尤二姨

第六十五回

膏粱子惧内偷娶妾　淫奔女改行自择夫

话说贾琏、贾珍、贾蓉等三人商议，事事妥贴，至初二日，先将尤老和三姐送入新房。尤老一看，虽不似贾蓉口内之言，倒也十分齐备，母女二人也却称了愿。鲍二夫妇见了，如一盆火，赶着尤老一口一声唤“老娘”，又或是“老太太”；赶着三姐叫“三姨”，或是“姨娘”。至次日五更天，一乘素轿，将二姐抬来。各色香烛纸马，并铺盖以及酒饭，早已预备得十分妥当。一时，贾琏素服坐了小轿而来，拜过天地，焚了纸马。那尤老见二姐身上头上焕然一新，不似在家模样，十分得意。搀入洞房。是夜贾琏同他颠鸾倒凤，百般恩爱。

那贾琏越看越爱，越瞧越喜，不知要怎生奉承这二姐，乃命鲍二家的等人，不许提三说二的，直以“奶奶”称之，自己也称“奶奶”，竟将凤姐一笔勾销。有时回家中，只说在东府有事羁绊，凤姐辈因知他和贾珍相得，自然是或有事商议，也不疑心。再家下人虽多，都不管这些事。便有那游手好闲专打听小事的人，也都去奉承贾琏，乘机讨些便宜，



Chapter 65

A Hen-Pecked Young Profligate Takes a Concubine in Secret
A Wanton Girl Mends Her Ways and Picks Herself a Husband

Jia Lian, Jia Zhen and Jia Rong, consulting together, soon had everything satisfactorily arranged. On the second of the month, old Mrs. You and Third Sister were escorted first to the new house. Old Mrs. You saw at a glance that it was not as grand as Jia Rong had claimed; still, it appeared quite respectable, and she and her daughter were both satisfied. Bao Er and his wife gave them an effusive welcome, assiduously addressing old Mrs. You as "Old Madam" or "Old Lady" and Third Sister as "Third Aunt" or "Third Young Mistress."

The next day at dawn when Second Sister was brought over in a white sedan-chair, all the incense, candles and sacrificial paper as well as fine bedding, wine and food were ready. Presently Jia Lian, dressed in mourning, arrived in a small sedan-chair, after which they bowed to Heaven and Earth and burned sacrificial paper. And old Mrs. You was most gratified to see Second Sister's new finery, so unlike the trinkets and clothes she had worn at home. The bride was helped into the bridal chamber, where that night she and Jia Lian enjoyed the transports of love.

Jia Lian, more enamoured than ever of his new bride, did all in his power to please her in every way. He forbade Bao Er and the other servants to refer to her as "Second Mistress." They must all call her the mistress just as he did, as if Xifeng had been blotted out of existence. Whenever he went home he merely claimed to have been detained by business in the East Mansion; and Xifeng, knowing how close he and Jia Zhen were, thought it natural for them to talk things over together and never suspected the truth. As for the domestics, they never interfered in affairs of this kind. In fact, the idlers among them who made a point of learning all the gossip tried to profit by the situation, seizing this chance to make up to Jia Lian; thus none of them was willing to expose him. So Jia

谁肯去露风。于是贾琏深感贾珍不尽。贾琏一月出五两银子做天天的供给。若不来时，他母女三人一处吃饭；若贾琏来了，他夫妻二人一处吃，他母女便回房自吃。贾琏又将自己积年所有梯己，一并搬了与二姐收着，又将凤姐素日之为人行事，枕边衾内尽情告诉了他，只等一死，便接他进去。二姐听了，自是愿意。当下十来个人，倒也过起日子来，十分丰足。

眼看已是两个月的光景。这日贾珍在铁槛寺回家时，因与他姊妹久别，竟要去探望探望。先命小厮去打听贾琏在与不在，小厮回来说不在。贾珍欢喜，将左右一概先遣回去，只留两个心腹小童牵马。一时到了新房，已是掌灯时分，悄悄进去。两个小厮将马拴在棚内，自往下房去听候。

贾珍进来，屋里才点灯，先看过了尤氏母女，然后二姐出见，贾珍仍唤二姨。大家吃茶，说了一回闲话。贾珍因笑说："我作的这保山如何?若错过了，打着灯笼还没处寻，过日你姐姐还备了礼来瞧你们呢。"说话之间，尤二姐已命人预备下酒馔，关起门来，都是一家人，原没回避。那鲍二来请安，贾珍便说："你还是个有良心的小子，所以叫你来服侍。日后自有大用你之处，不可在外头吃酒生事。我自然赏你。倘或这里短了什么，你琏二爷事多，那里人杂，你只管

Lian's gratitude to Jia Zhen knew no bounds.

Every month Jia Lian paid five taels of silver to defray the daily expenses of this new establishment. In his absence, the mother and two daughters ate together; if he came, husband and wife had their meal alone while old Mrs. You and Third Sister retired to their own room to eat. Jia Lian also made over to Second Sister the savings he had put aside in the last few years, and when in bed told her freely all about Xifeng and her behaviour, promising to take her into the family as soon as Xifeng died. This, of course, was what Second Sister hoped for. So their household of a dozen or so people managed very comfortably.

Two months passed in a flash. One evening when Jia Zhen came home from Iron Threshold Temple, he decided to pay a visit to the two sisters whom he had not seen for so long. First he sent a page to find out whether Jia Lian was there, and was delighted when the boy reported that he was not. Having dismissed his attendants except for two trusted boys to lead his horse, he went straight to the new house. It was already lighting up time when he slipped quietly in. The two pages tethered the horse in the stable, then went to the servants' quarters to await further orders.

When Jia Zhen entered the house the lamps had just been lit. He first met old Mrs. You and Third Sister; then Second Sister came out to greet him, and he addressed her as before as Second Cousin. They sipped tea together and chatted.

"Well, how is the marriage I arranged for you?" asked Jia Zhen with a smile. "If you'd missed this chance, you couldn't have found another such man, not even if you'd searched with a lantern! Your elder sister will be coming to call one of these days with presents."

Second Sister ordered wine and food to be prepared. And as they were members of one family now they closed the door and chatted without constraint until Bao Er came in to pay his respects.

Jia Zhen told him, "It's because you're an honest fellow that I sent you here to work. In future I shall give you more important jobs. Don't get drunk outside or make trouble, and I shall reward you well. Your Second Master Lian is busy and there are all sorts of people about in his place, so if you're short of anything here just let me know. After all,

去回我。我们弟兄不比别人。”鲍二答应道:“是，小的知道。若小的不尽心，除非不要这脑袋了。”贾珍点头说:“要你知道。”当下四人一处吃酒。尤二姐知局，便邀他母亲说:“我怪怕的，妈同我到那边走走来。”尤老也会意，便真个同他出来，只剩了小丫头们。贾珍便和三姐挨肩擦脸，百般轻薄起来。小丫头子们看不过，也都躲了出去，凭他两个自在取乐，不知作些什么勾当。

跟的两个小厮都在厨房和鲍二饮酒，鲍二女人上灶。忽见两个丫头也走了来嘲笑，要吃酒。鲍二因说:“姐儿们不在上头伏侍，也偷来了。一时要叫起来没人，又是事。”他女人骂道:“胡涂浑账的忘八!你撞丧那黄汤罢。撞丧醉了，抱着你那脑袋挺你的尸去。叫不叫，与你什么相干!一应有我承当，风雨横竖洒不着你头上。”这鲍二原是因妻子发迹的，近日越发亏他。自己除赚钱吃酒之外，一概不管，贾琏等也不肯责备他，故他视妻如母，百依百随，且吃够了便去睡觉。这里鲍二家的陪着这些丫鬟小厮吃酒，讨他们的好，准备在贾珍前上些好话儿。

四人正吃的高兴，忽听扣门之声，鲍二家的忙出来开门看时，见是贾琏下马，问有事无事。鲍二女人便悄悄告他说:“大爷在这里西院里呢。”贾琏听了，便回至卧房。只见

we're cousins — it's not as if I were an outsider."

"Yes, sir, I understand," answered Bao Er. "If I don't do my best, you can cut off my head."

Jia Zhen nodded.

"I just want you to understand."

The four of them drank together until Second Sister, sizing up the situation, said to her mother, "I'm afraid to go out alone. Will you come with me?"

Old Mrs. You took the hint and withdrew with her, leaving only two young maids there. Then Jia Zhen and Third Sister nestled up to each other and flirted so outrageously that the maids were shocked and slipped out, leaving them to amuse themselves however they pleased.

Jia Zhen's pages were drinking in the kitchen with Bao Er, while his wife attended to the cooking, when the two maids burst in, giggling, and asked for drinks.

"Why aren't you waiting on them, sisters?" asked Bao Er. "Why leave your post and come here? If they want something and nobody's at hand, there's bound to be more trouble."

"You stupid, befuddled turtle!" scolded his wife. "Why not drink yourself silly and pass out? Just keep your balls between your thighs and stretch your carcass out. Whether they call or whether they don't, it's nothing to do with *you*. I'll see to all that. Anyway no drop of rain will spatter *your* head."

Now Bao Er owed all his good fortune to his wife, and his recent good luck was even more thanks to her, for in this cushy job he had nothing to do but make money and get drunk, yet Jia Lian and the rest never reprimanded him. He therefore obeyed her implicitly, as if she were his mother. And so having drunk enough, he went to bed. His wife kept the maids and pages company drinking, and made up to them in the hope that they would speak well of her to Jia Zhen. But as they were enjoying themselves they heard a sudden knocking on the gate; and when Bao Er's wife hurried out to open it, she saw Jia Lian dismounting from his horse. He asked if all was well.

She quietly told him, "The Elder Master is here, in the west courtyard."

尤二姐和他母亲都在房中，见他来了，二人面上便有些讪讪的。贾琏反推不知，只命："快拿酒来，咱们吃两杯好睡觉。我今日很乏了。"二姐忙上来陪笑接衣奉茶，问长问短。贾琏喜的心痒难受。一时鲍二家的端上酒来，二人对饮。他丈母不吃，自回房中睡去了。两个小丫头分了一个过来服侍。

贾琏的心腹小童隆儿拴马去，见已有了一匹马，细瞧一瞧，知是贾珍的，心下会意，也来厨下。只见喜儿、寿儿两个正在那里坐着吃酒，见他来了，也都会意，故笑道："你这会子来的巧。我们因赶不上爷的马，恐怕犯夜，往这里来借宿一宵的。"隆儿便笑道："有的是炕，只管睡。我是二爷使我送月银的，交给了奶奶，我也不回去了。"喜儿便说："我们吃多了，你来吃一钟。"隆儿才坐下，端起杯来，忽听马棚内闹将起来。原来二马同槽，不能相容，互相蹶踢起来。隆儿等慌的忙放下酒杯，出来喝马，好容易喝住，另拴好了，方进来。鲍二家的笑说："你三人就在这里罢，茶也现成了，我可去了。"说着，带门出去。这里喜儿喝了几杯，已是楞子眼了。隆儿、寿儿关了门，回头见喜儿直挺挺的仰卧炕上，二人便推他说："好兄弟，起来好生睡，只顾你一个人，我们就苦了。"那喜儿便说道："咱们今儿可要公公道道

When Jia Lian heard that he went to his bedroom and found Second Sister there with her mother. At sight of him, they looked a little put out, but he pretended not to notice.

"Bring some wine, quick," he ordered. "After a couple of drinks we can go to bed. I'm tired out."

Second Sister at once stepped forward with a smile to take his outer garments and offer him tea, then asked about this and that. Jia Lian was so pleased that he itched to make love to her. Soon Bao Er's wife brought in wine which the two of them drank, while his mother-in-law went back to her room, sending one of the young maids to wait on them.

When Jia Lian's trusted page Longer went to stable the horse he discovered another there and, looking closely, recognized it as Jia Zhen's. Understanding the situation, he too went to the kitchen where he found Xier and Shouer sitting drinking. At sight of him, they exchanged knowing glances.

"You've come just at the right time," they chortled. "We couldn't overtake the master's horse, and as we were afraid of being caught out after curfew, we come here to spend the night."

Longer chuckled, "Well, there's plenty of room on the *kang*, just lie down as you like. Second Master sent me to bring the monthly allowance to the mistress, so I shan't be going back either."

"We've drunk too much," said Xier. "You must have a cup now."

But as Longer sat down and raised his cup, they heard a sudden commotion in the stable where the two horses, unwilling to be tethered together, had started kicking each other. Longer hastily put down his cup and rushed out to soothe them, coming back after he had managed to tie Jia Lian's horse up elsewhere.

"You three stay here," Bao Er's wife told them. "There's tea ready made for you. I must leave you now." With that she left, closing the door behind her.

Xier after a few cups was already glassy-eyed. By the time Longer and Shouer had locked the door they saw that he had passed out on the *kang*. They gave him a shove.

"Get up and move over, good brother," they urged. "If you hog all the space, where are *we* to sleep?"

的贴一炉子烧饼，要有一个充正经的人，我痛把你妈一肏。”隆儿、寿儿见他醉了，也不必多说，只得吹了灯，将就睡下。

尤二姐听见马闹，心下便不自安，只管用言语混乱贾琏。那贾琏吃了几杯，春兴发作，便命收了酒果，掩门宽衣。尤二姐只穿着大红小袄，散挽乌云，满脸春色，比白日更增了颜色。贾琏搂他笑道：“人人都说我们那夜叉婆齐整，如今我看来，给你拾鞋也不要。”尤二姐道：“我虽标致，却无品行。看来到底是不标致的好。”贾琏忙问道：“这话如何说？我却不解。”尤二姐滴泪说道：“你们拿我作愚人待，我什么事不知道。我如今和你作了两个月的夫妻，日子虽浅，我也知你不是愚人。我生是你的人，死是你的鬼，如今既作了夫妻，我终身靠你，岂敢瞒藏一字。我算是有靠，将来我妹子却如何结果？据我看来，这个形景恐非长策，要作长久之计方好。”贾琏听了，笑道：“你且放心，我不是那拈酸吃醋之辈。前事我已尽知，你也不必惊慌。你姐夫是作兄的，自然不好意思，不如我去破了这例。”说着走了，便至西院中来，只见窗内灯烛辉煌，二人正吃酒取乐。

贾琏便推门进去，笑说：“大爷在这里，兄弟来请安。”贾珍羞的无话，只得起身让坐。贾琏忙笑道：“何必又作如此

"Must play fair tonight, each get a good fuck," Xier mumbled. "Anyone who poses as proper — I'll fuck his mother."

The other two seeing that he was drunk ignored him, simply putting out the light, then lying down to sleep as best they could.

The commotion made by the horses had alarmed Second Sister, who tried to distract Jia Lian with conversation. After a few cups, feeling randy, he ordered the maids to clear away the wine and dishes, then closed the door to undress. Second Sister was wearing nothing but a scarlet jacket. With her hair hanging loose, her cheeks flushed, she looked even lovelier than in the daytime.

Throwing his arms around her, Jia Lian declared, "Everyone calls that shrew of mine good-looking, but to me she isn't fit even to pick up your shoes."

"I may have good looks but I've got a bad name," she answered. "So it seems not to be good-looking would be better."

"Why do you say that?" he asked. "I don't understand."

"You all think me silly," she told him, shedding tears. "But I have my wits about me. Now I've been your wife for two months, and already in that short time I've learned that you're no fool either. I'll be yours dead or alive. Being married to you, I'll depend on you all my life, so of course I won't keep any secrets from you. I'm provided for, but what about my sister? Seems to me things can't go on the way they are now. We must think of some long-term plan."

"Don't worry," chuckled Jia Lian. "I'm not the jealous type. I know all that happened in the past, you don't have to be afraid. As your brother-in-law is my cousin, you naturally don't like to broach the subject. It would be better for me to make the proposal."

So he went to the west courtyard and saw through the window that the room was brightly lit and Jia Zhen and Third Sister were drinking and enjoying themselves inside. Jia Lian opened the door and went in.

"So you're here, sir," he said with a smile. "I've come to pay my respects."

Jia Zhen, too embarrassed to speak, simply stood up and waved him to a seat.

Jia Lian laughed. "Why look so worried? As cousins we've always

景象，咱们弟兄从前是如何样来！大哥为我操心，我今日粉身碎骨，感激不尽。大哥若多心，我意何安？从此以后，还求大哥如昔方好，不然，兄弟宁可绝后，再不敢到此处来了。”说来，便要跪下。慌的贾珍连忙搀起，只说：“兄弟怎么说，我无不领命。”贾琏忙命人：“看酒来，我和大哥吃两杯。”又拉尤三姐说：“你过来，陪小叔子一杯。”贾珍笑着说：“老二，到底是你，哥哥必要吃干这钟。”说着，一扬脖子。尤三姐站在炕上，指着贾琏笑道：“你不用和我花马吊嘴的，咱们清水下杂面，你吃我看见。见提着影戏人子上场，好歹别戮破这层纸儿。你别油蒙了心，打谅我们不知道你府上的事。这会子花了几个臭钱，你们哥儿两个，拿着我们姐儿两个权当粉头来取乐儿，你们就打错了算盘了。我也知道你那老婆太难缠，如今把我姐姐拐了来做二房，偷的锣儿敲不得。我也要会会那凤奶奶去，看他是几个脑袋几只手。若大家好，取和便罢；倘若有一点叫人过不去，我有本事先把你两个的牛黄狗宝掏了出来，再和那泼妇拼了这命，也不算是尤三姑奶奶！喝酒怕什么，咱们就喝！”说着，自己绰起壶来，便斟了一杯，自己先喝了半杯，搂过贾琏的脖子来就灌，说：“我和你哥哥已经吃过了，咱们来亲香亲香。”吓的贾琏酒都醒了。贾珍也不承望尤三姐这等无耻老辣。弟兄两个本是风月场中耍惯的，不想今日反被这闺女一席话说住。

been on the closest terms. I can't thank you enough for all you've done for me. If you take offence now, I shall be most upset. Please behave just as you did before. Otherwise I shall never dare come here again, not even if it means having no son." He made as if to kneel down.

Jia Zhen hastily raised him.

"I'll do whatever you say, cousin," he assured him.

Then Jia Lian called for wine, saying, "I'll have a couple of drinks with Elder Cousin." Taking Third Sister by the hand he added, "Come and drink a cup with me too."

Jia Zhen laughed.

"What a character you are! I shall have to empty this cup." And he tossed it off.

Third Sister jumped on to the *kang* then and pointed at Jia Lian.

"Don't try to get round me with your glib tongue!" she cried. "We'd better keep clear of each other. I've seen plenty of shadow-plays in my time; anyway don't tear the screen to show what's behind the scenes. You must be befuddled if you think we don't know what goes on in your house. Now after spending a bit of your stinking money, you two figure you can amuse yourselves with us as if we were prostitutes! Well, you're out in your calculations.

"I know your wife's such a termagant that you tricked my sister into coming here to be your second wife; but you can't beat a stolen gong. And I've a good mind to call on this Madam Xifeng, to see what sort of prodigy she is. If everyone treats us right we can all live at peace. But if anyone takes the least guts, then fighting it out with that shrew. If I don't, I'm not Third Mistress You! Who's afraid of drinking? Let's go ahead and drink."

She picked up the wine-pot to fill a cup and drank half of this herself, then throwing one arm round Jia Lian's neck started pouring the rest down his throat."

"I've already drunk with your cousin," she said. "Now let *us* play at being sweethearts."

This gave Jia Lian such a scare that he sobered up. Jia Zhen, for his part, had never dreamed that Third Sister could act so brazenly. The two cousins, for all their experience of loose women, now found themselves

尤三姐一叠声又叫："将姐姐请来！要乐，咱们四个一处同乐。俗语说'便宜不过当家'，他们是弟兄，咱们是姊妹，又不是外人，只管上来。"尤二姐反不好意思起来。贾珍得便就要一溜，尤三姐那里肯放。贾珍此时方后悔，不承望他是这种为人，与贾琏反不好轻薄起来。

这尤三姐松松挽着头发，大红袄子半掩半开，露着葱绿抹胸，一痕雪脯。底下绿裤红鞋，一对金莲或翘或并，没半刻斯文。两个坠子却似打秋千一般，灯光之下，越显得柳眉笼翠雾，檀口点丹砂。本是一双秋水眼，再吃了酒，又添了饧涩淫浪，不独将他二姊压倒，据珍、琏评去，所见过的上下贵贱若干女子，皆未有此绰约风流者。二人已酥麻如醉，不禁去招他一招，他那淫态风情，反将二人禁住。那尤三姐放出手眼来，略试了一试，他弟兄两个竟全然无一点别识别见，连口中一句响亮话都没了，不过是酒色二字而已。自己高谈阔论，任意挥霍洒落一阵，拿他兄弟二人嘲笑取乐，竟真是他嫖了男人，并非男人淫了他。一时他的酒足兴尽，也不容他弟兄多坐，撵了出去，自己关门睡去了。

自此后，或略有丫鬟婆子不到之处，便将贾珍、贾琏、贾蓉三个泼声厉言痛骂，说他爷儿三个诳骗了他寡妇孤女。

struck dumb by this chit of a girl.

Then Third Sister cried out, "Ask my sister in! If you want fun, let's all *four* of us have fun together. As the saying goes, 'Perks should be kept inside the family.' You're cousins, we're sisters; none of us are outsiders — come on!"

Second Sister who had joined them began to feel embarrassed, and Jia Zhen wanted to sneak away, but Third Sister would not let him. By now Jia Zhen regretted having come. He had had no idea that Third Sister would behave like this, making it impossible for him and Jia Lian to have their way with her.

Now Third Sister wound her hair in a loose knot, her scarlet jacket, half unbuttoned, disclosing her leek-green bodice and snow-white skin. Below she was wearing green trousers and red slippers, and she now kicked her dainty feet against each other, now stretched them out side by side — never still for a moment — while her pendant eardrops swung this way and that. Under the lamplight her willowy eyebrows curved enticingly, her fragrant lips glowed red as cinnabar, and her eyes, bright as autumn pools, sparkled even more seductively after drinking. To Jia Zhen and Jia Lian it seemed that not only did she surpass her elder sister but that none of the girls they had ever seen, whether high or low, noble or humble, had possessed such bewitching charm. Both were too dazed and too intoxicated even to lift a finger. Her wanton coquetting had deprived them of speech.

Gesticulating and making eyes at them, Third Sister You had not put herself out to excite them, yet already the two men were at a loss to know which way to look, and had not so much as a word to say for themseleves, so befuddled were they both by wine and lust. Holding forth loudly and freely, she heaped abuse on them, taunting and teasing them just as she pleased, as if *they* were prostitutes called in by her instead of men who had wanted to seduce her. Finally, sated with wine, having worked off her high spirits she drove them out, closed the door behind them, and retired to bed.

After this, whenever the maids were remiss in any way, Third Sister would loose a flood of abuse against Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Rong, accusing them of cheating a widow and her two fatherless daughters.

贾珍回去之后，以后亦不敢轻易再来，有时尤三姐自己高了兴，悄命小厮来请，方敢去一会。到了这里，也只好随他的便。谁知这尤三姐天生的脾气不堪，自己仗着风流标致，偏要打扮的出色，另式作出许多万人不及的淫情浪态来，哄的男子们垂涎落魂，欲近不能，欲远不舍，迷离颠倒，他以为乐。他母、姊二人也十分相劝，他反说："姐姐糊涂。咱们金玉一般的人，白叫这两个现世包沾污了去，也算无能。而且他家有一个极利害的女人，如今瞒着他不知，咱们方安。倘若一日他知道了，岂肯干休，势必有一场大闹，不知谁生谁死。趁如今我不拿他们取乐作践准折，到那时白落个臭名，后悔不及。"因此一说，他母女见不听劝，也只得罢了。那尤三姐天天挑拣吃穿，打了银的，又要金的；有了珠子，又要宝石；吃的肥鹅，又宰肥鸭。或不称心，连桌一推。衣裳不如意，不论绫缎新旧，便用剪刀剪碎，撕一条，骂一句。究竟贾珍等何曾随意了一日，反花了许多昧心钱。

贾琏来了，只在二姐房内，心中也悔上来。无奈二姐倒是个多情人，以为贾琏是终身之主了，凡事倒还知疼着痒的。若论起温柔和顺，凡事必商必议，不敢恃才自专，实较凤姐高十倍；若论标致，言谈行事，也胜五分。虽然如今改过，但已经失了脚，有了一个"淫"字，凭有甚好处也不算了。偏这贾琏又说："谁人无错，知过必改就好。"故不提已

Thereafter, Jia Zhen hardly dared to come back unless Third Sister happened to be in the mood to send a page boy secretly to fetch him. And when he arrived he had to let her have her way.

Third Sister was in fact a born eccentric. Being good-looking and romantic, she liked to dress strilingly and behave more lasciviously and seductively than all other girls to infatuate men until they were fairly drooling, unable either to approach her or stay away. She delighted in keeping them on a string like this. Her mother and sister tried in vain to dissuade her.

"How silly you are, sister," she would retort. "Why let those two reincarnated apes defile our precious bodies? Why act so helpless? Besides, that wife of his is a real terror. As long as this is kept from her, we're all right. If she comes to hear of it one day, she won't take it lying down and there's bound to be a big row. Who knows which of you will survive? If I don't have some fun now treating them like dirt, by the time this breaks it'll be too late to regret it — I'll be left with nothing then but a bad name."

They realized then it was no use trying to persuade her, and gave up.

And now Third Sister started demanding the best of everything whether food or clothing. When silver trinkets were made for her she wanted gold as well; when pearls were given her she asked for gems; if a fat goose was served her she demanded duck, and unless humoured would overturn the table. If her clothes were not just as she wanted, regardless of whether they were silk or satin, new or old, she would cut them up, swearing as she tore them to shreds. So not for a day did Jia Zhen have any satisfaction. Instead, he squandered large sums of money for nothing.

Jia Lian when he went there just stayed in Second Sister's rooms, and he was beginning to regret this set-up. But Second Sister had an affectionate disposition. To her, Jia Lian was her lord and master for life, she doted on him. As regards gentleness and obedience, she was ten times better than Xifeng, for she would consult him on everything and never dared make any decisions herself or trust to her own better judgement. As regards her looks, conversation and behaviour, she was superior too. Yet although she had now reformed, because of her previous slip-ups she had been labelled a wanton, and so her other good qualities

往之淫，只取现今之善，便如胶投漆，似水如鱼，一心一计，誓同生死，那里还有凤、平二人在意了?二姐在枕边衾内，也常劝贾琏说:“你和珍大哥商议商议，拣个相熟的人，把三丫头聘了罢。留着他不是常法子，终久要生出事来，怎么处?”贾琏道:“前儿我也曾回过大哥的，他只是舍不得，我说:‘是块肥羊肉，只是烫的慌；玫瑰花儿可爱，刺太扎手。咱们未必降的住，正经拣个人聘了罢。’他只意意思思，就丢开手了。你叫我有何法?”二姐道:“你放心。咱们明日先劝三丫头，他肯了，让他自己闹去。闹的无法，少不得聘他。”贾琏听了说:“这话极是。”

至次日，二姐另备了酒，贾琏也不出门，至午间特请他小妹过来，与他母亲上坐。尤三姐便知其意，酒过三巡，不用姐姐开口，先便滴泪泣道:“姐姐今日请我，自有一番大礼要说。但妹子不是那愚人，也不用絮絮叨叨提那从前丑事，我已尽知，说也无益。既如今姐姐也得了好处安身，妈也有了安身之处，我也要自寻归结去，方是正理。但终身大事，一生至死，非同儿戏。我如今改过守分，只要我拣一个素日可心如意的人方跟他去。若凭你们拣择，虽是富比石崇，才过子建，貌比潘安的，我心里进不去的，也白过了一世。”

counted for nothing.

However, Jia Lian said, "Who's perfect? If you recognize your mistakes and correct them, that's all right." Thus he never mentioned her loose living in the past, content to dwell on her present goodness. And he stuck to her like glue, like a fish to water, vowing from his heart to be true to her his whole life long, having lost all interest in Xifeng and Pinger.

When they shared the same pillow and quilt, Second Sister often urged him, "Why not talk it over with your cousin Zhen, and choose some man you know to marry my sister? It's no good keeping her here indefinitely, because sooner or later there's bound to be trouble, and then what shall we do?"

"I did mention this to him the other day," said Jia Lian. "But he can't bear the idea of giving her up. I pointed out, 'What's the good of fat mutton if it's too hot to eat? The rose is lovely but prickly. How can we control her? We'd better find someone and marry her off.' He just hemmed and hawed, then changed the subject. So what do you expect me to do?"

"Don't worry," said Second Sister. "Tomorrow we'll first tackle my sister. If she's willing, we'll let her go on making rows until he has no choice but to marry her off."

"That's the idea," agreed Jia Lian.

The next day Second Sister prepared a feast and Jia Lian stayed in. At noon, they invited Third Sister and her mother over and made them take the seats of honour. Third Sister guessed their intention, and when their cups had been filled three times, without waiting for her sister to speak she said tearfully:

"You must have invited me today, sister, for some important reason. I'm no fool, and there's no need to harp on my shameful conduct in the past. I'm aware of it; it's no use talking about it. You've found yourself a good niche now, and so has mother, and it's only right and proper that I should look for a home of my own too. But marriage is a serious business; it's for life, not a joking matter. I've had a change of heart and mean to turn over a new leaf, but I must find someone congenial before I'll marry. If your choice, no matter how rich, talented and handsome, wasn't a man after my own heart then my whole life would be wasted."

贾琏笑道："这也容易。凭你说是谁就是谁，一应彩礼都有我们置办，母亲也不用操心。"尤三姐泣道："姐姐知道，不用我说。"贾琏笑问二姐是谁，二姐一时也想不起来。大家想来，贾琏便料定是此人无疑了！便拍手笑道："我知道了。这人原不差，果然好眼力。"二姐笑问是谁，贾琏笑道："别人他如何进得去，一定是宝玉。"二姐与尤老听了，亦以为然。尤三姐便啐了一口，道："我们有姊妹十个，也嫁你弟兄十个不成？难道除了你家，天下就没了好男子了不成？"众人听了都诧异："除去他，还有那一个？"尤三姐笑道："别只在眼前想，姐姐只在五年前想就是了。"

正说着，忽见贾琏的心腹小厮兴儿来回话："老爷那边紧等着叫爷呢。小的答应往舅老爷那边去了，小的连忙来请。"贾琏又忙问："昨天家里没人问么？"兴儿道："小的回奶奶说，爷在家庙里同珍大爷商议作百日的事，只怕不能来家。"贾琏忙命拉马，隆儿跟随去了，留下兴儿答应人来事务。

尤二姐拿了两碟菜，命拿大杯斟了酒，就命兴儿在炕沿下蹲着吃，一长一短向他说话儿。问他家里奶奶多大年纪，怎个利害的样子，老太太多大年纪，太太多大年纪，姑娘几

"That's no problem," said Jia Lian. "You can make your own choice. And we'll provide the whole dowry, so that mother needn't worry about that either."

"Sister knows who I mean," sobbed Third Sister. "I don't have to name him."

"Who is he?" Jia Lian asked Second Sister, but she could not think who it could be.

While the others were wondering, Jia Lian, sure that he had guessed, clapped his hands.

"I know who it is! He's certainly not bad. You've made a good choice."

"Who is it?" saked Second Sister.

"It must be Baoyu," he chuckled. "No one else would do for her."

Second Sister and old Mrs. You thought he had guessed right, but Third Sister spat in disgust.

"If there were ten of us sisters, would we all have to marry your brothers and cousins?" she asked. "Are there no men outside your family?"

This puzzled them all. Who else could it be? They wondered.

"Forget about the present, sister," said Third Sister. "Just think back five years and you'll know."

As they were talking, Jia Lian's trusted page Xinger came in to report, "The old master wants you to go over at once, sir. I told him you'd gone to see your uncle, then came straight to fetch you."

"Did they ask about me at home yesterday?" demanded Jia Lian hastily.

"I told Madam that you were at the family temple making plans for the hundredth day sacrifice with Lord Zhen, so you probably couldn't come home."

Jia Lian promptly called for his horse and rode off, accompanied by Longer, leaving Xinger behind to attend to other things. Second Sister ordered two dishes and made him drink a goblet of wine as he squatted by the *kang* while she questioned him about the Jia family. How old was Madam Lian? Was she really a terror? How old were the old lady and Lady Wang? How many girls were there in the household? Beaming as

个，各样家常等语。兴儿笑嘻嘻的在炕沿下一头吃，一头将荣府之事备细告诉他母女。又说："我是二门上该班的人。我们共是两班，一班四个，共是八个。这八个人有几个是奶奶的心腹，有几个是爷的心腹。奶奶的心腹我们不敢惹，爷的心腹奶奶就敢惹。提起我们奶奶来，心里歹毒，口里尖快。我们二爷也算是个好的，那里见得他。倒是跟前的平姑娘为人很好，虽然和奶奶一气，他倒背着奶奶常作些个好事。小的们凡有了不是，奶奶是容不过的，只求求他去就完了。如今合家大小除了老太太、太太两个人，没有不恨他的，只不过面子情儿怕他，皆因他一时看的人都不及他，只一味哄着老太太、太太两个人喜欢。他说一是一，说二是二，没人敢拦他。又恨不得把银子钱省下来堆成山，好叫老太太、太太说他会过日子。殊不知苦了下人，他讨好儿。估量着有好事，他就不等别人去说，他先抓尖儿；或有了不好事，或他自己错了，他便一缩头推到别人身上来，他还在旁边拨火儿。如今连他正经婆婆大太太都嫌了他，说他：'雀儿拣着旺处飞，黑母鸡一窝儿，自家的事不管，倒替人家去瞎张罗。'若不是老太太在头里，早叫过他去了。"尤二姐笑道："你背着他这等说他，将来你又不知怎么说我呢。我又差他一层儿，越发有的说了。"兴儿忙跪下说道："奶奶要这样说，小的不怕雷打！但凡小的们有造化起来，先娶奶奶时，

he ate and drank beside the *kang,* Xinger regaled old Mrs. You and her daughters with a detailed account of the Rong Mansion.

"I keep watch at the inner gate," he said. "We have two shifts, four men in each, eight altogether. Some of us are trusted by Madam, some by the master. We're careful not to annoy *her* men, but they're always provoking *us.*

"You ask about our mistress. Well, I shouldn't really be telling you this, madam, but she's crafty and vicious with a sharp, quick tongue. Second Master is all right, but he's under her thumb. Still Miss Pinger in their apartments is good-natured; even though she's on Madam Lian's side, behind her back she often does people good turns. If we do anything wrong, Madam won't let us off; but if we beg Pinger for help she smooths things over.

"There's no one now in the whole household, barring Their Ladyships, who doesn't hate her. We just make a show of liking her out of fear. That's because she looks down on everyone and just sucks up to the old lady and mistress. Whatever she says goes, and no one dares stop her. She tries to save up piles of silver so that Their Ladyships will praise her for being a good manager; but of course we servants are the ones to suffer, while she takes all the credit.

"If anything good happens, she rushes to take the credit before anyone else can report it. If anything bad happens, or if she herself makes some mistake, she ducks and shifts the blame on to other people, stirring up more trouble too on the side. Now even her own mother-in-law, the Elder Mistress, can't stand her, calling her a fair-weather sparrow, or a black hen that neglects her own nest but keeps butting in everywhere else. If not for the old lady's backing, her mother-in-law would have fetched her back long ago."

Second Sister smiled.

"The way you're talking behind her back makes me wonder what you'll say about *me* in future. As I'm lower in status you can lay it on even thicker!"

Xinger hastily fell on his knees.

"If I do, may a thunderbolt strike me dead!" he swore. "If we'd had the luck from the start to have a mistress like you, we wouldn't have had

若得了奶奶这样的人，小的们也少挨些打骂，也少提心吊胆的。如今跟爷的这几个人，谁不背前背后称扬奶奶的圣德。我们商量着，叫二爷要出来，情愿来答应奶奶呢。”二姐笑道：“猴儿崽子，还不起来呢。说句玩话，就吓的这样起来。你们作什么来，我还要找了你奶奶去呢。”兴儿连忙摆手说：“奶奶千万不要去。我告诉奶奶，一辈子别见他才好。嘴甜心苦，两面三刀；上头一脸笑，脚下使绊子；明是一盆火，暗是一把刀；都占全了。只怕三姨的这张嘴还说他不过。奶奶这样斯文良善的人，那里是他的对手！”尤氏笑道：“我只以礼待他，他敢怎样！”兴儿道：“不是小的吃了酒放肆胡说，奶奶便有礼让，他看见奶奶比他标致，又比他得人心，他怎肯干休善罢？人家是醋罐子，他是醋缸醋瓮。凡丫头们二爷多看一眼，他有本事当着爷打个烂羊头。虽然平姑娘在屋里，大约一年之间，两个有一次到一处，他还要口里掂十个过子呢，气的平姑娘性子发了，哭闹一阵，说：‘又不是我自己寻来的，你又浪着劝我，我原不依，你反说我反了，这会子又这样。’他一般的也罢了，倒央告平姑娘。”尤二姐笑道：“可是扯谎？这样一个夜叉，怎么反怕屋里的人呢？”兴儿道：“这就是俗语说的‘天下逃不过一个理字去’了。这平儿是他自幼的丫头，陪了过来一共四个，嫁人的嫁人，死的死了，只剩了这个心腹。他原为收了屋里，一则显他的贤良名儿，二则又叫拴爷的心，好不外头走邪

to put up with so many beatings and cursings or to live in fear and trembling all the time. Why, all our master's servants keep praising you, behind your back as well, for your goodness and kindness to us. We've been talking of asking our master to let us come here to wait on you, madam."

"You monkey!" she laughed. "Get up quickly. I was only joking — you needn't be afraid. Why should you all come here? I've been meaning, actually, to call on your mistress."

Xinger threw up his hands in dismay. "On *no* account do that, madam. Take my word for it, it will be best for you never to meet her all your life. She'll give you sweet talk when there's hatred in her heart, she's so double-faced and tricky. All the time she's smiling she tries to trip you up, making a show of great warmth while she stabs you in the back. That's the way she is. I'm afraid not even Third Aunt could outtalk her, so how could a gentle, kindly lady like you be a match for her?"

"If I treat her politely what can she do to me?"

"It's not that I'm talking wildly because I'm drinking. Even if you treated her with respect, once she saw you were better looking and more popular with people, how could she let you off? If other women are jealous, she's a hundred times so. If the master happens to cast a second glance at any maid, she's liable to make a row then and there. Though Miss Pinger's part of their household, and the master may be allowed to sleep with her once a year, or once in two years, she keeps nagging until Pinger loses her temper and makes a scene. 'I didn't ask to be his concubine,' she says. 'When I was unwilling you called me disobedient. You forced me into it, yet now you treat me like this!' Then, generally, she pipes down and even asks Miss Pinger's pardon."

"There you're lying," said Second Sister with a laugh. "How could a hellion like that be afraid of a concubine?"

"As the proverb says," he retorted, "'everyone has to listen to reason.' Miss Pinger has been her maid since she was a girl, being one of the four she brought here at the time of her marriage. The rest got married or died, leaving only this favourite maid, so she decided to make her a concubine. That was so as to show how broad-minded she was and also to stop the master from chasing after loose women outside.

路。又还有一段因果：我们家的规矩，凡爷们大了，未娶亲之先都先放两个人服侍的。二爷原有两个，谁知他来了没半年，都寻出不是来，都打发出去了。别人虽不好说，自己脸上过不去，所以强逼着平姑娘作了房里人。那平姑娘又是个正经人，从不把这一件事放在心上，也不会挑妻窝夫的，倒一味忠心赤胆服侍他，所以他才容下了。”

尤二姐笑道：“原来如此。但我听见你们家还有一位寡妇奶奶和几位姑娘。他这样利害，这些人如何依得？”兴儿拍手笑道：“原来奶奶不知道。我们家这位寡妇奶奶，他的浑名叫做‘大菩萨’，第一个善德人。我们家的规矩又大，寡妇奶奶们不管事，只宜清净守节。妙在姑娘又多，只把姑娘们交给他，看书写字，学针线，学道理，这是他的责任。除此问事不知，说事不管。只因这一向他病了，事多，这大奶奶暂管几日。究竟也无可管，不过是按例而行，不像他多事逞才。我们大姑娘不用说，但凡不好也没这段大福了。二姑娘浑名叫‘二木头’，戳十针也不知嗳哟一声。三姑娘的浑名是‘玫瑰花’。”尤氏姊妹忙问何意。兴儿笑道：“玫瑰花又红又香，无人不爱的，只是有刺戳手。也是一位神道，可惜不是太太养的，‘老鸹窝里出凤凰’。四姑娘小，他不是太太养的，是珍大爷的亲妹子，因自幼无母，老太太命太太

"There's another reason too. It's a rule in our family that when the young gentlemen reach teenage, before they're married, two girls are always assigned to wait on them. Second Master had two, but within half a year of *her* arrival she picked fault with them and sent them both packing. Although no one could very well say anything, she knew it didn't look good, so she forced Pinger to become his concubine. Pinger's really a good sort. Instead of holding this against her or stirring up trouble between husband and wife, she's completely loyal to her mistress — that's why she's kept on."

"So that's the way it is," remarked Second Sister. "But I hear you've another mistress who's a widow, and several young ladies too. Why do they put up with her if she's such a shrew?"

Xinger clapped his hands.

"You don't understand, I see. That widow, Madam Zhu, is such a kindly soul that she's nicknamed Great Bodhisattva. Besides, the rule in our family is so strict that widows never attend to affairs: all that's expected of them is to live quietly and chastely. But as there happen to be so many young ladies, they've been put in her charge and it's her job to superintend their studies and teach them needlework and moral principles. She doesn't have to bother about anything else. It's only because of Madam Lian's recent illness and because there's so much to be done that Madam Zhu's helping out for a few days. Still, there isn't much she can do, she simply sticks to the old ways, not throwing her weight about like Madam Lian to show how smart she is.

"As for our eldest young lady, it goes without saying, if she wasn't so fine in every way she wouldn't have been blessed with her present good fortune. Our second young lady, the one we call Dumbbell, won't let out a peep even if she's pricked with a needle. The third has the nickname Rose."

"Why's that?" asked the two You sisters.

Xinger chuckled.

"Everyone loves roses, they're so red and fragrant. But they're prickly too. And she's wonderfully clever. The pity is she's not Lady Wang's own child but 'a phoenix from a crow's nest.' The fourth, who's still young, is actually Lord Zhen's younger sister; but because she lost her

抱过来养着，也是一位不管事的。奶奶不知道，我们家里的姑娘不算，另外有两位姑娘，真是天上少有，地下无双。一个是我们姑太太的女儿，姓林，小名儿叫什么黛玉，面庞身段，和三姨不差什么，一肚子文章，只是一身多病；这样的天，还穿夹的，好着出来，风儿一吹就倒了。我们这起没王法的嘴都悄悄的叫他‘病西施’。还有一位姨太太的女儿，姓薛，叫宝钗，竟是雪堆出来的。每常出门或上车，或一时院子里瞥见一眼，我们鬼使神差，见了他两个，不敢出气儿。”尤二姐笑道：“你们大家子规矩，虽然你们小孩子进的去，然遇见小姐们，原该远远的藏开。”兴儿摇手道：“不是，不是。那正经大礼，自然远远的藏开，自不必说。就藏开了，自己不敢出气，是生怕这气大了，吹倒了林姑娘；气暖了，吹化了薛姑娘。”说的满屋里都笑了。要知端的，下回分解。

mother when she was a child, the old lady made Lady Wang adopt her and bring her up; and she never bothers about family affairs either.

"Then, you may not know, madam, apart from our own young ladies we have two others, the likes of whom are seldom seen on earth or in heaven. One's Lin Daiyu — her mother was the old lady's daughter. In looks and figure she's just as lovely as Third Aunt, with a bellyful of book learning besides; but she's always falling ill. Even in hot weather like this she wears lined clothes, and a puff of wind can blow her over. Being a disrespectful lot, behind her back we all call her the Sick Beauty.

"Then there's Aunt Xue's daughter Baochai, with a skin so white she looks as if made of snow. Whenever we catch a glimpse of them coming out of the gate or getting into a carriage, or in the courtyard, we all seem to be possessed by ghosts or gods! The sight of either of them takes our breath away."

Second Sister laughed.

"A big family like yours has strict rules. Even though you were taken into service there as children, when you happen to meet any of the young ladies you ought to make yourselves scarce."

Xinger brushed this aside.

"It's not that. If you talk about the proper etiquette, it goes without saying we should keep out of the way. But even when we do we still hold our breath because, if we let out a gasp, it might blow Miss Lin over; or being warm, might melt Miss Xue."

Everybody in the room burst out laughing at this. To know what followed read the next chapter.

LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS
1965

第六十六回

情小妹耻情归地府　冷二郎一冷入空门

话说鲍二家的打了兴儿一下子，笑道："原有些真的，叫你又编了这混话，越发没了捆儿了。你倒不像跟二爷的人，这些混话倒像跟宝玉那边的。"尤二姐才要又问，忽见尤三姐笑问道："可是你们家那宝玉，除了上学，他作些什么？"兴儿笑道："姨娘别问他，说起来姨娘也未必信。他长了这么大，独他没有上过正经学堂。我们家从祖宗直到二爷，谁不是寒窗十载，偏他不喜读书。老太太的宝贝，老爷先还管，如今可也不敢管了。成天家疯疯癫癫的，说的话人也不懂，干的事人也不知。外头人人看着好清俊模样儿，心里自然是聪明的，谁知是外清而内浊，见了人，一句话也没有。所有的好处，虽没上过学，倒难为他认得几个字。每日也不习文也不学武，又怕见人，只爱在丫头群里闹。再者也没刚柔，有时见了我们，喜欢时没上没下，大家乱玩一阵；不喜欢时，各自走了，他也不理人。我们坐着卧着，见了他也不理。他也不责备。因此没人怕他，只管随便，都过的去。"

Chapter 66

A Girl in Love Is Rejected and Kills Herself
A Cold-Hearted Man Repents and Turns to Religion

Bao Er's wife slapped Xinger playfully.

"How you do twist the truth and exaggerate!" she teased. "The senseless way you talk sounds as if you were Baoyu's servant, not Second Master's."

Before Second Sister could ask any other questions, Third Sister put in, "By the way, what does he do, that Baoyu of yours, apart from studying?"

"Don't ask, aunt," Xinger chuckled. "If I tell you, you won't believe me. Big as he is, he's unique in never having had any proper schooling. All earlier generations of our family right down to Second Master studied hard for years; he's the only one who won't study, and he's the old lady's pet. At first his father tried to discipline him, but he's long since given that up.

"Baoyu carries on the whole time like a lunatic, talking in a way that no one understands, and what he gets up to goodness only knows. He's handsome and is taken for an intelligent boy, but for all he looks so smart he's actually muddle-headed, with nothing to say for himself in company. The only good thing about him is that though he's never been to a proper school he's managed to learn to read. He never studies books or practises military arts; and he doesn't like meeting strangers, instead he just loves to fool about with the maids.

"He has no sense of what's fitting either. When he sees us, if he's in the mood he'll play around with us quite forgetting his station; if he's not in the mood he'll go off by himself, ignoring everyone else. If we're sitting or lying about when he turns up, and we pay no attention to him, he never ticks us off. So nobody's afraid of him; we know we can behave just as we please."

尤三姐笑道："主子宽了，你们又这样；严了，又报怨。可知你们难缠。"尤二姐道："我们看他倒好，原来这样。可惜了一个好胎子。"尤三姐道："姐姐信他胡说，咱们也不是见过一面两面的，行事言谈吃喝，原有些女儿气，那是只在里头惯了的。若说糊涂，那些儿糊涂？姐姐记得，穿孝时咱们同在一处，那日，正是和尚们进来绕棺，咱们都在那里站着，他只站在头里挡着人。人说他不知礼，又说没眼色。过后他没悄悄的告诉咱们说：'姐姐不知道，我并不是没眼色。细想和尚们脏，恐怕气味熏了姐姐们。'接着他吃茶，姐姐又要茶，那个老婆子就拿了他的碗去倒，他连忙说：'我吃脏了的，另洗了再拿来。'这两件上，我冷眼看去，原来他在女孩儿们跟前，不管怎样都过的去，只不大合外人的式，所以他们不知道。"尤二姐听说，笑道："依我说，你两个已是情投意合了。竟把你许了他，如何？"三姐见有兴儿，不便说话，只低头磕瓜子儿。兴儿笑道："若论模样儿行事为人，倒是一对好的。只是他已有了，未露出来。将来准是林姑娘定了的。因林姑娘多病，二则都还小，故尚未及此。再过二三年，老太太便一开言，那是再无不准的了。"大家正说话，只见隆儿又来了，说："老爷有事，是件机密大事，要遣二爷往平安州去。不过三五天就起身，来回也得半月工夫。今日不能来了。请老奶奶早和二姨定了那事，明日爷来，好作定

"When your master's lenient you run him down; if he were strict you'd complain," said Third Sister with a smile. "That shows what a troublesome lot you are."

"He made a good impression on *us*," remarked Second Sister. "We didn't know he was like this. What a pity when he's such a handsome boy."

"Don't believe the nonsense he talks, sister," said Third Sister. "We've met Baoyu several times. The way he behaves and speaks does seem rather effeminate, but that's because he spends all his time in the inner apartments. You can't call him muddle-headed. Remember when we were in mourning, that day the monks filed round the coffin? We girls were all standing there and he stepped in front of us, standing in our way. People said he had no manners and should know better; but later didn't he tell us in confidence, 'You know, sisters, it's not that I had no sense of respect, but those monks are so dirty I was afraid you'd find their stench overpowering. '

"Then he was drinking tea, and you wanted some too. When that old woman took his bowl to pour some for you, he said at once, 'I've dirtied that bowl; you must wash it first.' From these two incidents, viewed dispassionately, I saw how obliging he is towards us girls — he knows how to make himself agreeable to us. It just doesn't seem right to outsiders; that's why they can't understand him."

"It sounds as if the two of you are already of one mind," Second Sister chuckled. "How would it be if we were to betroth you to him?"

Inhibited by Xinger's presence, Third Sister just lowered her head and went on cracking melon-seeds.

"As far as looks and behaviour go, they'd make a fine couple," chortled Xinger. "Only he's already made his choice, although it hasn't yet been announced. It's bound to be Miss Lin. Nothing has been done so far, as she's so delicate and they're both still young; but in another two or three years, as soon as the old lady says the word it will certainly be settled."

As they were chatting, Longer came back to report, "The old master has some business, something extremely important and confidential, that he's sending Second Master to Pinganzhou to attend to. He's to set out in a few days and the whole trip there and back will take more than a

夺。”说着，带着兴儿也回去了。

这里尤二姐命掩了门早睡，盘问他妹子一夜。至次日午后，贾琏方来了。尤二姐因劝他说：“既有正事，何必忙忙又来，千万别为我误了事。”贾琏道：“也没甚事，只是偏偏的又出来了一件远差。出了月就起身，得半个月工夫才回来。”尤二姐道：“既如此，你只管放心前去，这里一应不用你记挂。三妹子他不会朝更暮改，他已说了改悔，必是改悔的。他已择定了人，你只要依他，就是了。”贾琏忙问是谁，尤二姐笑道：“这人此刻不在这里，不知多早才来，也难为他眼力。他自己说了，这人一年不来，他等一年；十年不来，他等十年；若这人死了再不来了，他情愿剃了头发当姑子，吃长斋念佛，以了今生。”贾琏问：“到底是谁，这样动他的心？”二姐笑道：“说来话长。五年前我们老娘家里做生日，妈和我们到那里与老娘拜寿。他家请了一起串客，里头有个作小生的，叫作柳湘莲，他看上了，如今要是他才嫁。旧年我们闻得柳湘莲他惹了一个祸逃走了，不知可又来了不曾？”贾琏听了道：“怪道呢！我说是个什么样人，原来是他！果然眼力不错。你不知道这柳二郎，那样一个标致人，最是

fortnight. So he can't come back today. He hopes the old mistress and Second Aunt will see to that matter right away, so that he can make the final decision when he comes tomorrow." This said, he went off with Xinger.

Second Sister ordered the gate to be closed and they turned in early, but she spent most of the night questioning her sister.

The next day it was after noon before Jia Lian arrived.

"Why be in such a hurry to come when you've other important business?" Second Sister asked him. "You mustn't delay your journey on my account."

"It's not all that important," he told her. "The nuisance is I've got to make a long trip, starting early next month, and I shan't be back for a fortnight."

"Well, just go with an easy mind. You needn't worry about anything here. My sister's not the type that keeps changing her mind. She says she's going to turn over a new leaf, and she'll be as good as her word. She's already made her choice of a man. All you need do is to fall in with her wishes."

"Who is he?" asked Jia Lian.

"He's not here now, and there's no knowing when he'll come back. But she's made an intelligent choice. If he stays away for a year, she'll wait for a year, she says. If he doesn't return for ten years, she'll wait for ten years. If he's dead and never comes back, she'll gladly shave off her hair and become a nun, fasting and chanting sutras all her life."

"Who can the fellow be that has won her heart so completely?"

"It's a long story," said Second Sister with a smile. "Five years ago, when it was our grandmother's birthday, my mother took us there to offer congratulations. They'd invited a troupe of amateur actors, among them a certain Liu Xianglian who liked to play the young hero's part in operas. She took such a fancy to him, she now declares he's the only man for her. Last year we heard that he'd got into trouble and run away. We don't know whether he has ever come back."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Jia Lian. "So that's who it is. I was wondering what sort of fellow he could be. Yes, she's made a good choice. But you know this Second Master Liu, for all he's so handsome, is cold

冷面冷心的，差不多的人，他都无情无义。他最和宝玉合的来。去年因打了薛呆子一顿，他不好意思见我们，不知那里去了一向。后来听见有人说来了，不知是真是假。一问跟宝玉的小子们，就知道了。倘或不来时，他萍踪浪迹，知道几年才来，岂不白耽搁了？”尤二姐道：“我们这三丫头说的出来，干的出来，他怎样说，只依他便了。”二人正说之间，只见尤三姐走来说道：“姐夫，你只放心。我们不是那心口两样的人，说什么是什么。若有了姓柳的来，我便嫁他。从今日起，我吃斋念佛，只服侍母亲。等他来了，嫁了他去。若一百年不来，我自己修行去了。”说着，将一根玉簪，敲作两段，“一句不真，就如这簪子一样！”说罢，回房去了。

贾琏没了法，只得和二姐商议了一回家务，复回家与凤姐商议起身之事。一面着人问茗烟，茗烟说：“竟不知道，大约未来。若来了，必是我知道的。”一面又问他的街坊，也说未来。贾琏只得回复了二姐。至起身之日已近，前两日便说起身，却先往二姐这边来住两夜，从这里再悄悄长行。果见小妹竟又换了一个人，又见二姐持家勤慎，自是不消记挂。

是日一早出城，就奔平安州大道，晓行夜住，渴饮饥餐。方走了三日，那日正走之间，顶头来了一群驮子，内中一伙，主仆十来骑马，走的近来一看，原来不是别人，竟是

and stand-offish. He has no time for most people but happens to get on splendidly with Baoyu. Last year after he beat up that fool Xue Pan he left, feeling too embarrassed to see us, and we don't know where he's gone. Some people say he's returned. I suppose we can ask Baoyu's pages to find out. If he hasn't come back and is still drifting about, Heaven knows how many years he may stay away. Your sister may wait in vain."

"No, my sister's always as good as her word," she assured him. "Just let her have her way."

At this point Third Sister joined them.

"Believe me, brother-in-law, I'm not one of those who don't say what they think," she declared. "I mean what I say. If Mr. Liu comes I'll marry him. Until then I'll fast, chant sutras and look after my mother while waiting for him to come and marry me, even if I have to wait a hundred years. If he never comes, I'll go and become a nun." Drawing a jade pin from her hair she broke it in two, exclaiming, "If I've said a single word that isn't true, may I end up like this pin!"

This said, she went back to her room. And after that she was, indeed, most correct in her speech and behaviour.

There was nothing Jia Lian could do. Having discussed some family business with Second Sister, he went home to tell Xifeng about his trip, then sent to ask Mingyan whether Liu Xianglian had returned or not.

"I don't know," said Mingyan. "Probably not. Otherwise I would have heard."

And Liu's neighbours when questioned said he had never come back. So Jia Lian had to pass on this information to Second Sister.

As the time for his departure approached he announced that he was leaving two days early, but in fact he spent two nights in Second Sister's place, starting his journey secretly from there. He observed that Third Sister's behaviour had indeed changed out of all recognition, and as Second Sister was managing the house diligently and prudently he had no need to worry.

He left the city early in the morning and took the highway to Pinganzhou. He travelled all day, stopping only to refresh himself when he was hungry or thirsty, staying in inns at night, and he had been three days on the way when a caravan of pack-horses came towards him

薛蟠、柳湘莲。贾琏深为奇怪，忙伸马迎了上来，大家一齐相见，说些别后寒温，便拣个酒店歇下，叙谈叙谈。贾琏因笑说："闹过之后，我们忙着请你两个说和，谁知柳兄踪迹全无。怎么你两个今日倒在一处了？"薛蟠笑道："天下竟有这等奇事。我同伙计贩了货物，自春天起身，往回里走，一路平安。谁知前日到了平安州界，遇一伙强盗，已将东西劫去。不想柳二弟从那边来了，方把贼人赶散，夺回货物，还救了我们的性命。我谢他又不受，所以我们结拜了生死弟兄，如今一路进京。从此后，我们是亲弟亲兄一般。到前面岔口上分路，他就往南二百里，有他一个姑妈，他去望候望候。我先进京去安置了我的事，然后给他寻一所宅子，寻一门好亲事，大家过起来。"贾琏听了道："原来如此，倒教我们悬了几日心。"又听见寻亲事，便忙说道："我正有一门好亲事，堪配二弟。"说着，便将自己娶尤氏，如今又要发嫁小姨一节说了出来，只不说尤三姐自择之语。又嘱薛蟠且不可告诉家里，等生了儿子，自然是知道的。薛蟠听了大喜，说："早该如此，这都是舍表妹之过。"湘莲忙笑说："你又忘情了，还不住口。"薛蟠忙止住不语，便说："既是这等，这门亲事定要做的。"湘莲道："我本有愿，定要一个绝色的女子。如今既是贵昆仲高谊，顾不得许多了，任凭裁夺，我无

escorted by a dozen or so men on horseback. As they drew near he saw to his astonishment that among them were Xue Pan and Liu Xianglian. At once he spurred his horse forward to meet them, and after exchanging the usual courtesies they chose an inn in which to rest and chat.

Jia Lian said, "After the two of you fell out we were very eager to patch it up between you, but Brother Liu had vanished without a trace. How come you're together today?"

"Wonders never cease," said Xue Pan. "I and my assistants bought some goods and started back to the capital this spring. All went well till the other day when we reached Pinganzhou and a band of brigands seized everything we had. Then along came Brother Liu in the nick of time to drive the brigands away, rescus our goods and save our lives into the bargain. When he wouldn't accept anything for his help, we became sworn brothers and have been travelling together. From now on we shall be like real blood-brothers. But we shall part company at the crossroad in front, as he has to go two hundred *li* farther south to visit an aunt of his. I shall go to the capital first to finish my business, then find a house for him and a suitable wife, so that we can all settle down there."

"If that's the case," exclaimed Jia Lian, "We've been worrying needlessly for several days." As Xue Pan had spoken of finding a wife for Xianglian, he hastened to continue, "I've got the very bride for him, a splendid match for Brother Liu." He went on to explain how he had married Second Sister You and now wanted to find a husband for her younger sister, omitting only to add that Liu was Third Sister's own choice. He then cautioned Xue Pan, "Mind you don't tell the family. Just wait until she has a son, then of course they'll have to know."

Xue Pan was delighted.

"You should have done that long ago," he said. "It serves Cousin Xifeng right."

"You're talking nonsense again," put in Xianglian with a smile. "You'd better shut up."

"In that case," said Xue Pan, changing the subject, "we must fix up this match."

"It's been my intention all along," Xianglian told them, "to marry only an outstanding beauty. But as this proposal comes from my honourable

不从命。”贾琏笑道:“如今口说无凭，等柳兄一见，便知我这内姨的品貌是古今有一无二的了。”湘莲听了大喜，说:“既如此说，等弟探过姑母，不过月半就进京的，那时再定如何?”贾琏笑道:“你我一言为定，只是我信不过柳兄。你乃是萍踪浪迹，倘然淹滞不归，岂不误了人家。须得留一定礼。”湘莲道:“大丈夫岂有失信之理。小弟素系寒贫，况且客中何能有定礼。”薛蟠道:“我这里现成，就备一分二哥带去。”贾琏笑道:“也不用金帛之礼，须是柳兄亲身自有之物，不论物之贵贱，不过我带去取信耳。”湘莲道:“既如此说，弟无别物，此剑防身，不能解下。囊中尚有一把鸳鸯剑，乃吾家传代之宝，弟也不敢擅用，只随身收藏而已。贾兄请拿去为定。弟纵系水流花落之性，然亦断不舍此剑者。”说毕，大家又饮了几杯，方各自上马，作别起程。正是:将军不下马，各自奔前程。

且说贾琏一日到了平安州，见了节度，完了公事。因又嘱他十月前后务要还来一次，贾琏领命。次日连忙取路回家，先到尤二姐处探望。谁知贾琏出门之后，尤二姐操持家

elder brothers, I shan't insist on that. I'll agree to whatever you suggest."

"Words don't carry conviction," Jia Lian rejoined. "But once you see her, Brother Liu, you'll realize that this sister-in-law of mine is a matchless beauty."

Xianglian was overjoyed by this assurance.

"If that's so," he said, "When I've called on my aunt, in less than a fortnight I'll come to the capital and we can settle everything then. How's that?"

"We're both men of our word," replied Jia Lian. "But you're such a rolling stone, always on the move, I don't like leaving it undecided. If you drift away now and don't come back, what's to become of her? You'd better let me have some betrothal token."

"A true man never goes back on his word. I'm not rich and I'm in the middle of a journey, so where would I get a betrothal token?"

"I've something suitable," Xue Pan cut in. "Just take it, Second Brother."

"I don't want gold or silk," said Jia Lian. "What I have in mind is one of Brother Liu's personal possessions; it doesn't have to be anything valuable. I'll just take it as a pledge."

"Very well, then," agreed Xianglian. "The only things I have with me, apart from this sword which I need in self-defence, are a pair of 'duck and drake' swords in my luggage — they're a family heirloom which I never use but always keep with me. You can take them as a pledge. However much of a wanderer I am, I'd never give up these swords."

After that they drank a few more cups, then mounted their horses, took their leave of each other and went their different ways.

Truly:

> Generals, not dismounting from their horses,
> Gallop off to their destinations.

After Jia Lian reached Pinganzhou he called on the governor to settle his business, and was told to come back again before the tenth month. The very next day he hurriedly started back, and as soon as he got home went to see Second Sister.

Since his departure Second Sister had been running her household

务十分谨肃，每日关门阖户，一点外事不闻。他小妹果是个斩钉截铁之人，每日侍奉母姊之余，只安分守己，随分过活。虽是夜晚间孤衾独枕，不惯寂寞，奈一心丢了众人，只念柳湘莲早早回来完了终身大事。这日贾琏进门，见了这般景况，喜之不尽，深念二姐之德。大家叙些寒温之后，贾琏便将路上相遇湘莲一事说了出来，又将鸳鸯剑取出，递与三姐。三姐看时，上面龙吞夔护，珠宝晶莹，将靶一掣，里面却是两把合体的。一把上面錾一“鸳”字，一把上面錾一“鸯”字，冷飕飕，明亮亮，如两痕秋水一般。三姐喜出望外，连忙收了，挂在自己绣房床上，每日望着剑，自笑终身有靠。贾琏住了两天，回去复了父命，回家合宅相见。那时凤姐已大愈，出来理事行走了。贾琏又将此事告诉了贾珍。贾珍因近日又相遇了新友，将这事丢过，不在心上，任凭贾琏裁夺，只怕贾琏独力不加，少不得又给了他三十两银子。贾琏拿来交与二姐预备妆奁。

谁知八月内湘莲方进京来，先来拜见薛姨妈，又遇见薛蝌，方知薛蟠不惯风霜，不服水土，一进京时便病倒在家，请医调治。听见湘莲来了，请入卧室相见。薛姨妈也不提旧事，只感新恩，母子们十分称谢。又说起亲事一节，凡一应东西皆已妥当，只等择日。柳湘莲也感激不尽。

most prudently, staying in every day behind closed doors and taking no interest in outside affairs. And Third Sister had proved her iron resolution: apart from waiting on her mother and sister she had kept to herself, doing her share of work every day and sleeping alone at night on her lonely pillow. Although unaccustomed to such a solitary life she avoided all company, simply longing for Liu Xianglian's early return, so that the main affair of her life could be settled.

When Jia Lian saw how things were, he was very pleased with Second Sister's virtuous conduct. After the usual civilities had been exchanged, he described his encounter with Liu Xianglian on the road and taking out the pair of swords passed them to Third Sister. She looked at the dragon and serpent designs on the sheath which was studded with bright pearls and jewels, then drew out the two swords, identical in size, one engraved with the word "duck," the other "drake." The blades had the cold gleam of two autumn streams. Overjoyed, she hastily took them to her chamber to hang them on the wall over her bed. Every day she would feast her eyes on them, happy that her future was provided for.

After Jia Lian had spent two days there, he went to report on his mission to his father, then returned home to see his family. By now Xifeng was well enough to attend to affairs and get about again. When Jia Lian told Jia Zhen about Third Sister's engagement his cousin showed little interest, as he had recently found himself a new mistress and given up calling on the You sisters. He was willing to let Jia Lian do as he pleased. But suspecting that the latter might be unable to defray all the expenses, he gave him thirty taels of silver which Jia Lian passed on to Second Sister to prepare her sister's trousseau.

Liu Xianglian did not come to the capital till the eighth month. When he called on Aunt Xue and Xue Ke he learned that Xue Pan, being unaccustomed to the rigours of travel and a different climate, had fallen ill as soon as he arrived home and was still being treated by doctors. Hearing of Xianglian's arrival, he invited him into his bedroom.

Full of gratitude for the good turn Xianglian had done them, Aunt Xue let bygones be bygones, both she and her son thanking him most profusely. They went on to speak of the wedding, all the preparations for which were complete except for the choice of an auspicious day. Xianglian,

次日又来见宝玉，二人相会，如鱼得水。湘莲因笑问贾琏偷娶二房之事，宝玉笑道："我听见茗烟一干人说，我却未见，我也不敢多管。我又听见茗烟说，琏二哥哥着实问你，不知有何话说？"湘莲就将路上所有之事一概告诉宝玉，宝玉笑道："大喜，大喜！难得这个标致人，果然是个古今绝色，堪配你之为人。"湘莲道："既是这样，他那里少了人物，如何只想到我？况且我又素日不大和他相厚，也关切不至此。路上忙忙的，就那样再三要定礼，难道女家反赶着男家不成？我自己疑惑起来，后悔不该留下这剑作定。所以后来想起你来，可以细细问个底里才好。"宝玉道："你原是个精细人，如何既许了定礼，又疑惑起来？你原说只要一个绝色的，如今既得了个绝色便罢了，何必再疑。"湘莲道："你既不知他偷娶，如何又知是绝色？"宝玉道："他是珍大嫂子的继母带来的两位小姨。我在那里和他们混了两个月，怎么不知？真真一对尤物，他又姓尤。"湘莲听了，跌足道："这事不好，断乎做不得了！你们东府里除了那两个石头狮子干净，只怕连猫儿狗儿都不干净。我不做这剩忘八。"宝玉听说，红了脸。湘莲自惭失言，连忙作揖说："我该死胡

in turn, was loud in his thanks.

The next day he called on Baoyu, and meeting again they felt so at home with each other that Xianglian asked for more details about Jia Lian's secret marriage to a second wife.

"I only heard about it from Mingyan and the others," Baoyu told him. "And it wasn't my business to interfere. I also heard from Mingyan that Cousin Lian was very anxious to find you — I don't know what for."

Xianglian explained all that had happened on the road.

"Congratulations!" cried Baoyu. "You'd be hard put to it to find a lovelier girl. She's really ravishing, just the right match for you."

"If she's so lovely she ought to have lots of suitors; why should he single me out? It's not as if the two of us were close friends or he has any special concern for me. In our brief meeting on the road he kept pressing me to agree to this engagement. Why should the girl's family be in such a hurry? I couldn't help having misgivings, and soon started regretting having given him my swords as a pledge. That's why I thought of asking you just what's behind this."

"You're a smart fellow," answered Baoyu. "Once you've given your pledge how can you start having second thoughts? You always said you wanted a ravishing beauty, and now you've got one. Isn't that good enough? Why be so suspicious?"

"If you didn't know about Jia Lian's secret marriage, how do you know that she's so beautiful?"

"She's one of the two daughters of Madam You's step-mother, old Mrs. You, by her first marriage. I saw a lot of them for a couple of months, so of course I know. She and her sister are really a pair of beauties."

Xianglian stamped his foot.

"That's no good then! I can't go through with it. The only clean things in that East Mansion of yours are those two stone lions at the gate. Even the cats and dogs there are unclean. I don't want to be a cuckold and take someone else's leavings."

Baoyu blushed. And Xianglian, regretting his tactlessness, made haste to bow.

"I deserve death for talking such nonsense. But do at any rate tell me

说。你好歹告诉我，他品行如何?”宝玉笑道:“你既深知，又来问我作什么?连我也未必干净了。”湘莲笑道:“原是我自己一时忘情，好歹别多心。”宝玉笑道:“何必再提，这倒似有心了。”湘莲作揖告辞出来，若去找薛蟠，一则他现卧病，二则他又浮躁，不如去索回定礼。主意已定，便一径来找贾琏。

贾琏正在新房中，闻得湘莲来了，喜之不禁，忙迎了出来，让到内室与尤老相见。湘莲只作揖，称老伯母，自称晚生，贾琏听了诧异。吃茶之间，湘莲便说:“客中偶然忙促，谁知家姑母于四月间订了弟妇，使弟无言可回。若从了老兄背了姑母，似非合理。若系金帛之物，弟不敢索取，但此剑系祖父所遗，请仍赐回为幸。”贾琏听了，便不自在，还说:“定者，定也。原怕反悔所以为定。岂有婚姻之事，出入随意的?还要斟酌。”湘莲笑道:“虽如此说，弟愿领责罚，然此事断不敢从命。”贾琏还要饶舌，湘莲便起身说:“请兄外坐一叙，此处不便。”那尤三姐在房明明听见。好容易等了他来，今忽见翻悔，便知他在贾府中得了消息，自然是嫌自己淫奔无耻之流，不屑为妻。今若容他出去和贾琏说退

what her character's like."

"If you know so much already, why ask *me*? I may not be clean myself either."

"I forgot myself just now," said Xianglian with a smile. "Please don't make such an issue of it."

"Why mention it again?" retorted Baoyu. "This makes it seem that you take it seriously."

Xianglian took his leave then with a bow and left. He thought of going to see Xue Pan, but reflected that as the latter was unwell and so irascible at the best of times he had better go and get his pledge back instead. This decision reached, he went to find Jia Lian.

Jia Lian was in the new house. When he heard that Xianglian had come he was overjoyed and hurried out to welcome him, then ushered him into the inner room and introduced him to old Mrs. You. To his astonishment, instead of kneeling to her as his future mother-in-law, Xianglian simply bowed and addressed her as "aunt," referring to himself as "your nephew."

And as they were sipping tea he said, "During my journey, as it happened, I was overhasty, not knowing that my aunt had arranged a match for me in the fourth month, making it impossible for me to retract. It wouldn't be right would it, brother, for me to accept your proposal and refuse my aunt's. If I'd given the usual gifts of money and silk, I wouldn't venture to ask to have them back; but those swords were left me by my grandfather, so I must beg you to return them."

Jia Lian was very put out when he heard this.

"A pledge is a pledge," he argued. "And a pledge is given to stop a man from going back on his word. Can you cancel an engagement so casually? Pray reconsider the matter."

"In spite of what you say," replied Xianglian, "I'm willing to accept any penalty, but on this matter I definitely cannot obey your order."

Jia Lian was about to reply when Xianglian stood up.

"Let's discuss this outside," he proposed. "It's not convenient her."

Third Sister had heard all this clearly from her room. She had been waiting and waiting for Liu Xianglian's arrival, but now he had suddenly broken the engagement. It was clear to her that he must have heard

亲，料那贾琏必无法可处，自己岂不无趣。一听贾琏要同他出去，连忙摘下剑来，将一股雌锋隐在肘后，出来便说："你们不必出去再议，还你的定礼。"一面泪如雨下，左手将剑并鞘送与湘莲，右手回肘只往项上一横。可怜"揉碎桃花红满地，玉山倾倒再难扶"，芳灵慧性，渺渺冥冥，不知那里去了。当下唬得众人急救不迭。尤老一面嚎哭，一面又骂湘莲。贾琏忙揪住湘莲，命人捆了送官。尤二姐忙止泪反劝贾琏："你太多事，人家并无威逼他死，是他自寻短见。你便送他到官，又有何益，反觉生事出丑。不如放他去罢，岂不省事。"贾琏此时也没了主意，便放了手，命湘莲快去。湘莲反不动身，泣道："我并不知道是这等刚烈贤妻，可敬，可敬。"湘莲反伏尸大哭一场。等买了棺木来，眼见入殓，又俯棺大哭一场，方告辞而去。

出门正无所之，昏昏默默，自想方才之事。原来尤三姐这样标致，又这等刚烈，自悔不及。正走之间，只见薛蟠的小厮寻他家去，那湘莲只管出神。那小厮带他到新房之中，

some gossip in the Jia mansions which led him to believe her a shameless wanton, not fit to be his wife. If she let the two men go out now to discuss it, she foresaw that Jia Lian would fail to win him round and she would be utterly humiliated. So as soon as Jia Lian agreed to his proposal she took down the swords, concealing the "duck" behind her elbow, and went out to intercept them.

"There's no need for you to go out to discuss this further." she told them. "Here's your pledge, I'm returning it."

Her tears falling like rain, with her left hand she passed the sheath with one sword in it to Xianglian, and with her right cut her throat with the other blade. Alas!

> The jade hill crumbles, never to rise again;
> Peach-blossom, trampled, stains the ground with red.
> Her fragrant spirit is lost in the infinite —
> None knows whither it has fled.

All present were consternated and tried in vain to revive her. Old Mrs. You sobbing with horror cursed Xianglian, while Jia Lian seized hold of him, calling servants to tie him up and drag him to court.

Second Sister dried her tears then to urge her husband, "Let him be! He didn't threaten her, she took her own life. So what use would it be to take him to court? That would only cause a worse scandal. You'd better let him go, to save further trouble."

Then Jia Lian, not knowing what else to do, let go of Xianglian and told him to get out. However, he did not move but burst into tears.

"I never knew this intended wife of mine was so chaste, such a magnificent girl!" he exclaimed.

Prostrating himself over her corpse he gave way to a storm of weeping. And when a coffin was brought and her body laid in it, he clasped it and lamented bitterly before finally leaving them.

Once outside the gate he did not know where to go, dazed and sunk in gloom as he recalled what had just happened. "So she was so lovely and chaste," he reflected, torn by remorse.

He wandered aimlessly on until one of Xue Pan's pages appeared and asked him to go back. The boy took him to a magnificent bridal

十分齐整。忽听环珮叮当，尤三姐从外而入，一手捧着鸳鸯剑，一手捧着一卷册子，向柳湘莲泣道："妾痴情待君五年矣。不期君果冷心冷面，妾已以死报此痴情。妾今奉警幻仙子之命，前往太虚幻境，修注案中所有一干情鬼。妾不忍一别，故来一会，从此再不能相见了。"说着便走。湘莲不舍，忙欲上前拉住问时，那尤三姐便说："来自情天，去由情地。前生误被情惑，今既耻情而觉，与君两无干涉。"说毕，一阵香风，无踪无影去了。

湘莲惊觉，似梦非梦，睁眼看时，那里有薛家小童，也非新室，竟是一座破庙，旁边坐着一个跏腿道士捕虱。湘莲便起身稽首相问："此系何方？仙师仙名法号？"道士笑道："连我也不知道此系何方，我系何人，不过暂来歇足而已。"柳湘莲听了，不觉冷然如寒冰侵骨，掣出那股雄剑，将万根烦恼丝一挥而尽，便随那道士，不知往那里去了。且听下回分解。

chamber. He heard the tinkling of pendants, and in came Third Sister, in one hand the "duck and drake" swords, in the other a book. With tears she told him:

"Your devoted handmaid waited five years for you, my lord, not knowing you would prove so cold-hearted. I have paid with my life now for my infatuation. Today, at the order of the goddess of Disenchantment, I am going to the Illusory Land of the Great Void to register all the amorous spirits in this case. But I couldn't bear to go away without bidding you farewell, for from this day on we shall never meet again." This said, she turned to leave.

Xianglian could not bear to let her go and quickly stepped forward to stop her and question her.

"We came from the Heaven of Love and we must return there from the Earth of Love," she told him. "I was deluded by love in my last life, but as I have repented of it and awakened, from now on I shall have nothing to do with you, sir."

As her voice died away, a fragrant wind sprang up and she vanished into thin air.

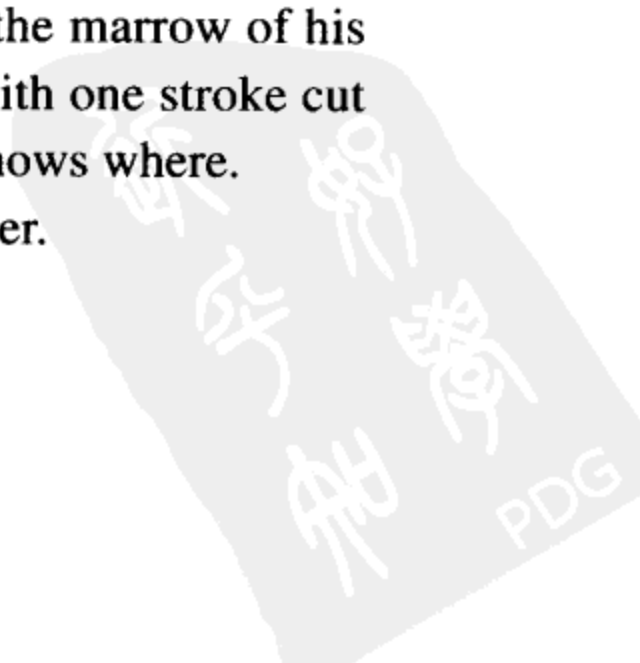
Xianglian woke with a start, wondering if he had been dreaming. When he opened his eyes and looked round, there was no sign of the Xues' page boy or of the bridal chamber. He was in a tumble-down temple, and beside him a lame Taoist priest was sitting catching lice. Xianglian rose to his feet, then bowed to the ground.

"Where are we, holy master?" he asked the priest. "And what is your immortal name?"

The priest chuckled, "I myself don't know where we are or who I am. I'm simply putting up here for the time being."

At this Liu Xianglian shuddered with cold, as if the marrow of his bones had frozen. He drew the "drake" sword and with one stroke cut off his hair, then went away with the priest, no one knows where.

To know what became of him, read the next chapter.



第六十七回

馋土物馨卿思故里　讯家童凤姐蓄阴谋

说话尤三姐自戕之后，尤老娘以及尤二姐、尤氏并贾珍、贾蓉、贾琏等闻之，俱各不胜悲伤，自不必说，忙着人置买棺木盛殓，送往城外埋葬。却说柳湘莲见尤三姐身亡，迷性不悟，尚有痴情眷恋，却被道人数句偈言打破迷关，竟自截发出家，跟随道士飘然而去，不知何往。暂且不表。

且说薛姨妈闻知湘莲已说定了尤三姐为妻，心甚喜悦，正自高高兴兴要打算替他买房治屋、办妆奁、择吉日、迎娶过门等事，以报他救命之恩。忽有家中小厮见薛姨妈，告知尤三姐自戕与湘莲出家的信息，心甚叹息。正自猜疑，宝钗从园子里过来，薛姨妈便对宝钗说道："我的儿，你听见了没有？你珍大嫂子的妹妹尤三姐，他不是已经许定了给你哥哥的义弟柳湘莲的？这也很好，不知为什么尤三姐自刎了。湘莲也出了家了。真正奇怪的事，叫人意想不到。"宝钗听了，并不在意，便说道："俗语说的好，'天有不测风云，人有旦夕祸福'。这也是前生命定，活该不是夫妻。妈所为的

Chapter 67

A Gift of Local Products Makes Daiyu Homesick Xifeng Questions a Page Boy and Hatches a Plot

After Third Sister's suicide, it goes without saying, old Mrs. You, Second Sister and Jia Lian were overcome with grief, as were Jia Zhen, his wife and Jia Rong as soon as they learned of it. They at once prepared to bury her in style.

As for Liu Xianglian, Third Sister's death had filled him with remorse and inspired him with foolish passion, till a few words from the Taoist priest freed him from his delusions. Thereupon he cut off his hair and renounced the world to go off with the priest, none knew where. But no more of this.

Aunt Xue had been so delighted to hear of Xianglian's betrothal to Third Sister that she had decided to buy and furnish a house for him, prepare the bride's trousseau and then choose an auspicious day for the wedding to express her gratitude to him for saving her son's life. Now, hearing from one of their servant boys that Third Sister had taken her own life and Xianglian had gone off with a priest, she was overwhelmed by distress and bewilderment. And just then Baochai came over from the Garden.

"Have you heard the news, child?" her mother asked. "Wasn't Third Sister You, the younger sister of your Cousin Zhen's wife, engaged — and a very good match it would have been too — to your brother's sworn brother Liu Xianglian? But for some unknown reason she's cut her throat and he's renounced the world. Isn't it amazing? A real bolt from the blue!"

Baochai, however, did not take it to heart.

"As the proverb says," she replied, "'Sudden storms spring up in nature, and the fortunes of men may change overnight.' They can't have been predestined to be husband and wife. You're upset, mother,

是因有救哥哥的一段好处，故谆谆感叹。如果他二人齐齐全全的，妈自然该替他料理。如今死的死了，出家的出了家了，依我说，也只好由他罢了。妈也不必为他们伤感，损了自己的身子。倒是自从哥哥打江南回来了许多日，贩了来的货物，想来也该发完了。那同伴去的伙计们辛辛苦苦的，来回几个月，妈同哥哥商议商议，也该请一请，酬谢酬谢才是。不然倒叫他们轻看了无礼似的。”

母女正说之间，见薛蟠自外而入，眼中尚有泪痕未干。一进门来，便向他母亲拍手说道：“妈可知道柳大哥尤三姐的事么？”薛姨妈说：“我在园子里才听见大家议论，正在这里才和你妹子说这件公案呢。”薛蟠说：“这事奇不奇？”薛姨妈说：“可是，柳相公那样一个年轻聪明的人，怎么就一时糊涂，跟着道士去了呢？我想他前世必是有夙缘的、有根基的人，所以才容易听得进这些度他的话去。想你们相好了一场，他又无父母兄弟，单身一人在此，你也该各处找一找才是。靠那跛足道士，疯疯颠颠的能往那里去？左不过是在这房前左右的庙里寺里躲藏着罢咧。”薛蟠说：“何尝不是呢。我一听见这个信儿，就连忙带了小厮们在各处寻找去，连个影儿也没有。又去问人，人人都说不曾看见。我因如此急的没法，惟有望着西北上大哭了一场，回来了。”说着，眼眶儿又红上来了。薛姨妈说：“你既找寻了没有，把你待朋友的心也尽了。焉知他这一出家不是得了好处呢。你也不必太过虑了，一则张罗张罗买卖，二则你把你自己娶媳妇应办的事情，倒是早些料理料理。咱们家里没人手儿，竟是笨雀儿先飞，省得临期丢三忘四的不齐全，令人笑话。再者你妹子

because he rescued my brother, and if all had gone well between them of course it would have been only right for you to help with the wedding. Now that one of them is dead and the other's gone, it seems to me you'd better let things be. Don't grieve so much for them that you injure your health.

"Now quite a time's passed since brother came back from the south, and all the goods he brought ought to be disposed of. The assistants who went with him worked hard for several months. Why not talk it over with brother, and invite them to a meal to express our gratitude? Otherwise they may think we're lacking in manners."

In came Xue Pan then, tears still in his eyes. As he stepped through the door he clapped his hands together.

"Mother," he blurted out, "have you heard about Brother Liu and Third Sister You?"

"I heard talk of it in the Garden, and your sister and I were speaking about it just now."

"Isn't it extraordinary?"

"It certainly is. Why should a smart young man like Master Liu suddenly do such a foolish thing, going off with a Taoist priest? I suppose it's because he was pre-ordained in some former existence to become a saint that he was so ready to listen to the priest. As you were such good friends and he lived all alone here, with no parents or brothers, you ought to make a thorough search for him. How could that lame and crazy priest go very far? He must be hiding in one of the temples near by."

"That's exactly what I thought," replied Xue Pan. "As soon as I got this news I took my servants out to search high and low, but not a trace of him could we find. And everyone we asked said they hadn't seen them. I was so frantic that, before coming back, I faced northwest and burst out howling." As he said this his eyes brimmed with tears again.

"If you've made a search and failed to find him, you've done your duty as a friend," said his mother. "After all, his renouncing the world may not be a bad thing. You'd better not worry too much. For one thing, you've your business to attend to; and then you should make preparations in good time for your own wedding. Our family's short-handed and, as the proverb says, 'A slow sparrow should make an early start.' We

说，你也回家半个多月了，想货物也该发完了，同你作买卖去的伙计们，也该设桌酒席请请他们，酬酬劳乏才是。他们固然是咱们家约请的吃工食劳金的人，到底也算是客，又陪着你走了一二千里的路程，受了四五个月的辛苦，而且在路上又替你担了惊怕沉重。”薛蟠闻听，说：“妈说的很是，妹妹想的周到。我也这样想来着，只因这些日子为各处发货闹的头晕，又为柳大哥的亲事，又忙了这几日，反倒落了一个空，白张罗了一会子，倒把正经事都误了。要不然就定了明儿后儿下帖子请请罢。”薛姨妈说：“由你办去罢。”

话犹未了，外面小厮回说：“张总管的伙计送了两个箱子来，说这是爷各自买的，不在货账里面。本要早送来，因货箱子压着，未得拿；昨日货物发完了，所以今儿才送来了。”一面说，一面又见两个小厮搬进了两个夹板夹的大棕箱来。薛蟠一见，说：“嗳哟，可是我怎么就糊涂到这步田地了！特特的给妈和妹妹带来的东西都忘了，没拿了家里来，还是伙计送了来了。”宝钗说：“亏你才说，还是特特的带来的，还是放了一二十日才送来；若不是特特的带来，必定是要放到年底下才送进来呢。你也诸事太不留心了。”薛蟠笑道：“想是我在路上叫贼把魂吓掉了，还没归壳呢。”说着，大家笑了一阵，便向回话的小厮说：“东西收下了，叫他回去罢。”薛姨妈同宝钗忙问：“是什么好东西，这样捆着夹着

don't want to find, when the time comes, that we've forgotten this, that and the other, so that people laugh at us.

