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A DREAM
OF RED MANSIONS



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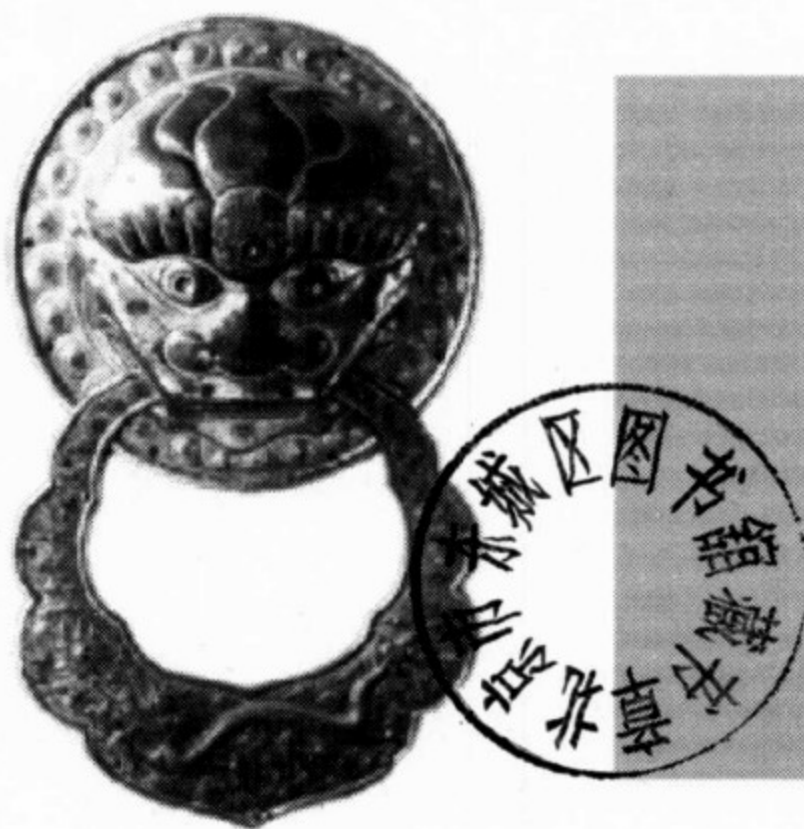
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Chinese-English

红楼梦

A Dream of Red Mansions

V



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第七十八回

老学士闲征婉嫔词 痴公子杜撰芙蓉诔

话说两个尼姑领了芳官等去后，王夫人便往贾母处来省晨，见贾母喜欢，便趁便回道：“宝玉屋里有个晴雯，那个丫头也大了，而且一年之间病不离身；我常见他比别人分外淘气，也懒；前日又病倒了十几天，叫大夫瞧，说是女儿痲，所以我就赶着叫他出去了。若养好了也不用叫进来，就赏他家配人去也罢了。再那几个学戏的女孩子，我也作主放出去了。一则他们都会戏，口里没轻没重，只会混说，女孩儿们听了如何使得？二则他们既唱了会子戏，白放了他们，也是应该的。况丫头们也太多，若说不够使，再挑上几个来也是一样。”贾母听了，点头道：“这倒是正理，我也正想着如何呢。但晴雯那丫头我看他甚好，怎么就这样起来。我的意思，这些丫头的模样爽利，言语针线多不及他，将来只他还可以给宝玉使唤。谁知变了性。”王夫人笑道：“老太太挑中的人原不错。只怕他命里没造化，所以得了这个病。俗语又说，‘女大十八变’。况且有本事的人，未免就有些调歪。老太太还有什么不曾经验过的。三年前我就留心这件事，先只取中了他，我便留心。冷眼看去，他色色虽比人强，只是不大沉重。若说沉重知大礼，莫若袭人第一。虽说贤妻美妾，





Chapter 78

An Old Scholar at Leisure Has Eulogies Composed His Unorthodox, Witless Son Laments the Hibiscus

After the two abbesses had taken the young actresses away, Lady Wang called to pay her morning respects to the Lady Dowager. And finding her in a good mood she reported:

“Baoyu’s maid Qingwen has grown up now, and this last year or so she’s kept falling ill. I’ve noticed too that she’s saucier and lazier than the others. Recently she was ill again for over ten days, and the doctor diagnosed it as consumption; so then and there I dismissed her with instructions not to come back when she’s better, giving her to her family to marry off. I also took it on myself to send away those few young actresses. Because, on account of their theatrical training, they talked in a wild way we don’t want our girls to hear; and as they performed for us here for a time, it wouldn’t have been right to ask for money for them. In any case, we have too many maids. If we need more in future, we can always pick a few others.”