"Another thing, your sister says you've been home nearly a month now, so presumably those goods are all disposed of. You ought to entertain the assistants who went on the trip with you to a feast, to thank them for their hard work. Of course, they're our employees and we pay them; still, they're our protégés too. And, after all, they accompanied you on a journey of one or two thousand *li*, working hard for four or five months and sharing your hardships and dangers on the road."

"You're quite right, mother," agreed Xue Pan. "Sister thinks of everything. It did occur to me too, but these days I've been so busy dispatching goods, my head's been in a whirl; and the last few days I've been rushing about arranging Brother Liu's wedding — not that anything's come of it — and that's held up our own business. Suppose we fix on tomorrow or the day after and send out invitations?"

"Just decide on any day you please," said his mother.

As she was speaking a servant came in to report, "Manager Zhang's assistants have brought two cases. They say these are things the master bought for himself, not included in the bill of goods. They meant to bring them over earlier but couldn't get at them as they were beneath other cases. Yesterday they finished dispatching the goods; that's why they've only sent them over today."

Meanwhile two servant-boys had brought in two big palmfibre cases, crated with spars.

"*Aiya*!" exclaimed Xue Pan. "How could I be so muddle-headed! These are things I bought specially for you, mother and sister, but as I forgot to bring them home they've had to send them."

Baochai teased, "You say these were bought specially, yet you left them lying there for over a fortnight. If they had been something not specially bought, I suppose you wouldn't have given them to us until the end of the year. You're altogether too casual."

"I guess those brigands on the road scared the wits out of me, and they haven't come back to my noddle yet," he said, raising a laugh. Then turning to the servants, he ordered, "Go and tell the messengers I've received these cases and they can go back now."

的?”便命人挑了绳子，去了夹板，开了锁看时，都是些绫罗缎绸锦洋货等家常应用之物。独有宝钗他的那个箱子，除笔、墨、砚、各色笺纸、香袋、香珠、扇子、扇坠、花粉、胭脂、头油等物外，还有虎丘带来的自行人、酒令儿，水银灌的打筋斗的小小子，沙子灯；一出一出的泥人儿的戏，用青纱罩的匣子装着；又有在虎丘山上作的薛蟠的像，泥捏成的，与薛蟠毫无相差；以及许多碎小玩意儿的东西。宝钗一见，满心欢喜，便叫自己使的丫鬟来吩咐：“你将我这个箱子，与我拿了园子里去，我好就近从那边送送人。”说着便站起身来，告辞母亲，往园子里来了。这里薛姨妈将自己这个箱子里东西取出，一分一分的打点清楚，着同喜丫头送往贾母并王夫人等处去不讲。

且说宝钗随着箱子到了自己房中，将东西逐件件过了目，除将自己留用之外，遂一分一分配合妥当，也有单送玩意的，也有送笔墨砚纸的，也有送香袋、扇子、香坠的，也有送胭脂头油的；酌量其人分办，只有黛玉与别人不同，比诸人加厚一倍。一一打点完毕，使莺儿同一老婆子跟着，往各处去送。

其李纨、宝玉以及诸人，不过收了东西，赏赐来使，皆说些见面再谢等语而已。惟有林黛玉，他见江南家乡之物，反自触物伤情，因想起他父母来了，便对着这些东西挥泪自

Aunt Xue and Baochai now asked, "What good things are these, so carefully packed and crated?"

Xue Pan called servants to unfasten the ropes and remove the spars, then he unlocked the cases. They saw that one was filled with silks, satins, brocades, foreign imports and articles of daily use. The other, meant for Baochai, in addition to writing-brushes, ink-tablets, inkstones, stationery, perfume-sachets, scented beads, fans, fan-sheaths, powder, rouge and pomade, had in it all sorts of toys from Huqiu in Soochow. Among them were figurines with movable limbs, lots for drinking-games, toy tumblers weighted with quicksilver, earthenware lanterns, whole sets of clay opera figures in blue gauze boxes, and even a clay sculpture of Xue Pan done to the life by one of the Huqiu craftsmen.

Baochai was not interested in the other things, but she picked up the figurine of Xue Pan to examine it carefully; and comparing it with her brother, she burst out laughing.

She told her maids, "Take this case to the Garden, so that it'll be easier to distribute these presents to the different aparments there."

With that she stood up to ask leave from her mother, then went back to the Garden.

Aunt Xue, for her part, when she had unpacked her case, divided the things into different lots which she told her young maid Tongxi to take to the Lady Dowager, Lady Wang and others.

Baochai, who had followed her case back to her own rooms, looked through the things in it one by one. Some she kept for herself; the rest she divided into appropriate lots. To some people she would just give toys; to others, stationery; or sachets, fans and pendants; rouge and pomade. She gave careful thought to what was a fair share for each, only making an exception in Daiyu's case — she was to have twice as much as anyone else. After she had allotted all the shares, she sent Yinger with an old maid-servant to deliver them to the different apartments.

Li Wan, Baoyu and the rest, on receiving these presents, tipped the messengers and told them that they would thank Baochai when next they saw her. Only Daiyu was grief-stricken at the sight of these toys from her home in the south which reminded her of her parents. Gazing at them through tears she sighed:

叹，暗想：我乃江南之人，父母双亡，又无兄弟，只身一人，可怜寄居外祖母家中，而且又多疾病，除外祖母以及舅母姐妹看问外，那里还有一个姓林的亲人来看望看望?给我带些土物来，使我送送人，装装脸面也好。可见人若无至亲骨肉手足，是最寂寞，极冷清，极寒苦，无趣味的。想到这里，不觉就大伤起心来了。紫鹃乃服侍黛玉多年，朝夕不离左右的，深知黛玉的心腹：他为见了江南故土之物，因感动了心怀，追思亲人的缘故。但不敢说破，只在一旁劝说道："姑娘的身子多病，早晚尚服丸药，这两日不过看着比那些日子略饮食好些，精神壮一点儿，还算不得十分大好。今儿宝姑娘送来这些东西，可见宝姑娘素日看姑娘甚重，姑娘看着该欢喜才是，为什么反倒伤感?这不是宝姑娘送东西为的是叫姑娘喜欢，这反倒招姑娘烦恼了?若令宝姑娘知道了，怎么脸上下的来呢?再，姑娘也想一想，老太太、太太们为姑娘的病症，千方百计的请好大夫诊脉配药调治，所为的是病急好。这如今才好些，又这样的哭哭啼啼的，岂不是自己糟蹋自己的身子，不肯叫老太太看着喜欢?难道说姑娘这个病，不是因素日从忧虑过度上伤多了气血得的么?姑娘的千斤贵体，别自己看轻了。"紫鹃正在这里劝解黛玉，只听见小丫头子在院内说："宝二爷来了。"紫鹃忙说："快请!"

话犹未毕，只见宝玉已进房来了。黛玉让坐毕，宝玉见黛玉泪痕满面，便问："妹妹，又是谁得罪了你了?你两眼哭的都红了，是为什么?"黛玉不回答，旁边紫鹃将嘴向床上一努，宝玉会意，便往床上一看，见堆着许多东西，便知是

"I come from south of the Yangzi, but my parents are dead and I'm all on my own, with no brothers; so I have to put up in my grandmother's house. My health is poor too, and though I'm well looked after by my grandmother, aunt and cousins, none of the Lin family ever calls to see me or brings me local products which I could gain face by distributing as presents. This shows how lonely it is, how utterly wretched, to have no family of one's own." These reflections made her feel her heart would break.

Zijuan, having waited on Daiyu for so long, knew just how her mind worked and that it was the sight of these gifts from her old home in the south that had upset her, making her feel homesick. But not daring to say so outright, she just tried to comfort her.

"You're so delicate, miss," she said, "that you're always taking medicine. These last few days you've just begun to recover your appetite and have a little more energy; but you're not completely well yet. Miss Baochai's gift of these things today shows how fond she is of you. They ought to make you happy instead of upsetting you. Doesn't it look as if her presents, which she hoped would please you, have vexed you instead? Wouldn't she feel bad if she knew this?

"And just think, miss, Their Ladyships are doing all they can to find good doctors to diagnose your illness and prescribe medicine, so that you'll be cured as soon as possible. You've just taken a turn for the better, but by weeping again like this aren't you yourself injuring your health? Don't you want to please the old lady? You fell ill, didn't you, because you undermined your strength by worrying too much? Your health's as precious as gold, miss. Don't treat it so lightly!"

As Zijuan was pleading like this with Daiyu, a young maid in the courtyard announced, "Master Bao has come."

"Show him in at once," called Zijuan.

Even as she was speaking Baoyu walked in, and Daiyu invited him to take a seat.

Seeing the tear-stains on her face he asked, "Who's been offending you again, cousin? Your eyes are red from weeping."

Daiyu said nothing. Zijuan, standing to one side, jerked her chin towards the bed, and Baoyu taking the hint walked over to have a look.

宝钗送来的，便笑着取笑说道："好东西，想是妹妹开杂货铺么?摆着这些东西作什么?"黛玉只是不理。紫鹃说："二爷还提东西呢。因宝姑娘送了些东西来，我们姑娘一看就伤心哭起来了。我正在这里好劝歹劝，总劝不住呢。而且又是没吃了饭，若只管哭太乏了，犯了旧病，可不叫老太太骂死了我们么。倒是二爷来的很好，替我们劝一劝。"宝玉他本是聪明人，而且一心总留意在黛玉身上最重，所以深知黛玉之为人心细心窄，而又多心要强，不落人后，因见了人家哥哥自江南带了东西来送人，又系故乡之物，勾想起别的痛肠来。是以伤感是实。这是宝玉肚里揣摩黛玉的心病，却不肯明明的说出，恐黛玉越发动情，乃笑道："你们姑娘哭的原故不为别的，为的是宝姑娘送来东西少，所以生气伤心。妹妹，你放心，等我明年往江南去，与你多多的带两船来，省得你淌眼抹泪的。"黛玉听了这话，不由"嗤"的一声笑了，忙说道："我凭他怎么没见过世面，也到不了这一步田地上，因送的东西少，就生气伤心。我也不是三两岁小孩子，你也忒把人看的平常小器了。我有我的缘故，你那里知道。"说着，眼泪又流下来。宝玉忙移至床上，挨黛玉坐下，将那些东西一件一件的摆弄着细瞧，故意的问这是什么，叫什么名字；那是什么做的，这样齐整；这是什么，要他做什么；妹妹你瞧这一件可以摆在书阁儿上做陈设，放在条案上做古董儿倒好呢。一味的将这些没要紧的话来支吾搭讪了一会。黛玉见宝玉那些呆样子，问东问西的招人可笑，稍将烦恼去些，略

When he saw all the things piled up there he knew that these were presents from Baochai. "What nice things!" he exclaimed. "Are you starting a shop? Or why display them like this?"

Still Daiyu ignored him.

"Don't mention them, Second Master," said Zijuan. "They were sent by Miss Baochai, but at sight of them our young lady got upset and started weeping. I've been trying hard to console her, but it's no use. And she's missed a meal again. If she wears herself out with crying so that her illness comes back, the old lady's going to give us a fearful scolding. It's lucky you've come. Do talk her round for us."

Baoyu was intelligent, and having always paid more attention to Daiyu than anyone else he knew just how narrowminded and hyper-sensitive she was, how eager to outshine others in every way. When she saw that Baochai's brother had brought all these things from the south, from her old home, to give away as presents, she must have been painfully reminded of her own loss and other causes for grief. But though he knew the real reason for her distress he refrained from speaking of it, for fear of making her feel worse.

"I know why your young lady cried," he said with a smile. "She's angry and upset because Miss Baochai didn't send her *more* things. Don't worry, cousin, next year when I go south I'll bring you back two *boatloads* of things to stop you crying all the time."

Daiyu couldn't help chuckling at this.

But at once she protested, "However little I've seen of the world, I'm not such a fool as to get provoked because a present's too little. What do you take me for, a two-year-old? You really have too low an opinion of other people. I have my own reasons which you know nothing about." With that she started shedding tears again.

Baoyu at once went to sit down on the bed beside her. He picked up the gifts one by one to examine them.

"What's this?" he asked. "What's it called? What's that cute thing made of? And this one, what's it used for? Look, cousin, you could put this one as an ornament on your bookcase or on your cabinet as a curio." In the hope of distracting her he kept up this idle chatter for a while.

Seeing Baoyu clowning like this to amuse her and asking all sorts of

有些喜欢之意。宝玉见他有些喜色，便说道："宝姐姐送东西给咱们，我想着咱们也该到他那里道谢去才是，不知妹妹可去不去?"黛玉原不愿意为送些东西来，就特特的道谢去，不过一时见了谢一声就完了。今被宝玉说的有理，难以推脱，无可奈何，同宝玉去了。这且不提。

且说薛蟠听了母亲之言，急忙下请帖，置办酒筵，张罗了一日。果至次日，三四位伙计俱个个到齐，未免说了些店内发货帐目之事毕。列席让座，薛蟠与众人各位奉酒酬劳。里面薛姨妈又着人出来致谢道乏毕。内有一位问道："今日席上怎么柳大哥不出来，想是东家忘了没请么?"薛蟠闻听，把眉一皱，叹了一口气，说道："休提休提，想来众位不知深情。若说起此人，真真可叹。于两日前忽被一个疯道士度化的出了家，跟着他去了。你们众位听一听，可奇不奇?"众人说道："我们在店内也听见外面人吵嚷说，有一个道士三言两语把一个俗家弟子度了去了，又闻说一阵风刮了去了，又说驾着一片彩云去了。纷纷议论不一。我们也因发货事忙，那里有功夫当正经事，也没去仔细打听，到如今还是似信不信的。今听此言，那道士度化的原来就是柳大哥么?早知是他，我们大家也该劝解劝解。任凭怎么，也不容他去。又少了一个有趣儿的好朋友了，实实在在的可惜可叹!也怨不得东家你心里不爽快。想他那样一个伶俐人，未必是真跟了道士去罢。柳大哥他会些武艺，又有力量，或者看破了道士有些什么妖术邪法的破绽出来，故意假跟了去，在背地里摆布

inconsequential questions, Daiyu was mollified and cheered up a little.

Noticing this, he suggested, "Don't you think we should call on Baochai to thank her? Will you come with me?"

Daiyu had not intended to make a special trip to thank Baochai — that could wait until next they met. But as Baoyu's proposal was right she could hardly refuse, so she went off with him.

To return to Xue Pan. On his mother's advice he lost no time in sending out invitations and making preparations for feast, which kept him busy all day.

The next day the three or four assistants invited arrived. After some talk about the dispatching of goods and the accounts, they were ushered to their seats. Xue Pan poured drinks for each in turn to thank them for their work, and Aunt Xue sent a maid out from the inner room to express her thanks as well.

One of the men asked, "Why isn't Brother Liu here today? Did you forget to invite him, sir?"

Xue Pan knitted his brows.

"Don't bring up his name," he sighed. "None of you know, I suppose, what's happened to him. It's really tragic. Two days ago, out of the blue, some crazy Taoist priest persuaded him to renounce the world, and he went away with the priest. Don't you call that extraordinary?"

One of them answered, "In the shop we did hear a great hubbub outside about some Taoist priest, who with just a few words persuaded a young man to go away with him. Some said they disappeared in a gust of wind, others that they rode off on rainbow-coloured clouds — there were different accounts. But we were too busy dispatching goods to pay much attention, so we didn't make further inquiries. Besides, we were rather sceptical about it. Now you tell us that the convert was our Brother Liu. If we'd known that, we ought to have dissuaded him and never allowed him to leave. It's really too bad to have lost such an entertaining friend. No wonder you feel upset, sir.

"But would such an intelligent man really go off with the priest? Brother Liu can use arms, he's strong. He may have seen through the priest's black magic and just pretended to be taken in, so that he could do for the

他，也未可知。”薛蟠说：“谁知道。果能如此，倒好罢咧。世上也少一个妖言惑众的人了。”众人说：“难道你知道了的时候也没寻找他去不成？”薛蟠说：“城里城外，那里没有找到？因找了不见，不怕你们笑话，我还哭了一场呢。”言毕，只是长吁短叹，无精打彩的，不像往日高兴让酒畅饮。席上虽设了些鸡鸭鱼肉、山珍海味、美品佳肴，怎奈东家皱眉叹气，众伙计看此光景，不便久坐，不过随便喝了几杯酒，吃了些饭食，就都散了，这也不必提。

且说宝玉拉了黛玉至宝钗处来道谢，彼此见面，未免说几句客套语。黛玉便对宝钗说道：“大哥哥辛辛苦苦的，能带了多少东西来，搁的住送我们这些，你还剩什么呢？”宝玉说：“可是这话呢。”宝钗笑说：“东西不是什么好的，不过是远路带来的土物，大家看着略觉新鲜似的，我剩不剩什么要紧。我如今果爱什么，今年虽然不剩，明年我哥哥去时，再叫他给我带些来，有什么难呢？”宝玉听说，忙笑道：“明年再带了什么来，我们还要姐姐送我们呢。可别忘了我们。”黛玉说：“你只管说，不必拉扯上‘我们’的字眼。姐姐瞧，宝哥哥不是给姐姐来道谢，竟是又要定下明年的东西来了。”宝玉笑说：“我要出来，难道没有你一份不成？你不知道帮着说，反倒说起这散话来了。”黛玉听了，笑了一声。宝钗问：“你二人如何来的这样巧？是谁会谁去的？”宝玉说：“休

fellow somewhere else."

"One never knows," said Xue Pan. "If that's what happened, fine: there'll be one less sorcerer casting spells on people."

"But when you heard about it, didn't you go to make a search?" they asked.

"We searched high and low, inside and outside the city, but couldn't find him. And when I saw no sign of him — you may think me a fool for this — I broke down and blubbed."

As he kept sighing and looked very downcast, not urging them to drink in his usual cheerful way, though it was a sumptuous feast with chicken, duck, fish, meat and other delicacies of land and sea, in view of their host's low spirits the guests did not like to stay too long. After finishing a few cups of wine and a little food they left.

Meantime Baoyu had taken Daiyu to Baochai's place to thank her. After the usual exchange of civilities, Daiyu said to Baochai:

"Your brother must have been to a lot of trouble bringing back all those things. Now you've given so many to us, you can't have anyhing left for yourself."

"Exactly. Why didn't you keep them?" asked Baoyu.

"They weren't anything good," said Baochai, "just some local products from far away, some novelties to amuse us. Whether I keep any or not doesn't matter. If there's anything I fancy, next year when my brother makes another trip I can ask him to bring more; it's no trouble at all."

At once Baoyu chuckled, "If he does, we'll expect you to give *us* some. You mustn't forget us."

"Speak for yourself," said Daiyu. "Don't drag *me* in." Turning to Baochai she added, "You see he's not come to thank you, but to order things for next year."

Baoyu laughed.

"If I get some, of course you'll get a share too. So you ought to back me up instead of making such sarcastic remarks."

Daiyu just smiled.

"How did you two happen to arrive here at the same time?" Baochai asked. "Did one of you fetch the other?"

提。我因姐姐送我东西，想来林妹妹也必有，我想要道谢，想林妹妹也必来道谢。故此我就到他房里，会了他一同要到这里来。谁知到了他家，正在房里伤心落泪，也不知是为什么这样爱哭。”宝玉刚说到“落泪”二字，见黛玉瞪了他一眼，恐他往下还说。宝玉会意，随即换过口来说道：“林妹妹这几日因身上不爽快，恐怕又病扳嘴，故此着急落泪，我劝解了一会子才来了。一则道谢，二则一个人在房坐着发闷。”宝钗说：“妹妹怕病闷，固然是正理，也不过是在那饮食起居穿脱衣服冷热上加些小心就是了。为什么伤起心来呢？妹妹你难道不知伤心难免不伤血气精神，把要紧的伤了，反倒要受病的。妹妹你细想想。”黛玉说：“姐姐说的很是。我自己何尝不知道呢？只因我这几年，姐姐是看见的，那一年不病一两场？病的我怕的了。见了药，吃了见效不见效，一闻见，先就头疼发恶心，怎么不叫我怕病呢？”宝钗说：“虽然如此，却也不该伤心。倒是觉着身上不爽快，反自己强扎挣着出来，各处走走逛逛，把心松散松散，比在层里闷坐着还强呢。伤心是自己添病的大毛病。我那两日不是觉得发懒，浑身乏倦，只是要歪着，心里也是为时气不好，怕病，因此偏扭着他寻些事件作作。一般里也混过去了。妹妹别怪我说，越怕越有鬼。”宝玉听说，忙问道：“宝姐姐，鬼在哪里呢，我怎么看不见一个鬼？”惹的众人哄声大笑。宝钗说道：“呆小爷，这是比喻的话。哪里真有鬼呢？认真的果有鬼，你又该吓哭了。”黛玉因此笑道：“姐姐说的很是，很

"Well, when you sent me these things, I knew Cousin Lin must have her share too," explained Baoyu. "So if I wanted to thank you, so would she. I called to pick her up and come here together, but found her upset and in tears. I can't understand why she's so fond of crying."

Daiyu shot him a repressive look.

Taking the hint he changed his tune and said, "Cousin Lin hasn't felt too well these last few days. She was crying for fear her illness might come back. I tried to comfort her for a while and then we came, partly to thank you, partly because she'd feel low sitting all alone in her room."

"It's only right to worry about one's health," replied Baochai. "But all one need do is to take extra care about food and sufficient rest, and wearing suitable clothes for different weather. Why should one feel upset? Don't you know, cousin, that grieving saps your spirits and energy? If you do yourself such serious harm you'll fall ill. Do remember that."

"You're quite right, cousin," agreed Daiyu. "Of course I know that. But you've seen how it's been with me these last few years. Not one year's gone by without my falling ill once or twice; that's what unnerves me. The very sight of medicine, whether it does me any good or not, gives me a headache, and the smell nauseates me. How can I help being afraid of a relapse?"

"Even so, you shouldn't get too upset," urged Baochai. "Instead, whenever you don't feel too well you should make an effort to come out and stroll about to cheer yourself up. That would be better than sitting moping at home. Depression just makes your health worse, that's the trouble with it. A couple of days ago I felt so lazy and limp I longed to lie down, but knowing this is a treacherous time of the year I was afraid I might fall ill, so I forced myself to find something to do, and that way I got over it. You mustn't mind me saying this, cousin, but 'the more afraid you are the more likely the devil is to come.'"

"What devil, cousin? From where?" demanded Baoyu. "Why have I never seen one?"

Everyone laughed.

"Silly lordling!" mocked Baochai. "That's just a figure of speech. There are no such things as devils. If there were, you'd be crying for fright."

该说他，谁叫他嘴快!”宝玉说:“有人说我的不是，你就乐了，你这会子心里也不懊悔了，咱们也该走罢。”于是二人又说笑一回，二人辞了宝钗出来。宝玉仍把黛玉送至潇湘馆门首，自己回家，这且不提。

且说赵姨娘因见宝钗送环哥儿物件，忙忙接下，心中甚喜，满口夸奖:“人人都说宝姑娘会行事，很大方，今日看来果然不错。他哥哥能带了多少东西来，他挨家送到，并不遗漏一处，也不露出谁薄谁厚，连我们搭拉嘴子他都想到，实在的可敬。若是林姑娘，也罢么，也没人给他送东西带什么来，即或有人带了来，他只是拣着那有势力有体面的人头儿跟前才送去，那里还轮的到我们娘儿们身上呢。可见人会行事，真真露着各别另样的好。”赵姨娘因环哥儿得了东西，深为得意，不住的托在掌上摆弄。瞧看一回，想宝钗乃系王夫人之表侄女，特要在王夫人跟前卖好儿。自己蝎蝎螫螫的拿着那东西，走至王夫人房中，站在一旁说道:“这是宝姑娘才给环哥的，他哥哥带来的。他年轻轻的人，想的周到。我还给了送东西的小丫头二百钱。听见说姨太太也给太太送来了，不知是什么东西?你们瞧瞧，这一个门里头就是两份儿，能多少呢?怪不得老太太同太太都夸他疼他，果然招人爱。”说着，将抱的东西递过去与王夫人瞧。谁知王夫人头也没抬，手也没伸，只口内说了声:“好，给环哥玩罢咧。”并无正眼看一看。赵姨娘因招了一鼻子灰，满肚气恼，无精打彩的回至自己房中，将东西丢在一边，说了许多劳儿三巴

"Well said, cousin," approved Daiyu with a smile. "You're right to tick him off for blurting out whatever comes into his head."

"So you're pleased whenever people snub me," said Baoyu. "Well, now that you've stopped feeling sad we'd better be going."

After a little further chat they said goodbye to Baochai and left, Baoyu seeing Daiyu to Bamboo Lodge before going home himself.

Now when Concubine Zhao saw the presents sent to Huan, she seized on them gleefully, loud in her praise of Baochai.

"Everyone speaks of Miss Baochai's good manners and generosity," she gushed, "and sure enough here's an example today. How much stuff could her brother bring back? Yet she sends some to every household, not missing one out or making any distinctions, even thinking of *us* who don't count for anything here. This really does her credit! Miss Lin, now, she's quite different. Of course nobody brings her anything; but even if they did, she'd only send presents to those who have power and big face. Would she ever think of me or of my son? This shows that good breeding is really exceptional."

As Concubine Zhao gloated over these presents for Huan, picking them up to play with and examine, it occurred to her that as Baochia was Lady Wang's niece this was a good opportunity to go and make up to her mistress. So she hurried over with the presents to Lady Wang's room.

Standing to one side there she said, "These are things Miss Baochai just gave Huan, things brought her by her brother. She's so young yet she thinks of everybody! I gave the maid who brought them two hundred cash. I heard that Aunt Xue sent you some gifts too, madam. I wonder what they are? So their family's sending us two lots of presents! How many things could they have got? Not wonder the old lady and you both praise Miss Baochai and make such a favourite of her. She's really most lovable."

While saying this she held out the things she had brought. But Lady Wang neither looked up nor reached out her hand.

"Good, let Huan play with them," was all she said, without so much as glancing at the toys.

Annoyed by this snub, the concubine trailed back dejectedly to her

儿四，不着要的一套闲话，也无人问他。他却自己咕哆着嘴，一边子坐着。可见赵姨娘为人小器糊涂，饶得了东西，反说许多令人不入耳生厌的闲话，也怨不得探春生气，看不起他。闲话休提。

且说宝钗送东西的丫头回来说，也有道谢的，也有赏赐的，独有给巧姐儿送的那一份儿仍旧拿回来了。宝钗一见，不知何意，便问："为什么这一份没送去呢?还是送了去没收呢?"莺儿说："我方才给环哥儿送东西去的时候，见琏二奶奶往老太太房里去了，我想琏二奶奶不在家，知道交给谁呢?所以没有去送。"宝钗说："你也太糊涂了。二奶奶不在家，难道平儿、丰儿也不在家不成?你只管交给他们收下，等二奶奶回来，自有他们告诉就是了，必定要你当面交给才算么?"莺儿听了，复又拿着东西，出了园子，往凤姐处去。在路上走着，便对拿东西的老婆子说："早知道一就事送了去不完了?省的又走这一趟。"老婆子说："闲着也是白闲着，借此出来逛逛也好。只是姑娘你今日来回各处走了好些路儿，想是不惯、乏了，咱们送了这个，可就完了。一打总儿再歇着。"二人说着话，到了凤姐处送了东西。回来见宝钗问道："你见了琏二奶奶没有?"莺儿说："我没见。"宝钗说："想是二奶奶还没回来么?"丫头说："回是回来了，因丰儿对我说，'二奶奶自老太太屋里回房来，不像往日欢天喜地的，一脸的怒气，叫了平儿去唧唧咕咕的说话，也不叫人听见，连我都撵出来了，你不必见，等我替你回一声儿就是了。'因此便着丰儿拿进去回了。出来说，'二奶奶说给你们姑娘道生受',赏了我们一吊钱，就回来了。"宝钗听了，

room where she threw the toys aside and started grumbling, scolding and complaining. As no one asked her what the matter was, she sat there muttering to herself, showing how petty-minded and stupid she was. Even when good things came her way, she would make so many tactless and irritating remarks that Tanchun can hardly be blamed for being exasperated with her mother and despising her.

When the maid delivering the presents for Baochai returned, she reported how some of the recipients had thanked her and some had given her tips; only she had brought back the share for little Qiaojie.

"Didn't you take it or wouldn't she accept it?" asked Baochai in surprise.

"When I took the things to Master Huan," Yinger explained, "I saw Madam Lian going to the old lady's place. As she wouldn't be at home, I didn't know to whom to give Qiaojie's share, so I didn't go there."

"How silly of you," scolded Baochai. "Even if she were out, Pinger and Fenger would hardly be out as well. You could have given it to them, and they'd have told Madam Lian when she came back. Do you have to delver it to her in person?"

So Yinger took the things out of the Garden again. On the way to Xifeng's quarters she told the old maid-servant carrying them for her:

"If I'd known that would be all right, I could have saved this trip."

"We've nothing to do at home, so this is a good chance for a stroll," said the old woman. "Only you're not used to much walking, and after going to so many places today I daresay you're tired out, miss. Still, after delivering this we shall be through, and then you can have a rest."

Still chatting they reached Xifeng's place and delivered the gift.

On their return, Baochai asked, "Did you see Madam Lian?"

"No, we didn't," Yinger answered.

"I suppose she wasn't back then?"

"She was back, but Fenger told me, 'Since coming back from the old lady's place she hasn't looked her usual cheerful self — her face is black as thunder. She called Pinger in for a whispered consultation which the rest of us weren't allowed to hear — she even sent *me* out. So you'd better not go in. I'll report that you've come.' Then Fenger took the present in. When she came out again she said, 'Our mistress sends

自己纳闷，也想不出凤姐是为什么生气。这也不表。

且说袭人见宝玉，便问："你怎么不逛，就回来了。你原说约着林姑娘两个同到宝姑娘处道谢去，可去了没有？"宝玉说："你别问，我原说是要会林姑娘同去的，谁知到了他家，他在房里守着东西哭呢。我也知道林姑娘的那些原故的，又不好直问他，又不好说他，只装不知道，搭讪着说别的，宽解了一会儿，才好了。然后方拉了他到了宝姐姐那里道了谢，说了一会子闲话方散了。我又送他到家，才回来了。"袭人说："你看送林姑娘的东西，比我们的多些少些，还是一样呢？"宝玉说："比送我们的多着一两倍呢。"袭人说："这才是明白人，会行事。宝姑娘他想别的姐妹等都有亲的热的跟着，有人送东西，况且他们两个，不但是亲戚，还是干姐妹，难道你不知道林姑娘去年曾认过薛姨太太作干妈的？论理多给他些也是该的。"宝玉笑说："你就是会评事的一个公道老儿。"说着话儿，便叫小丫头取了拐枕来，要在床上歪着。袭人说："你不出去了？我有一句话告诉你。"宝玉便问什么话，袭人说："素日琏二奶奶待我很好，你是知道的。他自从病了一大场之后，如今又好了，我早就想着要到那里看看去，只因琏二爷在家不方便，始终总没有去。闻说琏二爷不在家，你今日又不往那里去，而且初秋天气，不冷不热，一则看二奶奶尽个礼，省得日后见了，受他的数

her thanks to your young lady.' And she gave us a string of cash. Then we came back."

Baochai was puzzled by this account, unable to think why Xifeng should be so angry.

But let us return to Baoyu. When Xiren saw him come home she asked:

"Why didn't you amuse yourself outside a bit longer? You said you were going with Miss Lin to thank Miss Baochai. Did you do that?"

"Of course that's what I intended to do," said Baoyu, "but when I got there I found her in her room weeping over those things. I understood the reason, but I couldn't very well ask her about it or scold her, so I pretended not to understand and chatted for a while about this and that so as to cheer her up; and as soon as she felt better I took her with me to thank Cousin Baochai. We chatted there for a bit, then I saw Daiyu back before coming home myself."

"Did you notice," asked Xiren, "whether Miss Lin got more things than we did or the same amount?"

"Her share was two or three times bigger."

"That shows real understanding and tact," approved Xiren. "Miss Baochai knows that all her other cousins have close relatives at hand to send them presents; besides, she and Miss Lin aren't simply relatives but half-sisters too, for, as you know, last year Miss Lin became Aunt Xue's god-daughter. So it was only right to give her a bigger share."

Baoyu chuckled, "You sound like an old judge reviewing a case." He called a young maid then to fetch him a pillow as he wanted to lie down for a while.

"If you're not going out," said Xiren, "there's something I want to ask you."

"Well, what is it?"

"You know how good Madam Lian's always been to me. Now she's just getting over a serious illness and for some time I've been meaning to call on her, but it wasn't convenient while Master Lian was at home, so I never went. Now I hear he's out and you're not going over there today; besides, this early autumn weather is neither too hot nor too cold;

落；二则借此逛一逛。你同他们看着家，我去去就来。”晴雯说：“这却是该的，难得这个巧空儿。”宝玉说：“我方才说，为他议论宝姑娘，夸他是个公道人。这一件事，行的又是一个周到人了。”袭人笑道：“好小爷，你也不用夸我。你只在家同他们好生玩，好歹别睡觉。睡出病来，又是我担沉重。”宝玉说：“我知道了。你只管去罢。”言毕，袭人随到自己房里，换了两件新鲜衣服，拿着把镜儿照着抿了抿头，匀了匀脸上脂粉，步出下房，复又嘱咐了晴雯、麝月几句话，便出了怡红院来。至沁芳桥上立住，往四下里观看那园中景致。

时至秋令，秋蝉鸣于树，草虫鸣于野，见这石榴花也开败了，荷叶也将残上来了，倒是芙蓉近着河边，都发了红扑扑的骨朵子，衬着碧绿的叶儿，倒令人可爱。一壁厢下了桥不远，迎见李纨房里使唤的丫头素云，跟着个老婆子，手里捧着个洋漆盒儿走来。袭人便问：“往哪里去?送的是什么东西?”素云说：“这是我们奶奶给三姑娘送去的菱角、鸡豆。”袭人说：“这个东西还是咱们园子里河内采的，还是外头买来的呢?”素云说：“这是我们房里使唤的刘妈妈，他告假瞧亲戚去带来的，孝敬奶奶。因三姑娘在我们那里坐着看见了，我们奶奶叫人剥了让他吃，他说才喝了热茶了，不吃，一会儿再吃罢。故此给三姑娘送了家去。”言毕，各自分路走了。

袭人远远看见那边葡萄架底下有一个人，拿着掸子在那

so I'd like to go and pay my meet. And this is a good excuse to take a stroll while you and the other girls keep an eye on things here. I shan't be going long."

"Yes, that's what you should do," agreed Qingwen, "as you happen to be free now."

"I was just saying what a good judge she was in her appraisal of Miss Baochai," Baoyu remarked. "Now in this case she's showing real thoughtfulness too."

"There's no need to heap praise on me, my good young master," replied Xiren with a smile. "Just amuse yourself with them here, but whatever happens don't go to sleep and catch a chill, or the blame will fall on me again."

"I know," he said. "You can go."

Xiren went to her room to change into new clothes, then picked up the mirror to tidy her hair and dust her face with powder. Coming out, she gave Qingwen and Sheyue some further instructions before leaving Happy Red Court.

At Seeping Fragrance Bridge, she paused to look round and enjoy the early autumn scene. Cicadas were shrilling in the trees, insects chirping in the undergrowth; the pomegranate flowers were fading, the lotus leaves withering, but the hibiscus on the river bank had put out clusters of red buds which looked enchanting against the vivid green leaves. Crossing the bridge then she soon saw Li Wan's maid Suyun approaching, followed by an old serving-woman with a lacquer hamper. Xiren asked where they were taking the hamper and what was in it.

"These are caltrops and lotus seeds our mistress is sending Miss Tanchun," Suyun told her.

"Were they picked in the stream in our Garden or bought outside?"

"Mother Liu who works in our house asked leave to go and visit some relatives, then brought these back as a present for our mistress, and Miss Tanchun saw them as she happened to be in our place. Our mistress had some peeled for her to taste, but she refused as she'd just been drinking hot tea and said she'd try some later. So now we're taking these to her house."

Then they went their different ways. In the distance Xiren now saw

里动手动脚的，因迎着日光，看不真切。至离的不远，那祝老婆子见了袭人，便笑嘻嘻的迎上来说道："姑娘今日怎么得工夫出来闲逛，往那里去？"袭人说："我那里还得工夫来逛？我往琏二奶奶家瞧瞧去。你在这里做什么？"那祝老婆子说："我在这里赶马蜂呢。今年三伏里雨水少，不知怎么果木树上长虫子，把果子吃的疤拉眼睛的掉了好些下来，可惜了的白掷了。就是这葡萄，刚成了珠儿，怪好看的，那马蜂、蜜蜂儿满满的围着蜍，都咬破了。这还罢了，喜鹊、雀儿他也来吃这个葡萄。还有一个毛病儿，无论雀儿、虫儿，一嘟噜上只咬破三五个，那破的水淌到好的上头，连这一嘟噜都是要烂的。这些雀儿、马蜂可恶着呢，故此我在这里赶。姑娘你瞧咱们说话的空儿没赶，就蜍了许多上来了。"袭人说："你就是不住手儿赶，也赶不了这许多。你刚这里赶，那里又来了。到是告诉买办说，叫他多多的作些冷布口袋来，一嘟噜一嘟噜的套上，免得翎禽草虫糟踏，而且又透风，捂不坏。"婆子笑道："倒是姑娘说的是。我今年才上来，那里就知道这些巧法儿呢。"袭人说："如今这园子里这些果品，有好些种儿，倒是那样先熟的快些？"祝老婆子说："如今才入七月的门，果子都是才红上来，要是好吃，想来还得月尽头儿才熟透了呢。姑娘不信，我摘一个给姑娘尝尝。"袭人正色说道："这那里使得。不但没熟吃不得；就是熟了，一则没有供佛，二则主子们尚然没有吃，咱们如何先吃得呢。你是这府里的陈人，难道连这个规矩也不晓得么？"老婆子忙笑道："姑娘说的有理。我因为姑娘问我，我白这样说。"口内

someone flicking a whisk under a trellis of grapes, but as the sun was in her eyes she could not make out who it was. Drawing nearer she discovered it was old Mrs. Zhu, who came forward, beaming, to greet her.

"How is it you have time to come out for a stroll today, miss?" she asked. "Where are you going?"

"I've no time to stroll about, I'm on my way to call on Madam Lian. What are you doing here?"

"I'm chasing away the wasps. This has been such a dry summer, all the trees are infested by insects who've been boring into the fruit so that lots of it has dropped — what a wretched waste! Look at the grapes, just forming such pretty clusters, but the wasps and bees keeping swarming round to bite them. Worse still, magpies and sparrows come to steal grapes too. The trouble is that once a sparrow or insect has made a hole in three of four grapes in one cluster, the juice dripping on to the good ones rots them too. These sparrows and wasps are such a pest, I'm here to shoo them away. Just look, miss, because I stopped for one minute to talk, another swarm of wasps has come."

"Even if you keep waving that whisk you'll never keep them all away. As soon as you drive one lot away from here, another will come over there. Better tell the purveyors to have a whole lot of small gauze bags made. If you put one bag over each cluster of grapes, the birds and insects won't be able to spoil them; and as gauze lets through the air, that won't hurt the grapes."

"That's a good idea," agreed the old woman. "This is my first year at this job, so I don't know these clever dodges."

"We have many different kinds of fruit in the Garden," remarked Xiren. "Which kind ripens first?"

"This is the start of the seventh month. The grapes are only just turning red. They won't be really ripe and good to eat until the end of the month. If you don't believe me, miss, I'll pick one for you to taste."

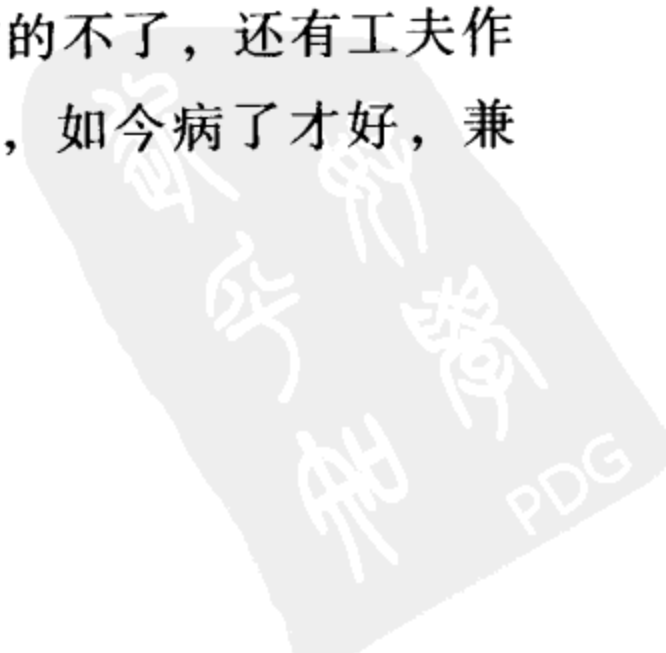
"Even if they were ripe, the first fruits have to be sacrificed to Buddha and the next sent to the mistresses. How can *we* taste them first? As an old hand here, surely you know this rule?"

The old woman smiled sheepishly.

"You're right, miss. I only said that because of the question you

说，心里想说道："够了，我方才幸亏是在这里赶马蜂，若是顺着手儿摘一个尝尝，叫他们看见，还了得么?"袭人说："我方才告诉你要口袋的话，你就回一回二奶奶，叫管事的做去罢。"言毕，遂一直出了园子门，就到凤姐这里来了。

正是凤姐与平儿议论贾琏之事，因见袭人，他是轻意不来之人，又不知是有什么事情，便连忙止住话语，勉强带笑说道："贵人从那阵风儿刮了我们这个贱地来了?"袭人笑说："我就知道奶奶见了我，是必有麻烦我一顿的，有什么呢?但是奶奶欠安，本心惦着要过来请请安。头一件，琏二爷在家不便；二则奶奶在病中，又怕嫌烦，故未敢来。想奶奶素日疼爱我的那个分儿上，自必是体谅我，再不肯恼我的。"凤姐笑道："宝兄弟屋里虽然人多，就靠着你一个儿照看，也实在的离不开。我常听见平儿告诉我说，你背地里还惦着我常问，我听见就很欢喜的什么似的。今日见了你，我还要给你道谢呢，我还舍得麻烦你吗，我的姑娘?"袭人说："我的奶奶，若是这样说，就是真疼我了。"凤姐拉了袭人的手，让他坐下。袭人那里肯坐，让之再三，方才挨炕沿脚踏上坐了。平儿忙自己端了茶来，袭人说："你叫小人们端罢，劳动姑娘，我倒不安。"一面站起接过茶来吃着，一面回头看见床沿上放着一个活计，簸萝儿内，装着一个大红洋锦的小兜肚。袭人说："奶奶一天七事八事的，忙的不了，还有工夫作活计么?"凤姐说："我本来不会作什么，如今病了才好，兼



asked." But while saying this she was thinking, "Drat it all! It's lucky I was chasing wasps just now. If I'd happened to pick a grape to taste and been spotted, what a to-do there'd have been!"

"Put in a request to Madam Lian for those bags I told you about," Xiren advised her. "She'll get the stewards to have them made."

This said she left by the Garden gate and went straight to Xifeng's place.

Xifeng and Pinger were discussing Jia Lian's secret marriage. As Xiren was a rare visitor and they did not know her errand, they broke off their conversation on her arrival.

With a forced smile Xifeng asked, "What wind's blown such a noble visitor to our humble place?"

Xiren replied with a smile, "I knew you'd tease me when I came, madam, but never mind. While you were unwell I kept wanting to come and pay my respects, but when Master Lian was at home it wasn't convenient, and I didn't like to disturb you while you were ill, so I didn't venture to come. As you've always been so kind to me, I knew you'd overlook it and not be offended."

"Cousin Bao has plenty of maids in his place, but you're the only responsible one," said Xifeng. "Of course you couldn't get away. Pinger often told me that you were thinking of me and asking after my health, so I felt very pleased. Now that you're here it's *I* who should be thanking you for your concern. How could I tease you, my dear Miss Xiren?"

"If you put it like that, my dear madam, you're really too kind."

Xifeng took Xiren's hand and ruged her to sit on the *kang*, but only after declining several times did she take a seat on a stool by it, while Pinger herself fetched in tea.

"Let the young maids attend to that," urged Xiren. "I don't like to trouble you, miss."

As she stood up to take the tea, turning her head she noticed in a needlework basket on one side of the *kang* a small crimson apron of imported satin.

"Busy as you are every day, madam, do you still have time to do needlework?" she asked.

"I'm no needlewoman," said Xifeng. "And now that I've just got

着家务事闹个不清，那里还有工夫做这些呢?要紧的我都丢开了，这是我往老太太屋里请安去，正遇见薛姨太太送老太太这些花红柳绿的，到对给小孩子们做小衣小裳儿的穿着，倒好玩呢，因此我就问老祖宗讨了来了。还惹的老祖宗说了好些玩话，说我是老太太的命中小人，见了什么要什么，见了什么拿什么，惹得众人都笑了。你是知道我是脸皮儿厚，不怕说的人，老祖宗只管说，我只管装不听见。所以才交给平儿给巧姐儿先作件小兜肚穿着，还剩下的，等消闲有工夫，再做别的。”袭人听毕，笑道:“也就是奶奶，才能够沤的老祖宗喜欢罢咧。”伸手拿起来一看，便夸道:“果然好看，各样颜色都有，好材料，也须这样巧手的人才对做。况又是巧姐儿他穿的，抱了出去，谁不多看一看。”又说道:“巧姐儿那里去了，我怎么这半日没见他?”平儿说:“方才宝姑娘那里送了些玩的东西来，他一见了很希罕，就摆弄玩了好一会子。他奶妈子才抱了出去，想是乏了，睡觉去了。”袭人说:“巧姐儿比先前自然越发会玩了。”平儿说:“小脸蛋子吃的银盆似的，见了人就赶着笑，再不得罪人。真真的是我奶奶的解闷的宝贝疙瘩儿。”凤姐便问:“宝兄弟在家做什么呢?”袭人笑道:“我才求他同晴雯他们看家，我才告了假来了。可是呢，只顾说话，我也来了好大半天了，要回去了。别叫宝玉在家里抱怨，说我屁股沉，到那里就坐住了。”说着，便立起身来告辞，回怡红院来了。这且不提。

且说凤姐见平儿送出袭人回来，复又把平儿叫入房中，追问前事。越说越气，说道:“二爷在外边偷娶老婆，你说你

over my illness there are so many family affairs to see to I've naturally no time for such things — I've even given up doing what's most urgent. But when I went to pay my respects to the old lady, I saw the gay materials Aunt Xue had sent her, which would look cute made into little clothes for children; so I asked the old lady for some. That provoked our Old Ancestress into baiting me. She declared I was the bane of her life, the way I demanded and grabbed everything I saw in her place. She had everyone laughing at me. You know I'm too thick-skinned to mind being scolded, so I just let our Old Ancestress rattle on and pretended not to hear. I've given that material to Pinger to first make a small apron for Qiaojie. With what's left, when I've time, I'll make some other things."

"You're indeed the only one, madam, who can keep the old lady happy," rejoined Xiren laughingly. She picked up the sewing to examine it, then commented admiringly, "It's really pretty with all these different colours. A good material needs someone with skilful fingers like this to embroider it. Especially for Qiaojie. Why, when she's carried out wearing this, people won't be able to take their eyes off her. Where is Qiaojie?" she added. "Why haven't I seen her all this time?"

Pinger told her, "Just now Miss Baochai sent over some toys, and she was so tickled with them that she went on playing with them till her wet-nurse carried her off. She must have gone to sleep now, tired out."

"Qiaojie must be growing more and more of a romp."

"Her plump little face is like a round silver plate. She smile at everybody she sees and never offends anyone. She's truly a little darling who keeps our mistress amused."

"What is Cousin Bao doing at home?" Xifeng inquired.

"I begged him to keep an eye on things there with Qingwen and the others, so that I could ask leave and come out," Xiren told her. "But I've been so engrossed in talking, a long time's slipped by and I must be getting back now. I don't want to have him complaining that I'm so lazy, wherever I go I stay sitting there and won't move." With that she got up, took her leave of them, and went back to Happy Red Court.

After Pinger had seen Xiren out, Xifeng called her back to cross-examine her further. The more she heard, the more furious she became.

"You say you heard from the pages at the inner gate that your Second

是听见二门上小小子们说，到底是谁?哪一个说的呢?”平儿说:“是来旺他说的。”凤姐便命人把来旺叫来，问道:“你二爷在外边买房子娶小老婆，你知道么?”来旺说:“小的终日在二门上听差，如何知道二爷的事?这是听见兴儿告诉的。”凤姐说:“兴儿是几时告诉你的?”来旺说:“还是二爷没起身的头里告诉的。”凤姐说:“兴儿在哪里呢?”来旺说:“兴儿在新二奶奶那里呢。”凤姐一听，满腔怒气，啐了一口骂道:“下作猴儿崽子，什么是新奶奶旧奶奶，你就私自封奶奶了?满嘴里胡说，这就该打嘴巴。”又问:“兴儿他是跟二爷的人，怎么没有跟了二爷去呢?”来旺说:“特留下他在这里照看尤二姐，故此未曾跟了去。”凤姐听说，忙的一叠连声，命来旺快把兴儿叫来。来旺忙忙的跑了出去。见了兴儿，只说:“二奶奶叫你呢。”兴儿正在外边同小子们玩笑，听见叫他，也不问来旺二奶奶叫他做什么，便跟了来旺急忙忙的来至二门前，回明进去。见了凤姐，请了安，旁边侍立。凤姐一见，便先瞪了两眼问道:“你们主子奴才，在外面干的好事!你们打量我是呆瓜，不知道?!你是紧跟二爷的人，是必深知根由。你须细细的对我实说，稍有些儿隐瞒撒谎，我将你的腿打折了。”兴儿跪下磕头说:“奶奶问的是什么事?是我同爷干的?”凤姐骂道:“好小杂种，你还敢来支吾我!我问你，二爷在外边怎么就说成了尤二姐?怎么买房子治

Master had secretly married another wife outside. Who told you that?"

"Lai Wang."

At once Xifeng sent for him.

"Did you know that your Second Master had bought a house and married a concubine outside?" she demanded.

"I'm on duty all day long at the inner gate," stammered Lai Wang. "How could I know about the Second Master's business? I heard this from Xinger."

"When did Xinger tell you?"

"Before the master left on that trip."

"Where is Xinger now?"

"He's working in the new mistress' house."

In a furious temper Xifeng spat at him.

"You contemptible son of an ape," she swore. "Who are you to talk about a new mistress or an old mistress? How dare *you* confer the title of mistress on her. The nonsense you talk, you deserve to be slapped." Then she asked, "Isn't Xinger supposed to wait on the Second Master? Why didn't he go with him?"

"He was specially left here to look after Second Sister You; that's why."

Xifeng at once ordered him to fetch Xinger.

Lai Wang rushed off on this errand and, when he found Xinger fooling about with some other pages outside he simply told him that Xifeng wanted him. When Xinger heard this, without asking why he was wanted, he hurried with Lai Wang to the inner gate, where he announced his business and was admitted. Having bowed to Xifeng he stood respectfully to one side. At sight of him she glared.

"What fine goings-on have you, master and slave, been up to outside?" she snapped. "Did you take me for a fool who wouldn't know? As Second Master's personal attendant, you must know the whole story. I want the true facts from you. Any attempt to cover up or lie, and I'll have you beaten till your legs are broken!"

Xinger fell on his knees to kowtow.

"What goings-on are these, madam, that you're asking about?"

"How dare you stall, you little bastard! I'm asking how your master

家伙?怎么娶了过来?一五一十的说个明白，饶你的狗命。”兴儿听了仔细，想了一想:“此事两府皆知，就是瞒着老爷、太太、老太太同二奶奶不知道，终久也是要知道的，我如今何苦来瞒着，不如告诉了他，省得挨眼前打，受委屈。再，兴儿一则年幼，不知事的轻重；二则素日又知道凤姐是个烈口子，连二爷还惧他五分；三则此事原是二爷同珍大爷、蓉哥儿他叔侄弟兄商量着办的，与自己无干。”故此把主意拿定，壮着胆子，跪着说道:“奶奶别生气，等奴才回禀奶奶听。只因那府里大老爷的丧事上穿孝，不知二爷怎么看见过尤二姐几次，大约就看中了，动了要说的心，故此先同蓉哥商议，求蓉哥替二爷从中调停办理，做了媒人说合，事成之后，还许下谢礼。蓉哥满应，将此话转告诉了珍大爷，珍大爷告诉了珍大奶奶合尤老娘。尤老娘听了很愿意，但说是二姐从小儿已许过张家为媳，如何又许二爷呢，恐张家知道，生出事来不妥当。珍大爷笑道:‘这算什么大事?交给我。’便说那张姓小子，本是个穷苦破落户，那里见得多给他几两银子，叫他写张退亲的休书就完了。后来果然找了姓张的来，如此说明，写了休书，给了银子去了。二爷闻知，方得放心大胆的说定了。又恐怕奶奶知道，拦阻不允，所以在外边咱们后身儿买了几间房子，治了东西，就娶过来了。珍大爷还给了爷两口人使唤。时常推说给老爷办事，又说给珍大爷张罗事，都是些支吾的谎话，竟是在外头住着。从前原是

fixed things up outside with Second Sister You. How did he buy the house and furnish it? How did the marriage take place? Tell me all these things clearly, you dog, and I may spare your life."

Hearing these explicit questions Xinger reflected: Both mansions know about this business; the only ones kept in the dark were the old lady, Lord She, Lady Xing and Madam Lian. As the truth's bound to come out in the end, why should I try to cover it up? I may as well come clean to get off a beating and worse punishment. For one thing, I'm too young to be expected to know how serious this was; for another, I've always known that Madam's such a firebrand that even Master Lian's half afraid of her; and, besides, this business was arranged by Master Lian, Lord Zhen and Master Rong between them — it had nothing to do with *me*.

His mind made up, he screwed up his courage.

"Have mercy on me, madam!" he begged on his knees. "I'll tell you everything. It started during our mourning for the Elder Master of the East Mansion. Second Master happened to meet Second Sister You there a few times, and I suppose he took a fancy to her and wanted to make her his concubine. So he first discussed it with Master Rong, asking him to act as go-between and arrange the match, and promising him presents if he pulled it off. Master Rong agreed readily and told Lord Zhen, who broached it to Madam You and old Mrs. You.

"Old Mrs. You was quite willing but she said, 'Second Sister was engaged as a child to the son of the Zhang family; so how can I marry her to Master Lian? If the Zhangs hear of it there may be trouble.'

"'That's nothing serious,' said Lord Zhen. 'Leave it to me. That fellow Zhang's family has been beggared. If we just give him a few extra taels of silver, we can make him write a document cancelling the engagement and there'll be no further trouble.'

"Later they did fetch that man Zhang and put it to him. When he'd written the document they paid him and off he went. Then Second Master felt safe enough to go boldly ahead. Only, for fear lest this came to your ears, madam, and you stopped him, he bought and furnished a small house outside at the back, then took her over. And Lord Zhen gave him a married couple to work there.

"Often, when he says he has business to attend to for Lord She or

娘儿三个住着，还要商量给尤三姐说人家，又许下了厚聘嫁他。如今尤三姐也死了，只剩下那尤老娘跟着尤二姐住着做伴儿呢。这是一往从前的实话，并不敢隐瞒一句。”说毕，复又磕头。凤姐听了这一篇言词，只气得痴呆了半晌，面如金纸，两只吊梢子眼越发直竖起来了，浑身乱颤，半天连话也说不上来，只是发怔。猛低头见兴儿在地下跪着，便说道：“这也没有你的大不是，但只是二爷在外头行这样的事，你也该早些告诉我才是，这却很该打。因你肯实说，不撒谎，且饶恕你这一次。”兴儿说：“未能早回奶奶，这是奴才该死的。”便叩头有声。凤姐说：“你去罢。”兴儿才立起身要走，凤姐又说：“叫你时须要快来，不可远去。”兴儿连连答应了几个“是”，就出去了。在外面伸了伸舌头，说：“够了我的了，差一差儿，没有挨一顿好打。”暗自后悔不该告诉来旺，又愁二爷回来怎么见，各自害怕。这且不提。

且说凤姐见兴儿出去，回头向平儿说：“方才兴儿说的话，你都听见了没有？”平儿说：“我都听见了。”凤姐说：“天下那有这样没脸的男人！吃着碗里，看着锅里，见一个爱一个，真成了喂不饱的狗，实在的是个弃旧迎新坏货，只是可惜这五六品的顶带给他。他别想着俗语说的‘家花那有野花香’的话，他要信了这个话，可就大错了。多早晚在外面

Lord Zhen, that's a lie — an excuse for him to stay outside there.

"Originally the mother and the two sisters lived there, and they wanted to arrange a match for Third Sister You too, promising to give her a handsome dowry; but now Third Sister You's dead, so there's only old Mrs. You keeping Second Sister You company.

"All this is the truth, I haven't dared hide a thing." With that he kowtowed again.

This account had left Xifeng transfixed with rage, her face livid, her almond eyes squinting. For a while she trembled convulsively, unable to get a word out for stupefaction. Then, looking down suddenly, she saw that Xinger was still kneeling there.

"You're not the one most to blame for this," she said. "But when Second Master carried on like that outside you ought to have told me about it earlier. For not doing that you fully deserve a beating. Still, since you've told me honestly now, without lying, I'll let you off this time."

"I deserve death, madam, for not telling you before." Again he thumped his head hard on the ground.

"Be off now."

As he rose to leave she added, "Next time I send for you, mind you come at once. Don't go far away."

Assenting repeatedly, Xinger withdrew. Once outside he stuck out his tongue in dismay.

"That was touch and go!" he exclaimed. "I only just escaped a good beating." He regretted having passed on the news to Lai Wang, and was scared stiff for worrying what to say when Jia Lian returned. But no more of this.

After the page had left, Xifeng turned to Pinger and asked, "Did you hear what Xinger said?"

"Yes, I heard it all."

"How can there be such a shameless man in the world? Guzzling what's in the bowl, he has his eyes on what's in the pan. He wants every woman he sees, the greedy dog. Talk about off with the old love and on with the new! It's a pity to give a lecher like him the insignia of the fifth or sixth rank. He may believe in the saying that the flowers at home aren't as sweet as flowers growing wild; but if he thinks that, he's mak-

闹一个很没脸、亲戚朋友见不得的事出来，他才罢手呢。”平儿一旁劝道：“奶奶生气，却是该的，但奶奶身子才好了，也不可过于气恼。看二爷自从鲍二的女人那一件事之后，倒很收了心，好了呢，如今为什么又干起这样事来？这都是珍大爷的不是。”凤姐说：“珍大爷固然有不是，也总因咱们那位下作不堪的爷他眼馋，人家才引诱他罢咧。俗语说：‘牛儿不吃水，也强按头么？’”平儿说：“珍大爷干这样事，珍大奶奶也该拦阻不依才是。”凤姐说：“可是这话呢。珍大奶奶也不想一想，把一个妹子要许上几家子才好呢。先许了姓张的，今又嫁了姓贾的，天下的男人都死绝了，都嫁到贾家来，难道贾家的衣食这样好不成？这不是说，幸而那一个没脸的尤三姐，知道好歹，早早死了，若是不死，将来不是嫁宝玉，就是嫁环哥儿呢。总也不见给那妹子留一些儿体面，叫妹子怎么抬头竖脸的见人呢。妹子好歹也罢咧，那妹子本来也不是他亲的，而且听见说原是个混账烂桃，难道珍大奶奶现做着命妇，家中有这样一个打嘴现世的妹子，也不知道羞臊，躲避着些，反到大面上扬名打鼓的在这门里丢丑，也不怕笑话么？再者，珍大爷也是做官的人，别的律例不知道也罢了，连个服中娶亲、停妻再娶使不得的规矩，他也不知道不成？你替我细想想，他干的这件事，是疼兄弟、还是害兄弟呢？”平儿说：“珍大爷只顾眼前，叫兄弟喜欢，也不顾日后的轻重干系了。”凤姐冷笑道：“这是什么叫兄弟喜欢，这是给他的毒药吃呢。若论亲叔伯兄弟中，他年纪又最大，又居长，不知教导学好，反引诱兄弟学不长进，担罪名儿。

ing a big mistake. Sooner or later he'll cause such a scandal outside, he won't be able to face relatives and firends; and then only will he give up."

To mollify her Pinger said, "Of course you're right to be angry; but you've only just got over your illness, madam, you shouldn't let yourself be carried away. After that affair with Bao Er's wife, the master seemed to be restraining himself and behaving much better. So why is he having affairs of this sort again? It must be Lord Zhen's fault."

"Of course Lord Zhen's to blame too. Still, it's because our master is so debauched that it's easy for people to tempt him. As the proverb says, 'If an ox doesn't want to drink, you can't force it to. '"

"Lord Zhen's wife ought to have stopped him from doing such a thing."

"Exactly. How could Madam You let her sister be betrothed to two different families? First the Zhangs, then the Jias. Have all the other men in the world died out? Must all girls marry into our Jia family? Are we so well off, or what? It's lucky that slut Third Sister You had sense enough to kill herself first; otherwise they'd have married her to Baoyu or Huan.

"Madam You doesn't seem to have cared about saving her sister's face — how could she ever have held up her head in future? But she wouldn't worry about that, as after all Second Sister was only her half-sister and, by all accounts, a looseliving, shameless bitch. But Cousin Zhen's wife is a lady of rank; shouldn't she feel ashamed of having such a flighty sister at home? Yet instead of trying to keep her away she blatantly brings her here to carry on in that shocking way, not caring if people laugh.

"Besides, Lord Zhen's an official. He may not know all the rules of propriety, but surely he knows that it's taboo for a man in mourning to marry, or to spurn his wife and take another woman. What I'm wondering is this: did he fix this up as a favour for his cousin or to harm him?"

"Yes, Lord Zhen is too short-sighted," said Pinger. "He just wanted to please his cousin without worrying about the consequences."

"Please his cousin?" Xifeng snorted sarcastically. "No, this was giving him poison. Of all our cousins, he's the oldest and most experienced; but instead of setting the others a good example he teaches them bad

日后闹出事来，他在一边缸沿上站着看热闹，真真我要骂也骂不出口来。再者他那边府里的丑事坏名儿，已经叫人听不上了，必定也叫兄弟学他一样，才好显不出他的丑来，这是什么做哥哥的道理?倒不如撒泡尿浸死了，替大老爷死了也罢了，活着作什么呢?你瞧东府里大老爷那样厚德，吃斋念佛行善，怎么反得了这样一个儿子孙子?大概是好风水都叫他老人家一个拔尽了。”平儿说:“想来不错。若不然，怎么这样差着格儿呢。”凤姐说:“这件事幸而老太太、老爷、太太不知道，倘或吹到这几位耳朵里去，不但咱们那没出息的二爷挨打受骂，就是珍大爷和珍大奶奶管保要吃不了的兜着走呢。”连说带闹了半天，连午饭也推头疼没过去吃。平儿看此光景，越说越气，说道:“奶奶也煞一煞气儿，事从缓来，等二爷回来，慢慢的再商量就是了。”凤姐听了此言，从鼻孔内哼了两声，冷笑道:“好罢咧。等爷回来，可就迟了。”平儿便跪在地下，再三苦劝安慰一会子。凤姐才略消了些气恼，喝了口茶，喘息了良久，便要了拐枕歪在床上，闭着眼睛打主意。平儿见凤姐躺着，方退出。

偏有不懂眼的几个回事的人来，都被丰儿撵出去了。又有贾母处着玛瑙来问:“二奶奶为什么不吃饭?老太太不放心，着我来瞧瞧。”凤姐因是贾母处打发人来，随勉强起来说:“我白日有些头疼，并没别的病，请老太太放心。我已经

ways to spoil their reputation. And when there's a public scandal he'll just stand aside watching the fun. Honestly, I can't find words strong enough to damn him. The scandalous goings-on in that East Mansion of his don't bear speaking of. And to cover up his own debauchery he must needs make his cousin follow his example. Is this the way an elder brother should behave? He should have drowned himself in his own piss and died in place of his father, for what's his life worth? Look how virtuous Lord Jing of the East Mansion was, fasting, chanting sutras and doing so many good deeds. How could he beget a son and grandson like these? I suppose all the family's good luck, generated by the auspicious geomancy of the ancestral tombs, was used up by the old man."

"That does seem to be the case. How else could they be so lacking in decency?"

"It's lucky the old lady, Lord She and Lady Xing haven't heard of it. If it came to their ears, not only would our good-for-nothing master get beaten and cursed, even Lord Zhen and Madam You would certainly be made to smart for it."

Xifeng went on cursing and raging, refusing to go over for lunch on the excuse that her head ached. Seeing that she was working herself up into a greater fury, Pinger urged:

"You'd better calm down, madam. The thing's done, so there's no hurry. There'll be plenty of time to talk it over again after Second Master's return."

Xifeng gave a couple of snorts.

"After his return? No, that would be too late."

Pinger knelt down to reason with her and comfort her, till at length Xifeng calmed down enough to sip some tea. Then, after taking some deep breaths, she asked for her pillow and lay down on the bed, her eyes closed as she considered what to do. When Pinger saw that she was resting, she withdrew. And when some people ignorant of what had happened arrived to report on their business, they were sent packing by Fenger. Then Manao was sent by the Lady Dowager to ask:

"Why hasn't the Second Mistress gone over for lunch? The old lady's worried and sent me to see what's wrong."

As it was the Lady Dowager who had sent to inquire, Xifeng forced

躺了一躺儿好了。”言毕，打发人去后，却自己一个将前事从头至尾细细的盘算多时，得了个一计害三贤的狠主意，自己暗想须得如此如此方妥。主意已定，也不告诉平儿，反外面作出嘻笑自在无事的光景，并不露出恼恨妒嫉之意。于是叫丫头传了来旺来，吩咐令他明日传唤匠役人等，收拾东厢房，裱糊陈设等语，平儿与众人皆不知为何缘故。要知端的，且听下回分解。

herself to get up.

"I've a bit of a headache, nothing serious," she said. "Tell the old lady not to worry. After lying down for a while I'm feeling better." With that she sent the maid back.

She then thought the whole business over carefully once more, and hit on a cunning plan to kill several birds with one stone, working out the safest measures to achieve this. This done, instead of disclosing her plan to Pinger, she behaved as cheerfully as if nothing had happened, giving no sign of her fury and jealousy. She sent a maid to fetch Lai Wang and ordered him to bring workers the next day to clean up, repaper and furnish the eastern rooms in their compound. Pinger and the others were nonplussed by this.

If you want to know the upshot, read the next chapter.

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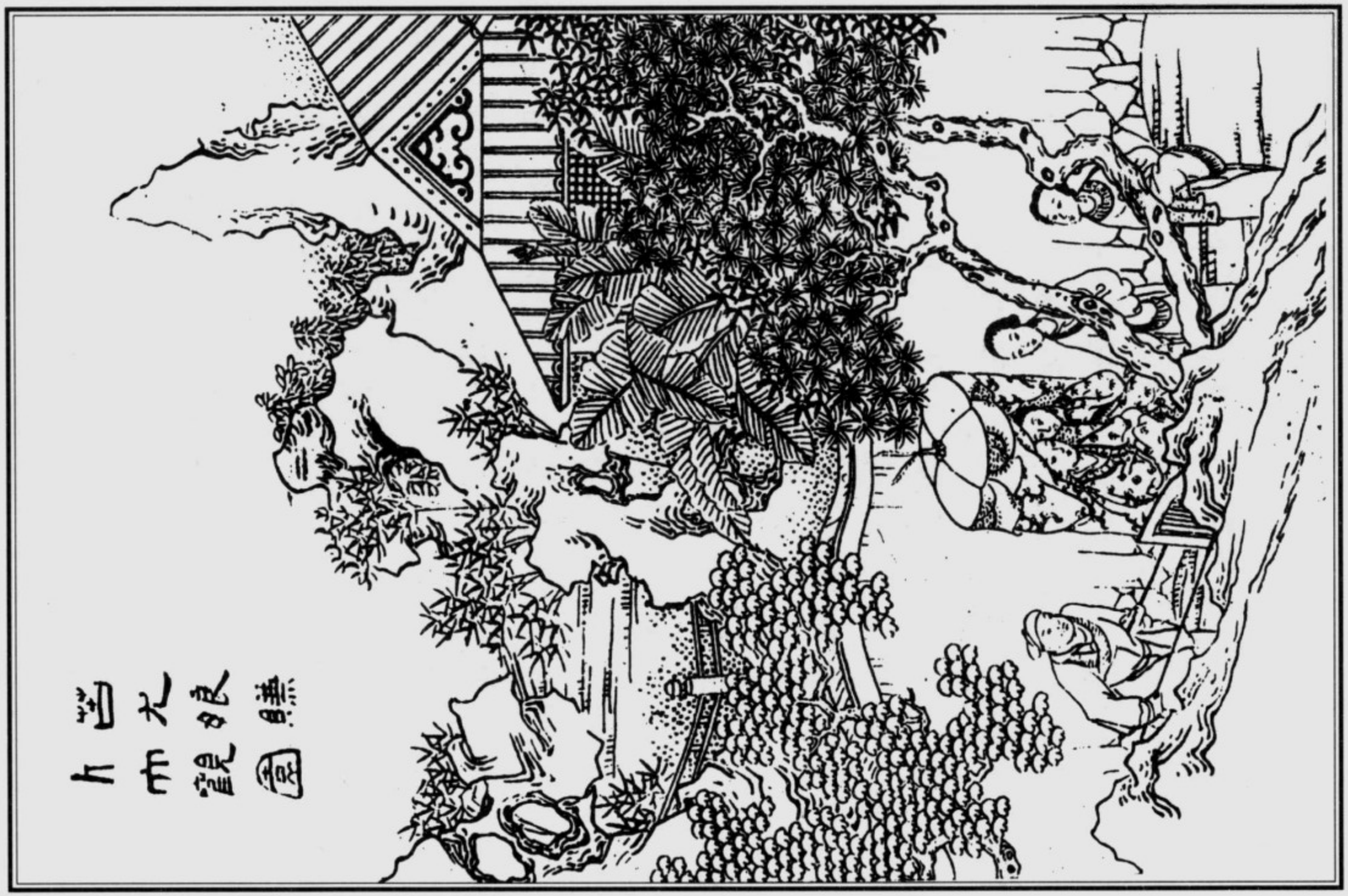

尤氏
賈璉
偷情

第六十八回

苦尤娘赚入大观园　酸凤姐闹翻宁国府

话说贾琏起身去后，偏值平安节度巡边在外，约一个月方回。贾琏未得确信，只得住在下处等候。及至回来相见，将事办妥，回程已是将两个月的限了。

谁知凤姐心下早已算定，只待贾琏前脚走了，回来便传各色匠役，收拾东厢房三间，照依自己正室一样装饰陈设。至十四日便回明贾母王夫人，说十五日一早要到姑子庙进香去。只带了平儿、丰儿、周瑞媳妇、来旺媳妇四人，未曾上车，便将原故告诉了众人。又吩咐众人，素衣素盖，一径前来。

兴儿引路，一直到了二姐门前扣门。鲍二家的开了门。兴儿笑说："快回二奶奶去，大奶奶来了。"鲍二家的听了这话，顶梁骨走了真魂，忙飞进报与尤二姐。尤二姐虽也一惊，但已来了，只得以礼相见，于是忙整衣来迎接。出至门前，凤姐方下车进来。尤二姐一看，只见头上皆是素白银器，身上月白缎袄，青缎披风，白绫素裙。眉弯柳叶，高吊两梢，目横丹凤，神凝三角。俏丽若三春之桃，清素若九秋之菊。两个女人搀扶入院来，尤二姐陪笑忙迎上来万福，张

Chapter 68

Unhappy Second Sister You Is Decoyed into Grand View Garden Jealous Xifeng Makes a Scene in the Ning Mansion

When Jia Lian left on his mission, it so happened that the Governor of Pinganzhou was away for a month inspecting border areas. To get a definite reply, Jia Lian had to wait in the hostel for his return. Thus by the time the governor came back, received him and settled the matter, nearly two months had passed.

Xifeng's plans were already laid. As soon as Jia Lian left she ordered workmen to fix up the three rooms on the eastern side, decorating and furnishing them just like her own. On the fourteenth, she reported to the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang that she wanted to go to the nunnery to offer incense the next morning, taking only Pinger, Fenger and the wives of Zhou Rui and Lai Wang. Before setting out she disclosed her true purpose to them and ordered them all to wear mourning.

Then they set off, Xinger leading the way, to the house where Second Sister You lived. He knocked at the gate, which was opened by Bao Er's wife.

Xinger announced with a grin, "Tell the Second Mistress that Madam Lian is here. Quick!"

Frightened out of her wits, Bao Er's wife flew in to report this. Second Sister You, too, was taken aback; but since Xifeng had come she had no choice but to receive her with befitting respect. She hastily straightened her clothes and went out to meet her as Xifeng dismounted from her carriage and stepped through the gate.

Second Sister You saw that Xifeng had nothing but silver trinkets in her hair and was wearing a pale blue satin jacket, black satin cape and white silk skirt. Under eyebrows arched like willow leaves her almond eyes were as bright as those of a phoenix; she was pretty as peach-blossom in spring, simple and austere as chrysanthemums in autumn. As

口便叫："姐姐下降，不曾远迎，望恕仓促之罪。"说着便福了下来。凤姐忙陪笑还礼不迭。二人携手同入室中。

凤姐上座，尤二姐命丫鬟拿褥子来便行礼，说："奴家年轻，一从到了这里，诸事皆系家母和家姐商议主张。今日有幸相会，若姐姐不弃奴家寒微，凡事求姐姐的指示教训。奴亦倾心吐胆，只伏侍姐姐。"说着，便行下礼去。凤姐儿忙下座以礼相还，口内忙说："皆因奴家妇人之见，一味的只劝二爷保重，不可在外眠花卧柳，恐惹太爷、太太耽心。这都是你我的痴心，怎奈二爷错会了我的意。眠花宿柳之事瞒着家里也罢了；如今娶了姐姐作二房这样正经大事，也是人家大礼，却不曾对我说。我也曾劝二爷早办这件事，果然生个一男半女，连我后来也有靠，不想二爷反以我为那等嫉妒不堪的人，私自办了，真使我有冤没处诉。我的这个心，惟天地可表。前十天头里，我就风闻着知了，只怕二爷又错想了，遂不敢先说；目今可巧二爷走了，所以我亲自过来拜见，还求姐姐体谅我的苦心，起动大驾，挪至家中。你我姊妹同居同处，彼此合心谏劝二爷，慎重事务，保养身体，方是大礼。姐姐在外头，我在里头，姐姐想着我心里怎么过的

the wives of Zhou Rui and Lai Wang helped her into the courtyard, Second Sister You stepped forward with a smile to curtsey to her, addressing her as "elder sister."

"I wasn't expecting the honour of this visit, so I didn't come out to meet you," she apologized. "Please overlook my negligence, elder sister."Again she curtseyed.

Smiling, Xifeng returned her greeting and hand in hand they entered the house, where Xifeng took the seat of honour while Second Sister ordered her maid to bring a cushion, then knelt to pay her respects.

"Your slave is young," she said. "Since coming here, I've left all decisions to my mother and my step-sister. Now that I've had the good fortune to meet you, elder sister, if you don't consider me too far beneath you I'd like to ask for your advice and instructions. I'll bare my heart to you, too, and wait upon you." She bowed low.

Xifeng left her seat to return the courtesy.

"This all comes of my behaving like a silly woman," she answered, "for ever advising my husband to take good care of his health and keep away from brothels, to spare his parents worry. We're both fond, foolish women. But he seems to have misunderstood me. If he'd taken a mistress outside and hidden it from me, that wouldn't have signified; but now he's taken you as his second wife, and that's an important matter, in accordance with the rules of propriety, yet he never told me about it.

"Actually, I'd advised him to take another wife, because if he begets a son I, too, shall have someone to rely on in future. But he seems to have thought me the jealous type, and so he took this important step in secret. That was really wronging me! And to whom can I complain but to Heaven and Earth?

"This came to my ears about ten days ago, but for fear of vexing my husband I didn't venture to take it up with him. Now that he happens to have gone on a long journey, I've come to call on you in person. I do hope you'll understand how much I take this to heart and agree to move into our house so that we can live together as sisters, both of one mind, to advise Second Master to pay careful attention to his business and to look after his health. This is only right and proper.

"Foolish and lowly as I am, and unworthy of your company, if we live

去呢?再者，使外人听着，不但我的声名不好听，就是姐姐的名儿也不雅；况且二爷的名声更是要紧，倒是谈论咱们姐妹们还是小事。至于那起下人小人之言，未免见我素日持家太严，背后加减些言语，自是常情。姐姐乃何等样人物，岂可信真?若我实有不好之处，上头三层公婆，有无数姐妹妯娌，况贾府世代名家，岂容我到今日?今日二爷私娶姐姐在外，若别人则怒，我则以为幸。正是天地神佛不忍我被小人们诽谤，故生此事。我今来求姐姐进去和我一样同居同处，同分同例，同侍公婆，同谏丈夫。喜则同喜，悲则同悲；情同亲妹，和同骨肉。不但那起小人见了，自悔从前错认了我；就是二爷来家一见，他作丈夫之人，心中也未免后悔。所以姐姐竟是我的大恩人，使我从前之名一洗无余了。若姐姐不随奴去，奴亦情愿在此相陪。奴愿作妹子，每日服侍姐姐梳洗。只求姐姐在二爷跟前替我好言方便，容我一席之地安身，奴死也愿意。”说着，便呜呜咽咽哭将起来。尤二姐见了这般，也不免滴下泪来。

二人对见了礼，分序坐下。平儿忙也上来要见礼。尤二姐见他打扮不凡，举止品貌不俗，料定是平儿，连忙亲身挽住，只叫:“妹子快休如此，你我是一样的人。”凤姐忙也起身笑说:“折死他了!妹子只管受礼，他原是咱们的丫头。以

in separate establishments like this, how do you suppose I can set my mind at rest? Besides, once outsiders know, it will reflect badly on both of our reputations. Not that gossip about us is so serious — it's Second Master's reputation that really counts. Besides, it's entirely up tp you to save me from getting a bad name.

I daresay you've heard talk about me from servants who think I run the household too strictly and most likely exaggerate behind my back. But how can someone as intelligent and broad-minded as you believe such disgruntled talk? If I were really so impossible, why have three generations of my seniors as well as all my cousins and in-laws — and don't forget that the Jias are a well-known old family — put up with me all this time?Anyone else would have been angry at his marrying you in secret like this outside, but I actually consider it a blessing which shows that the gods and Buddhas of Heaven and Earth don't want me to be defamed by those low creatures' slander.

"I've come today to beg you to move in and live with me, on the same footing, share and share alike to serve our father and mother-in-law and advise our husband together, and share the same griefs and joys like real sisters. Then those low types will be sorry they sized me up wrongly; and when Second Master comes back and sees this, he as our husband will regret his mistake. So, sister, you'll have become my benefactress, redeeming my reputation.

"If you won't agree to coming back with me, I'll gladly move out to live with you here and wait on you like a younger sister. All I beg of you is to put in a few good words for me to Second Master, so that he'll allow me somewhere to stay. Then I shall die content."

With that she started sobbing and weeping, moving Second Sister to tears too.

After this exchange they resumed their seats, and now Pinger came in to pay her respects. As she was unusually welldressed and looked a cut above the other maids, Second Sister You realized who she was and hastily laid a restraining hand on her arm.

"Don't do that, sister!" she exclaimed. "You and I are of the same rank."

Xifeng rose with a smile to protest, "Don't overrate her — that

后快别如此。”说着，又命周家的从包袱里取出四匹上色尺头来，四对金珠簪环，为拜见之礼。尤二姐忙拜受了。二人吃茶，对诉已往之事。凤姐口内全是自怨自错，“怨不得别人，如今只求姐姐疼我”等语。尤二姐见了这般，便认他作极好的人，小人不遂心诽谤主子亦是常理，故倾心吐胆，叙了一回，竟把凤姐认为知己。又见周瑞等媳妇在旁边称扬凤姐素日许多善政，只是吃亏心太痴了，惹人怨；又说：“已经预备了房屋，奶奶进去一看便知。”尤氏心中早已要进去同住方好，今又见如此，岂有不允之理，便说：“原该跟了姐姐去，只是这里怎样？”凤姐道：“这有何难，姐姐的箱笼细软，只管着小厮搬了进去。这些粗笨货要他无用，还叫人看管。姐姐说谁妥当就叫谁在这里。”尤二姐忙说：“今日既遇见姐姐，这一进去，凡事只凭姐姐料理。我也来的日子浅，也不曾当过家，不明白世事，如何敢作主？这几件箱笼拿进去罢。我也没有什么东西，那也不过是二爷的。”凤姐听了，便命周瑞家的记清，好生看管着抬到东厢房去。于是催着尤二姐穿戴了，二人携手上车，又同坐一处，又悄悄的告诉他：“我们家的规矩大。这事老太太一概不知，倘若知二

would spoil what little good fortune she may have! Just let her pay her respects, sister. She's after all our maid. There's no need to stand on ceremony with her."

She then ordered Zhou Rui's wife to unwrap four rolls of fine silk and four pairs of jewelled trinkets set in gold as her gift to Second Sister You at this first meeting, and these were accepted with thanks. Then, sipping tea, they spoke of what had happened.

"It was all my fault," Xifeng kept reiterating. "No one else is to blame. But do be good to me."

Second Sister, quite taken in by her protestations, thought it was only natural for disgruntled servants to run down their mistress. So she replied very frankly, treating Xifeng as a trusted friend. Moreover, Mrs. Zhou and the other serving women there praised Xifeng for her goodness, saying it was her being honest to a fault which had given rise to resentment. They announced too that the house had been made ready, as the new mistress would see for herself when she moved in. Second Sister had always thought it would be better for her to live in the Jia mansion, and hearing all this she naturally agreed.

"I ought to accompany you, sister," she said. "But what about this household here?"

"That's no problem," Xifeng assured her. "Just get the servants to take over your personal belongings. The furniture here won't be needed. You can assign anyone you think fit to stay here so as to keep an eye on it."

"Since I've met you today, elder sister, I'll leave all the arrangements for the removal to you. I haven't been here long, and never having run a house before I'm too inexperienced to make decisions. These few cases can be taken. I've really nothing else here of my own, the other things belong to Second Master."

Xifeng ordered Zhou Rui's wife to make a note of these cases and see to it that they were carried carefully to the eastern rooms. Then she urged Second Sister to put on her jewels and they went out hand in hand to mount the carriage, in which they sat side by side.

"Our family rules are strict," Xifeng now told her confidentially. "So far the old lady knows nothing about this business. If they learned that the

爷孝中娶你，管把他打死了。如今且别见老太太、太太。我们有一个花园子极大，姊妹们住着，容易没人去的。你这一去，且在园里住两天，等我设个法子回明白了，那时再见方妥。”尤二姐道：“任凭姐姐裁处。”那些跟车的小厮们皆是预先说明的，如今不进大门，竟奔后门而来。

下了车，赶散众人。凤姐便带尤氏进了大观园的后门，来到李纨处相见了。彼时大观园中，十停人已有九停人知道了，今忽见凤姐带了进来，引动多人来看问。尤二姐一一见过。众人见他标致和悦，无不称扬。凤姐一一的吩咐了众人：“都不许在外走了风声，若老太太、太太知道了，我先叫你们死。”园中婆子丫鬟都素惧凤姐的，又系贾琏国孝家孝中所行之事，知道关系非常，都不管这事。凤姐悄悄的求李纨收养几日，“等回明了，我们自然过去的。”李纨见凤姐那边已收拾房屋，况在服中，不好张扬，自是正理，只得收下权住。凤姐又变法将他的丫头一概退出，又将自己的一个丫头送他使唤。暗暗吩咐园中媳妇们：“好生照看着他。若有走失逃亡，一概和你们算账。”自己又去暗中行事。合家之人

Second Master married you while still in mourning, they'd have him beaten to death! So we can't present you yet to Their Ladyships. We have a very big garden where the girls of our family live, but other people hardly ever go there. Now that you're moving over, you can stay in the Garden for a couple of days till I've found some way to break this news, and then it will be all right to pay your respects."

"Do exactly as you think best, elder sister," acquiesced Second Sister.

As the pages accompanying the carriage had received their orders in advance, instead of entering the main gate they went straight to the one at the back; and as soon as the ladies alighted, everyone in the neighbourhood was chased away. Then Xifeng led Second Sister through the back gate of Grand View Garden to see Li Wan.

By this time most of the inmates of the Garden had heard the news. Now that they saw Xifeng bringing Second Sister in, they flocked over to see her and she greeted each in turn. Not one but was very favourably impressed by her beauty and her charm.

"Don't let word of this get out," Xifeng warned them all. "If it comes to the ears of Their Ladyships, I'll kill the lot of you!"

The matrons and maids in the Garden were all afraid of Xifeng. And as Jia Lian had taken this second wife while observing state mourning and family mourning too, they knew it was a most serious offence and took care not to speak of the matter.

Xifeng quietly asked Li Wan to put up the new arrival for a few days.

"Once this business is straightened out." she said, "of course she'll move over with me."

Knowing that rooms had been made ready in Jia Lian's quarters and that it would not be fitting to announce this marriage during the period of mourning, Li Wan agreed.

Xifeng then dismissed all Second Sister's maids, assigning some of her own to wait on her, and ordered the women in the Garden to look after her well.

"If she disappears or runs away, you'll have to answer for it!" she threatened them, after which she went off to make other secret arrangements.

Everyone in the household was amazed to see how benevolent Xifeng

无不纳罕，都说："看他如何这等贤惠起来了。"

那尤二姐得了这个所在，又见园中姊妹各各相好，倒也安心乐业的，自为得其所矣。谁知三日之后，丫头善姐便有些不服使唤起来。尤二姐因说："没了头油了，你去回声大奶奶拿些来。"善姐道："二奶奶，你怎么不知好歹没眼色！我们奶奶天天承应了老太太，又要承应这边太太那边太太。这些妯娌姊妹，上下几百男女，天天起来，都等他的话。一日少说，大事也有一二十件，小事还有三五十件。外头的从娘娘算起，以及王公侯伯家多少人情客礼，家里又有这些亲友的调度。那里为这点子小事去烦琐他。我劝你省着些儿罢。咱们又不是明媒正娶来的，这是他亘古少有一个贤良人，才这样待你，若差些儿的人，听见了这话，吵嚷起来，把你丢在外，死不死，活不活，你又敢怎样呢！"一席话，说的尤氏垂了头，自为有这一说，少不得将就些罢了。那善姐渐渐连饭也不端来与他吃，或早一顿，或晚一顿，所拿来之物，皆是剩的。尤二姐说过两次，他反先乱叫起来。尤二姐又怕人笑他不安分，少不得忍着。隔上五日八日见凤姐一面，凤姐却是和颜悦色，满嘴里"姐姐"不离口。又说："倘有下人不到之处，你降不住他们，只管告诉我，我打他们。"又骂丫头、媳妇说："我深知你们，软的欺，硬的怕，背开我的眼，还怕谁。倘或二奶奶告诉我一个不字，我要你们的

had become. As for Second Sister, now that she had found this niche and all the girls in the Garden treated her well, she was quite contented and happy, thinking her future assured.