“Quite right and proper.” The old lady nodded approval. “Exactly what I had in mind myself. But I always thought Qingwen a very nice girl. How could she have turned out so badly? She struck me as smarter than the other maids, with a ready tongue too and better at needlework the best choice as a concubine for Baoyu in future. Who could have dreamed that she’d change for the worse?”

“You made the right choice, madam, only she wasn’t fated to have such good fortune. That’s why she contracted this illness. As the saying goes, ‘A girl changes eighteen times before reaching womanhood.’ And the smarter the girl, the more out of hand she’ll get. You must have seen many such cases.

“Three years ago when I thought about this question too, she was my first choice. No one’s a match for her in other ways, it’s just that she’s



却也要性情和顺举止沉重的更好些。就是袭人的模样虽比晴雯略次一等，然放在屋里，也算得一二等的了。况且行事大方，心地老实，这几年来，从未逢迎着宝玉淘气。凡宝玉十分胡闹的事，他只有死劝的。因此品择了二年，一点不错了，我就悄悄的把他丫头的月钱止住，我的月分银子里批出二两银子来给他。不过使他自己知道，越发小心学好之意。且不明说者，一则宝玉年纪尚小，老爷知道了又恐说耽误了书；二则宝玉再自为已是跟前的人，不敢劝他说他，反倒纵性起来。所以直到今日才回明了老太太。”贾母听了，笑道：“原来这样，如此更好了。袭人本来从小儿不言不语，我只说他是没嘴的葫芦。既是你深知，岂还有错误的。而且你这不明说与宝玉的主意更好，且大家别提这事，只是心里知道罢了。我深知宝玉将来也是个不听妻妾劝的。我也解不过来，也从未见过这样的孩子。别的淘气都是应该的，只他这种和丫头们好却是难得。我为此也耽心，每每冷眼查看他。只和丫头们闹，必是人大心大，知道男女的事了，所以爱亲近他们。既细细查找，究竟不是为此，岂不奇怪。想必他原是个丫头，错投了胎不成。”说着，大家笑了。王夫人又回今日贾政如何夸奖，又如何带他们逛去，贾母听了，更加喜悦。

一时，只见迎春打扮了前来告辞过去。凤姐也来省晨，伺候过早饭，又说笑了一回。贾母歇晌午觉，王夫人便唤了凤姐，问他丸药可曾配好。凤姐道：“还不曾呢，如今还是吃汤药。太太只管放心，我已是大好了。”王夫人见他精神复



a bit flighty. For steadiness and propriety, Xiren comes first. Though what's wanted in a wife is virtue, they say, and in a concubine beauty, still it's better to choose a girl with a sweet disposition and steady character. Xiren may not be up to Qingwen in looks, yet she's the best for Baoyu's chamber. Trustworthy, too, and honest. These last few years she's never once led Baoyu into mischief. In fact, whenever he does wrong she tries her best to dissuade him — after watching her for two years I know this for certain. That's why I secretly stopped her pay as a maid and gave her two taels a month from my own allowance, so that she'd understand and look after him even better. I didn't make it public for two reasons: partly because Baoyu's young, and if his father knew of this he might think it bad for his studies; partly because if she was known to be his concubine she wouldn't dare gainsay him, and Baoyu would carry on more wildly than ever. This is why I didn't report it to you earlier."

The Lady Dowager smiled.