After three days, however, Shanjie, the maid assigned to her, started showing signs of insubordination.

"There's no hair-oil left," Second Sister told her. "Go and ask Madam Lian for some."

"How can you be so inconsiderate, madam?" Shanjie retorted. "Madam Lian has to look after the old lady every day, as well as the mistresses of both mansions and all the young ladies. At the same time she has to give orders to several hundred men-servants and women-servants all told. Not a day goes by but she has ten or twenty important matters to attend to, besides dozens of minor ones. Outside, she has to see to sending gifts and returning the courtesies of so many noble families from Her Imperial Highness down to princess and marquises; on top of which she has to cope with countless relatives and friends, as well as receiving or sending out thousands of taels of silver every day. How can you trouble her with trifles like this? I wouldn't be so demanding if I were you. Yours isn't a proper marriage. She's treating you well because she's so exceptionally kind and generous. If not for that, hearing the way you talk, she could well storm at you and kick you out. And then what could you do? You'd really be stranded."

This harangue made Second Sister hang her head. She saw she would just have to stomach such slights. And things went from bad to worse: Shanjie even stopped fetching her meals, or served them unpunctually, bringing nothing but scraps. If Second Sister complained, the maid started screaming at her; but for fear others might scoff that she didn't know her place, she had to put up with it. Every week or so when she happened to see Xifeng, the latter was all smiles and sweetness, for ever addressing her as "my dear sister."

"If any servants are remiss and you can't control them, just let me know and I'll have them beaten," promised Xifeng. Then she scolded the maids and matrons, "I know the way you take advantage of those who are kind and fear only those who are hard on you. Once my back's turned you're not afraid of anyone. If I hear one word of complaint from

命。”尤氏见他这般的好心，思想：“既有他，何必我又多事。下人不知好歹，也是常情。我若告了，他们受了委屈，反叫人说我不贤良。”因此反替他们遮掩。

凤姐一面使来旺在外打听细事，这尤二姐之事皆已深知。原来已有了婆家的，女婿现在才十九岁，成日在外嫖赌，不理生业，家私花尽，父亲撵他出来，现在赌钱厂存身。父亲得了尤婆十两银子退了亲的，这女婿尚不知道。原来这小伙子名叫张华。凤姐都一一尽知原委，便封了二十两银子与来旺，悄悄命他将张华勾来养活，着他写一张状子，只管往有司衙门中告去，就告琏二爷“国孝家孝之中，背旨瞒亲，仗财依势，强逼退亲，停妻再娶”等语。这张华也深知利害，先不敢造次。来旺回了凤姐，凤姐气的骂：“癞狗扶不上墙去的种子。你细细的说给他，便告我们家谋反也没事的。不过是借他一闹，大家没脸。若告大了，我这里自然能够平息。”来旺领命，只得细说与张华。凤姐又吩咐来旺：“他若告了，你就和他对词去。”如此如此，这般这般，“我自有道理。”来旺听了有他做主，便又命张华状子上添上自

the second mistress, I'll have your lives for it!"

Second Sister was taken in by this show of kindness.

"With her taking my side like this, I'd better not make any fuss," she reflected. "Some servants have no sense, that's only natural. If I report them and get them into trouble, I'm the one people will blame." So she covered up for the maids instead.

Meanwhile Xifeng had sent Lai Wang out to make detailed inquiries, and had now ascertained that Second Sister had indeed been engaged before to a certain Zhang Hua now nineteen, a wastrel and loafer who spent his time gambling and whoring and had squandered his family's money. Having been driven out by his father, he now stayed in a gambling den. And his father, without telling him, had accepted ten taels of silver from old Mrs. You for cancelling the engagement.

After Xifeng had learned all these particulars, she gave Lai Wang a packet of twenty taels of silver and secretly ordered him to get Zhang Hua to stay with him and bring a suit against Jia Lian. He was to accuse him of marrying during a period of state and family mourning, against Imperial decree and unknown to his parents; of relying on his wealth and power to force Zhang Hua to renounce his engagement; and of taking a second wife without the consent of his first.

Zhang Hua, however, only too well aware of the danger involved, dared not bring such a charge. When Lai Wang reported this to Xifeng she fumed:

"Damn him for a mangy cur that won't let itself be hepled over a wall! Go and explain to him that it doesn't matter even if he accuses our family of *high treason.* I just want him to make a row so that everyone loses face. If big trouble comes of it, I can always smooth things over."

Lai Wang carried out her orders and explained this to Zhang Hua.

Xifeng also instructed Lai Wang,"Get him to implicate you, then *you* can confront him in court — I'll tell you just what to say — and I guarantee everything will be all right."

When Lai Wang saw that he had Xifeng's backing, he told Zhang Hua to include his name in his charge.

"Just accuse me of acting as the middleman and of putting Second

己，说："你只告调唆来往过付，都是我就是了。"张华便得了主意，和来旺商议定了，写上一纸状子，次日便往都察院喊了冤。

察院坐堂看状，见是告贾琏的事，上面有家人来旺一人，只得传来旺来对词。青衣不敢擅入，只命人带信。那来旺正等着此事，不用人带信，早在这条街上等候。见了青衣，反迎上去笑道："惊动众位兄弟，必是兄弟的事犯了。说不得，快来套上。"众青衣不敢，只说："你老去罢，别闹了。"于是来至堂前跪了。察院命将状子与他看，来旺故意看了一遍，碰头说道："这事小的尽知，小的主人实有此事。但这张华素与小的有仇，故意攀扯小的在内。其中还有别人，求老爷再问。"张华碰头说："虽还有人，小的不敢告他，所以只告他下人。"来旺故意急的说："糊涂东西，这不快说出来！这是朝廷公堂之上，凭是主子，也要说出来。"张华便说出贾蓉来。察院听了无法，只得去传贾蓉。凤姐又差了庆儿暗中打听，告了起来，便忙将王信唤来，告诉他此事，命他托察院只虚张声势惊唬而已，又拿了三百银子与他去打点。是夜王信到了察院私第，安了根子。那察院深知原委，收了赃银。次日回堂，只说张华无赖，因拖欠了贾府银两，枉捏虚词，诬赖良人。都察院又素与王子腾相好，王信

Master up to this," he said.

Zhang Hua, given this cue, acted on Lai Wang's advice and wrote out his plaint, taking it the next morning to the Court of Censors. When the judge took his seat in the court and saw that this charge against Jia Lian involved his servant Lai Wang, he had no choice but to send for the latter to answer the charge. The runners, not daring to enter the Jia mansion, meant to order a servant to deliver the summons. But Lai Wang had reckoned on their coming, and was already waiting out in the street, When he saw the runners he approached them with a smile.

"Sorry to have put you to this trouble, brothers," he said, "I must have done wrong. All right, put the chains round my neck."

Not venturing to do this, they replied, "Please just come quietly, sir, and stop joking."

Then Lai Wang went to the court and knelt down before the judge, who showed him the charge. He pretended to read it through and then kowtowed.

"I was in the know about this," he admitted. "My master did this all right. But this fellow Zhang Hua has a grudge against me, that's why he's accused me of being the middleman. Actually, it was someone else. I beg Your Honour to make investigations."

Zhang Hua, knowtowing too, said, "That's true; but it's someone I dared not mention, that's why I accused the servant instead."

"Silly fool!" Lai Wang made a show of desperation. "Hurry up and come clean. This is a government court. You must name him even if he's a gentleman."

Then Zhang Hua named Jia Rong. And the judge had to have him served with a summons.

Xifeng had secretly sent Qinger to find out when this summons was issued. Now she promptly called for Wang Xin, explained what had happened, and told him to go and bribe the judge with three hundred taels just to make a display of severity in order to frighten the culprits.

That evening Wang Xin went to the judge's house and fixed things up. The judge, knowing the situation, accepted the bribe and the next day announced in court that Zhang Hua was a scoundrel who had trumped up this charge against innocent people because he was in debt to the Jia

也只到家说了一声，况是贾府之人，巴不得了事，便也不提此事，且都收下，只传贾蓉对词。

且说贾蓉等正忙着贾珍之事，忽有人来报信，说有人告你们如此如此，快作道理。贾蓉慌了，忙来回贾珍。贾珍说："我早防了这一着，只亏他大胆子。"即刻封了二百银子，着人去打点察院，又命家人去对词。正商议之间，人报："西府二奶奶来了。"贾珍听了这句，倒吃了一惊，忙要同贾蓉藏躲。不想凤姐进来了，说："好大哥哥，带着兄弟们干的好事！"贾蓉忙请安，凤姐拉了他就进来。贾珍还笑说："好生伺候你姑妈，吩咐他们杀牲口备饭。"说了，忙命备马，躲往别处去了。

这里凤姐带着贾蓉走至上房，尤氏正迎了出来，见凤姐气色不善，忙笑说："什么事情这么忙？"凤姐照脸一口唾沫啐了来，说道："你尤家的丫头没人要了，偷着只往贾家送！难道贾家的人都是好的，普天下死绝了男人了！你就愿意给，也要三媒六证，大家说明，成个体统才是。你痰迷了心，脂油蒙了窍，国孝家孝两重在身，就把个人送来了。这会子被人家告我们，我又是个没脚蟹，连官场中都知道我利害吃醋，如今指名提我，要休我。我来了在你家，干错了什

family. For as this judge was on good terms with Wang Ziteng, after a word in private from Wang Xin he was all for settling the matter without making trouble for the Jias. He therefore said no more, simply detained the plaintiff and the accused and summoned Jia Rong to court.

Jia Rong was seeing to some business for Jia Zhen when someone brought him word of this charge against him and urged him to think of a way out at once. He made haste to report this to Jia Zhen.

"I was prepared for this; but that fellow certainly has a nerve!" said Jia Zhen.

At once he sealed two hundred taels in a packet to be sent to the judge, and ordered a servant to go and answer the charge. As they were discussing their next step, the arrival of Madam Lian from the West Mansion was announced. Both men started and wanted to slip away into hiding, but it was too late — Xifeng had already entered.

"A fine elder brother you are!"she cried. "A fine thing you got your younger brother to do!"

Jia Rong hastily stepped forward to pay his respects. Xifeng simply caught hold of him and went on in.

"Entertain your aunt well," said Jia Zhen. "Order a good meal for her." He then called for his horse and made off.

Xifeng marched Jia Rong towards the inner rooms and Madam You came out to meet her.

"What's the matter?" she asked, seeing how furious she looked. "Why this hurry?"

Xifeng spat in her face.

"Couldn't you find husbands for the girls of your You family that you had to smuggle them into the Jia family?" she demanded. "Are all men of the Jias so wonderful? Have all the other men in the world died out? Even if you want to pawn off your sisters, there's a proper procedure for marriage and it should be announced in a decent way. Have you taken leave of your senses? How could you send her over during a time of state and family mourning? And now that someone's brought a charge against us, I'm all in a flurry. Even the court thinks me a jealous shrew and has summoned me to stand trial. My name will be mud! And I shall be divorced!

么不是，你们这等害我?或是老太太、太太有了话在你心里，使你们做这圈套，要挤我出去?如今咱们两个一同去见官，分证明白。回来咱们公同请了合族中人，大家觌面说个明白。给我休书，我就走路!”一面说，一面大哭，拉着尤氏，只要去见官。急的贾蓉跪在地下碰头，只求“姑娘、婶婶息怒。”凤姐一面又骂贾蓉:“天雷劈出脑子、五鬼分尸的、没良心的种子!不知天有多高，地有多厚，成日家调三窝四，干出这些没天理、没王法、败家破业的营生。你死了的娘阴灵儿也不容你，祖宗也不容你，还敢来劝我!”哭骂着扬手就打。贾蓉忙磕头有声说:“婶婶别动气，仔细手，让我自己打。婶婶别生气。”说着，自己举手左右开弓，自己打了一顿嘴巴子，又自己问着自己说:“以后可再顾三不顾四的混管闲事了?以后还单听叔叔的话不听婶婶的话了?”众人又是劝，又要笑，又不敢笑。

凤姐滚到尤氏怀里，嚎天动地，大放悲声，只说:“给你兄弟娶亲，我不恼。为什么使他违旨背亲，将混账名儿给我背着?咱们只去见官，省得捕快皂隶来拿。再者，咱们只过去，见了老太太、太太、阖族中人，大家公议了，我既不贤良，又不容丈夫娶亲买妾，只给我一纸休书，我即刻就走。你妹妹我已亲身接了来家，生怕老太太、太太生气，也不敢回，现在三茶六饭，金奴银婢的住在园里。我这里赶着收拾房子，和我的一样，只等老太太知道了。原说接过来大家安

"What wrong have I done you since I've come to this house that you treat me so cruelly? Or did Their Ladyships tip you a hint to trap me like this so as to get rid of me? Let's go to face the judge now, both of us, to clear this up. Then we can put the case before the whole clan. If they give me a bill of divorce, I'll leave."

Sobbing and storming she caught hold of Madam You, insisting on going to court. Jia Rong knelt in desperation and kowtowed, begging her not to be angry.

"May lightning blast your skull!" she swore at him. "May five devils tear you apart, you heartless wretch! You fear nothing in heaven or on earth, playing such dirty tricks all the time and doing such shameless, lawless things to ruin our family. Even your dead mother's spirit will disown you, so will all your ancestors. How dare you appeal to me?"

After this tearful tirade she raised her hand to strike him. Jia Rong thumped his head on the ground again.

"Don't be angry, aunt!" he cried. "Don't hurt your hand — let me slap myself instead. Please don't be angry, auntie."

He raised his hands and slapped himself on both cheeks.

"Will you meddle in that thoughtless way again?" he asked himself. "Just listen to your uncle and not to your aunt?"

All present, repressing smiles, begged him to stop.

And now Xifeng threw herself into Madam You's arms to weep and wail, calling on Heaven and Earth.

"I wouldn't mind you finding another wife for your brother in-law," she sobbed. "But why make him flout the Imperial decree and keep it secret from his parents? Why give *me* a bad name? We must go to find the judge before he sends police and runners to arrest me. After that we must go and see Their Ladyships and call the whole clan together to discuss this. If I've acted so badly, refusing to let my husband take a second wife or another concubine, just give me a bill of divorce and I'll leave at once.

"Actually, I've fetched your sister here myself, but didn't venture to report it to Their Ladyships for fear they'd be angry. She has maids in the Garden to wait on her hand and foot, and I've prepared rooms for her in our place exactly like my own, where I meant to take her as soon

分守己的，我也不提旧事了。谁知又是有了人家的。不知你们干的什么事，我一概不知道。如今告我，我昨日急了，纵然我出去见官，也丢的是你贾家的脸，少不得偷把太太五百银子去打点。如今把我的人还锁在那里。”说了又哭，哭了又骂，后来放声又哭起祖宗爹妈来，又要寻死撞头。把个尤氏揉搓成了一个面团，衣服上全是眼泪鼻涕。尤氏没别话，只骂贾蓉：“孽障种子！和你老子作的好事！我就说不好的。”凤姐听说，哭着，两手搬着尤氏的脸，紧对相问道：“你发昏了？你的嘴里难道有茄子塞着？不然他们给你嚼子衔上了？为什么你不告诉我去？你若告诉了我，这会子平安了，怎得经官动府，闹到这步田地？你这会子还抱怨他们。自古说：‘妻贤夫祸少，表壮不如里壮。’你但凡是个好的，他们怎得闹出这些事来！你又没才干，又没口齿，锯了嘴子的葫芦，就只会一味瞎小心图贤良的名儿。总是他们也不怕你，也不听你。”说着又啐了几口。尤氏也哭道：“何曾不是这样。你不信问问跟的人，我何曾不劝的，也得他们听。叫我怎么样呢，怨不得妹妹生气，我只好听着罢了。”

众姬妾、丫鬟、媳妇已是乌压压跪了一地，陪笑求说：“二奶奶最圣明的，虽是我们奶奶的不是，奶奶也作贱的够了。当着奴才们，奶奶们素日何等的好来？如今还求奶奶给

as the old lady knew. We could all have settled down then, minding our own business, and I'd have let bygones be bygones. How was I to know that she was engaged to another man before? How was I to know what you'd been up to?

"Yesterday, hearing that her betrothed had brought a charge against me, I was so desperate that I had to take five hundred taels of the mistress' silver to use as a bribe; because if I were summoned to court your Jia family would lose face. And my servant is still locked up by the police."

She went on storming and wailing, sobbingly invoking their ancestors and her parents, then tried to dash out her brains and kill herself. Madam You, reduced to a squelch, her clothes covered with tears and snot, could only round on Jia Rong.

"You degenerate!" she scolded. "You and your father are to blame for this. I warned you against it."

Xifeng let out another wail, clasping Madam You's face between both hands.

"Were you crazy?" she demanded. "Was your mouth stuffed with eggplant or with a bit and curb, that you couldn't let me know? If you had, I wouldn't be in such a fix, with this business so out of hand it's been taken to court. Yet you're still trying to shift the blame to *them*! As the saying goes, 'A good wife keeps her husband out of trouble — a sound woman counts for more than a sound man.' If you were any good, how could they do such things? You're as stupid and dumb as a gourd with its tip sawn off. All you care about, you fool, is getting a *name* for goodness. So they're not afraid of you and won't listen to what you say." She spat again and again in disgust.

"That's how it was, really," sobbed Madam You. "If you don't believe me, ask the servants. Of course I tried to stop them — they just wouldn't listen. So what could I do? I don't blame you for being angry, sister, but I simply couldn't help it."

The concubines and maids kneeling fearfully round them now pleaded with Xifeng, "You're so wise and understanding, madam, even if our mistress did wrong you've got even with her now. Usually, in front of us slaves, you're both on the best of terms. So please leave her some face!"

留脸。”说着，捧上茶来。凤姐也摔了，一面止了哭，挽头发，又喝骂贾蓉：“出去请大哥哥来。我对面问他，亲大爷的孝才五七，侄儿娶亲，这个礼我竟不知道！我问问，也好学着日后教导子侄的。”贾蓉只跪着磕头，说：“这事原不与我父母相干，都是儿子一时吃了屎，调唆着叔叔作的。我父亲也并不知道。如今我父亲正要商量接太爷出殡，婶婶若闹起来，儿子也是一个死。只求婶婶责罚儿子，儿子谨领。这官司还求婶婶料理，儿子竟不能干这大事。婶婶是何等样人，岂不知俗语说的‘胳膊只折在袖子里’。儿子糊涂死了，既作了不肖的事，就同那猫儿狗儿一般。婶婶既教训，就不和儿子一般见识了，少不得还要婶婶费心费力将外头的事压住了才好。原是婶婶有这个不肖的儿子，既惹了祸，少不得委屈，还要疼儿子。”说着，又磕头不绝。

凤姐见他母子这般，也再难往前施展了，只得又转过一副形容言谈来，与尤氏反赔礼说：“我是年轻不知事的人，一听见有人告官了，把我吓昏了，不知方才怎样得罪了嫂子。可是蓉儿说的‘胳膊折了往袖子里藏’，少不得嫂子要体谅我。还要嫂子转替哥哥说了，先把这官司按下去才好。”尤氏、贾蓉一齐都说：“婶婶放心，横竖一点儿连累不着叔叔。婶婶方才说用过了五百两银子，少不得我娘儿们打点五百两银子与婶婶送过去，好补上，不然岂有反教婶婶又添上亏空之名，越发我们该死了。但还有一件，老太太、太太们跟前，婶婶还要周全方便，别提这些话方好。”凤姐又冷笑

They brought Xifeng some tea, but she smashed the cup. However, she stopped crying and smoothed her hair.

"Fetch your father here!" she ordered Jia Rong. "I want to ask him why, with still a fortnight to go before the mourning for the uncle was over, he let the nephew take a wife. I've never heard of such a thing! I must learn the rules of propriety from him so as to pass them on later to the young people."

Still on his knees, Jia Rong kowtowed and protested, "This had nothing to do with my parents. It was I who put my uncle up to it — I must have eaten some shit. My father knew nothing about it. He's gone now to prepare for the funeral procession. If you make a scene, aunt, it will be the death of me. Whatever punishment you impose I'll accept it, but for pity's sake settle this court case — it's too serious for me to handle. You're so intelligent you know the saying: 'If your arm is broken, hide it in your sleeve.' I was an utter fool. As I've done such a despicable thing, I'm just like a cat or a dog. Now that you've given me this lesson, auntie, do please do your best to settle this with the court. Though I've been so undutiful and wronged you, aunt, by causing all this trouble, what else can I do but beg you to take pity on me!" He went on kowtowing as if he would never stop.

The behaviour of mother and son made it hard for Xifeng to go on storming at them. She had to adopt a different attitude now.

Apologizing to Madam You she said, "I'm too young and inexperienced. When I heard the case had been taken to court, I was frightened out of my wits. How could I have been so rude to you just now, sister! Still, Rong is right: 'If your arm is broken, hide it in your sleeve.' You must forgive me. And please ask Cousin Zhen to lose no time in settling this lawsuit."

"Don't worry," Madam You and Jia Jung assured her.

"Uncle won't be involved at all," added Jia Rong. "You said just now you'd spent five hundred taels, aunt. Of course we'll get together that sum and send it over to make it up to you. How can we make you out of pocket over us? That would be even more outrageous. But one thing, aunt, will you help see to it that no word of this reaches Their Ladyships?"

Xifeng smiled sarcastically at Madam You.

道："你们饶压着我的头干了事，这会子反哄着我替你们周全。我虽然是个呆子，也呆不到如此。嫂子的兄弟是我的丈夫，嫂子既怕他绝后，我岂不比嫂子更怕绝后？嫂子的令妹就是我的妹子一样。我一听见这话，连夜喜欢的连觉也睡不成，赶着传人收拾了屋子，就要接进来同住。倒是奴才小人的见识，他们倒说：'奶奶太好性儿了。若是我们的主意，先回了老太太、太太，看是怎样，再收拾房子去接也不迟。'我听了这话，教我要打要骂的，才不言语了。谁知偏不称我的意，偏打我的嘴，半空里又跑出一个张华来告了一状。我听见了，吓的两夜没合眼儿，又不敢声张，只得求人去打听这张华是什么人，这样大胆。打听了两日，谁知是个无赖的花子。我年轻不知事，反笑了，说：'他告什么？'倒是小子们说：'原是二奶奶许了他的。他如今正是急了，冻死饿死也是个死；现在有这个理他抓着，他纵然死了，死的倒比冻死饿死还值些。怎么怨的他告呢。这事原是爷做的太急了。国孝一层罪，家孝一层罪，背着父母私娶一层罪，停妻再娶一层罪。俗语说：拼着一身剐，敢把皇帝拉下马。他穷疯了的人，什么事作不出来，况且他又拿着这满理，不告等请不成？'嫂子说，我便是个韩信张良，听了这话，也把智谋吓回去了。你兄弟又不在家，又没个商量，少不得拿钱去垫补，谁知越使钱越被人拿住了刀靶儿，越发来讹。我是耗子尾上长疮——多少脓水儿。所以又急又气，少不得来找嫂子。"尤氏贾蓉不等说完，都说："不必操心，自然要料理的。"贾蓉又道："那张华不过是穷急，故舍了命才告咱们。

"First you stab me in the back and now you ask me to hush it us for you! I may be a fool but I'm not all that foolish. Your cousin happens to be my husband, sister. If you were worried because he had no son, wouldn't I be still more worried? I look on your younger sister as my own sister. When I heard about this I was too excited to sleep and made my people get ready rooms at once, to fetch her in to live with up. Actually the servants had more sense: they said, 'You're too kind-hearted, madam. It seems to us it would be better to wait till you've reported this to Their Ladyships and see what they have to say.' That made me rage at them, so they said no more.

"But nothing worked out as I wanted. Like a slap in the face or a bolt from the blue came this suit brought by Zhang Hua. I had to beg people to find out who this Zhang Hua was, that he had such a nerve; and two days later I was told he was a rascally beggar. Being young and ignorant, I laughed and asked what he'd accused us of. The servants told me, 'The new mistress was engaged to him. Now he's desperate, liable to starve of freeze to death anyway, so he's seized on this chance. Even if he dies for it, it's a better bet than dying of hunger and cold; so how can you blame him? After all, the master acted too hastily and was guilty of two offences by marrying during state mourning and family mourning. He was wrong, too, to keep it a secret from his parents and to take a new wife without his wife's consent. As the proverb says, "One who will risk being sliced to pieces dare unsaddle the Emperor." A man so desperately poor will go to any lengths. He's in the right too, so why not make an indictment?"

"So you see, sister, even if I'd been as wise as Han Xin or Zhang Liang,[1] such talk would have frightened me out of my wits. Besides, with my husband away, I had no one to consult; I could only try to patch things up with money. Yet the more I gave him, the more I was at his mercy and the more he blackmailed me. But how much can he squeeze out of me? No more than from a pimple on a rat's tail. That's why I panicked and flew into such a rage that I came looking for you ...."

Not waiting for her to finish, Madam You and her son said,"Don't worry. We'll see to it."

Jia Rong added, "It's Zhang Hua's poverty that's made him so reck-

我如今想了一个法子，竟许他些银子，只叫他应了妄告不实的罪，咱们替他打点完了官司，他出来时再给他些银子就完了。”凤姐笑道：“好孩子，怨不得你顾一不顾二的作这些事出来。原来你竟糊涂。若照你这话，他暂且依了，且打出官司来又得了银子，眼前自然了事。这些人既是无赖之徒，银子到手一旦光了，他又寻事故讹诈。倘又叨登出事来，这可怎么样？虽不怕他，也终担心。搁不住他说，既没毛病，为什么反给银子？终久是不了之局。”贾蓉原是个明白人，听如此一说，便笑道：“我还有个主意，‘来是是非人，去是是非者’，这事还得我了才好。如今我竟去问张华个主意，或是他定要人，或是愿意了事得钱。他若说一定要人，少不得我去劝我二姨，叫他出来仍叫他去嫁他去；若说要钱，我们这里少不得给他。”凤姐忙道：“虽如此说，我断舍不得你姨娘出去，我也断不叫他出去。好侄儿，你若疼我，只宁可多给他钱为是。”贾蓉深知凤姐口虽如此，心却是巴不得本人出来，他却做贤良人。如今怎说怎依。凤姐欢喜了，又说：“外头好处了，家里终久怎么样呢？你也同我过去回明才是。”尤氏又慌了，拉凤姐讨主意如何撒谎才好。凤姐冷笑道：“既没这本事，谁叫你干这事了？这会子又这个腔儿，我又看不上。待要不出个主意，我又是个心慈面软的人，凭人

less he's risked his life to indict us. I know what to do. Promise him some money and get him to admit that he brought a false accusation; then we can settle the business. When he comes out, we'll give him some more silver and that will be that."

"What a clever boy!" said Xifeng derisively. "No wonder that you did this thing with no thought of the consequences. How stupid you are! Suppose he agreed to what you proposed and got money from us after the case was settled, of course that would be that — for the time being. But as such people are rascals, as soon as that silver was spent he'd start blackmailing us again. If he made further trouble what should we do? We may not be afraid of him, still it's something to worry about. And he can always say if we hadn't wronged him why should we give him money?"

Jia Rong had sense enough to understand this.

He said with a smile, "Well, I have another plan. Since I caused the trouble it's up to me to fix it. I'll go and sound Zhang Hua out. Does he want her back, or will he give her up and settle for money with which he can marry another girl? If he insists on having her, I'll go and persuade my second aunt to leave here and marry him; if he wants money, we shall have to give him some."

"That's all very well," said Xifeng hastily. "I certainly don't want her to leave us, and I certainly won't let her. If you've any feeling for me, nephew, just give him a bigger sum in settlement."

Jia Rong knew very well that in spite of Xifeng's protestations she really wanted to get rid of Second Sister and was only posing as broad-minded. He had to agree, however, to whatever she said, at which she looked delighted.

"The problem outside is easy to handle, but what about the arrangement at home?" Xifeng now asked. "You must come back with me to report this."

This threw Madam You into another panic. She begged Xifeng to make up some story for her.

"If you can't talk your way out, why do this in the first place?" asked Xifeng sarcastically. "I've no patience with the way you're carrying on. But it wouldn't be like me to refuse to find a way out for you, as I'm so

撮弄我，我还是一片痴心。说不得让我应起来。如今你们只别露面，我只领了你妹妹去与老太太、太太们磕头，只说原系你妹妹，我看上了很好。正因我不大生长，原说买两个人放在屋里的，今既见了你妹妹很好，而又是亲上做亲的，我愿意娶来做二房。皆因家中父母姊妹新近一概死了，日子又艰难，不能度日，若等百日之后，无奈无家无业，实难等待。我的主意接了进来，已经厢房收拾出来，暂且住着，等满了服再圆房。仗着我不害臊的脸，死活赖去，有了不是，也寻不着你们了。你们母子想想，可使得?”尤氏、贾蓉一齐笑说:“到底是婶婶宽洪大量，足智多谋。等事妥了，少不得我们娘儿两个过去拜谢。”尤氏忙命丫鬟们服侍凤姐梳妆洗脸，又摆酒饭，亲自递酒奉菜。

凤姐也不多坐，执意回去了。进园中将此事告诉与尤二姐，又说我怎么操心打听，又怎么设法子，须得如此，如此方救下众人才无罪，少不得我去拆开这鱼头才好。要知端的，下回分解。

soft-hearted that even when people trick me I still act like a fool. All right then, I'll see to this. Both of you keep out of it.

"I'll take your sister to pay her respects to Their Ladyships, and tell them that I took a fancy to her, and because I have no son I was thinking of buying a couple of concubines. Finding your sister so charming, and as we're relatives too, I wanted her to be Lian's second wife. But because her parents and sister had died recently and she was finding it hard to manage, with no home of her own, how could she possibly wait till after the full hundred days' mourning? So I decided to bring her into our house, and I've made the side rooms ready for her to stay in for the time being. Once the mourning is over she can live with my husband.

"I shall brazen it out somehow in my shameless way. If anyone is blamed it won't be *you.* What do you think of this plan?"

Madam You and Jia Rong responded, "It's most generous and kind of you. How clever you are! Once it's settled, we'll certainly both come to thank you."

Madam You ordered her maids to help Xifeng wash her face and comb her hair. Then the table was spread and she herself served the wine and food. Before long, however, Xifeng rose to go.

She went to the Garden and told Second Sister what had happened, explaining how worried she had been, how she had ascertained the facts, and what would have to be done to keep them all out of trouble. She promised to get them out of the dilemma.

To know what her plans really were, read the next chapter.

第六十九回

弄小巧用借剑杀人　觉大限吞生金自逝

话说尤二姐听了凤姐之言，感谢不尽，只得跟了他来。尤氏那边怎好不过来的，少不得也过来跟着凤姐去回，方是大礼。凤姐笑说："你只别说话，等我去说。"尤氏道："这个自然。但一有了不是，是往你身上推的。"说着，大家先来至贾母房中。

正值贾母和园中姊妹们说笑解闷，忽见凤姐带了一个标致小媳妇进来，忙觑着眼瞧，说："这是谁家的孩子！好可怜见的。"凤姐上来笑道："老祖宗倒细细的看看，好不好？"说着，忙拉二姐说："这是太婆婆，快磕头。"二姐忙行了大礼，展拜起来。又指着众姊妹说：这是某人某人，你先认了，等给老太太瞧过了，再见礼。二姐听了，一一又从新故意的问过，垂头站在旁边。贾母上下瞧了一遍，因又笑问："你姓什么？今年十几了？"凤姐忙又笑说："老祖宗且别问，只说比我俊不俊。"贾母又戴上眼镜，命鸳鸯、琥珀："把那

Chapter 69

Crafty Xifeng Kills Her Rival by Proxy And Second Sister Swallows Gold and Dies

Unable to express all her gratitude, Second Sister went off with Xifeng. And propriety required Madam You to accompany them to report to the old lady.

"You needn't say anything." Xifeng assured her, "Leave all the talking to me."

"Of course," agreed Madam You. "If there's any blame we'll let you take it."

They went first to the Lady Dowager's room where she was chatting and laughing with the girls from the Garden. At sight of the pretty young woman Xifeng had brought in, the old lady looked at her searchingly. "Whose child is this?" she asked. "So charming!"

Xifeng stepped forward and said with a smile, "Take a good look, Old Ancestress. Isn't she sweet?" Pulling Second Sister forward too, she told her, "This is grandmother-in-law. Hurry up and kowtow to her."

At once Second Sister prostrated herself to pay her respects. Then Xifeng introduced the girls to her one by one.

"Now you know them," she said. "After the old lady's through with inspecting you, you can pay your respects to each other."

Second Sister pretended that this was the first time she had met them, then stood there with lowered head while the Lady Dowager looked her up and down.

"What is your name?" she inquired. "How old are you?"

"Never mind about that, Old Ancestress," Xifeng chuckled. "Just say, is she prettier than me?"

The old lady put on her spectacles, telling Yuanyang and Hupo, "Bring the child closer. I want to look at her skin."

Amid suppressed laughter, Second Sister was pushed forward and

孩子拉过来，我瞧瞧肉皮儿。”众人都抿嘴笑着，只得推他上去。贾母细瞧了一遍，又命琥珀:“拿出手来我瞧瞧。”鸳鸯又揭起裙子来。贾母看毕，摘下眼镜来，笑说道:“竟是个齐全孩子，我看比你俊些。”凤姐听说，笑着忙跪下，将尤氏那边所编之话，一五一十细细的说了一遍，“少不得老祖宗发慈心，先许他进来，住一年后再圆房。”贾母听了道:“这有什么不是。既你这样贤慧，很好。只是一年后方可圆得房。”凤姐听了，叩头起来，又求贾母着两个女人一同带去见太太们，说是老祖宗的主意。贾母依允，遂使二人带去见了邢夫人等。王夫人正因他声名不雅，深为忧虑，见他今行此事，岂有不乐之理。于是尤二姐自此见了天日，挪到厢房住居。

凤姐一面使人暗暗调唆张华，只叫他要原妻，这里还有许多陪送外，还给他银子安家过活。张华原无胆无心告贾家的，后来又见贾蓉打发人来对词，那人原说的:“张华先退了亲。我们皆是亲戚，接到家里住着是真，并无娶嫁之说。皆因张华拖欠了我们的债务，追索不与，方诬赖小的主人那些个。”察院都和贾、王两处有瓜葛，况又受了贿，只说张华无赖，以穷讹诈，状子也不收，打了一顿赶出来。庆儿在外替他打点，也没打重。又调唆张华:“亲原是你家定的，你只要亲事，官必还断给你。”于是又告。王信那边又透了消息与

subjected to a carefully scrutiny. Then the Lady Dowager made Hupo hold out her hands for inspection. Yuanyang lifted Second Sister's skirt as well to show her feet. Her examination at an end, the old lady took off her spectacles.

"Perfect!" she pronounced. "She's even prettier than you."

Smiling, Xifeng promptly knelt down to relate in detail the story she had made up in Madam You's room. "Do take pity on her, Old Ancestress," she pleaded. "Let her move in now, and after a year they can be formally married."

"That's quite in order," the old lady conceded. "I'm glad your're so understanding and tolerant. But she mustn't live with Lian for a year."

Xifeng kowtowed, then got up and requested that two maids be sent to present Second Sister to Lady Xing and Lady Wang and tell them this was the old lady's decision. The Lady Dowager agreed and this was done. Lady Wang had been worried because of Xifeng's bad name. Now that she was taking in a second wife for her husband, she was naturally pleased. So from now on Second Sister could come into the open, and she moved to Xifeng's side rooms.

Xifeng meanwhile sent a messenger in secret to urge Zhang Hua to insist on claiming his bride, promising that in addition to a generous dowry he would be given money to set up house. For Zhang Hua himself was too spineless to dare sue the Jia family.

Then Jia Rong sent a man to court to contend, "It was Zhang Hua who first gave up the engagement. Being related to the You family we did, it is true, invite her to stay in our house; but there was no talk of marriage. Because Zhang Hua owed us money and could not pay it, he trumped up this charge against our master."

As the judges were all connected with the Jia and Wang families and had in addition accepted bribes from them, they condemned Zhang Hua as a rascal whom poverty had driven to blackmail. His plea rejected, he was beaten and thrown out of court. But Qinger outside had fixed it with the runners not to beat him severely.

And now Qinger told Zhang Hua, "As you were engaged to the girl first, if you demand her the court will have to give her to you."

Thereupon Zhang Hua brought a new suit; but again Wang Xin took a

察院，察院便批："张华所欠贾宅之银，令其限内按数交足；其所定之亲，仍令其有力时娶回。"又传了他父亲来当堂批准。他父亲亦系庆儿说明，乐得人财两进，便去贾府领人。

凤姐一面吓的来回贾母，说如此这般，都是珍大嫂子干事不明，并没和那家退准，惹人家告了，如此官断。贾母听了，忙唤尤氏过来，说他作事不妥，"既是你妹子从小曾与人家指腹为婚，又没退断，使人混告了。"尤氏听了，只得说："他连银子都收了，怎么没准？"凤姐在旁又说："张华的口供上现说不曾见银子，也没见人去。他老子说：'原是亲家母说过一次，并没应准。亲家母死了，你们就接进去作二房。'如此没有对证，这只好由他混说。幸而琏二爷不在家，没曾圆房，这还无妨。只是人已来了，怎好送回去，岂不伤脸。"贾母道："又没圆房，没的强占人家有夫之人，名声也不好，不如送给他去。那里寻不出好人来。"尤二姐听了，又回贾母说："我母亲实于某年月日给了他十两银子退准的。他因穷急了告，又翻了口。我姐姐原没错办。"贾母听了，便说："可见刁民难惹。既这样，凤丫头去料理料理。"

message to the judge, and the court's verdict was: "Zhang Hua's debt to the Jia family must be repaid in full by a specified date. As for his betrothed, he can marry her when he has the means."

Zhang Hua's father, summoned to court to hear this verdict after having been told the situation by Qinger, exulted that now he would get both the money and the girl. He went to the Jia mansion to fetch Second Sister.

Xifeng with a great show of alarm reported this to the Lady Dowager.

"This muddle is all my sister-in-law Zhen's fault!" she complained. "Apparently the engagement was never really cancelled. That's why the Zhangs took the case to court, and now this decision's been made."

The old lady sent at once for Madam You.

"Because your sister was promised from childhood to the Zhang family, and they never broke the engagement, they've brought this charge against us now," she scolded.

"But they took the money," protested Madam You. "How can they still claim her?"

Xifeng put in, "According to Zhang Hua, he never saw any money, and no one contacted him. According to his father, Second Sister's mother did make such an offer but they turned it down; and after her mother died you took her in as a secondary wife. As we've no proof to the contrary, he can talk any nonsense he pleases. It's lucky Second Master Lian isn't at home and they haven't been formally married. Still, as she's already here, how can we send her back? Wouldn't that make us lose face?"

The old lady said, "They're not married yet, and it wouldn't look good to seize someone promised to another man. That would damage our reputation. We'd better send her back. It'll be easy enough to find some other nice girl."

When Second Sister heard this she exclaimed, "My mother really did give them ten taels of silver to cancel the engagement. Now in desperation because he's poor, he denies it. My sister did nothing wrong."

"That shows how troublesome such rascals are," said the Lady Dowager. "Well, I leave it to you, Xifeng to sort this out."

凤姐听了无法，只得应着。回来只命人去找贾蓉。贾蓉深知凤姐之意，若要使张华领回，成何体统，便回了贾珍，暗暗遣人去说张华："你如今既有许多银子，何必定要原人。若只管执定主意，岂不怕爷们一怒，寻出个由头，你死无葬身之地。你有了银子，回家去什么好人寻不出来，你若走时，还赏你些路费。"张华听了，心中想了一想，这倒是好主意，和父亲商议已定，约共也得了有百金，父子次日起个五更，便回原籍去了。

贾蓉打听得真了，来回了贾母、凤姐，说："张华父子妄告不实，惧罪逃走，官府亦知此情，也不追究，大事完毕。"凤姐听了，心中一想："若必定着张华带回二姐去，未免贾琏回来再花几个钱包占住，不怕张华不依。还是二姐不去，自己相伴着还妥当，且再作道理。只是张华此去不知何往，倘或他将此事再告诉了别人，或日后再寻出这由头来翻案，岂不是自己害了自己。原先不该如此将刀靶付与外人去的。"因此悔之不迭，复又想了一条主意出来，悄命来旺遣人寻着了他，或讹他作贼，和他打官司将他治死；或暗中使人算计，务将张华治死，方剪草除根，保住自己的名誉。来旺领命出来，回家细想：人已走了完事，何必如此大作，人命关天，非同儿戏，我且哄过他去，再作道理。因此在外躲了几日，回来告诉凤姐，只说："张华因有了几两银子在身上，逃去第三日在京口地界，五更天已被截路的人打闷棍打死了。他老子吓死在店房，在那里验尸掩埋。"凤姐听了不

Xifeng had to comply. On her return she sent for Jia Rong, who knew perfectly what she was aiming at. He realized what a great loss of face it would be if Second Sister were to be reclaimed by the Zhangs, so he reported this to Jia Zhen and secretly sent Zhang Hua the message: Now that you've got so much money, why must you have the girl back? If you insist, the gentlemen may get angry and find a way to kill you where no one will bury you. With money, you can go home and find a good bride. If you do that, we'll help with your travelling expenses.

Zhang Hua on reflection thought this a good idea. He discussed it with his father, and they reckoned they were now the richer by about a hundred taels. So the next day at dawn, father and son started home.

When Jia Rong heard this he told the Lady Dowager and Xifeng, "Zhang Hua and his father have fled for fear of being punished for bringing a false charge. The court knows of this but has decided to let the matter drop. The whole business is over!"

Xifeng reflected, "If I make Zhang Hua reclaim Second Sister, Lian on his return will most likely offer more money to get her back, and Zhang Hua's bound to agree. So I'd better keep her here with me until I've made other plans. The only snag is we don't know where Zhang Hua will go, and whether he'll spread this story or come back later to reopen this case. If he does, I'll have cut my own throat! I should never have given other people this handle against me." She bitterly regretted what she had done.

Then she hit on another plan. She quietly ordered Lai Wang to send men to find Zhang Hua, then either hale him to court on a charge of theft and have him done to death, or send assassins to kill him secretly. In this way the root of the trouble would be removed and her reputation assured.

Lai Wang went home and thought over these instructions.

"Since the man's gone and the matter's dropped, why do anything so drastic?" he asked himself. "Taking someone's life is a serious crime, no joke. I'll fool her into thinking it's done instead."

He lay low outside for a few days, then returned to report that Zhang Hua, traveling with a fair amount of silver had been beaten and killed at dawn one day by some highwaymen in the Jingkou district, and his father

信，说："你要扯谎，我再使人打听出来敲你的牙！"自此方丢过不究。凤姐和尤二姐和美非常，更比亲姊亲妹还胜十倍。

那贾琏一日事毕回来，先到了新房中，已竟悄悄的关锁，只有一个看房子的老头儿。老头子细说原委，贾琏只在镫中跌足。少不得来见贾赦与邢夫人，将所完之事回明。贾赦十分欢喜，说他中用，赏了他一百两银子，又将房中一个十七岁的丫鬟名唤秋桐者，赏他为妾。贾琏叩头领去，喜之不尽。见了贾母和家中人，回来见凤姐，未免脸上有些愧色。谁知凤姐儿他反不似往日容颜，同尤二姐一同出迎，叙了寒温。贾琏将秋桐之事说了，未免脸上有些得意之色，骄矜之容。凤姐听了，忙命两个媳妇坐车在那边接了来。心中一刺未除，又平空添了一刺，说不得且吞声忍气，将好颜面换出来遮饰。一面又命摆酒接风，一面带了秋桐来见贾母与王夫人等。贾琏心中也暗暗的纳罕。

那日已是腊月十二日，贾珍起身，先拜了宗祠，然后过来辞拜贾母等人。合族中人直送到洒泪亭方回，独贾琏、贾蓉二人送出，三日三夜方回。一路上贾珍命他好生收心治家等语，二人口内答应，也说些大礼套话，不必繁叙。

had died of fright in the inn. A post-mortem had been held there and the bodies buried.

Xifeng did not believe him.

"If I find you've been lying, I'll knock out your teeth!" she threatened. But there the matter rested.

Meanwhile Xifeng and Second Sister were on the best of terms, to all appearances closer even than sisters.

When Jia Lian finally came home after completing his business, he went straight to the new house. But it was locked up and deserted, with only an old caretaker there who told him all that had happened. Jia Lian stamped his foot in the stirrup, then went to report on his mission to his parents. Jia She, very pleased, praised his competence and rewarded him with a hundred taels of silver as well as a new concubine — a seventeen-year-old maid of his named Qiutong. Jia Lian kowtowed his thanks and left in high spirits. Having paid his respects to the Lady Dowager and other members of the family he went home somewhat sheepishly to see Xifeng, but found her less stern than usual. She came out with Second Sister to welcome him and ask after his health. Then Jia Lian, telling her of his father's gift, could not help looking pleased and proud. Xifeng immediately sent two servingwomen to fetch Qiutong by carriage. Before she had rid herself of one thorn in her side, here — out of the blue — was another! However, she had to watch her tongue and hide her anger by a show of complaisance, ordering a feast of welcome, then taking Qiutong to present her to the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, much to her husband's amazement.

On the Double Twelfth, Jia Zhen rose early to sacrifice to the ancestors, then took his leave of the Lady Dowager and other ladies of the family. Most of the men saw him off to the Pavilion of Tearful Parting, only Jia Lian and Jia Rong accompanying him all the way to the temple and back, a trip taking three days and three nights. On the road, Jia Zhen admonished them on the need to run their households well, and they gave him the appropriate assurances — there is no need to dwell on their conversation.

To return to Xifeng at home. Outwardly, it goes without saying,

且说凤姐在家，外面待尤二姐自不必说得，只是心中又怀别意。无人处只和尤二姐说："妹妹的声名很不好听，连老太太、太太们都知道了，说妹妹在家做女孩儿就不干净，又和姐夫有些首尾，'没人要的了你拣了来，还不休了再寻好的。'我听见这话，气个倒仰，查是谁说的，又查不出来。这日久天长，这些个奴才跟前，怎么说嘴，我反弄了个鱼头来拆。"说了两遍，自己又气病了，茶饭也不吃，除了平儿一人，众丫头、媳妇无不言三语四，指桑说愧，暗相讥刺。秋桐自为系贾赦所赐，无人僭他的，连凤姐、平儿皆不放在眼里，岂肯容他。张口是"先奸后娶没汉子要的娼妇，也来占我的强。"凤姐听了暗乐，尤二姐听了暗愧暗怒。凤姐既装病，便不和尤二姐吃饭了。每日只命人端了菜饭到他房中去吃，那茶饭都系不堪之物。平儿看不过，自拿了钱出来弄菜与他吃，或是有时只说和他园中去玩，在园中厨内另做了汤水与他吃，也没人敢回凤姐。只有秋桐一时撞见了，便去说舌告诉凤姐，说："奶奶的声名，生是平儿弄坏了的。这样好菜好饭浪着不吃，却往园里去偷吃。"凤姐听了，骂平儿说："人家养猫拿耗子，我的猫倒只咬鸡。"平儿不敢多说，自此也要远着了。又暗恨秋桐，难以出口。

she treated Second Sister well; but inwardly she plotted to destroy her.

When the two of them were alone she told Second Sister, "You have such a bad name, sister, even the old lady and the mistresses have heard about it. They say that while still a girl you were unchaste and intimate with your brother-in-law. 'You've picked someone nobody else wanted,' they scold me. 'Why not get rid of her and choose someone better.' Talk like that makes me furious. I've tried to find out who started this, but I can't. If this goes on, how are we to hold up our heads in front of these slaves? I seem to have landed myself in a foul mess." Having said this a couple of times, she pretended to fall ill with anger, refusing to eat or drink.

All the maids and servants, with the exception of Pinger, kept gossiping, making sarcastic remarks, and casting aspersions at Second Sister. As for Qiutong, having been given to Jia Lian by his father, she felt superior to everyone else including even Xifeng and Pinger, not to say a discarded wanton who had been Jia Lian's mistress before she became his wife. "How can she take precedence of *me*!" she thought. So she treated her with contempt. Xifeng was secretly pleased at this, and Seccond Sister had to swallow her indignation.

As Xifeng was shamming sickness she stopped having her meals with Second Sister, just ordering the servants to take food to her room every day — and the rice and dishes were always of the worst. Pinger took pity on her. She would spend her own money on extra dishes for her, or take her sometimes for a stroll in the Garden, getting special soups made for her in the kitchen there. No one else dared report this to Xifeng; but Qiutong, happening to find out, went to tell her.

"Pinger's spoiling your reputation, madam," she said. "The good dishes we have here are wasted on her — she won't eat them. Instead, she scrounges food in the Garden."

Xifeng swore at Pinger, "Other people's cats catch mice for them, but mine just steals my chickens!"

Pinger did not venture to talk back. After that she had to keep at a distance from Second Sister, and she bore Qiutong a grudge but could not speak out.

园中姊妹，如李纨、迎春、惜春等人，皆为凤姐是好意，然宝黛一干人暗为二姐担心。虽都不便多事，惟见二姐可怜，常来了，倒还都悯恤他。每日常无人处说起话来，尤二姐便淌眼抹泪，又不敢抱怨。凤姐儿又并没露出一点坏形来。贾琏来家时，见了凤姐贤良，也便不留心。况素习以来因贾赦姬妾丫鬟最多，贾琏每怀不轨之心，只未敢下手。如这秋桐辈等人，皆是恨老爷年迈昏愦，贪多嚼不烂，没的留下这些人作什么，因此除了几个知礼有耻的，余者或有与二门上小幺儿们嘲戏的。甚至与贾琏眉来眼去，相偷期约的，只惧贾赦之威，未曾到手。这秋桐便和贾琏有意，从未来过一次。今日天缘凑巧，竟赏了他，真是一对烈火干柴，如胶似漆，燕尔新婚，连日那里拆的开。那贾琏在二姐身上之心也渐渐淡了，只有秋桐一人是命。凤姐虽恨秋桐，且喜借他先可发脱二姐，自己且抽头，用“借剑杀人”之法，“坐山观虎斗”。等秋桐杀了尤二姐，自己再杀秋桐。主意已定，没人处常又私劝秋桐说：“你年轻不知事。他现在是二房奶奶，你爷心坎儿上的人，我还让他三分，你去硬碰他，岂不是自寻其死？”那秋桐听了这话，越发恼了，天天大口乱骂说：“奶奶是软弱人，那等贤慧，我却做不来。奶奶把素日的威风怎都没了？奶奶宽洪大量，我却眼里揉不下沙子去。让我和他这淫妇做一回，才知道。”凤姐在屋里，只装不听见。气的尤二姐在房里哭泣，饭也不吃，又不敢告诉贾琏。

Li Wan, Yingchun and Xichun in the Garden thought Xifeng was uncommonly good to Second Sister. Others like Baoyu and Daiyu were worried for her, but did not like to meddle in their affairs. Second Sister looked so pathetic when she called that they sympathized with her, and when they were talking alone she would shed tears, but she never breathed a word against Xifeng who had shown her nothing of her vicious side.

When Jia Lian came home and observed Xifeng's irreproachable behaviour to Second Sister, he did not give the matter a second thought. Besides, he had long had designs on many of his father's concubines and young maids, including Qiutong, who for their part were disgusted because their senile old master, still lecherous, was virtually impotent. Why, then, should he keep them all there? So apart from a few with some sense of propriety, the rest played about with the pages at the inner gate or even made eyes at Jia Lian, who was only too ready to flirt with them but for fear of his father dared go no further than that.

Although Qiutong had been interested in Jia Lian, they had never had an affair. Now that as luck would have it she had being given to him, it was truly like throwing a dry faggot on a blazing fire. They clung to each other like glue, Jia Lian so enamoured of his new concubine that he never left her side. Little by little his affection for Second Sister lessened. Qiutong was the only one he cared for.

Xifeng, though hating Qiutong, was eager to use her first to rid herself of Second Sister by "Killing with a borrowed sword" and "Watching from a hilltop while two tigers fought." For once Qiutong had killed Second Sister, she could do this new concubine in. Her mind made up, when they were alone she often advised Qiutong:

"You're young and inexperienced. She's now the second mistress, your master's favourite. Even *I* have to yield to her to some extent, yet you keep provoking her. You're just looking for trouble."

Inflamed by such talk, Qiutong took to cursing and storming every day, "The mistress is too soft and weak; I haven't that kind of forbearance. What's happened to her? She used to be such a terror. Well, the mistress may be broad-minded, but I'm not going to put up with a mote in my eye. Just let me have it out with that bitch — then she'll see!"

Xifeng in her room pretended to be too frightened to say a word.

次日贾母见他眼红红的肿了，问他，又不敢说。秋桐正是抓乖卖俏之时，他便悄悄的告诉贾母王夫人等说："他专会作死，好好的成天家号丧，背地里咒二奶奶和我早死了，他好和二爷一心一计的过。"贾母听了便说："人太生娇俏了，可知心就嫉妒。凤丫头倒好意待他，他倒这样争锋吃醋的。可是个贱骨头！"因此渐次便不太欢喜。众人见贾母不喜，不免又往下踏践起来，弄得尤二姐要死不能，要生不得。还是亏了平儿，时常背着凤姐，看他这般，与他排解排解。

那尤二姐原是个花为肠肚雪为肌肤的人，如何经得这般磨折？不过受了一个月的暗气，便恹恹得了一病，四肢懒动，茶饭不进，渐次黄瘦下去。夜来合上眼，只见他小妹子手捧鸳鸯宝剑前来，说："姐姐，你一生为人心痴意软，终吃了这亏。休信那妒妇花言巧语，外作贤良，内藏奸狡，他发恨定要弄你一死方罢。若妹子在世，断不肯令你进来，即进来时，亦不容他这样。此亦系理数应然，你我生前淫奔不才，使人家丧伦败行，故有此报。你还依我，将此剑斩了那妒妇，一同归至警幻案下，听其发落。不然，你则白白的丧命，且无人怜惜。"尤二姐泣道："妹妹，我一生品行既亏，今日之报既系当然，何必又结杀戮之冤。随我去忍耐。若天见怜，使我好了，岂不两全。"小妹笑道："姐姐，你终是个

Second Sister in her room wept for rage and could not eat, but she dared not tell Jia Lian. And the next day when the Lady Dowager asked why her eyes were so red and swollen. She dared not explain.

Qiutong seized every chance to score off her. She secretly told the old lady and Lady Wang, "She keeps making trouble, complaining and whining all day for no reason at all, besides cursing madam and me behind our backs. She hopes we'll both die early, so that she can live with Second Master and do just as she pleases."

"Imagine!" exclaimed the old lady. "When a girl's too pretty, she is bound to be jealous. Xifeng's been kind to her all along, yet she repays her by treating her like a rival! This shows she's a worthless creature."

Little by little she took a dislike to Second Sister. And when the others saw that she had lost favour with the old lady, they naturally bullied her too. Second Sister was in such a miserable dilemma, she could neither die nor live. Pinger was the only one who tried, behind Xifeng's back, to help her and divert her mind from her troubles.

How could Second Sister, fragile as snow, delicate as a flower, stand up to such cruel treatment? After suppressing her anger for just a month, she fall ill and lost her appetite. Too listless to move, she grew daily thinner and paler. One night when she closed her eyes, she saw her younger sister approaching, the duck-and-drake swords in her hands.

"You've always been too naive and soft-hearted," Third Sister told her, "That's why you're in trouble now. Don't trust that shrew's honeyed talk or her show of being such a virtuous wife — at heart she's crafty and cruel. She's made up her mind to kill you. If I'd been alive, I'd never have let you move into their house; even if you had, I'd not let her treat you like this. Still, we brought this on ourselves by our worthless lives and wanton ways, corrupting men and upsetting family relations. So this is just retribution. Now take my advice and kill that shrew with this sword, then go together to the Goddess of Disenchantment for her to decide the case. Otherwise you will die in vain and no one will pity you."

Second Sister sobbed,"I've already got a bad name, sister. As I deserve my present fate, why should I add to my crimes by killing her? Let me just put up with it. If Heaven takes pity on me, I may recover. Wouldn't that be better?"

痴人。自古‘天网恢恢，疏而不漏’，天道好还。你虽悔过自新，然已将人父子兄弟致于聚麀之乱，天怎容你安生。”尤二姐泣道：“既不得安生，亦是理之当然，奴亦无怨。”小妹听了，长叹而去。尤二姐惊醒，却是一梦。等贾琏来看时，因无人在侧，便泣说：“我这病不能好了。我来了半年，腹中已有身孕，但不能预知男女。倘天见怜，生了下来还可，若不然，我这命就不保，何况于他。”贾琏亦泣说：“你只放心，我请明人来医治。”于是出去即刻请医生。

谁知王太医亦谋干了军前去效力，回来好讨荫封的。小厮们走去，便请了个姓胡的太医，号叫君荣。进来诊脉看了，说是经水不调，全要大补。贾琏便说：“已是三月庚信不行，又常作呕酸，恐是胎气。”胡君荣听了，复又命老婆子们请出手来再看看。尤二姐少不得又从帐内伸出手来。胡君荣又诊了半日，说：“若论胎气，肝脉自应洪大。然木盛则生火，经水不调亦皆因由肝木所致。医生要大胆，须得请奶奶将金面露一露，医生观观气色，方敢下药。贾琏无法，只得命将帐子掀起一缝，尤二姐露出脸来。胡君荣一见，魂魄如飞上九天，通身麻木，一无所知。一时掩了帐子，贾琏陪他出来，问是如何。胡太医道：“不是胎气，只是淤血凝结。如

"Still so naive, sister?" the other scoffed. "No one, since time immemorial, has escaped Heaven's far-flung net. The Way of Providence is retribution. Although you've repented and mended your ways, you've already made father, son and cousins guilty of incest; so how can Providence allow you to live at peace?"

"If I can't live at peace, that's only just," said Second Sister tearfully. "I bear no resentment."

Hearing this, Third Sister heaved a long sigh and withdrew. Second Sister woke with a start to find it was only a dream.

When Jia Lian came to see her, as no one else was about she told him with tears, "I shan't get over this illness. I've been with you for half a year and I'm with child, but don't know whether it will be a boy or a girl. If Heaven has pity and the child is born, well and good. Otherwise, I shan't be able to save myself, let alone the child."

"Don't you worry," Jia Lian, in tears himself, reassured her. "I'll get a good doctor for you."

He immediately went out to send for the doctor. However, Doctor Wang was busy manoeuvring to get a post in the army in order to acquire a noble title for his offspring. In his absence the servants fetched Doctor Hu Junrong. His diagnosis was that her menstruation was irregular and some tonic would set her right. When Jia Lian told him that she had missed three periods and was often sick, so it looked like a pregnancy, Hu Junrong asked the serving-women to show him the lady's hand, and Second Sister stretched our her hand from behind the curtains. After feeling the pulse for some time he declared:

"If it were a pregnancy, the liver humour should be strong. But the wood is in the ascendant, and that engenders the fire element which causes irregular menstruation. May I make so bold as to ask to have a glimpse of the lady's face, so that I can see how she looks before venturing to make out a prescription."

Jia Lian had to order the curtain to be raised. But the sight of Second Sister robbed Hu Junrong of his senses. He was too dazed to know what he was doing. Then the curtain was lowered and Jia Lian escorted him out. Asked what the trouble was he said:

"It's not a pregnancy, just congestion of the blood. To make her

今只以下淤血通经脉要紧。”于是写了一方，作辞而去。贾琏命人送了药礼，抓了药来，调服下去。只半夜，尤二姐腹痛不止，谁知竟将一个已成形的男胎打了下来。于是血行不止，二姐就昏迷过去。贾琏闻知，大骂胡君荣。一面着人再去请医生调治，一面命人去打胡君荣。胡君荣听了，早已卷包逃走。这里太医院便说：“本来气血生成亏弱，受胎以来，想是着了些气恼，郁结于中。这位先生擅用虎狼之剂，如今大人元气十分伤其八九，一时难保就愈。煎丸二药并行，还要一些闲言闲事不闻，庶可望好。”说毕而去。急的贾琏查是谁请了姓胡的来，一时查出，便打了半死。

凤姐比贾琏更急十倍，只说：“咱们命中无子，好容易有了一个，又遇见这样没本事的大夫。”于是天地前烧香礼拜，自己通陈祷告说：“我或有病，只求尤氏妹子身体大愈，再得怀胎生一男子，我愿吃长斋念佛。”贾琏众人见了，无不称赞。贾琏与秋桐在一处时，凤姐又做汤做水的着人送与二姐。又骂平儿不是个有福的，“也和我一样，我因多病了，你却无病，也不见怀个胎。如今二奶奶这样，都因咱们无福，或犯了什么，冲的他这样。”因又叫人出去算命打卦。偏算命的回来又说：“系属兔的阴人冲犯。”大家算将起来，只有秋桐一人属兔，说他冲的。秋桐近见贾琏请医治

periods normal, we must get rid of the congestion." He then wrote a prescription and took his leave.

Jia Lian ordered servants to send over the doctor's fee and buy and prepare the medicine for the patient.

In the middle of the night, Second Sister had such a pain in her stomach that she miscarried — the foetus was male — and bled so copiously that she fainted. Jia Lian hearing this cursed Hu Junrong and had another doctor fetched at once. He also sent men to go and beat up Hu; but the latter heard of this in time to bundle together his things and run away.

The newly summoned doctor said, "She had a weak constitution to begin with, and after conceiving she seems to have been bottling up some resentment. That other gentleman made the mistake of using potent drugs which have undermined the lady's health completely. We cannot look for a speedy recovery. She will have to take both potions and pills, and must pay no attention to any malicious gossip; then we can only hope she may get well." This said, he left.

In a frenzy, Jia Lian asked who it was that had fetched that fellow Hu and had the man beaten within an inch of his life.

Xifeng showing ten times more anxiety exclaimed, "We seem fated to have no son! After going to such trouble to beget one, we come up against this bungling quack." She offered incense and kowtowed to Heaven and Earth, praying earnestly, "Let me fall ill if only Sister You can recover, conceive again and give birth to a boy. Then I'll gladly fast and chant sutras for the rest of my life."

Jia Lian and the others, seeing this, could not but praise her.

While Jia Lian stayed with Qiutong, Xifeng prepared soup and broth for the invalid.

She also berated Pinger, "You're just as luckless as me with my illness, because you're not ill, just barren! It must be our bad luck that's brought the Second Mistress to this pass — or may be someone's horoscope clashes with hers."

Thereupon she sent out to consult fortune-tellers, who returned the reply that the trouble had been caused by a woman born in the year of the rabbit. They checked, and as Qiutong was the only one in their household born in that year they laid the blame at her door.

药，打人骂狗，为尤二姐十分尽心，他心中早浸了一缸醋在内了。今又听见如此说他冲了，凤姐又劝他说："你暂且别处去躲几个月再来。"秋桐便气的哭骂道："理那起瞎肏的混嚼舌根！我和他'井水不犯河水'，怎么就冲了他！好个爱八哥儿，在外头什么人不见，偏来了就有人冲了。白眉赤脸，那里来的孩子？他不过指着哄我们那个棉花耳朵的爷罢了。纵有孩子，也不知姓张姓王。奶奶希罕那杂种羔子，我不喜欢！老了谁不成？谁不会养！一年半载养一个，倒还是一点搀杂没有的呢！"骂的众人又要笑，又不敢笑。可巧邢夫人过来请安，秋桐便哭告邢夫人说："二爷二奶奶要撵我回去，我没了安身之处，太太好歹开恩。"邢夫人听说，慌的数落了凤姐一阵，又骂贾琏："不知好歹的种子，凭他怎不好，是你父亲给的。为个外头来的撵他，连老子都没了。你要撵他，你不如还你父亲去倒好。"说着，赌气去了。秋桐更又得意，越性走到他窗户根底下大哭大骂起来。尤二姐听了，不免更添烦恼。

晚间，贾琏在秋桐房中歇了，凤姐已睡。平儿过来瞧他，又悄悄劝他："好生养病，不要理那畜生。"尤二姐拉他哭道："姐姐，我从到了这里，多亏姐姐照应。为我，姐姐也不知受了多少闲气。我若逃的出命来，我必报答姐姐的恩德；只怕我逃不出命来，也只好等来生罢。"平儿也不禁滴泪说道："想来都是我坑了你。我原是一片痴心，从没瞒他的

Qiutong's jealousy had already been aroused by the care Jia Lian lavished on Second Sister, fetching doctors, giving her medicine, and having the servant who had blundered beater. Now she was told that she was the one to blame, and Xifeng advised her to move out for a few months and make herself scarce.

Qiutong wept and stormed, "What's all this senseless talk from that blind rascal? I kept as clear of her as well water and river water. How could *my* horoscope clash with hers? She had all sorts of contacts outside, the slut. Why does the jinx have to be found here? Which of all those fine fellows she knew got her with child? It's only this credulous master of ours who's taken in by her. Even if she had a child, we wouldn't know whether its name should be Zhang or Wang. You may treasure her bastard, madam, but not I! Who can't have a child? If I have one a year or so from now, at least there'll be no doubt who fathered it."

The maids were amused by this tirade but dared not laugh outright. And just then Lady Xing called.

Qiutong told her, "The Second Master and Second Mistress want to throw me out. I've nowhere to go. Please take pity on me, madam!"

Lady Xing first scolded Xifeng, then said sternly to Jia Lian:

"You ungrateful cur! Whatever her faults, she was given you by your father. How can you throw her out for the sake of a woman you brought in from outside? Have you no respect for your father? If you want to get rid of her, you can at least return her to him." She then left in a temper.

Emboldened by this, Qiutong went to Second Sister's window to scream abuse at her, making her feel even more wretched.

Jia Lian spent that night in Qiutong's room. And after Xifeng had gone to bed Pinger slipped in to see Second Sister and comfort her, advising her to rest well and not trouble about that bitch.

Second Sister took her hand and said through tears, "How good you've been to me, sister, since I came here! You've suffered a lot too on my account.

If I come out of this alive, I'll repay your kindness. I'm afraid I'm done for, though, and can only pay you back in my next life."

Pinger was reduced to tears too.

"It was all *my* fault," she confessed. "I was too naive. I never kept

话。既听见你在外头，岂有不告诉他的。谁知生出这些事来。”尤二姐忙道：“姐姐这话错了。姐姐便不告诉他，他岂有打听不出来的，不过是姐姐说的在先。况且我也要一心进来，方成个体统，与姐姐何干。”二人哭了一回，平儿又嘱咐了几句，夜已深了，方去安息。

这里尤二姐心下自思：“病已成势，日无所养，反有所伤，料定必不能好。况胎已打下来了，无可悬心之处，何必受这些零气，不如一死，倒还干净。常闻生金子可以坠死，岂不比上吊自刎又干净。”想毕，扎挣起来，打开箱子，找出一块生金，也不知多重，狠命含泪便吞入口中，几次狠命直脖，方咽了下去。于是赶忙将衣服首饰穿戴齐整，上炕躺下了。当下人不知，鬼不觉。到第二日早晨，丫鬟、媳妇们见他不叫人，乐得且自己去梳洗。凤姐和秋桐都上去了。平儿看不过，说丫头们：“你们就只配没人心的打着骂着使也罢了，一个病人，也不知可怜可怜。他虽好性儿，你们也该拿出个样儿来，别太过了，墙倒众人推。”丫鬟们听了，急推房门进去看时，却穿戴的齐齐整整，死在炕上。于是方吓慌了，喊叫起来。平儿进来看了，不禁大哭。众人虽素习惧怕凤姐，然想尤二姐实在温和怜下，比凤姐原强，如今死去，谁不伤心落泪，只不敢与凤姐看见。

anything from her, so when I heard of your marriage outside I felt I had to tell her. I had no idea such trouble would come of it."

"No, you're wrong," protested Second Sister. "If you hadn't told, she'd have found out anyway. You just happened to tell her first. At any rate, I *wanted* to move in for appearances' sake. So you're in no way to blame."

They both wept again and presently, after a few more words of advice, Pinger saw that it was late and went back to rest.

Left to herself Second Sister thought, "I'm so ill, and getting worse every day, I see no hope of recovery. And now that I've miscarried and haven't the child to worry about, why should I go on putting up with such taunts? Better die and be done with it! They say swallowing gold will kill you. Wouldn't that be a cleaner death than hanging myself or cutting my own throat?"

She struggled out of bed and opened her case, from which she took a piece of gold of a fair size. Weeping and cursing her fate, she put it in her mouth and after several desperate attempts succeeded in swallowing it. Then she hastily dressed herself neatly and put on her trinkets, after which she lay down on the *kang*. Not a soul had any suspicion of what she had done.

The next morning when she failed to call for her maids, they attended cheerfully to their own toilets while Xifeng and Qiutong went off to pay their respects to the senior mistresses.

Pinger was shocked by this and scolded the maids, "Don't be so heartless! You only obey harsh people who beat or curse you — and that's the treatment you deserve. Have you no pity at all for someone so ill? You might at least behave decently, instead of taking advantage of her good nature and kicking her when she's down."

The maids opened Second Sister's door then. At sight of her lying — neatly dressed — dead on her bed, they screamed with fright. Pinger running in wept bitterly when she saw this. And the maids, remembering now how gentle Second Sister had been and how much kinder to them than Xifeng, shed tears over her death as well, but took care to hide their grief from their dreaded mistress.

The news spread at once through the whole mansion. Jia Lian came

当下合宅皆知。贾琏进来，搂尸大哭不止。凤姐也假意哭："狠心的妹妹！你怎么丢下我去了，辜负了我的心！"尤氏贾蓉等也来哭了一场，劝住贾琏。贾琏便回了王夫人，讨了梨香院停放五日，挪到铁槛寺去，王夫人依允。贾琏忙命人去开了梨香院的门，收拾出正房三间来停灵。贾琏嫌后门出灵不像，便对着梨香院的正墙上通街现开了一个大门。两边搭棚，安坛场做佛事。用软榻铺了锦缎衾褥，将二姐抬上榻去，用衾单盖了。八个小厮和几个媳妇围随，从内子墙一带抬往梨香院来。那里已请下天文生预备，揭起衾单一看，只见这尤二姐面色如生，比活着还美貌。贾琏又搂着大哭，只叫"奶奶，你死的不明，都是我坑了你！"贾蓉忙上来劝："叔叔解着些儿，我这个姨娘自己没福。"说着，又向南指大观园的界墙，贾琏会意，只悄悄跌脚说："我忽略了，终久对出来，我替你报仇。"天文生回道："奶奶卒于今日正卯时，五日出不得，或是三日，或是七日方可。明日寅时入殓大吉。"贾琏道："三日断乎使不得，竟是七日。因家叔家兄皆在外，小丧不敢多停，等到外头，还放五七，做大道场才掩灵。明年往南去下葬。"天文生应诺，写了殃榜而去。宝玉

in, clasped the corpse and wept without stop.

Xifeng put on a show of sobbing, "How cruel of you, sister, to leave me alone like this! What a poor return for my kindness!"

Madam You and Jia Rong also came to mourn and console Jia Lian. Then he reported the matter to Lady Wang, and obtained permission to leave the corpse for five days in Pear Fragrance Court before its removal to Iron Threshold Temple. Hasty orders were given to have the court gate opened and the three main rooms cleared for the coffin's resting place. Since it would be unbecoming to carry the bier through the back gate, Jia Lian had a new gate leading to the street made through the main wall facing Pear Fragrance Court; booths were set up on either side of this and an altar was erected for Buddhist masses. And there Second Sister was carried on a soft couch with a silken mattress and a coverlet shrouding her body. Eight pages and a few matrons escorted the bier from the inner wall to Pear Fragrance Court, where they had an astrologer waiting.

When Jia Lian lifted the coverlet and saw Second Sister lying there as if alive, yet even lovelier than in life, he threw his arms around her.

"Wife, your death is a mystery," he wailed. "But I brought it on you."

Jia Rong hastily stepped forward to console him.

"Don't give way to such grief, uncle. This aunt of mine was ill-starred." As he spoke he pointed south at the wall of Grand View Garden.

Jia Lian caught his meaning and softly stamped his foot.

"Yes, I know. I shall get to the bottom of it and avenge you!"

The astrologer reported that as the lady had died at five in the morning she could not be carried to the temple on the fifth, but the third or the seventh would be appropriate, and the body should be coffined at three the next morning — an auspicious hour.

"The third won't do," said Jia Lian. "We'll make it the seventh. As my uncle and cousin are away, we mustn't leave her here too long as this is a minor funeral. After the coffin has been placed in the temple for five weeks, we'll have a big mass and then close the mourning shrine. Next year it can be taken south for burial."

The astrologer approved this and left after writing out the obituary.

早已过来陪着哭了一场。众族中人也都来了。

贾琏忙进去找凤姐，要银子治办棺椁丧礼。凤姐见抬了出来，推有病，面回老太太、太太，说："我病着，忌三堂，不许我去。"因此也不出来穿孝，且往大观园中来。绕过群山，至北界墙根下往外听，隐隐绰绰听了一半言语，回来又回贾母说如此这般。贾母道："信他胡说，谁家痨病死的孩子不烧了一撒，也认真了开丧破土起来。既是二房一场，也是夫妻之分，停五七日抬出去，或一烧或拣乱葬地上埋了完事。"凤姐笑道："可是这话。我又不敢劝他。"正说着，丫鬟来请凤姐，说："二爷等着奶奶拿银子呢。"凤姐只得来了，便问他："什么银子?家里近来艰难，你还不知道?咱们的月例，一月赶不上一月，鸡儿吃了过年粮。昨儿我把两个金项圈当了三百银子，你还做梦呢。这里还有二三十两银子，你要就拿去。"说着，命平儿拿了出来，递与贾琏，指着贾母有话，又去了。恨的贾琏没话可说，只得开了尤氏箱柜，去拿自己的梯己。及开了箱柜，一点无存，只有些折簪烂花并几件半新不旧的绸绢衣服，都是尤二姐素习所穿的，不禁又伤心哭了起来。自己用个包袱一齐包了，也不命小厮丫鬟来拿，便自己提着来烧。

平儿又是伤心，又是好笑，忙将二百两一包的碎银子偷了出来，到厢房拉住贾琏，悄递与他说："你只别作声才好，

Baoyu had already come to mourn, and now other members of the clan arrived. Jia Lian hurried back then to ask Xifeng for money for the coffin and funeral rites.

Meanwhile, after seeing the body carried away, Xifeng had shammed illness again and claimed that Their Ladyships would not let her attend any ceremonies while unwell. She did not put on mourning either. Going instead to the Garden, past the rockeries to the wall at the north end, she eavesdropped on her husband outside, then came back to report the few remarks she had caught to the Lady Dowager.

"Don't listen to his nonsense," said the old lady, "Girls who die of consumption are cremated, aren't they, and their ashes scattered? Why should she have a formal funeral and burial? Still, as she was a secondary wife, let her body be kept for five weeks in the temple before being carried out to be burnt or buried in some common graveyard."

Xifeng smiled.

"That's exactly what I think, but I dare not urge him to do that."

A maid came then to ask Xifeng to go back as Jia Lian had gone home to get some money from her, and so she had to return.

"What money do we have?" she asked him. "Don't you know how tight things have been here recently? We couldn't distribute each month's allowance on time. It's been like hens eating up next year's grain. Yesterday I pawned a gold necklace for three hundred taels, and that may have given you ideas; but now only about two dozen taels are left. If you want that you can have it."

She told Pinger to fetch this and gave it to Jia Lian, then went off again on the excuse that the old lady wanted her.

Jia Lian swallowing his resentment had to resort to opening Second Sister's cases to look for any savings; but all he found were some broken trinkets, soiled artificial flowers and some of her half worn silk cotlhes, the sight of which reduced him to tears again. He wrapped them up in a cloth and, not asking the maids or pages to carry the bundle, started out to burn it himself. Pinger, both touched and amused, filched a packet of loose silver — about two hundred taels — and going to the eastern rooms gave him this, warning him to keep it a secret.

"If you must cry, can't you cry as much as you want outside?" she

你要哭，外头多少哭不得，又跑了这里来点眼。”贾琏听说，便说：“你说的是。”接了银子，又将一条裙子递与平儿，说：“这是他家常穿的，你好生替我收着，作个念心儿。”平儿只得掩了，自己收去。贾琏拿了银子，与众走来，命人先去买板。好的又贵，中的又不要。贾琏骑马自去要瞧。至晚间果抬了一副好板进来，价值五百两赊着，连夜赶造。一面分派了人口，穿孝守灵，贾琏晚来也不进去，只在这里伴宿。要知端的，下回分解。

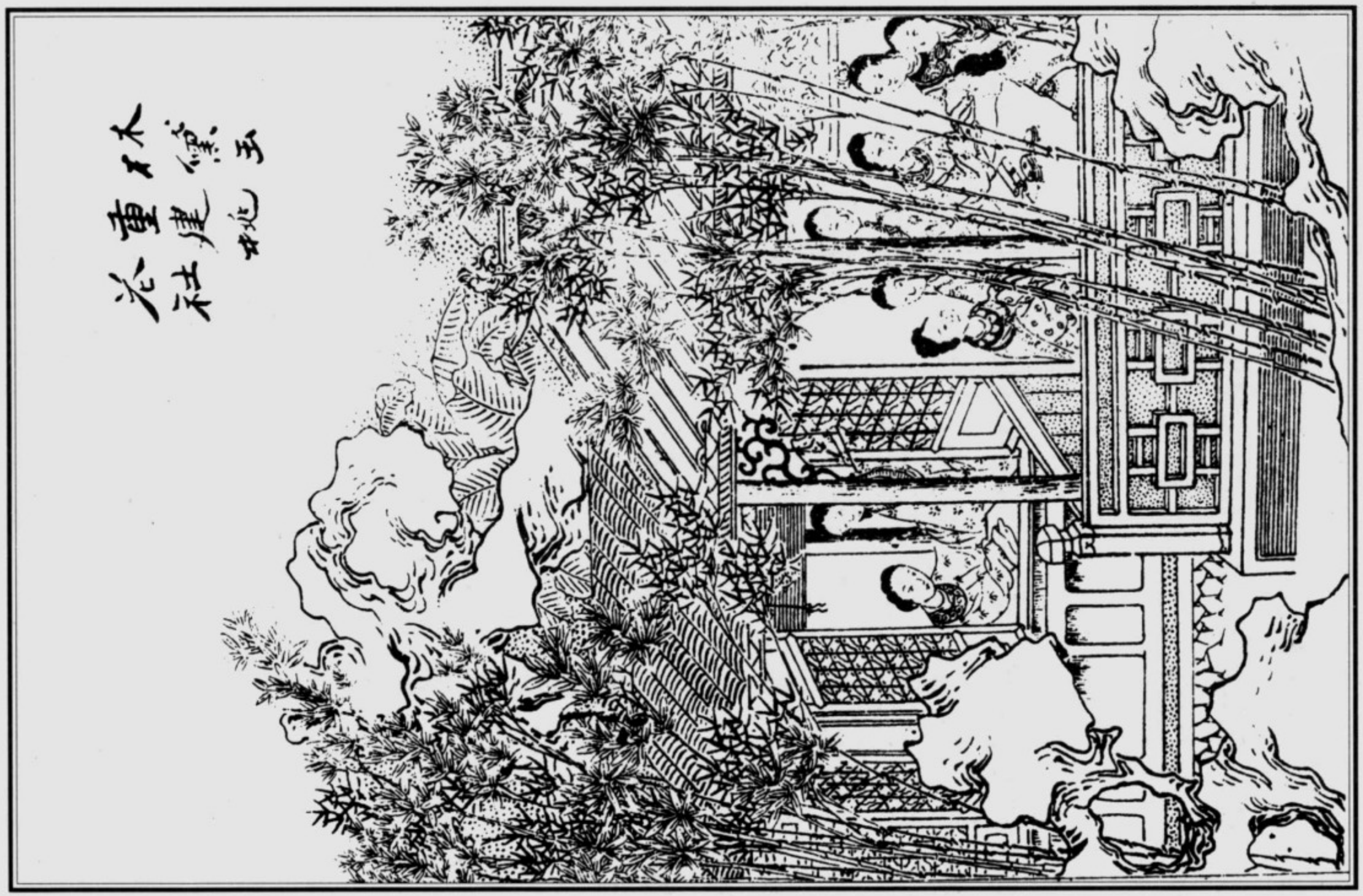
scolded him. "Why do it here, attracting attention?

"You're right," said Jia Lian as he took the silver. He then gave a skirt to Pinger saying, "This is one she was fond of wearing. Keep it for me as a memento."

Pinger accepted it and put it away.

Having taken the silver, Jia Lian came out with some others and ordered men to buy wood for the coffin. The best timber was expensive, but nothing inferior would satisfy him; so he mounted his horse and went to make the choice himself. By evening some good timber had been delivered — as it cost five hundred taels, he had to buy it on credit. He had the coffin made immediately, at the same time assigning mourners to keep vigil, and he did not go home that night, but watched by the coffin.

What happened later is recorded in the next chapter.


大觀園
元春歸省

第七十回

林黛玉重建桃花社　史湘云偶填柳絮词

话说贾琏自在梨香院伴宿七日夜，天天僧道不断做佛事。贾母唤了他去，吩咐不许送往家庙里去。贾琏无法，只得又和时觉说了，就在尤三姐之上点了一个穴，破土埋葬。那日送殡，只不过族中人与王信夫妇、尤氏婆媳而已。凤姐一应不管，只凭他自去办理。

因又年近岁逼，诸务猬集不算外，又有林之孝开了一个人名单子来，共有八个二十五岁的单身小厮应该娶妻成房的，等里面有该放的丫头们好求指配。凤姐看了，先来问贾母和王夫人。大家商议，虽有几个应该发配的，奈各人皆有原故：第一个鸳鸯发誓不去。自那日之后，一向未和宝玉说话，也不盛妆浓饰。众人见他志坚，也不好相强。第二个琥珀，现有病，这次不能了。彩云因近日和贾环分崩，也染了无医之症。只有凤姐和李纨房中粗使的大丫鬟出去了，其余年纪未足。令他们外头自娶去了。

原来这一向因凤姐病了，李纨、探春料理家务不得闲暇，接着过年过节，出了许多杂事，竟将诗社搁起。如今仲春天气，虽得了工夫，怎奈宝玉因冷遁了柳湘莲，剑刎了尤

Chapter 70

Daiyu Starts Another Poetry Club — Peach-Blossom Society Xiangyun Dashes Off a Poem on Willow Catkins

Jia Lian attended the funeral ceremonies at Pear Fragrance Court for seven days and seven nights, during which monks and priests chanted sutras. Then the Lady Dowager summoned him and forbade him to send the coffin to the family temple, so all he could do was choose a spot near Third Sister's grave and arrange with of the temple to have Second Sister buried there. Only members of the clan, Wang Xin and his wife, Madam You and her daughter-in-law were present at the interment. Xifeng did not lift a finger to help, leaving Jia Lian to manage everything himself.

New Year was now approaching and, on top of the host of things that had to be seen to, Lin Zhixiao brought a list of eight men-servants who had reached the age of twenty-five and not yet married, to ask whether there were any maids due to leave who would make them suitable wives. Xifeng having read the list went to consult the old lady and Lady Wang, but although there were several maids in that category they found objections in the case of each. First, Yuanyang since vowing never to leave their service had neither spoken to Baoyu nor put on fine clothes or make up; and in view of her determination, they could hardly force her to marry. Then Hupo was disqualified by illness. And Caiyun, since breaking with Jia Huan recently, had also contracted some unknown disease. Apart from them, only the older maid-servants doing rough work for Xifeng and Li Wan were due to leave. The others were too young. So the men had to look for wives outside.

While Xifeng was unwell, Li Wan and Tanchun had been too occupied with domestic affairs to have time for anything else; and what with celebrating New Year and the Lantern Festival and miscellaneous business, the poetry club had been forgotten. Now, although there was a lull and it was midspring, a whole series of misfortunes — Baoyu's loss of

小妹，金逝了尤二姐，气病了柳五儿，连连接接，闲愁胡恨，一重不了又一重。弄得情色若痴，言语常乱，似染怔忡之疾。慌的袭人等又不敢回贾母，只百般逗他玩笑。

这日清晨方醒，只听外间房内咭咭呱呱，笑声不断。袭人因笑说："你快出去解救，晴雯和麝月两个人按住温都里那儿膈肢呢。"宝玉听了，忙披上灰鼠皮袄出来一瞧，只见他三人被褥尚未叠起，大衣也未穿。那晴雯只穿着葱绿花绸小袄，红小衣，红睡鞋，披着头发，骑在雄奴身上。麝月是红绫抹胸，披着一身旧衣，在那里抓雄奴的肋肢。雄奴却仰在炕上，穿着撒花紧身儿，红裤绿袜，两脚乱蹬，笑的喘不过气来。宝玉忙上前笑说："两个大的欺负一个小的，等我助力。"说着，也上床来抓晴雯肋肢。晴雯怕痒，笑的忙丢下雄奴，来抓宝玉。雄奴趁势又将晴雯按倒，向他肋下抓动。袭人笑说："仔细冻着了。"看他四人裹在一处倒好笑。

忽有李纨打发碧月来说："昨日晚上奶奶在这里把块手帕子忘了去，不知可在这里？"小燕说："有，有，有，我在地下拾了起来，不知是那一位的，才洗了出来晾着，还未干呢。"碧月见他四人乱滚，因笑道："倒是这里热闹，大清早起就咭咭呱呱的玩到一处。"宝玉道："你们那里人也不少，怎么不玩？"碧月道："我们奶奶不玩，把两个姨娘和琴姑娘

his friend Liu Xianglian, the suicides of Third Sister and Second Sister, and Liu Wuer's illness brought on by mortification — had reduced Baoyu to such a state of dejection that he appeared dazed and often raved like a madman. Xiren and his other maids were alarmed but not daring to report this to the old lady they just did their best in every way to divert him.

One morning, as soon as he woke he heard giggling and muffled cries from the outer room.

"Go and rescue her, quick!" said Xiren with a smile. "Qingwen and Sheyue have pinned Venturina down and are ticking her."

Baoyu draped his squirrel-fur jacket over his shoulders and went out to have a look. The three girls had not folded their quilts or put on their outer clothes. Qingwen in a leek-green silk bodice, red silk pants and red slippers, her hair tousled, was sitting astride Fangguan who was being tickled in the ribs by Sheyue in a red silk chemise, an old jacket over her shoulders. Fangguan lying on her back in a flowered bodice, red pants and green socks was thrashing her legs wildly, quite out of breath from laughing.

"Two big girls bullying one small one!" chuckled Baoyu. "I've come to the rescue."

He climbed on to the *kang* to tickle Qingwen in the ribs. Being ticklish, she at once let go of Fangguan to grab him; and Fangguan seized this chance to pull her down and tickle her under the armpits.

"Mind you don't catch cold!" warned Xiren, amused to see the four of them scuffling together.

Just then Li Wan's maid Biyue came in.

"Last night my mistress left a handkerchief somewhere," she announced. "Is it here?"

Xiaoyan answered, "Yes, it is. I picked it up from the floor and didn't know whose it was. I've just washed it and hung it out. It's not quite dry yet."

Biyue smiled at sight of the scrimmage on the *kang*.

"You're lively here," she remarked, "starting your horseplay so early in the morning."

"Don't you play about in your place too?" asked Baoyu. "There are plenty of you there."

也宾住了。如今琴姑娘又跟了老太太前头去了，更寂寞了。两个姨娘今年过了，到明年冬天都去了，又更寂寞呢。你瞧宝姑娘那里，出去了一个香菱，就冷清了多少，把个云姑娘落了单。”

正说着，只见湘云又打发了翠缕来说：“请二爷快出去瞧好诗。”宝玉听了，忙问：“那里的好诗？”翠缕笑道：“姑娘们都在沁芳亭上，你去了便知。”宝玉听了，忙梳洗了出来，果见黛玉、宝钗、湘云、宝琴、探春都在那里，手里拿着一篇诗看。见他来时，都笑说：“这会子还不起来，咱们的诗社散了一年，也没有人作兴。如今正是初春时节，万物更新，正该鼓舞另立起来才好。”湘云笑道：“一起诗社时是秋天，就不应发达。如今却好万物逢春，皆主生盛。况这首桃花诗又好，就把海棠社改作桃花社。”宝玉点头道：“很好。”且忙着要诗看。众人都又说：“咱们此时就访稻香老农去，大家议定好起的。”说着，一齐起来，都往稻香村来。宝玉一壁里走，一壁里看那纸上写的《桃花行》一篇，曰：

桃花帘外东风软，桃花帘内晨妆懒。
帘外桃花帘内人，人与桃花隔不远。
东风有意揭帘栊，花欲窥人帘不卷。
桃花帘外开仍旧，帘中人比桃花瘦。
花解怜人花也愁，隔帘消息风吹透。

"Our mistress is so serious that her two cousins and Miss Baoqin hold themselves in check as well. And now that Miss Baoqin's moved in with the old lady we're even quieter. By winter next year, when her cousins will have gone, it will be still quieter. Didn't you notice how lonely Miss Baochai's place seemed after Xiangling went home, leaving Miss Xiangyun all on her own?"

Even as she was speaking, in came Cuilu sent by Xiangyun to invite Baoyu over to read a fine poem. Asked where this good poem was, she said:

"The young ladies are all at Seeping Fragrance Pavilion. Go and see for yourself, young master."

Baoyu hastily washed, dressed and left. Sure enough he found Daiyu, Baochai, Xiangyun, Baoqin and Tanchun all there reading a poem.

"Why are you so late up?" they demanded. "For a year our poetry club's been broken up and no one's called it together again. Now it's early spring, a fresh start for all living things and high time to bestir ourselves to get it going again."

"We started the club in autumn," added Xiangyun. "That's why it didn't prosper. If we start it again now in spring when everything burgeons, it's bound to come to life. And this poem on peach-blossom is so good, why not change our Begonia Club into Peach-Blossom Club?"

Baoyu nodded approvingly and asked to read the poem.

But the others proposed, "Let's go and find the Old Peasant of Sweet Paddy, to talk it over together and get things going."

With that they all got up and set off for Paddy-Sweet Cottage, Baoyu reading the poem on the way. It was as follows:

PEACH-BLOSSOM

Outside the blind, peach-blossom, a soft spring breeze;
Within, a girl is languidly dressing her hair.
Outside, the peach-blossom; within the girl —
Not far apart the blossom and maid so fair.
Obligingly, the breeze blows back the blind
And holds it to afford a glimpse of her bower;
Outside, the peach is blooming as of old,
Frailer the girl within than any flower.

风透湘帘花满庭，庭前春色倍伤情。
闲苔院落门空掩，斜日栏杆人自凭。
凭栏人向东风泣，茜裙偷傍桃花立。
桃花桃叶乱纷纷，花绽新红叶凝碧。
雾裹烟封一万株，烘楼照壁红模糊。
天机烧破鸳鸯锦，春酣欲醒移珊枕。
侍女金盆进水来，香泉影蘸胭脂冷。
胭脂鲜艳何相类，花之颜色人之泪。
若将人泪比桃花，泪自长流花自媚。
泪眼观花泪易干，泪干春尽花憔悴。
憔悴花遮憔悴人，花飞人倦易黄昏。
一声杜宇春归尽，寂寞帘栊空月痕！

宝玉看了，并不称赞，却滚下泪来。便知出自黛玉，因此落泪，又怕众人看见，又忙自己擦了。因问："你们怎么得来？"宝琴笑道："你猜是谁作的？"宝玉笑道："自然是潇湘子的稿咧。"宝琴笑道："现是我作的呢。"宝玉笑道："我不信。这声调口气，迥乎不像蘅芜之体，所以不信。"宝钗笑道："所以你不通。难道杜工部首首只作'丛菊两开他日泪'

The flowers, knowing pity, grieve for her;
Their sighs gentle breezes express;
Breeze wafts through bamboo slats, blooms fill the court,
But this sping scene redoubles her distress.
The gate of the quiet, mossy courtyard is closed,
At sunset she leans alone on the balustrade;
Then, shedding tears in the soothing breeze,
Neath blossoming boughs slips the red-skirted maid.
Luxuriant the foliage and blooms
With petals a fresh red, leaves emerald green;
These myriad trees enwrapped in mist
Cast a rosy glow, as if of warmth, on her screen.
Duck-and-drake brocade from heaven's loom is burned,
While on coral pillow she wakes in balmy spring;
But chill to the touch of rouged cheeks,
Sweet spring water in golden basins her maids bring.
To what can the vividness of rouge be likened?
The colour of flowers? A girl's tears dropping slow?
If tears are likened to blossom,
Long as the blooms retain their charm they flow.
As she gazes at the blossom her tears run dry —
Her tears run dry, spring ends, blooms fade away;
The fading blossoms hide the fading maid;
Blossoms drift down, she tires, dusk follows day.
A cuckoo-call and spring is left behind,
Only faint moonlight falls on the lonely blind.

Baoyu instead of praising this poem shed tears, for he knew it must be by Daiyu. But not wanting the girls to see how moved he was, he hastily wiped his eyes.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"Guess who wrote it," challenged Baoqin.

"The Queen of the Bamboos, of course."

"No, she didn't," giggled Baoqin. "I did."

"I don't believe it. The style and spirit are definitely not yours."

"That just shows how little you know," put in Baochai. "Were all Tu Du's lines like 'clustered chrysanthemums have flowered twice in tears

之句不成！一般的也有‘红绽雨肥梅’‘水荇牵风翠带长’之媚语。”宝玉笑道：“固然如此说。但我知道姐姐断不许妹妹有此伤悼语句，妹妹虽有此才，是断不肯作的。比不得林妹妹曾经离丧，作此哀音。”众人听说，都笑了。

已至稻香村中，将诗与李纨看了，自不必说称赏不已。说起诗社，大家议定：明日乃三月初二日，就起社，便改“海棠社”为“桃花社”，林黛玉就为社主。明日饭后，齐集潇湘馆。因又大家拟题。黛玉便说：“大家就要桃花诗一百韵。”宝钗道：“使不得。从来桃花诗最多，纵作了必落套，比不得你这一首古风。须得再拟。”正说着，人回：“舅太太来了。姑娘们出去请安。”因此大家都往前头来见王子腾的夫人，陪着说话。吃饭毕，又陪入园中来，各处游玩一遍。至晚饭后掌灯方去。

次日乃是探春的寿日，元春早打发了两个小太监送了几件玩器。合家皆有寿仪，自不必细说。饭后，探春换了礼服，各处去行礼。黛玉笑向众人道：“我这一社开的又不巧了，偏忘了这两日是他的生日。虽不摆酒唱戏的，少不得都要陪他在老太太、太太跟前玩笑一日，如何能得闲空儿。”因此改至初五。

这一日，众姊妹皆在房中侍早膳毕，便有贾政书信到

for other days'? He has other exquisite lines like 'Plums steeped in rain will wax crimson in days to come' and 'The waterweed in the breeze trails long emerald belts.'"

"Even so," Baoyu retorted, "I know you'd never let your cousin write such sad lines. And even if she had the talent, she wouldn't want to. Cousin Daiyu is different. She's known such grief that she writes mournful lines."

All laughing, they now reached Paddy-Sweet Cottage where they showed Daiyu's poem to Li Wan, who was of course loud in her praise. Then they discussed the poetry club and decided to start it the following day, the second of the third month, and to change its name from Begonia Club to Peach-Blossom Society, electing Daiyu as its president.

The next day after breakfast they all gathered in Bamboo Lodge. When the question arose of a subject for the first poem, Daiyu suggested that each of them should write a hundred rhyming couplets on peach-blossom.

"That won't do," objected Baochai. "There have been so many poems since ancient times on peach-blossom, if we did that we'd be bound to produce something stereotyped, not to be compared with *your* poem. We must think of a different subject."

Just then the arrival of Lady Wang's sister-in-law was announced and they all had to go to the mansion to pay their respects. They chatted with Wang Ziteng's wife, and after lunch showed her round the Garden. Not till after dinner when the lamps were lit did she take her leave.

The day after that was Tanchun's birthday. Yuanchun sent two young eunuchs to present her with a few curios, and she received gifts which need not be enumerated from the rest of the family. After breakfast she changed into ceremonial costume and went to the different apartments to pay her respects.

Daiyu observed laughingly, "I picked the wrong day again to start this club, forgetting that we'd be celebrating her birthday for the next two days. Though there won't be feasts and operas, we'll all have to go with her to spend the day amusing Their Ladyships, and that won't leave us any spare time." So the date was changed to the fifth.

That day, however, while the girls were waiting upon the old lady and

了。宝玉请安，将请贾母的安禀拆开，念与贾母听，上面不过是请安的话，说六月中准进京等语。其余家信事务之帖，自有贾琏和王夫人开读。众人听说六七月回京，都喜之不尽。偏生近日王子腾之女许与保宁侯之子为妻，择日于五月初十日过门，凤姐又忙着张罗，常三五日不在家。这日王子腾的夫人又来接凤姐儿，一并请众甥男甥女闲乐一日。贾母和王夫人命宝玉、探春、林黛玉、宝钗四人同凤姐去。众人不敢违拗，只得回房去另妆饰了起来。五人作辞，去了一日，掌灯方回。

宝玉进了怡红院，歇了半刻，袭人便乘机见景劝他收心，闲时把书理一理，预备着。宝玉屈指算一算，说："还早呢。"袭人道："书是第一件，字是第二件。到那时你纵有了书，你的字写的在那里呢？"宝玉笑道："我时常也有写了的好些的，难道都没收着？"袭人道："何曾没收着？你昨儿不在家，我就拿出共算，数了一数，才有五六十篇。这三四年的工夫，难道只有这几张字不成？依我说，从明日起，把别的心全收了起来，天天快临几张字补上。虽不能按日都有，也要大概看得过去。"宝玉听了，忙的自己又亲检了一遍，实在搪塞不过去，便说："明日为始，一天写一百字才好。"说话时大家安下。

Lady Wang at breakfast, a letter arrived from Jia Zheng. After paying his respects Baoyu asked his grandmother's permission to open it and read it to her. Apart from the usual greetings, the letter said that Jia Zheng would definitely be back by the middle of the sixth month. Another letter on family affairs was opened and read by Jia Lian and Lady Wang.

The news of Jia Zheng's impending return by the sixth or seventh month threw them all into a flurry of excitement. On this same day, too, they heard that Wang Ziteng had arranged to marry his daughter to the son of Marquis Baoning on the tenth of the fifth month. Xifeng hastened to offer her services, and this took her away from home for days at a time. Then Wang Ziteng's wife came to invite Xifeng and the young people for a day's pleasure, and the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang told Baoyu, Tanchun, Daiyu and Baochai to accompany Xifeng. Not daring to refuse, they had to go back to dress in formal costumes and then went out for the whole day, not returning till the evening.

Baoyu, back in Happy Red Court, took a short rest. And Xiren seized this chance to advise him to avoid distractions in future and spend his spare time revising the classics, ready for his father's return.

Baoyu reckoned on his fingers. "There's still plenty of time," he expostulated.

"Reading's one thing, and there's writing too," she replied. "You may have read what's required, but how about your calligraphy exercises?"

"I've done quite a few. Haven't they been kept?"

"Of course. When you were out yesterday I got them out and counted them — there are only fifty to sixty sheets. Surely you should have written more than that in the last three or four years? I suggest that, starting tomorrow, you'd better put aside all other business and concentrate on writing a few sheets every day to make up. Then even if you haven't a sheet to show for each day, you'll have done enough to pass muster."

Baoyu at once counted the sheets himself and found he had really procrastinated too long.

"From tomorrow on I'll write a hundred characters a day," he promised, after which they turned in for the night.

至次日起来梳洗了，便在窗下研墨，恭楷临帖。贾母因不见他，只当病了，忙使人来问。宝玉方去请安，便说写字之故，先将早起清晨的工夫尽了出来，再作别的，因此出来迟了。贾母听了，便十分欢喜，吩咐他："以后只管写字念书，不用出来也使得。你去回你太太知道。"宝玉听说，便往王夫人房中来说明。王夫人便说："临阵磨枪，也不中用。有这会子着急的，天天写写念念，有多少完不了的。这一赶，又赶出病来才罢。"宝玉回说不妨事。这里贾母也说怕急出病来。探春宝钗等都笑说："老太太不用急。书虽替他不得，字却替得的。我们每人每日临一篇给他，搪塞过这一步就完了。一则老爷到家不生气，二则他也急不出病来。"贾母听说，喜之不尽。

原来林黛玉闻得贾政回来，必问宝玉的功课，恐临期吃了亏。因此自己只装作不耐烦，把诗社便不起，也不以外事去勾引他。探春、宝钗二人每日也临一篇楷书字与宝玉，宝玉自己每日也加工，或写二百三百不拘。至三月下旬，便将字又集凑出许多。这日正算，再得五十篇，也就混的过去了。谁知紫鹃走来，送了一卷东西与宝玉，拆开看时，却是一色老油竹纸上，临的是钟王蝇头小楷，字迹且与自己十分相似。喜的宝玉

The next day as soon as he was dressed, he sat down by the window to grind ink and practise writing in real earnest, instead of going straight to his grandmother. Thinking he must be unwell she sent maids to make inquiries, whereupon he went over to pay his respects and explain that he was late because he had been practising calligraphy since first thing that morning.

The old lady was very gratified to hear this.

"As long as you're writing or studying, you needn't come here," she said. "You tell your mother that."

Baoyu did so.

"It's no use sharpening your spear just before a battle," warned Lady Wang. "If you'd done some reading and writing every day, you'd have finished all that's expected and wouldn't feel so frantic. If you go at it too hard now you may fall ill again"

"No, I'll be all right," he assured her.

The old lady also expressed the fear that he might overwork and ruin his health.

"Don't you worry, madam," said Baochai and Tanchun. "His reading we can't do for him, but writing we can. We'll each copy out one sheet for him every day to get him out of this fix; then His Lordship won't be angry when he comes home, and Baoyu won't fret himself ill."

The old lady was delighted with this idea.

When Daiyu heard that Jia Zheng was coming home, she knew he would certainly check on his son's studies and was afraid Baoyu would get into trouble. So she pretended to have lost interest in re-starting the poetry society, in order not to distract him. Tanchun and Baochai each day neatly copied out a sheet of characters in the orthographic script for Baoyu, while he himself put on a spurt and wrote two or three hundred characters a day. In this way, by the end of the third month, he had amassed quite a number of exercises. He reckoned that with another fifty sheets he could get by.

Then to his surprise Zijuan came to give him a rolled-up package. When he opened it he found a number of sheets of old bamboo paper filled with small characters modelled on those of Zhong You and Wang

和紫鹃作了一个揖，又说亲自来道谢。史湘云、宝琴二人亦皆临了几篇相送。凑成虽不足功课，亦足搪塞了。宝玉放了心，于是将所读之书，又温理过几遍。正是天天用功，可巧近海一带海啸，又遭踏了几处生民。地方官题本奏闻，奉旨就着贾政顺路查看赈济回来。如此算去，至冬底方回。宝玉听了，便把书字又搁在一边，仍是照旧游荡。

时值暮春之际，史湘云无聊，因见柳花飘舞，便偶成一小令，调寄《如梦令》，其词曰：

> 岂是绣绒残吐，卷起半帘香雾。纤手自拈来，空使鹃啼燕妒。且住，且住！莫放春光别去。

自己作了，心中得意，便用一条纸儿写好，与宝钗看了，又来找黛玉。黛玉看毕，笑道："好，也新鲜有趣。我却不能。"湘云笑道："咱们这几社总没有填词。你明日何不起社填词，改个样儿，岂不新鲜些。"黛玉听了，偶然兴动，便说："这话说的极是。我如今便请他们去。"说着，一面吩咐预备了几色果点之类，一面就打发人分头去请众人。这里他二人便拟了柳絮之题，又限出几个调来，写了绾在壁上。

Xizhi, exactly as he would have written them himself. Baoyu joyfully bowed his thanks to Zijuan, and went over in person to thank Daiyu. Xiangyun and Baoqin also copied out some sheets for him. So altogether, althought less than was strictly required, he had about enough. And once this was off his mind, Baoyu started reading the classics he had been set.

But it so happened that at this time some coastal regions were devastated by tidal waves and the local officials reported this to the court, whereupon the Emperor decreed that Jia Zheng on his way back should inspect these areas and supervise relief work. This meant that he would not be home till the end of winter. When Baoyu heard this, he put aside his books and calligraphy exercises and started amusing himself again as before.

It was then the end of spring. Xiangyun, feeling listless one day, watched the swaying willow catkins and then dashed off the following short poem to the melody *Rumengling:*

> Boughs with silk floss entwined
> Or sweet mist glimpsed through a half rolled-up blind?
> As slender fingers with the catkins play,
> Cuckoo and swallow cry out in dismay:
> Stop, pray! Do stay!
> Don't let spring steal away.

Feeling rather pleased with this verse she wrote it down and showed it to Baochai, then went to find Daiyu.

Daiyu read it and pronounced,"Good. It's fresh and original. I can't write in this way myself."

"Our poetry club has never tried writing irregular metres," said Xiangyun. "Why don't you call a meeting tomorrow to do that? Wouldn't that make a change?"

Intrigued by this suggestion Daiyu cried, "Of course! That's a wonderful idea. I'll send out invitations right away."

She gave orders for refreshments to be prepared, then sent her maids out to invite the others while she and Xiangyun fixed on willow catkins as the subject and on the different melodies to be used. They fastened a notice to this effect on the wall.

众人来看时，以柳絮为题，限各色小调。又都看了史湘云的，称赏了一回。宝玉笑道："这词上我倒平常，少不得也要胡诌起来。"于是大家拈阄，宝钗便拈得了《临江仙》，宝琴拈得了《西江月》，探春拈得了《南柯子》，黛玉拈得了《唐多令》，宝玉拈得了《蝶恋花》。紫鹃炷了一支梦甜香，大家思索起来。一时黛玉有了，写完。接着宝琴宝钗都有了。他三人写完，互相看时，宝钗便笑道："我先瞧完了你们的，再看我的。"探春笑道："嗳呀，今儿这香怎么这样快，已剩了三分了，我才有了半首。"因又问宝玉可有了。宝玉虽作了些，只是自己嫌不好，又都抹了，要另作，回头看香，已将烬了。李纨等笑道："这算输了。蕉丫头的半首且写出来。"探春听说，忙写了出来。众人看时，上面却只半首《南柯子》，写道是：

空挂纤纤缕，徒垂络络丝。也难绾系也难羁，一任东西南北各分离。

李纨笑道："这也却好作，何不续上？"宝玉见香没了，情愿认输，不肯勉强塞责，将笔搁下，来瞧这半首。见没完时，反倒动了兴开了机，乃提笔续道是：

落去君休惜，飞来我自知。莺愁蝶倦晚芳时，纵是明春再见隔年期。

When the others arrived they read first this notice and then Xiangyun's poem, which they praised.

Baoyu said: "I'm no good at irregular metres. Still, I shall have to write some sort of nonsense."

They drew lots for the different metres and Baochai got *Linjiangxian*; Baoqin, *Xijiangyue*; Tanchun, *Nankezi*; Daiyu, *Tangduoling*; and Baoyu, *Dielianhua*. Zijuan lighted a stick of Sweet-Dream Incense then and they started. Very soon Daiyu had finished and written her verse out. Then Baoqin and Baochai completed theirs. They looked at each other's poem.

Baochai said with a smile, "Let me see yours first, and then you can see mine."

"How come the incense is burning so fast today?" exclaimed Tanchun. "There's only one third left, yet I've just made up half." She asked Baoyu,"How about you?"

Baoyu did not think what he had written was any good, so he crossed it out meaning to start again, then looking round saw that the incense was nearly burnt up. The others laughed.

"Baoyu's lost again," said Li Wan. "You'd better write out the half you've done, Tanchun."

Tanchun did so. Her lines to the melody *Nankezi* were only half completed:

> In vain the willow trails long slender branches,
> Hanging strands of silk are they;
> They cannot curb the catkins
> And north, south, east and west these drift away ....

Li Wan said, "That sounds easy. Why not finish it?"

Seeing that the incense was already burnt out, Baoyu preferred to admit defeat rather than writing something inferior. He put down his brush to read Tanchun's unfinished poem, and this gave him the idea for the following conclusion which he wrote:

> Do not mourn their falling;
> Where they fly, only I have any idea;
> Orioles grieve, butterflies flag as flowers fade,
> But next spring, another year past, they will reappear.

众人笑道："正经你分内的又不能，这却偏有了。纵然好，也不算得。"说着，看黛玉的《唐多令》：

粉堕百花洲，香残燕子楼。一团团逐对成毬。飘泊亦如人命薄，空缱绻，说风流。　草木也知愁，韶华竟白头！叹今生谁舍谁收？嫁与东风春不管，凭尔去，忍淹留。

众人看了，俱点头感叹，说："太作悲了，好是固然好的。"因又看宝琴的是《西江月》：

汉苑零星有限，隋堤点缀无穷。三春事业付东风，明月梅花一梦。　几处落红庭院，谁家香雪帘栊？江南江北一般同，偏是离人恨重

众人都笑说："到底是他的声调悲壮。'几处'　'谁家'两句最妙。"宝钗笑道："终不免过于丧败。我想，柳絮原是一件轻薄无根无绊的东西，然依我的主意，偏要和他说好了，才不落套。所以我诌了一首来，未必合你们的意思。"众人笑道："不要太谦。我们且赏鉴，自然是好的。"因看这一首《临江仙》，道是：

白玉堂前春解舞，东风卷得均匀。

湘云先笑道："好一个'东风卷得均匀'！这一句就出人之上了。"又看底下道：

The others teased,"You didn't do your own assignment, so even if you've finished this off well it doesn't count."

Then they read Daiyu's poem to the melody *Tangduoling:*

Pink petals fall in Hundred Flowers Islet.
By Swallow Tower their fragrance slowly fades;
Catkins following in clusters
Float off like ill-fated maids;
Vain their close attachment and beauty.
The willow too knows what it is to yearn;
In early prime her head turns white,
She laments her life but has no one to whom to turn.
The spring breeze to whom she is wedded no pity will show,
Leaving it to chance whether to stay or go.

As they read this they nodded and exclaimed, "Too sad! But of course it's good."

Next they read Baoqin's verse to the melody *Xijiangyue:*

Few and far between in the Han garden,
They make the whole Sui Dyke gleam!
Their spring splendour gone with the wind,
Moonlight and plum-blossom nothing but a dream.
Here and there in the courtyard crimson petals fall —
Beside whose curtain snow down these fragrant flakes?
North and south of the Great River it is the same,
The heart of every parted lover aches.

The others commented with a smile, "This is really in a tragic vein. The fifth and sixth lines are the best."

"Still it's too mournful," objected Baochai. "Willow catkins may be light and fickle, yet it seems to me, to be original, we should praise what's good about them. That's what I've done, but you may not approve."

"Don't be so modest," said the rest. "Yours is bound to be good, so let's hear it." Then they read her verse to the melody *Linjiangxian:*

Dancing at ease in spring before white jade halls,
Swirling gracefully in the spring breeze ....

"That's the best line yet!" cried Xiangyun. "Swirling gracefully in the spring breeze."

蜂团蝶阵乱纷纷。几曾随逝水，岂必委芳尘。

万缕千丝终不改，任他随聚随分。韶华休笑本无根。好风频借力，送我上青云!

众人拍案叫绝，都说："果然翻得好气力，自然是这首为尊。缠绵悲戚，让潇湘妃子；情致妩媚，却是枕霞；小薛与蕉客今日落第，要受罚的。"宝琴笑道："我们自然受罚，但不知付白卷子的又怎么罚?"李纨道："不要忙，这定要重重罚他。下次为例。"

一语未了，只听窗外竹子上一声响，恰似窗屉子倒了一般，众人唬了一跳。丫鬟们出去瞧时，帘外丫鬟嚷道："一个大蝴蝶风筝挂在竹梢上了。"众丫鬟笑道："好一个齐整风筝!不知谁家放的，断了绳，拿下他来。"宝玉等听了，也都出来看时，宝玉笑道："我认得这风筝。这是大老爷那院里嫣红姑娘放的，拿下来给他送过去罢。"紫鹃笑道："难道天下没有一样的风筝，单他有这个不成?我不管，我且拿起来。"探春道："紫鹃也学小器了。你们一般的也有，这会子拾人走了的，也不怕忌讳。"黛玉笑道："可是呢，知道是谁放晦气的，快掉出去罢。把咱们的拿出来，咱们也放晦

While whirling all around me
Are butterflies and bees.
I have never followed the flowing stream,
Why then should I abandon myself to the dust?
Constant to ten thousand boughs,
Whether together or parted I keep trust.
Do not jeer at me as rootless,
But lend me strength, good wind,
To soar up to the azure sky at last.

The others clapped the table and exclaimed with admiration.

"There's real strength in this," they said. "It's the best of the lot. Less tender and poignant, though, than the Queen of Bamboo's poem; and Pillowed Iridescence's has charm and feeling. Today Little Xue and the Stranger Under the Plantain have fallen behind. They'll have to be penalized."

"We'll accept any penalty," cried Baoqin gaily. "But how will you punish the one who handed in a blank paper?"

"Just wait," said Li Wan. "We'll deal with him strictly, you can be sure of that, to make an example of him."

As she was speaking something crashed against the bamboo outside — it sounded as if a window had fallen out. They all jumped with fright and maids ran out to investigate.

One of the girls outside called, "A big butterfly kite's got entangled in the bamboo."

"What a fine kite," remarked the other maids. "Whose can it be? Its string has snapped. Let's get it down."

Hearing this Baoyu and the others went out to look.

"I know this kite," said Baoyu. "It belongs to anhong in the other house. Fetch it down and send it back to her."

"Is there only one kite like this in the world?" objected Zijuan. "How can you be sure it's hers? I don't care if it is, I'm going to keep it."

"Don't be so greedy, Zijuan," scolded Tanchun. "You've kites of your own, so why filch somebody else's? That may bring you bad luck."

"Quite right," agreed Daiyu. "Someone may have set it adrift to float away evil influences. Get rid of it, quick. And let's loose ours too to send

气。”紫鹃听了，赶令小丫头们，将这风筝送出与园门上值日的婆子去了，倘有人来找，好与他们去的。

这里小丫头们听见放风筝，巴不得一声儿，七手八脚都忙着拿出一个美人风筝来。也有搬高凳去的，也有捆剪子股的，也有拨篦子的。宝钗等都立在院门前，命丫头们在院外敞地下放去。宝琴笑道：“你这个不大好看，不如三姐姐的那一个软翅子大凤凰好。”宝钗笑道：“果然。”因回头向翠墨笑道：“你把你们的拿来也放放。”翠墨笑嘻嘻的果然也取去了。宝玉又兴头起来，也打发个小丫头子家去，说：“把昨儿赖大娘送我的那个大鱼取来。”小丫头子去了半天，空手回来，笑道：“晴姑娘昨儿放走了。”宝玉道：“我还没放一遭儿呢。”探春笑道：“横竖是给你放晦气罢了。”宝玉道：“也罢。再把那个大螃蟹拿来罢。”丫头去了，同了几个人扛了一个美人并篦子来，说道：“袭姑娘说，昨儿把螃蟹给了三爷了。这一个是林大娘才送来的，放这一个罢。”宝玉细看了一回，只见这美人做的十分精致。心中欢喜，便命叫放起来。此时探春的也取了来，翠墨带着几个小丫头子们在那边山坡上已放了起来。宝琴也命人将自己的一个大红蝙蝠也取来。宝钗也高兴，也取了一个来，却是一连七个大雁的，都放起来了。独有宝玉的美人放不起来，宝玉说丫头们不会放，自己放了半天，只起房高便落下来了。急的宝玉头上出汗，众人又笑。宝玉恨的掷在地下，指着风筝道：“若不是个美人，我一顿脚跺个稀烂。”黛玉笑道：“那是顶线不好，拿出去另打了顶线就好了。”宝玉一面使人拿出去打顶

away our bad luck."

Then Zijuan told some younger maids to take the kite to the women on duty at the gate, who should give it to anyone who came asking for it.

When the younger maids heard they were going to fly kites, they hurried off eagerly to fetch a kite in the form of a beautiful girl, as well as high stools, cords and reels, and a pole with a stick tied to its top for launching the kite. Baochai and the others standing by the gate, ordered the maids to fly this on the open ground outside.

Baoqin remarked,"This of yours isn't as handsome as Cousin Tanchun's big phoenix with flapping wings."

Baoyu agreed and turned to tell Cuimo to fetch it, where upon she went off cheerfully on this errand.

Baoyu, in high spirits, sent a young maid home with the instructions, "Fetch that big fish kite Mrs. Lai brought us yesterday."

After a long interval the maid came back empty-handed.

"Qingwen flew it yesterday and lost it," she announced.

"And I hadn't flown it even once!" exclaimed Baoyu.

"Never mind." said Tanchun. "She sent off your bad luck for you."

"In that case bring the big crab kite," ordered Baoyu.

The maid came back presently with a few others carrying a beauty kite and reel. "Miss Xiren says yesterday she gave the crab kite to Master Huan," she told him. "Here's one just brought by Mrs. Lin. She suggests you fly this instead."

Baoyu examined the kite and was pleased to find it exquisitely made, He told them to fly it. By now Tanchun's kite had come too, and Cuimo and some other maids were already flying it above a nearby slope. Baoqin told her maids to fly a big red bat kite. Baochai, infected by the general enthusiasm, had sent up a lite in the shape of a formation of seven wild swans. Now all these kites were airborne except Baoyu's beauty, making him so frantic that sweat poured down his face. When the others laughed at him, he angrily therw the kite to the ground and pointing at it swore:

"If you weren't a beauty, I'd trample you to bits!"

"It's the fault of the bridle," said Daiyu soothingly. "If you adjust it, it'll be all right."

线，一面又取出一个来放。大家都仰面而看，天上这几个风筝都起在半空中去了。

一时丫鬟们又都拿了许多各式各样的送饭的，玩了一回。紫鹃笑道："这一回的劲大，姑娘来放罢。"黛玉听说，用手帕垫着手，顿了一顿，果然风紧力大，接过簦子来，随着风筝的势将簦子一松，只听一阵"豁啷啷"响，登时簦子线尽。黛玉因让众人来放，众人都笑道："各人都有，你先请罢。"黛玉笑道："这一放虽有趣，只是不忍。"李纨道："放风筝图的是这一乐，所以又说放晦气，你更该多放些，把你这病根儿都带了去就好了。"紫鹃笑道："我们姑娘越发小器了。那一年不放几个子，今日忽然又心疼了。姑娘不放，等我放。"说着便向雪雁手中接过一把西洋小银剪子来，齐簦子根下寸丝不留，咯噔一声铰断，笑道："这一去把病根儿可都带了去了。"那风筝飘飘摇摇，只管往后退了去，一时只有鸡蛋大小，转眼只剩了一点黑星，再转眼便不见了。众人皆仰面睃眼，说："有趣，有趣。"宝玉道："可惜不知落在那里去了。若落在有人烟处，被小孩子得了好；若落在荒郊野外无人烟处，我替他寂寞。想起来把我这个也放去，叫他两个作伴儿罢。"于是也用剪子剪断，照先放了。探春正要剪自己的凤凰，见天上也有一个凤凰，因道："这也不知是谁家的。"众人皆笑说："且别剪你的，看他倒像要来绞的样儿。"说着，又见那凤凰渐逼近来，遂与这凤凰绞在

Baoyu ordered this to be done and at the same time sent for another kite. They were all looking up and watching the kites sail through the air when the maids brought many others of different kinds and played with them for a while.

Then Zijuan exclaimed, "It's pulling hard now, miss. Won't you take over?"

Daiyu wrapped a handkerchief round her hand and pulled. Sure enough, the wind was blowing hard. She took the reel and paid out the cord. As the kite soared off, the reel whirred and all of a sudden the whole cord had run out. Then she urged the rest to let their kites drift away.

"We're all ready," they said. "You start first."

"Though it's fun to let it go, I haven't the heart to." she replied with a smile.

"Kite-flying is just for fun, that's why we call it 'sending off bad luck,'" said Li Wan. "You should do this more often, and then you might get rid of that illness of yours. Wouldn't that be a good thing?"

"Our young lady's getting more and more stingy," put in Zijuan. "We always sent off a few kites every year, so why begrudge one today? If you won't do it, miss, I will." She took from Xueyan a pair of small silver Western scissors, and clipped the cord tied to the reel.

"There!" she said with a laugh. "That'll carry off her illness."

The kite drifted away until soon it seemed no bigger than an egg, then it dwindled to a speck like a black star and the next minute vanished from sight.

Watching with screwed-up eyes they cried, "What fun!"

"It's a pity we don't know where it'll land," observed Baoyu. "Let's hope it falls somewhere with people about and gets picked up by some children. If it falls in the wilderness where nobody lives, how lonely it will feel. I'd better send this one after it to keep it company." He cut the cord of his kite and let it go too.

Tanchun was about to cut the cord of her phoenix kite when she saw another just like it in the sky.

"Whose can that be?" she wondered.

The others advised, "Don't cut yours loose yet. That other kite seems to be approaching it."

一处。众人方要往下收线，那一家也要收线，正不开交，又见一个门扇大的玲珑喜字带响鞭，在半天如钟鸣一般，也逼近来。众人笑道："这一个也来绞了。且别收，让他三个绞在一处倒有趣呢。"说着，那喜字果然与这两个凤凰绞在一处。三个齐收乱顿，谁知线都断了，那三个风筝飘飘摇摇都去了。众人拍手哄然一笑，说："倒有趣，可不知那喜字是谁家的，忒促狭了些。"黛玉说："我的风筝也放了，我也乏了，我也要歇歇去了。"宝钗说："且等我们放了去，大家好散。"说着，看姊妹都放去了，大家方散。黛玉回房歪着养乏。要知端的，下回分解。

Even as they spoke the two phoenixes converged, their cords becoming entangled. They tried to pull Tanchun's back, but as the other side was pulling too, they could not disentangle them. And just then another kite the size of a door, in the form of the character "good-luck," came zooming over, the bells on it ringing.

"This one will get entangled too," they cried. "Don't pull yours back. Let all three of them tangle together, that will be amusing."

This new kite did indeed get entangled with the two phoenixes. The three kite-fliers tugged at their cords until these snapped and the three kites sailed away. They clapped and laughed, then, crying.

"What fun! Whose could that good-luck kite be? It played a dastardly trick."

"My kite's gone and I'm tired," said Daiyu, "I'm going back to rest."

"Just wait till we've sent off all our kites and then we'll go," said Baochai.

So they loosed their kites, then dispersed, Daiyu going back to her own apartments to rest.

To know what happened later, read the next chapter.

第七十一回

嫌隙人有心生嫌隙　鸳鸯女无意遇鸳鸯

话说贾政回京之后，诸事完毕，赐假一月在家歇息。因年景渐老，事重身衰，又近因在外几年，骨肉离异，今得晏然复聚于庭室，自觉喜幸不尽。一应大小事务一发付于度外，只是看书，闷了便与清客们下棋吃酒，或日间在里面母子、夫妻共叙天伦之乐。

因今岁八月初二日乃贾母八旬之庆，又因亲友全来，恐筵席排设不开，便早同贾赦及贾珍、贾琏等商议，议定于七月二十八日起至八月初五日止，荣宁两处齐开筵宴，宁国府中单请官客，荣国府中单请堂客，大观园中收拾出缀锦阁并嘉荫堂等几处大地方，来作退居。二十八日请皇亲、驸马、王公、诸公主、郡主、王妃、国君、太君、夫人等，二十九日便是阁下、都府、督镇及诰命等，三十日便是诸官长及诰命并远近亲友及堂客。初一日是贾赦的家宴，初二日是贾政，初三日是贾珍贾琏，初四日是贾府中合族长幼大小共凑的家宴。初五日是赖大林之孝等家下管事人等共凑一日。自七月上旬，送寿礼者便络绎不绝。礼部奉旨：钦赐金玉如意各一柄，彩缎四端，金玉杯四个，帑银五百两。元春又命太

Chapter 71

Lady Xing Feeling Wronged Puts Xifeng in the Wrong
Yuanyang Happens Upon Two Lovers

Upon Jia Zheng's return to the capital, after all his business was despatched, he was granted a month's home leave. Growing old now and worn out by his heavy responsibilities, he was so happy after this long time away to be reunited with his family that banishing all thought of business he passed the time reading, and when he was tired would play chess or drink with his prot¨¦g¨¦s or enjoy the domesticity of the inner quarters with his mother, sons and wife.

The second of the eighth month that year would be the old lady's eightieth birthday, and all their relatives and friends were bound to come to offer congratulations. How were they to accommodate so many feasters? Jia Zheng talked it over with Jia She, Jia Zhen and Jia Lian, and they decided to hold feasts from the twenty-eighth of the seventh month to the fifth of the eighth in both mansions, the Ning entertaining the men, the Rong the ladies. Two of the larger buildings in Grand View Garden, Variegated Splendour Tower and Auspicious Shade Hall, could be prepared as retiring rooms. On the twenty-eighth they would invite the prince consorts, princes, princesses and dukes of the Imperial House together with their ladies; on the twenty-ninth, ministers, military governors and their titled wives; on the thirtieth, other officials with their titled wives, and relatives close and distant with their wives. Family feasts would be given on the first by Jia She, on the second by Jia Zheng, on the third by Jia Zhen and Jia Lian, on the fourth by the whole Jia family old and young. Finally, on the fifth, Lai Da, Lin Zhixiao and the other chief stewards would give a feast.

From the start of the seventh month streams of messengers had been arriving with gifts. The Ministry of Rites by Imperial decree presented the old lady with one gold and jade *Ruyi* sceptre, four lengths of coloured

监送出金寿星一尊，沉香拐一枝，伽南珠一串，福寿香一盒，金锭一对，银锭四对，彩缎十二匹，玉杯四只。余者自亲王驸马以及大小文武官员之家凡素有来往者，莫不有礼，不能胜记。堂屋内设下大桌案，铺了红毡，将庆寿之物都摆上，请贾母过目。贾母先一二日还高兴过来瞧瞧，后来烦了，也不过目，只说："叫凤丫头收了，改日闲了再瞧。"

至二十八日，两府中俱悬灯结彩，屏开鸾凤，褥设芙蓉，笙箫鼓乐之音，通衢越巷。宁府中本日只有北静王、南安郡王、永昌驸马、乐善郡王并几位世交公侯应袭，荣府中南安王太妃、北静王妃并几位世交公侯诰命。贾母等皆是按品大妆迎接。大家厮见，先请入大观园内嘉荫堂，茶毕更衣，方出至荣庆堂上拜寿入席。大家谦逊半日，方才入席。上面两桌席是两王妃，下面依次便是众公侯的诰命。左边下手一席，陪客是锦乡侯的诰命与临昌伯的诰命；右边下手一席，方是贾母的主位。邢、王二夫人带领尤氏凤姐并族中几个媳妇，两溜雁翅站在贾母身后侍立。林之孝赖大家的带领众媳妇都在竹帘外面伺候上菜上酒，周瑞家的带领几个丫鬟在围屏后伺候呼唤。凡跟来的人，早又有人别处管待去了。

satin, four gold and jade ear-rings, and five hundred taels of silver from the Imperial Treasury. The Imperial Consort Yuanchun sent eunuchs with a golden image of the God of Longevity, an eaglewood cane, a string of scented beads, a box of rare incense, one pair of gold and four of silver ingots, twelve lengths of coloured satin and four jade cups. As for the gifts sent by all the princes and their consorts, as well as officials and officers high and low who had connections with the Jia family, these were too many to enumerate. A large table covered with a red felt was set in the hall to display all the best gifts for the old lady's inspection. The first two days she enjoyed examining them, but after that she lost interest.

"Let Xifeng put them away," she said. "I'll look at them some other time when I've nothing to do."

On the twenty-eighth, both mansions were hung with lanterns as decorations, phoenix screens were set up and lotus-patterned carpets spread, while the sound of fluting and drumming carried into the streets outside. The only guests that day in the Ning Mansion were the Prince of Beijing, the Prince of Nanan, Prince Consort Yongchang, the Prince of Leshan and a few young nobles. To the Rong Mansion came only the Dowager Princess of Nanan, the wife of the Prince of Beijing and a few other noble ladies.

The Lady Dowager and the rest received them in full court costume appropriate to their rank. After greetings had been exchanged the guests were invited to Auspicious Shade Hall in the Garden to drink tea and freshen up, after which they went to the Hall of Glorious Celebration to offer their congratulations and sit down to a feast. There was much polite deferring to each other before finally they sat down, the two princes' consorts in the seats of honour, then the other ladies according to their rank. The wives of the Marquis of Jinxiang and the Earl of Linchang sat at the lower table on the left. The Lady Dowager, as hostess, took a lower seat on the right and Madam You, Xifeng and some other daughters-in-law, headed by Lady Xing and Lady Wang, ranged themselves behind her on both sides to wait on the guests. Outside the bamboo portière matrons headed by the stewards' wives Mrs. Lin and Mrs. Lai served the dishes and wine, while a few young maids supervised by Mrs. Zhou Rui stood behind the

一时台上参了场，台下一色十二个未留发的小厮伺候。须臾，一小厮捧了戏单至阶下，先递与回事的媳妇。这媳妇接了，才递与林之孝家的，用一小茶盘托上，挨身入帘来递与尤氏的侍妾佩凤。佩凤接了才奉与尤氏。尤氏托着走至上席南安太妃前，太妃谦让了一回，点了一出吉庆戏文；然后又谦让了一回，北静王妃也点了一出。众人又谦让了一回，才罢了。少时，菜已四献，汤始一道，跟来的人拿出赏来，各家放了赏。大家便更衣复入园来，另献好茶。

南安太妃问宝玉，贾母笑道："今日几处庙里念'保安延寿经'，他跪经去了。"又问众小姐们，贾母笑道："他们姊妹们病的病，弱的弱，见人腼腆，所以叫他们给我看屋子去了。有的是小戏子，传了一班在那边厅上陪着他姨娘家的姊妹们也看戏呢。"南安太妃笑道："既这样，叫人请来。"贾母回头命凤姐去把史、薛、林带来，"再只叫你三妹妹陪着来罢。"凤姐答应了，来至贾母这边，只见他姊妹们正吃果子看戏呢，宝玉也才从庙里跪经回来。凤姐说了话。宝钗姊妹与黛玉、探春、湘云五人来至园中，大家见了，不过请安、问好、让坐等事。众人中也有见过的，还有一两家不曾

screens waiting for orders. The servants who had come with the guests were entertained elsewhere.

Presently, actors came on the stage to offer congratulations, which signified that it was time for the performance to start. At the foot of the stage stood twelve pages, still too young to let their hair grow. One of these with both hands presented a list of the repertoire to the woman in charge at the bottom of the steps, who passed it to Mrs. Lin. She laid it on a small tray and noiselessly raised the portiere, then sidled up to Madam You's maid, the concubine Peifeng. Peifeng presented it to Madam You, who carried it over to the two highest seats. The mother of the Prince of Nanan after first declining this honour chose an auspicious item, then passed the list to the wife of the Prince of Beijing who — after a show of modesty — also selected one item. The rest after some deferring to each other finally all said:

"Let them sing whatever they think best."

When dishes had been served four times followed by soup, the servants who had accompanied their mistresses brought forward tips which were given to the performers, after which they all had a wash and returned to the Garden where fresh tea was served. The mother of the Prince of Nanan, asking after Baoyu, was told by the Lady Dowager that he had gone to worship in one of the temples where monks were chanting sutras to pray for peace and longevity for her. Then she asked after the girls.

"Some of them are unwell, others are delicate, and they're so shy in company that I told them to keep an eye on my rooms for me," said the old lady. "As we have plenty of actresses, I've sent a troupe to perform in my hall, and they're watching operas there with the girls in their aunt's family."

"In that case, do invite them over," urged the Dowager Princess.

The Lady Dowager turned to tell Xifeng, "Go and fetch Xiangyun, Baochai, Baoqin and Daiyu, and ask Tanchun to come with them."

Xifeng assented and went off. She found the girls eating sweetmeats and watching an opera in the old lady's place with Baoyu, just back from the temple. When she passed on her instructions, Baochai, Baoqin, Daiyu, Tanchun and Xiangyun all went with her to the Garden where they were

见过的，都齐声夸赞不绝。人非草木，见此数人，焉得不垂涎称妙。其中湘云最熟，南安太妃因笑道："你在这里，听我来了还不出来，还只等请去。我明儿和你叔叔算账。"因一手拉着探春，一手拉宝钗，问几岁了，又连连夸赞。因又松了他两个，又拉着黛玉、宝琴，也着实细看，极夸一回。又笑道："都是好的，不知叫我夸那一个的是。"早有一人将备用的礼物打点出五分来，金玉戒指各五个，腕香珠五串。南安太妃笑道："你姊妹们别笑话，留着赏丫头们罢。"五人忙拜谢过。北静王妃也有五样礼物，余者不必细说。

吃了茶，园中略逛了一逛，贾母等因又让入席。南安太妃便告辞说身上不快，"今日若不来，实在使不得，因此恕我竟先要告别了。"贾母等听说，也不便强留，大家又让了一回，送至园门，坐轿而去。接着北静王妃略坐一坐，也就告辞了。余者也有终席的，也有不终席的。

贾母劳乏了一日，次日便不出来会人，一应都是邢、王二夫人款待。有那些世家子弟拜寿的，只到厅上行礼，贾赦、贾政、贾珍等还礼，款待至宁府坐席。不在话下。

introduced and paid their respects. Some of the visitors had met them before. One or two had not, but all alike expressed their admiration. The mother of the Prince of Nanan knew Xiangyun best.

"When you heard I was here, why didn't you come out?" she teased. "Were you waiting for an invitation? I shall take your uncle to task for this some time."

Next she took Tanchun and Baochai by the hand to ask them their age and exclaimed in delight, so impressed was she by them. Then letting them go she drew Daiyu and Baoqin to her, subjected them to a close scrutiny and praised them in the highest terms.

"They're all so charming," she said laughingly, "I don't know which to praise most."

A servant had already brought in the five sets of presents prepared: five gold and five jade rings and five bracelets of scented beads.

"Don't laugh at these gifts," said the mother of the prince. "Take them to give to your maids."

The five girls curtseyed their thanks, and then the wife of the Prince of Beijing also gave each of them a set of presents. There is no need to describe all the gifts presented them by the other guests.

After sipping tea the guests strolled for a while in the Garden. Then the Lady Dowager asked them to go back to feast, but the mother of the Prince of Nanan declined.

"I'm not feeling well today, but I simply had to come," she said. "So please excuse me if I leave early."

The old lady and others could not press her to stay, and after a further exchange of civilities they saw her to the Garden gate, where she mounted her sedan-chair and left. The wife of the Prince of Beijing stayed a little longer, then took her leave too. Some of the others withdrew early, some stayed till the end.

As the Lady Dowager had had a tiring day, the next day she did not receive any guests, leaving Lady Xing and Lady Wang to entertain them for her. The sons of noble families simply came to the outer hall to pay their respects, and were received by Jia She, Jia Zheng and Jia Zhen, who then took them off to feast in the Ning Mansion. But no more of this.

这几日，尤氏晚间也不回那府里去，白日待客，晚间陪贾母玩笑，又帮着凤姐料理出入大小器皿以及收放赏礼事务，晚间在园内李纨房中歇宿。这一日晚间，服侍过贾母晚饭后，贾母因说："你们也乏了，我也乏了，早些寻一点子吃的歇歇去。明儿还要起早闹呢。"尤氏答应着退了出来，到凤姐房里来吃饭。凤姐在楼上看着人收送来的新围屏，只有平儿在房里与凤姐叠衣服。尤氏因问："你们奶奶吃了饭了没有？"平儿笑道："吃饭岂不请奶奶去的。"尤氏笑道："既这样，我别处找吃的去。饿的我受不得了。"说着，就走。平儿忙笑道："奶奶请回来。这里有点心，且点补一点儿，回来再吃饭。"尤氏笑道："你们忙的这样，我园子里和他姊妹们闹去。"一面说，一面就走。平儿留不住，只得罢了。

且说尤氏一径来至园中，只见园中正门与各处角门仍未关，犹吊着各色彩灯，因回头命小丫头叫该班的女人。那丫鬟走入班房中，竟没一个人影儿，回来回了尤氏。尤氏便命传管家的女人。这丫头应了便出去，到二门外鹿顶内，乃是管事的女人议事取齐之所。到了这里，只有两个婆子分菜果吃。因问："那一位奶奶在这里？东府奶奶立等一位奶奶，有话吩咐。"这两个婆子只顾分菜果，只听见是东府里的奶奶，不大在心，因就回说："管家奶奶们才散了。"小丫头

During these celebrations, Madam You did not go home at night. She spent each day entertaining guests, and stayed on in the evening to amuse the Lady Dowager and help Xifeng to supervise the disposal of the various utensils, the putting away of presents and tipping of servants, then retired for the night in Li Wan's quarters in the Garden.

This evening after she had waited on the old lady during her meal, the latter said, "You must all be tired, I know I am. So eat early and go and rest. Tomorrow you have to get up early again."

Madam You assented and withdrew to have dinner in Xifeng's apartments; but Xifeng was in the upstairs storeroom overlooking the servants putting away the tapestry screens presented while Pinger, alone in the room, put away Xifeng's clothes.

"Has your mistress had her meal?" asked Madam You.

Pinger smiled.

"How could we omit to invite you, madam, if we were having a meal?"

"Well then, I'll go somewhere else to find something to eat. I'm ravenously hungry."

As she started off, Pinger called, "Do come back, madam! Here are some cakes for you to be going on with. Then come for dinner later."

"No, you're all so busy here, I'll go and cadge a meal from the girls in the Garden." With that she left and Pinger could not detain her.

Madam You went straight to the Garden. As she found its main gate and the side gates still open and coloured lanterns still hanging there, she ordered her maid to fetch the women on duty, but the girl came back to report that not even the shadow of anyone was to be found in the gatehouse. Told to fetch the stewards' wives in charge, she went to the corner house outside the inner gate where those women gathered to chat before work. There she found only two matrons sharing out sweetmeats and dishes.

"Are none of the stewards' wives here?" she asked. "My mistress from the East Mansion wants one of them immediately."

The two matrons, intent on the food, hearing that it was a mistress from the other mansion answered casually:

"They've just gone."

道："散了，你们家里传他去。"婆子道："我们只管看屋子，不管传人。姑娘要传人再派传人的去。"小丫头听了道："嗳哟，嗳哟，这可反了！怎么你们不传去？你哄那新来了的，怎么哄起我来了！素日你们不传谁传去！这会子打听了梯己信儿，或是赏了那位管家奶奶的东西，你们争着狗颠儿似的传去，不知谁是谁呢。琏二奶奶要传，你们可也这么回？"这两个婆子一则吃了酒，二则被这丫头揭挑着弊病，便羞激怒了，因回口道："扯你的臊！我们的事，传不传不与你相干！你不用揭挑我们，你想想，你那老子娘在那边管家爷们跟前比我们还更会溜呢。什么'清水下杂面，你吃我也见'的事，各家门，另家户，你有本事，排场你们那边人去。我们这边，你们还早些呢！"丫头听了，气白了脸，因说道："好，好，这话说的好！"一面转身进来回话。

尤氏已早入园来，因遇见了袭人、宝琴、湘云三人同着地藏庵的两个姑子正说故事玩笑，尤氏因说饿了，先到怡红院，袭人装了几样荤素点心出来与尤氏吃。两个姑子、宝琴、湘云等都吃茶，仍说故事。那小丫头子一径找了来，气狠狠的把方才的话都说了出来。尤氏听了，冷笑道："这是两个什么人？"两个姑子同宝琴、湘云等听了，生怕尤氏生气，忙劝说："没有的事，必是这一个听错了。"两个姑子笑推这丫头道："你这孩子好性气，那糊涂老嬷嬷们的话，你也不该来回才是。咱们奶奶万金之躯，劳乏了几天，黄汤辣水没吃，咱们哄他欢喜一会子还不得一半儿，说这些话做什

"Well then, go to their homes and fetch them," urged the maid.

"We're caretakers, not messengers. If you want someone fetched, send a messenger."

"Aiya, this is mutiny! So you won't take orders!" the girl cried."And why can't you go yourselves? You may be able to fool newcomers but you can't fool me. Who's to run errands if not you? Whenever you get wind of any perks of handouts to one of the stewards'wives, you dash off like dogs with wagging tails to announce it. Have you no sense of respect? Would you respond like this to Madam Lian's instructions?"

The women had been drinking, and now that this maid had shown them up they retorted angrily:

"Shut your filthy mouth. Whether we run errands or not is none of your business. You've no right to nag at us. You know very well how that father and mother of yours toady to the stewards of your mansion — they're worse than any of us. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. We know what's what. We belong to different households. Go and impress your own people if you can, before you come here meddling in our affairs."

"Fine, fine," snapped the maid. "That's fine!"

Livid with anger she hurried back to report this.

Madam You, now in the Garden, had come across Xiren, Baoqin and Xiangyun exchanging stories and jokes with two nuns from the Ksitigarbha Nunnery. Explaining that she was hungry, she went on to Happy Red Court where Xiren offered her some sweet and savoury pastries. The two nuns and Baoqin and Xiangyun went on sipping tea and telling stories till the maid arrived, fuming, to report everything the women had said.

"Who were they?" asked Madam You grimly.

To spare her feelings, the nuns and Baoqin and Xiangyun suggested that it must be a misunderstanding — the maid had heard wrongly.

The nuns nudged the maid.

"You lose your temper too easily, miss," they scolded. "Why pass on all the nonsense those silly old women talk? Madam's health is what's important. Here she's been wearing herself out for days, and not a bite to eat or a drop to drink has she had yet. The least we can do is try to keep her amused. Why should you tell such tales?"

么?”袭人也忙笑拉出他去，说:“好妹妹，你且出去歇歇，我打发人叫他们去。”尤氏道:“你不要叫人，你去就叫这两个婆子来，到那边把他们家的凤儿叫来。”袭人笑道:“我请去。”尤氏道:“偏不要你。”两个姑子忙立起身来，笑说:“奶奶素日宽洪大量，今日老祖宗的千秋，奶奶生气，岂不惹人议论。”宝琴、湘云二人也都笑劝。尤氏道:“不为老太太的千秋，我不依。且放着就是了。”

说话之间，袭人早又遣了一个丫头去到园门外找人，可巧遇见周瑞家的，这小丫头子就把这话告诉周瑞家的。周瑞家的虽不管事，因他素日仗着是王夫人的陪房，原有些体面，心性乖滑，专管各处献勤讨好，所以各处房里的主人都喜欢他。他今日听了这话，忙的便跑入怡红院来，一面飞走，一面口内说道:“气坏了奶奶了，可了不得!我们家里，如今惯的太不堪了。偏生我不在跟前，若在跟前，且打他们几个耳刮子，再等过了这几日算账。”尤氏见了他，也便笑道:“周姐姐你来，有个理你说说。这早晚门还大开着，明灯蜡烛，出入的人又杂，倘有不防的事，如何使得?因此叫该班的人吹灯关门。谁知一个人芽儿也没有。”周瑞家的道:“这还了得!前儿二奶奶还吩咐了他们了，说这几日事多人杂，一晚就关门吹灯，不是园里的人不许放进去。今儿就没了人。这事过了这几日，必要打几个才好。”尤氏又说小丫头子的话。周瑞家的道:“奶奶不要生气，等过了事儿，

Xiren drew the maid aside.

"Good sister, just go out and have a rest," she coaxed. "I'll get someone to fetch them."

"No need," said Madam You. "Just send for those two women, then 'fetch Xifeng here.'"

"I'll go," offered Xiren.

"No, not you," replied Madam You.

The two nuns rose respectfully to their feet to demur, "You're so magnanimous, madam, won't it make for talk if you lose your temper today of all days when our Old Ancestress is celebrating her birthday?"

Baoqin and Xiangyun interceded too.

"All right then," said Madam You. "If it weren't for the old lady's birthday I'd certainly thrash this out. As it is, I'll overlook it for the time being."

Meanwhile the girl sent by Xiren to find some woman in charge outside the Garden had met Zhou Rui's wife and told her what had happened. Though Mrs. Zhou was not in charge, as the maid who had attended Lady Wang to the Jia mansion at the time of her marriage she was a person of some consequence, and so quick-witted and ingratiating that all the mistresses liked her. She now hurried to Happy Red Court, exclaiming as she ran:

"The mistress's angry! That will never do. Things have come to a pretty pass. If only *I'd* been there! I'll slap their faces for them, and in a few days we'll deal with them properly."

When Madam You saw her she cried,"Come on, Sister Zhou, let's hear what you think about this. The Garden gates are still wide open so late, with the lanterns alight and all sorts of people going in and out. What if anything happens? So I decided to tell the women on duty to put out the lights and lockup. But to my surprise there was no one there at all."

"How outrageous!" said Mrs. Zhou. "The other day Madam Lian told them that with all sorts of people here these days they must lock up and put out the lights as soon as it gets dark, and not let any outsiders into the Garden. Yet today they leave their posts. When these celebrations are over, some of them must be given a good hiding!"

Madam You then told her what the maid had reported.

我告诉管事的打他个臭死。只问他们，谁叫他们说这‘各家门各家户’的话！我已经叫他们吹了灯，关上正门和角门子了。”正乱着，只见凤姐打发人来请吃饭。尤氏道：“我也不饿了，才吃了几个饽饽，请你奶奶自吃罢。”

一时周瑞家的得便出去，便把方才的事回了凤姐，又说：“这两个婆子好像管家奶奶，时常我们和他说话，都是狠虫一般。奶奶若不戒饬，大奶奶脸上过不去。”凤姐道：“既这么着，记着这两个人的名字。等过了这两天，捆了送到那府里凭大嫂子开发，或是打几下子，或是他施恩饶了他们，随他去就是了。什么大事。”周瑞家的听了，巴不得一声儿，素日因与这几个人不睦，出来了便命一个小厮到林之孝家传凤姐的话，立刻叫林之孝家的进来见大奶奶；一面又传人立刻捆起这两个婆子来，交到马圈里派人看守。

林之孝家的不知有什么事，此时已经点灯，忙坐车进来，先见凤姐。至二门上传进话去，丫头们出来说：“奶奶才歇了。大奶奶在园里呢，叫大娘见了大奶奶就是了。”林之孝家的只得进园来到稻香村，丫鬟们回进去，尤氏听了反过意不去，忙唤进他来，因笑向他道：“我不过为找人找不着，因问你，你既去了，也不是什么大事，谁又把你叫进来，倒要你白跑了一遭。不大的事，已经撂开手了。”林之孝家的也笑道：“二奶奶打发人传我，说奶奶有话吩咐。”尤氏笑

"Don't be angry, madam," urged Mrs. Zhou. "After the merry-making I'll get the stewards to beat them within an inch of their lives, and we'll ask who told them to talk in that way about different households. Now I've ordered the lights to be put out and the main and the side gates closed."

Just then a maid arrived from Xifeng to invite Madam You to supper.

"I'm not hungry now," was the answer. "I've just had some pastries. Ask your mistress to start without me."

Mrs. Zhou went off to report this to Xifeng.

"Those two women carry on like stewardesses," she said. "And when we speak to them they treat us like dirt. If you don't make an example of them, madam, Madam You is going to feel slighted."

"In that case," replied Xifeng, "remember those two women's names, and when this commotion is over have them tied up and sent to the other mansion for Madam You to beat or pardon as she thinks fit."

This was just what Mrs. Zhou had been hoping for, as she had long been on bad terms with both women. On withdrawing she snet a page with this message to Lin Zhixiao's wife, and asked her to go straight to see Madam You. At the same time she sent people to have both those women tied up and kept under guard in the stable.

It was dark now and, not knowing what was afoot, Lin Zhixiao's wife took a carriage to the mansion. She went first to Xifeng's quarters. But when she announced herself at the inner gate some maids came out to tell her:

"The mistress has just gone to bed. Madam You is in the Garden. You can go and see her there."

So Mrs. Lin had to go to the Garden. When the maids at Paddy-Sweet Cottage announced her, Madam You regretted the trouble she had caused her. Inviting her in she said:

"I only asked for you because I couldn't find the women on duty. It isn't all that important. Since you'd left they shouldn't have called you back again, making a trip for nothing. It's a small matter and I've already set it aside."

Mrs. Lin responded with a smile,"Madam Lian sent to tell me you had some instructions for me, madam."

道："这是那里的话，只当你没去，白问你。这是谁又多事告诉了凤丫头，大约周姐姐说的。你家去歇着罢，没有什么大事。"李纨又要说原故，尤氏反拦住了。

林之孝家的见如此，只得便回身出园去。可巧遇见赵姨娘，因笑道："嗳哟哟，我的嫂子！这会子还不家去歇歇，还跑些什么？"林之孝家的便笑说何曾不家去的，如此这般进来了。又是个齐头故事。赵姨娘原是个好察听这些事的，且素日又与管事的女人们扳厚，互相连络，好作首尾。方才之事，已经闻得八九，听林之孝家的如此说，便恁般如此告诉了林之孝家的一遍，林之孝家的听了，笑道："原来是这事，也值一个屁！开恩呢，就不理论；心窄些儿，也不过打几下子就完了。"赵姨娘道："我的嫂子，事虽不大，可见他们太猖狂了些。巴巴的传进你来，明明戏弄你，玩耍你。快歇歇去，明儿还有事呢，也不留你吃茶去。"

说毕，林之孝家的出来，到了侧门前，就有方才两个婆子的女儿上来哭着求情。林之孝家的笑道："你这孩子好糊涂，谁叫你娘吃酒混说了，惹出事来，连我也不知道。二奶奶打发人捆他，连我还有不是呢。我替谁讨情去。"这两个小丫头子才七八岁，原不识事，只管哭啼求告。缠的林之孝家的没法，因说道："糊涂东西！你放着门路不去，却缠我来。你姐姐现给了那边太太作陪房费大娘的儿子，你走过去告诉你姐姐，叫亲家娘求大太太，什么完不了的事！"一语

"The idea! I didn't know you'd left or I wouldn't have asked for you. Some busybody's been talking to Xifeng. I suppose it was Sister Zhou. You go back and rest now. It's of no consequence."

Li Wan was on the point of explaining, but Madam You stopped her.

Seeing this, all Mrs. Lin could do was leave. But it so happened that on her way out of the Garden she ran into Concubine Zhao.

"Well, well, sister!" cried the concubine with a smile."Why are you running about here at this hour of the day instead of resting at home?"

Mrs. Lin explained that she had gone home and why she had returned, then gave a detailed account of what had happened.

Now the concubine was naturally officious, and as she kept on good terms with the stewards' wives, trading information with them, she had a fair idea of what had happened. She told Mrs. Lin what she knew of the whole story.

"So that's the way it was!" Mrs. Lin laughed. "What a storm in a teacup. If she's kind she'll forget it; if she's mean, at most she'll just give them a thrashing and have done with it."

"My dear sister-in-law," said the concubine, "this may not be serious but it shows how domineering they are, fetching you here for nothing to make an outright figure of fun of you. Go back and rest now; you'll be busy tomorrow, so I won't keep you for tea."

Then Mrs. Lin left and was approaching the side gate when the daughters of those two women came up to her in tears and begged her to help.

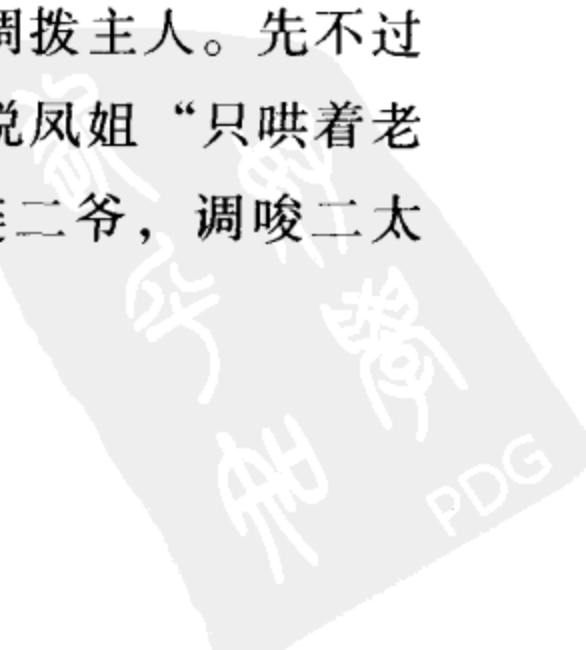
"You silly children," she scolded. "Who told your mothers to get drunk and talk nonsense, landing themselves in trouble? This had nothing to do with me. It was Madam Lian who had them tied up, and now people are holding me to blame too. I'm in no position to help you."

The two children, being only seven or eight, had no sense and just went on crying and pleading with her.

Unable to shake them off Mrs. Lin exclaimed,"Silly creatures! Why don't you approach the right people instead of pestering me?" She turned to one girl."Your elder sister's mother-in-law Mrs. Fei came here with Lady Xing at the time of her marriage. Get your sister to ask her mother-in-law to enlist Her Ladyship's help, then your problem will be solved, won't it?"

提醒了这一个，那一个还求。林之孝家的啐道："糊涂攮的！他过去一说，自然都完了。没有个单放了他妈，又只打你妈的理。"说毕，上车去了。

这一个小丫头果然过来告诉了他姐姐，和费婆子说了。这费婆子原是邢夫人的陪房，起先也曾兴过时，只因贾母近来不大兴邢夫人，所以连这边的人也减了威势。凡贾政这边有些体面的人，那边各各皆虎视眈眈。这费婆子常倚老卖老，仗着邢夫人，常吃些酒，嘴里胡乱詈骂着出气。如今贾母庆寿这样大事，干看着人家逞才卖技办事，呼幺喝六的弄手脚，心里早已不自在，指鸡骂狗，闲言闲语的乱闹。这边的人也不和他较量。如今听见周瑞家的捆了他亲家，越发火上浇油，仗着酒兴，指着隔断的墙大骂了一阵，便走上来求邢夫人，说他亲家并没有什么不是，"不过和那府里的大奶奶的小丫头白斗了两句话，周瑞家的便调唆了咱家二奶奶捆到马圈里，等过了这两日还要打。求太太，我那亲家娘也是七八十岁的老婆子，和二奶奶说声，饶他这一次罢。"邢夫人自为要驾鸯之后讨了没意思，后来见贾母越发冷淡了他，凤姐的体面反胜自己；且前日南安太妃来了，要见他姊妹，贾母又只令探春出来，迎春竟似有如无，自己心里早已怨忿不乐，只是使不出来。又值这一干小人在侧，他们心内嫉妒挟怨之事不敢施展，便背地里造言生事，调拨主人。先不过是告那边的奴才；后来渐次告到凤姐，只说凤姐"只哄着老太太喜欢了他好就中作威作福，辖治着琏二爷，调唆二太



The little girl accepted this advice. The other went on pleading.

"How silly can you get?" snapped Mrs. Lin. "If she goes and asks, the whole business will blow over. They can't just let her mother off and have yours beaten, can they?" With that she went off in her carriage.

So one of the small girls went to ask her sister to speak to old Mrs. Fei. This Mrs. Fei, as Lady Xing's personal maid at the time of her marriage, had once been of some consequence, but as Lady Xing had recently lost favour with the Lady Dowager her servants had lost some of their authority too; thus they were always eager to find fault with the upper servants of Jia Zheng's household. Old Mrs. Fei, presuming on her age and Lady Xing's backing, had taken to drinking and cursing people at random to work off her resentment. The Lady Dowager's grand birthday celebrations had filled her with envy as she watched other people showing off their administrative ability and ordering their underlings about; but no one in Jia Zheng's household paid much attention to her spiteful scolding and aspersions. The news now that Zhou Rui's wife had had a relative of hers tied up added fuel to the fire of her indignation. Being in her cups, she pointed at the wall separating the two brothers' houses and loosed off a flood of abuse. She then went to find Lady Xing.

"My son's mother-in-law has done nothing wrong," she complained. "She had a few words with one of the maids of Madam You over in the other mansion, and at the instigation of Zhou Rui's wife Madam Lian has had her tied up in the stable. They're threatening to beat her after the celebrations, and her an old woman of more than seventy too! Please, Your Ladyship, ask Madam Lian to let her off this once."

Lady Xing had felt snubbed after her request for Yuanyang was turned down; and since then the old lady had treated her more coldly, showing much more consideration to Xifeng. Still, moreover, during the Dowager Princess of Nanan's recent visit, when she asked to see the girls the Lady Dowager had sent for Tanchun but passed over Yingchun. Lady Xing's resentment had been rankling, only she had had no occasion to express it. And now these jealous and spiteful servants, not daring to avenge their own grievances, kept making up stories to provoke her, first simply denouncing servants of Jia Zheng's house, then by degrees throwing the blame on Xifeng herself. They said Xifeng just curried favour with

太，把这边的正经太太倒不放在心上。”后来又告到王夫人，说：“老太太不喜欢太太，都是二太太和琏二奶奶调唆的。”邢夫人纵是铁心铜胆的人，妇人家终不免生些嫌隙之心，近日因此着实恶绝凤姐。今听了如此一篇话，也不说长短。

至次日一早，见过贾母，众族中人到齐，坐席开戏。贾母高兴，又见今日无远亲，都是自己族中子侄辈，只便衣常妆出来，堂上受礼。当中独设一榻，引枕靠背脚踏俱全，自己歪在榻上。榻之前后左右，皆是一色的小矮凳，宝钗、宝琴、黛玉、湘云、迎春、探春、惜春姊妹等围绕。因贾瑞之母也带了女儿喜鸾，贾琼之母也带了女儿四姐儿，还有几房的孙女儿，大小共二十来个。贾母独见喜鸾与四姐儿生得又好，说话行事与众不同，心中喜欢，便命他两个也过来榻前同坐。宝玉却在榻上脚下与贾母捶腿。首席便是薛姨妈，下边两溜皆顺着房头辈数坐下去。帘外两廊都是族中男客，也依次而坐。先是那女客一起一起行礼，后方是男客行礼。贾母歪在榻上，只命人说“免了罢”，早已都行完了。然后赖大等带领众人，从仪门直跪至大厅上，磕头礼毕，又是众家下媳妇，然后各房的丫鬟，足闹了两三顿饭时。然后又抬了许多雀笼来，在当院子里放了生。贾赦等焚过了天地寿星纸，方开戏饮酒。直到歇了中台，贾母方进来歇息，命他们

the old lady and liked to throw her weight about keeping her husband under her thumb, getting Lady Wang worked up, and showing no respect at all for the real mistress of the mansion. Later, they even brought charges against Lady Wang, alleging that she and Xifeng had set the old lady against Lady Xing. So even if Lady Xing had been strong-minded, as a woman she could not help bearing a grudge, and recently she had come to detest Xifeng. When Mrs. Fei told her this tale she made no comment.

The next morning she went to pay her respects to the Lady Dowager. The whole family had come to feast and watch operas, and the old lady was in high spirits. As no distant relatives had been invited, only junior members of the family, she came out in informal dress to receive their salutations in the hall, reclining on a couch in the middle furnished with a pillow, back-rest and foot-stool. Seated on low stools around the couch were Baochai, Baoqin, Daiyu, Xiangyun, Yingchun, Tanchun and Xichun. Jia Bin's mother had brought her daughter Xiluan too, Jia Qiong's mother her daughter Sijie, and about twenty other grand-nieces of different ages had assembled as well.

As Xiluan and Siqi were good-looking, well-spoken girls a cut above the others, the Lady Dowager was delighted with them and made them also sit in front of her couch where Baoyu was massaging her legs. Aunt Xue had the seat of honour, the others sitting down in a row on each side according to their ages and the seniority of their family branch. In the corridor outside the portiere the male members of the clan also sat in due order.

First the women of the clan, row by row, paid their respects; then the men. By the time the old lady on her couch told them to desist, they had all gone through the ceremonies.

Then Lai Da led the other stewards and servants to kowtow, kneeling from the ceremonial gate to the hall. They were followed by their wives, then the maids from various apartments. This went on for the time it would take for two or three meals, and after that many bird-cages were brought into the courtyard and the birds let loose.[1] Jia She and the others burnt incense and paper money to sacrifice to Heaven, Earth and the God of Longevity; and only then did they start to watch operas and feast. Not until the interval did the old lady retire to her room to rest, enjoining

取便，因命凤姐留下喜鸾四姐儿玩两日再去。凤姐儿出来便和他母亲说，他两个的母亲素日都承凤姐的照顾，也巴不得一声儿。他两个也愿意在园内玩耍，至晚便不回家了。

邢夫人直至晚间散时，当着许多人陪笑和凤姐求情，说："我听见昨儿晚上二奶奶生气，打发周管家的娘子捆了两个老婆子，可也不知犯了什么罪。论理我不该讨情，我想老太太好日子，发狠的还舍钱舍米，周贫济老，咱们家先倒折磨起老人家来了。不看我的脸，权且看老太太的好日子，竟放了他们罢。"说毕，上车去了。凤姐听了这话，又当着许多人，又羞又气，一时抓寻不着头脑，憋得脸紫胀，回头向赖大家的等笑道："这是那里的话?昨儿因为这里的人得罪了那府里的大嫂子，我怕大嫂子多心，所以尽让他发放，并不为得罪了我。这又是谁的耳报神这么快。"王夫人因问为什么事，凤姐笑将昨日的事说了，尤氏也笑道："连我并不知道，你原也太多事了。"凤姐道："我为你脸上过不去，所以等你开发，不过是个礼。就如我在你那里有人得罪了我，你自然送了来尽我开发。凭他是什么好奴才，到底错不过这个礼去。这又不知谁过去没的献勤儿，这也当作一件事情去说。"王夫人道："你太太说的是。就是珍哥媳妇也不是外人，也不用这些虚礼。老太太的千秋要紧，放了他们为是。"说着，回头便命人去放了那两个婆子。凤姐

the others to enjoy themselves. She also told Xifeng to keep Xiluan and Sijie there to have a good time for a couple of days. Xifeng went out to inform the girls' mothers, and as they owed much to her they agreed with alacrity. And the girls were only too glad to amuse themselves in the Garden, and spend the night there.

That evening when the time came for the party to break up, Lady Xing in front of everyone approached Xifeng with a smile to ask her a favour.

"Last night I heard you were angry and sent Steward Zhou's wife to have two old women tied up — I don't know what they'd done wrong. By rights I shouldn't ask to have them let off, but it seems to me the old lady's birthday is surely the time to give alms to the poor and aged, yet here we are punishing old folk instead. So if you won't give me this face, do at least let them off for the old lady's sake!" After this speech she went off in her carriage.

Mortified at being addressed like this in front of so many people, Xifeng flushed crimson, quite put out for a moment. Then she turned with a cold laugh to Mrs. Lai and the stewards' wives.

"How extraordinary!" she said. "Yesterday some of this household annoyed Madam You of the other mansion, and not wanting her to take offence I left her to deal with the culprits. It wasn't because they had offended *me*. Who's been telling tales again?"

Lady Wang asked what all this was about, and Xifeng reported what had happened the previous day.

Then Madam You said with a smile, "I had no idea of this. And you needn't have meddled."

"I wanted to save your face," retorted Xifeng. "That's why I left you to deal with them — that seemed only reasonable. Just as, if someone in your place offended me, stands to reason you'd send her to *me* to deal with, however much of a favourite that servant might be. I don't know what busybody went and reported this as if it was something of consequence, just to prove her loyalty."

"But what your mother-in-law said is right," put in Lady Wang. "Your cousin Zhen's wife isn't an outsider, so such formalities are uncalled for. The old lady's birthday is the important thing. You'd better let them off."

由不得越想越气越愧，不觉的灰心，遂滚下泪来。因赌气回房哭泣，又不肯使人知觉。偏是贾母打发了琥珀来叫立等说话，琥珀见了，诧异道："好好的，这是什么原故？那里立等你呢。"凤姐听了，忙擦干了眼泪，洗脸另施了脂粉，方同琥珀过来。

贾母因问道："前儿这些人家送礼来的共有几家有围屏？"凤姐道："共有十六家有围屏，有十二架大的，四架小的炕屏。内中只有江南甄家一架大屏十二扇，是大红缎子缂丝'满床笏'，一面是泥金'百寿图'的，是头等的。还有粤海将军邬家的一架玻璃的还罢了。"贾母道："既这样，这两样别动，好生搁着，我要送人的。"凤姐答应了。鸳鸯忽过来向凤姐儿面上只管细瞧，引的贾母问说："你不认得他？只管瞧什么。"鸳鸯笑道："怎么他的眼肿肿的，所以我诧异，只管看。"贾母听说，便叫近前来，也觑着眼看。凤姐笑道："才觉的一阵痒痒，揉肿了些。"鸳鸯笑道："别又是受了谁的气了不成？"凤姐笑道："谁敢给我气受，便受了气，老太太的好日子，我也不敢哭的。"贾母道："正是呢。我正要吃晚饭，你在这里打发我吃，剩下的你就和珍儿媳妇吃了。你两个在这里帮着两个师傅替我拣佛豆儿，你们也积积

She turned and gave orders for both old women to be released.

More mortified than ever, in her frustration Xifeng could not hold back her tears. But not wanting anyone to see her weep, she went back in a pique to her room. However, it so happened that the Lady Dowager sent Hupo to fetch her. When Hupo saw her she exclaimed in surprise:

"What's come over you suddenly? The old lady wants you."

Xifeng hastily wiped her eyes, washed and powdered her face, then went over with Hupo.

The Lady Dowager asked her, "How many of those families who sent presents the other day sent screens?"

"Sixteen families," replied Xifeng. "There are twelve big screens and four small ones for *kang*. The big screen sent by the Zhens south of the Yangzi has twelve red tapestry scenes from the opera *Every Son a High Minister* on one side and on the other gilded depictions of the character 'Longevity' in various styles of calligraphy. That's the best of the lot. Then there's a glass screen from the family of Admiral Wu of Canton which isn't bad."

"In that case don't dispose of those two, but store them in a safe place," the old lady said. "I want to give them as presents."

As Xifeng assented, Yuanyang suddenly stepped forward to stare at her.

"Don't you know her?" asked the old lady. "What are you staring for?"

"I'm wondering why her eyes are so swollen," answered Yuanyang with a smile.

The Lady Dowager told Xifeng to come closer and looked at her hard.

Xifeng tried to laugh it off.

"My eyes were itching so I rubbed them," she said.

Yuanyang chuckled, "Has someone been provoking you again?"

"Who would dare?" retorted Xifeng. "Even if someone did, I wouldn't dare cry on the old lady's birthday."

"Quite right," agreed the Lady Dowager. "I'm just going to have my supper. You can wait on me, then take what's left for yourself and Chen's wife. Then you two must help the two nuns to pick some Buddhist beans

寿，前儿你姊妹们和宝玉都拣了，如今也叫你们拣拣，别说我偏心。”说话时，先摆上一桌素的来。两个姑子吃了，然后才摆上荤的，贾母吃毕，抬出外间。尤氏、凤姐二人正吃着，贾母又叫把喜鸾、四姐儿二人也叫来，跟着他二人吃。吃毕，洗手，点上香，捧过一升豆子来。两个姑子先念了佛偈，然后一颗一颗的拣在簸箩内，每拣一颗，念一声佛。明日煮熟了，令人在十字街结寿缘。贾母歪着听两个姑子又说些佛家的因果善事。

鸳鸯早已听见琥珀说凤姐哭之事，又和平儿前打听得原故。晚间人散时，便回说：“二奶奶还是哭的，那边大太太当着人给二奶奶没脸。”贾母因问为什么原故，鸳鸯便将原故说了。贾母道：“这才是凤丫头知礼处，难道为我的生日，由着奴才们把一族中的主子都得罪了也不管罢。这是大太太素日没好气，不敢发作，所以今儿拿着这个作法子，明是当着众人给凤儿没脸罢了。”正说着，只见宝琴等进来，也就不说了。

贾母因问：“你在那里来？”宝琴道：“在园里林姐姐屋里大家说话来。”贾母忽想起一事来，忙唤过一个老婆子来，吩咐他：“到园里各处女人们跟前嘱咐嘱咐，留下的喜姐儿和四姐儿虽然穷，也和家里的姑娘们是一样，大家照看经心些。我知道咱们家的男男女女都是‘一个富贵心，两只体面眼’，未必把他两个放在眼里。有人小看了他们，我听见，

for me. That'll bring you long life too. The other day your girl cousins and Baoyu did that; so I want you to do it too, and then you can't accuse me of favouritism."

As she was speaking a vegetarian meal was served for the two nuns, after which a meal with meat was brought for the old lady. When she had finished eating, the remainder was taken to the outer room for Madam You and Xifeng. They had just started their meal when the old lady sent for Xiluan and Sijie to join them.

After that they washed their hands and lit incense, and a pint of beans was brought. First the two nuns chanted some Buddhist incantations over it, then they picked out the beans one by one and put them in a basket, chanting the name of Buddha over each. These beans would be cooked and distributed at the crossroads to bring longevity. The old lady lay down on her couch then and listened to the Buddhist tales of karma told by the nuns.

Yuanyang, having heard from Hupo about Xifeng crying, had found out the reason from Pinger. So that night after the others had left she reported:

"Madam Lian did cry, because Lady Xing made her lose face in public."

Asked how it had happened, she told the old lady.

The Lady Dowager said, "This shows Xifeng has good manners. How can she allow servants to offend each and every mistress in our clan — and get away with it just because it's my birthday? Lady Xing's been sulking for some time but didn't dare flare up. This gave her the excuse to shame Xifeng in public."

Just then Baoqin came in and they broke off, the old lady asking Baoqin where she had come from.

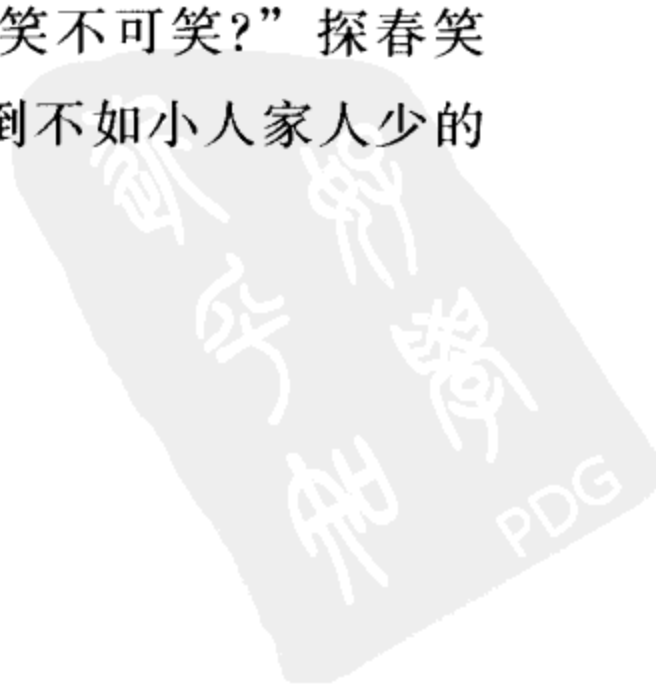
"We were chatting in Cousin Lin's place in the Garden," she answered.

This reminded the Lady Dowager of something, and she ordered an old woman to take her instructions to the servants in the Garden.

"I've kept Xiluan and Sijie here," she said. "Though they may be poor they're the same as our own young ladies, so you must look after them well. I know all our servants, men and women alike, are impressed

可不依。”婆子答应了。方要走时，鸳鸯道：“我说去罢。他们那里听他的话。”说着，便一径往园里来。

先到了稻香村中，李纨与尤氏都不在这里。问丫鬟们，说：“都在三姑娘那里呢。”鸳鸯回身又来至晓翠堂，果见那园中人都在那里说笑。见他来了，都笑说道：“你这会子又跑了来做什么？”又让他坐。鸳鸯笑道：“不许我也逛逛么？”于是把方才的话说了一遍。李纨忙起身听了，即刻把各房的头儿唤了来，令他们传与诸人知道，不在话下。这里尤氏笑道：“老太太也太想的到，实在我们年轻力壮的人捆上十个也赶不上。”李纨道：“凤丫头仗着鬼聪明儿，还离脚踪儿不远。咱们是不能的了。”鸳鸯道：“罢哟，还提凤丫头虎丫头呢，他也可怜见儿的。虽然这几年没有在老太太、太太跟前有个错缝儿，暗里也不知得罪了多少人。总而言之，为人是难作的：若太老实了没有个机变，公婆又嫌太老实了，家里人也不怕；若有些机变，未免治一经又损一经。如今咱们家里更好，新出来的这些底下奴字号的奶奶们，一个个心满意足，都不知要怎么样才好，少有不得意，不是背地里嚼舌，就是挑三窝四。我怕老太太生气，一点儿也不肯说。不然，我告诉出来，大家别过太平日子。这不是我当着三姑娘说，老太太偏疼宝玉，有人背地里怨言还罢了，算是偏心。如今老太太偏疼你，我听着也是不好。这可笑不可笑？”探春笑道：“糊涂人多，那里较量得许多。我说倒不如小人家人少的



only by riches and rank and unlikely to think much of them; but if I hear of anyone showing them the least disrespect, there's going to be trouble!"

The woman assented and was about to leave when Yuanyang said, "I'll go. The people there wouldn't pay any attention to her."

She went straight to the Garden, going first to Paddy-Sweet Cottage. Finding neither Li Wan nor Madam You there, she questioned the maids who told her that they were with Tanchun. Yuanyang went on to Morning Emerald Hall and, sure enough, found all the inmates of the Garden there chatting. At sight of her they pressed her to take a seat.

"What brings you here at this hour?" they asked.

"Can't I come and enjoy myself as well?" Yuanyang chuckled before giving them the old lady's message.

Li Wan hastily stood up to hear it, then sent for the chief servants from each household and ordered them to pass on these instructions.

Madam You remarked, "The old lady really thinks of everything. Even ten of us healthy young people put together aren't up to *her*."

Li Wan said, "Xifeng's devilish clever, she comes closest to her; but the rest of us can't hold a candle to her."

"Don't talk about her, poor thing," put in Yuanyang. "These last few years she may have made no mistakes that the old lady knows of, but she's offended goodness knows how many other people. Well, it's hard to please everybody. If you're too honest and don't know any tricks, your father and mother-in-law will think you a simpleton and the household won't respect you. If you're full of tricks, you'll please some and offend others. In our family especially, this new lot of 'mistresses' promoted from slaves are so puffed up they all think they can do as they like. If they're in the least dissatisfied, they gossip behind people's backs or stir up trouble. So as not to upset the old lady, I haven't breathed a word about this to her. If I did, none of us could have a single day of peace! I shouldn't be saying this in front of you, Miss Tanchun, but when someone complains on the sly that the old lady dotes on Baoyu, that doesn't matter — it counts as natural partiality. But when the old lady shows her fondness for *you*, I hear the same person complain. Isn't that ridiculous?"