"If that's the case so much the better. Xiren's always been so quiet I felt she was rather stupid; but as you know her so well you can't be wrong. I'm all in favour, too, of not letting Baoyu know. None of us must mention this, just let it be understood. I'm well aware that in future Baoyu won't listen to his wife's or concubines' advice. I can't understand him either. I've never known another child like him. One expects a boy to be mischievous, but this extraordinary liking he has for maids has been preying on my mind. I'm for ever finding him fooling about with them. At first I thought this intimacy was because he'd grown big enough to know about sex; but watching him more closely I realized that wasn't the reason, which makes it even odder. Could it be that he was really meant to be born a girl..."

This set every body laughing. Then Lady Wang went on to describe how Jia Zheng had praised Baoyu today and taken the boys out with him to pay a call. This pleased the old lady still more.

Soon Yingchun, dressed to go out, came to take her leave. Then Xifeng arrived to pay her respects and wait upon the old lady as she had breakfast. They chatted till it was time for her siesta, when Lady Wang called Xifeng over to ask her whether she had prepared her pills.

"Not yet," was the answer. "I'm still taking herb-cordials. But don't



初，也就信了。因又告诉撵逐晴雯等事，又说：“怎么宝丫头私自回家睡了，你们都不知道？我前儿顺路都查了一查。谁知兰小子这一个新进来的奶子也十分妖娆，我也不喜欢他。我也说与你嫂子，好不好叫他各自去罢。况且兰小子也大了，用不着这些奶子了。我因问你大嫂子：‘宝丫头出去难道你也不知道不成？’他说是告诉了他的，不过住两三日，等你姨妈好了就进来。姨妈究竟无甚大病，不过还是咳嗽腰疼，年年是如此的。他这去必有原故，敢是有人得罪了他不成？那孩子心重，亲戚们住一场，别得罪了人，反不好了。”凤姐笑道：“谁可好好的得罪他？况且他天天在园里，左不过是他们一群人。”王夫人道：“别是宝玉有口无心，傻子似的，从没个忌讳，高兴了信嘴胡说也是有的。”凤姐笑道：“这可是太太过于操心了。若说他出去干正经事说正经话去，却像个傻子；若只叫他进来在这些姊妹跟前以至于大小的丫头跟前，他最有尽让，又恐怕得罪了人，那是再不得有人恼他的。我想薛妹妹此去，想必为着前时搜检众丫头的东西的原故。他自然为信不及园里的人才搜检，他又是亲戚，现也有丫头老婆子在内，我们又不好去搜检，恐我们疑他，所以多了这个心，自己回避了。也是应该避嫌疑的。”

王夫人听了这话不错，自己遂低头想了一想，便命人请了宝钗来，分晰前日的事，以解他的疑心，又仍命他进来照

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you worry, madam. I'm much better."

Lady Wang believed her, having seen that she looked more energetic. She told her of Qingwen's dismissal.

"How come you didn't know that Baochai — of her own accord — had moved home to sleep with her mother?" she continued. "A couple of days ago I made a search of all the other apartments in the Garden. And, just imagine, I found young Lan's new nurse a regular vamp! I didn't like the look of her at all. So I urged your sister-in-law to send her packing, as in any case he's big enough now not to need so many nurses. And I asked her, 'Surely you knew about Baochai's leaving?'"

"She said yes, but Baochai had told her she'd be coming back in a few days, once Aunt Xue was better. Actually, there's nothing much the matter with Aunt Xue apart from that chronic cough and backache of hers which she gets every year. So Baochai must have moved out for some other reason. Do you think somebody offended her? She's a sensitive child, and it would be too bad if we offended her after living together for so long."

"Why should anyone offend them for no reason?" asked Xifeng cheerfully. "They spend all their time in the Garden, so if there *has* been any misunderstanding it must be among themselves."

"Can Baoyu have been tactless?" wondered his mother. "He's such a simpleton, so lacking in scruples, that in a fit of excitement he may have spoken wildly."

"Don't worry so much about him, madam. When Baoyu goes out on business, he may talk and behave like a simpleton. But when he's at home with all these girl cousins of his, or even with the maids, he's most considerate to them, afraid of giving offence. So no one could possibly be annoyed by *him*."