Tanchun said with a smile,"There are plenty of silly people; don't

好，虽然人少寒苦些，倒是欢天喜地，大家快乐。我们这样人家人多，外头看着我们不知千金万金小姐，何等快乐，殊不知我们这里说不出来的烦难，更利害。”宝玉道：“谁都像三妹妹多心多事。我常劝你，总别听那些俗语，想那俗事，只管安富尊荣才是。比不得我们没这清福，该应浊闹的。”尤氏道：“谁都像你，真是一心无挂碍，只知道和姊妹们玩笑，饿了吃，倦了睡，再过几年，不过还是这样，一点后事也不虑。”宝玉笑道：“我能够和姊妹们过一日是一日，死了就完了。什么后事不后事。”李纨等都笑道：“这可又是胡说。就算你是个没出息的，终老在这里，难道他姊妹们都不出门的？”尤氏笑道：“怨不得人都说他是假长了一个胎子，究竟是个又傻又呆的。”宝玉笑道：“人事莫定，知道谁死谁活？倘或我在今日明日今年明年死了，也算是遂心一辈子……”众人不等话说完，便说：“可是又疯了？别和他说话才好。若和他说话，不是呆话，就是疯话。”喜鸾因笑道：“二哥哥，你别这样说，等这里姐姐们果然都出了门，横竖老太太、太太也寂寞，我来和你作伴儿。”李纨、尤氏等都笑道：“姑娘也别说呆话，难道你是不出门的？这话哄谁。”

take it so seriously. It seems to me humble households are better off having fewer people even though they're poorer, because parents and children enjoy themselves together, laughing and joking. In a big family like ours, outsiders think our wealthy young ladies must be very happy. Little do they know the unspeakable troubles we have here, much worse than anywhere else."

"Other people don't worry as much as you, third sister," said Baoyu. "I'm always urging you not to listen to that vulgar talk or think about those vulgar matters. Just enjoy your wealth and high rank. You're luckier than us men who can't enjoy a quiet, leisurely life, but have to muck about."

"Who can compare with you, with not a care in the world?" asked Madam You. "All you do is play around with your girl cousins, eating when you're hungry, sleeping when you're tired and going on like this year after year, taking no thought at all for the future."

"Every day I spend with my cousins is all to the good," he answered. "When I die that'll be the end. Who cares about the future?"

The others laughed.

"You're talking nonsense again," teased Li Wan. "Even if you were good for nothing and stayed here all your life, these girls would get married and leave the family, wouldn't they?"

"No wonder people say you belie your handsome looks," chuckled Madam You. "You're really and truly a fool."

"A man's fate is uncertain," Baoyu quipped. "Who knows when he will die? If I died today or tomorrow, this year or next, I'd die content."

The others hastily stopped him.

"He's raving again," they said. "We mustn't talk to him. If we do, he talks like a fool or a lunatic."

"Don't say such things, Cousin Bao," Xiluan put in. "When all your sisters and cousins here have left to get married, the old lady and the mistress are bound to feel lonely too; then I'll come and keep you company."

Li Wan and Madam You laughed.

"You're talking nonsense too, child. Are you never going to get married? Whom are you trying to fool?"

说的喜鸾也低了头。当下已是起更时分，大家各自归房安歇，众人都且不提。

且说鸳鸯一径回来，刚至园门前，只见角门虚掩，犹未上闩。此时园内无人来往，只有该班的房内灯光掩映，微月半天。鸳鸯又不曾有个作伴的，也不曾提灯笼，独自一个，脚步又轻，所以该班的人皆不理会。偏生又要小解，因下了甬路，寻微草处，行至一湖山石后大桂树阴下。刚转过石后，只听一阵衣衫响，吓了一惊不小。定睛一看，只见是两个人在那里，见他来了，便想往石后树丛里藏躲。鸳鸯眼尖，趁月色见准一个穿红裙子梳髻头的高大丰壮身材的，是迎春房里的司棋。鸳鸯只当他和别的女孩子也在此小解，见自己来了，故意藏躲恐吓着玩，因便笑叫道："司棋，你不快出来，吓着我，我就喊起来当贼拿了。这么大丫头了，没个黑家白日的只管玩不够。"这本是鸳鸯的戏语，叫他出来。谁知他贼人胆虚，只当鸳鸯已看见他的首尾了，生恐叫喊起来使众人知觉更不好了，且素日鸳鸯又和自己亲厚，不比别人。便从树后跑出来，一把拉住鸳鸯，便双膝跪下，只说："好姐姐，千万别嚷！"鸳鸯反不知因何，忙拉他起来，笑问道："这是怎么说？"司棋满脸红胀，又流下泪来。鸳鸯再一回想，那一个人影恍惚像个小厮，心下便猜疑了八九，自己反羞的面红耳赤，又怕起来。因定了一会，忙悄问："那个是谁？"司棋复跪下道："是我姑舅兄弟。"鸳鸯啐了一口，

Xiluan blushed and lowered her head.

It was then already the first watch, so they all went back to their own rooms to rest.

Yuanyang, when she reached the Garden gate, saw that the side gates were closed but not yet bolted. There was nobody about, and the only light apart from the faint moonlight was in the gatehouse. As she was all alone and had not brought a lantern, and as she walked quietly, no one in the gatehouse had noticed her approach. Happening just then to want to relieve herself, she left the path and walked across the grass to the back of a rockery under a large fragrant osmanthus. She had just skirted the rockery when the rustle of clothes made her start with fright, and looking in that direction she saw two people who at sight of her ducked behind some rocks under the trees. But Yuanyang had seen in the moon-light that one of them, a tall, buxom maid in a red skirt with loosely tied hair, was Siqi from Yingchun's apartments. Assuming that she and another girl were also relieving themselves here and had dodged out of sight to frighten her for fun, she called out laughingly:

"Siqi, if you don't come out quickly and try to scare me, I'll scream and have you caught as a thief. Fancy a big girl like you fooling about at this time of the night."

Yuanyang was only teasing to get her to come out. But Siqi, having a guilty conscience, thought she had been caught red-handed and was afraid Yuanyang's shouts would alert other people, which would be even worse. As Yuanyang had always treated her well, better than the other girls, she ran out from behind the tree to catch hold of her arm.

"Good sister." she begged, dropping to her knees. "Do keep quiet for goodness' sake."

Puzzled by this, Yuanyang pulled her up to ask, "What do you mean?"

Siqi blushed crimson and burst into tears. Then Yuanyang remembered that the other figure had looked something like a young man, and she guessed more or less what had happened. She flushed up to her ears, quite consternated. Presently, taking a grip on herself, she asked softly:

"Who was he?"

Siqi sank to her knees again.

道："要死，要死。"司棋又回头悄说道："你也不用藏着，姐姐已看见了，快出来磕头。"那小厮听了，只得也从树后爬出来，磕头如捣蒜。鸳鸯忙要回身，司棋拉住苦求，哭道："我们的性命，都在姐姐身上，只求姐姐超生要紧！"鸳鸯道："你放心，我横竖不告诉一个人就是了。"一语未了，只听角门上有人说道："金姑娘已出去了，角门上锁罢。"鸳鸯正被司棋拉住，不得脱身，听见如此说，便接声说道："我在这里有事，且略住住手，我就出来了。"司棋听了，只得松了手让他去了。且听下回分解。

"My cousin," she faltered.

Yuanyang spat in disgust.

"How could you?"

Siqi turned and hissed, "It's no use hiding. Sister's seen you. Come here quick and kowtow to her."

At that the page boy had to crawl out from behind the tree to thump his head vigorously on the ground. Yuanyang wanted to hurry away, but Siqi caught hold of her and begged through her sobs:

"Our lives are in your hands, sister. Do, please, let us off!"

"Don't worry," said Yuanyang. "I won't tell a soul."

As she was speaking they heard someone at the side gate call, "Miss Jin's left. Lock the gate."

Yuanyang, unable to shake off Siqi's grip, promptly called out, "I'm still here. Just wait a bit, I'll be leaving in a minute."

Then Siqi had to let her go.

To know what came of this, read on.

第七十二回

王熙凤恃强羞说病　来旺妇倚势霸成亲

话说鸳鸯出了角门，脸上犹红，心内突突的，真是意外之事。因想这事非常，若说出来，奸盗相连，关系人命，还保不住带累了旁人。横竖与自己无干，且藏在心内，不说与一人知道。回房复了贾母的命，大家安息。从此凡晚间便不大往园中来。因思园中尚有这样奇事，何况别处，因此连别处也不大轻走动了。

原来那司棋因从小儿和他姑表兄弟在一处玩笑起住时，小儿戏言，便都订下将来不娶不嫁。近年大了，彼此又出落的品貌风流，时常司棋回家时，二人眉来眼去，旧情不忘，只不能入手。又彼此生怕父母不从，二人便设法彼此里外买嘱园内老婆子们留门看道。今日趁乱方初次入港，虽未成双，却也海誓山盟，私传表记，已有无限风情了。忽被鸳鸯惊散，那小厮早穿花度柳，从角门出去了。司棋一夜不曾睡着，又后悔不来。至次日见了鸳鸯，自是脸上一红一白，百般过不去。心内怀着鬼胎，茶饭无心，起坐恍惚。挨了两日，竟不听见有动静，方略放下了心。这日晚间，忽有个婆子来悄告诉他道："你兄弟竟逃走了，三四天没归家。如今打

Chapter 72

Xifeng Puts up a Bold Front, Ashamed to Admit Her Illness
Lai Wang's Wife Relies on Her Mistress' Power to Force Through a Match for Her Son

Yuanyang left the side gate still blushing, in a flutter after this shock. "This is serious!" she thought."If it got out, the charge of lewdness linked with theft might even cost them their lives besides involving other people. Well, as it's no concern of mine, I'd better keep it to myself and not tell a soul." So on her return she simply reported that she had passed on the Lady Dowager's orders, after which they all went to bed. After this Yuanyang seldom went to the Garden after dark; and reflecting that if even the Garden was the scene of such strange carryings-on, other places must be still worse, she went nowhere else either if she could avoid it.

Now Siqi and her cousin had been playmates as children and vowed in fun to marry no one else. Both of them had now grown up good-looking, and whenever Siqi went home they would exchange glances, recalling their former feeling for each other although neither could make open overtures. Besides, they feared their parents' disapproval. So they had bribed the women in charge of the Garden gate to leave it open, and taking advantage of today's confusion had had their first rendezvous. Although they had not made love, they had secretly exchanged solemn vows and pledges, baring their hearts to each other. Their sudden discovery by Yuanyang had made the boy run off through the flowers and willows to slip out by the side gate.

Siqi, repenting too late, could not sleep that night. The next day when she saw Yuanyang she turned red and white by turns in an agony of embarrassment and guilt. She lost her appetite and grew quite bemused. But when two days passed without any repercussions she began to feel somewhat easier in her mind.

That evening, however, one of the matrons came to tell her in confidence,"Your cousin's skedaddled. He hasn't been home for three

发人四下里找他呢。”司棋听了，气个倒仰，因思道：“纵是闹了出来，也该死在一处。他自为是男人，先就走了，可见是个没情意的。”因此又添了一层气。次日便觉心内不快，百般支持不住，一头睡倒，恹恹的成了大病。

鸳鸯闻知那边无故走了一个小厮，园内司棋又病重，要往外挪，心下料定是二人惧罪之故，“生怕我说出来，方吓到这样。”因而自己反过意不去，指着来望候司棋，支出人去，反自己立身发誓，与司棋说：“我要告诉一个人，立刻现死现报！你只管放心养病，别白糟踏了小命儿。”司棋一把拉住，哭道：“我的姐姐，咱们从小儿耳鬓厮磨，你不曾拿我当外人待，我也不敢怠慢了你。如今我虽一着走错，你若果然不告诉一个人，你就是我亲娘一样。从此后我活一日是你给我一日，我的病好之后，把你立个长生牌位，我天天焚香礼拜，保佑你一生福寿双全。我若死了时，变驴变马报答你。再俗语说：‘千里搭长棚，没有不散的筵席。’再过三二年，咱们都是要离这里的。俗语又说：‘浮萍尚有相逢日，人岂全无见面时。’倘或日后咱们遇见了，那时我又怎么报你的德行。”一面说，一面哭。这一席话反把鸳鸯说的心酸，也哭起来了。因点头道：“正是这话。我又不是管事的人，何苦我坏你的声名，我白去献勤。况且这事我自己也不便开口向人说，你只放心。从此养好了，可要安分守己，再不许胡行乱作了。”司棋在枕上点头不绝。

鸳鸯又安慰了他一番，方出来。因知贾琏不在家中，又因这两日见凤姐声色怠惰了些，不似往日一样，因顺路儿也来望候。因进入凤姐院中来，二门上的人见是他来，便立身

or four days and a search is being made for him everywhere."

Distraught by this news Siqi thought,"Even if there's a scandal we ought to die together. Of course, being a man he can go anywhere he wants to. How heartless he is!" This embittered her so much that the next day she felt too upset to bear up. Ill with frustration she took to her bed.

When Yuanyang learned that a page in the Jia household had fled and Siqi was asking to go home on sick leave, she knew they were afraid of the consequences if she disclosed their secret. As this preyed on her mind, she went to see Siqi. After sending everyone else out of the room, she gave the girl her solemn word:

"I'll die before I breathe a word about this. Just stop worrying and nurse your illness. Don't risk your little life like this, child!"

Siqi caught her by the arm.

"Sister, we've been on good terms since we were children," she sobbed."You've never treated me as an outsider and I've always respected you. Now if you'll really keep my slip-up a secret, I shall look on you as my own mother — for I'll owe every day that I live to you. If I get well, I shall set up a shrine to you and burn incense and bow to it every day to pray for good fortune and long life for you. If I die, I'll become a donkey or a dog so as to repay your kindness. 'Even the longest feast must break up at last,' says the proverb. In two or three years we shall all be leaving this place. Still, even floating weeds may come together again, much more so human beings. And if we do meet again I shall try to repay your goodness." She shed tears as she spoke.

By now Yuanyang was weeping in sympathy.

Nodding she said, "All right. I'm not in charge, so why should I spoil your good name? Why be so officious? In any case, I could never bring myself to speak of such a thing. So don't you worry. When you're better you must behave more circumspectly and not carry on like that."

Siqi propped on her pillow nodded repeatedly, and after more reassurances Yuanyang left.

As she knew that Jia Lian was away and these last few days Xifeng had looked out of sorts, quite unlike her usual self, on the way back she called to see her. When she entered the courtyard the servants at the

待他进来。鸳鸯刚至堂屋中，只见平儿从里间出来，见了他来，便忙上来悄声笑道："才吃了一口饭歇了午睡，你且别屋里坐着。"鸳鸯听了，只得同平儿到东边房里来。小丫头倒了茶来。鸳鸯因悄问："你奶奶这两日是怎么了？我只看他懒懒的。"平儿见房内无人，便叹道："他这懒懒的也不止今日了，这有一月之前便是这样。又兼这几日忙乱了几天，又受了些闲气，从新又勾起来。这两日比先又添了些病，所以支持不住，便露出马脚来了。"鸳鸯忙道："既这样，怎么不请大夫治呢？"平儿叹道："我的姐姐，你还不知道他那脾气的。别说请大夫来吃药。我看不过，白问一声儿身上怎样，他就动了气，反说我咒他病了。饶这样，天天还是查三访四，自己再不肯看破些且养身子。"鸳鸯道："虽然如此，到底该请大夫瞧瞧是什么病，也都好放心。"平儿叹道："说起病来，据我看也不是什么小症候。"鸳鸯忙道："是什么病呢？"平儿往前又凑了一凑，向耳边说道："只从上月行了经之后，这一个月竟沥沥淅淅没有止住。这可是大病不是大病？"鸳鸯听了，忙道："嗳哟！依你这话，这可不成了血崩了。"平儿忙啐了一口，又悄笑道："你女孩儿家，这是怎么说的，你倒会咒人呢。"鸳鸯见说，不禁红了脸，又悄笑道："究竟我也不知什么是崩不崩的，你倒忘了不成，先我姐姐不是害这个病死了？我也不知是什么病，因无心中听见妈和亲家妈说，我还纳闷，后来也是听见妈细说原故，才明白了一二分。"平儿笑道："你该知道的，我也竟忘了。"

inner gate stood up to let her in, and as she stepped into the hall Pinger came out of the bedroom and approached her.

"She's just had a bite to eat and is having a nap," Pinger whispered. "Won't you wait in the other room for a while?" She took her to the eastern room where a maid served tea.

"What's the matter with your mistress these days?" Yuanyang asked in a low voice. "I've noticed she seems very listless."

As they were alone Pinger sighed,"She's been this way for some time, at least a month. And these last few days she's been kept on the go and provoked into the bargain, so that's brought on a relapse. As it's worse now than before, she can't put up a brave front and hide it."

"In that case why not get a doctor in good time?"

Again Pinger sighed.

"Don't you know the way she is, sister? She won't hear of fetching a doctor or taking medicine. When I simply asked out of concern how she felt, she swone crossly that my nagging was making her ill. Poorly as she is, she still insists on checking on this and that every day instead of taking things easy to get back her health."

"Even so, you ought to get a doctor to diagnose her illness and save us all worry."

"I'm afraid it's something serious."

"What do you mean?"

Pinger drew closer to whisper, "Since her period last month she's been having fluxions off and on non-stop. Wouldn't you call that serious?"

"*Aiya*! From what you say, it sounds like menorrhagia."

Pinger spat in disgust, then chuckled.

"What does a girl like you know about such things? It's unlucky to talk like that."

Yuanyang blushed.

"I didn't know any such things to start with," she answered. "But have you forgotten that was how my sister died? I'd no idea what her illness was till I overheard my mother telling her mother-in-law, and the name meant nothing to me. Later I heard mother explain its cause and that gave me an inkling."

二人正说着，只见小丫头进来向平儿道："方才朱大娘又来了。我们回了他奶奶才歇午觉，他往太太上头去了。"平儿听了点头。鸳鸯问："那一个朱大娘？"平儿道："就是官媒婆那朱嫂子。因有什么孙大人家来和咱们求亲，所以他这两日天天弄个帖子来赖死赖活……。"一语未了，小丫头子跑进来说："二爷来了。"说话之间，贾琏已走至堂屋门，口内唤平儿。平儿答应着才要迎出去，贾琏已找至这间房内来。至门口，忽见鸳鸯坐在炕上，便煞住脚，笑道："鸳鸯姐姐，今儿贵脚踏贱地。"鸳鸯只坐着，笑道："来请爷奶奶的安，偏又不在家的不在家，睡觉的睡觉。"贾琏笑道："姐姐一年到头辛苦服侍老太太，我还没看你去，那里还敢劳动来看我们。正是巧的很，我才要找姐姐去。因为穿着这袍子热，先来换了夹袍子再过去找姐姐，不想天可怜，省我走这一趟，姐姐先在这里等我了。"一面说，一面在椅上坐下。鸳鸯因问："又有什么说的？"贾琏未语先笑道："有一件事，我竟忘了，只怕姐姐还记得。上年老太太生日，曾有一个外路来的和尚孝敬一个蜡油冻的佛手，因老太太爱，就即刻拿过去摆着了。因前日老太太生日，我看古董帐上还有这一笔，却不知此时这件东西着落何方？古董房里的人也回过我两次，等我问准了好注上一笔。所以我问姐姐，如今还是老太太摆着呢，还是交到谁手里去了呢？"鸳鸯听说，便道："老太太摆

"Yes, I'd forgotten that," said Pinger gently.

As they were chatting a maid came in.

"Just now Mrs. Zhu came again," she announced. "We told her the mistress is having a siesta, so she went to Lady Wang's place."

Pinger nodded.

Yuanyang asked, "Which Mrs. Zhu?"

"That professional go-between," Pinger explained. "The family of some official named Sun wants to arrange a match with us, so recently she's been turning up here every day with a card, making a regular nuisance of herself."

Before she had finished the maid returned to report, "The master's back."

By now Jia Lian was calling Pinger from the door of the hall, and before she could go to meet him he stepped through her doorway. At sight of Yuanyang seated on the *kang* he halted.

"What brings our distinguished Sister Yuanyang to our humble abode?" he asked smiling.

Remaining seated she answered, "I came to pay my respects to you and madam, but you were out and she was having a nap."

"You work so hard all the year round for the old lady, by rights I should call on you. How can we trouble you to come to see us?" He added, "Still, this is very opportune. I was meaning to go and see you, but felt so hot in this heavy gown that I came back first to change into a lighter one. Now Heaven has taken pity on me and saved me a trip by having you waiting here." He seated himself on a chair.

She asked what his business was.

"It's slipped my mind," Jia Lian chuckled, "but you may remember. On the old lady's birthday last year, an itinerant monk presented her with a Buddha's-hand made of soapstone; and as the old lady took a fancy to it, it was taken straight to her place for display. The other day on her birthday I checked our inventory of curios and found this listed there, but I don't know where it's got to now. The caretakers of the storeroom for antiques have mentioned it several times, as they want to record where it is. So I meant to ask you whether it's still in the old lady's place or whom she's given it to."

了几日，厌烦了，就给了你们奶奶。你这会子又问我来。我连日子还记得，还是我打发了老王家的送来的。你忘了，或是问你们奶奶和平儿。”平儿正拿衣服，听见如此说，忙出来回说：“交过来了，现在楼上放着呢。奶奶已经打发过人出去说过给了这屋里，他们发昏，没记上，又来叨登这些没要紧的事。”贾琏听说，笑道：“既然给了你奶奶，我怎么不知道，你们就昧下了。”平儿道：“奶奶告诉二爷，二爷还要送人，奶奶不肯，好容易留下的。这会子自己忘了，倒说我们昧下。那是什么好东西，什么没有的物儿。比那强十倍的东西也没有昧下一遭儿，这会子又爱上那不值钱的！”贾琏垂头含笑想了一想，拍手道：“我如今竟糊涂了！丢三忘四，惹人抱怨，竟大不像先了。”鸳鸯笑道：“也怨不得。事情又多，口舌又杂，你再喝上两杯酒，那里清楚的许多。”一面说，一面就起身要去。

贾琏忙也立身说道：“好姐姐，再坐一坐，兄弟还有一事相求。”说着便骂小丫头子：“怎么不沏好茶来！快拿干净盖碗，把昨儿进上的新茶沏一碗来。”说着向鸳鸯道：“这两日因老太太的千秋，所有的几千两银子都使了。几处房租地税，通在九月才得，这会子竟接不上。明儿又要送南安府里

"The old lady had it out for a couple of days, then got tired of it and gave it to Madam Lian," was Yuanyang's answer. "So now you are asking *me*! I even remember the day when I sent Old Wang's wife to bring it here. If you can't remember, ask Madam Lian or Pinger."

Pinger who was getting out clothes for Jia Lian came out on hearing this.

"Yes, it was delivered here. It's kept upstairs," she said. "Madam sent to tell them that it had been given to us, but the fools must have forgotten to record it. Now they're pestering us again over these trifles."

Jia Lian grinned.

"How come I didn't know it was given to your mistress? You two must have pocketed it."

"She told you, sir," Pinger retorted. "You wanted to give it to someone else, but she didn't agree, so we managed to hang on to it. Now you've forgotten and say we've kept it. What precious, priceless rarity is it, pray? We've never kept anything from you, not even things ten times better than this. Why should we value that worthless object now?"

Jia Lian lowered his head with a smile to think this over, then clapped his hands.

"Yes, I'm getting muddle-headed and forgetful," he exclaimed. "I don't wonder you scold me — my memory's not what it was."

Yuanyang smiled.

"You're not to blame. You have so much to attend to, so many people coming to you with requests; and then when you drink a few cups of wine how can you remember every single thing?" While saying this she rose to take her leave.

Jia Lian stood up hastily too.

"Dear sister, please sit down for a while," he begged. "I've something else to ask you." He reprimanded the maid, "Why didn't you brew some better tea? Hurry up and fetch a clean bowl with a lid and brew some of that new tribute tea."

Turning back to Yuanyang he went on, "These days, because of the old lady's birthday, I've spent the few thousand taels of silver I had. Our house rents and land rents from various places won't be coming in till the ninth month, so right now I'm rather hard up. Tomorrow I have to send

的礼，又要预备娘娘的重阳节礼，还有几家的红白大礼，至少还得三二千两银子用，一时难去支借。俗语说：‘求人不如求己’，说不得，姐姐担个不是，暂且把老太太查不着的金银家伙偷着运出一箱子来，暂押千数两银子支腾过去。不上半年的光景，银子来了，我就赎了交还，断不能叫姐姐落不是。”鸳鸯听了，笑道：“你倒会变法儿，亏你怎么想来。”贾琏笑道：“不是我扯谎，若论除了姐姐，也还有人手里管的起千数两银子的，只是他们的为人，都不如你明白有胆量。我若和他们一说，反吓住了他们。所以我‘宁撞金钟一下，不打破鼓三千’。”一语未了，忽有贾母小丫头子忙忙走来找鸳鸯，说：“老太太找姐姐这半日，我们那里没找到，却在这里。”鸳鸯听说，忙的且去见贾母。

贾琏见他去了，只得回来瞧凤姐。谁知凤姐早已醒了，听他和鸳鸯借当，自己不便答话，只躺在炕上。听见鸳鸯去了，贾琏进来，凤姐因问道：“他可应准了？”贾琏笑道：“虽然未应准，却有几分成手，须得你晚上再和他一说，就十分成了。”凤姐笑道：“我不管这事。倘或说准了，这会子说得好听，有了钱的时节，你就丢在脖子后头了，谁和你打饥荒去？倘或老太太知道了，倒把我这几年的脸面都丢了。”贾琏笑道：“好人，你若说定了，我谢你如何？”凤姐笑道：“你说，谢我什么？”贾琏笑道：“你说要什么，就有什么。”平儿在旁笑道：“奶奶倒不要谢的。昨儿正说，要作一件什么

presents to the Prince of Nanan and prepare Double-Ninth gifts for Her Imperial Highness; then there are weddings and funerals coming up in several other families too. I need at least two or three thousand taels, and I can't raise that sum quickly. As the proverb says, 'It's better to ask of one's own folk than of outsiders.' So I wonder, sister, if you'll stick your neck out and filch me a case of gold and silver utensils which the old lady isn't using for the time being. I can pawn them for some silver to tide over. In less than half a year, when my money comes in, I'll redeem them and return them. I promise not to land you in any trouble."

"You certainly know a trick or two," Yuanyang laughed. "The idea!"

"I won't lie to you," he chuckled. "Apart from you, there are several others who have control of plenty of silver, but none of them is as sensible and plucky as you. If I approached them they'd take fright. So I'd rather strike the golden bell once instead of trying all the broken drums."

At this point one of the Lady Dowager's maids hurried in in search of Yuanyang.

"The old lady wants you, miss," she said. "We've been looking everywhere, but here you were all the time."

Then Yuanyang quickly went back.

As soon as she had gone Jia Lian went in to see Xifeng, who had woken up and heard him ask for a loan. Not liking to interpose, she just lay on the *kang* until Yuanyang had left and Jia Lian entered her room.

"Did she agree?" she asked him.

"Not in so many words, but it looks hopeful," he answered cheerfully. "You must go and mention it again this evening, and that should fix it."

"I'll do nothing of the sort," retorted Xifeng. "If she agrees, once you get hold of the money you'll forget all your fine talk and promises now. Who's going to run such a risk for you? If it came to the old lady's ears, I'd lose all the face I've had the last few years."

"Be an angel," he begged. "If you fix this up, I'll make it worth your while — how's that?"

"What with?"

"Whatever you say."

Pinger beside them put in, "Don't ask for any other rewards, madam.

事，却少一二百银子使，不如借了来，奶奶拿一二百银子，岂不两全其美。”凤姐笑道：“幸亏提起我来，就是这样也罢。”贾琏笑道：“你们也太狠了。你们这会子别说一千两银子的当头，就是现银子要三五千，只怕也难不倒。我不和你们借就罢了。这会子烦你说一句话，还要个利钱，真真了不得。”凤姐听了，翻身起来说道：“我有三千、五万，不是赚的你的。如今里里外外上上下下背着我嚼说我的不少，就差你来说了，可知没家亲引不出外鬼来。我们王家可那里来的钱，都是你们贾家赚的。别叫我恶心了。你们看着你家什么石崇、邓通，把我王家的地缝子扫一扫，就够你们过一辈子呢。说出来的话也不怕臊！现有对证：把太太和我的嫁妆细细的看看，比一比你们的，那一样是配不上你们的。”贾琏笑道：“说句玩话儿就急了。这有什么这样的，你要使一二百两银子值什么，多的没有，这还有，先拿进来，你使了再说，如何？”凤姐道：“我又不等着衔口垫背，忙了什么。”贾琏道：“何苦来，不犯着这样肝火盛。”凤姐听了，又自笑起来，“不是我着急，你说的话戳人的心。我因为我想着后日是尤二姐的周年，我们好了一场。虽不能别的，到底给他上个坟烧张纸，也是姊妹一场，他虽没留下个男女，也不要‘前人撒土迷了后人的眼’才是。”一语倒把贾琏说没了话，低头打算了半晌，方说道：“难为你想的周全，我竟忘了。既

Just yesterday you were saying you needed a couple of hundred taels. If you get this loan you can deduct them from that. Wouldn't that suit you both?"

"I'm glad you reminded me," cried Xifeng gaily. "All right then."

"What a hard bargain you drive," protested Jia Lian. "Don't talk about pawning things for a mere thousand taels when I know you could easily produce three to five thousand of ready cash here and now. You should be thankful I'm not borrowing from you, just asking you to put in a word; and yet you still demand interest. This is the limit..."

Before he could go on, Xifeng sprang up.

"If I have three thousand or fifty thousand, I didn't earn it from you." she cried. "Nowadays everybody inside and out, high and low, keeps carping about me behind my back, so you may as well join in. Ghosts from outside don't come in unless they're invited by some family devils. Where did our Wang family's money come from, pray? Is it all from your Jia family? Don't make me vomit. You think you're as rich as a mint-master. The sweepings from the cracks in our Wang family's floor are enough to last you a lifetime. Aren't you ashamed talking like that? There's evidence to prove it. Just look at the dowries Lady Wang and I brought and compare them with yours. In what way are we inferior to you?"

"Why take a joke so seriously?" he asked, smiling. "This is nothing to get so worked up about. If you want a couple of hundred taels, that's nothing. More than that I can't manage, but this I can afford. Suppose you take that to be going on with before you raise this loan?"

"I'm not waiting for that to pay for my funeral, so what's the hurry?"

"Why carry on like that? There's no need to flare up."

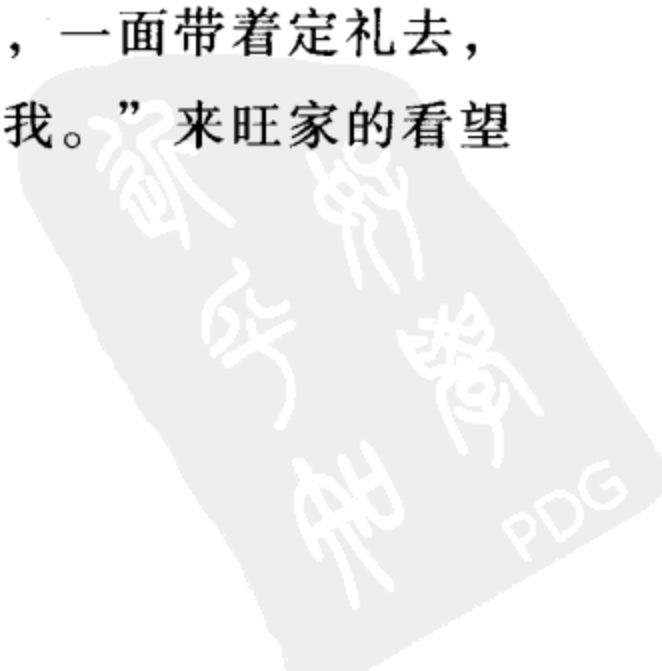
"Don't accuse me of temper. But your words cut me to the heart. I was thinking that the day after tomorrow is the anniversary of Second Sister You's death; and as she and I were good friends, the least I can do is burn some paper money at her grave for friendship's sake. Though she didn't leave any children, we shouldn't forget her now that she's turned to dust."

Jia Lian lowered his head and was silent for some time.

"I'd forgotten," he admitted. "It's good of you to remember. If you

是后日才用，若明日得了这个，你随便使多少就是了。”

一语未了，只见来旺媳妇走进来。凤姐便问：“可成了没有？”来旺媳妇道：“竟不中用。我说须得奶奶作主就成了。”贾琏便问：“又是什么事？”凤姐儿见问，便说道：“不是什么大事。来旺有个小子，今年十七岁了，还没得女人，因要求太太房里的彩霞，不知太太心里怎么样，就没有计较得。前日太太见彩霞大了，二则又多病多灾的，因此开恩打发他出去了，给他老子娘随便自己拣女婿去罢。因此来旺媳妇来求我。我想他两家也就算门当户对的，一说去自然成的了，谁知他这会子来了，说不中用。”贾琏道：“这是什么大事，比彩霞好的多着呢。”来旺家的陪笑道：“爷虽如此说，连他家还看不起我们，别人越发看不起我们了。好容易相看准一个媳妇，我只说求爷奶奶的恩典，替我作成了。奶奶又说他必肯的，我就烦了人过去一试，谁知白讨了一个没趣。若论那孩子倒好，与我素日合意儿，他心里没有甚说的，只是他老子娘两个老东西太心高了些。”一语戳动了凤姐和贾琏，凤姐因见贾琏在此，且不作一声，只看贾琏的光景。贾琏心中有事，那里把这点子事放在心里。待要不管，只是看着他是凤姐儿的陪房，且又素日出过力的，脸上实在过不去。因说道：“什么大事，只管咕咕唧唧的。你放心且去，我明儿作媒打发两个有体面的人，一面说，一面带着定礼去，就说我的主意，他十分不依，叫他来见我。”来旺家的看望



don't need the money till the day after tomorrow, wait till we raise this loan tomorrow, then you can take as much as you want from it."

Just then Lai Wang's wife came in.

"Is it settled?" Xifeng asked her.

"No, nothing doing," answered Mrs. Lai. "But I think if you sponsor it, madam, it should come off."

Jia Lian wanted to know what they were talking about.

"It's of no great consequence," Xifeng told him. "Lai Wang has a son who's seventeen this year and not yet married. They want Caixia who waits on Lady Wang, but don't know whether Her Ladyship will agree. The other day she kindly said that as Caixia is grown up and so delicate she can be given her freedom and sent home, so that her parents can arrange for her marriage. Then Mrs. Lai approached me. I thought the two families being fairly well matched, once the request was made it was bound to be granted. Yet here she comes now saying nothing doing!"

"What does that matter?" he rejoined. "There are plenty of better girls than Caixia."

Mrs. Lai put in with a smile,"You may look at it that way, sir; but her family turning us down like that will make others look down on us even more. It's not so easy to find a suitable girl. I thought with your help we could fix it up — that at a word from madam they'd surely agree. So I troubled some one to go and sound them out, but to my surprise we got snubbed. The girl herself is agreeable and never seemed to be against the match, but those two old creatures have grander ideas for their daughter."

This was a challenge to Xifeng and Jia Lian; but as her husband was there the former said nothing, just waited to see his reaction. Jia Lian having other things on his mind did not take this seriously. However, as Mrs. Lai had accompanied Xifeng here at the time of her wedding and served them well, he could hardly ignore her request.

"It's not all that important," he said. "Why keep on about it? Don't worry, you can go now. Tomorrow I'll act as gobetween and send two respectable fellows with betrothal gifts to tell them it's my proposal. If they still hold out, we'll get them to come and see me."

凤姐，凤姐便扭嘴儿，来旺家的会意，忙爬下就给贾琏磕头谢恩，贾琏忙道："你只给你姑娘磕头。我虽如此说了这样行，到底也得你姑娘打发个人叫他女人来，和他好说更好些。虽然他们必依，然这事也不可太霸道了。"凤姐忙道："连你还这样施恩操心呢，我倒反袖手旁观不成?来旺家，你听见了，说了这事，你也忙忙的给我完了事来。说给你男人，外头所有的账，一概都赶今年年底下收了进来，少一个钱我也不依。我的声名不好，再放一年，都要生吃了我呢。"来旺媳妇笑道："奶奶也太胆小了。谁敢议论奶奶!若收了时，公道说，我们倒还省些事，不大得罪人。"凤姐冷笑道："我也是一场痴心白使了。我真个的还等钱作什么，不过为的是日用出的多，进的少。这屋里有的没的，我和你姑爷一月的月钱，再连上四个丫头的月钱，通共一二十两银子，还不够三五天的使用呢。若不是我千凑万挪的，早不知道到什么破窑子里去了。如今倒落了一个放账破落户的名儿。既这样，我就收了回来。我比谁不会花钱，咱们以后就坐着花，花到多早晚再说。这不是样儿么：前儿老太太的生日，太太急了两个月，想不出法儿来，还是我提了一句，后楼上有那没要紧的大铜锡器四五箱子，拿去弄了三百银子，才把太太遮羞的礼儿搪过去了。我是你们知道的，那一个金自鸣钟卖了五百六十两银子。没有半个月，大事小事倒有十来件，白填在里头。今儿外头也短住了，不知是谁的主意，搜寻上老太太了。明儿再过一年，各人搜寻到头面衣服，可

At a sign from Xifeng, Mrs. Lai fell on her knees to kowtow her thanks to Jia Lian.

"It's your mistress you should be kowtowing to," he said. "Even though I'll do what I can, it would be best for her to send for Caixia's mother and put it to her nicely. Otherwise even if they agree, we'll seem too overbearing."

"If you're willing to go to this trouble for her," put in Xifeng, "how can I just stand watching? Well, Mrs. Lai, you've heard that. After this is settled, you must hurry up and see to my business for me. Tell your husband to collect all the money lent out before the end of this year — not a single cash short. I've a bad enough reputation as it is. I don't want to make it worse by going on lending out money."

Lai Wang's wife laughed.

"You needn't worry, madam. Who would dare say a word against you? But, honestly speaking, if you stopped lending out that money we'd save ourselves trouble and offend fewer people."

Xifeng snorted.

"I've acted like a fool all for nothing. What did *I* need money for? Only for daily expenses, as we're overspending our income and our household is always short. My monthly allowance and his, plus those of our four maids, come to only some twenty taels a month — not enough to last three or five days. If I hadn't raised more by hook or by crook, we'd long ago have had to move into some tumble-down cave. But all I've got for my pains is the reputation of a moneylender. So I may as well call in all those loans. I can spend money as well as anyone else. In future let's all sit here spending, without worrying how long the money will last. Isn't that the idea?

"Before the old lady's birthday the other day, Lady Wang worried for two months, not knowing how to raise funds, till I reminded her that in the back upstairs storeroom there were four or five cases of big copper and pewter vessels lying useless. By pawning these for three hundred taels she managed to make her contribution. As for me, as you know, I sold that gold striking-clock for five hundred and sixty-four taels. But in less than half a month it all went on some ten outlays big and small. Now that even our treasury is short, someone's had the bright idea of milking the

就好了！”来旺媳妇笑道：“那一位太太奶奶的头面衣服折变了不够过一辈子的，只是不肯罢了。”凤姐道：“不是我说没了能奈的话，要像这样，我竟不能了。昨儿晚上忽然作了一个梦，说来也可笑，梦见一个人，虽然面善，却又不知名姓，找我。问他作什么，他说娘娘打发他来要一百匹锦。我问他是那一位娘娘，他说的又不是咱们家的娘娘。我就不肯给他，他就上来夺。正夺着，就醒了。”来旺家的笑道：“这是奶奶的日间操心，常应候宫里的事。”

一语未了，人回：“夏太府打发了一个小太监家来说话。”贾琏听了，忙皱眉道：“又是什么话，一年他们也搬够了。”凤姐道：“你藏起来，等我见他，若是小事罢了，若是大事，我自有话回他。”贾琏便躲入内套间去。这里凤姐命人带进小太监来，让他椅子上坐，吃了茶，因问何事。那小太监便说：“夏爷爷因今儿偶见一所房子，如今竟短二百两银子，打发我来问舅奶奶家里，有现成的银子暂借一二百两，过几天就送过来。”凤姐听了，笑道：“什么是送过来，有的是银子，只管先兑了去。改日等我们短了，再借去也是一样。”小太监道：“夏爷爷还说了，上两回还有一千二百两银

old lady. A few more years and we'll be reduced to selling our clothes and jewellery, and won't that be fine!"

Lai Wang's wife chuckled.

"The clothes and jewels of any single one of our mistresses would raise enough to last us a whole lifetime. But of course that would never do."

"It's not that I've got cold feet," Xifeng insisted. "But if things go on this way I really can't cope. Last night I suddenly had a very odd dream. I dreamed that someone with a familiar face, but whose name I couldn't recollect, came to see me. When I asked her business, she said Her Imperial Highness had sent her to fetch a hundred rolls of silk from me. I asked which Imperial Highness. She told me it wasn't the one from our family, so I refused. Then she tried to take the silk by force. We were scuffling when I woke up."

Lai Wang's wife said with a smile, "That's because you'd been worrying all day about presents for the Palace."

Just then it was announced that the eunuch Xia had sent a young eunuch to see them.

Jia Lian frowned.

"What is it *this* time?" he exclaimed. "Haven't they squeezed enough out of us this year?"

"You keep out of sight and let me handle this," suggested Xifeng. "If it's some small matter, all right. It it's something important I know how to ward him off."

Jia Lian withdrew then to the annex.

Xifeng ordered the young eunuch to be brought in and offered him a seat, after which tea was served. She then asked his business.

"His Excellency Xia saw a house today which he'd like to buy, but he's two hundred taels short," was the answer. "He sent me to ask you, madam, if you have ready money at home and can lend him a couple of hundred for the time being. He'll pay you back in a few days."

Xifeng replied with a smile, "Don't speak of paying us back. We've plenty of silver here; just take any amount you need. If ever we're short of funds, we'll apply to you."

"His Excellency also said he still hasn't repaid the twelve hundred

子没送来，等今年年底下，自然都一齐送了过来。”凤姐笑道：“你夏爷爷好小气，这也值得提在心上。我说一句话，不怕他多心，若都这样记的清还我们，不知还了多少了。只怕没有；若有，只管拿去。”因叫来旺媳妇来：“出去不管那里，先支二百两银子来。”来旺媳妇会意，因笑道：“我才因别处支不动，才来和奶奶支的。”凤姐道：“你们只会里头来要钱，叫你们外头弄去就不能了。”说着叫平儿：“把我那个金项圈拿出去，暂且押四百两银子。”平儿答应了，去了半日，果然拿了一个锦盒子来，里面两个锦袱包着。打开时，一个金累丝攒珠的，那珍珠都有莲子大小；一个点翠嵌宝石的。两个都与宫中之物不离上下。一时拿去，果然拿了四百两银子来。凤姐命小太监打叠起一半，那一半命人与了来旺媳妇，命他拿去办八月中秋的节礼。那小太监便告辞了，凤姐命人替他拿着银子，送出大门去了。这里贾琏出来笑道：“这一起外祟何日是了！”凤姐笑道：“刚说着，就来了一股子。”贾琏道：“昨儿周太监来，张口一千两。我略应的慢了些，他就不自在。将来得罪人之处不少。这会子再发个三二万银子的财就好了。”一面说，一面平儿服侍凤姐另洗了面，更衣往贾母处去伺候晚饭。

这里贾琏出来，刚至外书房，忽见林之孝走来。贾琏因

taels he borrowed the last two times. He will definitely return it all before the end of the year."

"His Excellency is too scrupulous." Xifeng laughed. "He may as well forget it. At the risk of offending him I'd like to say that if he remembered to pay us back all he's borrowed, goodness knows how much that would come to. The only thing that worries us is that we may not have money when he needs it. As long as we have, he can take it." She called for Lai Wang's wife and told her, "Go and get hold of two hundred taels from somewhere."

Taking the hint, Mrs. Lai replied, "I came to borrow from you, madam, because I couldn't raise money anywhere else."

"You just come in asking *us* for money," scolded Xifeng, "When I ask you to get some outside, you say you can't." She told Pinger, "Take those two gold necklets of mine and have them pawned for four hundred taels."

Pinger went off, returning after some lapse of time with a brocade-covered box containing two silk wrappers. In one was a gold filigree necklet studded with pearls as large as lotus seeds; in the other, a jewelled green enamel necklet. Both were similar to those made for the Palace. She took these away and soon brought back four hundred taels, half of which on Xifeng's instructions she gave to the young eunuch, the other half to Lai Wang's wife to meet expenses for the Moon Festival. Then the young eunuch took his leave, and a servant was ordered to carry the silver for him and see him out of the main gate.

Jia Lian returned now demanding, "When will those scoundrels outside stop plaguing us?"

Xifeng chuckled, "It's a case of 'talk of the devil.'"

"Yesterday the eunuch Zhou came and asked straight out for a thousand tales. When I hedged, he looked put out. In future we're bound to offend them even more often. I only wish we could come into another two or three million taels."

While he was speaking Pinger helped her mistress with her toilet, and then Xifeng went to wait upon the Lady Dowager at dinner.

Jia Lian had barely gone to his outside study when Lin Zhixiao appeared.

问何事，林之孝说道："方才打听得雨村降了，却不知因何事，只怕未必真。"贾琏道："真不真，他那官儿也未必保得长。将来有事，只怕未必不连累咱们，宁可疏远着他好。"林之孝道："何尝不是，只是一时难以疏远。如今东府大爷和他更好，老爷又喜欢他，时常来往，那一个不知。"贾琏道："横竖不和他谋事，也不相干。你去再打听真了，是为什么。"林之孝答应了，却不动身，坐在下面椅子上，且说些闲话。因又说起家道艰难，便趁势又说："人口太众了。不如拣个空日，回明老太太、老爷，把这些出过力的老家人用不着的，开恩放几家出去。一则他们各有营运，二则家里一年也省些口粮月钱。再者里头的姑娘也太多。俗语说，'一时比不得一时'，如今说不得先时的例了，少不得大家委屈些，该使八个的使六个，该使四个的便使两个。若各房算起来，一年也可以省许多月米月钱。况且里头的女孩子们一半都太大了，也该配人的配人。成了房，岂不又是一件好事，又孳生出人来。"贾琏道："我也这样想着，只是老爷才回家来，多少大事未回，那里议到这个上头?前儿官媒拿了个庚帖来求亲，太太还说老爷才来家，每日欢天喜地的说骨肉团聚，忽然就提起这事，恐老爷又伤心，所以且不叫提这事。"林之孝道："这也是正理，太太想的周到。"贾琏道："正是，提起这话，我想起一件事来。我们来旺的小子要说太太屋里的彩霞。他昨儿求我，我想什么大事，不管谁去说

"Just now I heard that Jia Yucun has lost his post," he reported. "I don't know why. Of course, it may not be true."

"Whether it's true or not, he's not likely to keep his present post for long," replied Jia Lian. "If he gets into trouble, I'm afraid we'll be involved. It would be better to keep clear of him."

"Quite so," agreed Lin. "But that's easier said than done. At the moment he's very thick with the master of the East Mansion, and our master Lord She likes him too. Every body knows that he's a frequent visitor here."

"Provided we don't get involved in any of his schemes, it doesn't matter. Go and check up to find out what's really happened."

Lin Zhixiao assented, but instead of leaving he sat there chatting until the subject of their financial straits came up again. He took this chance to advise:

"We should cut down on our household — it's too large. Why not ask the old lady and the master to release some old servants who have served the family well but are no longer useful? They all have independent means, and that would save us some money and grain each year. We have too many maids as well. Now that times have changed we can't follow the old rules but should tighten up a bit! Those used to eight maids can make do with six, those used to four with two. By cutting down like this in all our apartments we'd save a good deal of money and grain every year. And then half the girls in the household, who are grown up anyway, should get married. With them married, our household would increase. Wouldn't that be a good thing?"

"I've had the same idea," agreed Jia Lian. "But the master is only just back, and there are quite a few important matters I haven't yet reported to him; so there's been no time to bring this up. The other day when the professional match-maker came with a horoscope to propose a match, Her Ladyship told us not to mention it as His Lordship is just home, enjoying this family reunion, and a sudden proposal of this sort might upset him."

"Quite right and proper too. You think of everything, sir."

"Yes, but this reminds me of something. Our man Lai Wang wants Caixia in Her Ladyship's place for his son. Yesterday he asked my help.

一声去。这会子有谁闲着，我打发个人去说一声，就说我的话。”林之孝听了，答应着，半晌笑道：“依我说，二爷竟别管这件事。来旺的那小儿子虽然年轻，在外头吃酒赌钱，无所不至。虽说都是奴才们，到底是一辈子的事。彩霞那孩子这几年我虽没见，听得越发出挑的好了，何苦来白糟踏一个人。”贾琏道：“他小子原会吃酒？不成人！”林之孝冷笑道：“岂只吃酒赌钱，在外头无所不为。我们看他是奶奶的人，也只见一半不见一半罢了。”贾琏道：“我竟不知道这些事。既这样，那里还给他老婆，且给他一顿棍子，锁起来，再问他老子娘。”林之孝笑道：“何必在这一时。那是我错了，等他再生事，我们自然回爷处治。如今且恕他。”贾琏不语，一时林之孝出去。

凤姐晚间已命人唤了彩霞之母来说媒。彩霞之母满心纵不愿意，见凤姐亲自和他说，何等体面，便心不由意的满口应承出去。今凤姐问贾琏可说了没有，贾琏因说：“我原要说的，打听得他小儿子太不成人，故还不曾说。若果然不成人，且管教他两日，再给他老婆不迟。”凤姐听说，便说道：“你听见谁说他不成人？”贾琏道：“不过是家里的人，还有谁？”凤姐笑道：“我们王家的人，连我还不中你们的意，何况奴才呢。我才已和他娘说了，他娘已经欢天喜地应了，难道又叫进他来不要了不成？”贾琏道：“你既说了，又何必退，明儿说给他老子好生管他就是了。”这里说话不提。

且说彩霞因前日出去，等父母择人，心中虽是与贾环有

As it's nothing important, I don't think it matters which of you goes to propose it. Just send anyone who's free and say I approve of the match."

Lin Zhixiao could not but assent. After a pause, however, he smiled.

"Actually, sir, if I were you I'd have nothing to do with this. That son of Lai Wang's, for all he's so young, drinks and gambles and gets up to all sorts of devilry outside. They may both be bond-servants; still, marriage is for life. Though I haven't seen Caixia these last few years, I hear she's grown up a nice-looking girl. Why ruin her life for her?"

"So that young fellow's a dissolute drunkard, eh?"

"He not only drinks and gambles but carries on outrageously outside. We've turned a blind eye because his mother worked for madam."

"I didn't know that," said Jia Lian. "In that case we certainly won't give him a wife. We'll give him a good beating instead, then have him locked up and take his parents to task."

"This isn't the time for that." The steward smiled. "I shouldn't have brought it up. Wait till he makes trouble again and we'll report it to you, sir, for you to handle. Better let him off for the time being."

Jia Lian said nothing to this, and soon Lin Zhixiao withdrew.

That evening Xifeng sent for Caixia's mother and proposed the match. Although the woman did not like the idea, as Xifeng had done her the honour of proposing it in person she had to agree out of hand. After she had left, Xifeng asked Jia Lian whether he had broached the matter.

"I was meaning to," he said, "but then I heard that the boy is a worthless wretch. I thought: if he's really no good, we'd better discipline him for a couple of days before giving him a wife."

"Who told you he's no good?"

"One of our servants, of course."

"You think nothing of us Wangs, not even of me, much less our servants. I've spoken to Caixia's mother and she's consented gladly. Am I to call her back now and tell her it's off?"

"There's no need for that if you've already made the proposal. I'll just tell the boy's father tomorrow to give him a good dressing-down."

The rest of their conversation need not concern us.

Now Caixia after being released from service was waiting for her

旧，尚未作准。今日又见来旺每每来求亲。早闻得来旺之子酗酒赌博，而且容颜丑陋，一技不知，自此心中越发懊恼。生恐来旺仗凤姐之势，一时作成，终身为患，不免心中急躁。遂至晚间悄命他妹子小霞，进二门来找赵姨娘，问个端的。赵姨娘素日深与彩霞契合，巴不得与了贾环，方有个膀臂，不承望王夫人又放了出去。每日调唆贾环去讨，一则贾环羞口难开，二则贾环也不大甚在意，不过是个丫头，将来还有，迁延着不说，意思便丢开手。无奈赵姨娘又不舍，又见他妹子来问，是晚得空，便先求了贾政。贾政因说道："且忙什么，等他们再念一二年书，再放人不迟。我已经看中了两个丫头，一个与宝玉，一人给环儿。只是年纪还小，又怕他们误了书，所以再等一二年。"赵姨娘道："宝玉已有了二年了，老爷难道还不知道？"贾政听了，忙问道："是谁给的？"赵姨娘才欲说，只听外面一声响。要知端的，下回分解。

parents to choose her a husband. Although she had been on friendly terms with Jia Huan, nothing had come of it; and now she saw Lai Wang coming repeatedly to ask for her hand. As she had heard that his son was a drunkard and gambler and ugly into the bargain, she felt all the more upset — for if Lai Wang fixed up this match with Xifeng's backing her whole life would be ruined. This prospect made her so frantic that that evening she secretly sent her younger sister Xiaoxia to Concubine Zhao, to find out the situation.

Concubine Zhao had always been on good terms with Caixia and was all for giving her to Jia Huan, for then she would have an ally in the house. She had never expected Lady Wang to discharge her. Day after day she urged Jia Huan to go and ask for her, but he was too shy to speak and not too attracted by Caixia in any case. To him, she was only a maid and he would have others in future; so he procrastinated, quite willing to give her up. His mother was reluctant to do this, however. After the younger sister came for news, as she was free that evening she went to enlist Jia Zheng's help.

"What's the hurry? " he asked. "Wait till the boys have studied a year or two more before we get concubines for them. I've already got two suitable maids in mind, one for Baoyu, one for Huan. But they're still young and it might hold up their studies; so let's wait a couple of years."

"Baoyu's had one for two years already. Didn't you know that sir?" asked Concubine Zhao.

At once Jia Zheng demanded,"Who made the decision?"

Before she could answer they heard a crash outside. To know what had happened, read the following chapter.

第七十三回

痴丫头误拾绣春囊　懦小姐不问累金凤

话说那赵姨娘和贾政说话，忽听外面一声响，不知何物。忙问时，原来是外间窗屉不曾扣好，塌了屈戌了吊下来。赵姨娘骂了丫头两句，自己带领丫鬟上好，方进来打发贾政安歇了。不在话下。

却说怡红院中宝玉才睡下，丫鬟们正欲各散安歇，忽听有人击院门。老婆子开了门，见是赵姨娘房内的丫鬟名唤小鹊的。问他什么事，小鹊不答，直往房内来找宝玉。只见宝玉才睡下，晴雯等犹在床边坐着，大家玩笑，见他来了，都问："什么事，这时候又跑了来作什么？"小鹊笑向宝玉道："我来告诉你一个信儿。方才我们奶奶这般如此在老爷前说了。明儿你仔细老爷问你话。"说着回身就走，袭人命留他吃茶，因怕关门，遂一直去了。

这里宝玉听了，便如孙大圣听见了紧箍咒儿一般，登时四肢五内，一齐皆不自在起来。想来想去，别无他策，只理熟了书预备明儿盘考。只书内不舛错，便有他事，也可搪塞一半。想罢，忙披衣起来要读书。心中又自后悔，这些日子只说不提了，偏又丢生，早知该天天好歹温习些。如今打算

Chapter 73

A Foolish Maid by Chance Picks up a Pornographic Pouch
A Timid Young Lady Ignores the Loss of Her Gold Phoenix Tiara

Concubine Zhao's conversation with Jia Zheng was interrupted by a crash outside. Upon inquiry they found that one of the shutters of the outer room, not being properly secured, had clattered to the ground. Concubine Zhao reprimanded the maids and got them to fix it in place, then helped Jia Zheng to bed.

Meanwhile, in Happy Red Court, Baoyu had just gone to bed and his maids were thinking of turning in themselves when someone knocked at the gate. An old woman opened it to admit Xiaoque, a girl working for Concubine Zhao, who would not state her business but went straight in to find Baoyu already in bed, with Qingwen and some other maids sitting chatting beside him.

"What's happened?" they asked. "What brings you here at this hour?"

Addressing herself to Baoyu, Xiaoque announced, "I've got some news for you. Just now my mistress was talking to Lord Zheng and I heard your name. So look out tomorrow if he sends for you."

This said, she turned to leave.

Xiren urged her to stay for some tea, but for fear that the Garden gate would be closed she went off.

Baoyu instantly felt as distraught as Monkey King on hearing the incantation to tighten the magic band around his head.[1] Staggered, he racked his brains but could think of no way out except to cram in readiness for a test the following day. He fancied that if he could give correct answers from his books, other lapses would be overlooked and he might muddle through. Throwing a jacket round his shoulders he got up to study, thinking remorsefully, "I was sure he wouldn't test me these first few days, so I let things slide and got rusty. If I'd known, I'd have done some revising every day."

打算，肚子内现可背诵的，不过只有“学”“庸”“二论”是带注背得出的。至上本《孟子》，就有一半是夹生的，若凭空提一句，断不能接背的；至下《孟子》，就有一大半忘了。算起“五经”来，因近来作诗，常把《诗经》读些，虽不甚精阐，还可塞责。别的虽不记得，素日贾政也未曾吩咐过读的，纵不知，也还不妨。至于古文，这是那几年所读过的几篇，连“左传”、“国策”、“公羊”、“谷梁”、汉、唐等文，不过几十篇，这几年竟未曾温得半篇片语。虽闲时也曾遍阅，不过一时之兴，随看随忘，未曾下苦工夫，如何记得。这是断难塞责的。更有时文八股一道，因平素深恶此道，原非圣贤之制撰，焉能阐发圣贤之微奥，不过是后人饵名钓禄之阶。虽贾政当日起身时，选了百十篇命他读的，不过偶因见其中或一二股内，或承题之中，有做的或精致、或流荡、或游戏、或悲感，稍能动心悦意者，偶一读之，不过供一时之兴趣，究竟何曾成篇潜心玩索。如今若温习这个，又恐明日盘诘那个；若温习那个，又恐盘诘这个。况一夜之功，亦不能全然温习。因此越添了焦躁。自己读书不致紧要，却带累着一房丫鬟们皆不能睡。袭人、麝月、晴雯等几个大的是不用说，在旁剪烛斟茶；那些小的，都困眼朦胧，前仰后合起来。晴雯因骂道：“什么蹄子们，一个个黑日白夜挺尸挺不够，偶然一次睡迟了些，就装出这腔调来了。再这样，我拿针戳给你们两下子！”

Now, the only ones of the *Four Book* he knew by heart together with the commentaries were the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Analects*. His knowledge of the first half of *Mencius* was so sketchy that if suddenly give one sentence from it he would be unable to recite what followed, and the whole of the second half had slipped his mind. When it came to the *Five Classics*, while writing poems himself he had browsed quite often through the *Book of Songs* and if questioned on that should be able to get by. It did not matter that he had forgotten the rest, as his father had never told him to study them. As for classical prose, in the past few years he had read several dozen works including the *Zuo Annals, Anecdotes of the Warring States*, the commentaries of Gongyang and Guliang, and some writings of the Han and Tang dynasties — no more than a few score works in all; but he was quite unable to quote from them, for he had only glanced at them when at a loose end and in the mood. Never having studied them hard, he had since forgotten them and if tested on them now would be floored.

Then there were the fashionable eight-section essays which he had always loathed, taking the view that as these were not written by sages or worthies they could not expound the wisdom of sages or worthies and were simply ladders by which later examination candidates climbed up to bureaucratic advancement. Jia Zheng before his departure had set him over a hundred essays of this kind to study. Baoyu had skipped through these, noting here and there a well-written paragraph or argument or certain digressions, amusing anecdotes or poignant sentiments. But this again was only when the mood took him. He had never given his mind to studying whole essays. If he prepared one now, tomorrow he might be examined on quite another; and it was out of the question to revise the whole lot in one night. These reflections made him more and more frantic.

While Baoyu was dilly-dallying over his studies, none of the girls in his place could go to bed either. It goes without saying that his chief maids Xiren, Sheyue and Qingwen trimmed candles and poured tea for him. The younger ones, however, were all so sleepy that they kept dozing off.

"Little bitches!" Qingwen scolded. "You all sleep like the dead every day — are you so short of sleep that you can't even sit up late for once? If you drowse off again I'll jab you with a needle."

话犹未了，只听外间咕咚一声，急忙看时，原来是一个小丫头子坐着打盹，一头撞到壁上了，从梦中惊醒，恰正是晴雯说话之时，他怔怔的只当是晴雯打了他一下，遂哭央说："好姐姐，我再不敢了。"众人都发起笑来。宝玉忙劝道："饶他去罢，原该叫他们都睡去才是。你们也乏了，该替换着睡去。"袭人忙道："小祖宗，你只顾你的罢。通共这一夜的功夫，你把心暂且用在这几本书上，等过了这关，由你再张罗别的去，也不算误了什么。"宝玉听他说的恳切，只得又读。读了没有几句，麝月又斟了一杯茶来润舌，宝玉接茶吃着。因见麝月只穿着短袄，解了裙子，宝玉道："夜静了，冷，到底穿一件大衣裳才是。"麝月笑指着书道："你暂且把我们忘了，把心且略对着他些罢。"

话犹未了，只听金星玻璃从后房门跑进来，口内喊说："不好了，一个人从墙上跳下来了！"众人听说，忙问在那里，即喝起人来，各处寻找。晴雯因见宝玉读书苦恼，劳费一夜的神思，明日也未必妥当，心下正要替宝玉想出一个主意来脱此难，正好忽逢此惊怪，即便生计，向宝玉道："趁这个机会快装病，只说吓着了。"正中宝玉心怀，因而遂传起上夜人等来，打着灯笼，各处搜寻，并无踪迹，都说："小姑娘们想是睡花了眼出去，想是风摇的树枝儿，错认作人了。"晴雯说："别放狗屁！你们查的不严，怕得不是，还拿

Just then they heard a thump in the outer room and rushing out to look found that one young maid, falling asleep in her chair, had banged her head on the wall. She woke up with a start to hear this scolding and in her dazed state imagined that Qingwen had struck her.

"Good sister," she cried tearfully, "I promise not to do it again!"

The others burst out laughing.

"Don't punish her," put in Baoyu hastily. "You should have sent them all to bed. And you must be tired yourselves. You'd better take it in turns to get some sleep."

"Just get on with your work, Little Ancestor," urged Xiren. "You've only this one night; so give your mind to those books for the time being. You'll have plenty of time once you've passed this test to attend to other things."

As she spoke in such earnest Baoyu had to comply. He went on reading. But presently when Sheyue poured him more tea to moisten his throat, he noticed that she was wearing a short jacket but had taken off her skirt.

"It's cold so late at night," he warned. "You should put on a gown."

With a smile she pointed at his books.

"Just forget us for the moment and concentrate on those."

At this point Venturina dashed in through the back door declaring excitedly that someone had just jumped down from the top of the wall.

"Gracious! Where?" cried the others.

At once they called people out to search everywhere.

Qingwen saw how wearisome Baoyu found this cramming, and knew that if he wore himself out tonight he was likely to make a poor showing the next day. She had been wanting to find some way out for him and this alarm provided her with a pretext.

"Take this chance to sham ill," she advised him. "Just pretend you've had a fright."

Baoyu snatched eagerly at this suggestion.

The matrons on night duty were summoned to search everywhere with lanterns.

When they failed to find anyone they said, "The girls, going out half asleep, must have taken some branches tossed by the wind for a man."

"Stop farting!" retorted Qingwen. "You're trying to shift the blame

这话来支吾。刚才并不是一个人见的，宝玉和我们出去有事，大家亲见的。如今宝玉唬的颜色都变了，满身皆发热，我如今还要上房里取安魂丸药去。太太问起来，是要回明的，难道依你们说就罢了不成。”众人听了，吓的不敢则声，只得又各处去找。晴雯和玻璃二人果出去要药，故意闹的众人皆知宝玉着了惊吓病了。王夫人听了，忙命人来看视给药，又吩咐各上夜人仔细搜查，又一面叫查二门外邻园墙上夜的小厮们。于是园内灯笼火把，直闹了一夜。至五更天，就传管家男女，命仔细访查，拷问内外上夜男女人等。

贾母闻知宝玉被吓，细问原由，不敢再隐，只得回明。贾母道：“我料到必有此事。如今各处上夜都不小心，还是小事，只怕他们就是贼也未可知。”当下邢夫人并尤氏等都过来请安，凤姐及李纨姊妹等皆陪侍，听贾母如此说，都默无所答。独探春出位笑道：“近因凤姐姐身子不好，几日园内的人比先放肆了许多。先前不过是大家偷着一时半刻，或夜里坐更时，三四个人聚在一处，或掷骰或斗牌，小小的玩意，不过为熬困。近来渐次放诞，竟开了赌局，甚至有头家局主，或三十吊、五十吊、一百吊的大输赢。半月前竟有争斗相打之事。”贾母忙说：“你既知道，为何不早回我们来？”探春道：“我因想着太太事多，且连日不自在，凤姐又病着，所以没回。只告诉了大嫂子和管事的人们，戒饬过几次，近

for not making a proper search. More than one person saw someone break in. Some of us had gone out with Baoyu, and we all saw it. It gave him such a fright that he turned white and now he's feverish. I'm going to the mistress to get a sedative for him, and when she asks what's happened I'll have to report it in full. So how can you give up searching?"

At this the matrons dared not raise any further objections. They made a more thorough search while Qingwen and Venturina went off to fetch medicine, loudly spreading the news that Baoyu had fallen ill as a result of a shock. At once Lady Wang sent some of her own attendants to give him medicine, besides ordering those on night duty to search every nook and cranny of the Garden and check on the men on duty at the inner gate outside it. So they ransacked the Garden all night with lanterns and torches, and when dawn came the stewards were instructed to make careful investigations. They questioned all the matrons and men-servants who had been on night duty.

When the Lady Dowager heard of Baoyu's fright and asked the reason they dared not hide it from her.

"I guessed as much," said the old lady. "It shows how careless they are on the night watch nowadays. And what's more serious is that some of them may even be thieves themselves. You can never tell."

Lady Xing and Madam You had come over to pay their respects and were waiting on her with Xifeng, Li Wan and the girls. They all remained silent after this remark until Tanchun stepped forward.

"It's true that with Cousin Xifeng unwell the servants in the Garden have become much more disorderly," she said. "At first, they used to gather in threes or fours to dice or play cards for small stakes in their spare time, or to keep themselves awake when on night duty. But recently they've grown bolder. They've actually formed gambling clubs with someone acting as banker, and the stakes are as high as thirty, fifty or a hundred strings of cash. A fortnight ago they even started a fight."

"If you knew this why didn't you report it before?" demanded the old lady.

"As Her Ladyship was busy and out of sorts and Cousin Xifeng was ill, I just told my sister-in-law and the stewardesses. I also reprimanded

日好些。”贾母忙道:“你姑娘家，如何知道这里头的利害。你自为要钱常事，不过怕起争端。殊不知夜间既要钱，就保不住不吃酒；既吃酒，再保不住门户任意开锁。或买东西，寻张觅李，其中夜静人稀，趋便藏贼引盗，何等事作不出来。况且园内你姊妹们起居相伴皆系丫头、媳妇们，贤愚混杂，贼盗事小，再有别事，倘略沾带了，关系不小。这事岂可轻恕。”探春听说，便默然归坐。凤姐虽未大愈，精神比素常稍加，今见贾母如此说，便忙道:“偏生我又病了。”遂回头命人速传林之孝家的等总理家事四个媳妇到来，当着贾母申饬了一顿。贾母命即刻查了头家赌家来，有人出首者赏，隐情不告者罚。

林之孝家的等见贾母动怒，谁敢徇私，忙至园内传齐人，一一盘查。虽不免大家赖一回，终不免水落石出。查得大头家三人，小头家八人，聚赌者通共二十多人，都带来见贾母，跪在院内磕头求饶。贾母先问大头家名姓和钱之多少。原来这三个大头家，一个就是林之孝的两姨亲家，一个就是园内厨房内柳家媳妇之妹，一个就是迎春之乳母。这是三个为首的，余者不能多记。贾母便命将骰子牌一并烧毁，所有的钱入官分散与众人，将为首者每人四十大板，撵出，

the servants several times, and lately they've behaved better."

"You unmarried young girls can't be expected to know how serious this is. To *you* gambling is nothing much; you're only afraid that it may lead to quarrels. But this gambling night after night leads to drinking and unlocking the gates to buy this, that and the other or send to look for someone. At the dead of night when few people are about, thieves may hide themselves there and debauchees and bandits can easily be smuggled in, and then *anything* could happen! Besides, in those places where you girls live in the Garden the maids are a mixed lot, some good and some bad. Pilfering isn't of much consequence, but if worse trouble came of it there could be a scandal! This isn't something we can pass over lightly."

After this harangue Tanchun resumed her seat in silence.

Xifeng, though not fully recovered, was feeling a little better today. Having heard what the old lady said, she remarked, "It's too bad my falling ill again at this time."

She sent at once to summon Lin Zhixiao's wife and three other stewardesses in charge of the maids and reprimanded them in the presence of the Lady Dowager, who ordered them to fetch the culprits forthwith, promising rewards to those who voluntarily gave information and threatening to punish any who withheld it. Seeing how angry she was, Mrs. Lin and the others dared not shelter their friends. They hurried to the Garden to summon and question all the servants in turn. Though at first everyone denied ever having gambled, in the end inevitably they arrived at the truth; there were three main bankers, eight minor ones, and more than twenty people involved in the gaming.

Haled before the Lady Dowager they all knelt down in the courtyard, kowtowing to beg for mercy. First she ascertained the names of the chief bankers and the sums of money involved. One was no other than a relative of Lin Zhixiao; another was the younger sister of Mrs. Lin the cook in the Garden; the third was Yingchun's nurse. These three were the ring-leaders. The rest need not be enumerated here. The Lady Dowager ordered all the dice and cards to be burned and all the winnings confiscated and distributed among the other servants. The chief culprits were given forty strokes of the bastinado apiece then dismissed from service, with orders never to set foot there again. Their followers received twenty

总不许再入；从者每人二十大板，革去三月月钱，贬入坑厕行内。又将林之孝家的申饬了一番。林之孝家的见他的亲戚又与他打嘴，自己也觉没趣。迎春在坐，也觉没意思。黛玉、宝钗、探春等见迎春的乳母如此，也是物伤其类的意思。遂都起身笑着向贾母讨情说："这个妈妈素日原不玩的，不知怎么今日也偶然高兴。求看二姐姐面上，饶他这次罢。"贾母道："你们不知。大约这些奶子们，一个个仗着奶过哥儿姐儿，原比别人有些体面，他们就生事，比别人更可恶，专管调唆主子护短偏向。我都是经过的。况且要拿一个作法子，恰好果然就遇见了一个。你们别管，我自有道理。"宝钗等听说，只得罢了。

一时贾母歇响，大家散出，都知贾母今日生气，皆不敢各散回家，只得在此暂候。尤氏便往凤姐处来闲话了一回，因他也不自在，只得园内寻众姑嫂闲谈。邢夫人在王夫人处坐了一回，也就往园内散散心来。刚至园门前，只见贾母房内的小丫头子名唤傻大姐的笑嘻嘻走来，手内拿着个花红柳绿的东西，低头一壁瞧着，一壁只管走，不防迎头撞见邢夫人，抬头看见，方才站住。邢夫人因说："这痴丫头，又得了个什么狗不识儿这么欢喜？拿来我瞧瞧。"原来这傻大姐年方十四五岁，是新挑上来的与贾母这边提水桶扫院子，专作粗活的一个丫头。只因他生得体肥面阔，两只大脚作粗活简捷爽利，且心性愚玩，一无知识，行事出言，常在规矩之外。贾母因喜欢他爽利便捷，又喜他出言可以发笑，便起名为"呆大姐"，发闷时便引他取笑，毫无避忌，因此又叫他作"痴丫头"。他纵有失礼之处，见贾母喜欢他，众人也就

strokes apiece, were fined three months' wages and demoted to clean the privies. Lin Zhixiao's wife was also reprimanded.

Her relative's disgrace mortified Mrs. Lin, and Yingchun too was embarrassed. Daiyu, Baochai and Tanchun sympathizing with her rose to beg the old lady to forgive her nurse.

"That nanny never used to gamble," they pleaded. "She must have been drawn in accidentally. Do let her off for Cousin Yingchun's sake."

"You don't understand," said the Lady Dowager. "Those nannies are privileged because they nursed you. As a result they're worse than anyone else when it comes to making trouble, setting their mistresses against each other and covering up the faults of their favourites. I've experience enough of that. I've been meaning to make an example of one of them and now, luckily, she's presented me with the chance. So don't interfere. I know what I'm doing."

Then Baochai and the others could say no more.

Presently the old lady lay down to have a nap and the others withdrew; but knowing how angry she was they did not go straight home. Madam You chatted for a while in Xifeng's place, and when Xifeng looked tired she left to pass the time with the girls in the Garden. Lady Xing after sitting a little with Lady Wang decided to take a stroll in the Garden too. She had just reached the gate when Sister Numskull, one of the Lady Dowager's maids, came along chortling to herself over some gaudy object in her hands, and as her head was lowered bumped into Lady Xing. She looked up then and halted.

"What outlandish toy have you got there that you're so pleased, silly creature?" asked Lady Xing. "Let me see it."

This Sister Numskull, who was fourteen or fifteen, had recently been chosen to do rough jobs — fetching water or sweeping the yard — for the Lady Dowager. She was plump with a round face and big feet, a good, fast worker. And being ignorant and simple-minded she behaved and talked quite unconventionally. Since the old lady liked her rough-and-ready ways and her ability to make people laugh, she gave her the nickname Numskull and when she felt bored would make fun of her, letting her behave in any way she liked. For this reason she also called Numskull her crazy maid. So when the girl did anything wrong no one took her to

不去责备。这丫头也得了这个力，若贾母不唤他时，便入园内来玩耍。今日正在园内掏促织，忽在山石背后得了一个五彩绣香囊，其华丽精致，固是可爱，但上面绣的并非花鸟等物，一面却是两个人赤条条的盘踞相抱，一面是几个字。这痴丫头原不认得是春意，便心下盘算："敢是两个妖精打架？不然必是两口子相打。"左右猜解不来，正要拿去与贾母看，是以笑嘻嘻的一壁看，一壁走，忽见了邢夫人如此说，便笑道："太太真个说的巧，真个是狗不识呢。太太请瞧一瞧。"说着，便送过去。邢夫人接来一看，吓得连忙死紧攥住，忙问："你是那里得的？"傻大姐道："我掏促织，忽在山石背后拣了这个。"邢夫人道："快休告诉人。这不是好东西，连你也要打死。皆因你素日是傻子，以后再别提起了。"这傻大姐听了，反吓的白了脸，说："再不敢了。"磕了个头，呆呆而去。邢夫人回头看时，都是些女孩儿，不便递与，自己便塞在袖里，心内十分罕异，揣摩此物从何而至，且不形于声色。且来至迎春室中。

迎春正因他乳母获罪，自觉无趣，心中不自在，忽报母亲来了，遂接入内室。奉茶毕，邢夫人因说道："你这么大了，你那奶妈子行此事，你也不说说他。如今别人都好好的，偏咱们的人做出这事来，什么意思。"迎春低首弄衣带，半晌答道："我说他两次，他不听也无法。况且他是妈妈，只有他说我的，没有我说他的。"邢夫人道："胡说！你

task for it, knowing the old lady's partiality to her. And this emboldened her when she was free to go and play in the Garden.

Today she had been catching crickets there when she saw behind a rock a gaily embroidered sachet. It was exquisitely made and very charming, but on it in place of the usual flowers or birds were two naked figures locked in embrace, and on the other side some characters.

Not knowing that this was pornography the silly girl wondered,"Are these two monsters fighting? Or maybe a husband and wife tussling together?" Unable to make it out she had started back, chuckling to herself, to show it to the Lady Dowager. In reply to Lady Xing's question she said:

"Yes, this really is very strange, madam. Do have a look." She handed her the pouch.

One glance at it so horrified Lady Xing that she clutched it tight.

"Where did you find this?"

"Behind a rock when I was catching crickets."

"Mind you don't tell anybody! It's something very wicked. You'd be beaten to death for picking it up if you weren't such a fool. But you mustn't mention it to anyone else."

Numskull turned pale with fright.

"I won't!" she promised, then kowtowed several times and went off quite bewildered.

Lady Xing looked round and saw some girls about. She stuffed the pouch into her sleeve to conceal it from them, wondering where it could have come from, then hiding her consternation went on to see Yingchun.

Yingchun was vexed and depressed by her nurse's disgrace. When Lady Xing was announced she invited her in and tea was served.

"You're no longer a child," scolded Lady Xing. "Why didn't you take your nurse to task for carrying on in that way? Other people's servants don't misbehave, only ours — how do you account for that?"

Yingchun lowered her head to play with her sash.

"I did speak to her twice but she paid no attention," she muttered after a pause. "What more could I do? Besides, she's my nanny. It's for *her* to scold *me*, not for me to speak sharply to *her*."

"Nonsense. If you do wrong, of course she should pull you up; but

不好了他原该说，如今他犯了法，你就该拿出小姐的身分来。他敢不从，你就回我去才是。如今直等外人共知，这是什么意思。再者，只他去放头儿，还恐怕他巧言花语借簪环衣服作本，你这心活面软的，未必不周济他些。若被他骗去，我是一个钱没有的，看你明日怎么过节。”迎春不语，只低头弄衣带。邢夫人见他这般，因冷笑道：“总是你那好哥哥好嫂子，一对儿赫赫扬扬，琏二爷凤奶奶，两口子遮天盖日，百事周到，竟通共这一个妹子，全不在意。但凡是我身上掉下来的，又有一话说，——只好凭他们罢了。况且你又不是我养的，你虽不是同他一娘所生，到底是同出一父，也该彼此瞻顾些，也免别人笑话。我想天下的事也难较定，你是大老爷跟前的人养的，这里探丫头也是二老爷跟前的人养的，出身一样。如今你娘死了，从前看来你两个的娘，只有你娘比如今赵姨娘强十倍的，你该比探丫头强才是。怎么反不及他一半！谁知竟不然，这可不是异事。倒是我一生无儿无女的，一生干净，也不能惹人笑话议论为高。”旁边伺候的媳妇们便趁机道：“我们的姑娘老实仁德，那里像他们三姑娘伶牙俐齿，会要姊妹们的强。他们明知姐姐这样，他竟不照顾一点儿。”邢夫人道：“连他哥哥嫂子还如是，别人又作什么呢。”一言未了，人回：“琏二奶奶来了。”邢夫人听了，冷笑两声，命人出去说：“请他自去养病，我这里不用他伺候。”接着又有探事的小丫头来报说：“老太太醒了。”邢夫人方起身前边来。迎春送至院外方回。

when she breaks the rules like this you should assert your authority as mistress. If she wouldn't obey you, why not report it to me? Once outsiders hear about this what fools we shall look!"

"Another thing, to raise money for her bank I daresay she wheedled you, soft and spineless as you are, into lending her some trinkets and clothes to pawn. If she's swindled you I haven't a cent to help you redeem your trinkets and clothes for the coming festival."

Yingchun, her head lowered, just fingered her clothes in silence.

Lady Xing laughed scornfully.

"Your fine brother and sister-in-law, Master Lian and Madam Lian, are high and mighty. They control this household and run everything but pay no attention to you, their only younger sister. If you were a child of my own and discriminated against, there'd be nothing we could do about it. Yet you're not my own child. But even though you and Lian didn't have the same mother, at least you have the same father; so he ought to show a little consideration instead of making people laugh at you.

"It's a mystery to me the way things turn out. Your mother was Lord She's concubine, Tanchun's mother Lord Zheng's concubine, and by rights you two should have the same status. When your mother was alive she was ten times better than Concubine Zhao, so you should be superior to Tanchun. How come, then, you're not half as good? Isn't it strange? Well, I'm thankful I've no children of my own to make a laughing-stock of me."

Some servants waiting on them interposed, "Our young lady's good-hearted and honest, not like Miss Tanchun who talks so glibly and likes to score off her cousins. She knows very well how it is with our young mistress but never shows the least concern for her."

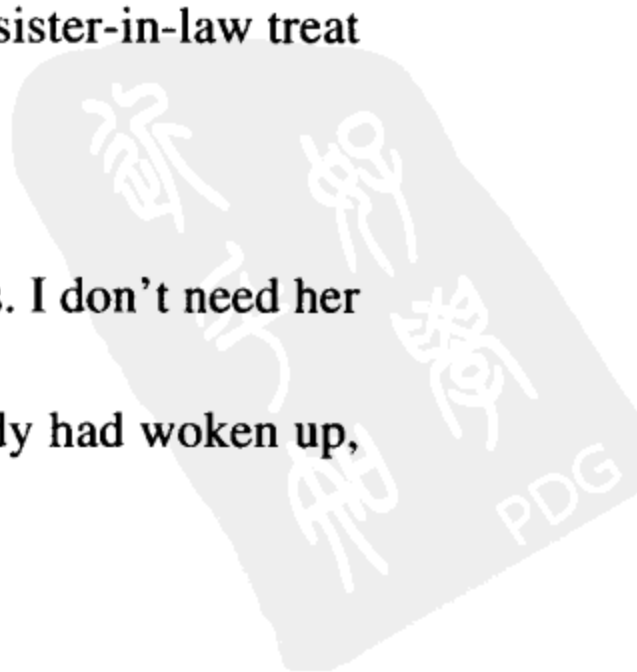
"What can you expect when her own brother and sister-in-law treat her like that?"

Just then the arrival of Xifeng was announced.

Lady Xing snorted.

"Ask her to go back and rest to get over her illness. I don't need her services here."

Then another maid came to report that the old lady had woken up, whereupon Lady Xing took her leave.



绣桔因说道："如何，前儿我回姑娘，那一个攒珠累丝金凤竟不知那里去了。回了姑娘，姑娘竟不问一声儿。我说必是老奶奶拿去当了放头儿的，姑娘不信，只说司棋收着呢。叫问司棋，司棋虽病着，心里却明白。我去问他，他说没有收起来，还在书架上匣内暂放着，预备八月十五恐怕要戴呢。姑娘就该问老奶奶一声，只是脸软怕人恼。如今正无着落，明儿要都戴时，独咱们不戴，是何意思呢。"迎春道："何用问，自然是他拿去暂时借一肩儿。我只说他悄悄的拿了出去，不过一时半晌，仍旧悄悄的送来就完了，谁知他就忘记了。今日偏又闹出事来，问他想也无益。"绣桔道："他何曾是忘记！他是试准了姑娘的性格，所以才这样。如今我有了主意：我竟走到二奶奶房里将此事回了他，或他着人去要，或他省事拿几个钱来替他赔补，如何？"迎春忙道："罢，罢，省些事罢。宁可没有了，又何必生事。"绣桔道："姑娘怎么这样软弱。都要省起事来，将来连姑娘还骗了去呢。我竟去的是。"说着便走。迎春便不言语，只好由他。

谁知迎春乳母子媳王住儿的媳妇正因他婆婆得了罪，来求迎春去讨情，听他们正说金凤一事，且不进去。也因素日迎春懦弱，他们都不放在心上。如今见绣桔立意去回凤姐，估量这事脱不去了，且又有求迎春之事，只得进来，陪笑先向绣桔说："姑娘，你别去生事。姑娘的金凤，原是我们老奶奶老糊涂了，输了几个钱，没的捞梢，所以暂借了去。原说一日半晌就赎的，因总未捞过本来，就迟误了。可巧今儿又

"Now what's to be done?" asked Xiuju when Yingchun came back from seeing off Lady Xing. "The other day I told you, miss, that gold filigree phoenix tiara inlaid with pearls was missing, but you wouldn't even ask what had happened to it. When I said nanny must have pawned it to raise money for gambling, you didn't believe me and told us to ask Siqi where she had put it. I did. And though she was ill she remembered quite distinctly that it hadn't been put away but left in a case on the bookshelf for you to wear during the Moon Festival. You should have asked nanny about it, only you're too soft and afraid of offending people. Now it's missing, won't it look odd if you're the only young lady not wearing one tomorrow?"

"There was no need to ask," said Yingchun. "Of course she took it to tide her over. I thought she'd smuggled it out and would smuggle it back again in a day or two, but apparently she forgot. It's no use asking her now that she's in trouble."

"How could she have forgotten? She knows you too well and was simply taking advantage of you, miss. I've just had an idea. Why not let me go and report this to Madam Lian? She can either send to demand it back or just get it out of hock for her with a few strings of cash. What do you think?"

"Don't do that," demurred Yingchun hastily. "Let's not make any fuss. I'd rather lose it than stir up more trouble."

"How can you be so soft, miss?" protested Xiuju. "If you'll never stand up for your rights, some day you'll be spirited away yourself! Better let me go." She started off and Yingchun had no way to stop her.

Now the wife of Wang Zhu the old nurse's son had come to beg Yingchun to intercede for her mother-in-law, but she stayed outside when she heard this talk about the gold phoenix tiara. Yingchun was so weak that none of the servants were afraid of her. If Xiuju reported this to Xifeng, however, it would be serious. So Mrs. Wang came in, with an ingratiating smile, to make her appeal.

First she begged Xiuju,"Please don't go, miss, to stir up trouble. My mother-in-law, being old and muddle-headed, borrowed your young lady's phoenix tiara because she'd lost some money and had no means of winning it back. She meant to redeem it in a day or two, but she didn't

不知是谁走了风声，弄出事来。虽然这样，到底是主子的东西，我们不敢迟误下，终久是要赎的。如今还要求姑娘看从小儿吃奶的情分，往老太太那边去讨个情面，救出他老人家来才好。”迎春先便说道:“好嫂子，你趁早打了这妄想，要等我去说情，等到明年也不中用的。方才连宝姐姐、林妹妹大伙儿说情，老太太还不依，何况是我一个人。我自己愧还愧不过来，反去讨臊。”绣桔便说:“赎金凤是一件，说情是一件，别绞在一处说。难道姑娘不去说情，你就不赎了不成?嫂子且取了金凤来再说。”王住儿家的听见迎春如此拒绝他，绣桔的话又锋利无可回答，一时脸上过不去，也明欺迎春素日好性，乃向绣桔发话道:“姑娘，你别太仗势了。你满家子算一算，谁的妈妈奶奶不仗着主子哥儿姐儿多得些益，偏咱们就这样丁是丁卯是卯的，只许你们偷偷摸摸的哄骗了去。自从那邢姑娘来了，太太吩咐一个月俭省出一两银子来与舅太太去，这里饶添了邢姑娘的使费，反少了一两银子。常时短了这个，少了那个，不是我们供给，谁又要去?不过大家将就些罢了。算到今日，少说些也有三十两了。我们这一项钱，岂不白填了眼呢。”绣桔不待说完，便啐了一口，道:“作什么白填了三十两，我且和你算一算，姑娘要了些什么东西?”迎春听见这媳妇发邢夫人之私意，忙止道:“罢，罢，你不能拿了金凤来，不必牵三扯四乱嚷。我也不要那凤了。便是太太们问时，我只说丢了，也妨碍不着你什么的，出去歇息歇息倒好。”一面叫绣桔倒茶来。绣桔又气又急，

recoup her losses and that delayed her. Then, as ill luck would have it, someone told tales and landed her in trouble. Still, we can't keep something belonging to your mistress. We'll redeem it without fail." She turned to Yingchun. "Do us a favour, miss. As she nursed you at her breast when you were small, go and ask the old lady to let your old nanny off."

"It's out of the question, sister," replied Yingchun. "Even if I pleaded for a year it wouldn't be any use. Just now Cousin Baochai, Cousin Daiyu and the other girls tried to beg her off, but the old lady wouldn't hear of it. How much more could I do alone? Besides I've been humiliated enough. Why should I go asking for another snub?"

Xiuju put in, "Redeeming the tiara and asking a favour are two quite different things. Don't mix them up. Or do you mean you won't give it back if our young lady doesn't get her off? Go and fetch the tiara first."

Yingchun's refusal and Xiuju's taunt left Wang Zhu's wife at a momentary loss. Then, in her mortification, she took advantage of Yingchun's good temper to round on her maid.

"Don't be so smug, miss!" she cried. "In all the different young masters' and mistresses' households, which nurse or nanny doesn't get certain perks. Why expect *us* to be so scrupulous? Are you maids the only ones allowed to filch things on the sly? After Lady Xing's niece came here, Her Ladyship ordered us to save one tael of silver a month for her sister-in-law; so here we are spending more on Miss Xiuyan while getting one tael less. And when you're short of this or that we have to provide it. Who goes to ask for more money? We just make do somehow. We're out of pocket by at least thirty taels. Now it seems we've been spending our money all for nothing..."

Not waiting for her to finish, Xiuju spat in disgust.

"On what have you spent thirty taels for us? Let's work it out. What has our young lady asked you for?"

As the woman had cast aspersions on Lady Xing. Yingchun hastily interrupted, "That's enough. If you can't produce my tirara, at least don't drag in other things and raise this rumpus. I don't want that tiara. If Their Ladyships ask about it I'll tell them I've lost it, so as not to involve you. Better go back and rest now." She told Xiuju to bring her some tea.

因说道："姑娘虽不怕，我们是作什么的，把姑娘的东西丢了。他倒赖说姑娘使了他们的钱，这如今竟要准折起来。倘或太太问姑娘为什么使了这些钱，敢是我们就中取势了？这还了得！"一行说，一行就哭了。司棋听不过，只得勉强过来，帮着绣桔问着那媳妇。迎春劝止不住，自拿了一本《太上感应篇》去看。

三人正没开交，可巧宝钗、宝琴、黛玉、探春等因恐迎春今日不自在，都约来安慰他。走至院中，听得两三个人较口。探春从纱窗内一看，只见迎春倚在床上看书，若有不闻之状。探春也笑了。小丫鬟们忙打起帘子，报道："姑娘们来了。"迎春方放下书起身。那媳妇见有人来，且又有探春在内，不劝而自止了，遂趁便要走。探春坐下，便问："刚才谁在这里说话？倒像拌嘴似的。"迎春笑道："没有说什么，左不过是他们小题大作罢了。何必问他。"探春笑道："我才听见什么'金凤'，又是什么'没有钱只和我们奴才要'，谁和奴才要钱了？难道姐姐和奴才要钱了不成？难道姐姐不是和我们一样有月钱的，一样的用度不成？"司棋、绣桔道："姑娘说的是了。姑娘们都是一样的，那一位姑娘的钱不是由着奶奶妈妈们使，连我们也不知道怎样是算账，不过是要东西只说得一声儿。如今他偏要说姑娘使过了头儿，他赔出许多来。究竟姑娘何曾和他要什么了。"探春笑道："姐姐既没有和他要，必定是我们或者和他们要了不成！你叫他进来，我倒要问问他。"迎春笑道："这话又可笑。你们又无沾碍，何得带累于他。"探春道："这倒不然。我和姐姐一样，姐姐的

Instead the girl exploded, "You may not mind, miss, but how about us who are supposed to be looking after you? After filching your things they even accuse you of sponging on them and want their money back! If Her Ladyship asks you why and how so much was spent, people may think we've been squeezing you! That would be dreadful!" She burst into tears.

Siqi could not let this pass either and dragged herself out of bed to take Xiuju's side. Unable to stop their dispute, Yingchun picked up *Retribution for Good and Evil* and started reading it.

It so happened that Baochai, Daiyu, Baoqin and Tanchun had agreed to come together to cheer Yingchun up, guessing that she must be moping. They reached the courtyard as the three servants were squabbling. And Tanchun peeping through the window was amused to see Yingchun sitting on the couch reading, oblivious of the row. A small maid hastily raised the portiére and announced the young ladies' arrival. Yingchun put down her book and got up while Mrs. Wang, seeing Tanchun among the visitors, quieted down of her own accord and prepared to slip out.

Tanchun sat down and asked, "Who were talking in here just now? It sounded like a quarrel."

"Not really," Yingchun told her. "They were making a mountain out of a molehill. It's nothing to worry about."

Tanchun smiled.

"I heard something about a gold phoenix and 'sponging on us servants.' Who's been asking the servants for money? Have you, cousin? Don't you get your monthly allowance just like the rest of us?"

"Of course she does," cried Siqi and Xiuju. "All the young mistresses get the same and their nurses and nannies make free with their money, never keeping any account, just asking for what they need. But now she claims that our young lady overspent and they had to make it up. When did our mistress ever ask them for anything?"

"If my cousin hasn't, they must mean we have. Call her in. I want to get this clear."

"Don't be ridiculous," protested Yingchun. "This doesn't concern you, so why involve yourself with her?"

"That's not so," retorted Tanchun. "We're in the same boat, cousin,

事和我的事也是一般，他说姐姐即是说我。我那边的人有抱怨我的，姐姐听见也即同怨姐姐是一理。咱们是主子，自然不理论那些钱财小事，只知想起什么要什么，也是有的事。但不知累丝金凤因何又夹在里头?”那王住儿媳妇生恐绣桔等告出他来，遂忙进来用话掩饰。探春深知其意，因笑道：“你们所以糊涂。如今你奶奶既得了不是，趁此求二奶奶，把方才的钱尚未散人的拿出些来赎了就完了。比不得没闹出来，大家都藏着留脸面；如今既是没了脸，趁此时纵有十分罪，也只一人受去，没有砍两颗头的理。你依我，竟是和二奶奶说去。在这里大声小气，如何使得?”这媳妇被探春说出真病，也无可赖了，只不敢往凤姐处去自首。探春笑道：“我不听见便罢，既听见，少不得替你们分解分解。”谁知探春早使个眼色与待书，待书出去。

这里正说话，忽见平儿进来。宝琴拍手笑道：“三姐姐敢是有驱神遣将的符术?”黛玉笑道：“这倒不是道家玄术，倒是用兵最精的，所谓‘守如处女，脱如狡兔’，出其不备之妙策也。”二人取笑。宝钗便使眼色与二人，令其不可，遂以别话岔开。探春见平儿来了，遂问：“你奶奶可好些了?真是病糊涂了，事事都不在心上，叫我们受这样的委屈。”平儿忙道：“姑娘怎么委屈?谁敢给姑娘气受，姑娘快吩咐我。”当时住儿媳妇慌了手脚，遂上来赶着平儿叫“姑娘坐下，让我说原故请听。”平儿正色道：“姑娘这里说话，也有你混插口的理?你但凡知礼，只该在外头伺候。不叫你，进

so your business is mine too. If she's rude to you, she's rude to me as well. You'd feel the same if you heard someone in my place complaining about me. Of course, as mistresses we don't worry about trifling expenses, just ask for whatever we want — yes, that does happen. But what was that about your gold phoenix tiara?"

Wang Zhu's wife hurried in now to defend herself before Xiuju and Siqi could accuse her. And Tanchun seeing this smiled.

"How stupid you are!" she sneered. "As your mother-in-law's in trouble you should beg Madam Lian to redeem the tiara with some of the winnings still left, to settle the matter. It's not as if we don't know about this, so we could have covered it up to save her face. Since she's already lost face, whatever crimes she's charged with she can only be punished once — nobody has two heads to be chopped off. So if I were you I'd appeal to Madam Lian. It's outrageous to make a scene here."

The woman could not deny the truth of this, but she dared not go to confess the theft to Xifeng.

"If I hadn't heard about it that would be different," Tanchun continued. "But now that I know about this I shall have to help you out."

She signalled to Shishu, who slipped out of the room. And the others went on talking until suddenly Pinger came in.

"Cousin Tanchun must have magic powers," giggled Baoqin clapping her hands. "She can summon goddesses."

"This isn't Taoist magic," Daiyu chuckled. "It's the first rate military tactic called 'guarded as a virgin, swift as a hare' to catch your opponent off guard."

Baochai shot them a warning glance and they dropped the subject.

"Is your mistress any better?" Tanchun asked Pinger. "Her illness has really made her lose her wits. She's let everything slide, and we're the ones who suffer."

"What do you mean, miss?" asked Pinger hastily. "Tell me who's dared to offend you."

Wang Zhu's wife stepped forward, very flustered, to urge her, "Please take a seat, miss, and let me explain."

"Who are you to butt in when the young ladies are talking?" demanded Pinger sternly. "If you had any manners, you'd wait outside till

不来的。几时有外头的媳妇子们无故到姑娘房里来的例呢。”绣桔道:“你不知我们这房里是没礼的，谁爱来就来。”平儿道:“都是你们的不是。姑娘好性儿，你们就该打出去，然后再回太太去才是。”王住儿媳妇见平儿出了言，红了脸方退出去。探春接着道:“我且告诉你，若是别人得罪了我，倒还罢了。如今那住儿媳妇和他婆婆仗着是妈妈，又瞅着二姐姐好性儿，如此这般私自拿了首饰去赌钱，而且还捏造假账折算，威逼着还要去讨情，和这两个丫头在卧房里大嚷大叫。二姐姐竟不能辖治，所以我看不过，才请你来问一声：还是他原是天外的人，不知道理?还是谁主使他如此，先把二姐姐制伏，然后就治伏我并四姑娘了?”平儿忙陪笑道:“姑娘怎么今日说这话出来?我们奶奶如何当得起!”探春冷笑道:“俗语说的，‘物伤其类’，‘齿竭唇亡’，我自然有些惊心。”平儿道:“若论此事，还不是大事，极好处置。但他现是姑娘的奶嫂，据姑娘怎么样为是?”当下迎春只和宝钗阅“感应篇”,究竟连探春之语亦不曾闻得，忽见平儿如此说，乃笑道:“问我，我也没什么法子。他们的不是，自作自受，我也不能讨情，我也不去苛责就是了。至于私自拿去的东西，送来我收下，不送来我也不要了。太太们要问，我若能隐瞒、遮饰过去，是他的造化；若瞒不住，我

you were sent for. It's unheard of for servants from outside to enter the young ladies' rooms without any reason."

"You should know we have no manners here," put in Xiuju. "People barge in whenever they please."

"That's your fault," retorted Pinger. "Your young lady is good-natured, but you should put people out and then report them to Her Ladyship."

Seeing that Pinger was red in the face with anger, Mrs. Wang finally withdrew.

Tanchun resumed, "Let me tell you: if anyone else offended me I'd not make an issue of it. But this woman and her mother-in-law, because Yingchun's so sweet-tempered and she's her nanny, smuggled out her trinkets so that she could gamble and then cooked up a false account to blackmail Yingchun into getting her off. Wang Zhu's wife had a big row with these two maids in the bedroom, and Yingchun couldn't control her. It was too much for me: that's why I asked you over. Tell me, has that woman, coming from another planet, no sense at all? Or has someone put her up to this to get Yingchun to knuckle under first, and after that Xichun and me?"

"What an idea, miss!" declared Pinger with a smile. "How could our mistress stand up to such a charge?"

Tanchun smiled cynically.

"As the proverb says, 'Everyone feels for his fellow creatures.' And 'When the lips are gone the teeth will feel the cold.' How can I help being alarmed?"

Pinger asked Yingchun, "What's your opinion, miss? A little business like this is easy to handle, but she's your nanny's daughter-in-law after all."

Yingchun, reading *Retribution for Good and Evil* with Baochai, had not even heard what Tanchun was saying.

"Why ask me?" she replied. "There's nothing I can do. They brought this on themselves. I can't get them off but I shan't blame them either. If they bring back the tiara I'll take it; if not I won't demand it. If the mistresses ask about it and I'm able to cover up for them, they'll be in luck; if I can't, there's no more I can do. I can't lie to the mistresses for

也没法，没有个为他们反欺枉太太们的理，少不得直说。你们若说我好性儿，没个决断，竟有个好主意可以八面周全，不使太太们生气，任凭你们处治，我总不知道。”众人听了，都好笑起来。黛玉笑道：“真是‘虎狼屯于阶陛，尚谈因果’。若使二姐姐是个男人，这一家上下许多人，又如何裁治他们。”迎春笑道：“正是。多少男人尚如此，何况我哉。”一语未了，只见一人进来。不知是谁，且听下回分解。

their sake — I have to tell the truth. If you say I'm too soft and can't make up my mind, while you have a good plan to please all parties without annoying the mistresses, just go ahead with it — I don't need to know it."

This answer amused them all.

Daiyu chuckled, "This is really a case of 'descanting upon religion while tigers and wolves gather at one's gate.' What would happen to this household if you were a man and had to keep it in order?"

"Many men are the same, so why laugh at me?" answered Yingchun.

As she was speaking a new arrival walked in. If you want to know who it was read the following chapter.

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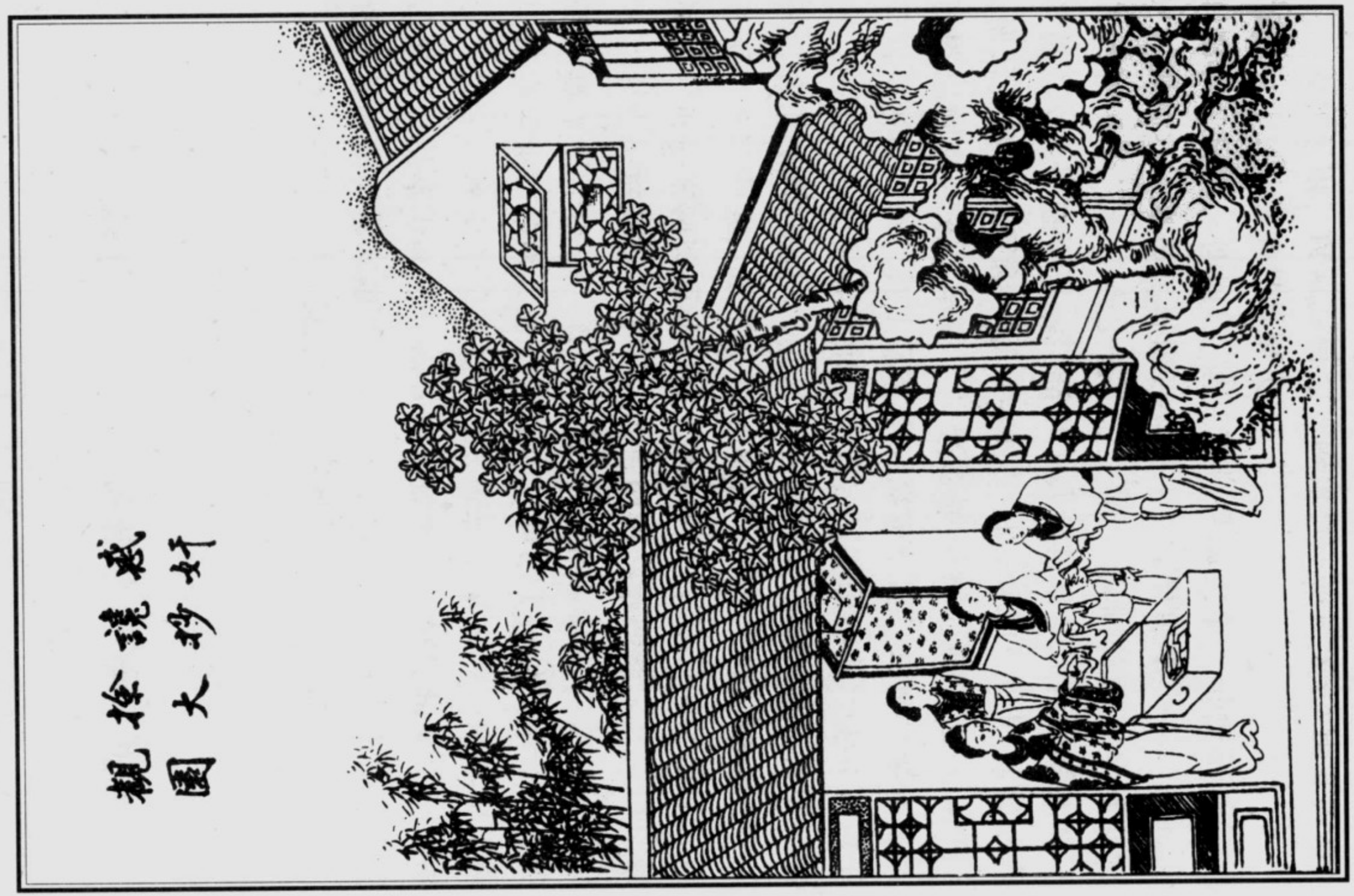
觀梅遣戚
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第七十四回

惑奸谗抄检大观园　矢孤介杜绝宁国府

话说平儿听了迎春之言，正自好笑。忽见宝玉也来了。原来管厨房的柳家媳妇之妹，也因放头开赌得了不是。这园中有素与柳家不睦的，便又告出柳家来，说他和他妹子是伙计，虽然他妹子出名，其实赚了钱两个人平分。因此凤姐要治柳家之罪。那柳家的得了此信，便慌了手脚，因思素日与怡红院人最为深厚，故走来悄悄的央求晴雯、金星玻璃等人。金星玻璃告诉了宝玉。宝玉因思内中迎春之乳母也现有此罪，不若来约同迎春讨情，比自己独去单为柳家说情又更妥当，故此前来。忽见许多人在此，见他来时，都问："你的病可好了?跑来作什么?"宝玉不便说出讨情一事，只说："来看二姐姐。"当下众人也不在意，且说些闲话。平儿便出去办累丝金凤一事，那王住儿媳妇紧跟在后，口内百般央求，只说："姑娘好歹口内超生，我横竖去赎了来。"平儿笑道："你迟也赎，早也赎，既有今日，何必当初。你的意思得过去就过去了。既是这样，我也不好意思告人，趁早赎了来，交与我送去，我一字不提。"王住儿媳妇听说，方放下心来，就拜谢，又说："姑娘自去贵干，我赶晚拿了来，先回了姑娘，再送去，如何?"平儿道："赶晚不来，可别怨我。"说毕，二人方分路各自散了。

平儿到房，凤姐问他："三姑娘叫你作什么?"平儿笑道："三姑娘怕奶奶生气，叫我劝着奶奶些，问奶奶这两天可吃

Chapter 74

Malicious Talk Makes Lady Wang Have a Search Made of the Garden To Guard Her Integrity Xichun Breaks with the Ning Mansion

As Pinger was smiling over Yingchun's answer they were suddenly joined by Baoyu. It turned out that enemies of Mrs. Liu in charge of the Garden's kitchen had reported that she had organized gambling parties in her younger sister's name, and they had divided the winnings equally. Alarmed by the news that Xifeng had decided to have her punished too, Mrs. Liu had hurried to Happy Red Court, being on the best of terms with the maids there, and secretly got Qingwen and Venturina to enlist Baoyu's help. And as Yingchun's nurse was also incriminated, he thought it better to go with Yingchun to intercede for both women instead of going alone for Mrs. Liu.

When he found so much company there and was asked about his health and why he had come, he replied evasively that he had simply dropped in to see Yingchun. The others accepted this and went on chatting. Presently Pinger took her leave to attend to Xifeng's business, and Mrs. Wang followed her out. "Do put in a good word for us, miss," she begged. "We're going to redeem the tiara anyhow, I promise you."

"You'll have to sooner or later," retorted Pinger. "So why make such a scene today? You expect us to get you off, don't you? Well, if you're truly repentant I haven't the heart to report this, not if you bring the tiara straight back to me as soon as possible,"

"I will," promised Mrs. Wang, reassured by this. "I won't keep you from your work, miss. I'll get it out of hock this evening and report to you before returning it,"

"Mind you do, or you'll have to take the consequences!"

Then they went their different ways, Pinger rejoining Xifeng who asked her what Tanchun had wanted her for. "She was afraid you were angry," Pinger prevaricated. "She urged me to soothe you and asked how your appetite was."

些什么。”凤姐笑道:“倒是他还记挂着我。刚才又出了一件事:有人来告柳二媳妇和他妹子通同开局,凡妹子所为,都是他作主。我想,你素日肯劝我‘多一事不如省一事’,就可闲一时心,自己保养保养也是好的。我因听不进去,果然应了些,先把太太得罪了,而且自己反赚了一场病。如今我也看破了,随他们闹去罢,横竖还有许多人呢。我白操一会子心,倒惹的万人咒骂。我且养病要紧。便是病好了,我也作个好好先生,得乐且乐,得笑且笑,一概是非都凭他们去罢。所以我只答应着知道了,自不在心上。”平儿笑道:“奶奶果然如此,便是我们的造化。”

一语未了,只见贾琏进来,拍手叹气道:“好好的又生事!前儿我和鸳鸯借当,那边太太怎么知道了?刚才太太叫过我去,叫我不管那里先迁挪二百银子,做八月十五日节间使用。我回没处迁挪。太太就说:‘你没有钱就有地方迁挪,我白和你商量,你就搪塞我,说是没地方了。前儿那一千银子的当是那里的?连老太太的东西你都有神通弄出来,这会子二百银子,你就这样。幸亏我没和别人说。’我想太太分明不短,何苦来要寻事奈何人。”凤姐儿道:“那一日并没一个外人,谁走了这个消息?”平儿听了,也细想那日有谁在此,想了半天,笑道:“是了。那日说话时没一个外人,但晚上送东西来的时节,老太太那边傻大姐的娘也可巧来送浆洗的衣服。他在下房里坐了一会子,见一大箱子东西,自然要问,必是小丫头们不知道,说了出来,也未可知。”因此便唤了几个小丫头来问,那日谁告诉傻大姐的娘来。众丫头慌了,都跪下赌咒发誓,说:“自来也不敢多说一句话。有人凡问什么,都答应不知道,这事如何敢说?”凤姐详情,说道:

"That was kind of her. Just now something else cropped up. It's been reported to me that Liu Er's wife and her younger sister ran gambling parties together, but Mrs. Liu was really the one behind it. You've always advised me to let things slide whenever possible, to get more rest and keep fit. Because I ignored your advice, I've had to pay for it — to start with, I've offended my mother-in-law and ruined my own health. Well, now I know better. Let them raise any rumpus they please; at any rate there are plenty of other people to control them. Why should I worry for nothing, just getting myself disliked by everyone? It's more important for me to take care of my health. And even after I'm better I mean to take things easy — leave all responsibility to them and have a good time myself. So I'm paying no attention, as I said, to that report."

"If you take that line madam, so much the better for us," Pinger approved.

Just then Jia Lian came in. With a clap of his hands he sighed.

"Here's fresh trouble out of the blue! How did my mother come to hear of Yuanyang's loan to me the other day? Just now she sent for me and asked me to raise two hundred taels — no matter where — for her Moon Festival expenses. When I told her I'd nowhere to raise it she retorted, 'When you're short yourself you can get a loan, but when I ask your help you fob me off saying you've nowhere to turn. Where did you get stuff the other day to pawn for a thousand taels? You can even spirit away the old lady's things, yet you boggle now at a mere two hundred taels. It's lucky for you I haven't told anyone else.'

"I can't believe she's really short of money. Why should she pick on me like this for nothing?"

"There were no outsiders here that day. How did the news leak out?" wondered Xifeng.

Pinger thought back carefully, then cried, "I know! That evening the things were brought over, the mother of the old lady's girl Numskull came to deliver the laundry and stayed chatting for a while in the servants' quarters. She must have asked what was in the big case, and one of our maids, not knowing any better, told her."

She called in the maids and asked which of them had blabbed to Numskull's mother. In fright the girls dropped to their knees, swearing that none of them

"他们必不敢多说，倒别委屈了他们。如今且把这事靠后，且把太太打发了去要紧。宁可咱们短些，再别讨没意思。"因叫平儿："把我的金项圈拿来，且去暂押二百银子来送去完事。"贾琏道："越性多押二百，咱们也要使呢。"凤姐道："很不必，我没处使钱。这一去还不知指那一项赎呢。"平儿拿去，吩咐一个人叫了来旺媳妇来领去，不一时，拿了银子来。贾琏亲自送去，不在话下。

这里凤姐和平儿猜疑，终是谁人走的风声，竟拟不出来。凤姐道："知道这事还是小事，怕的是小人趁便又造言生事。打紧那边正和鸳鸯结下仇了，如今听得他私自借给琏二爷东西，那起小人眼馋肚饱，连没缝儿还要下蛆的；如今有了这个因由，恐怕又造出些原故来，又说些没天理的话来，也定不得。在你琏二爷还无妨，只是鸳鸯正经女儿，带累了他受屈，岂不是咱们的过失。"平儿笑道："这也无妨。鸳鸯借东西原看的是奶奶，并不为的是二爷。二则鸳鸯虽应名儿是他的私情，其实他是回过老太太的。老太太因怕孙男、弟女多，这个也借，那个也要，到跟前都撒个娇儿，和谁要去，因此只装不知道。纵闹了出来，究竟那也无碍。"凤姐道："理虽如此，只是你我是知道的，那不知道的，焉得不生疑呢。"

一语未了，人报："太太来了。"凤姐听了诧异，不知为何事亲来，与平儿等忙迎出来。只见王夫人气色更变，只带一个贴己的小丫头走来，一语不发，走至里间坐下。凤姐忙奉茶，因陪笑问道："太太今日高兴，到这里逛逛。"王夫人

dared say a word out of turn: whenever questioned about anything they denied all knowledge of it, so how could they have let this secret out?

Xifeng saw they were telling the truth.

"No, they wouldn't dare," she agreed. "We mustn't wrong them. Let's not worry about this now but find a way to satisfy Her Ladyship. However short we are ourselves, we mustn't get into her bad books again." She told Pinger to pawn her gold necklace for two hundred taels and have the money sent to Lady Xing.

"Let's pawn it for *four* while we're at it," suggested Jia Lian. "We need money ourselves as well."

"No, *I* don't need any," she answered. "And we don't know yet how to raise two hundred to redeem it."

Pinger sent Lai Wang's wife with the necklace to the pawnshop. And on her return, Jia Lian himself took the money to Lady Xing while Xifeng and Pinger went on trying to guess who had let the cat out of the bag.

"Her Ladyship knowing doesn't matter much," Xifeng observed. "The danger is that her servants may take this chance to gossip and stir up fresh trouble. Those greedy gluttons in the other house, who are always throwing dirt, bear Yuanyang a grudge. If they hear that she's secretly lent things to Master Lian, they may make a commotion and spread outrageous talk. Master Lian can take it, but Yuanyang's a good girl and if she's involved in trouble it will be our fault."

"Don't worry," Pinger laughed. "Yuanyang lent us those things for *your* sake, not for our master's. Though it sounds like a secret favour, in fact she'll have got the old lady's permission first. The old lady only pretends not to know because she has so many grandchildren, and if all of them borrow her things to pawn but then make a scene saying that they can't replace them, how is she to cope? So even if this gets out it won't hurt Yuanyang."

"Even so, we know Yuanyang's all right, but those who don't know her are bound to think the worst."

Just then Lady Wang was announced. Surprised by this unexpected visit, they hurried out to welcome her. They saw that her face was stern and she was accompanied by her confidential maid only. Whithout a word she went into the inner room and sat down, while Xifeng poured her some tea.

喝命："平儿出去！"平儿见了这般光景，心内着慌不知怎么样了，忙应了一声，带着众丫头一齐出去，在房门外站住，越性将房门掩了，自己坐在台阶上，所有的人，一个不许进去。凤姐也着了慌，不知有何等事。只见王夫人含着泪，从袖内掷出一个香袋子来，说："你瞧！"凤姐拾起一看，见是十锦春意香袋，也吓了一跳，忙问："太太从那里得来？"王夫人见问，越发泪如雨下，颤声说道："我从那里得来？我天天坐在井里，拿你当个细心人，所以我才偷个空儿。谁知你也和我一样。这样的东西，大天白日里明摆在园里山石上，被老太太的丫头拾着，不亏你婆婆遇见了，早已送到老太太跟前去了。我且问你，这个东西如何遗在那里来？"凤姐听得，也变了颜色，忙问："太太怎知是我的？"王夫人又哭又叹，说道："你反问我！你想，一家子除了你们小夫小妻，余者老婆子们，要这个何用？再女孩子们是从那里得来？自然是那琏儿不长进下流种子那里弄来。你们又和气，当作一件玩意儿，年轻人儿，闺房私意是有的，你还和我赖！幸而园内上下人还不解事，尚未拣得。倘或丫头们拣着，你姊妹看见，这还了得！不然有那小丫头们拣着，出去说是园内拣着的，外人知道，这性命脸面要也不要？"凤姐听说，又急又愧，登时紫胀了面皮，便依炕沿双膝跪下，也含泪诉道："太太说的固然有理，我也不敢辩我并没有这样东西。但其中还要求太太细详其理：这香袋是外头雇工做的，请看带子、穗子一概是市卖货。我便年轻不尊重些，也不要这劳什子，此是一。二者，这东西也不是常带着的，我纵有，也

"You must be in good spirits," Xifeng remarked, "to stroll over here today, madam."

Lady Wang sharply ordered Pinger to leave the room. Hastily assenting she withdrew with all the other maids, wondering what this foreboded. Having closed the door behind her, she sat on the steps to stop anyone else going in. Xifeng was flustered too and quite bewildered.

Then Lady Wang with tears in her eyes produced a sacher from her sleeve.

"Look at this!"

Xifeng took it and saw the indecent embroidery on it. Very shocked she exclaimed, "Where did you find this, madam?"

Tears streaming down her cheeks Lady Wang quavered, "Are you asking *me*? I've been in the dark all this time. Relying on your discretion, I took things easy. I'd no idea you were just as careless as me. Fancy leaving a thing like this on a rock in the Garden, openly, in broad daylight too! One of the old lady's maids picked it up. Luckily your mother-in-law found her with it; otherwise she'd have taken it to the old lady. How could you be so thoughtless as to leave this lying around?"

"What makes you think it's mine, madam?" asked Xifeng, changing colour.

"Whose else could it be?" Lady Wang sobbed. "Just think, you're the only young couple in our household. What would older women be doing with such a thing? And where could the girls get hold of it? No, it must be that dissolute wretch of a husband of yours who picked it up somewhere. And intimate as you are, it's natural that you young people keep playthings of this kind in your bedroom. Don't try to deny it. It's a mercy that nobody else in the Garden knows. If one of the maids there had found it and your girl cousins saw it, that would have been terrible! Or suppose some little maids picked it up and took it outside, telling people they had found it in the Garden, how could we ever hold up our heads again?"

Red in the face with pique and mortification, Xifeng knelt down by the *kang*.

"Of course your reasoning is logical, madam," she said tearfully. "I daren't contradict you. Still, do think more carefully, madam.

"In the first place, this sachet was made by craftsmen outside. See, the belt and tassels are the kind sold in the market. If they'd been made

只好在家里，焉肯带在身上各处去?况且又在园里，个个姊妹我们都拉拉扯扯，倘或露出来，不但在姊妹前，就是奴才们看见，我有什么意思?我虽年轻不尊重，亦不能糊涂至此。三则论主子内我是年轻媳妇，算起奴才来，比我更年轻的又不止一个人了。况且他们也常进园，晚间各人家去，焉知不是他们身上的?四则除我常在园里之外，还有那边太太常带过几个小姨娘来，如嫣红、翠云等人，皆系年轻侍妾，他们更该有这个了。还有那边珍大嫂子，他也不算甚老，他也常带过佩凤等人来，焉知又不是他们的?五则园内丫头太多，保的住个个都是正经的不成?也有年纪大些的知道了人事，或者一时半刻人查问不到偷着出去，或借着因由同二门上小幺儿们打牙犯嘴，外头得了来的，也未可知。如今不但我没此事，就连平儿我也可以下保的。太太请细想。”王夫人听了这一席话，大近情理，因叹道:“你起来。我也知道你是大家子小姐出身，焉得轻薄至此，不过我气急了，拿了话激你。但如今却怎么处?你婆婆才打发人封了这个给我瞧，说是前日从傻大姐手里得的，把我气了个死。”凤姐道:“太太快别生气。若被众人觉察了，保不定老太太不知道。且平心静气暗暗访查，才得确实；纵然访不着，外人也不能知道。这叫作‘胳膊折在袖内’。如今惟有趁着赌钱的因由革了许多的人这空儿，把周瑞媳妇来旺媳妇等四五个贴近不能走话的人安插在园里，以查赌为由。再如今的丫头也太多

by embroiderers of our house they'd certainly be finer. However young and flighty I may be, I wouldn't want such trash.

"In the second place, this isn't the sort of thing I'd carry around with me. Even if I had one I'd have to keep it indoors, not take it everywhere with me. Besides, when I'm in the Garden with the girls we often scuffle in fun, and think how ashamed I'd feel if it was seen, not only by my cousins but even by the servants! However young and flighty I may be, I wouldn't be as foolish as all that.

"In the third place, of all the ladies of our house I'm the only young married woman, but there are plenty of servants' wives younger than me who are for ever dropping into the Garden then going home again at night. Couldn't this belong to one of them?

"Fourthly, I'm not the only visitor to the Garden. Lady Xing of the other house often takes Yanhong, Cuiyun and other young concubines there. They're all more likely than me to have such things. Cousin Zhen's wife isn't too old either, and she often brings along Peifeng and others; so this could equally well belong to them.

"Fifthly, with so many maids in the Garden, can we guarantee that they all behave properly? Isn't it possible that one of the older girls, who knows the facts of life, sneaked out unchecked or made some pretext to gossip with the pages at the inner gate, and smuggled this in from outside?

"This not only isn't mine, I can assure you that Pinger has never had such a thing either. Please reconsider the matter carefully, madam."

This made good sense to Lady Wang.

"Get up," she said with a sigh. "I should have known that a girl of good family like you couldn't be so frivolous. I just challenged you because I was so angry. But what's to be done? Your mother-in-law sent this over just now in a sealed package with word that she got it from Numskull the day before yesterday. I nearly choked with rage!"

"Don't be angry, madam. If this gets out, it may come to the old lady's ears. We must calm down and investigate this on the quiet to get to the bottom of it. And even if we fail to find the culprit, we mustn't let outsiders know about it but 'hide our broken arm in our sleeve.' Now let's take this gambling as a pretext to dismiss a good few servants. Let's choose four or five stewardesses like the wives of Zhou Rui and

了，保不住人大心大，生事作耗，等闹出事来，反悔之不及。如今若无故裁革，不但姑娘们委屈烦恼，就连太太和我也过不去。不如趁此机会，以后凡年纪大些的，或有些咬牙难缠的，拿个错儿撵出去配了人。一则保得住没有别的事，二则也可省些用度。太太想我这话如何?”王夫人叹道:“你说的何尝不是，但从公细想，你这几个姊妹也甚可怜了。也不用远比，只说如今你林妹妹的母亲，未出阁时，是何等的娇生惯养，是何等的金尊玉贵，那才像个千金小姐的体统。如今这几个姊妹，不过比人家的丫头略强些罢了。通共每人只有两三个丫头像个人样，余者纵有四五个小丫头子，竟是庙里的小鬼。如今还要裁革了去，不但于我心不忍，只怕老太太未必就依。虽然艰难，也穷不至此。我虽没受过大荣华富贵，比你们是强的。如今宁可我省些，别委屈了他们，以后要省俭先从我来倒使得。如今且叫人传了周瑞家的等人进来，就吩咐他们快快暗地访拿这事要紧。”凤姐听了，即唤平儿进来吩咐出去。

一时，周瑞家的与吴兴家的、郑华家的，来旺、来喜两家的，现在五家陪房进来，余者皆在南方各有执事。王夫人正嫌人少不能勘察，忽见邢夫人的陪房王善保家的走来，方才正是他送了香囊来的。王夫人向来看视邢夫人之得力心腹人等原无二意，今见他来了打听此事，十分关切，便向他说:“你去回了太太，你也进园内照管照管，不比别人又强

Lai Wang, whose discretion we can count on, and put them in the Garden ostensibly to check up on the gambling.

"We have too many young maids now. As they grow up they start getting ideas and cause trouble. If we wait till there's a scandal, we shall regret it too late. Now if we send some of them packing for no reason, it'll not only vex the girls but will make us seem unreasonable, madam. So let's take this chance to find fault with some of the older and more obstreperous ones, and send them home to get married. This will prevent any scandals here and save us money too. What do you think, madam?"

Lady Wang sighed again.

"You are right, of course. But to be fair to your cousins, I pity the poor girls. We needn't go further back, but just look at Daiyu's mother — how cosseted she was before she married, treasured like gold or jade! She lived in real style like a fine young lady. But our girls today are only slightly better off than other people's servants, with merely two or three presentable maids apiece and four or five younger ones who look like scarecrows. I haven't the heart to cut down their attendants, and I doubt if the old lady would agree to it either. Difficult as things are, we're not all that poor. I never lived in real luxury and style, yet as a girl I was better off than you. I'd sooner skimp a little myself rather than see them go short. If we're to save money I'm willing to make a start.

"Now, send for Zhou Rui's wife and the others and order them — in strict confidence, mind — to hurry up and get to the bottom of this."

Xifeng called Pinger in to pass on these orders. And soon the wives of Zhou Rui, Wu Xing, Zheng Hua, Lai Wang and Lai Xi arrived, these being the only five couples here who had accompained Lady Wang or Xifeng to the Jia mansion at the time of their marriage, the others having gone south on business. Lady Wang was just thinking five too few to make a careful check when they were joined by Lady Xing's personal maid, wife of the steward Wang Shanbao who had brought over the pouch. As Lady Wang treated Lady Xing's trusted maids on the same footing as her own, and this woman had come with a great show of concern to ask about this matter, she said to her:

"Go and tell your mistress I want you to move into the Garden for a while to keep an eye on things there. That would be better than my find-

些。”王善保家的因素日进园去，那些丫鬟们不大趋奉他，他心里不大自在，要寻他们的事故又寻不着，恰好生出这样事来，以为得了把柄。又听见王夫人托他，正撞在心坎上，连忙应道：“这个容易。不是奴才多话，论理这事早该严禁些的。太太也不大往园子里去，这些女孩子们一个个倒像受了封诰似的，他们就成了千金小姐了。闹下天来，谁敢哼一声儿。不然，就调唆姑娘的丫头们，说欺负了姑娘们了，谁还当得起。”王夫人道：“这也是有的，本是常情，跟姑娘们的丫头原比别的娇贵些。你们该劝他们。连主子们的姑娘不教导，尚且不是，何况他们？”王善保家的道：“别的都还罢了。太太不知道，头一个宝玉屋里的晴雯，那丫头仗着他生的模样儿比别人标致些，又生了一张巧嘴，天天打扮的像个西施的样儿，在人跟前能说惯道，掐尖要强。一句话不投机，他就立起两个骚眼睛来骂人，妖妖娆娆，大不成个体统。”王夫人听了这话，猛然触动往事，便问凤姐道：“上次我们跟了老太太进园逛去，有一个水蛇腰、削肩膀、眉眼又有些像你林妹妹的，正在那里骂小丫头。我的心里很看不上那狂样子，因同老太太走，我不曾说得。后来要问是谁，又偏忘了。今日对了坎儿，这丫头想必就是他了。”凤姐道：“若论这些丫头们，共总比起来，都没晴雯生得好。论举止言语，他原轻薄些。方才太太说的倒很像他。我也忘了那日的事。不敢乱说。”王善保家的便道：“不用这样，此刻不难叫了他来，太太瞧瞧。”王夫人道：“宝玉房里常见我的，只有袭人、麝月，这两个笨笨的倒好。若有这个，他自然不敢

ing other people."

Now Wang Shanbao's wife, disgruntled by the lack of respect shown her by the maids in the Garden, had long been looking — unsuccessfully — for some grounds to fault them. To her mind, this pouch provided a handle against them, while Lady Wang's proposal gave her a welcome chance to settle scores with them.

She promptly answered, "That's easy. If you'll excuse your slave saying so, discipline should have been tightened up there long ago. You don't go to the Garden very often, madam. The maids there all behave as if they'd become fine young ladies of noble rank. They turn things upside-down, and nobody dares say a word for fear they'll work their young mistresses up to accuse people of insulting them. Who's willing to take such a risk?"

"Well, that's only to be expected," said Lady Wang. "Our young ladies' maids are a cut above the rest, but you should teach them manners. Not to correct the young mistresses would be wrong, how much more so in the case of their maids."

"The others aren't so bad," continued Mrs. Wang. "But do you know that minx Qingwen in Baoyu's place, madam? Because she's prettier than most and has the gift of the gab, she makes herself up every day like Xi Shi and is very pert and forward, jabbering away all the time and showing off. She scolds and carries on in a shocking way on the least provocation. A regular vamp she is — it's scandalous!"

Thus reminded, Lady Wang remarked to Xifeng, "Last time we went for a stroll with the old lady in the Garden, I noticed a girl with a willowy waist, sloping shoulders and eyes and eyebrows rather like Daiyu's. She was scolding one of the younger maids and I didn't at all like the wild look of her, but being with the old lady I said nothing. I meant to ask later who she was, but I forgot. She seems to fit this description of Qingwen,"

"Qingwen's the prettiest among the maids," Xifeng replied. "She does act and talk rather flippantly too. Your description sounds like her, but I can't remember exactly what happened that day."

"That's easily remedied," said Wang Shanbao's wife. "Just fetch her now for Your Ladyship to see."

Lady Wang observed, "The girls from Baoyu's place whom I see most often are Xiren and Sheyue. They're not too smart and that's all to the good.

来见我的。我一生最嫌这样的人，况且又出来了这事。好好的宝玉，倘或被这蹄子勾引坏了，那还了得。”因叫自己的丫头来，吩咐他到园里去，“只说我说的话，留下袭人、麝月服侍宝玉不必来，有一个晴雯最伶俐，叫他即刻快来。你不许和他说什么。”

小丫头子答应了，走入怡红院，正值晴雯身上不自在，睡中觉才起来，正发闷，听如此说，只得随了他来。素日这些丫鬟皆知王夫人最恶乔妆艳饰、语薄言轻者，故晴雯不敢出头见王夫人。今因连日不自在，并没十分妆饰，自为无碍。及到了凤姐房中，王夫人一见他钗歪鬓松，衫垂带褪，有春睡捧心之遗风，而且形容面貌恰是上月的那人，不觉勾起方才的火来。王夫人原是天真烂漫之人，喜怒出于心臆，不比那些饰词掩意之人，今既真怒攻心，又勾起往事，便冷笑道：“好个美人！真像个病西施了。你天天作这轻狂样儿给谁看？你干的事，打量我不知道呢！且放着你，自然明儿揭你的皮！宝玉今日可好些？”晴雯一听如此说，心内诧异，便知有人暗算了他。虽然着恼，只不敢作声。他本是聪明过顶的人，见问宝玉可好些，他便不肯以实话对，只说：“我不大到宝玉房里去，又不常和宝玉在一处，好歹我不能知，只问袭人、麝月两个。”王夫人道：“这就该打嘴！你难道是死人，要你们作什么！”晴雯道：“我原是跟老太太的人。因老太太说园里空大人少，宝玉害怕，所以拨了我去外间屋里上夜，不过看屋子。我原回过我笨，不能服侍。老太太骂了我一

If she's there, she naturally wouldn't dare come. She's just the sort of girl I've always disliked. And now that this has happened, think how dreadful it would be if this bitch were to lead our precious Baoyu astray!"

She told her maid to go to the Garden.

"Just give them this message: I want Xiren and Sheyue to stay to look after Baoyu, but that clever girl Qingwen is to come here at once. Don't tell her why I want her."

The maid assented and went off to Happy Red Court.

Qingwen happened to be unwell that day and had just got up from a nap, feeling out of sorts. She had no choice now but to obey this summons. As all the maids were well aware that Lady Wang disliked finery and pertness, Qingwen had taken care to keep out of her way. Now as she had been unwell for a couple of days and not paid much attention to her toilet, she had no special misgivings. When she entered Xifeng's room with her hair dishevelled and her costume rumpled, like a frail beauty just aroused from sleep, Lady Wang immediately recognized her as the girl she had seen. This rekindled her anger. And being genuinely outraged and already prejudiced, she was too outspoken to conceal her feelings. She smiled sarcastically.

"What a beauty!" she sneered. "Really like an ailing Xi Shi. Whom are you trying to vamp, going about like this? Don't think I'm ignorant of your goings-on. I'll let you off now, but very soon I'll have you skinned alive. How is Baoyu today?"

Qingwen knew that someone must have been running her down, but did not venture to express her resentment. And quickly recovering from her surprise she was intelligent enough not to give a truthful answer.

"I seldom go into Baoyu's rooms or spend much time with him," she lied. "So I can't say just how he is. You'll have to ask Xiren or Sheyue, madam."

"You deserve a slap on your mouth," fumed Lady Wang. "Are you dead? What are you paid for?"

"I used to serve the old lady," answered Qingwen. "Then she said there were too few older maids in the Garden and Baoyu was nervous because it was so empty, so I was to go and keep watch at night in the outer rooms, just to keep an eye on the place. When I said I was too clumsy to wait on the young master, the old lady scolded, 'I'm not asking

顿，说‘又不叫你管他的事，要伶俐的作什么。’我听了这话才去的。不过十天半月之内，宝玉闷了，大家玩一会子就散了。至于宝玉饮食起居，上一层有老奶奶、老妈妈们，下一层有袭人、麝月、秋纹几个人。我闲着还要作老太太屋里的针线，所以宝玉的事竟不曾留心。太太既怪，从此后我留心就是了。”王夫人信以为实，忙说：“阿弥陀佛！你不近宝玉是我的造化，竟不劳你费心。既是老太太给宝玉的，我明儿回明了老太太，再撵你。”因向王善保家的道：“你们进去，好生防他几日，不许他在宝玉房里睡觉。等我回过老太太，再处治他。”喝声：“去罢！站在这里，我看不上这浪样儿！谁许你这样花红柳绿的妆扮！”晴雯只得出来，这气非同小可，一出门便拿手帕子握脸，一头走，一头哭，直哭到园内去。

这里王夫人向凤姐等自怨道：“这几年我越发精神短了，照顾不到。这样妖精似的东西竟没看见。只怕这样的还有，明日倒得查查。”凤姐见王夫人盛怒之际，又因王善保家的是邢夫人的耳目，常调唆着邢夫人生事，纵有千百样的言词，此刻也不敢说，只低头答应着。王善保家的道：“太太且请养息身体要紧，这些小事，只管交与奴才。如今要查这个主儿也极容易，等到晚上园门关了的时节，内外不通风，我们竟给他们个猛不防，带着人到各处丫头们房里搜寻一遍。想来谁有这个，断不单只有这一个，自然还有别的东西。那时翻出别的来，自然这个也是他的了。”王夫人道：“这话倒

you to look after him, you don't have to be smart.' So I had to go. It's only two or three times a month, when Baoyu's bored, that we all have a game together. His personal needs are attended to by his old nurses and the matrons with Xiren, Sheyue and Qiuwen under them. In my spare time I still do some sewing for the old lady, so I've never paid much attention to Baoyu's affairs. But if you wish, madam, I shall be more attentive in future."

"Amida Buddha! Don't trouble!" exclaimed Lady Wang, quite taken in by this. "The less you have to do with Baoyu, the better. Since you were assigned to him by the old lady, I'll get her permission tomorrow to have you dismissed."

She turned and told Wang Shanbao's wife, "You people move into the Garden and keep a good watch on her for a few days. Don't let her sleep in Baoyu's quarters. We'll deal with her after I've spoken to the old lady. Get out!" she rapped at Qingwen. "What are you standing there for? I can't bear the sight of such a vamp. Who let you dress in those gaudy reds and greens?"

Qingwen had to withdraw, so outraged that once out of the door she covered her face with her handkerchief and wept all the way back to the Garden.

Meanwhile Lady Wang was reproaching herself to Xifeng.

"These last few years I haven't had the energy to see to things," she lamented. "I never set eyes on such a fox-fairy! I suppose there are others like her too. Tomorrow I must make a thorough investigation."

Seeing how enraged she was, and knowing that Wang Shanbao's wife often told tales to Lady Xing and incited her to make trouble, Xifeng could not defend Qingwen even had she had good reasons for doing so. She just lowered her head and assented.

"You must look after your health, madam," urged Mrs. Wang. "Just leave trifling matters like this to your slaves. It should be very easy to find the culprit. This evening after the Garden gates are locked and no news can get in or out, we'll take them by surprise and have a thorough search made of all the maids' rooms I'm positive that whoever had that pouch will have other things of the same kind. When we find them we'll know whose it is."

是，若不如此，断不能清的清，白的白”。因问凤姐如何？凤姐只得答应说：“太太说的是，就行罢了。”王夫人道：“这主意很是，不然一年也查不出来。”于是大家商议已定。

至晚饭后，待贾母安寝了，宝钗等入园时，王善保家的便请了凤姐一并入园，喝命将角门皆锁上。便从上夜的婆子处抄检起来，不过抄检出些多余剩下蜡烛灯油等物。王善保家的道：“这也是赃，不许动，等明儿回过太太再动。”于是先就到怡红院中，喝命关门。当下宝玉正因晴雯不自在，忽见这一干人来，不知为何直扑了丫头们房内去，因迎向凤姐，问是何故。凤姐道：“丢了一件要紧的东西，因大家混赖，恐怕有丫头们偷了，所以大家都查一查去疑。”一面说，一面坐下吃茶。王善保家的等搜了一回，又细问这几个箱子是谁的，都叫本人来亲自打开。袭人因见晴雯这样，知道必有异事，又见这番抄检，只得自己先出来打开了箱子并匣子，任其搜检一番，不过是平常动用之物。随放下又搜别人的，挨次都一一搜过。到了晴雯的箱子，因问：“是谁的，怎不开了让搜？”袭人等方欲代晴雯开时，只见晴雯挽着头发闯进，“豁啷”的一声，将箱子掀开，两手提着底子朝天，往地下尽情一倒，将所有之物尽都倒出。王善保家的也觉没趣，看了一看，也无甚私弊之物。回了凤姐，要往别处去。凤姐道：“你们可细细的查，若这一番查不出东西来，难

"That's a good idea," approved Lady Wang. "We can't let innocent people take the blame." She asked Xifeng her opinion.

"Of course you're right, madam," Xifeng had to acquiesce. "That's the way to do it."

"This is an excellent plan," added Lady Wang. "Otherwise we could search for a year and still get nowhere."

So they agreed on it. After supper when the old lady had gone to bed and Baochai and the rest had returned to the Garden, Wang Shanbao's wife accompanied Xifeng there. They ordered all the gates to be locked and started their search in the rooms of the servants on night duty, but discovered nothing more incriminating than some left-over candles and a jar or two of oil.

"These count as stolen property too," declared Wang Shanbao's wife. "They mustn't be moved till we've made our report to Her Ladyship tomorrow."

Then they went first to Happy Red Court and had the courtyard gate locked. Baoyu was rather unhappy on Qingwen's account. When he saw these matrons marching into the maids' rooms, he asked Xifeng what they were doing.

"Something important is missing," she told him. "As people are accusing each other and we think one of the maids may have stolen it, we're making a general search to clear up suspicion."

She sat down to sip tea while Mrs. Wang and the others set about searching. They asked whose the different cases were and told the owners to open them themselves. Xiren had already guessed from what had happened to Qingwen that something was amiss. Now she was the first to step forward and open her cases and boxes for them to examine. Finding nothing out of the way, the women went on to search the other maids'cases one by one. When they came to Qingwen's they asked:

"Whose is this? Why doesn't anyone open it for us?"

Xiren was about to open it when Qingwen rushed in, her hair loosely knotted. Crash! She flung the lid back and raised the case bottom upwards in both hands to empty all its contents on the floor. Wang Shanbao's wife was disconcerted. She had a look and, finding nothing improper, suggested to Xifeng that they should move on.

"You'd better make a careful search," warned Xifeng. "If you fail to

回话去。”众人都道:“都细细的翻着看了，没什么差错东西。虽有几样男人的物件，都是小孩子的东西，想是宝玉的旧时物件，没甚关系的。”凤姐听了，笑道:“既是如此，咱们就往别处去。”

说着，一径出来，因向王善保家的道:“我有一句话，不知是不是。要抄检只抄检咱们家的人，薛大姑娘屋里，断乎检抄不得的。”王善保家的笑道:“这个自然，岂有抄起亲戚家来?”凤姐点头道:“我也这样说呢。”一头说，一头到了潇湘馆内。黛玉已睡下了，忽报这些人来，也不知为何事。才要起来，只见凤姐已走进来，忙按住他不许起来，只说:“睡着罢，我们就走。”这边且说些闲话。这个王善保家的带了众人到丫鬟房中，也一一开箱倒笼抄检了一番。因从紫鹃房中抄出两副宝玉常换下来的寄名符儿，一副束带上的披带，两个荷包并扇套，套内有扇子。打开看时皆是宝玉往年往日手内曾拿过的。王善保家的自为得了意，遂忙请凤姐过来验视，又说:“这些东西从那里来的?”凤姐笑道:“宝玉和他们从小儿在一处混了几年，这自然是宝玉的旧东西。这也不算什么罕事，撂下再往别处去是正经。”紫鹃笑道:“直到如今，我们两下里的账也算不清。要问这一个，连我也忘了是那年月日有的了。”王善保家的听凤姐如此说，也只得罢了。

又到探春院内，谁知早有人报与探春了。探春也就猜着必有原故，所以引出这等丑态来，遂命众丫鬟秉烛开门而待。一时众人来了。探春故问何事，凤姐笑道:“因丢了一件东西，连日访查不出人来，恐怕旁人赖这些女孩子们，所以越性大家搜一搜，使人去疑，倒是洗净他们的好法子。”探

find anything, what are we going to say to Her Ladyship?"

The stewardesses assured her, "We've been through everything carefully, and there's nothing that shouldn't be here except a few objects used by boys; but these must have belonged to Baoyu when he was small. There's nothing of consequence."

Xifeng smiled."In that case we can go to another house."

As they went out she said to Mrs. Wang, "I have a suggestion, if you agree to it, and that is to restrict the search to our own family. We mustn't raid Miss Baochai's quarters."

"Of course not. How can we search our relatives?"

"Exactly."

By now they had reached Bamboo Lodge where Daiyu was already in bed. When visitors were announced, not knowing their errand she propared to get up, but Xifeng came in and made her lie down again.

"Go back to sleep," she said. "We won't stay long,"

She chatted with Daiyu while Mrs. Wang took the others to the maids'quarters and searched their cases and baskets one by one. In Zijuan's room they discovered two amulets which Baoyu had often worn, two tassels from a boy's belt, two pouches and a fan in a sheath — all Baoyu's old belongings. Wang Shanbao's wife thought she had made a find and hastily called Xifeng over to have a look.

"Where do these things come from?" she asked. Xifeng told her with a smile, "Baoyu's been thick with them ever since he was a child, so naturally these are some of his old things. This is nothing extraordinary. Better put them back and try somewhere else."

"Our two apartments' accounts are so muddled," put in Zijuan gaily, "I can't even remember the day, the month or the year when these things were left here."

In view of what Xifeng had said, Mrs. Wang had to let this pass and they went on to Tanchun's place. Apparently someone had sent Tanchun word of their coming, and she knew there must be some reason for this indignity. She had ordered her maids to open all the doors and light candles in readiness. When the women arrived she deliberately asked them their business.

"Something's missing, and we don't know who took it," Xifeng told her. "For fear people may put the blame on these girls, we're making a general

春冷笑道："我们的丫头自然都是些贼，我就是头一个窝主。既如此，先来搜我的箱柜，他们所偷了来的，都交给我藏着呢。"说着便命丫鬟们把箱柜一齐打开，将镜奁、妆盒、衾袱、衣包若大若小之物一齐打开，请凤姐去抄阅。凤姐陪笑道："我不过是奉太太的命来，妹妹别错怪了我。何必生气。"因命丫鬟们快快关上。平儿、丰儿等先忙着替待书等关的关，收的收。探春道："我的东西倒许你们搜阅；要想搜我的丫头，这却不能。我原比众人歹毒，凡丫头所有的东西我都知道，都在我这里间收着，一针一线他们也没的收藏，要搜所以只来搜我。你们不依，只管去回太太，只说我违背了太太，该怎么处治，我去自领。你们别忙，自然连你们抄的日子有呢！你们今日早起不曾议论甄家，自己家里好好的抄家，果然今日真抄了。咱们也渐渐的来了。可知这样大族人家，若从外头杀来，一时是杀不死的，这是古人曾说的'百足之虫，死而不僵'，必须先从家里自杀自灭起来，才能一败涂地呢！"说着，不觉流下泪来。凤姐只看着众媳妇们。周瑞家的便道："既是女孩子的东西全在这里，奶奶且请到别处去罢，也让姑娘好安寝。"凤姐便起身告辞。探春道："可细细的搜明白了？若明日再来，我就不依了。"凤姐笑道："既然丫头们的东西都在这里，就不必搜了。"探春冷笑

search to disarm suspicion. This seems the best way to clear them."

Tanchun laughed scornfully. "Naturally, all our maids are thieves and I'm their brigand chief. So search my cases first. They've given me all their stolen goods for safe-keeping."

She ordered her maids to open up all her chests as well as her mirror-stand, dressing-case, bedding, wrappers and bundles large and small for Xifeng's inspection.

"I'm simply carrying out Her Ladyship's orders," said Xifeng with a mollifying smile. "You've no call to blame me, cousin. Don't be angry."

She told the maids to close the cases at once, and Pinger and Fenger made haste to help Daishu and the rest put the things away.

"I'll let you search my things, but not my maids'," Tanchun insisted. "As a matter of fact, being meaner than all the others, I know everything they've got and I'm keeping it for them here. They haven't so much as a needle or thread themselves. So if search you must, search *me*. If you don't agree, go and report to Her Ladyship that I won't obey her orders, and I'll accept any punishment she thinks fit.

"Just you wait though! The day will come when you're raided too. Weren't you talking this morning about the Zhen family and how they were doing fine but insisted on ransacking each others' houses? Now they've been raided themselves and their property's been confiscated. Our turn's coming too. Now I realize that big families like ours can't be destroyed in one fell swoop from outside. In the words of the old saying, 'A centipede even when dead won't fall to the ground.' We must start killing each other first before our family can be completely destroyed." By now she was shedding tears.

Xifeng looked in silence at the stewardesses.

Taking the hint Zhou Rui's wife proposed, "As all these girl's things are here, madam, we'd better go elsewhere and leave Miss Tanchun to rest."

Xifeng got up to take her leave.

But Tanchun cried, "Mind you make a thorough search. I won't have you coming here again tomorrow!"

"Since all your maids' things are here, there's no need to search," replied Xifeng with a smile.

Tanchun laughed scornfully.

道："你果然倒乖。连我的包袱都打开了，还说没翻。明日敢说我护着丫头们，不许你们翻了。你趁早说明，若还要翻，不妨再翻一遍。"凤姐知道探春素日与众不同的，只得陪笑道："我已经连你的东西都搜查明白了。"探春又问众人："你们也都搜明白了不曾？"周瑞家的等都陪笑说："都翻明白了。"那王善保家的本是个心内没成算的人，素日虽闻探春的名，那是为众人没眼力，没胆量罢了，那里一个姑娘家就这样起来；况且又是庶出，他敢怎么。他自恃是邢夫人陪房，连王夫人尚另眼相看，何况别个。今儿见探春如此，他只当是探春认真单恼凤姐，与他们无干。他便要趁势作脸献好，因越众向前拉起探春的衣襟，故意一掀，嘻嘻笑道："连姑娘身上我都翻了，果然没有什么。"凤姐见他这样，忙说："妈妈走罢，别疯疯颠颠的。"一语未了，只听"拍"的一声响，王善保家的脸上早着了探春一掌。探春登时大怒，指着王善保家的问道："你是什么东西，敢来拉扯我的衣裳！我不过看着太太的面上，你又有年纪，叫你一声妈妈，你就狗仗人势，天天作耗，专管生事。如今越性了不得了。你打谅我是同你们姑娘那样好性儿，由着你们欺负他，就错了主意！你来搜检东西我不恼，你不该拿着我取笑。"说着，便亲自解衣卸裙，拉着凤姐儿细细的翻。又说："省得叫奴才来翻我身上。"凤姐平儿等忙与探春束裙整袂，口内喝着王善保家的说："妈妈吃两口酒就疯疯颠颠的起来。前儿把太太也冲撞了。快出去，不要提起了！"又劝探春休得生

"How smart you are! You've opened even my bundles of old clothes, yet still pretend you haven't ransacked the place. Will you accuse me later of shielding my maids and refusing to let you search? Let's get this clear now. If you want to search again, just go ahead."

Xifeng knew how difficult Tanchun was and therefore answered soothingly, "We've made a thorough search, even including your things."

"Are you all satisfied?" Tanchun challenged the others.

Zhou Rui's wife and the rest assured her that they were.

But Wang Shanbao's wife was tactless. She had heard that Tanchun was difficult to handle, but thought this was because others were afraid to stand up to her. How could a young girl have her own way like this? Besides, the mere daughter of a concubine would hardly dare cross *her*, Lady Xing's personal maid whom even Lady Wang treated with respect, to say nothing of younger members of the household. Tanchun's behaviour had led her to believe that she was simply annoyed with Xifeng, not with the rest of them. So she decided to assert herself and stepping forward through the crowd she pulled up the girl's lapel.

"Yes," she sniggered. "I've searched even the young lady's person. There's really nothing."

"Let's go, nurse," interposed Xifeng. "Stop this fooling."

Even as she was speaking — slap! — Tanchun boxed Mrs. Wang's ears.

"Who do you think you are?" she fumed, pointing one finger at her. "How *dare* you paw me? It's only for Her Ladyship's sake and because you're old that I call you 'nurse', but like a dog counting on its master's backing you're always making trouble. Today you've gone too far. If you think I'm as good-natured as your young mistress, whom you bully just as you please, you're making a big mistake. I didn't scold you for coming to raid our place, but you've no right to take liberties with me."

She started taking off her clothes and insisted that, instead of letting a slave maul her, Xifeng must search her carefully herself.

Xifeng and Pinger hurriedly helped to dress her again.

"A few cups of wine and you play the fool," they scolded Mrs. Wang. "The other day you offended Her Ladyship too. Be off with you now, and not another word."

气。探春冷笑道："我但凡有气性，早一头碰死了！不然，岂许奴才来我身上翻贼赃呢？明儿一早，我先回了老太太、太太，然后过去给大娘陪礼，该怎么，我就领。"那王善保家的讨了个没意思，在窗外只说："罢了，罢了，这也是头一遭挨打。我明儿回了太太，仍回老娘家去罢。这个老命还要他做什么！"探春喝命丫鬟道："你们没听他说话？还等我和他对嘴去不成！"待书等听说，便出去说道："你果然回老娘家去，倒是我们的造化了。只怕你舍不得去。"凤姐笑道："好丫头，真是有其主必有其仆。"探春冷笑道："我们作贼的人，嘴里都有三言两语的。这还算笨的，背地里就只不会调唆主子。"平儿忙也陪笑解劝，一面又拉了待书进来。周瑞家的等人劝了一番。凤姐直待服侍探春睡下，方带着人往对过暖香坞来。

彼时李纨犹病在床上，他与惜春是紧邻，又与探春相近，故顺路先到这两处。因李纨才吃了药睡着，不好惊动，只到丫鬟们房中一一的搜了一遍，也没有什么东西，遂到惜春房中来。因惜春年纪尚幼小，尚未识事，吓的不知当有什么事，凤姐也少不得安慰他。谁知竟在入画箱中寻出一大包金银锞子来，约共三四十个，又有一副玉带板子并一包男人的靴袜等物。入画也黄了脸。因问是那里来的，入画只得跪下哭诉真情，说："这是珍大爷赏我哥哥的。因我们老子娘都

They tried to placate Tanchun.

"If I'd any pride," scoffed Tanchun, "I should have dashed my brains out long ago. How can I let a slave search my person for stolen goods? Tomorrow I'll report this to Their Ladyships, then go to apologize to Lady Xing and accept whatever punishment she thinks fit."

Wang Shanbao's wife, thoroughly abashed, started grumbling outside the window, "This is too much! I've never been struck before in all my life. Tomorrow I'll ask Her Ladyship's leave to go home. What's there left for me to live for?"

"Hear that?" Tanchun snapped at her maids. "Are you waiting for *me* to go out and argue with her?"

At once Daishu darted out.

"If you get leave to go home, that's our good fortune!" she cried. "We're only afraid you won't ask."

"Well!" laughed Xifeng. "Here's truly a case of 'like mistress like maid'."

"We thieves all have ready tongues," retorted Tanchun. "But she isn't clever enough to tell tales to her mistress."

Pinger tried to smooth things over and fetched Daishu back while Zhou Rui's wife and the others soothed Tanchun. And Xifeng waited till she had gone to bed before leading her search party to Warm Spring Village opposite, for as this lay just between Xichun's and Tanchun's quarters it was the next place to visit before Xichun's. Li Wan, ill in bed, had just taken medicine and gone to sleep, so without disturbing her they searched her maids' rooms. Not finding anything there they went on to Xichun's place.

Xichun being little more than a child was frightened, and Xifeng had to soothe her. However, in Ruhua's case they discovered a big package of thirty to forty gold and silver ingots: so instead of evidence of immoral conduct they had found stolen goods! There was also a set of jade ornaments for a man's belt and a bundle containing a man's sandals and socks. Ruhua turned pale. And asked where these things came from she knelt down and sobbed.

"They were given my brother by Lord Zhen," she faltered. "Now that our parents are down south he lives with our uncle. And because my

在南方，如今只跟着叔叔过日子。我叔叔、婶子只要吃酒赌钱，我哥哥怕交给他们又花了，所以每常得了，悄悄的烦了老妈妈带进来叫我收着的。”惜春胆小，见了这个也害怕，说：“我竟不知道。这还了得！二嫂子，你要打他，好歹带他出去打罢，我听不惯的。”凤姐笑道：“这话若果真呢，也倒可恕，只是不该私自传送进来。这个可以传递得，什么不可以传递呢？这倒是传递的那人的不是了。若这话不真，倘是偷来的，你可就别想活了。”入画跪着哭道：“我不敢扯谎。奶奶只管明日问我们奶奶和大爷去，若说不是赏的，就拿我和我哥哥一同打死无怨。”凤姐道：“这个自然要问的，只是真赏的也有不是。谁许你私自传送东西的！你且说是谁作接应，我便饶你。下次万万不可。”惜春道：“嫂子别饶他这次方可。这里人多，若不拿一个人作法，那些大的听见了，又不知怎么样呢。嫂子若饶他，我也不依。”凤姐道：“我看他素日还好。谁没一个错，只这一次。二次犯下，二罪俱罚。但不知传递是谁？”惜春道：“若说传递，再无别个，必是后门上的张妈。他常肯和这些丫头们鬼鬼祟祟的，这些丫头们也都肯照顾他。”凤姐听了，便命人记下，将东西且交与周瑞家的暂拿着，等明日对明再议。于是别了惜春，方往迎春房内来。

迎春已经睡着了，丫鬟们也才要睡，众人叩门半日才开。凤姐吩咐：“不必惊动小姐。”遂往丫鬟们房里来。因司棋是王善保家的外孙女儿，凤姐倒要看看王家的可藏私不藏

uncle and aunt are fond of drinking and gambling, for fear they'd squander anything he gets my brother always gives it to an old nurse to bring to me for safe-keeping."

Xichun was naturally timid and this disclosure appalled her.

"I'd no idea!" she cried. "How disgraceful! If you want to have her beaten, sister-in-law, do take her away so that I don't have to hear it."

"If what you say is true, it's forgivable," said Xifeng to Ruhua. "But you shouldn't smuggle things in here in secret. If you had *these* smuggled in, you can smuggle in other things too; so whoever brought them in here is to blame. If you're lying and these are stolen goods, don't expect to get off alive!"

Kneeling before her Ruhua sobbed, "I dare not lie to you, madam. You can check with Her Ladyship and His Lordship tomorrow. If they say these weren't gifts, I won't complain if you have me and my brother beaten to death."

"Naturally I shall check. But even if these were gifts you still did wrong. Who gave you permission to bring things here in secret? Tell me who your intermediary was and I'll let you off. But mind you never do such a thing again."

"Don't let her off, sister-in-law," cried Xichun. "We have so many people here, if we don't make an example of one of them the bigger offenders will get quite out of hand. Even if you're willing to forgive her, I'm not."

"She's usually quite well behaved, isn't she? We all make mistakes, and this is her first offence. If she does it again we'll punish her for both. But I wonder who smuggled the things in for her?"

"As for that, it must be Mrs. Zhang at the back gate. She's always whispering with the maids and they all do her little favours."

Xifeng told the stewardesses to make a note of this name, and the things were entrusted to Zhou Rui's wife for temporary custody till a check had been made the next day. Then they took their leave of Xichun and went on to Yingchun's place.

Yingchun was already asleep. They knocked for some time before the gate was opened. Xifeng gave orders not to disturb the young lady and went with the others to the maids' quarters. As Siqi there was Mrs. Wang's grand-daughter, Xifeng was curious to know whether or not she was biased by family ties and she therefore paid special attention to this

私，遂留神看他搜检。先从别人箱子搜起，皆无别物。及到了司棋箱子中搜了一回，王善保家的说："也没有什么东西。"才要关箱时，周瑞家的道："且住，这是什么？"说着，便伸手掣出一双男子的锦带袜并一双缎鞋来。又有一个小包袱，打开看时，里面有一个同心如意并一个字帖儿，一总递与凤姐看。凤姐因当家理事，每每看开帖并账目，也颇识得几个字了。便看那帖子是大红双喜笺帖，上面写道："上月你来家后，父母已觉察你我之意。但姑娘未出阁，尚不能完你我之心愿。若园内可以相见，你可托张妈给一信息。若得在园内一见，倒比来家得说话。千万，千万。再，所赐香袋二个，今已查收外，特寄香珠一串，略表我心。千万收好。表弟潘又安拜具。"凤姐看罢，不怒而反乐。别人并不识字。王善保家的素日并不知道他姑表姊弟有这一节风流故事，见了这鞋袜，心中已是有些毛病，又见有一红帖，凤姐又看着笑，他便说道："必是他们胡写的账目，不成个字，所以奶奶见笑。"凤姐笑道："正是这个账竟算不过来。你是司棋的姥姥，他的表弟也该姓王，怎么又姓潘呢？"王善保家的见问的奇怪，只得勉强告道："司棋的姑妈给了潘家，所以他姑表兄弟姓潘。上次逃走了的潘又安就是他姑表兄弟。"凤姐笑道："这就是了。"因道："我念给你听听。"说着从头念了一遍，大家都吓一跳。这王善保家的一心只要拿人错儿，不想反拿住了他外孙女儿，又气又臊。周瑞家的四人又

search. Mrs. Wang started with the other girls' cases and, finding nothing exceptionable, went on to open Siqi's case. After a perfunctory search she declared there was nothing there and started to close it.

"Wait!" cried Zhou Rui's wife. "What's this?"

She reached to pick out a man's silk socks and slippers as well as a small bundle. When they opened this, they found inside a love-knot and a letter. These were handed to Xifeng for her inspection, for as she was in charge of the household and had to read letters and go through accounts, she knew quite a few characters. Xifeng saw that this stationery was red with double happy-life designs. On it was written:

> After your visit home last month my parents found out about our understanding, but we can't have our wish until after your young lady's marriage. If it's possible to meet in the Garden, get Mrs. Zhang to send me word. That would be more convenient than your coming here. Do, do arrange it! Also, I've received the two pouches you sent me, and I'm sending you a string of scented beads as a token of my love. Please. Keep them safely. Your cousin, Pan Youan.

This letter, far from angering Xifeng, amused her. As none of the others could read and Mrs. Wang had no inkling of this romance between her grand-daughter and young Pan, the sight of the slippers and socks had made her uneasy. When Xifeng started laughing at what was written on the red paper she said:

"I suppose this is some account and you're amused by their poor writing, madam?"

"Quite. This account takes some working out. As Siqi's maternal grandmother, tell me how her cousin comes to have the name Pan instead of Wang?"

In some surprise Mrs. Wang stammered, "Her paternal aunt married a Pan, so she has a cousin named Pan — the Pan Youan who ran away the other day."

"That explains it," chuckled Xifeng. I'll read it for you."

She read the letter, and everybody was shocked. It had never occurred to Wang Shanbao's wife, so intent had she been on exposing others, that her grand-daughter would be caught out. She was quite overwhelmed by shame and vexation. Zhou Rui's wife and the other stew-

都问着他："你老可听见了？明明白白，再没的话说了。如今据你老人家，该怎么样？"这王善保家的只恨没地缝儿钻进去。凤姐只瞅着他嘻嘻的笑，向周瑞家的笑道："这倒也好。不用你们作老娘的操一点儿心，他鸦雀不闻的给你们弄个好女婿来，大家倒省心。"周瑞家的也笑着凑趣儿。王善保家的气无处泄，自己回手打自己的脸，骂道："老不死的娼妇，怎么造下孽了！说嘴打嘴，现世现报在人眼里。"众人见这般，俱笑个不住，又半劝半讽的。凤姐见司棋低头不语，也并无畏惧惭愧之意，倒觉可异。料此时夜深，且不必盘问，只怕他夜间去寻短志，遂唤两个婆子监守起他来。带了人，拿了赃证回来，且自安歇，等待明日料理。谁知到夜里又连起来几次，下面淋血不止。

至次日，便觉身体十分软弱，起来发晕，遂撑不住。请太医来。诊脉毕，遂立药案云："看得少奶奶系心气不足，虚火乘脾，皆由忧劳所伤，以致嗜卧好眠，胃虚土弱，不思饮食。今聊用升阳降火养荣之剂。"写案毕，遂开了几样药名，不过是人参、当归、黄芪等类之剂。一时退出，有老嬷嬷们拿了方子回过王夫人，不免又添一番愁闷，遂将司棋等事暂且不理。

可巧这日尤氏来看凤姐，坐了一回，到园中去又看过李纨。才要望候众姊妹们去，忽见惜春遣人来请，尤氏遂到了他房中去。惜春便将昨晚之事细细告诉与尤氏，又命将入画的东西一概要来与尤氏过目。尤氏道："实是你哥哥赏他哥哥的，只是不该私自传送，如今官盐竟成了私盐了。"因骂入

ardesses asked her, "Well, what have you to say to that? How should we deal with her in your opinion?"

Mrs. Wang wished she could sink into the ground, and Xifeng laughed at her. "This is just as well," she remarked to Mrs. Zhou. "She's saved her granny and everyone trouble by quietly picking a fine young man for herself."

Zhou Rui's wife chuckled too and made some caustic comments. Unable to vent her anger on anyone else, Mrs. Wang slapped her own face.

"You old bitch who's lived beyond your time!" she swore. "This is retribution for your sins. You brought this on yourself."

The others burst out laughing, then while making a show of consoling her flung a few taunts at her. Only Siqi stood silent with lowered head, but to Xifeng's surprise she showed no sign of fear. It was too late to question the girl, but for fear she might do away with herself that night Xifeng detailed two matrons to keep an eye on her. Then she had the evidence they had discovered taken back to her place and retired, meaning to settle the matter the next day.

During the night, however, Xifeng had to get up several times and lost a good deal of blood. The next morning she kept to her bed, feeling weak and dizzy. The court physician summoned to examine her reported:

"The young mistress suffers from lack of vital blood and a hot humour in the spleen caused by worry and undue exertion. This has resulted in listlessness, drowsiness, indigestion and lack of appetite. A tonic to restore her strength and cool the hot humour is recommended."

Having made out a prescription including ginseng, angelica, astragalus and the like, he took his leave.

Some old nurses took the prescription to Lady Wang, and this so added to her worries that for the time being she set Siqi's business aside.

That day Madam You happened to call first on Xifeng and then on Li Wan in the Garden. She was meaning to visit the girls when Xichun sent a maid to invite her over. Xichun told her all that had happened the night before and showed her the ingots found among Ruhua's things.

"These really were gifts to her brother from Zhen," Madam You confirmed. "His giving them was above-board, but she shouldn't have

画："糊涂脂油蒙了心的。"惜春道："你们管教不严，反骂丫头。这些姊妹，独我的丫头这样没脸，我如何去见人。昨儿我立逼着凤姐带了他去，他只不肯。我想，他原是那边的人，凤姐姐不带他去，也原有理。我今日正要送过去，嫂子来的恰好，快带了他去。或打，或杀，或卖，我一概不管。"入画听说，又跪下哭求，说："不敢了。只求姑娘看从小儿的情分，好歹生死在一处罢。"尤氏和奶娘等人也都十分分解，说："他不过一时糊涂了，下次再不敢的。他从小儿服侍你一场，到底留着他为是。"谁知惜春虽然年幼，却天生成一种百折不回的、廉介孤独僻性，任人怎说，他只以为丢了他的体面，咬定牙断乎不肯。更又说的好："不但不要入画，如今我已大了，连我也不便往你们那边去了。况且近日我每每风闻得有人背地里议论多少不堪的闲话，我若再去，连我也编派上了。"尤氏道："谁议论什么？又有什么可议论的！姑娘是谁，我们是谁。姑娘既听见人议论我们，就该问着他才是。"惜春冷笑道："你这话问着我倒好。我一个姑娘家，只有躲是非的，我反去寻是非，成个什么人了！还有一句话，我不怕你恼，好歹自有公论，又何必去问人。古人说得好，'善恶生死，父子不能有所勖助'，何况你我二人之间。我只知道保得住我就够了，不管你们。从此以后，你们

smuggled them in here on the sly — that's turned state traffic in salt into contraband." She scolded Ruhua for her stupidity, saying eating too much rich food had addled her wits.

"As master and mistress you weren't strict enough with your servants, yet now you blame the maid," protested Xichun. "Of all us girls here I'm the only one to lose face through my maid. How am I to face people in future? Last night I urged Xifeng to take her away, but she wouldn't. That's natural, I suppose, as Ruhua comes from the East Mansion. But today I meant to take her there myself, so I'm glad you've come. Do take her away quickly. You can beat her, kill her or sell her — I shan't care in the least."

Ruhua fell on her knees weeping.

"I won't do such a thing again. But please, miss, for old time's sake, let me die here with you!" she pleaded.

Madam You and the nurses interceded too.

"This was just a momentary slip-up, and she won't dare do it again," they said. "She's been waiting on you since childhood. You'd better allow her to stay."

But Xichun although young had a will of her own and was most uncompromising and eccentric. However hard they pleaded, she was adamant as she felt the maid had disgraced her.

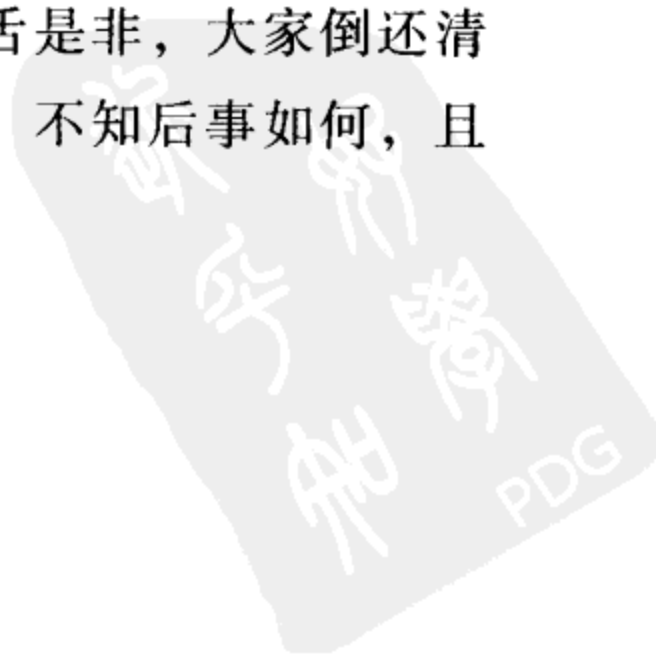
"I don't want Ruhua," she insisted. "Not only that, now that I'm growing up I think it best not to visit you people over there myself. Especially as these last few days I've been hearing a lot of gossip. I don't want to be mixed up in any scandal."

"Who's been gossipping?" asked Madam You. "What about? Aren't we all one family? If you hear talk about us, you should ask the gossips why they spread such rumours."

Xichun smiled scornfully.

"A fine way to talk! A young girl like me should just steer clear of scandals. What sort of creature would I be if instead I sought them out? And at the risk of offending you I must say: Your reputation's known, so I don't have to ask what it is. As the ancients said: 'Where good and evil, life and death are concerned, even fathers and sons are unable to help each other.' That's even truer of us. What I care about is *my* good name, not yours. If you

有事别累我。”尤氏听了，又气又好笑，因向地下众人道：“怪道人人都说这四丫头年轻糊涂，我只不信。你们听方才这篇话，无原无故，又不知好歹，又没个轻重。虽然是小孩子的话，却又能寒人的心。”众嬷嬷笑道：“姑娘年轻，奶奶自然要吃些亏的。”惜春冷笑道：“我虽年轻，这话却不年轻。你们不看书不识几个字，所以都是些呆子，看着明白人，倒说我年轻糊涂。”尤氏道：“你是状元、探花，古今第一个才子。我们是糊涂人，不如你明白，何如?”惜春道：“状元、探花难道就没有糊涂的不成?可知他们更有不能了悟的。”尤氏笑道：“你倒好，才是才子，这会子又作大和尚了，又讲起了悟来。”惜春道：“我不了悟，我也舍不得入画了。”尤氏道：“可知你是心冷口冷的人。”惜春道：“古人曾也说的，‘不作狠心人，难得自了汉。’我清清白白的一个人，为什么叫你们带累坏了我!”尤氏心内原有病，怕说这些话。听说有人议论，已是心中羞恼激射，只是在惜春分上不好发作，忍耐了大半。今见惜春又说这句，因按捺不住，因问惜春道：“怎么就带累了你?你的丫头的不是，无故说我，我倒忍了这半日，你倒越发得了意，只管说这些话。你是千金万金的小姐，我们以后就不亲近，仔细带累了小姐的美名。即刻就叫人将入画带了过去!”说着，便赌气起身去了。惜春道：“若果然不来，倒也省了口舌是非，大家倒还清净。”尤氏也不答话，一径往前边去了。不知后事如何，且听下回分解。



get involved in scandals in future, don't drag me in."

Madam You did not know whether to laugh or be angry. She said to the servants, "No wonder they all call her young and foolish. I didn't believe them, but you heard the unreasonable way she talked just now — showing no judgement or sense of proportion at all. It's childish talk, but it cuts people to the quick."

"She's young, madam," the nurses rejoined. "You must make allowances."

"I may be young," Xichun retorted. "All the same I'm speaking from experience. You don't know enough characters to read, so you're all so benighted that when I talk sense you call me young and foolish."

"You're the Number One Scholar, the greatest talent of all times," quipped Madam You. "Stupid people like us don't have your sense. How's that?"

"Even Number One scholars can be foolish. In fact they're most likely to lack enlightenment."

"Fine!" Madam You crowed. "A moment ago you were a talented scholar; now you've become a chief monk holding forth on enlightenment."

"If I weren't enlightened, I wouldn't have the heart to give up Ruhua."

"But that proves you heartless and cold."

"As the ancients said: 'One must be ruthless to keep out of trouble.' I'm pure and spotless. Why should I spoil my integrity by letting you involve me in your affairs?"

Being sensitive on this point, Madam You disliked such talk. She had been mortified to hear that there had been gossip, but had controlled herself in front of Xichun. This last thrust was more than she could take, however.

"In what way have we involved you?" she demanded. "Your maid does wrong, and for no reason you round on *me*. I've put up with it for some time, but that's only emboldened you to keep on like this. If you're such a fine young lady, we won't venture to approach you in future for fear of spoiling your good reputation." She ordered her servants to take Ruhua away and got up in a temper to leave.

"If you do stay away that will save us bickering and trouble, and we can all have a quiet life," cried Xichun.

Madam You did not answer this but went straight out. To know what happened later, read the next chapter.

第七十五回

开夜宴异兆发悲音　赏中秋新词得佳谶

话说尤氏从惜春处赌气出来，正欲往王夫人处去。跟从的老嬷嬷们因悄悄的回道："奶奶且别往上房去。才有甄家的几个人来，还有些东西，不知是作什么机密事，奶奶这一去恐不便。"尤氏听了道："昨日听见你爷说，看邸报，甄家犯了罪，现今抄没家私，调取进京治罪。怎么又有人来？"老嬷嬷道："正是呢。才来了几个女人，气色不成气色，慌慌张张的，想必有什么瞒人的事情也是有的。"

尤氏听了，便不往前去，仍往李氏这边来了。恰好太医才诊了脉去。李纨近日也略觉清爽了些，拥衾倚枕，坐在床上，正欲一二人来说些闲话。因见尤氏进来不似往日和蔼可亲，只呆呆的坐着。李纨因问道："你过来了这半日，可曾在别处屋里吃些东西没有？只怕饿了。"命素云瞧有什么新鲜点心拣了来。尤氏忙止道："不必，不必。你这一向病着，那里有什么新鲜东西？况且我也不饿。"李纨道："他姨娘家送来的好茶面子，倒是对碗来你喝罢。"说毕，便吩咐人去对茶。尤氏出神无语。跟来的丫头媳妇们因问："奶奶今儿中晌尚未洗脸，这会子趁便可洗一洗好？"尤氏点头。李纨忙命

Chapter 75

At a Feast One Night Portentous Sighing Is Heard
New Poems on the Moon Festival Are Taken as Good Omens

Madam You left Xichun in a huff to call on Lady Wang, but the nurses accompanying her quietly warned her, "Better not go there, madam. The Zhen family have just sent people with some things and they seem to want it kept quiet, so this may not be a good time to call."

"Only yesterday your master told me that, according to the *Court Gazette*, the Zhens have been charged with crimes," said Madam You. "Their house has been raided, their property confiscated, and they've been fetched to the capital to stand trial. So why have these people come?"

"Why indeed?" answered the nurses. "The few women who arrived just now looked flustered and agitated. They must be up to something they don't want to be known."

In view of this, Madam You called instead on Li Wan. The court physician treating her had just left, and as her health had recently improved she was sitting propped up against her pillow in bed with a quilt around her, just hoping someone would drop in for a chat. She soon noticed, however, that Madam You was not her usual amiable self, simply sitting there lost in thought.