"I think Baochai must have left because of the search the other night, naturally concluding that we didn't trust certain people in the Garden. As she's a relative, we could hardly search *her* servants. But for fear that her household might be suspected, being sensitive as she is she took her self off so as to avoid suspicion. And quite right, too."

Convinced by this estimate, Lady Wang lowered her head and after



旧居住。宝钗陪笑道：“我原早要出去的，只是姨娘有许多的大事，所以不便来说。可巧前日妈又不好了，家里两个靠得的女人也病着，所以我趁便出去了。姨娘今既知道了，我正好明讲出情理来，就从今日辞了，好搬东西出去的。”王夫人、凤姐都笑道：“你太固执了。正经仍搬进来的为是，休为没要紧的事反疏远了亲戚。”宝钗笑道：“这话说的太不解了，并没为什么事我出去。我为的是妈近来神思较先大减，而且夜间晚上没有得靠的人，通共只我一个。二则我哥哥眼看要娶嫂子，多少针线活计并家里一切动用的器皿，尚有未齐备的，我也须得帮着妈去料理料理。姨妈和凤姐姐都知道我们家的事，不是我撒谎。三则自我在园里，东南上小角门子就常开着，原是为我走的，保不住出入的人就图省路，也从那里走，又没人盘查，设若从那里生出一件事来，岂不两碍脸面。而且我进园里来住原不是什么大事，因前几年年纪皆小，且家里没事，有在外头的，不如进来姊妹相共，或作针线，或玩笑，皆比在外头闷坐着好，如今彼此都大了，也都有事。况姨娘这边，历年皆遇不遂心的事故，那园子也太大，一时照顾不到，皆有关系，惟有少几个人儿，就可以少操些心。所以今日不但我执意辞去，此后还要劝姨娘，如今该减些的就减些，也不为失了大家的体统。据我看，园子里





some reflection told a maid to invite Baochai over. She explained about the recent search to set her niece's mind at rest then urged her to move back into the Garden.

"I'd been meaning to move out for some time," said Baochai with a smile. "Only I didn't find the occasion to ask you, as you have so much important business to attend to. But that day, as it happened, my mother was unwell again and our only two reliable maids were ill; so I took the chance to move out. Now that you know about it, I can explain the reason and ask leave today to move my things out too."

Neither Lady Wang nor Xifeng would hear of this.

"Don't be so stubborn!" they cried laughingly. "What you should really do is move in again, not let something so inconsequential come between us."

"I don't understand what you mean." Baochai rejoined. "I didn't leave because of anything that happened here, but because my mother'd been feeling less energetic and at night she had nobody to rely on but me. Besides, my brother will soon be getting married. There's a lot of needlework to do, his rooms still have to be furnished, and I have to help her with all the preparations. *You* know, aunt and Cousin Xifeng, how it is in our family and that I'm not fibbing.

"For another thing, after I moved into the Garden that small side gate in the southeast corner was kept open for me to go through; but other people wanting to take a short cut could use it too, and there was nobody to make a check there. If trouble had come of it, it would have been awkward for both families.

"Besides, my moving into the Garden to sleep was of no great consequence. A few years ago we were all young and I had no business at home, so I was better off here than outside, able to do needlework with the other girls and amuse myself with them — that was better than sitting idly at home by myself. Now we've all grown up and have our different tasks. Moreover, these years you've had various troubles, aunt. And the Garden is too big for you to keep an eye on everything. The fewer the people there, the less you need worry. So now I've not only made up my mind to move out, but I'll venture to advise you, aunt, to cut down as far as possible, for that won't make us lose face. It seems to me



的这一项费用也竟可以免的，说不得当日的話。姨娘深知我家的，难道我们家当日也是这等零落不成？”凤姐听了这篇话，便向王夫人笑道：“这话竟是，依我说便不必强他了。”王夫人点头道：“我也无可回答，只好随你的便罢了。”

说话之间，只见宝玉等已回来，因说：“父亲还未散，恐天黑了，所以先叫我们回来了。”王夫人忙问：“今日可曾丢了丑？”宝玉笑道：“不但不丢丑，倒拐了许多东西来了。”接着，就有老婆子们从二门上小厮手里接了东西来。王夫人看时，只见扇子三把，扇坠三个，笔墨共六匣，香珠三串，玉绦环三个。宝玉说道：“这是梅翰林送的，那是杨侍郎送的，这是李员外送送的，每人一分。”说着，又向怀中取出一个旃檀香的小护身佛来，说：“这是庆国公单给我的。”王夫人又问在席何人、作何诗词，宝玉一一答应毕，只将宝玉一分令人拿着，同宝玉、环、兰前来见过贾母。贾母看了，喜欢不尽，不免又问些话。无奈宝玉一心记着晴雯，答应完了话时，便说骑马颠了，骨头疼。贾母便说：“快回房去换了衣服，疏散疏散就好了，不许睡倒。”宝玉听了，便忙入园来。

当下麝月、秋纹已带了两个丫头来等候，见宝玉出来，秋纹便将笔墨拿起，一同随宝玉进园来。宝玉满口里说“好热”，一壁走，一壁便摘冠解带，将外面的大衣服都脱下来麝月拿着，只穿着一件松花绫子夹袄，袄内露出血点般大红

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that much of this expenditure in the Garden could be avoided. After all, times have changed. You know our family well, aunt — we weren't as badly off as this in the old days!"

Xifeng after hearing this said to Lady Wang, "She's right. We needn't insist."

Lady Wang nodded.

"I've no answer to that. Just do as you think fit."

At this point Baoyu came back with the other boys.

"My father is still feasting," he said. "As it will soon be growing dark, he told us to come home first."

Lady Wang hastily asked, "Did you make any gaffes today?"

"No," he answered with a smile. "Not only that but I've brought back a lot of loot."

Then some old serving-women fetched in from the pages at the inner gate the presents the young masters had received. Lady Wang saw these were three fans, three fan-pendants, six boxes of writing brushes and ink-tablets, three strings of scented beads and three jade rings, which Baoyu explained had been given them by Academician Mei, Vice-Minister Yang and Secretary Li — one set apiece. He then pulled a talisman, a small sandalwood Buddha, from his pocket.

"This was a gift just for me from the Duke of Jingguo."

Lady Wang asked what guests had been there and what poems they had written, then took the three boys to pay their duty visit to the old lady, ordering the servant carrying Baoyu's presents to accompany them.

The Lady Dowager, delighted, inevitably cross-examined them too. Baoyu was so worried about Qingwen, however, that after answering her questions he told her that his bones ached after riding.

"Go back quickly then," urged the old lady. "Once you've changed your clothes and rested, you'll feel better. But mind you don't lie down."

Thereupon Baoyu hurried back to the Garden.

Sheyue and Qiuwen had been waiting in the old lady's place with two younger maids. When Baoyu left they followed him, Qiuwen carrying his presents.

"How hot it is!" he kept complaining.

While walking he took off his hat, belt and outer garment, which Sheyue



裤子来。秋纹见这条红裤是晴雯手内针线，因叹道：“这条裤子以后收了罢，真是物在人去了。”麝月忙也笑道：“这是晴雯的针线么。”又叹道：“真是物在人亡了！”秋纹将麝月拉了一把，笑道：“这裤子配着松花色袄儿、石青靴子，越显出这靛青头皮，雪白的脸来了。”宝玉在前只装听不见，又走了两步，便止住步道：“我要走一走，这怎么好？”麝月道：“大白日里，还怕什么？还怕丢了你不成！”因叫两个小丫头跟着，“我们送了这些东西去再来。”宝玉道：“好姐姐，等我一等再去。”麝月道：“我们去了就来。两个人手里都有东西，倒像摆执事的，一个捧着文房四宝，一个捧着冠袍带履，成个什么样子。”宝玉听见，正中心怀，便让他两个去了。