"It was good of you to come," said Li Wan. "Have you eaten anything in your round of calls? You must be hungry." She told Suyun to try to find some delicacies for her.

"No need, no need," Madam You at once demurred. "Ill as you've been, you can't have any delicacies here. Besides, I'm not hungry."

"Lan's aunt has sent me some good fried flour; let's mix a bowl for you to taste." She ordered a maid to prepare this, while Madam You remained silent in a brown study.

The attendants who had come with her suggested. "You didn't wash at noon, madam. Would you like to freshen up now?"

素云来取自己妆奁。素云一面取来，一面将自己的脂粉拿来，笑道："我们奶奶就少这个。奶奶不嫌脏，这是我的，能着用些。"李纨道："我虽没有，你就该往姑娘们那里取去，怎么公然拿出你的来。幸而是他，若是别人，岂不恼呢。"尤氏道："这又何妨。自来我每逢过来，谁的没使过，今日忽然又嫌脏了?"一面说，一面盘膝坐在炕沿上。银蝶上来忙代为卸去腕镯戒指，又将一大袱手巾盖在下截，将衣裳护严。小丫鬟炒豆儿捧了一大盆温水走至尤氏跟前，只弯腰捧着。李纨道："怎么这样没规矩?"银蝶笑道："说一个个没权变的，说一个葫芦就是一个瓢。奶奶不过待咱们宽些，在家里不管怎样罢了，你就得了意，不管在家出外，当着亲戚也只随便罢了。"尤氏道："你随他去罢，横竖洗了就完事了。"炒豆儿忙赶着跪下。尤氏笑道："我们家上下大小的人只会讲外面假礼、假体面，究竟作出来的事都够使的了。"李纨听如此说，便知他已知道昨夜的事，因笑道："你这话有因，谁作事究竟够使了?"尤氏道："你倒问我!你敢是病着死过去了?"

一语未了，只见人报："宝姑娘来了。"忙说快请时，宝钗已走进来。尤氏忙擦脸起身让坐，因问："怎么忽然一个人走来，别的姊妹都怎么不见?"宝钗道："正是，我也没有见他们。只因今日我妈妈身上不自在，家里两个女人也都因时症未起炕，别的靠不得，我今儿要出去伴着老人家夜里作伴

When she nodded, Li Wan told Suyun to fetch her dressing case, and with it the girl brought some of her own rouge and powder.

"Our mistress doesn't use cosmetics, so please make do with these of mine if you don't think them dirty, madam," she said with a smile.

"The idea!" scolded Li Wan. "Although I haven't got such things, you should have fetched some from one of the young ladies, instead of producing your own. You're lucky it's her and not anybody else — or they'd have taken offence at your impudence."

"What does it matter?" said Madam You. " I use all your servants' things each time I come here. Why should I be fussy today?"

She sat cross-legged on the *kang* while Yindie took off her bracelets and rings, then spread a large handkerchief on her lap to protect her clothing. A large basin of warm water was brought in by Chaodou, one of the younger maids, who stooped to hold it out for Madam You.

"Will you never learn to adapt yourself to circumstances?" cried Yindie. "Once given an instruction, you stick to it, regardless. Because our mistress is lenient and not particular about etiquette at home, you get the idea you can be equally casual in a relative's house, carrying on in public the way you do in private."

"Never mind," said Madam You. " All I want is a wash."

Chaodou hastily knelt down.

"In our family," went on Madam You with a smile, "high and low alike all observe the outward forms of etiquette but actually carry on in a scandalous way."

Li Wan knew from this that she had heard about the last night's happenings.

"Why do you say that?" she laughed. "Who's been carrying on in a scandalous way?"

"Why ask *me*? You may have been ill but you weren't dead...."

Before she could say more, Baochai was announced and she entered even as Li Wan was asking her in. Madam You quickly wiped her face and got up to offer her a seat.

"All by yourself?" she asked. "Where are the other girls?"

"I haven't seen them," said Baochai. "I've come because mother's unwell, and our only two reliable maids are ill in bed; so I must go back to

儿。要去回老太太、太太，我想又不是什么大事，且不用提。等好了，我横竖进来的，所以来告诉大嫂子一声。”李纨听说，只看着尤氏笑，尤氏也只看着李纨笑。一时尤氏盥沐已毕，大家吃面茶。李纨因笑道：“既这样，且打发人去请姨妈的安，问是何病。我也病着，不能亲自来的。好妹妹，你去只管去，我自打发人去到你那里去看屋子。你好歹住一两天还进来，别叫我落不是。”宝钗笑道：“落什么不是呢，这也是通共常情，你又不曾卖放了贼。依我的主意，也不必添人过去，竟把云丫头请了来，你和他住一两日，岂不省事。”尤氏道：“可是史大妹妹往那里去了？”宝钗道：“我才打发他们找你们探丫头去了，叫他同到这里来，我也明白告诉他。”

正说着，果然报：“云姑娘和三姑娘来了。”大家让坐已毕，宝钗便说要出去一事。探春道：“很好。不但姨妈好了还来的，就便好了不来也使得。”尤氏笑道：“这话奇怪，怎么撵起亲戚来了？”探春冷笑道：“正是呢，有叫人撵的，不如我先撵。亲戚们好，也不必要死住着才好。咱们倒是一家子亲骨肉呢，一个个不像乌眼鸡，恨不得你吃了我，我吃了你！”尤氏忙笑道：“我今儿是那里来的晦气，偏都碰着你姊妹们的气头儿上了。”探春道：“谁叫你赶热灶来了！”因问：“谁又得罪了你呢？”因又寻思道：“四丫头也不犯罗唣你，却是谁呢？”尤氏只含糊答应。探春知他畏事不肯多言，因笑

keep her company tonight. I meant to ask leave from Their Ladyships, but then I thought that as it's not really serious there's no need to mention it; and anyway I'll come back as soon as she's better. So I've just come to let you know."

Li Wan and Madam You exchanged smiles at this. And now that the latter had cleaned up they all had some fried-flour "tea."

Li Wan remarked, "We must send to inquire after Aunt Xue's illness, as I'm not well enough to go myself. Yes, just go along home, dear cousin. I'll assign people to keep an eye on your rooms for you while you're away. But mind you come back after a day or two, otherwise I'll be held to blame."

"Why should you be? This is just for the time being and perfectly natural. It's not as if you were taking a bribe to let a thief escape! And I see no reason for you to send people over. Why not invite Xiangyun here to stay with you for a few days? Wouldn't that be simpler?"

"Where is she?" asked Madam You.

"I just sent her to find Tanchun and bring her here, so that I can let her know too."

That same moment Xiangyun and Tanchun were announced, and after they had been offered seats Baochai explained why she was leaving the Garden.

"Very good," commented Tanchun. "So you'll come back when auntie's better. And even if you don't, that won't matter either."

"That's strange way to talk!" exclaimed Madam You. "Are we driving our relatives away?"

"That's the idea." Tanchun smiled mockingly. "Better drive them out before getting thrown out by others. In any case, there's no need for relatives to live together all the time. We're a happy family of kith and kin I must say, all like game-cocks fighting to finish each other off."

"I'm certainly out of luck today," Madam You laughed, "Finding so many of you girls in a bad temper."

"Who told you to come and burn yourself on the stove?" Tanchun retorted. "And who else has offended you?" She went on thoughtfully, "Xichun has no reason to scold you, so who else could it be?"

Madam You just muttered an evasive reply.

道："你别装老实了。除了朝廷治罪，没有砍头的，你不必畏头畏尾的。实告诉你罢，我昨儿把王善保的那老婆子打了，我还顶着个罪呢。不过背地里说我些闲话，难道也还打我一顿不成！"宝钗忙问因何又打他，探春悉把昨夜怎的抄检，怎的打他，一一都说了出来。尤氏见探春已经说了出来，便把惜春方才之事也说了出来。探春道："这是他的僻性，孤介太过，我们再傲不过他的。"又告诉他们说："今日一早不见动静，打听凤辣子又病了。我就打发我妈妈出去打听王善保家的是怎样。回来告诉我说，王善保家的挨了一顿打，大太太嗔着他多事。"尤氏、李纨道："这倒也是正理。"探春冷笑道："这种掩饰谁不会作，且再瞧就是了。"尤氏、李纨皆默无所答。一时估量着前头用饭，湘云和宝钗回房打点衣衫，不在话下。

尤氏等遂辞了李纨，往贾母这边来。贾母歪在榻上，王夫人说甄家因何获罪，如今抄没了家产，回京治罪等语。贾母听了不自在，恰好见他姊妹来了，因问："从那里来的？可知凤姐妯娌两个的病今日怎样？"尤氏等忙回道："今日都好些。"贾母点头叹道："咱们别管人家的事，且商量咱们八月十五日赏月是正经。"王夫人笑道："都已预备下了。不知老太太拣那里好，只是园里空，夜晚风冷。"贾母笑道："多穿

Knowing she was reluctant to speak out for fear of trouble, Tanchun teased, "Don't pretend to be so simple. People don't get their heads chopped off except for crimes against the state, so what are you so afraid of? I'll tell you the truth: I slapped that old wife of Wang Shanbao's yesterday, and I'm quite willing to take the consequences. But apart from calling me names behind my back, nobody's likely to give me a beating for it."

Asked by Baochai what had provoked her, Tanchun described in detail the search made the night before and why she had struck Mrs. Wang. Since Tanchun had come out with it, Madam You told them how Xichun had just treated her.

"She's like that," observed Tanchun, "so eccentric and stubborn there's just no talking her round." Then she informed them, "When no action was taken this morning and I heard that our peppery Xifeng was ill again, I sent my nanny to find out what had happened to Wang Shanbao's wife. She came back to report that the old creature got a thrashing for being too meddlesome."

"Serves her right too," approved Madam You and Li Wan.

Tanchun laughed caustically.

"Who can't see through that trick? Just wait and see...." Madam You and Li Wan made no answer to this. And presently, thinking it time for the Lady Dowager's meal, Xiangyun and Baochai went back to pack their things while Madam You took her leave of Li Wan and went straight to the old lady's place. She found her sitting on her couch listening to Lady Wang's disturbing account of how the Zhen family had got into trouble, had their property confiscated and been fetched to the capital for punishment. She asked Madam You where she had come from and if Xifeng and Li Wan were any better.

"They're both better today," Madam You made haste to assure her.

The old lady nodded and sighed.

"Well, let's not trouble ourselves about other people's affairs but consider how to celebrate the Moon Festival."

"We've got everything ready," said Lady Wang. "But we don't know where you'd like to have the feast. Only the wind may be cold at night in the empty Garden."

两件衣服何妨，那里正是赏月的地方，岂可倒不去的?”说话之间，早有媳妇、丫鬟们抬过饭桌来，王夫人、尤氏等忙上来放箸捧饭。贾母见自己的几色菜已摆完，另有两大捧盒内捧了几色菜来，便知是各房另外孝敬的旧规矩。贾母因问:“都是些什么?上几次我就吩咐过，如今可以把这些蠲了罢，你们还不听。如今比不得在先辐辏的时光了。”鸳鸯忙道:“我说过几次，都不听，也只罢了。”王夫人笑道:“不过都是家常东西。今日我吃斋，没有别的。那些面筋豆腐老太太又不大甚爱吃，只拣了一样椒油莼齑酱来。”贾母笑道:“这样正好，正想这个吃。”鸳鸯听说，便将碟子挪在跟前。宝琴一一的让了，方归坐。贾母便命探春来同吃。探春也都让过了，便和宝琴对面坐下。待书忙取了碗箸来。鸳鸯又指那几样菜道:“这两样看不出是什么东西，是大老爷送来的。这一碗是鸡髓笋，是外头老爷送上来的。”一面说，一面就只将这碗笋送至桌上。贾母略尝了两点，便命:“将那两样着人送回去，就说我吃了。以后不必天天送，我想吃自然来要。”媳妇们答应着，仍送过去，不在话下。贾母问:“有稀饭吃些罢。”尤氏早捧过一碗来，说是红稻米粥。贾母接来吃了半碗，便吩咐:“将这粥送给凤哥儿吃去。”又指:“这一碗笋和这一盘风腌果子狸给颦儿、宝玉两个吃去，那一碗肉给兰小子吃去。”又向尤氏道:“我吃了，你就来吃了罢。”尤氏答应着，待贾母漱口洗手毕，贾母便下地和王夫

"That doesn't matter. We can dress more warmly. That's just the place to enjoy the moon, of course."

While they were chatting tables had been brought in, and Lady Wang and Madam You at once helped to serve the food. The Lady Dowager saw that in addition to the dishes prepared for her there were two big hampers of others, it being the custom for the two mansions to present her with extra dishes every day. She asked what they were.

"I've told you several times to stop this, but you never listen," she complained. "We're not as well off as we used to be."

"I've passed on your instructions more than once, but this goes on as usual," Yuanyang said. "So I had to let it go."

"This is only everyday family fare," put in Lady Wang. "As today is one of my fast days we haven't got much, and knowing that you're not too fond of gluten of wheat and beancurd I just chose minced water-mallow with pepper sauce."

"That's good. Just what I fancy."

At once Yuanyang set this dish before her. Baoqin and the other girls after deferring to each other took seats too. And Tanchun, told by the old lady to join them, after first declining the honour sat down opposite Baoqin, Shishu then brought out a bowl and chopsticks. Pointing at two dishes in a hamper Yuanyang remarked:

"We don't know what these are, they're from the Elder Master. This bowl of bamboo-shoots with chicken marrow is from Lord Zhen." She placed it on the table.

The old lady simply tasted a couple of dishes, then ordered those two to be returned to the senders.

"Tell them I've tried them," she said. "In future there's no need to send over every day. If I fancy anything I'll ask for it."

The matrons assented and went off with the dishes.

"Is there any congee?" the Lady Dowager asked.

Madam You, who had a bowl ready, remarked that it was made of special red rice. The old lady took it and ate half a bowl, then had some sent to Xifeng. She also had a bowl of bamboo-shoots and a dish of salted raccoon sent to Daiyu and Baoyu, and another bowl of meat sent to Jia Lan. Then she urged Madam You to come and eat. The latter

人说闲话行食。尤氏告坐。探春、宝琴二人也起来了，笑道："失陪，失陪。"尤氏笑道："剩我一个人，大排桌的不惯。"贾母笑道："鸳鸯、琥珀来趁势也吃些，又作了陪客。"尤氏笑道："好，好，好，我正要说呢。"贾母笑道："看着多多的人吃饭，最有趣的。"又指银蝶道："这孩子也好，也来同你主子一块儿来吃，等你们离了我，再立规矩去。"尤氏道："快过来，不必装假。"贾母背着手看着取乐。因见伺候添饭的人手内捧着一碗下人的米饭，尤氏吃的仍是白粳饭，贾母问道："你怎么昏了，盛这个饭来给你奶奶。"那人道："老太太的饭完了。今日添了一位姑娘，所以短了些。"鸳鸯道："如今都是可着头做帽子了，要一点儿富余也不能的。"王夫人忙回道："这一二年旱涝不定，田上的米都不能按数交的。这几样细米更艰难了，所以都可着吃的多少关去，生恐一时短了，买的不顺口。"贾母笑道："这正是'巧媳妇做不出没米的粥'来。"众人都笑起来。鸳鸯道："既这样，你就去把三姑娘的饭拿来添也是一样，就这样笨。"尤氏笑道："我这个就够了，也不用取去。"鸳鸯道："你够了，我不会吃的。"地下的媳妇们听说，方忙着取去

assented but waited till the old lady had washed her hands, rinsed her mouth and left the table to chat with Lady Wang. And as she took a seat, Tanchun and Baoqin got up and asked to be excused.

"What, leave me all alone at this big table!" cried Madam You. "I'm not used to it."

"Yuanyang and Hupo!" called the old lady, chuckling. "Here's your chance to tuck in. Come and keep her company."

"Fine, fine." Madam You smiled. "Just what I was hoping for."

"It's great fun watching a whole lot of people eating together." The old lady pointed at Yindie. "That's a good child too. Come and join your mistress. You can stick to the rules again after leaving me."

"Come on, quick," Madam You cried. " No need to put on an act."

The Lady Dowager, her hands behind her as she looked on with amusement, noticed one of the maids offer Madam You a bowl of the ordinary white rice for the servants.

"Are you out of your mind, serving your mistress that rice?" she demanded.

"Your rice is finished, madam," said the maid. "And as there's an extra young lady today, we're short."

"We have to cut our coat according to our cloth," Yuanyang put in. "Nowadays there's no margin at all."

Lady Wang explained, "The last couple of years, what with floods and drought, our farms haven't been able to produce their quota, especially of the rice of the finer kind. So we only issue as much as we think will be needed, for fear of running out. The rice you buy outside isn't to our taste."

The old lady chortled, "As the proverb says: 'Even a clever wife can't make congee without rice. '"

Amid general laughter Yuanyang asked the servant, "In that case, why not fetch Miss Tanchun's rice here to make up? Wouldn't that be the same? Why be so stupid?"

"No, I've had enough," said Madam You with a smile. "There's no need to fetch more."

"You may have had enough, but what about me?" Yuanyang parried.

了。一时王夫人也去用饭，这里尤氏直陪贾母说话取笑。

到起更的时候，贾母说："黑了，过去罢。"尤氏方告辞出来。走至大门前上了车，银蝶坐在车沿上。众媳妇放下帘子来，便带小丫头们先直走过那边大门口等着去了。因两府之门相隔没有一箭之路，每日家常来往不必定要周备，况天黑夜晚之间回来的遭数更多，所以老嬷嬷带着小丫头，只几步便走了过来。两边大门上的人都在东西街口，早把行人断住。尤氏大车上也不用牲口，只用七八个小厮挽环拽轮，轻轻的便推拽过这边台基上了。于是众小厮退过狮子以外，众嬷嬷打起帘子，银蝶先下来，然后搀下尤氏来。大小七八个灯笼照的十分真切。尤氏因见两边狮子下放着四五辆大车，便知系来赴赌之人所乘，遂向银蝶众人道："你看，坐车的是这样，骑马的还不知有几个?马自然在棚里拴着，咱们看不见。也不知道他娘老子挣下多少钱与他们，这么开心儿。"一面说，一面已到了厅上。贾蓉之妻带了家下媳妇、丫头们，也都秉烛接了出来。尤氏笑道："成日家我要偷着瞧瞧他们，也没得便。今儿倒巧，就顺便打他们窗户跟前走过去。"众媳妇答应着，提灯笼引路，又有一个先去悄悄的知会服侍的小厮们不要失惊打怪。于是尤氏一行人悄悄的来至窗下，只听里面称三赞四，耍笑之音虽多，又兼着恨五骂六，忿怨之声亦不少。

原来贾珍近因居丧，每不得游玩，又不得观优闻乐作

Then the serving-women hurried off to fetch more. Presently Lady Wang went off to have her meal leaving Madam You to chat with the old lady till about nine, when she was told:

"It's late now. You'd better go back."

Madam You took her leave then and went out to the gate to mount her carriage. Yindie took a place at one side of the carriage. The serving-women, having let down the curtain, led the young maids to wait at the Ning Mansion's gate; for as the two mansions were less than a bowshot apart, no elaborate preparations had to be made when the members of both exchanged visits, especially at night when many of them went out and returned. So the old nurses just led the young maids the short distance over, the men-servants at both gates having already cordoned off the east and west ends of the street. Madam You's carriage was not drawn by a mule. Instead, seven or eight pages pulled it gently along to the steps of the Ning Mansion, then withdrew behind the stone lions flanking the gate while the serving-women raised the curtain and Yindie alighted to help her mistress down. Seven or eight lanterns large and small shed a bright light, and noticing four or five carriages drawn up by the stone lions Madam You inferred that visitors had arrived for another gambling party.

"Look at all those carriages," she said to Yindie. "And how many more came on horseback we've no means of knowing, as their horses will all be tethered in the stables. How much money can those young fellows' parents give them to throw away like this?"

By now she had reached the front hall, where Jia Rong's wife was waiting to welcome her at the head of serving-women and maids with candles.

"I've always wanted to take a peep at them," remarked Madam You. "Here's our chance at last! Suppose we walk past their windows?"

The matrons assented and led the way with lanterns, one of them going quietly ahead to warn the pages in attendance not to make any commotion. When Madam You and the rest tiptoed up to the windows they heard quite a noise inside — jokes and compliments interspersed with complaints and curses.

The fact is that Jia Zhen, being in mourning and unable to go out to

遣。无聊之际，便生了个破闷之法。日间以习射为由，请了各世家弟兄及诸富贵亲友来较射。因说："白白的只管乱射，终无裨益，不但不能长进，而且坏了式样。必须立个罚约，赌个利物，大家才有勉力之心。"因此在天香楼下箭道内立了鹄子，皆约定每日早饭后来射鹄子。贾珍不肯出名，便命贾蓉作局家。这些来的皆系世袭公子，人人家道丰富，且都在少年，正是斗鸡走狗、问柳评花的一干游荡纨袴。因此大家议定，每日轮流作晚饭之主，——每日来射箭，不便独扰贾蓉一人之意。于是天天宰猪割羊，屠鹅戮鸭，好似临潼斗宝一般，都要卖弄自己家的好厨役好烹宰。不到半月工夫，贾赦、贾政听见这般，不知就里，反说这才是正理，文既误矣，武事当亦该习，况在武荫之属。两处遂也命贾环、贾琮、宝玉、贾兰等四人于饭后过来，跟着贾珍习射一回，方许回去。

贾珍之志不在此，再过一二日便渐次以歇臂养力为由，晚间或抹牌，赌个酒东而已，至后渐次至钱。如今三四月的光景，竟一日一日赌胜于射了，公然斗叶掷骰，放头开局，日夜赌起来。家下人借此各有些进益，巴不得的如此，所以竟成了势了。外人皆不知一字。近日邢夫人之胞弟邢德全，也素好如此，故也在其中。又有薛蟠，头一个惯喜送钱与人的，见此岂不快乐。这邢德全虽系邢夫人之胞弟，却居心、行事大不相同，只知吃酒赌钱、眠花宿柳为乐，手中滥漫使

amuse himself or listen to operas or music, had thought of a way to while away the time. In the day-time, under the pretext of practising archery, he invited young lordlings and other wealthy relatives and friends to archery contests. Arguing that shooting at random could not improve their skill and might even spoil their style, he imposed certain penalties and set stakes as an incentive to all to do their best. They had set up a target in the shooting-range under Heavenly Fragrance Pavilion and made it the rule to assemble there every morning after breakfast. Jia Zhen, not wanting his name to be used, made Jia Rong act as the banker.

The young hereditary nobles from wealthy families whom they invited were a set of profligates who enjoyed cock-fights, dog-racing and playing about with singsong girls and young actors. They agreed to take it in turn every day after the shooting contest to stand treat, so that Jia Rong need not defray all the expenses. And so day after day they had pigs, sheep and poultry killed and vied to show off their wealth, the skill of their chefs and the sumptuousness of their feasts.

Jia She and Jia Zheng did not hear about this until it had gone on for a fortnight or so, and not realizing what was involved they judged it quite right and proper for these young men not versed in literature to practise military arts, the more so as they belonged to families of hereditary generals of noble ranks. They even ordered Jia Huan, Jia Cong, Baoyu and Jia Lan to come over too after breakfast every day to practise archery with Jia Zhen for a while.

But since Jia Zhen had other ends in view, alleging the need to relax after their exertions he soon started arranging card games in the evenings and they laid wagers while drinking. So little by little these turned into gambling parties. Now, after three or four months, gambling had priority over archery and they played cards, diced and gambled quite openly day and night. The servants, getting more perks, encouraged this and so it was now routine — quite unknown to people outside the family.

Recently their group had been joined by Lady Xing's younger brother Xing Dequan, an inveterate wastrel, as well as the confirmed prodigal Xue Pan who naturally thought this a splendid scheme.

Xing Dequan although Lady Xing's brother had totally different interests, being a credulous fool who spent money like water and found all

钱，待人无二心，好酒者喜之，不饮者则亦不去亲近，无论上下主仆皆出自一意，并无贵贱之分，因此都唤他“傻大舅”。薛蟠更是早已出名的呆大爷，今日二人皆凑在一处，都爱“抢新快”爽利，便又会了两家，在外间炕上“抢新快”。别的又有几家在当地下大桌上打公番。里间又一起斯文些的，抹骨牌、打天九。此间服侍的小厮都是十五岁以下的孩子，若成丁的男子到不了这里，故尤氏方潜至窗外偷看。其中有两个十七八岁娈童以备奉酒的，都打扮的粉妆玉琢。今日薛蟠又输了一张，正没好气，幸而掷第二张完了，算来除翻过来倒反赢了，心中只是兴头起来。贾珍道：“且打住，吃了东西再来。”因问那两处怎样。里头打天九的，也作了账等吃饭。打公番的未清，且不肯吃。于是不顾，先摆下一大桌，贾珍陪着吃，命贾蓉落后陪那一起。薛蟠兴头了，便搂着一个娈童吃酒，又命将酒去敬邢傻舅。傻舅输了，没心绪，吃了两碗，便有些醉意，嗔着两个娈童只赶着赢家不理输家了，因骂道：“你们这起兔子，就是这样。天天在一处，谁的恩不沾过，只不过这一会子输了几两银子，你们就三六九等了。难道从此以后再没有求着我们的事了！”众人见他带酒，忙说：“很是，很是。果然他们风俗不好。”因喝命：“快敬酒赔罪。”两个娈童都是演就的局套，忙都跪

his pleasure in drinking, gambling and debauchery. He liked good drinkers and shunned those who did not drink, no matter whether they were high or low, making no distinction between master and slave; hence everybody called him Foolish Uncle.

Xue Pan, who had long been dubbed the Stupid Lordling, naturally found Xing a man after his own heart. As both of them liked dicing because it was fast, they had got two fellows to dice with them on the *kang* in the outer room where a few other men were playing cards at a big table, while in the inner room a less uncouth party were in the middle of a game of dominoes. Most of their attendants were pages of less than fifteen, all grown men-servants being debarred from the place. This was why Lady You dared peep through the window.

She saw that wine was being served by two young actors of seventeen or eighteen, strikingly handsome in their fine clothes and make up. Xue Pan was scowling after a losing throw, but now with a lucky toss he recouped his losses and won, which restored his good humour.

"Let's stop for a while," proposed Jia Zhen, "and have some refreshments before going on."

He asked how the two other tables were getting on. The domino players in the inner room had also finished and were waiting for supper, but the card players were in the middle of a game and reluctant to stop. Without waiting for them they had one table set first, and Jia Zhen sat down to dine with those who were ready, instructing Jia Rong to wait for the rest. Xue Pan, in exuberation, fondling one of the actors as he drank, ordered him to toast Foolish Uncle. But Xing was in a bad mood, after losing. Tipsy after two bowls of wine, he complained that the actors simply made up to the winners, ignoring the losers.

"You pansies are all the same," he swore. "We've been together all these days and you've had favours from us all, but now as soon as I lose a few taels of silver you start cold-shouldering me. Do you think you'll never need my help again?"

Seeing that he was half drunk, the others tried to humour him.

"Quite right, quite right," they said. "That's a bad way they have." They sternly ordered the two boys, "Hurry up and offer him wine to apologize."

下奉酒，说："我们这行人，师父教的不论远近厚薄，只看一时有钱势就亲敬；便是活佛神仙，一时没了钱势了，也不许理他。况且我们又年轻，又居这个行次，求舅太爷体恕些，我们就过去了。"说着，便举着酒俯膝跪下。邢大舅心里虽软了，只还故作怒意。众人又劝道："这孩子是实情话。老舅是久惯怜香惜玉的，如何今日反这样起来?若不吃这酒，他两个怎敢起来。"邢大舅已撑不住了，便说道："若不是众位说，我再不理。"说着，方接过来一气喝干，又斟一碗来。这邢大舅便酒勾往事，醉露真情起来，乃拍案对贾珍叹道："怨不的他们视钱如命。多少世宦大家出身的，若提起'钱势'二字，连骨肉都认不得了。老贤甥，昨日我和你那边的令伯母赌气，你不知道么?"贾珍道："不曾听见。"邢大舅叹道："就为钱这件混账东西。利害，利害!"贾珍深知他与邢夫人不睦，每遭邢夫人弃恶，扳出怨言，因劝道："老舅，你也太散漫些。若只管花去，有多少给老舅花的。"邢大舅道："老贤甥，你不知我邢家底里。我母亲去世时我尚小，世事不知。他姊妹三个人，只有你令伯母年长出阁，一分家私都是他把持带来。如今二家姐虽也出阁，他家甚也艰窘，三家姐尚在家里，一应用度都是这里陪房王善保家的掌管。便

The two young actors, accustomed to such scenes, knelt down to offer Xing a drink.

"In our profession our masters train us all, no matter how generous or close our patrons may be, just to make up to the rich and powerful. A man may be a living Buddha or saint, but so long as he has no money or influence we have to ignore him. Besides, sir, we're young and in this low profession, so please overlook it this time and let us off."

They raised a cup of wine and fell on their knees.

Though Foolish Uncle was mollified he kept up a show of anger.

"They're telling the truth, that's how it is," said the others. "You've always had a soft spot in your heart for actors; why be like this today? If you refuse to drink how dare they get up?"

Xing gave in at that and growled, "If it weren't for all these gentlemen incerceding, I'd have nothing more to do with you." Then only did he take the cup and drain it.

Another bowl was poured. And now the wine went to his head, making him hark back to earlier grievances. Pounding the table he said to Jia Zhen with a sigh:

"We can't blame these boys, my worthy nephew, for being so grasping. Why, where money and power are concerned, many people from big official families will forget even their own flesh and blood. Did you hear about the row I had yesterday with your respected aunt?"

"No, I didn't," was Jia Zhen's reply.

Xing Dequan sighed again.

"It was all over filthy lucre."

Jia Zhen knew he was on bad terms with Lady Xing, who thoroughly disapproved of him and often complained about him.

"You're rather too improvident, uncle," he said. " If you go on spending at this rate, you'll never have enough."

"My dear worthy nephew, you don't know how it is in our family," Xing retorted. "At the time of my mother's death I was still small and knew nothing of affairs. Of my three sisters your respected aunt is the oldest. She grabbed all our family property and brought it over with her at the time of her marriage. Now my second sister's married too, but also in straitened circumstances. My third is still at home, all our expenses

来要钱，也非要的是你贾府的，我邢家家私也就够我花了。无奈竟不得到手，所以有冤无处诉。”贾珍见他酒后絮絮叨叨，恐人听见不雅，连忙用言语去解释。

这外面尤氏等听得十分真切，乃悄悄向银蝶道：“你听见了？这是北院里大太太的兄弟抱怨他呢。可怜他亲兄弟还是这么样，可就怨不得这些人了。”因还要往下听时，正值打公番的也歇住了，要吃酒。因有一个问道：“方才是谁得罪了老舅，我们竟不曾听得明白，且告诉我，我替评评理。”邢德全见问，便把两个娈童不去理输的只去赶赢的话告诉了一遍。这一个年少的纨袴道：“这样说来，原实可恼，怨不得舅太爷生气。我且问你两个：舅太爷输了的，不过是银子钱，并没有输丢了鸡巴，你怎么就该不理他了？”众人听了大笑起来，连邢德全也喷了一地饭。尤氏在外面悄悄的啐了一口，骂道：“你听听，这等没廉耻的小挨刀的，才丢了脑袋骨子，就胡嗖嚼毛的。若再灌嗓下些黄汤去，还不知再嗖出些什么东西来呢。”一面说，一面便进去卸妆安歇。这里贾珍直至四更时，方才散了，往佩凤屋里去了。

次日起来，就有人回西瓜、月饼都预备全了，只待分派送人。贾珍吩咐佩凤道：“你请你奶奶看着送罢，我还有别的事呢。”佩凤答应去了，回了尤氏。尤氏只得一一分派遣人送去。一时佩凤又来说：“爷问奶奶，今儿出门不出？说咱们

are doled out to us by your aunt's personal maid here, the wife of your steward Wang Shanbao. When I come to ask for money I'm not cadging from you Jias. Our Xing family has quite enough for me to spend — if only I could get my hands on it. It's grossly unjust, but what can I do about it?"

Afraid this maudlin talk would make a bad impression on their guests, Jia Zhen tried to change the subject. But Madam You outside had heard all this clearly.

"Hear that?" she whispered to Yindie. "That's Lady Xing's younger brother complaining about her. If she treats her own brother so badly, no wonder other people complain of her too."

She was eager to hear more, and just then the card players who had finished their game came over to join the feast.

"Who offended Uncle Xing just now?" one of them asked. "I didn't quite get it. Tell us, and let us arbitrate."

Xing told them then how the two actors cold-shouldered losers and made up to winners.

"In that case," said the young man, "you had good reason to be angry, uncle. Let me ask you two boys this: Uncle Xing has only lost some money, not his prick, hasn't he? So why cold-shoulder him?"

At this eyeryone roared with laughter, including Xing, who guffawed so hard that he sprayed rice all over the floor.

Madam You outside spat in disgust.

"Listen to those shameless young scoundrels." she swore softly. "Barely lost their milk-teeth yet spewing out such dirt. If they go on swilling that yellow wine, who knows what they'll come out with next!"

She retired to her own room to bed.

Jia Zhen kept the guests company until the fourth watch when at last the party broke up, then went to spend the night with his concubine Peifeng. The next day when he got up, some servants reported that the water-melons and mooncakes for the festival were ready for distribution.

Jia Zhen told his concubine, "Ask your mistress to share them out as she thinks fit. I have other things to attend to."

Peifeng reported this to Madam You, who had shares sent over to the different households.

是孝家，明日十五过不得节，今儿晚上倒好，可以大家应应景儿，吃些瓜果酒饼。”尤氏道：“我倒不愿出门呢。那边珠大奶奶病了，凤丫头又睡倒了，我再不过去，越发没了人了。况且他又不得闲，应什么景儿。”佩凤道：“爷说了，今儿已辞了众人，直等十六才来呢，好歹定要请奶奶吃酒的。”尤氏笑道：“请我，我没的还席。”佩凤笑着去了，一时又来笑道：“爷说，连晚饭也请奶奶吃，好歹早些回来，叫我跟了奶奶去呢。”尤氏道：“这样，早饭吃什么？快些吃了，我好走。”佩凤道：“爷说早饭在外头吃，请奶奶自己吃罢。”尤氏问道：“今日外头有谁？”佩凤道：“听见说外头有两个南京新来的，倒不知是谁？”说话之间，贾蓉之妻也梳妆了来见过。少时摆上饭来，尤氏在上，贾蓉之妻在下陪。婆媳二人吃毕，尤氏便换了衣服，仍过荣府来，至晚方回去。

果然贾珍煮了一口猪，烧了一腔羊，余者果菜也不可胜记，就在会芳园丛绿堂中，屏开孔雀，褥设芙蓉，带领妻子姬妾，先饭后酒，开怀赏月作乐。将一更时分，真是风清月朗，上下如银。贾珍因要行令，尤氏便叫佩凤等四人入席，

Presently the concubine came back to inquire, "The master wants to know whether you're going out today or not, madam. He says since we are in mourning we can't celebrate the Moon Festival on the fifteenth of the eighth month, but we can have a family party tonight to mark the occasion with melons, fruit, cakes and wine."

"I don't want to go out," replied Madam You, "but Madam Zhu over there is unwell and Xifeng is laid up too. If I don't go, there'll be no one to see to things. Besides, as he's so busy, why have a party?"

"The master's not receiving visitors today and won't be at home to them till the sixteenth. He's set his mind on inviting you to a feast."

"All right then, but I can't return this favour."

Peifeng went off laughing, returning soon to report, "The master hopes you'll come home early in time for dinner, madam. And he's told me to go with you."

"In that case he'd better hurry up and have breakfast, so that I can make a start."

"He says he'll have it outside, and wants you to breakfast without him."

"Whom has he got out there?"

"I hear two men have just arrived from Nanjing, but I don't know who they are."

As she was speaking Jia Rong's wife, having finished her toilet, came in to pay her respects. Soon they sat down to breakfast together, Madam You in the higher place, her daughter-in-law in the lower. Then Madam You changed her clothes and went over to the Rong Mansion.

On her return that evening, Jia Zhen had indeed prepared a feast: a whole pig and sheep together with other dishes and sweetmeats too many to enumerate. Peacock-feather screens and lotus-patterned cushions were set out in the Hall of Green Shrubs in the Garden of Concentrated Fragrance, and there he and his wife and concubines dined, then drank together to enjoy the moon.

By the time of the first watch the breeze was fresh and the bright moon silvered everything high and low. Jia Zhen proposed playing some drinking games, whereupon Madam You made Peifeng and the three

下面一溜坐下，猜枚划拳，饮了一回。贾珍有了几分酒，益发高兴，便命取了一竿紫竹箫来，命佩凤吹箫，文花唱曲，喉清嗓嫩，真令人魄醉魂飞。唱罢复又行令。那天将有三更时分，贾珍酒已八分了。大家正添衣饮茶，换盏更酌之际，忽听那边墙下有人长叹之声。大家明明听见，都悚然疑畏起来。贾珍忙厉声叱咤，问："谁在那里？"连问几声，没有人答应。尤氏道："必是墙外边家里人也未可知。"贾珍道："胡说。这墙四面皆无下人的房子，况且那边又紧靠着祠堂，焉得有人。"一语未了，一时只听得一阵风声，竟过墙去了。恍惚闻得祠堂内槅扇开闔之声，只觉得风气森森，比先更觉凉飒起来；月色惨淡，也不似先明朗。众人都觉毛发悚然，贾珍酒已醒了一半，只比别人撑持得住些，心下也十分疑畏，便大没兴头起来。勉强又坐了一会，就归房安歇了。次日一早起来，乃是十五日，带领众子侄开祠堂行朔望之礼。细看祠内，都仍是照旧好好的，并无怪异之迹。贾珍自为醉后自怪，也不提此事。礼毕，仍闭上门，看着锁禁起来。

贾珍夫妻至晚饭后方过荣府来。只见贾赦、贾政都在贾母房内坐着说闲话，与贾母取笑。贾琏、宝玉、贾环、贾兰皆在地下侍立。贾珍来了，都一一见过。说了两句话后，贾

other concubines join them, sitting in a row in the lower seats at their table to play the finger-guessing game and drink. Then Jia Zhen, in high spirits after wine, sent a servant to fetch a purple bamboo flute and asked Peifeng to play it while Wenhua sang. Her voice was so clear and tender that the listeners were entranced.

After that they played more drinking games until nearly midnight, by when Jia Zhen was eight-tenths drunk. Tea was served, and they had just been brought fresh wine cups when they heard long-drawn-out sighing from the direction of the garden wall. Everyone heard it distinctly and they were fearfully startled.

"Who is there?" demanded Jia Zhen sternly.

But though he called out several times there was no answer.

"It may be one of our servants behind the wall," suggested Madam You.

"Nonsense," her husband retorted. "The servant's quarters are nowhere near the wall. Besides, that part is just by the ancestral temple. Who could be there at this hour?"

That same instant they heard a gust of wind on the other side of the wall and the sound as if of partition windows slamming inside the temple. The air struck them as colder, and the moon just now so bright and clear seemed suddenly dimmed. All the girls and women shivered. Jia Zhen half sobered up, but though more in control of himself than the women he was most amazed and apprehensive too. This cast a gloom over the party. Still, they felt constrained to sit there a little longer before retiring to their rooms to rest.

The next morning being the fifteenth, Jia Zhen rose early and led the whole family to open the ancestral temple to perform the usual rites for the first and the fifteenth of every month. Looking round carefully, he observed that everything in the temple was undisturbed with no sign of anything amiss. He therefore made no mention of the strange occurrence the previous night, thinking he must have imagined it in his cups. The ceremony at an end, he had the temple locked up as before.

After supper Jia Zhen and his wife went over to the Rong Mansion. He found Jia She and Jia Zheng sitting chatting with the Lady Dowager while the younger men and boys of the family stood around in atten-

母命坐，贾珍方在近门小杌子上告了坐，警身侧坐。贾母笑问道："这两日你宝兄弟的箭如何了？"贾珍忙起身笑道："大长进了，不但样式好，而且弓也长了一个力。"贾母道："这也够了，且别贪力，仔细弩伤。"贾珍忙答应几个"是"。贾母又道："你昨日送来的西瓜、月饼皆好。"贾珍笑道："月饼是新来的一个专做点心的厨子，我试了试果然好，才敢做了孝敬。西瓜往年都还可以，不知今年怎么就不好了。"贾政道："大约今年雨水太勤之故。"贾母笑道："此时月已上了，咱们且去上香。"说着，便起身扶着宝玉的肩，带领众人齐往园中来。

当下园之正门俱已大开，吊着羊角大灯。嘉荫堂前月台上，焚着斗香，秉着风烛，陈献着瓜饼及各色果品。邢夫人等一干女客皆在里面久候。真是月明灯彩，人气香烟，晶艳氤氲，不可形状。地下铺着拜毯锦褥，贾母盥手上香拜毕，于是大家皆拜过。贾母便说："赏月在山上最好。"因命在那山脊上的大厅上去。众人听说，就忙着在那里去铺设。贾母且在嘉荫堂中吃茶少歇，说些闲话。一时，人回："都齐备了。"贾母方扶着人上山来。王夫人等因说："恐石上苔滑，还是坐竹椅子上去。"贾母道："天天有人打扫，况且极平稳的宽路，何必不疏散疏散筋骨。"于是贾赦、贾政等在前引

dance. Jia Zhen greeted each in turn, and after a few remarks the old lady invited him to take a seat, which he did on a stool near the door.

"How is your cousin Baoyu getting on with his archery these days?" she asked him.

"He's making great progress, not only in his form. He's now able to use a stronger bow as well."

"That's good. But don't let him overtax his strength."

When Jia Zhen had agreed to this she remarked, "The mooncakes you sent us yesterday were good. The melons looked all right but were disappointing."

"The cakes were made by a new pastry cook. Finding them good I ventured to have some made for you, madam, as a token of respect. It's strange that this year's melons aren't up to the usual standard."

"There was too much rain this summer," remarked Jia Zheng.

"Well, the moon has risen now. Let's go and offer incense."

The old lady rose and leaning on Baoyu's shoulder led the way to the Garden. By now all the Garden's main gates were wide open, big horn-lanterns hanging above. On the terrace in front of the Hall of Auspicious Shade where incense was burning in screened containers, shielded candles were alight, and melons, cakes and sweetmeats had been set out, Lady Xing and the other ladies were waiting for them. The bright moonlight, coloured lanterns, scents and incense evoked an ethereal splendour defying description.

The terrace was spread with carpets and silk cushions. The Lady Dowager washed her hands, burned incense and kowtowed; then all the rest followed suit. After that she said it would be better to enjoy the view of the moon from a height, and ordered the feast to be served in the big pavilion on the ridge of the hill. Attendants hurried there to make preparations while she had a short rest in the Hall of Auspicious Shade, sipping tea and chatting with her family. When presently it was announced that all was ready she started up the hill, leaning on some maids' shoulders.

"The mossy stones may be slippery," warned Lady Wang. "Why not go up in a bamboo chair?"

"The path is swept every day and it's very smooth and wide," countered the old lady. "I may as wall walk to loosen up my old bones."

路，又是两个婆子秉着两把羊角手罩灯，鸳鸯、琥珀、尤氏等贴身搀扶，邢夫人等在后围随，不过百余步，至山之峰脊上，便是这座敞厅。因在山之高脊，故名曰凸碧山庄。于厅前平台上列下桌椅，又用一架大围屏隔作两间。凡桌椅形式皆是圆的，特取团圆之意。居中贾母坐下，左垂首贾赦、贾珍、贾琏、贾蓉，右垂首贾政、宝玉、贾环、贾兰，团团围坐。只坐了半壁，下面还有半壁余空。贾母笑道："常日倒还不觉人少，今日看来，究竟咱们人也甚少。想当年过的日子，到今夜男女三四十个，何等热闹。今日就这样，太少了。待要再叫几个来，他们都是有父母的，家里去应景，不好来的。如今叫女孩们来坐那边罢。"于是令人向围屏后邢夫人等席上将迎春、探春、惜春三个请出来，贾琏、宝玉等一齐出坐，先尽他姊妹坐了，然后在下方依次坐定。贾母便命折一枝桂花来，命一媳妇在屏后击鼓传花。若花到谁手中，饮酒一杯，罚说笑话一个。

于是先从贾母起，次贾赦，一一接过。鼓声两转，恰恰在贾政手中住了，只得饮了酒。众姊妹弟兄皆你悄悄的扯我一下，我暗暗的又捏你一把，都含笑要听是何笑话。贾政见贾母喜悦，只得承欢。方欲说时，贾母又笑道："若说的不笑了，还要罚。"贾政笑道："只得一个，说来不笑，也只好受罚了。"因笑道："一家子一个人最怕老婆。"只说了这一句，大家都笑了。因从不曾见贾政说过笑话，所以才笑。贾母笑道："这必是好的。"贾政笑道："若好，老太太多吃一

Jia She and Jia Zheng led the way, followed by two old nurses with horn-lanterns. Yuanyang, Hupo and Madam You kept beside the old lady to help her along while Lady Xing and the rest clustered behind, and a mere hundred paces brought them to the summit on which stood Convex Emerald Hall, so called because it was built on a promontory. On its front terrace, partitioned into two by a large screen, were tables and chairs all round in shape to symbolize perfect reunion. The old lady took the centre seat with Jia She, Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Jia Rong on her left, on her right Jia Zheng, Baoyu, Jia Huan and Jia Lan. The circle, however, was only half complete, the other half being conspicuously vacant.

"I don't usually feel there are too few of us, yet tonight I do," observed the old lady. "Why, in the old days, on an evening like this there'd have been thirty to forty menfolk and womenfolk and it would have been ever so lively. This is too small a party. We can't ask others to join us, as they're all celebrating at home with their own parents, so let's get some of the girls to fill up the gap on the other side."

Yingchun, Tanchun and Xichun were fetched, and Jia Lian, Baoyu and the other boys stood up to offer them seats, taking lower places themselves. Then the Lady Dowager called for a twig of osmanthus and ordered a serving-woman to beat a drum on the other side of the screen as the twig passed from hand to hand. Whoever had it when the drumming stopped had to drink a cup of wine and tell a joke as forfeit. The game started with the old lady passing the twig to Jia She, and so on in turn. After two rounds Jia Zheng was left with it in his hand and had to drink up, while his children, nephews and nieces nudged or tugged at each other meaningly as they waited, smiling, to hear what joke he would tell. As his mother was in high spirits he felt constrained to do his best to please her.

"If you can't make us laugh," she warned, "we shall punish you by making you tell another."

"I have only the one joke, madam. If you don't find it funny I'll accept the penalty....There was a man who was hen-pecked...."

He was interrupted here by a burst of laughter, as Jia Zheng had never told jokes of this type before.

"This must be a good one," said the old lady, laughing.

杯。”贾母笑道:“自然。”贾政又说道:“这个怕老婆的人从不敢多走一步。偏是那日是八月十五日，到街上买东西，便遇见了几个朋友，死活拉到家里去吃酒。不想吃醉了，便在朋友家睡着了。第二日醒了，后悔不及，只得来家赔罪。他老婆正洗脚，说:‘既是这样，你替我舔舔就饶你。’这男人只得给他舔，未免恶心要吐。他老婆便恼了，要打，说:‘你这样轻狂!’吓得他男人忙跪下，说:‘并不是奶奶的脚脏。只因昨晚吃多了黄酒，又吃了几块月饼馅子，所以今日有些作酸呢。’”说的贾母与众人都笑了。贾政忙斟了一杯，送与贾母。贾母笑道:“既这样，快叫人取烧酒来，别叫你们受累。”众人又都笑起来。

于是又击鼓，便从贾政传起，可巧传至宝玉鼓止。宝玉因贾政在坐，自是踧踖不安，花偏又在他手内，因想:“说笑话倘或说不好了，又说没口才；若说好了，又说正经的不会，只管油嘴贫舌，更有不是。不如不说的好。”乃起身辞道:“我不能说笑话，求再限别的罢了。”贾政道:“既这样，限一个‘秋’字，就即景作一首诗。若好，便赏你；若不好，明日仔细。”贾母忙道:“好好的行令，如何又要作诗?”贾政道:“他能的。”贾母听说，就命快作，命人取了纸笔来。贾政道:“只不许用那些冰、玉、晶、银、彩、光、

"If you think it good, you must drink another cup, madam."

"Agreed."

He went on, "This hen-pecked husband never dared go anywhere without his wife's permission. But on the Moon Festival, going out to do some shopping, he met friends who dragged him home to drink with them. He got drunk and slept in their house. The next day when he woke up, quite conscience-stricken, he had to go home to apologize. It happened that his wife was washing her feet.

"She said to him, 'Well, if you lick my feet I'll forgive you.'

"So the man had to lick her feet. But he couldn't help retching, and this so enraged his wife that she threatened to beat him.

"'What insolence!' she cried.

"He fell on his knees in fright and explained, 'It's not that your feet stink, madam, but all the rice-wine and mooncakes I had yesterday have turned my stomach today. '"

The whole company laughed, and Jia Zheng at once poured a cup of wine for the old lady.

"If that's how you feel, let's replace this wine with spirits," she proposed. "We don't want you to be sick."

Amid general mirth the drumming started once more, stopping this time when Baoyu had the osmanthus. His father's presence made him feel on edge, but here he was caught with the twig in his hand. If I fail to tell a good joke I'll be scolded for being too stupid even to tell a joke, he thought. If I tell an amusing one he'll say I'm no good at studying, only able to gab, and blame me all the more. So I'd better get out of it.

He stood up and pleaded, "I'm no good at telling jokes. Please set me some other forfeit."

"Well then," said Jia Zheng, "write an occasional poem with 'autumn' as the rhyme. If it's good you'll get a reward. If not, look out tomorrow!"

"We're just playing a drinking game," objected the old lady. "Why make him write a poem?"

"He can do it," Jia Zheng assured her.

At once she sent for paper and a brush.

Jia Zheng warned, "Mind you don't use ornate phrases like 'frozen

明、素等样堆砌字眼，要另出己见，试试你这几年的情思。”宝玉听了，碰在心坎上，遂立想了四句，向纸上写了，呈与贾政看，道是……贾政看了，点头不语。贾母见这般，知无甚大不好，便问：“怎么样？”贾政因欲贾母喜悦，便说：“难为他。只是不肯念书，到底词句不雅。”贾母道：“这就罢了。他能多大，定要他做才子不成！这就该奖励他，以后越发上心了。”贾政道：“正是。”因回头命个老嬷嬷出去吩咐书房内的小厮，“把我海南带来的扇子取两把给他。”宝玉忙拜谢，仍复归坐行令。当下贾兰见奖励宝玉，他便出席也做了一首递与贾政，贾政看了喜不自胜，遂并讲与贾母听时，贾母也十分欢喜，也忙令赏。于是大家归坐，复行起令来。

这次在贾赦手内住了，只得吃了酒，说笑话。因说道：“一家子一个儿子最孝顺。偏生母亲病了，各处求医不得，便请了一个针灸的婆子来。婆子原不知道脉理，只说是心火，如今用针灸之法，针灸针灸就好了。这儿子慌了，便问：‘心见铁即死，如何针得？’婆子道：‘不用针心，只针肋条就是了。’儿子道，‘肋条离心甚远，怎么就好？’婆子

jade, ' 'silver crystal,' 'bright splendour' or 'shining purity.' Your poem must be original. I want to test your ability after these years of study."

This was just what Baoyu had been hoping for. He promptly made up four lines and wrote them out, presenting the poem to Jia Zheng who nodded without any comment. The Lady Dowager took this as a good sign.

"How is it?" she asked.

To please her Jia Zheng answered. "Quite a good effort. But because he hasn't been studying the right books the language lacks distinction."

"That's good enough. After all, how old is he? Do you expect him to be a prodigy? You should encourage him, to make him pay more attention to study in future."

"Very well." Jia Zheng turned to order a nurse, "Go and tell the pages in my study to bring two of those fans I brought back from Hainan to give him."

Baoyu having bowed his thanks sat down again, and they went on with the game.

This prize given to Baoyu made Lan now leave his seat to write a poem too, which he handed to his grandfather. Jia Zheng, very pleased with it, explained the contents of both poems to the old lady. And she was so delighted that she ordered a prize to be given to Lan too, after which they resumed their seats to continue the game. This time the drumming stopped when the osmanthus was in Jia She's hand, and he had to drink a cup and tell a joke.

"The son of a certain family was most filial," he began. "One day his mother fell ill, and unable to find physicians able to cure her they called in an old woman who practised acupuncture. As she knew nothing of the principles of pulse-taking, she diagnosed the illness as fire in the heart which a few acupuncture treatments would set right.

"The son asked in alarm, 'How can you needle her heart? Won't that kill her?'

"The old woman said, 'There's no need to needle the heart. Just needling the ribs will do.'

"He protested, 'But the heart isn't anywhere near the ribs.'

道:‘不妨事。你不知天下的父母的心偏的多呢。’”众人都笑起来。贾母也只得吃半杯酒，半日笑道：“我也得这个婆子针一针就好了。”贾赦听说，便知自己出言冒撞，贾母疑了心，忙起身笑与贾母把盏，以别言解释。贾母亦不好再提，且行起令来。

不料这次花却在贾环手里。贾环近日读书稍进，其脾味中不好务正也与宝玉一样，故每常也好看些诗词，专好奇诡仙鬼一格。今见宝玉作诗受奖，他便技痒，只当着贾政不敢造次。如今可巧花在手中，便也索纸笔来，立挥一绝与贾政。贾政看了，亦觉罕异，只是词句中略带着不乐读书之意，遂不悦道:“可见是弟兄了。发言吐气总属邪派，将来都是不由规矩准绳，一起下流货。妙在古人云有‘二难’，你两个也可以称‘二难’了。只是你两个的‘难’字，却是要作难以教训的‘难’字讲才好。哥哥是公然以温飞卿自居，如今兄弟又自为曹唐再世了。”说的贾赦等都笑了。贾赦乃要诗瞧了一遍，连声赞道:“好!这诗据我看去甚有气骨。想来咱们这样人家，原不比那起寒酸，定要‘雪窗萤火’，一日蟾宫折桂，方得扬眉吐气。咱们的子弟都原该读些书，不过比别人略明白些，可以做得官时就跑不了一个官的。何必多费了工夫，反弄出书呆子来。所以我爱他这诗，竟不失咱们侯门的气概。”因回头吩咐人去取了自己的许多玩物来赏

"She said, 'That doesn't matter. Don't you know that all parents are biased, so that their hearts always incline to one side?'"

Amid general laughter his mother had to sip some wine.

After a short silence she said, " I suppose I should get that old woman to give me some acupuncture treatment too."

Jia She realized then that she took the joke personally and he had offended her by his tactlessness. At once he stood up to pour her wine and tried to pass it off, and the old lady let the matter drop.

The game went on and this time Huan was caught holding the flower. Recently he had paid more attention to his studies; but, like Baoyu, instead of studying the orthodox classics he preferred to read poems, especially those dealing with the bizarre and supernatural. When he saw Baoyu awarded a prize for his poem he wanted to show off too, but in his father's presence dared not suggest it. Now that his turn had come to pay a forfeit, he also took paper and brush and wrote a four-lined verse which he handed to Jia Zheng. His father, although quite impressed, could read between the lines a lack of interest in study.

"You brothers are alike," he rebuked them both. "All the ideas you express are heterodox. You'll both turn out undisciplined reprobates. The ancients spoke of a 'matchless pair,' and that's what you two are; only in your case 'matchless' means 'incorrigible.' The elder brother shamelessly compares himself to Wen Tingyun, and now the younger considers himself another Cao Tang."

Jia She and the others laughed, and Jia She asked to see the poem and was full of praise for it.

"This seems to me to show character," he observed. "In our family we're not like those poor pedants who must 'study by the light of reflected snow or glow-worms' to pass the examination for the highest degree in order to climb up to exalted positions. Our sons should study too; but if they're a bit more intelligent than average and look all right, they can hardly fail to get some official post. There's no need for them to pore over tomes and become bookworms. That's why I like this poem of his — it shows the spirit of our noble house."

Thereupon he ordered a servant to fetch some novelties from his room as a reward. And patting Huan on the head he said with a laugh,

赐与他。因又拍着贾环的头，笑道："以后就这么做去，方是咱们的口气，将来这世袭的前程，定跑不了你袭呢。"贾政听说，忙劝道："不过他胡诌如此，那里就论到后事了。"

说着便斟上酒，又行了一回令。贾母便说："你们去罢。自然外头还有相公们候着，也不可轻忽了他们。况且二更多了，你们散了，再让我和姑娘们多乐一回，好歇着了。"贾赦等听了，方止了令，又大家共进了一杯酒，方带着子侄们出去了。要知端的，下回分解。

"Just go on writing like this — it's our family's style. I'm sure you'll inherit our noble ranks in future."

Jia Zheng protested, "He was just writing nonsense. How can these lines foretell the future?" He poured a cup of wine for the old lady and the game went on.

Then the Lady Dowager suggested, "You gentlemen can take your leave now. There must be friends waiting for you outside. It won't do to neglect them. Besides, it's already past the second watch. Once you've gone, our girls will be able to enjoy themselves more freely for a while before we retire for the night."

Jia She and the others stopped the game then and after a final toast took the younger men away. If you want to know the sequel, read the next chapter.

第七十六回

凸碧堂品笛感凄清　凹晶馆联诗悲寂寞

话说贾赦、贾政等散去不提。且说贾母这里命将围屏撤去，两席并为一席。众媳妇另外擦桌整果，更杯洗箸，陈设一番。贾母等都添了衣，盥漱吃茶，方又入坐，团团围绕。贾母看时，宝钗姊妹二人不在坐内，知他们家去圆月去了，且李纨凤姐二人又病着，少了四个人，便觉冷清了好些。贾母因笑道："往年你老爷们不在家，咱们越性请过姨太太来，大家赏月，却十分闹热。忽一时想起你老爷来，又不免想起母子、夫妻、儿女不能一处，都有些没兴。及至今年你老爷来子，正该大家团圆取乐，却又不便请他们娘儿们来说说笑笑。况且他们今年又添了两口人，也难丢了他们跑到这里来。偏又把凤丫头病了，有他一人来说说笑笑，还抵得十个人的空儿。可见天下事总难十全。"说毕，不觉长叹一声，遂命拿大杯来斟热酒。王夫人笑道："今日得母子团圆，自比往年有趣。往年娘儿们虽多，终不似今年自己骨肉齐全的好。"贾母笑道："正是为此，所以我才高兴拿大杯来吃酒。你们也换大杯才是。"邢夫人等只得换上大杯来。因夜深体乏，不能胜酒，未免都有些倦意，无奈贾母兴犹未尽，只得陪饮。

Chapter 76

By Convex Emerald Hall Fluting Fills an Old Lady with Grief In Concave Crystal Lodge Girls Composing a Poem Lament Their Loneliness

When Jia She and Jia Zheng had led Jia Zhen and the other men away, the Lady Dowager ordered serving-women to remove the screen and turn the two feasts into one. This they did by clearing the tables, replenishing the refreshments and bringing clean cups and chopsticks while the ladies put on warmer clothes, washed their faces and sipped tea. As they took seats again around one table the old lady noticed that Baochai and Baoqin were missing — they were celebrating the festival at home. In addition, Li Wan and Xifeng were unwell and the absence of these four made things seem rather quiet.

"In the past," she remarked, "When the master was away we used to invite Aunt Xue over to enjoy the moon with us and had great fun, until suddenly the thought of his absence, parting husband from wife, mother from son and father from children took away a bit from our pleasure.

"This year with the master back our family's reunited, but that means we couldn't ask Aunt Xue and her children over to have a good time with us. Besides, they've two relatives staying there this year and couldn't leave them to come over here. And on top of that, Xifeng's unwell. If she were here joking and laughing, she'd make up for ten other people. This shows nothing can ever be perfect in this world." She sighed and called for a big cup of heated wine.

"This year you and your son are together," said Lady Wang. "That's an improvement on the past. Though you had more young people around you then, it still wasn't as good as having your own son back."

"True," agreed the old lady. "That's why I'm in such good spirits that I want to drink from a big cup. You should switch to big cups too."

Lady Xing and the others had to comply. It was late now, they were tired, and as none of them were good drinkers they were flagging; but

贾母又命将罽毡铺于阶上，命将月饼西瓜果品等类都叫搬下去，令丫头媳妇们也都团团围坐赏月。贾母因见月至中天，比先益发精彩可爱，因说："如此好月，不可不闻笛。"因命人将十番上女孩子传来。吩咐说："音乐多了，反失雅致，只用吹笛的远远吹起来就够了。"说毕，刚去吹时，只见跟邢夫人的媳妇走来向邢夫人前说了两句话。贾母便问："什么事？"那媳妇便回说："方才大老爷出去，被石头绊了一下，踉了腿。"贾母听说，忙命两个婆子快看去，又命邢夫人快去。邢夫人遂告辞起身。贾母便又说："珍哥媳妇趁着便儿就家去罢，我也就睡了。"尤氏笑道："我今日不回去了，定要和老祖宗吃一夜。"贾母说道："使不得，使不得。你们小夫妻家，今夜也要团圆团圆，如何为我耽搁了？"尤氏红了脸，笑道："老祖宗说的我们太不堪了。我们虽然年轻，已经是十来年的夫妻，也奔四十岁的人了。况且孝服未满，陪着老太太玩一夜还罢了，岂有自去团圆的理。"贾母听说，笑道："这话很是，我倒也忘了孝未满。可怜你公公转眼已是二年多了，可是我倒忘了，该罚我一大杯。既这样，你就率性别去，陪着我罢。你叫蓉儿媳妇送去，他就顺便回去罢。"尤氏说了，蓉妻答应着，送出邢夫人，一同至大门，各自上车回去。不在话下。

这里贾母仍带众人赏了一回桂花，又入席换暖酒来。正

since the old lady was still in the mood for fun they had no choice but to keep her company. She ordered rugs to be spread on the steps and mooncakes, water-melons and other refreshments set out there so that the maids could sit down in a circle and enjoy the moon as well.

The moon, now in mid sky, was more dazzlingly lovely than ever.

"With such a fine moon we must listen to some fluting," decided the Lady Dowager. She sent for the girl musicians, telling them, "Too many instruments would break the spell. One flute played in the distance will be enough."

The flutist was just going off when one of Lady Xing's matrons brought her a message. The old lady asked what it was, and the matron answered:

"Just now, on his way home, the Elder Master tripped over a stone and sprained his ankle."

At once the Lady Dowager sent two women to see how he was and urged Lady Xing to hurry back. As she was taking her leave the old lady added, "Zhen's wife may as well go with you. I'll soon be turning in."

Madam You countered gaily, "I'm not going back today. I mean to sit up drinking the whole night with our Old Ancestress."

"No, that won't do. A young couple like you ought to be united tonight. How can you desert your husband for my sake?"

Madam You flushed crimson and tittered, "What do you take us for, Old Ancestress? We aren't as young as all that — we've been married for over a dozen years and are getting on for forty. Besides, we're still in mourning. There's no harm in my keeping you company tonight. How can you ask me to spend it with my husband?"

"Quite right," chuckled the old lady. "I'd forgotten you were still in mourning. Yes, your poor father-in-law has been dead two years and more — how time does fly! I must drink a big cup as a forfeit for forgetting. Well, don't go then but stay and keep me company. Rong's wife can go back with her great-aunt."

So Madan You told her daughter-in-law to accompany Lady Xing, and they mounted their carriages at the gate, then left.

In the Garden, the Lady Dowager led her party to enjoy the osmanthus in bloom, after which they returned to the feast and fresh wine was

说着闲话，猛不防只听那壁厢桂花树下，呜呜咽咽，悠悠扬扬，吹出笛声来。趁着这明月清风，天空地净，真令人烦心顿解，万虑齐消，都肃然危坐，默相赏听。听约两盏茶时，方才止住，大家称赞不已。于是遂又斟上暖酒来。贾母笑道："果然好听么？"众人笑道："实在好听。我们也想不到这样，须得老太太带领着，我们也得开些心胸。"贾母道："这还不大好，须得拣那曲谱中越慢的吹来越好。"说着，便将自己吃的一个内造瓜仁油的松穰月饼，又命斟一大杯热酒，送给谱笛之人，慢慢的吃了再细细的吹一套来。媳妇们答应了，方送去，只见方才瞧贾赦的两个婆子回来了，说："瞧了，右脚面上白肿了些，如今调服了药，疼的好些了，也不甚大关系。"贾母点头叹道："我也太操心的紧。说我偏心，我反这样。"因就将方才贾赦的笑话说与王夫人、尤氏等听。王夫人等因笑说劝道："这原是酒后说笑，不留心也是有的，岂有敢说老太太之理。老太太自当解释才是。"只见鸳鸯拿了软巾兜与大斗篷来，说："夜深了，恐露水下来，风吹了头，须要添了这个。坐坐也该歇了。"贾母道："偏今儿高兴，你又来催。难道我醉了不成，偏天亮才歇！"因命再斟酒来。一面戴上兜巾，披了斗篷，大家陪着又饮，说些笑

heated. They were chatting when, all of a sudden, from under the osmanthus came wafting the sweet, dulcet, mellifluous sound of fluting. In the bright moonlight and fresh breeze, with the sky above a void, the earth utterly still, this music dispelled all care and anxiety. Every voice hushed, they sat appreciating it in silence.

The fluting went on for the time it takes to drink two cups of tea. When it stopped, everyone exclaimed in admiration. Then warm wine was poured again.

"Wasn't that delightful?" asked the old lady, beaming.

"Really lovely, madam!" they replied. "We'd never have thought of such a thing. We need *you* to show us how to enjoy ourselves."

"This still isn't good enough. What's needed is slow music, the slower the better."

They had been eating melon-seed oil mooncakes stuffed with pine-kernals from the Palace, and the old lady now ordered one of these to be sent with a big cup of warm wine to the flutist, with instructions to drink it slowly then play another melody to the very best of her ability. Some serving-women had just gone off on this errand when back came the two matrons sent to ask after Jia She.

"We saw His Lordship," they reported. "His right instep is a bit swollen, but he's taken some medicine and the pain is less now. It's nothing serious."

The Lady Dowager nodded.

"I worry too much about my children," she sighed. "He calls me biased, yet I feel such concern for him." She repeated Jia She's joke to Lady Wang and Madam You.

"It was only a joke after drinking," said Lady Wang soothingly. "Anyone can make a slip. He can't possibly have had you in mind, madam. Why take it to heart?"

Yuanyang had now brought a soft hood and a cape. "It's late," she said. "There'll be dew, and you may catch cold in the wind unless you put more on. After a little while you should go and rest."

"Why hurry me when I'm in high spirits?" asked the old lady. "I'm not drunk, am I? I'm going to sit up till dawn."

She called for more wine, put on the hood and the cape, and went on

话。只听桂花阴里，呜呜咽咽，袅袅悠悠，又发出一缕笛音来，果真比先越发凄凉。大家都寂然而坐。夜静月明，且笛声悲怨，贾母年老带酒之人，听此声音，不免有触于心，禁不住堕下泪来。众人此时也都不禁凄凉寂寞之意。半日，方知贾母伤感，才忙转身陪笑，发语解释。又命暖酒，且住了笛。尤氏笑道："我也就学了一个笑话儿，说与老祖宗解解闷。"贾母勉强的笑道："这样更好，快说来我听。"尤氏乃说："一家子养了四个儿子：大儿子只一个眼睛，二儿子只一个耳朵，三儿子只一个鼻子眼，四儿子倒都齐全，偏又是个哑叭……"正说到这里，只见贾母已朦胧双眼，似有睡着之态。尤氏方住了，忙和王夫人轻轻的请醒。贾母睁眼笑道："我不困，白闭闭眼养神。你们只管说，我听着呢。"王夫人等笑道："夜已四更了，风露也大，请老太太安歇罢。明日再赏十六，也不辜负这月色。"贾母道："那里就四更了？"王夫人笑道："实已四更，他们姊妹们熬不过，都去睡了。"贾母听说，细看了一看，果然都散了，只有探春一人在此。贾母笑道："也罢。你们也熬不惯夜，况且弱的弱，病的病，可倒要费心。只是三丫头可怜见儿的，尚还等着。你也去罢，我们要散了。"说着，便起身，吃了一口清茶，便预备下竹椅小轿，便围着斗篷，坐上，两个婆子搭起，众人围随出园去了。不在话下。

drinking and joking with the rest.

Now from the shade of the osmanthus trees they heard the melodious strains of fluting again, sadder this time than before, and all kept silent. The old lady was under the influence of wine, and in the still night, under the bright moon, the plaintive music touched her heart and she could not hold back her tears. The others were painfully affected too; but after some time, noticing her distress, they began to talk gaily to cheer her up and called for more wine, directing the flutist to stop.

"I've learned one joke," announcced Madam You. "Let me tell it to amuse our Old Ancestress."

The old lady forced a smile.

"So much the better."

"A family had four sons. The eldest had only one eye, the second only one ear, the third only one nostril, the fourth had all his organs but was dumb...."

Seeing that the Lady Dowager had closed her eyes, she broke off and with Lady Wang softly asked if she was awake. The old lady opened her eyes.

"I'm not sleepy, just closing my eyes to rest them a bit. Go on with your joke, I'm listening."

Lady Wang demurred, "It's already the fourth watch, madam, windy and with heavy dew. Won't you go and rest? You can enjoy the moon again tomorrow; it's still bright on the sixteenth."

"How can it be so late?"

"It really is. The girls couldn't stay up any longer; they've all gone off to sleep."

The Lady Dowager looked around and found only Tanchun there — the rest had slipped away.

"All right," she said with a smile. "You're not used to staying up all night either. And we shouldn't tire the girls, weak and delicate as they are. So poor Tanchun's the only one still here. You'd better go too. It's time the party broke up."

She rose, took a sip of tea, then wrapped the cape around her and was carried off by two women in a small bamboo sedan-chair which they had ready. The others followed her out of the Garden.

这里众媳妇收拾杯盘碗盏时，却少了一个细茶杯，各处寻觅不见，又问众人："必是谁失手打了。撂在那里，告诉我，拿了磁瓦子去交收是证见，不然又说偷起来了。"众人都说："没有打了，只怕跟姑娘们的人打了，也未可知。你细想想，或是问问他们去。"一语未了，提醒了这管家伙的媳妇，因笑道："是了，那一会记得是翠缕拿着的。我去问他。"说着便去找时，刚下了甬路，就遇见了紫鹃和翠缕来了。翠缕便问道："老太太散了，可知我们姑娘那去了？"这媳妇道："我来问那一个茶钟往那里去了，你们倒问我要姑娘。"翠缕笑道："我因倒茶给姑娘吃的，转眼回头，就连姑娘都不见了。"那媳妇道："太太才说都睡觉去了。你不知那里玩去了，还不知道呢。"翠缕向紫鹃道："断乎没有悄悄的睡去之理，只怕在那里走了走。如今见老太太散了，赶过前边送了去，也未可知。我们且往前边找找去。有了姑娘，自然你的茶钟也有了。你明日一早再找，有什么忙的。"媳妇笑道："有了下落就不必忙了，明儿就和你要罢。"说毕回去，仍查收家伙。这里紫鹃和翠缕便往贾母处来，不提。

原来黛玉和湘云二人并未去睡觉。只因黛玉见贾府中许多人赏月，贾母犹叹人少，不似当年热闹，又提宝钗姊妹家去母女弟兄自去赏月等语，不觉对景感怀，自去俯栏垂泪。

The serving-women clearing up discovered that one fine porcelain cup was missing.

They asked the others, "Did one of you break a cup? If so, bring us the pieces to hand in as evidence. Otherwise we may be accused of stealing it."

The others denied having broken anything.

"But one of the maids attending the young ladies may have dropped a cup," they suggested. "Try to remember, or just go and ask them."

"That's right," cried the woman in charge of the tea-services. "I remember Cuilu taking a cup. I'll ask her."

She went to look for Cuilu, who happened to come towards her along the covered walk accompanied by Zijuan.

Cuilu called out, "Has the old lady left? And do you know where our young ladies are?"

"I've come to ask you for a cup, but you ask me for your mistresses instead."

"I'd just taken Miss Xiangyun some tea when she suddenly disappeared."

"Her Ladyship said just now they'd all gone to bed. You must have been playing about somewhere not to notice."

"They can't have slipped off quietly to bed. They must be strolling about. Madybe, seeing the old lady leave, they went ahead to see her off. Let's go to her place to look for them. Once we find them your teacup will turn up too. You can fetch it first thing tomorrow. What's the hurry?"

"Provided I know where it is, there's no hurry. I'll come for it tomorrow."

The woman went back then to clear away while Zijuan and Cuilu made for the old lady's quarters.

Daiyu and Xiangyun had not gone to bed. This big family reunion in the Jia mansion, which the Lady Dowager still complained was less lively than in the old days, as well as her reference to Baochai and Baoqin celebrating at home with their own family, had made Daiyu feel so disconsolate that she had slipped out to the corridor to shed tears. As Baoyu

宝玉近因晴雯病势甚重，诸事无心，王夫人再三遣他去睡，他也便去了。探春又因近日家事着恼，也无暇游玩。虽有迎春、惜春二人，偏又素日不大甚合。所以只剩了湘云一人宽慰他，因说："你是个明白人，何必作此形象自苦。我也和你一样，我就不似你这样心窄。何况你又多病，还不自己保养。可恨宝姐姐姊妹，天天说亲道热，早已说今年中秋要大家一处赏月，必要起社，大家联句，到今日便弃了咱们，自己赏月去了。社也散了，诗也不作了。倒是他们父子叔侄纵横起来。你可知宋太祖说的好：'卧榻之侧，岂容他人酣睡。'他们不作，咱们两个竟联起句来，明日羞他们一羞。"黛玉见他这般劝慰，不肯负他的豪兴，因笑道："你看这里这等人声嘈杂，有何诗兴。"湘云笑道："这山上赏月虽好，终不及近水赏月更妙。你知道这山坡底下就是池沿，山坳里近水一个所在就是凹晶馆。可知当日盖这园子时就有学问。这山之高处，就叫作凸碧；山之低洼近水处，就叫作凹晶。这'凸'、'凹'二字，历来用的人最少。如今直用作轩馆之名，更觉新鲜，不落窠臼。可知这两处一上一下，一明一暗，一高一矮，一山一水，竟是特因玩月而设此两处。有爱那山高月小的，便就这里来；有爱那皓月清波的，便往那里去。只是这两个字俗念作'洼''拱'二音，便说俗了，不大见用。只有陆放翁用了一个'凹'字，说'古砚微凹聚墨多'，还有人批他俗，岂不可笑。"林黛玉道："也不只放翁才用，古人中用者太多。如江淹《青苔赋》，东方朔《神异经》，以至《画记》上云张僧繇画一乘寺的故事，不

was listless and distraught these days because Qingwen's illness had taken a turn for the worse, when his mother urged him to go to bed off he went. Tanchun was in no mood for enjoyment either, with family troubles weighing on her mind. And as neither Yingchun nor Xichun was too intimate with Daiyu, that left only Xiangyun to comfort her.

"You should have more sense," Xiangyun told her, "than to let this scene upset you. I have no family either, but I don't take it to heart the way you do. With your poor health you ought to look after yourself. It's too bad of Baochai and Baoqin. They kept saying our club must meet to celebrate the Moon Festival this year by writing a poem together, but now they've abandoned us and gone off to celebrate it on their own. Instead of our meeting to write a poem, the men and boys of the house have had things all their own way. As the old saying goes: How can an outsider be allowed to sleep beside one's bed?' Well, if they won't join in, why don't the two of us write a poem together? Tomorrow we can shame them with it."

As Xiangyun was trying to cheer her up, not wanting to spoil her fun Daiyu replied, "All right, But it's too noisy here to have any poetic inspiration."

"Enjoying the moonlight on this hill is good, but it's better still by the water. You know that lake at the foot of this hill and Concave Crystal Lodge by the inlet there? A lot of thought went into designing this Garden. The crest of the hill is called Convex Emerald, and the creek in the lake below Concave Crystal. 'Convex' and 'concave, ' so seldom used before, make fresh, original names. And these two places — one above, one below; one bright, one dark; one hill, one water — seem specially designed for enjoying the moonlight. Those who like to look at the moon from a height can come here; those who prefer to see its reflection in water can go there. But as these two words are usually pronounced *wa* and *tu*[1] they're considered rather uncouth. That's why Lu You's line "The old inkstone, slightly concave, brims with ink' was scoffed at as vulgar. Ridiculous, isn't it?"

"Lu You wasn't the only one to use this word. so did many other writers of old — Jiang Yan in his poetic essay *On Green Moss*, Dongfang Shuo in his *Miraculous and Strange Records*, and Zhang Yanyuan in

可胜举。只是今人不知，误作俗字用了。实和你说罢，这两个字还是我拟的呢。因那年试宝玉，因他拟了几处，也有存的，也有删改的，也有尚未拟的。这是后来我们大家把这没有名色的也都拟出，注了出来，写了这房屋的坐落，一并带进去与大姐姐瞧了。他又带出来，命给舅舅瞧过。谁知舅舅倒喜欢起来，又说：'早知道这样，那日该就叫他姊妹一并拟了，岂不有趣。'所以凡我拟的，一字不改都用了。如今就往凹晶馆去看看。"

说着，二人便同下了山坡。只一转弯，就是池沿，沿上一带竹栏相接，直通着那边藕香榭的路径。因这几间就在此山怀抱之中，乃凸碧山庄之退居，因低洼而近水，故颜其额曰"凹晶溪馆"。因此处房宇不多，且又矮小，故只有两个老婆子上夜。今日打听得凸碧山庄的人应差，与他们无干，这两个老婆子关了月饼果品并犒赏的酒食来，二人吃得既醉且饱，早已息灯睡了。

黛玉湘云见息了灯，湘云笑道："倒是他们睡了好。咱们就在这卷棚底下近水赏月如何？"二人遂在两个湘妃竹墩上坐下。只见天上一轮皓月，池中一轮水月，上下争辉，如置身于晶宫鲛室之内。微风一过，粼粼然池面皱碧铺纹，真令人神清气爽。湘云笑道："怎得这会子坐上船吃酒倒好。这要是我家里这样，我就立刻坐船了。"黛玉笑道："正是古人常说的好，'事若求全何所乐'。据我说，这也罢了，偏要坐船起来。"湘云笑道："得陇望蜀，人之常情。可知那些老人家说的不错。说贫穷之家自为富贵之家事事称心，告诉他说竟

his *Anecdotes on Painting* when he described the frescoes Zhang Sengyou[2] painted in a monastery. Why, there are too many instances to quote. But nowadays people not knowing this think these vulgar words.

"To tell you the truth," Daiyu continued, "I'm the one who suggested both names. It was when we proposed names for places which hadn't yet been given any and marked their localities. They were taken to the Palace and shown to Elder Sister who sent them to uncle, and he was delighted. He said if only he'd known he'd have asked us girls to help with the names, and he accepted them all without changing a word. Well, let's go to concave Crystal Lodge."

They walked down the hill, round a bend, and reached the lake. A path by the bamboo railings along its bank led to Lotus Fragrance Pavilion. The little building here, nestling at the foot of the hill on which stood Convex Emerald Hall, had been given the name Concave Crystal because it was on low ground close to the water. As it was so small, with few rooms, there were only two serving-women on night duty; and knowing that the ladies at Convex Emerald Hall would not be requiring their services, after enjoying their share of mooncakes, sweetmeats, wine and dishes, they had put out the lights and gone to bed.

"So they're asleep — good," said Xiangyun when they saw that the place was dark. "Let's enjoy the water and moonlight under this awning."

Sitting on two bamboo stools they gazed at the bright moon in the sky and then at its reflection in the lake, the moon above and its reflection below rivalling each other in magnificence. It was like being in some mermaids' crystal palace. As a breeze ruffled the green water of the lake they felt thoroughly refreshed.

"What fun it would be to drink now in a boat on the lake!" exclaimed Xiangyun. "If we were at my home I'd take a boat out."

"As the ancients often said: 'What enjoyment can there be if everything is perfect?'" remarked Daiyu. "To my mind this is quite good enough."

"It's only natural for men to hanker for more. Didn't the old people often say: The poor think the rich have all their hearts' desire. Try to disabuse them and they won't believe you — not unless they grow rich

不能称心，他也不肯信的；必得亲历其境，他方知觉了。就如咱们两个，虽父母不在，然却也忝在富贵之乡，只你我竟有许多不遂心的事。”黛玉笑道：“不但你我不得称心，就连老太太，大太以至宝玉、探丫头等人，无论事大事小，有理无理，其不能各遂其心者，同一理也，何况你我是旅居客寄之人！”湘云听说，恐怕黛玉又伤感起来，忙道：“休说这些闲话，咱们且联句。”

正说间，只听笛声悠扬起来。黛玉笑道：“今日老太太、太太高兴了，这笛子吹的有趣，到是助咱们的诗兴。咱两个都爱五言，就还是五言排律罢。”湘云道：“限何韵？”黛玉笑道：“咱们数这个栏杆的直柱，这头到那头为止。他是第几根就用第几韵。若十六根，便是‘一先’起。这可新鲜？”湘云笑道：“这倒别致。”于是二人起身，便从头数至尽头，止得十三根。湘云道：“偏又是‘十三元’，这个韵少，作排律只怕牵强，不能押的稳呢。少不得你先起一句罢了。”黛玉笑道：“倒要试试咱们谁强谁弱，只是没个纸笔记。”湘云道：“不妨，明日再写。只怕这一点记心还有。”黛玉道：“我先起一句现成的俗语罢。”因念道：

三五中秋夕，

湘云想了一想，道：

清游拟上元。撒天箕斗灿，

黛玉道：

匝地管弦繁。几处狂飞盏，

themselves. Take the two of us for instance. Although we've lost our parents we're living in luxury, yet we have a lot to upset us."

"We aren't the only ones. Even their Ladyships, Baoyu, Tanchun and the others can't have their way in everything big and small, even if they have good reason for wanting something. That applies to everyone. Especially girls like us who are living with other families, not our own...."

Afraid Daiyu would start grieving again, Xiangyun interposed, "Well, enough of this idle talk. Let's get on with our poem."

As she was talking they heard melodious fluting.

"Their Ladyships are in high spirits today," Daiyu remarked. "This fluting is pleasant and should give us inspiration. As we both like five-character lines, let's make regulated couplets in that metre."

"What rhymes shall we use?"

"Suppose we count the bars from this end of the railing to the other to decide which category of rhymes to choose. For example, if it's sixteen we'll use the *Xian* rhymes. Wouldn't that make a change?"

"That's certainly original."

So they got up to count the bars and found there were thirteen in all.

Xiangyun chuckled, "It *would* be thirteen! That means the *yuan* group of rhymes. There aren't too many for a long poem of couplets, so it may be awkward. Still, you must make a start."

"We'll see which of us does better. But we ought to have paper and a brush to write it down."

"We can copy it out tomorrow. There's no danger of forgetting it before then."

"All right then. I'll start with a pat phrase." Daiyu declaimed:

"Mid-autumn's fifteenth night is here again...."

Xiangyun reflected, then said:

"As on the Feast of Lanterns we stroll round.
The sky above is sprinkled with bright stars...."

Daiyu continued:

"And everywhere sweet strings and pipes resound.
Goblets fly here and there as men carouse...."

湘云笑道："这一句'几处狂飞盏'有些意思。这倒要对的好呢。"想了一想，笑道：

谁家不启轩。轻寒风剪剪，

黛玉道："对的比我的却好。只是这一句又说熟话了，就该加上劲说了去才是。"湘云笑道："诗多韵险，也要铺陈些才是。纵有好的，且留在后头。"黛玉笑道："到后头没有好的，我看你羞不羞。"因联道：

良夜景喧喧。争饼嘲黄发，

湘云笑道："这句不好，是你杜撰，用俗事来难我了。"黛玉笑道："我说你是不曾见过书呢。吃饼是旧典，《唐书》、《唐志》你看了来再说。"湘云笑道："这也难不倒我，我也有了。"因联道：

分瓜笑绿媛。香新荣玉桂，

黛玉笑道："分瓜可是实实你的杜撰了。"湘云笑道："明日咱们对查了出来，大家再说，这会子别耽误了工夫。"黛玉笑道："虽如此，下句也不好，不犯着又用'玉桂'、'金兰'等字样来塞责。"因联道：

色健茂金萱。蜡烛辉琼宴，

湘云笑道："'金萱'二字便宜你了，省了多少力。这样现成的韵被你得了，只是不犯着替他们颂圣去。况且下句你也是塞责了。"黛玉笑道："你不说'玉桂'，我难道强对个'金萱'么?再也要铺陈些富丽的话才是，方才是即景之实事。"湘云只得又联道：

"I like that last line," Xiangyun approved. "I must find something good to match it." After a moment's thought she said:

> "No house but has its windows opened wide.
> The breeze that softly fans the air is chill...."

"You've capped my attempt," admitted Daiyu. "But your second line is trite. You should go from strength to strength."

"A long poem with tricky rhymes had to be padded out a bit. We can use some good lines later."

"If you don't, you should be ashamed!" Daiyu went on:

> "But bright as day the fine night scene outside.
> The greybeard grabbing for a cake is mocked...."

"That's no good," laughed Xiangyun. "It's not classical. You're putting me on the spot by using an everyday incident like that."

"I'd say you hadn't read many books. This reference to cakes is a classical allusion. You should read the Tang dynasty records before you talk."

"Well, you haven't foxed me. I've got it." Xiangyun capped the verse:

> "Green girls share melons laughing themselves silly.
> How fresh the scent of jade osmanthus bloom...."

"That really had no classical source," protested Daiyu.

"Tomorrow we'll look it up for everyone to see. Let's not waste time now."

"Anyway your second line is no good, padded out with expressions like 'jade osmanthus.'" She continued:

> "How bright the regal gold of the day-lily.[3]
> Wax candles set the sumptuous feast aglow...."

"You got off cheap with 'day-lily,'" observed Xiangyun. "That ready-made rhyme saved you a lot of trouble. But there was no need to drag in praise of the sovereign on their behalf. Besides, the line after that is mediocre."

"If you hadn't used jade osmanthus. I wouldn't have had to match it with day-lily, would I ? And we have to bring in some opulent images to make it true to life."

Then Xiangyun continued:

觥筹乱绮园。分曹尊一令，

黛玉笑道："下句好，只是难对些。"因想了一想，联想：

射覆听三宣。骰彩红成点，

湘云笑道："'三宣'有趣，竟化俗成雅了。只是下句又说上骰子。"少不得联道：

传花鼓滥喧。晴光摇院宇，

黛玉笑道："对的却好。下句又溜了，只管拿些风月来塞责。"湘云道："究竟没说到月上，也要点缀点缀，方不落题。"黛玉道："且姑存之，明日再斟酌。"因联道

素彩接乾坤。赏罚无宾主，

湘云道："又说他们作什么，不如说咱们。"只得联道：

吟诗序仲昆。构思时倚槛，

黛玉道："这可以入上你我了。"因联道：

拟景或依门。酒尽情犹在，

湘云说道："是时候了。"乃联道：

更残乐已谖。渐闻语笑寂，

黛玉说道："这时候可知一步难似一步了。"因联道：

空剩雪霜痕。阶露团朝菌，

湘云笑道："这一句怎么押韵，让我想想。"因起身负手，想了一想，笑道："够了，幸而想出一个字来，几乎败了。"因联道：

"Wild drinking games the splendid park confuse.
Opposing sides obey the self-same rule...."