他便带了两个小丫头到一石后，也不怎么样，只问他二人道：“自我去了，你袭人姐姐可打发人瞧晴雯姐姐去了不曾？”这一个答道：“打发宋妈妈瞧去了。”宝玉道：“回来说什么？”小丫头道：“回来说晴雯姐姐直着脖子叫了一夜，今儿早起就闭了眼，住了口，人事不知，也出不得一声儿，只有倒气的分儿了。”宝玉忙道：“一夜叫的是谁？”小丫头道：“一夜叫的是娘。”宝玉试泪道：“还叫谁？”小丫头道：“没有听见别人了。”宝玉道：“你糊涂，想必没有听真。”旁边那一个小丫头最伶俐，听见宝玉如此说，便上来说道：“真个他糊涂。”又向宝玉道：“不但我听得真切，我还亲自

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carried for him. Baoyu was now wearing only a green satin jacket above a pair of blood-red trousers, and Qiuwen noticing that these were trousers which Qingwen had made for him heaved a sigh.

"Better keep those trousers as a memento," she said. "Really, though she's gone her handiwork is still here."

"Yes, that's Qingwen's work," said Sheyue, then quoted the saying: "The handiwork remains though the maker's gone."

Qiuwen nudged her, saying more cheerfully:

"Those trousers, with that green jacket and the blue boots make a vivid foil for black hair and a snow-white complexion."

Baoyu in front pretended not to have heard them and walked on a few paces, then stopped.

"Is it all right if I take a stroll?" he asked.

"What are you afraid of in broad daylight?" Sheyue answered. "You can't get lost." She told the two young maids to accompany him. "We'll join you after we've put these things away."

"Won't you wait for me here, good sister?"

"We'll be back soon," Sheyue promised. "With both our hands full we're like a regular retinue, one carrying the 'four treasures of the study,' one a hat, belt and garments — it looks so ridiculous!"

As this was what Baoyu had hoped for, he let them go. He then led the two young maids behind a rockery. Without further ado he asked:

"After I left, did Sister Xiren send anyone to see Sister Qingwen?"

"She sent Mrs. Song," one girl told him.

"What did she say after she came back?"

"She said Sister Qingwen was crying out all night. First thing this morning, she closed her eyes and stopped calling because she'd fainted away and couldn't get a sound out, just gasping for breath."

"Whom was she calling all night?" he hastily asked.

"Her mother."

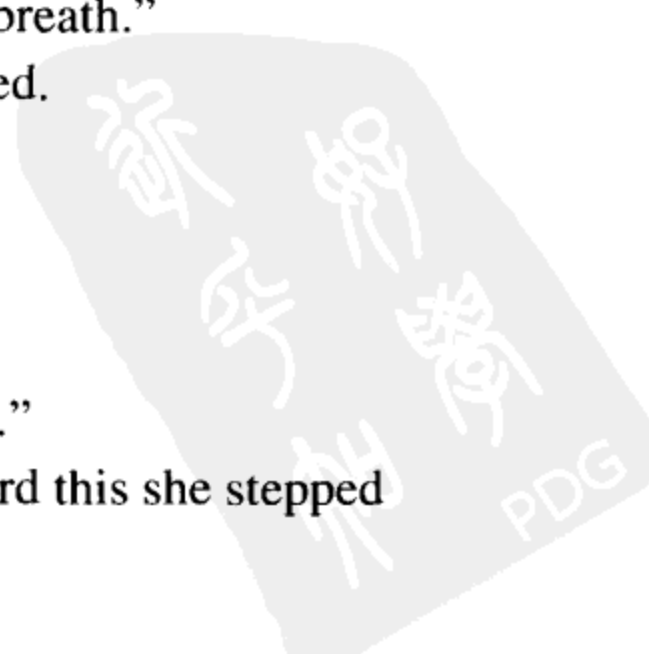
Baoyu wiped his tears.

"Who else?"

"Nobody else."

"You silly thing, you can't have heard her clearly."

The other girl by him was smarter. When she heard this she stepped





偷着看他去的。”宝玉听说，忙问：“你怎么又亲自看他去？”小丫头道：“我因想晴雯姐姐素日与别人不同，待我们极好。如今他虽受了委屈出去了，我们不能别的法子救他，只亲去瞧瞧他也不枉素日疼我们一场。就是人知道了回了太太，打我们一顿，也是愿受的。所以我拼着挨一顿打，偷着下去瞧瞧他。谁知他平生为人聪明，至死不变。因他想着那起俗人不可说话，所以只闭眼养神，见我去了便睁开眼，拉着我的手问：‘宝玉那去了？’我告诉他实情。他叹了一口气说：‘不能见了。’我就说：‘姐姐何不等一等他回来见一面，岂不两完心愿？’他就笑道：‘你们还不知道。我不是死，如今天上少了一位花神，玉皇救命着我去司主。我如今在未正二刻到任司花，宝玉须待未正三刻才到家，只少得一刻的工夫，不能见面。世上凡该死之人阎王勾取了过去，是差些小鬼来捉人魂魄。若要迟延一时半刻，不过烧些纸钱浇些浆饭，那鬼只顾抢钱去了，该死的人可就多待些工夫。又从来皆说阎王注定三更死，谁能留人至五更之语，我这如今是有天上的神仙来召请，岂可捱得时刻！’我听了这话，竟不大信，至回来看表时，果然是未正二刻他咽了气，正三刻上就有人来叫我们，说你来了。这时候倒都对合。”宝玉忙道：“你不识字看书，所以不知道。这原是有的，不但花有一个





forward.

“She really is silly,” she told Baoyu. “I not only heard her clearly, I went over on the sly to see Qingwen.”

“Why did you do that?”

“Because I remembered how good Sister Qingwen always was to us — not like other people. Though she’d been unfairly treated and left, if we couldn’t find any other way to help her, we should at least go to see her to repay her former kindness. Even if we were found out and reported to the mistress, and if we got beaten for it, we’d gladly put up with that. That’s why, at the risk of a beating, I slipped over to see her. She always had intelligence, and was clear in her head right up to the time of her death. She only closed her eyes because she didn’t want to talk to those vulgar people. When she saw me, she opened her eyes and took my hand.

“‘Where is Baoyu?’ she asked me.

“I told her where you’d gone.

“She sighed, ‘I shan’t be able to see him again then.’

“‘Why not wait till he’s back?’ I asked. ‘Then he can see you once more, which is what you both want.’

“She smiled and told me, ‘You don’t understand. I’m not going to die. There’s a vacancy now in heaven for a flower goddess, and the Jade Emperor has appointed me. I have orders to go to my new post at half past two; but Baoyu won’t be back till a quarter to three — too late by a quarter of an hour to see me. When people are fated to die and the King of Hell summons them, he sends small devils to fetch their spirits away. If someone wants to delay a bit he can burn paper money and serve some porridge; then while the devils are scrambling for the money, the one who’s dying can have a short reprieve. But now I mustn’t delay, as I’ve been *invited* by the gods in heaven.’

“At the time. I didn’t quite believe her. But when I got back and looked carefully at the clock, it was true that she died at half past two, and at a quarter to three *your* return was announced. So she’d got both the times right.”

“You don’t understand because you can’t read,” Baoyu answered. “This is absolutely true. Every single flower has its goddess, and there’s

神，一样花有一位神之外还有总花神。”这丫头听了一时发呆。宝玉又问道：“但他不知是作总花神去了，还是单管一样的花神？”这丫头听了，一时诌不出来。恰好这是八月节，园中池上芙蓉正开。这丫头便见景生情，忙答道：“我也曾问他是管什么花的神，告诉我们日后也好供养的。他说：‘天机不可泄漏。你既这样虔诚，我只告诉你，你只可告诉宝玉一人。除他之外若泄了天机，五雷就来轰顶的。’他就告诉我说，他就是专管这芙蓉花的。”宝玉听了这话，不但不为怪，亦且去悲而生喜，乃指芙蓉花笑道：“此花也须得这样一个人去司掌。我就说他那样人必有一番事业做的。虽然超出苦海，从此不能相见，也免不得伤感思念。”因又想：“虽然临终未见，如今且去灵前一拜，也算尽这五六年的情肠。”