"That last line's good but rather hard to match." Daiyu thought for a little then said:

"Those guessing riddles hear three different clues.
The dice is thrown and wins — the dots are red...."

Xiangyun said, "I like your 'three clues,' making something colloquial poetic. But you shouldn't have brought in dice again in the next line." She continued:

"Drums speed the blossom passed from hand to hand.
The courtyard scintillates with limpid light...."

Daiyu commented, "You capped my line all right but fell down again on the next. Why keep padding it out with the 'breeze' and the 'moon' all the time?"

"I haven't brought in the moon yet. And anyway a subject like this can do with some purple patches."

"Well, we'll let it go for the time being. We can consider it again tomorrow." Daiyu went on:

"A silver splendour merges sky and land.
For hosts and guests alike the same requital...."

"Why go on referring to others? Why not speak about us?" Xiangyun resumed:

"Verses are written turn and turn about.
One leaning on the barricade to think...."

"Yes, this is where we come in," Daiyu remarked, then continued:

"One 'tapping the door'[4] to make the scene stand out.
Engrossed as ever, though the wine is drunk...."

"Now we're getting somewhere!" Xiangyun went on:

"They savour the last watches of the night.
Then comes a gradual end to talk and laughter...."

"Here's where each line gets more difficult," observed Daiyu, continuing:

"Nought's left now but the waning frosty light.

庭烟敛夕棔。秋湍泻石髓，

黛玉听了，不禁也起身叫妙，说："这促狭鬼，果然留下好的。这会子才说'棔'字，亏你想得出。"湘云道："幸而昨日看历朝文选见了这个字，我不知是何树，因要查一查。宝姐姐说不用查，这就是如今俗叫作明开夜合的。我信不及，到底查了一查，果然不错。看来宝姐姐知道的竟多。"黛玉笑道："'棔'字用在此时更确，这也还罢了。只是'秋湍'这一句亏你好想。只这一句，别的都要抹倒。我少不得打起精神来对这一句，只是再不能似这一句了。"因想了一想：联道：

风叶聚云根。宝婺情孤洁，

湘云道："这句对的也还好。只是下一句你也溜了，幸而是景中情，不单用'宝婺'来塞责。"因联道：

银蟾气吐吞。药经灵兔捣，

黛玉不语点头，半日随念道：

人向广寒奔。犯斗邀牛女，

湘云也望月点首，联想：

乘槎待帝孙。虚盈轮莫定，

黛玉笑道："又用比兴了。"因联道：

晦朔魄空存。壶漏声将涸，

湘云方欲联时，黛玉指池中黑影与湘云看道："你看那河里，怎么像个人在黑影里去了，敢是个鬼罢？"湘云笑道："可是

By the steps, dew-drenched hibiscus blooms at dawn...."

Xiangyun exclaimed, "Now what paralled shall I choose? Let me see." She stood up to think, her hands clasped behind her back, then said with a smile, "All right. Luckily I've hit on a word. I was nearly floored." She resumed:

"In the courtyard, mist the albizzia shrouds.
Autumn rapids pour forth through the core of rocks...."

Daiyu sprang up with a cry of admiration.

"This clever imp had really kept some good lines up her sleeve. Fancy coming out with 'albizzia' — how did you think of that?"

"Luckily for me, yesterday I dipped into the *Selected Writings of Different Dynasties* and found this name. I didn't know what tree it was and wanted to look it up, but Cousin Baochai said, "There's no need for that. This is the tree whose leaves open out in the daytime and fold up at night.' Not trusting her, I checked up and found she was right. So it seems Cousin Baochai really knows a lot."

"It's just the word to use here, and your line about 'autumn rapids' is even more felicitous, better than all the other lines. I shall have to cudgel my brains to match it, but I can't possibly think of anything as good." After a little reflection she went on:

"Wind-swept leaves gather at the root of clouds.
Lonely and pure the Lady of the Star...."

"The parallel will pass but the second line is a comedown," was Xiangyun's verdict. "Still, at least the sentiment suits the scene. You haven't just used an allusion for padding." She continued:

"The Silver Toad[5] puffs and deflates the moon.
Elixirs are prepared by the Jade Hare...."[6]

Daiyu simply nodded, then capped this:

"The goddess flies towards the Palace of Cold Void. [7]
One soars on high to greet Weaving Maid and Cowherd...."[8]

Xiangyun looking up at the moon nodded and continued:

"One sails a barque to the heavenly maiden fair.
The orb, for ever changing, wanes and waxes...."

又见鬼了。我是不怕鬼的，等我打他一下。”因弯腰拾了一块小石片向那池中打去，只听打得水响，一个大圆圈将月影荡散复聚者几次。只听那黑影里嘎然一声，却飞起一个白鹤来，直往藕香榭去了。黛玉笑道：“原来是他，猛然想不到，反吓了一跳。”湘云笑道：“这个鹤有趣，倒助了我了。”因联道：

窗灯焰已昏。寒塘渡鹤影，

林黛玉听了，又叫好，又跺足，说：“了不得，这鹤真是助他的了！这一句更比‘秋湍’不同，叫我对什么才好？‘影’字只有一个‘魂’字可对，况且‘寒塘渡鹤’何等自然，何等现成，何等有景且又新鲜，我竟要搁笔了。”湘云笑道：“大家细想就有了，不然就放着明日再联也可。”黛玉只看天，不理他。半日，猛然笑道：“你不必得意，我也有了，你听听。”因对道：

冷月葬花魂。

湘云拍手赞道：“果然好极！非此不能对。好个‘葬花魂’！”因又叹道：“诗固新奇，只是太颓丧了些。你现病着，不该作此过于凄楚奇谲之语。”黛玉笑道：“不如此如何压倒你。下句竟还未得，只为用工在这一句了。”

一语未了，只见栏外山石后转出一个人来，笑道：“好诗，好诗，果然太悲凄了。不必再往下联，若底下只这样

"You're using the same image again," objected Daiyu, but went on:

"At each month's start and end but its ghost is there.
Clepsydra's water had wellnigh run dry...."

Before Xiangyun could continue, Daiyu pointed at a dark shadow in the pool and exclaimed, "Look there! That looks like a man in the dark. Could it be a ghost?"

"You're imagining things again. I'm not afraid of ghosts. I'll hit it."

Xiangyun bent to pick up a stone and threw it into the pool. Splash! Ripples radiated out to shatter the moon's reflection, which then rounded out again. When this had happened several times, they heard a cry in the dark shadows and a white stork took wing straight towards Lotus Fragrance Pavilion.

"So that's all it was," chuckled Daiyu. "I didn't think it could be a stork. It gave me quite a fright."

"How amusing — it's given me an idea." And Xiangyun declaimed:

"The lamp by the window is no longer bright.
A stork's shadow flit across the chilly pool...."

Daiyu exclaimed in admiration again, stamping her foot.

"This confounded stork had helped her! This line is even more original than the one about 'autumn rapids.' How am I going to match it? The only parallel for 'shadow' is 'spirit.' A stork flitting across the chilly pool sounds so natural, apt, vivid and original too! I shall have to give up."

"We can find something if we both think hard, or else leave it till tomorrow."

Daiyu still looking up at the sky ignored her.

After a while she suddenly laughed and said, "You needn't gloat. I've got it. Listen.

"The poet's spirit is buried in cold moonlight."

Xiangyun clapped her hands.

"Very good indeed! The only possible parallel. Burying the poet's spirit — wonderful." She added with a sigh, "Of course that line's distinctive, but it's rather too melancholy. Now that you're unwell you shouldn't make such strangely sad and depressing lines which sound ill-

去，反不显这两句了，倒觉得堆砌牵强。”二人不防，倒唬了一跳。细看时，不是别人，却是妙玉。二人皆诧异，因问：“你如何到了这里？”妙玉笑道：“我听见你们大家赏月，又吹的好笛，我也出来玩赏这清池皓月。顺脚走到这里，忽听见你两个联诗，更觉清雅异常，故此就听住了。只是方才我听见这一首诗中，有几句虽好，只是过于颓败凄楚。此亦关人之气数而有，所以我出来止住。如今老太太都早已散了。满园的人想俱已睡熟，你两个的丫头还不知在那里找你们呢。你们也不怕冷着了？快同我来，到我那里去吃杯茶去罢，只怕就天亮了。”黛玉笑道：“谁知道就这个时候了。”

三人遂一同来至栊翠庵中。只见龛焰犹青，炉香未烬。几个老嬷嬷也都睡了，只有小丫鬟在蒲团上垂头打盹。妙玉唤他起来，现去烹茶。忽听叩门之声，小丫鬟忙去开门看时，却是紫鹃翠缕与几个老嬷嬷来找他姊妹两个。进来见他们正吃茶，因都笑道：“要我们好找，一个园子走遍了，连姨太太那里都找到了。才到了那山坡底下小亭里找时，可巧那里上夜的睡醒了。我们就问他们，他们说，方才亭外头棚下两个人说话，后来又添了一个人，听见大家说往庵里去。我们就知道是这里了。”妙玉忙命小丫鬟引他们到那边去坐着歇息吃茶。自己取了笔砚纸墨出来，将方才的诗叫他二人念

omened."

Daiyu chuckled, "If I hadn't, how was I to beat you? But I worked so hard on it, I haven't got the next line yet...."

Just then someone stepped out from behind the rocks on the other side of the balustrade and laughed.

"A fine poem, a fine poem!" she cried. "But it *is* too melancholy. You'd better not go on. If you continue in this way, these two lines won't stand out so well and the poem may seem padded and forced."

Daiyu and Xiangyun, caught unawares, were startled to see Miaoyu.

"Where did *you* spring from?" they asked.

"Knowing you were all enjoying the moon and listening to fine fluting, I came out to admire this clear lake and bright moonlight too and on my way here suddenly heard the two of you poeticizing, which seemed the height of refinement. So I stopped to listen. You've made some good lines but as a whole it's too mournful — or was that fated? That's why I stepped out to stop you.

"The party broke up long ago and the old lady's left the Garden. Most of the others here must be asleep, and your maids will be wondering what's become of you. Aren't you afraid of catching cold? Come back to my place now for a cup of tea. The day will break any minute."

"I'd no idea it was so late," said Daiyu.

The three girls went to Green Lattice Nunnery. They found the lamp before the shrine still lit and the incense in the censer not yet burnt out, but the few old nuns there had gone to bed leaving only one young maid dozing on a hassock. Miaoyu roused her to brew tea. Then came a sudden knocking on the gate, and the maid opened it to admit Zijuan and Cuilu with some old nurses come to look for Daiyu and Xiangyun.

Seeing them drinking tea they said laughingly, "You had us searching the whole Garden — even Madam Xue's place — for you. We were looking just now in that small pavilion at the foot of the hill, and luckily the night-watchers were awake. They told us two people had been talking under the awning outside. Someone else joined them and they spoke of going to the nunnery. That's how we've tracked you down."

Miaoyu told the maid to take them to another room to have a rest and some tea. She herself brought out a brush, inkstone, paper and ink and

着，遂从头至尾写出来。黛玉见他今日十分高兴，便笑道："从来没见你这样高兴。若不见你这样高兴，我也不敢唐突请教，这还可以见教否?若不堪时，便就烧了；若可改正，即请改正改正。"妙玉笑道："也不敢妄加评赞。只是这才有了二十二韵。我意思想着你二位的警句已出，再若续时，恐后力不加。我竟要续貂，又恐有玷。"黛玉从没见妙玉作过诗，今见他高兴如此，忙说："果然如此，我们的虽不好，亦可以带好了。"妙玉道："如今收结，到底还该归到本来面目上去。若只管丢了真情真事且去搜奇检怪，一则失了咱们的闺阁面目，二则也与题目无涉了。"二人皆道极是。妙玉遂提笔一挥而就，递与他二人道："休要见笑。依我必须如此，方翻转过来，虽前头有凄楚之句，亦无甚碍了。"二人接了看时，只见他续道：

香篆销金鼎，脂冰腻玉盆。
箫增嫠妇泣，衾倩侍儿温。
空帐悬文凤，闲屏掩彩鸳。
露浓苔更滑，霜重竹难扪。
犹步萦纡沼，还登寂历原。
石奇神鬼搏，木怪虎狼蹲。
觋屃朝光透，罘罳晓露屯。
振林千树鸟，啼谷一声猿。
歧熟焉忘径，泉知不问源。
钟鸣栊翠寺，鸡唱稻香村。

asked the girls to recite their composition, which she wrote down from start to finish.

Finding her in such a good mood Daiyu said, "I've never seen you before in such high spirits. If not for that I wouldn't presume to ask for your opinion. Is this poem worth polishing? If you think not, we'll burn it; but if it is, will you please make some corrections?"

"I won't venture to make rash comments, but as you've already used twenty-two rhymes I expect you've produced your most striking images and if you go on you may tire yourselves out. I'd like to round it off, only I'm afraid I may spoil it."

Daiyu had never read any poems by Miaoyu, and as the young nun was so eager she urged her, "Please do! That may make out feeble attempts seem passable."

"We must wind up the poem by reverting to the present situation. If we pass over true feelings and incidents and simply search for striking images and expressions, we'll be losing our identity and departing from the main theme."

"Quite right," they concurred.

Miaoyu picked up her brush and wrote her addition straight off, then showed it to the other two, saying:

"Don't laugh at me! I feel this is the only way to get back to the theme. Then a few sad lines earlier on won't matter."

They took what she had written and read:

The incense in gold tripods has burnt out,
And ice-white oil in the jade basin forms;
Fluting recalls a widow's lamentations
As a small serving-maid the silk quilt warms.
On empty curtains a bright phoenix hangs.
The idle screens gay ducks and drakes enfold;
Thick dew has made the moss more slippery,
And heavy frost makes bamboo hard to hold.
Strolling again beside the winding lake,
Climbing once more the solitary hill,
The rugged boulders seem contending ghosts.
The gnarled trees wolves and tigers crouching still.
Dawn lights the tortoise pedestal of stone,

有兴悲何继，无愁意岂烦。

芳情只自遣，雅趣向谁言。

彻旦休云倦，烹茶更细论。

后书：《右中秋夜大观园即景联句三十五韵》。

黛玉、湘云二人皆赞赏不已，说："可见我们天天是舍近而求远。现有这样诗仙在此，却天天去纸上谈兵。"妙玉笑道："明日再润色。此时想已快天亮了，到底要歇息歇息才是。"林、史二人听说，便起身告辞，带领丫鬟出来。妙玉送至门外，看他们去远，方掩门进来。不在话下。

这里翠缕向湘云道："大奶奶那里还有人等着咱们睡去呢。如今还是那里去好？"湘云笑道："你顺路告诉他们，叫他们睡罢。我这一去未免惊动起来，不如闹林姑娘半夜去罢。"说着，大家走至潇湘馆中，有一半人已睡去。二人进去，方才卸妆宽衣，盥漱已毕，方上床安歇。紫鹃放下绡帐，移灯掩门出去。谁知湘云有择席之病，虽在枕上，只是睡不着。黛玉又是个心血不足常常失眠的，今日又错过困头，自然也是睡不着。二人在枕上翻来复去。黛玉因问道：

On outer trellis now the thick dew falls.
A thousand woodland birds begin to stir,
In vales below a single gibbon calls.
How can we stray on a familiar road?
Why ask the way to fountain-heads we know?
The bells chime in Green Lattice Nunnery,
The cocks in Paddy-Sweet Cottage start to crow.
With cause for joy why grieve excessively,
Or needlessly display anxiety?
A maiden's feelings none but she can vent —
To whom can she confide her nicety?
Speak not of weariness though night is done,
Over fresh tea let us talk on and on.

She then appended the title "A Poem Written Collectively with Thirty-five Rhymes While Celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival in Grand View Garden."

Daiyu and Xiangyun heaped praise on this ending.

"We've been ignoring a talent right under our eyes, yet trying to seek what is far away!" they exclaimed. "We have such a superior poetess here, yet every day we pretend to be able to write."

"We can polish it tomorrow," suggested Miaoyu. "It'll soon be light, and after all we must get some rest."

Then the other two took their leave and went off with their maids. Miaoyu saw them out of the gate and watched until they were out of sight before closing the gate and returning to her room.

Meanwhile Cuilu had told Xiangyun, "They're sitting up waiting for us in Madam Zhu's place. Let's go back now."

"You can call in there on the way and tell them to go to bed," replied Xiangyun. "If I go, I'll only disturb them. I'd better raise a rumpus in Miss Lin's place instead."

In Bamboo Lodge half the maids were already asleep. Having undressed and washed, Daiyu and Xiangyun went to bed; Zijuan put down the gauze bed-curtain and took away the lamp, closing the door behind her. However, Xiangyun could not sleep in a strange bed. As for Daiyu, being anaemic she often suffered from insomnia too, and having stayed up past her usual hour she now felt wide-awake. So the two of them

“怎么你还没睡着?”湘云微笑道:“我有择席的病，况且走了困，只好躺躺罢。你怎么也睡不着?”黛玉叹道:“我这睡不着也并非今日，大约一年之中，通共也只好睡十夜满足的。”湘云道:“却是你病的原故，所以……”不知是什么，下回分解。

tossed and turned.

Daiyu asked, "Why aren't you asleep yet?"

"I can't sleep well in a strange bed — that's my trouble. And I'm no longer sleepy, so I'm just resting. What about you?"

"I've had insomnia a long time now," Daiyu sighed. "In a whole year I probably have only ten nights of good sleep."

"No wonder you're unwell then!"

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

PDG

第七十七回

俏丫鬟抱屈夭风流　美优伶斩情归水月

话说王夫人见中秋已过，凤姐病已比先减了些，虽未大愈，可以出入行走得了，仍命大夫每日诊脉服药，又开了丸药方子来配调经养荣丸。因用上等人参二两，王夫人命人取时，翻寻了半日，只向小匣内寻了几枝簪挺粗细的。王夫人看了嫌不好，命再找去，又找了一包须末出来。王夫人焦躁道："用不着偏有，但用着了，再找不着。成日家我说叫你们查一查，都归拢在一处，你们白不听，就随手混撂。你们不知他的好处，用起来得多少换买来还不中使呢。"彩云道："想是没了，就只有这个。上次那边的太太来寻了些去，太太都给过去了。"王夫人道："没有的话，你再细找找。"彩云只得又去找，拿了几包药来说："我们不认得这个，请太太自看。除了这个再没有了。"王夫人打开看时，也都忘了，不知是什么东西，并没有一枝人参在内。因一面遣人去问凤姐有无，凤姐来说："也只有些参膏、芦须。虽有几枝，也不是上好的，每日还要煎药用呢。"王夫人听了，只得向邢夫人那里问去。邢夫人说："因上次没了，才往你太太那里来寻。早已用完了。"王夫人没法，只得亲自过来请问贾母。贾母忙命鸳鸯取出当日所余的来，竟还有一大包，皆是手指

Chapter 77

A Pretty Maid Wrongly Accused Dies an Untimely Death Lovely Actresses Sever Worldly Ties and Join a Nunnery

After the Moon Festival, as Xifeng though well enough to leave her bed was not yet fully recovered, Lady Wang continued to summon the doctor to attend her every day as before. The fortifying pills he prescribed required, among other ingredients, two ounces of the best ginseng. Lady Wang sent for some. But after a long search, all her maids could find was a small box of roots no thicker than hairpins, of such poor quality that she made them look again. Presently they came back with a packet of ginseng rootlets.

"When we don't want it there's plenty; when we do there's none," she exclaimed in exasperation. "Time and again I've told you to make sure to put things back in the right place, but you never listen, just dumping them anywhere. You don't know the value of ginseng. When we need it we have to pay through the nose, and what's bought outside may not be efficacious."

Caiyun explained, "This seems to be all we have. Last time Lady Xing came to ask for some, you gave her our whole stock."

"Nonsense. Go and make a more careful search."

This time Caiyun brought back a few packets of herbs.

"What these are I don't know," she said. "Please have a look, madam. There isn't anything else."

Lady Wang opened the packets but could not recall what they were, and there was no ginseng among them. She sent to ask Xifeng whether she had any. A few rootlets only, was the reply, not of the best quality either, and she needed these for her medicine every day. Lady Wang then applied to Lady Xing, who said it was because she had run out that she had asked her for ginseng the other day.

Then Lady Wang had no other recourse but to apply in person to the

粗的，遂称了二两与王夫人。王夫人出来交与周瑞家的，拿去令小厮送与医生家去，又命将那几包不能辨得的药也带了去，命医生认了，各包记号了来。

一时，周瑞家的拿了来说："这几包都各包好记上名字了。但这一包人参固然是上好的，如今就连三十换也不能得这样的了，就只是年代太陈了。这东西与别的不同，凭是怎样好的，只过一百年后，自己就成了灰了。如今这个虽未成灰，然已成了朽株枯木，也无性力的了。请太太收了这个，不拘好歹，再换些新的倒好。"王夫人低头半日，方说："这可没法了，只好去买二两来罢。"也无心看那些，只命："都收了罢。"因向周瑞家的说："你就去说给外头人们，拣好的换二两来。倘或一时老太太再问，你们只说用的是老太太的，不必多说。"周瑞家的方才要去时，宝钗因在坐，乃笑道："姨娘且住，如今外头卖的人参都没好的。虽有一枝全的，他们也必截做两三段，镶嵌上芦泡须枝，掺匀了好卖，看不得粗细。我们铺子里常和参行交易，如今我和妈妈说了，叫哥哥去托个伙计过去和参行说明，叫他把未作的原枝好参兑二两来。不妨咱们多使几两银子，也得了好的。"王夫人笑道："倒是你明白。就难为你亲自走一趟更好。"于是宝钗去了，半日回来说："已遣人去，赶晚就有回信的。明日一早去配也不迟。"王夫人自是喜悦，因说道："'卖油的娘子水梳头'，自来家里有好的，不知给了人多少。这会子轮到自己用，反倒各处求人去了。"说毕长叹。宝钗笑道：

old lady. The latter at once ordered Yuanyang to fetch all she had, and this proved to be quite a large packet of ginseng roots each as thick as a man's finger. Yuanyang weighed out two ounces. Lady Wang gave these to Zhou Rui's wife, instructing her to send them to the doctor along with the herbs which they could not identify, and get him to label these.

Before long Mrs. Zhou brought them back.

"All the herbs have been properly wrapped up and labelled," she said. "But as for this ginseng, madam, although it's of the best quality and costs more than thirty taels of silver an ounce now, it's too old. Ginseng isn't like other medicines. No matter how fine the roots, after a hundred years they turn to ashes. There haven't turned to ashes yet , but they have dried up and lost their potency. So the doctor hopes you'll take this back and get him some fresher, whatever the quality."

Lady Wang lowered her head in thought.

"There's nothing for it then," she concluded at last, "but to go and buy two ounces." Not interested in examining the other packets she had them put away, then told Zhou Rui's wife, "Get the servants outside to buy two ounces of good ginseng. If the old lady happens to ask just tell her we used hers — no need to say any more."

Baochai who was present put in, "One moment , aunt. There's no good ginseng to be bought outside. Whenever they get a whole root they cut it into two or three pieces and graft other rootlets on to these to be sold, with others, as if they were whole roots; so the size is nothing to go by. Our shop often does business with those ginseng dealers. I can easily ask mother to get my brother to send an assistant to approach one of them and buy two ounces of good whole roots. It's worth spending a few taels extra to get the best."

"That's a splendid idea!" exclaimed Lady Wang. "It's good of you to take the trouble."

Baochai came back some time later to report that someone had been sent, and they should have the ginseng that evening — in time to prepare the medicine the next morning. Lady Wang was greatly relieved.

"This is like the proverb: 'The pomade-vendor uses water for her own hair,'" she sighed. "Goodness knows how much we've given away, but when we need any ourselves we have to ask for help right and left!"

“这东西虽然值钱，究竟不过是药，原该济众散人才是。咱们比不得那没见世面的人家，得了这个，就珍藏密敛的。”王夫人点头道：“这话很是。”

一时宝钗去后，因见无别人在室，遂唤周瑞家的来问前日园中搜检的事情可得个下落。周瑞家的已和凤姐等人商议停妥，一字不隐，遂回明王夫人。王夫人听了，虽惊且怒，却又作难，因思司棋系迎春之人，皆系那边的人，只得令人去回邢夫人。周瑞家的回道：“前日那边太太嗔着王善保家的多事，打了几个嘴巴子，如今他也装病在家，不肯出头。况且又是他外孙女儿，自己打了嘴，只好装个忘了，日久平静了再说。如今我们过去回时，恐怕又多心，倒像似咱们多事似的。不如直把司棋带过去，一并连赃证与那边太太瞧了，不过打一顿配了人，再指个丫头来，岂不省事。如今白告诉去，那边太太再推三阻四的，又说‘既这样你太太就该料理，又来说什么’，岂不反耽搁了。倘或那丫头瞅空寻了死，反不好了。如今看了两三天，人都有个偷懒的时候，倘一时不到，岂不倒弄出事来。”王夫人想了一想，说：“这也倒是。快办了这一件，再办咱们家的那些妖精。”

周瑞家的听了吩咐，会齐了那边几个媳妇，先到迎春房里，回迎春道：“太太们说了，司棋大了，连日他娘求了太太，太太已赏了他娘配人，今日叫他出去，另挑好的给姑娘使。”说着，便命司棋打点走路。迎春听了，含泪似有不舍

"Ginseng's expensive," rejoined Baochai with a smile. "After all, it's only medicine, and such things should be given away to help others. We shouldn't hoard them the way vulgar people do."

Lady Wang nodded.

"Quite right."

Baochai left then, and as no one else was about Lady Wang summoned Zhou Rui's wife to ask the result of their recent search of the Garden. Mrs. Zhou had discussed this with Xifeng and agreed to keep nothing back. Her description of all that had happened shocked and enraged Lady Wang. But she was in a quandary too, as Siqi was Yingchun's maid and both of them belonged to Lady Xing's house. She proposed reporting the matter to her.

Mrs. Zhou demurred, "The other day she scolded Wang Shanbao's wife and boxed her ears for being too officious. So now Mrs. Wang's shamming ill and won't leave home — especially as Siqi's her granddaughter and she fell into her own trap. All she can do now is pretend it never happened and hope things will quiet down. If we report this to Her Ladyship, she may suspect us of trying to stir up more trouble. Better take Siqi to her with the evidence, and after seeing it they'll at most give her a beating and assign a different maid here. Wouldn't that be simpler?

"If instead of that we just report it, Lady Xing may make excuses in order to shift the responsibility. 'Why doesn't your mistress deal with it, then?' she may ask. 'Why report it to me?' That would cause delay. And if Siqi took this chance to kill herself, that would make matters worse. The women who've been watching over her the last few days are liable to grow slack. Suppose they do, and something happens — what then?"

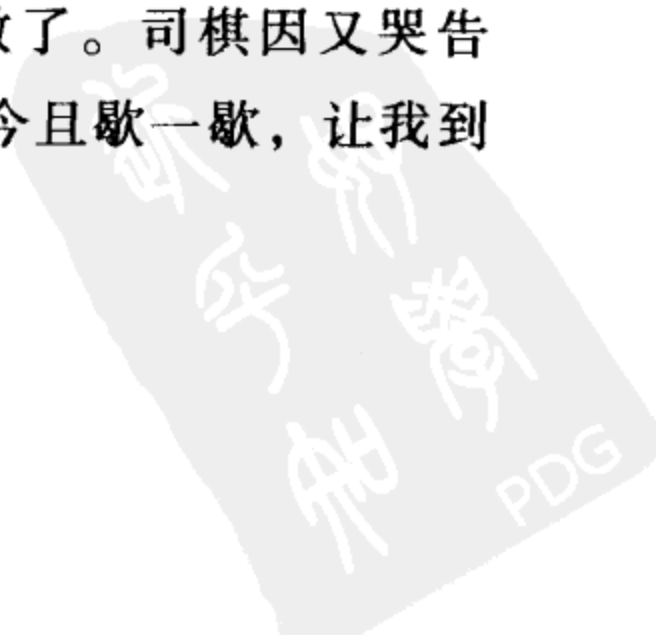
After some thought Lady Wang decided, "You're right. We must hurry up and see to this before dealing with those vixens in our own house."

Thereupon Mrs. Zhou called together some of her colleagues and led them to Yingchun's compound.

She told Yingchun, "The mistress says Siqi has grown up and her mother keeps coming to ask to have her back, so Her Ladyship's giving her back to be married off. She's to leave today. Another good maid will be chosen to wait on you, miss."

之意，因前夜已闻得别的丫鬟悄悄的说了原故，虽数年之情难舍，但事关风化，亦无可如何了。那司棋也曾求了迎春，实指望迎春能保救下的，只是迎春语言迟慢，耳软心活，是不能作主的。司棋见了这般，知不能免，因哭道："姑娘好狠心！哄了我这两日，如今怎么连一句话也没了？"周瑞家的等说道："你还要姑娘留你不成？便留下，你也难见园里的人了。依我们的好话，快快收拾了，倒是人不知鬼不觉的去罢，大家体面些。"迎春含泪道："我知道你干了什么大不是，我还十分说情留下，岂不连我也完了。你瞧入画也是几年的人，怎么说去就去了。自然不止你两个，想这园里凡大的都要去呢。依我说，将来终有一散，不如你各人去罢。"周瑞家的道："所以到底是姑娘明白。明儿还有打发的人呢，你放心罢。"司棋无法，只得含泪与迎春磕头，和众姊妹告别，又向迎春耳边说："姑娘好歹打听我要受罪，替我说个情儿，就是主仆一场！"迎春亦含泪答应说："你放心。"

于是周瑞家的等人带了司棋出了院门，又命两个婆子将司棋所有的东西都与他拿着。走了没几步，后头只见绣桔赶来，一面也擦着眼泪，一面递与司棋一个绢包儿说："这是姑娘给你的。主仆一场，如今一旦分离，这个与你作个想念罢。"司棋接了，不觉更哭起来了，又和绣桔哭了一回。周瑞家的不耐烦，只管催促，二人只得散了。司棋因又哭告道："婶婶大娘们，好歹略徇个情儿，如今且歇一歇，让我到



She ordered Siqi to pack up her things and leave.

Yingchun's eyes filled with tears, for she hated to part with the girl. But as other maids had told her in confidence about the events of that evening, fond as she was of Siqi there was nothing she could do where the question of morality was concerned. Siqi had begged her to intervene on her behalf and let her stay on; however, Yingchun did not have a ready tongue and was too weak to reach a decision.

"How cruel you are, miss!" sobbed Siqi, seeing that her fate was sealed. "You've kept me hoping the last two days, yet won't say a good word for me now."

Zhou Rui's wife demanded, "You don't expect the young lady to keep you, do you? Even if she did, how could you face the others in the Garden? Take my advice and pack up quickly to slip away without anyone noticing. That'll look better for us all."

Yingchun said tearfully, "I don't know what wicked thing you've done, but asking to keep you would spoil my reputation too. Just look at Ruhua: she was here for some years as well, but she left when she was told to. And you're not the only two. All the girls in the Garden will have to leave, I suppose, when they're grown up. Since we have to part sooner or later, you may as well go now."

"After all, the young lady sees things more clearly," agreed Mrs. Zhou. "Others will be sent away later, don't you worry."

Siqi had no alternative but to kowtow to Yingchun and take her leave of the other maids.

In tears she whispered, "If you hear that I'm in bad trouble, miss, do put in a good word for me for old time's sake."

Yingchun with tears in her own eyes promised, "I will."

Then Zhou Rui's wife and her colleagues led Siqi out, instructing two serving-women to carry away all her things. They had not gone far when Xiuju overtook them and, wiping her tears, handed Siqi a silk package.

"This is from our young lady," she said. "Now that mistress and maid are parting, she wants you to have this keepsake."

This gift reduced Siqi to tears again. She and Xiuju wept together until Mrs. Zhou lost patience and insisted that they must be on their way.

"Please be kind and wait a little, aunties," Siqi sobbed. "Let me say

相好的姊妹跟前辞一辞，也是我们这几年好了一场。”周瑞家的等人皆各有事务，作这些事便是不得已了，况且又深恨他们素日大样，如今那里有工夫听他的这些话，因冷笑道：“我劝你走罢，别拉拉扯扯的了。我们还有正经事呢。谁是你一个衣包里爬出来的，辞他们作什么?他们看你的笑声儿还看不了呢。你不过是挨一会是一会罢了，难道就算了不成!依我说快走罢。”一面说，一面总不住脚，直带着往后角门出去了。司棋无奈，又不敢再说，只得跟了出来。

可巧正值宝玉从外而入，一见带了司棋出去，又见后面抱着些东西，料着此去再不能来了。因闻得上夜之事，又兼晴雯之病亦因那日加重，细问晴雯，又不说是为何。昨日又见入画已去，今又见司棋出来，不觉如丧魂魄一般，因忙拦住问道:“那里去?”周瑞家的等皆知宝玉素日行为，又恐唠叨误事，因笑道:“不干你事，快念书去罢。”宝玉笑道：“好姐姐们，且站一站，我有道理。”周瑞家的便道:“太太吩咐不许少捱一刻，又有什么道理。我们只遵太太的话，管不得许多。”司棋见了宝玉，因拉住哭道:“他们做不得主，你好歹求求太太去。”宝玉不禁也伤心，含泪说道:“我不知你作了什么大事，晴雯也气病了，如今你又去。都要去了，这却怎么的好。”周瑞家的听了宝玉之言，忙发躁言向司棋道:“如今你已是有事的人，不是副小姐了，若不听话，我就打得你了。别想着往日有姑娘护着，任你们作耗。越说着，

goodbye to the others here who've been like sisters to me all these years."

Mrs. Zhou and the rest had business of their own to attend to and felt this task an extra imposition, in addition to which they bitterly resented the airs these maids put on. Naturally they had no patience with such talk.

"Get a move on and stop dilly-dallying," they scoffed. "We've more important things to see to. Are you one flesh and blood that you have to say goodbye? They'd only laugh at you. Shilly-shallying won't get you anywhere. So come along."

With that they marched straight on to the back side gate, and Siqi afraid to say more had no choice but to follow.

It so happened that Baoyu came back just then from outside. When he saw Siqi being led off, followed by women carrying things, he guessed that she had been dismissed for good. He had heard of the commotion that night and the happenings earlier in the day which had led to Qingwen's relapse; but though carefully questioned, she herself could not tell what had given rise to it all. The day before he had seen Ruhua leave, and now it was Siqi's turn. In consternation he barred the way and asked where they were going. The stewards' wives knew Baoyu's quirky ways and did not want him to pester and delay them.

"This is none of your business," said Mrs. Zhou with a smile. "Get back to your books."

"Good sisters, please wait a moment," he begged. "I have something to say."

"The mistress ordered us not to lose any time. And what can you have to say? We are just carrying out Her Ladyship's orders. That's our only concern."

Siqi caught hold of his sleeve.

"They can't disobey orders," she sobbed. "But please go and beg Her Ladyship to let me off."

Baoyu's heart bled for her. Tears started to his eyes.

"I don't know what dreadful thing you've done," he cried. "Qingwen's fallen ill with anger, and now you're leaving. All of you are leaving! What's to become of me?"

At this Mrs. Zhou scolded Siqi, "You're no longer a deputy young

你还不好儿的好走。如今和小爷们拉拉扯扯的，成个什么体统！”那几个媳妇不由分说，拉着司棋就出去了。

宝玉又恐他们去告舌，恨的只瞪着他们，看看已去远了，方指着恨道：“奇怪，奇怪，怎么这些人只一嫁了汉子，染了男人的气味，就这样混帐起来，比男人更可杀了！”守园门的婆子们听了，也不禁好笑起来，这个宝二爷说的也不知是些什么，也不知从哪里学来的这些话，叫人听了又可气又可笑，因问道：“这样说，但凡女儿个个都是好的了，女人们个个都是坏的了？”宝玉点头道：“不错，不错！”婆子们笑道：“还有一句话我们糊涂不解，倒要请问请问……”方欲说时，只见几个老婆子走来，忙说道：“你们小心，传齐了伺候着。太太亲自来园子里，在那里查点人呢。只怕还查到这里来呢。又吩咐快叫怡红院的晴雯姑娘的哥哥嫂子来，在这里等着领出他妹妹去。”因又笑道：“阿弥陀佛！今日天睁了眼，把这一个祸害妖精退送了，大家清净些。”宝玉一闻得王夫人进来亲自查点，便料定晴雯也保不住了，早飞也似的赶了去，所以这后来称愿之语竟未听见。

宝玉及到了怡红院，只见一群人在那里，王夫人在屋里坐着，一脸怒色，见宝玉也不理。晴雯四五日水米不曾沾牙，恹恹弱息，如今现从炕上拉了下来，蓬头垢面，两个女人搀架起来去了。王夫人吩咐道，只许把他贴身衣服撂出去，余者好衣服留下给好丫头们穿。又命把这里所有的丫头们都叫来一一过目。原来王夫人自那日着恼之后，王善保家

mistress now. I'll beat you if you don't do as you're told. Don't think you still have your young mistress to protect you and can go on making any trouble you please. So come along quietly instead of tugging at Master Bao. What way is that to behave?"

They dragged Siqi off before she could say any more; and Baoyu, afraid they might report this, could only glare after them. When they had gone some distance he shook a finger at them and swore:

"How strange! How is it that once girls marry they get contaminated by men and become so obnoxious — even worse than men!"

The matrons on duty at the gate burst out laughing.

"Whatever is Master Bao talking about?" they cried. "Goodness knows where he gets hold of such nonsense." To tease him they asked, "Do you mean that all girls are good and all married women bad?"

"That's right." Baoyu nodded. "Of course."

"We're so stupid," they chuckled, "there's something else we'd like you to explain...."

Before they could finish some nurses came along.

"Watch out!" they cried. "Mind you gather together all those on duty and stay at your posts. Her Ladyship's come to the Garden on a tour of inspection. She may very well come here...."

Then one of them ordered someone to fetch the relatives of that girl Qingwen in Happy Red Court and wait here to take her away.

"Buddha be praised!" they chortled. "At last Heaven has opened its eyes. Once this pest is gone we shall have a little peace."

Baoyu, as soon as he heard that his mother was coming to make a check-up, guessed that it boded trouble for Qingwen. So he dashed off too soon to hear the nurses' jubilation.

He found Happy Red Court packed with people. His mother, sitting there with a face like thunder, ignored him.

Qingwen was wasting away, having touched no food for four or five days; but now with dishevelled hair she was dragged from the *kang* and two women carried her off.

"She's only to take the clothes she has on," ordered Lady Wang. "The finer ones are to be kept for better maids."

She then summoned all the maids for her inspection.

的趁势告倒了晴雯，他和园中不睦的，也就随机趁便下了些话，说在王夫人耳中，王夫人皆记在心里。因节间有事，故忍了两日，今日特来亲自到园中阅人。一则为晴雯事犹可，二则因竟有人指宝玉为由，说他大了，已解人事，都由屋里的丫头们不长进引诱坏了。因这事更比晴雯一人较甚，乃从袭人起至作粗活的小丫头，个个亲自看了一遍。因问："谁是和宝玉一日的生日？"本人不敢答应，老嬷嬷指道："这一个蕙香，又叫作四儿的，是同宝玉一日生日的。"王夫人细看了一看，虽比不上晴雯一半，却有几分水秀。视其行止，聪明皆露在外面，且也打扮的不同。王夫人冷笑道："这也是个不害臊的。他背地里说的，同日同时就是夫妻。这可是你说的？打谅我隔的远，都不知道呢。可知道我身子虽不大来，我的心耳神意时时都在这里。难道我通共一个宝玉，就白放心凭你们勾引坏了不成！"这个四儿见王夫人说着他素日和宝玉的私语，不禁红了脸，低头垂泪。王夫人即命也快把他家的人叫来，领了去配人。又问，"谁是什么耶律雄奴？"老嬷嬷便将芳官指出。王夫人道："唱戏的女孩子，自然是狐狸精了！上次放你们，你们又懒待出去，可就该安分守己才是。你就成精鼓捣起来，调唆着宝玉无所不为。"芳官哭辩道："并不敢调唆什么。"王夫人冷笑道："你还强嘴。我且问

This was because Wang Shanbao's wife had taken advantage of Lady Wang's anger a few days previously to slander Qingwen, as well as others in the Garden whom she disliked. And Lady Wang had taken all this to heart. As she was busy during the festival she let things slide for a couple of days, but now she had come to inspect all the maids in the Garden, not only to dismiss Qingwen, but also because it had reached her ears that as Baoyu was growing up, his maids who were hussies were teaching him bad ways. As this was more serious than Qingwen's case, Lady Wang meant to examine all the maids from Xiren down to the girls assigned rough work.

"Which is the one," she asked, "born on the same day as Baoyu?"

Since the girl in question dared not answer, an old nurse pointed her out.

"Huixiang here, also called Sier."

Lady Wang looked at her closely. She saw that this maid, while by no means half as pretty as Qingwen, was not unattractive and looked intelligent. She dressed rather conspicuously too. Lady Wang smiled scornfully.

"Another shameless slut! She said in secret that a boy and girl born on the same day, at the same hour, are destined to marry. It was you who told him that. Do you think because we live apart I don't know? Though I don't often come to the Garden, I keep a close watch on what you're up to here. Baoyu is my only son. How can I allow hussies like you to lead him astray?"

At mention of what she had said in confidence to Baoyu, Sier blushed and hung her head, weeping.

Having ordered her to be fetched away by her parents and married off, Lady Wang asked:

"Which is the creature called Yelü Xiongnu?"

The nurses pointed out Fangguan.

"Oh, an actress? No wonder she's a vamp. When we offered last time to release you, you wouldn't go. Well then, you should have behaved yourself, instead of making mischief and getting Baoyu to carry on so wildly."

"I'd never dare!" pleaded Fangguan with a smile.

你，前年我们往皇陵上去，是谁调唆宝玉要柳家的丫头五儿了?幸而那丫头短命死了，不然进来了，你们又是连伙聚党遭害这园子呢。你连你干娘都欺倒了，岂止别人!”因喝命：“唤他干娘来领去，就赏他外头自寻个女婿去吧。把他的东西一概给他。”又吩咐上年凡有姑娘们分使的唱戏的女孩子们，一概都令其干娘带出，自行聘嫁。一语传出，这些干娘皆感恩称愿不尽，都约齐了来与王夫人磕头。王夫人又满屋里搜检一遍宝玉之物，凡略有眼生之物，一并命人收的收，卷的卷，着人拿到自己房内去了。因说道:“这才干净，省得旁人口舌。”因又吩咐袭人麝月等人:“你们可要小心!往后再有一点分外之事，我一概不饶。因叫人查看了书，今年不宜迁挪，暂且挨过今年，明年一并给我仍旧搬出去清净。”说毕，茶也不吃，遂带领众人又往别处去阅人。暂且说不到后文。

如今且说宝玉只当王夫人不过来搜检，即搜检，也无甚大事，谁知竟这样雷嗔电怒的来了。所责之事皆系平日之语，一字不爽，料必不能挽回的。虽心下恨不能一死，但王夫人盛怒之际，自不敢多言一句，多动一步，一直跟送王夫人到沁芳亭。王夫人命:“回去好生念念那书，仔细明儿问你。才已发下狠了。”宝玉听如此说，方回来。一路打算：“谁这样犯舌?况这里事也无人知道，如何就都说着了?”一面想，一面进来，只见袭人在那里垂泪。且去了第一等的

"So you're talking back! Tell me this: The year before last when we went to the Imperial Sepulchre, who coaxed Baoyu to bring that girl Liu Wuer here? Luckily she died a premature death; otherwise, if you'd got her in, you'd have ganged up to make more trouble in the Garden. You even bully your own foster-mother, to say nothing of other people."

She sent for this woman to take Fangguan away and find her a husband outside, saying she could keep all her things. She also ordered all the young actresses assigned to the different girls' quarters the previous year to clear out of the Garden, be fetched away and married off. This naturally delighted their foster-mothers, who came to kowtow their thanks.

Then Lady Wang had the whole house searched. Any of Baoyu's things which looked suspicious were to be confiscated and taken to her quarters.

"This will clean things up," she said, "and save gossip in future." She also warned Xiren and Sheyue, "Be careful now. If you overstep the mark I shan't let you off either."

She had them look up an almanac, which indicated that it would be inauspicious to move that year. So Baoyu had to stay in the Garden for the time being.

"Next year we'll move him out," declared Lady Wang. "That will stop further trouble."

This said, she led her attendants off to inspect other compounds, not even waiting for tea.

But to revert to Baoyu: He had expected nothing more than a perfunctory check-up, little dreaming that his mother would come down on them like a thunderbolt, taking them to task for things they had said in secret — which she had got word for word. He knew there was no saving the situation and wished he could die then and there; but as she was in such a rage he dared not make a false move or utter a word. He followed her to Seeping Fragrance Pavilion, where she told him:

"Go back and apply yourself to your books. You may be questioned tomorrow. Your father was fuming just now."

On his way back he wondered who had been telling tales. No outsiders knew what went on in his house, so how could his mother be so well informed? In a quandary, he returned to his room and found Xiren weep-

人，岂不伤心?便倒在床上也哭起来。袭人知他心内别的还犹可，独有晴雯是第一件大事，乃推他劝道:“哭也不中用了。你起来我告诉你，晴雯今日已经好了，他这家去，倒心净养几天。你果然舍不得他，等太太气消了，你再求老太太，慢慢的叫他进来也不难。不过太太偶然信了人的诽言，一时气头上如此罢了。”宝玉哭道:“我究竟不知晴雯犯了何等滔天大罪!”袭人道:“太太只嫌他生的太好了，未免轻佻些。在太太是深知这样美人似的人必不安静，所以很嫌他，像我们这粗粗笨笨的倒好。”宝玉道:“这也罢了。咱们私自玩的话怎么也知道了?又没外人走风的，这可奇怪。”袭人道:“你有甚忌讳的，一时高兴了，你就不管有人无人了。我也曾使过眼色，也曾递过暗号，倒被那人已知道了，你反不觉。”宝玉道:“怎么人人的不是太太都知道，单不挑出你和麝月、秋纹来?”袭人听了这话，心内一动，低头半日，无可回答，因便笑道:“正是呢。若论我们也有玩笑不留心的孟浪去处，怎么太太竟忘了?想是还有别的事，等完了再发放我们，也未可知。”宝玉笑道:“你是头一个出了名的至善至贤之人，他两个又是你陶冶教育的，焉能还有孟浪该罚之处!只是芳官尚小，过于伶俐些，未免倚强压弱，惹人厌。四儿是我误了他，还是那年我和你拌嘴的那日起，叫上来作些细活，未免夺占了地位，故有今日。只是晴雯也是和你一

ing there. Distressed by the less of his favourite maid, he threw himself on the bed to start weeping too.

Xiren knew that Qingwen's dismissal was the only thing that really mattered to him. She nudged him.

"It's no use crying. Get up and listen to me. Qingwen's on the mend, and going home like this she'll be able to rest quietly for a few days. If you really don't want to let her go, wait till your mother has got over her anger then go and beg the old lady to recall her. That shouldn't be difficult. The mistress did this in a fit of anger, just because she was taken in by some spiteful talk."

"I can't imagine what her crime was," he sobbed.

"The mistress just feels that someone with her good looks is bound to be rather flighty, and there can't be any peace with such a beauty here — that's why she dislikes her. She prefers plain, ungainly girls like us."

"Even so, how could she know our secret jokes? No outsiders could have passed them on. That's what's so odd."

"Have you ever shown any discretion? When you get worked up you don't care who's about. Many's the time I've tipped you a wink or signalled to you on the sly, but before you took the hint others had already noticed."

"How is it my mother knows all the faults of the other girls but not those of you , Sheyue and Qiuwen?"

Touched on the raw Xiren lowered her head for a while, at a loss for an answer.

"Yes, that's odd," she agreed presently. "We three have spoken carelessly in fun too, but the mistress seems to have forgotten that. Maybe she has other things on her mind and won't send us away until she's dealt with them."

"You're known as a paragon of virtue," he retorted. "And those two are influenced by you. So how could you slip up so as to deserve punishment? Fangguan now, being so young and a bit too smart, can't help bullying people and offending them. In Sier's case, it's my fault. It started that day when I quarrelled with you and called her in to wait on me. That made her uppish and led to this trouble today.

"But Qingwen's like you , she was transferred here as a child from

样，从小儿在老太太屋里过来的，虽然他生得比人强些，也没甚么要紧。就是他的性情爽利，口角锋芒些，究竟也不曾得罪你们。想是他过于生得好了，反被这好所误。”说毕，复又哭起来。袭人细揣此话，好似宝玉有疑他们之意，竟不好再往前劝，因叹道：“天知道罢了。此时也查不出人来了，白哭一会子也无益。倒是养着精神，等老太太喜欢时，回明白了再要他进来是正理。”宝玉冷笑道：“你不必虚宽我的心。等到太太平服了再瞧势头去要他时，知他的那病等得等不得。他自幼上来娇生惯养，何尝受过一日委屈。连我知道他的性格，还时常冲撞了他。他这一下去，就如同一盆才抽出嫩箭来的兰花送到猪窝里去一般。况又是一身重病，里头一肚子的闷气。他又没有亲爷热娘，只有一个醉泥鳅的姑舅哥哥。他这一去时是不惯的，那里还等得几日。知道还能见他一面两面不能了！”说着又越发伤心起来。袭人笑道：“可是你‘只许州官放火，不许百姓点灯’。我们偶然说一句略妨碍些的话，就说是不利之谈，你如今好好的咒他，是该的了！他便比别人娇些，也不至这样起来。”宝玉道：“不是我妄口咒他，今年春天已有兆头的。”袭人忙问何兆。宝玉道：“这阶下好好的一株海棠花，竟无故死了半边，我就知有异事，果然应在他身上。”袭人听了，又笑起来，因说道：“我待不说，又撑不住，你太婆婆妈妈的了。这样的话，岂是你读书的男人说的。草木怎又关系起人来？若不是婆婆妈妈的，真也成了个呆子了。”宝玉叹道：“你们那里知道，不但草木，凡天下之物，皆是有情有理的，也和人一样，得了知己，便极有灵验的。若用大题目比，就有孔子庙

the old lady's quarters. She may be better-looking, but what does that matter? And though she's outspoken and has a sharp tongue she's never done you any harm. I suppose it's her good looks that were her undoing." He burst into tears again.

Inferring from this that Baoyu suspected *her* of telling tales, Xiren did not like to pursue the subject further.

"Only Heaven knows the truth," she sighed. "We can't find out now who told, so it's no use crying. Take it easy till the old lady's in a good mood, then you can tell her about it and ask to have Qingwen back."

"Don't hold out false hopes," he snorted. "If I wait till my mother calms down it'll be too late, because Qingwen's illness won't wait. She's always lived in comfort, never had to put up with a single day's bad treatment. Even I, who know her so well, often offended her. Dismissing her now," he went on more bitterly, "seriously ill as she is and with all that resentment bottled up inside her, is like throwing a delicate orchid just coming into bloom into a pigsty. Besides, she has no parents, only an elder cousin who's a drunkard. How can she stand it there? How can you talk of waiting for a few days? Who knows whether I'll ever see her again or not?"

Xiren laughed.

"You're like 'the magistrate who goes in for arson but won't allow common people to light a lamp.' If we let slip some tactless remark you say it's unlucky, but it's all right for you to talk about her dying. She may be extra delicate, still it shouldn't come to that."

"I didn't speak at random. There was an omen this spring."

"What omen?"

"That begonia at the foot of the steps was thriving, but then for no reason half its branches withered. I knew that was a portent, and now see what's happened to her."

Xiren laughed again.

"I shouldn't say this, but I must, you're a regular old woman. How can an educated young gentleman talk that way? What have plants to do with human fate? If you're not an old woman you really are a fool."

"You don't understand," Baoyu sighed. "Not only plants and trees but all things in the world are just as sentient and rational as human be-

前之桧、坟前之蓍，诸葛祠前之柏，岳武穆坟前之松，这都是堂堂正大，随人之正气，千古不磨之物。世乱则萎，世治则荣，几千百年了，枯而复生者几次。这岂不是兆应?就是小题目比，也有杨太真沉香亭之木芍药，端正楼之相思树，王昭君冢上之草，岂不也有灵验。所以这海棠亦应其人欲亡，故先就死了半边。”袭人听了这篇痴话，又可笑，又可叹，因笑道:“真真的这话越发说上我的气来了。那晴雯是个什么东西，就费这样心思，比出这些正经人来!还有一说，他纵好，也灭不过我的次序。便是这海棠，也该先来比我，也还轮不到他。想是我要死的了。”宝玉听说，忙握他的嘴，劝道:“这是何苦!一个未清，你又这样起来。罢了，再别提这事，别弄的去了三个，再饶上一个。”袭人听说，心下暗喜道:“若不如此，你也不能了局。”宝玉乃道:“从此休提起，全当他们三个死了，不过如此。况且死了的也曾有过，也没有见我怎么样，总是一理。如今且说现在的，倒是把他的东西，作瞒上不瞒下，悄悄的打发人送出去与了他。再或有咱们常时积攒下的钱，拿几吊出去给他养病，也是你姊妹好了一场。”袭人听了，笑道:“你太把我们看的又小器，又没人心了。这话还等你说，我才已将他素日所有的衣裳以至各色各物总打点下了，都放在那里。如今白日里人多眼杂，又恐生事，且等到晚上，悄悄的叫宋妈给他拿出去。

ings. When in rapport with someone, they're specially sensitive. Some outstanding examples are the juniper tree before Confucius' temple and the yarrow before his tomb, as well as the cypress before Zhuge Liang's[1] temple and the pine before Yue Fei's[2] tomb. All these stately plants embodying these men's fine spirit have endured for centuries, withering when the world is in confusion and flourishing again when it is well governed. They have withered and revived again several times in all these thousands of years. Aren't they sure signs?

"Minor examples are the peony before Lady Yang's Scented Pavilion, the tree of longing before her Upright Tower, or the grass on Wang Zhaojun's tomb. They all had divine sensibility, didn't they? It's because she's going to die that half the begonia withered."

Hearing this senseless talk, Xiren did not know whether to laugh or cry.

"You're getting more and more outrageous," she protested. "How can you rack your brains to compare Qingwen, a mere nobody, with those great figures? Besides, however good she may be, she's lower in status than I am. You should compare me, not her with the begonia. I suppose this means I'm going to die very soon."

Baoyu clapped a hand over her mouth.

"What a thing to say! Before one death's taken place you're talking of another. All right, let's drop the subject. I've already lost three of you, I don't want to lose one more."

Secretly pleased, Xiren told herself: If they hadn't gone, how far would you have let yourself go?

"From now on," he continued, "let's say no more about it, just consider the three of them as dead and gone. Others have died before without it mattering much to me anyway. It's all the same. But let's talk about practical matters. We must secretly send her things to her without letting the mistresses know, as well as a few strings of cash from our savings to help cure her illness. We owe her that for old times' sake."

"How heartless and stingy you think us!" Xiren exclaimed. "We don't need a reminder from *you*. I've already sorted out all her clothes and things and put them aside. In the daytime there are too many busybodies around, all eager to make trouble; but as soon as it's dark we'll quietly

我还有攒下的几吊钱，也给他去罢。”宝玉听了，感谢不尽。袭人笑道：“我原是久已出了名的贤人，连这一点子好名儿还不会买来不成！”宝玉听了他方才的话，忙陪笑抚慰一时。晚间果密遣宋妈送去。

宝玉将一切人稳住，便独自得便出了后角门，央一个老婆子带他到晴雯家去瞧瞧。先是这婆子百般不肯，只说怕人知道，“回了太太，我还吃饭不吃！”无奈宝玉死活央告，又许他些钱，那婆子方带了他来。这晴雯当日系赖大家用银子买的，那时晴雯才得十岁，尚未留头。因常跟着赖嬷嬷进来，贾母见他生得伶俐标致，十分喜爱。故此赖嬷嬷就孝敬了贾母使唤，后来所以到了宝玉房里。这晴雯进来时，也不记得家乡父母，只知有个姑舅哥哥，专能庖宰，也沦落在外，故又求了赖大家的收买进来吃工食。赖大家的见晴雯虽到贾母跟前，千伶百俐，嘴尖性大，在赖家却还不忘旧故，又将他姑舅哥哥收买进来，把家里一个女孩子配了他。成了房后，谁知他姑舅哥哥一朝身安泰，就忘却当年流落时，任意饮酒，家小也不顾。偏又娶了个多情美色之妻，见他不顾身命，不知风月，一味死吃酒，便不免有蒹葭倚玉之叹，红颜寂寞之悲。又见他器量宽宏，并无嫉衾妒枕之意，这媳妇遂恣情纵欲，满宅内便延揽英雄，收纳才俊，上上下下，竟有一半是他“考试”过的。若问他夫妻姓甚名谁，上回贾琏所接见的多浑虫灯姑娘儿的便是了。目今晴雯只有这一门亲戚，所以出来就住他家。

get Mrs. Song to take them over. I've saved a few strings of cash too, which I'm giving her."

Baoyu expressed grateful thanks.

"I'm already known as 'a paragon of virtue'," she said sarcastically. "Surely this is a cheap way to add to my reputation."

At once he apologized and tried to mollify her.

That evening, in strict confidence, they sent Mrs. Song off on this errand. And after settling his maids down, Baoyu slipped out of the back gate alone and begged an old woman to take him to see Qingwen. At first she most resolutely refused, saying that if it was found out and reported to the mistress she'd lose her job; but after he pleaded hard and promised her a tip she finally took him.

Now Qingwen had been sold into bondage to Lai Da's family at the age of ten, before she had grown her hair. Old Mrs. Lai used to take her to the Rong Mansion, and the Lady Dowager took a fancy to her because of her intelligence and good looks, where upon Mrs. Lai presented her to the old lady, and that was how she had later become Baoyu's maid. Having come here as a child, she had no recollection of her old home and parents. Her only relative was a cousin on her father's side, a good cook but without any steady employment. She had asked Mrs. Lai to take him into service in the Rong Mansion. By that time Qingwen was waiting on the old lady and had turned out a smart, sharp-tongued girl with a hot temper; but touched by her remembering her kinsman, Mrs. Lai bought him too and gave him one of the bondmaids as his wife.

However, once living in comfort, the fellow forgot his hard life as a vagrant and took to drinking heavily, paying no attention to his wife who happened to be a good-looking, amorous woman. When he drank so recklessly, ignoring her, she felt as disconsolate as a piece of jade tossed among brambles or a beauty immured in solitude. Then, finding him so easygoing that he was never jealous, she started dispensing her favours to all the stout fellows and men of parts in the mansion until soon she had tried out half the men, masters as well as servants. If, Reader, you wish to know her name, she was that "Miss Deng," the wife of "To the Muddy Worm" with whom Jia Lian had once had an affair.

As these were Qingwen's only relatives, she had to stay with them.

此时他表哥往外头去了，那灯姑娘吃了饭也去串门子去了，只剩下晴雯一人，在外间房内卧着。宝玉命那婆子在院内瞭望，他独自掀起草帘进来，一眼就看见晴雯睡在芦席土炕上，幸而衾枕被褥还是旧日铺的。见了心内不知自己怎么着才好，因上来含泪伸手轻轻的拉他，悄悄唤两声。当下晴雯又因着了风，又受了哥嫂的歹话，病上加病，嗽了一日，朦胧睡了。忽闻有人唤他，强展星眸，一见是宝玉，又惊又喜，又悲又痛，忙一把死攥住他的手。哽咽了半日，方说出半句话来："我只当今生不得见你了。"一句话未完，便嗽个不住。宝玉也只有哽咽的分儿，晴雯道："阿弥陀佛，你来的很好，且把那茶倒半碗我喝。渴了这半日，叫半个人也叫不着。"宝玉听说，忙拭泪问："茶在那里？"晴雯道："那炉台上就是。"宝玉看时，虽有个黑沙吊子，却不像个茶壶。只得桌上去拿个碗，也大也粗，不像个茶碗，未到手内，先就闻得油膻之气。宝玉只得拿了来，先拿些水洗了两次，后又用水汕了两遍，方提起茶壶斟了半碗。看时，绛红颜色，也太不成茶。晴雯扶枕道："快递给我喝一口罢！这就是茶了。那里比得咱们的茶！"宝玉听说，先自己尝了一口，并无清香，只一味苦涩，略有茶意而已。尝毕，方递与晴雯。只见晴雯如得了甘露一般，一气都灌下去了。宝玉心下暗道："往常那样好茶，他尚有不如意之处；今日这样。看来，可知古人说的'饱饫烹宰，饥餐糟糠'，又道'饭饱弄粥'，

Her cousin was away at this time and Miss Deng had gone out after supper to call on friends, leaving Qingwen lying alone in the outer room. Baoyu told the old woman to keep watch in the courtyard, then lifted the matting portiere and went in. There was Qingwen on an earthen *kang* covered with a coarse mat, although at least she had her own pillow and bedding. Not knowing what to do, he approached her with tears in his eyes and gently took her hand, softly calling her name.

Qingwen had caught a chill and this, combined with her relatives' reproaches, had made her illness worse. After coughing for a whole day she had just dozed off, but hearing her name called she opened her eyes with an effort. When she saw it was Baoyu, she was so overwhelmed with pleased surprise mingled with grief and anguish that she promptly burst out sobbing. Grasping his hand with all her might, she managed at last to gasp between fits of coughing:

"I never thought to see you again...."

Baoyu too could only weep.

"Merciful Buddha!" cried Qingwen. "You've come just in time. Pour me half a cup of tea. I've been parched all this time, but when I call no one comes."

"Where is the tea?" he asked, wiping his eyes.

"On the stove."

Baoyu saw a black earthenware pot which he would never have recognized as a teapot. He took from the table a bowl, so large and coarse that it bore no resemblance to a teacup either and when he had it in his hand it smelled of rancid oil. He washed and rinsed it several times, after which he picked up the pot and poured out half a bowl. The dark red brew was unlike any tea he had seen.

Qingwen leaning on her pillow urged, "Pass it over, quick, for me to take a sip. You can't expect them here to have the kind of tea we're used to."

Baoyu first took a sip himself. The brew had no fragrance, only a bitter taste slightly reminiscent of tea. But when he passed her the bowl she gulped it all down as if it were sweet dew. He reflected: In the past the best tea couldn't satisfy her, yet now she likes this! It shows the truth of the old saying: "The well-fed turn away from cooked meats, while the

可见都不错了。”一面想，一面流泪问道：“你有什么话，趁着没人告诉我。”晴雯呜咽道：“有什么可说的！不过挨一刻是一刻，挨一日是一日。我已知横竖不过三五日的光景，我就好回去了。只是一件，我死也不甘心的：我虽生的比别人略好些，并没有私情密意勾引你怎样，如何一口死咬定了我是个狐狸精！我太不服。今日既已担了虚名，而且临死，不是我说一句后悔的话，早知如此，我当日也另有个道理。不料痴心痴意，只说大家横竖是在一处。不想平空里生出这一节话来，有冤无处诉。”说毕又哭。宝玉拉着他的手，只觉瘦如枯柴，腕上犹戴着四个银镯，因泣道：“且卸下这个来，等好了再戴上罢。”因与他卸下来，塞在枕下。又说：“可惜这两个指甲，好容易长了二寸长，这一病好了，又损好些。”晴雯试泪，就伸手取剪子，将左手上两根葱管一般的指甲都齐根铰下；又伸手向被内将贴身穿着的一件旧红绫袄脱下，并指甲都与宝玉道：“这个你收了，以后就如见我一般。快把你的袄儿脱下来我穿，我将来在棺材内独自躺着，也就像还在怡红院的一样了。论理不该如此，只是担了虚名，我也是无可如何了。”宝玉听说，忙宽衣换上，藏了指甲。晴雯又哭道：“回去他们看见要问，不必撒谎，就说是我的。既担了虚名，率性如此，也不过……”

一语未了，只见他嫂子笑嘻嘻掀帘进来，道：“好呀，你

famished enjoy dregs of wine and husks of rice."And again: "One glutted with rice prefers thin gruel."

Shedding tears he asked, "Have you anything to tell me while nobody's about?"

"What is there to say?" she sobbed. "I'm just dragging on from day to day, from hour to hour. I shall be gone in a few days at most, I know. But I can't die content. I may have been born with more than my share of good looks, but there's been no secret understanding between us and I've never tried to lead you astray, yet they insist I'm a vamp. That I *do* resent! Now I've got this bad name for nothing and I'm dying. If only I'd known how things would end I'd have acted differently; but I was fool enough to think we'd always be together. How could I guess there'd be this sudden scandal and I'd have nowhere to plead my innocence?" She burst into tears again.

Baoyu took her hand. On her wrists, thin as sticks, were for silver bracelets.

"Better take these off," he advised. "You can wear them when you're better." As he drew off the bracelets and put them under her pillow he remarked, "You took such care to grow those finger-nails two inches long; now your illness is going to spoil them."

Qingwen dried her tears and reached for a pair of scissors to cut off the tapering nails of the last two fingers of her left hand. Then, under the quilt, she took off her worn red silk bodice and gave this to him together with the nails.

"Take these keepsakes to remind you of me," she said. "And now take off your inner jacket and help me put it on , so that lying in my coffin I shall feel as if I were still in Happy Red Court. I shouldn't do such a thing, of course, but as I've already got a bad name — why not?"

At once Baoyu took off his inner jacket, put on her bodice, and concealed the finger-nails.

"If they see these when you go back and question you," she sobbed, "there's no need to lie. Just tell them these are mine. Since I've been falsely accused, why shouldn't I at least have this satisfaction?"

While she was still speaking her cousin's wife lifted the portiere and burst in, smirking.

两个的话，我已都听见了。”又向宝玉道：“你一个作主子的，跑到下人房里作什么？看我年轻又俊，敢是来调戏我么？”宝玉听说，吓的忙陪笑央道：“好姐姐，快别大声。他伏侍我一场，我私自出来瞧瞧他。”灯姑娘便一手拉了宝玉进里间来，笑道：“你不叫嚷也容易，只是依我一件事。”说着，便坐在炕沿上，却紧紧的将宝玉搂入怀中。宝玉如何见过这个，心内早突突的跳起来了，急的满面红涨，又羞又怕，只说：“好姐姐，别闹。”灯姑娘乜斜醉眼，笑道：“呸！成日家听见你风月场中惯作工夫的，怎么今日就反讪起来。”宝玉红了脸，笑道：“姐姐放手，有话好说。外头有婆子，听见什么意思。”灯姑娘笑道：“我早进来了，已叫婆子去园门等着你。我等什么似的，今儿等着了你。虽然闻名，不如见面，空长了一个好模样儿，竟是个没药性的爆竹，只好装幌子罢了，倒比我还发讪怕羞。可知人的嘴一概听不得的。就比如方才我们小姑下来，我也料定你们素日偷鸡摸狗的，我进来一会在窗下细听，屋内只你二人，若有偷鸡盗狗的事，岂有不谈及于此，谁知你两个竟还是个各不相扰的。可知天下委屈事也不少，如今我反后悔错怪了你们。既然如此，你但放心，以后你只管来，我也不啰唣你。”宝玉听说，才放下心来，方起身整衣央道：“好姐姐，你千万照看他两天。我如今去了。”说毕出来，又告诉晴雯。二人自是依依不舍，也少不得一别。晴雯知宝玉难行，遂用被蒙头，总不理他，宝玉方出来。意欲到芳官四儿处去，无奈天

"Fine, I heard all you two said!" She turned to Baoyu. "What is a young master doing in a servant's room? Have you come to seduce me, thinking me young and pretty?"

"Hush, good sister! Not so loud!" he begged. "She's worked for me all these years, so I slipped in to see her."

Miss Deng hustled him into the inner room.

"You don't want me to shout," she chortled. "All right — if you'll be nice to me."

She plumped down on the edge of the *kang* hugging Baoyu to her. He had never seen such behaviour as this before. His heart beating fast he blushed all over his face.

"Good sister, don't tease me!" he pleaded.

Miss Deng laughed tipsily.

"Bah! I've always heard that you were a lady's man. What makes you so bashful today?"

Flushing crimson he implored, "Do let go of me, then we can talk properly. If the old woman outside hears — how awful!"

"I came back long ago and sent her to wait for you at the Garden gate," she laughed. "I've been waiting and waiting for a chance like this, but now that you're here I've discovered you're a fraud. For all you're so handsome, you're nothing but a fire-cracker without powder — good only for show. Why, you're much shyer than I am. This shows it's no use listening to gossip. For instance, when my cousin came home I was sure you two must have been up to some monkey business; that's why I came back to listen outside the window. If there's been some goings-on between you, as you were alone you would have talked about it; but to my surprise there'd been nothing of the sort. So it's clear lots of people get wrongly accused in this world. I'm sorry I misjudged you. Well, as this is the case, you've nothing to worry about. You can come whenever you like and I won't pester you."

Feeling very relieved he got up and straightened his clothes.

"Good sister, please take good care of her for a couple of days," he urged her. "I must be off now."

He went out then to say goodbye to Qingwen. Both were reluctant to part, but part they must; and knowing how hard he found it, she covered

黑，出来了半日，恐里面人找他不见，又恐生事，遂且进园来了，明日再作计较。因乃至后角门看时，只见角门上小厮正抱铺盖，里边嬷嬷们正查人，若再迟一步门就关了。

宝玉进入园中，且喜无人知道。到了自己房内，告诉袭人只说在薛姨妈家去的，也就罢了。一时铺床，袭人不得不问今日怎么睡。宝玉道："不管怎么睡罢了。"原来这一二年间，袭人因王夫人看重了他，他越发自尊自重。凡背人之处，或夜晚之间，总不与宝玉狎昵，较先幼时反倒疏远了。况虽无大事办理，然一应针线并宝玉及诸小丫头们凡出入银钱衣履事务，也甚烦琐；且有吐血旧症，虽愈，然每因劳碌风寒所感，即嗽中带血，故迩来夜间总不与宝玉同房。宝玉夜间常醒，又极胆小，每醒必唤人。因晴雯睡卧警醒，且举动轻便，故夜间一应茶水起坐呼唤之事，皆悉委他一人，所以宝玉外床只是他睡。今他去了，袭人只得要问，因思此任比日间要紧之意。宝玉既答不管怎样，袭人只得还依旧年之例，遂仍将自己铺盖搬来设于床外。

宝玉发了一晚上呆。及催他睡下，袭人等也都睡后，听着宝玉在枕上长吁短叹，复去翻来，直至三更以后，方渐渐的安顿了，略有鼾声。袭人方放心，也就朦胧睡着。没半盏茶时，只听宝玉叫"晴雯"。袭人忙睁开眼连声答应，问作什么。宝玉因要吃茶。袭人忙下去向盆内蘸过手，从暖壶内倒了半盏茶来吃过。宝玉乃笑道："我近来叫惯了他，却忘了

her face with the quilt and ignored him until he left.

Baoyu had wanted to call on Fangguan and Sier too, but as it was dark and he had been out for some time he was afraid he would be missed and a search might be made for him, leading to more trouble. He had better return to the Garden and go out again the next day. When he reached the back gate, pages were bringing out bedding while nurses inside were checking up on people. A minute later and he would have been locked out. Luckily he was able to slip in unobserved.

Home again, he simply told Xiren that he had been with Aunt Xue and left it at that. Presently when preparing his bed, she had to ask him how they should sleep that night.

"Any way you like," was his answer.

Now for the last couple of years, since Xiren got into the good books of Lady Wang, she had begun to stand on her dignity and broken off her intimacy with Baoyu even in private or at night, behaving more distantly than when they were young. And though she had no major business to attend to, all the needlework of the household, as well as the accounts and seeing to the clothing and shoes of Baoyu and the young maids kept her fully occupied. Moreover, though she no longer suffered from fluxions, when she was tired or caught cold she sometimes coughed blood; and for this reason she had avoided sleeping in the same room as Baoyu. However, he often woke up in the night and being very timid would always call for someone; so Qingwen, who was a light sleeper and soft-footed, had been given the task of pouring him tea and attending him at night and had slept on a bed near his.

Now Xiren had to ask who should sleep on the bed near his, as she considered this work at night more important than any daytime tasks. Told to do as she thought fit, she could only move in her own bedding to sleep in Baoyu's room as in the old days.

That evening he was lost in thought. Finally she persuaded him to go to bed, but after she and the others had turned in she heard him groaning and tossing about in bed till after midnight, when finally he calmed down and started snoring. In relief she dozed off herself, but in less time than it takes to drink half a cup of tea he called for Qingwen. Xiren woke with a start and asked what he wanted. Some tea, he said. She got up, rinsed

是你。”袭人笑道:“他一乍来时，你也是睡梦中直叫我，半年后才改了。我知道这晴雯人虽去了，只怕这两个字是不能去的。”说着，大家又卧下。宝玉又翻转了一个更次，至五更方睡去时，只见晴雯从外头走来，仍是往日形景。进来笑向宝玉道:“你们好生过罢，我从此就别过了。”说毕，翻身便走。宝玉忙叫时，又将袭人叫醒。袭人还只当他惯了口乱叫，却见宝玉哭了，说道:“晴雯死了。”袭人笑道:“这是那里话!你就知道胡闹，被人听着什么意思。”宝玉那里肯听，恨不得一时亮了就遣人去问信。

及至天亮时，就有王夫人房里小丫头立刻叫开前角门，传王夫人的话:“‘即时叫起宝玉，快洗脸，换了衣裳快来，因今儿有人请老爷寻秋赏桂花，老爷因喜欢他前儿作得诗好，故此要带他去。’这都是太太的话，一句别错了。你们快飞跑告诉他去，立刻叫他快来，老爷在上房里还等他们吃面茶呢。环哥儿已经来了。快跑，快跑。再着一个人去叫兰哥儿，也要这等说。”里面的婆子听一句，应一句，一面扣钮子，一面开门。一面早有两三个人一行扣衣，一行分头去了。袭人听得叩院门，便知有事，忙一面命人问时，自己已起来了。听得这话，忙着叫人来舀了面汤，催宝玉起来盥

her hands in a basin of water, then poured him half a cup from the warm pot.

After sipping some tea Baoyu said with an apologetic smile, "I'm so used to calling her, I forgot it was you."

"You were used to calling me in your sleep when she first took over. It took you months to get out of the habit. So I knew that though Qingwen's gone her name would still be on your lips."

They lay down again. Baoyu tossed and turned for another hour or two, not falling asleep till the fifth watch. Then he saw Qingwen come in, looking her usual self. Having entered the room, she told him with a smile:

"Take good care of yourselves. I must leave you now." With that she turned and vanished.

Baoyu called her, waking Xiren again. She thought it was another slip of the tongue, but he sobbed:

"Qingwen is dead!"

"What a thing to say! How could you know? Don't let other people hear you talk such nonsense."

Baoyu insisted that he was right and could hardly wait till dawn to send to find out. Just at daybreak, however, a young maid sent by Lady Wang came to the Garden and called out asking to have the front side gate opened, as the mistress had instructions to be passed on.

"Baoyu must wash and dress quickly!" she cried. "The master has been invited out to enjoy the autumn scenery and the osmanthus in bloom. He is pleased with Baoyu because he wrote a good poem the other day, so he means to take him along. That's what Her Ladyship said, so don't get a word wrong. Hurry up and tell him to come as fast as he can. The master's waiting in the principal apartments for the boys to come and have breakfast. Master Huan has already arrived, and someone's been sent to fetch Master Lan as he's to go as well."

As she delivered this message, the serving-woman inside assented sentence by sentence while buttoning her clothes, then opened the gate. Several other maids, hastily dressing themselves, had run to pass on these instructions.

When Xiren heard knocking at the gate, she got up at once and sent to ask what was so pressing. This summons relayed to her, she quickly

漱。他自去取衣服。因思跟贾政出门，便不肯拿出十分出色的新鲜衣履来，只拿那二等成色的来。宝玉此时亦无法，只得忙忙的前来。果然贾政在那里吃茶呢，十分喜悦。宝玉忙行了省晨之礼。贾环、贾兰二人也都见过了宝玉。贾政命他坐了吃茶，向环、兰二人道："宝玉读书不如你两个，论题联和诗这种聪明，你们皆不及他。今日此去，未免强你们做诗，宝玉须得便助他们两个。"王夫人等自来不曾听见这等考语，真是意外之喜。

一时，候他父子四人去了，方欲过贾母这边来时，就有芳官等三个的干娘走来，回说："芳官自那日蒙太太的恩典赏了出去，他就疯了似的，茶也不吃，饭也不用，勾引上藕官、蕊官，三人寻死觅活，只要剪了头发做尼姑。我只当是小孩子家一时出去不惯也是有的，不过隔两日就好了。谁知越闹越凶，打骂着也不怕。实在没法，所以来求太太，或是就依他们做尼姑去，或教导他们一顿，赏给别人作女儿去罢，我们也没这福。"王夫人听了道："胡说！那里由得他们起来，佛门也是轻易进入得的！每人打一顿给他们，看还闹不闹了！"当下因八月十五日各庙内上供去，皆有各庙的尼姑来送供尖之例，王夫人曾于十五日就留下水月庵的智通与地藏庵的圆心住两日，至今日未回，听得此信，巴不得又拐两个女孩子去好作活使唤，因都向王夫人道："太太府上到底

called for hot water and urged Baoyu to get up and wash while she fetched his clothes. Since he was going out with his father, instead of choosing his most splendid new clothes she selected a less conspicuous outfit.

Baoyu had no choice but to go as fast as he could. He found his father drinking tea, obviously in a good humour. Having paid his morning respects he was greeted by Jia Huan and Jia Lan in turn, and then Jia Zheng ordered him to sit down to breakfast.

"Baoyu doesn't study as hard as you," he told the other boys. "But when it comes to writing inscriptions or capping verses you haven't got his flair. Today our hosts are bound to make you write poems, and Baoyu must help you both out."

Lady Wang, who had never heard such praise from him, was both surprised and pleased. After father and sons had left, she was thinking of going over to see the old lady when the foster-mothers of Fangguan, Ouguan and Ruiguan were announced.

"Ever since Your Ladyship kindly allowed Fangguan to come home she's behaved like a crazy creature," one of them reported. "She'll neither eat nor drink. And now the three of them — she's got Ouguan and Ruiguan to do the same — insist on cutting their hair and becoming nuns. They threaten to kill themselves if we won't let them. At first I thought the child was just unused to the way we live outside, and would get over this whim in a couple of days. But they're carrying on worse and worse. We've scolded and beaten them, but it's no use. We're really at our wits' end: that's why we've come to beg Your Ladyship's help. We'll either have to allow them to become nuns or give them a good talking to and let other families take them. We haven't the fortune to keep them!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lady Wang. "How can you let them have their own way? How can anyone enter a nunnery for fun? Give them a thrashing and they'll show more sense."

Now as this was just after the mid-autumn sacrifices, nuns from various nunneries had come to present sacrificial offerings, and Lady Wang had kept Abbess Zhitong of Water Moon Convent and Abbess Yuanxin of Ksitigarbha Nunnery to stay for a couple of days. When they heard

是善人家。因太太好善，所以感应得这些小姑娘们皆如此。虽说佛门轻易难入，也要知道佛法平等。我佛立愿，原是一切众生无论鸡犬皆要度他，无奈迷人不醒。若果有善根能醒悟，即可以超脱轮回。所以如今现有虎狼蛇虫得道的就不少。如今这三个姑娘既然无父母，家乡又远，他们既经过了这富贵，又想从小儿命苦入了这风流行次，将来知道终身怎么样，所以苦海回头，立意出家修修来世，也是他们的高意。太太别要阻他善念。”王夫人原是个好善的，先听彼等之语不肯听其自由者，因思芳官等不过皆系小儿女，一时不遂心，故有此意，但恐将来熬不得清净，反致获罪。今听这两个姑子的话大近情理；且近日家中多故，又有邢夫人遣人来知会，明日接迎春家去住两日，以备人家相看；且又有官媒婆来求说探春等事，心绪甚烦，那里着意在这些小事上。既听此言，便笑答道：“你两个既这等说，你们就带了作徒弟去如何呢？”姑子们听了，念一声佛道：“善哉！善哉！若如此，可是你老人家阴德不小。”说毕，便稽首拜谢。王夫人道：“既这样，你们问他们去。若果真心，即上来当着我拜了

this news, they thought it a chance to get two girls for nothing to work for them.

"After all," they told Lady Wang, "it's because your house is a virtuous one and you yourself do so many good deeds that these young girls have been influenced in this way. Though the house of Buddha isn't easy to enter, we should remember that the law of Buddha extends to all alike. Our Buddha's wish is to save all living creatures, yes, even chickens and dogs; but, alas, those who are deluded are hard to awaken. Anyone who has the root of goodness in her and can attain enlightenment can transcend transmigration. Why, even a number of tigers, wolves, snakes and insects have now entered Nirvana.

"These three orphan girls far from their native places lived here amid wealth and splendour but now they remember their early poverty which forced them to take to a despised profession, and they have no idea what will become of them in future. So turning away from this sea of sufferings they have decided to renounce the world and cultivate virtue, in the hope of doing better in their next life. This is a good and noble resolve. Please don't stand in their way, madam."

Now Lady Wang was fond of doing good deeds. She had not allowed Fangguan and the other girls to have their way because, to her mind, they were only children who had made this proposal in a fit of anger; they might prove unable to stand austerity, leading to more trouble in future. The speech of these two swindlers struck her as reasonable. Besides, she was quite distracted these days with a host of family problems, in addition to which Lady Xing had sent word that she intended to fetch Yingchun back tomorrow for a couple of days so that her prospective in-laws could inspect her, and official go-betweens had also come to propose a match for Tanchun. Unable to give much thought to these minor matters, she consented willingly.

"Well then, since that's how you feel, why not take these girls away as your acolytes?"

"Merciful Buddha!" the abbesses exclaimed. "how good of you, madam! This is a most virtuous deed." They forthwith bowed their thanks.

"They'd better be questioned first," said Lady Wang. "If they are really in earnest they can come and, in my presence, pay their respects

师父去罢。”这三个女人听了出去，果然将他三人带来。王夫人问之再三，他三人已是立定主意，遂与两个姑子叩了头，又拜辞了王夫人。王夫人见他们意皆决断，知不可强了，反倒伤心可怜，忙命人取了些东西来赏赏了他们，又送了两个姑子些礼物。从此芳官跟了水月庵的智通，蕊官、藕官二人跟了地藏庵的圆心，各自出家去了。再听下回分解。

to you now as their Mothers Superior."

The three foster-mothers fetched the three girls, and Lady Wang sounded them out carefully. As their minds were made up, they kowtowed to the two abbesses and then to Lady Wang by way of farewell. Seeing that they were determined and not to be dissuaded, she could not help feeling a pang of pity and sent for gifts for them as well as for the abbesses. Then Fangguan went off with Zhitong of Water Moon Convent, and the other two erstwhile actresses with Yuanxin of Ksitigarbha Nunnery.

To know what followed, read on.

NOTES

Chapter 62

[1] From the *Analects*.

[2] A quotation from Sima Guang's *Mirror of Governance*, meaning that injury is repaid in kind.

[3] "Duck's head" and "serving-maid" are both *yatou* in Chinese.

Chapter 63

[1] *Puer* tea, a green tea from Yunnan, is good for the digestion. *Nuer* tea is not really tea but brewed from tender *wutong* leaves grown in the Taishan Mountains.

[2] An aria from the third scene "Recommended to the World of Immortals" of *Story of Handan*, by the Ming playwright Tang Xianzu.

[3] Literally, "male slave," and a homophone for "Hun."

[4] A homophone in Chinese for "only a true hero."

[5] *Dou* means "pea."

[6] This means "pea-boy."

[7] This means "Wild Ass" in Chinese.

[8] "Glass."

Chapter 64

[1] Xi Shi, a beauty of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B. C.), was presented to Prince Fu Chai of Wu by Prince Gou Jian of Yue to induce him to neglect affairs of state. Fu Chai lost his kingdom to Gou Jian, while Xi Shi was drowned in a river by the people of Wu.

[2] A favourite of Xiang Yu, the Conqueror of Chu, she cut her throat when he was besieged by Liu Bang so that Xiang Yu could break out of the blockade unburdened. Qing Bu and Peng Yue were former Chu generals who surrendered to Liu Bang, but were later killed for disobeying orders.

[3] A palace maid during the reign of the Han emperor Yuandi (48-33 B. C.). Because she refused to bribe the palace painter Mao Yanshou, he painted an unflattering portrait of her and therefore the emperor never summoned her but decided to marry her to a Hunnish chieftain. When she left and he saw how beautiful she was, he regretted his mistake and had Mao Yanshou killed. See Note 8 in Chapter 51.

[4] A favourite concubine bought by the Jin official and plutocrat Shi Chong (249-300) with three pecks of pearls. After Shi Chong's fall from power his rival Sun Xiu demanded Green Pearl from him. She killed herself by jumping from a tower, and Shi Chong's whole household was killed.

[5] According to a Tang romance, Li Jing while in obscurity visited Yang Su, Duke of Sui. One of the duke's attendants, a girl holding a red whisk, was so impressed by Li Jing that she sought him out in his inn that night and they made off together. Li Jing then entered the service of Li Shimin (later Emperor Taizong of Tang) to overthrow the declining Sui

Dynasty. He subsequently became a prime minister and a duke.

[6] Wang Anshi (1021-1086).

[7] Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072).

Chapter 68

[1] See Note 3 and Note 5 in Chapter 51.

Chapter 71

[1] It was believed that to set caged birds free on someone's birthday would add years to that person's life.

Chapter 73

[1] It is related in *Pilgrimage to the West* that Guanyin had a gold band put on Monkey King's head to subdue him. If he became unruly, the Incantation of the Magic Band would be recited to cause him an unbearable headache.

Chapter 76

[1] *Wa*, concave or 凹 in Chinese; *tu*, convex, is 凸 in Chinese.

[2] Jiang Yan (444-505); Dongfang Shuo (154-93 B. C.); Zhang Yanyuan lived in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), and Zhang Sengyou in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589).

[3] Day-lily stands for mother or maternal authority, here referring to Imperial Consort Yuanchun.

[4] According to a Tang anecdote, Jia Dao, a famous poet of that dynasty, could not make up his mind whether to use "tap" or "push " in the line — The monk taps the door under the moonlight. Later, "tap and push" came to mean a careful choice of words in composition.

[5] According to ancient Chinese folklore, the Silver Toad swallowed then spat out the moon, making it wax and wane.

[6] In an ancient legend, a jade hare in the moon crushed herbs in a trough there.

[7] Chang E was said to have stealthily eaten her husband's elixir then flown to the Palace of Cold Void — the moon — becoming the goddess there.

[8] According to Chinese folklore, Weaving Maid (Vega of Lyra) and Cowherd (Altair of Aquila) neglected their duty after their marriage so that the God of Heaven, grandfather of the former, separated them with the Milky Way, allowing them to meet only once every year on the evening of the seventh of the seventh month across a bridge made up of magpies.

Chapter 77

[1] Zhuge Liang (181-234), chief minister of the Kingdom of Shu of the Three Kingdoms Period. Intelligent and utterly loyal, he was considered an exemplary minister.

[2] Yue Fei (1103-1142), a Southern Song general, was falsely accused and murdered in prison by order of the traitorous prime minister Qin Hui (1090-1155).