想毕，忙至房中，又另穿戴了，只说去看黛玉，遂一径出园来，往前日之处去，意为停柩在内。谁知他哥嫂见他一咽气便回了进去，希图早些得几两发送例银。王夫人闻知，便命赏了十两烧埋银子，又命：“即刻送到外头焚化了罢。女儿痨死的，断不可留！”他哥嫂听了这话，一面得银，一面就雇了人来入殓，抬往城外化人厂去了。剩的衣履簪环，约有三四百金之数，他兄嫂自收了为后日之计。二人将门锁上，一同送殡去未回。宝玉走来扑了个空。

宝玉发怔自立了半天，别无法儿，只得复身进入园中。待回至房中，甚觉无味，因乃顺路来找黛玉。偏黛玉不在房



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also a goddess in charge of all the flowers. I wonder whether she's gone to take charge of them all, or of one particular flower."

The maid had no ready answer. As it happened to be the eighth month and hibiscus was blooming beside the pond in the Garden, she took her cue from that.

"I asked her to let us know what flower she'd be in charge of," she said, "so that in future we can sacrifice to her. She told me, 'Heaven's secrets can't be disclosed; but as you are so pious I'll tell you. You can let Baoyu know, but no one else — if you do, you'll be struck dead by a thunderbolt!' Then she told me she was in charge of the hibiscus."

Baoyu, far from being surprised, felt his grief turn into pleasure. He pointed at the hibiscus.

"This flower needs a girl like her to care for it," he observed, "I always thought that someone with her talents was bound to be given a responsible task."

But although Qingwen had departed this sea of woe, the thought that they could never meet again inevitably filled him with grief and longing.

"Though I didn't see her at the end," he reflected, "I must go and sacrifice now at her shrine, for the sake of our friendship these last half dozen years."

Accordingly, he went straight back to change his clothes and, on the pretext of going to see Daiyu, went out of the Garden alone to the house where he had last visited Qingwen, assuming that her coffin would be there.

However, as soon as Qingwen died, her cousin and his wife had reported this in the hope of getting some money at once for the funeral. Lady Wang on hearing this news gave them ten taels of silver and ordered them to have the body taken out of town immediately to be cremated, for as Qingwen had died of consumption it must not be kept in the vicinity. The cousin and his wife took the money, then lost no time in having her body coffined and taken to the crematorium outside the city. Her clothes and trinkets, which were worth some three or four hundred taels, they kept for future use. Then they locked up the place and went to attend her funeral.

Baoyu, finding no one there, stood outside the door for a while; then,



中，问其何往，丫鬟们回说：“往宝姑娘那里去了。”宝玉又到蘅芜院中，只见寂静无人，房内搬的空空落落的，不觉吃了一大惊。忽见几个老婆子走来，宝玉忙问这是什么原故。老婆子道：“宝姑娘出去了。这里交给我们看着，还没有搬清楚呢。我们帮着送了些东西去，这也就完了。你老人家请出去罢，让我们扫扫灰尘也好，从此你老人家也省跑这一处的腿子了。”宝玉听了，怔了半晌，看着那院中的香藤异蔓，仍是翠翠青青，忽比昨日好似改作凄凉了一般，更又添了伤感。默默出来，又见门外的一条翠樾埭上也半日无人来往，不似当日各处房中丫鬟不约而来者络绎不绝。又俯身看那埭下之水，仍是溶溶脉脉的流将过去。心下因想：“天地间竟有这样无情的事！”悲感一番，忽又想到去了司棋、入画、芳官等五个；死了晴雯；今又去了宝钗；迎春虽尚未去，然连日也不见回来，且接连有媒人来求亲：大约园中之人不久都要散的了。纵生烦恼，也无济于事。不如还是找黛玉去相伴一时，回来还是和袭人厮混，只这两三个人，只怕还是同死同归的。想毕，仍往潇湘馆来，偏黛玉尚未回来。宝玉想亦当出去送送晴雯才是，无奈不忍悲感，还是不去的好，遂又垂头丧气的回来。





as there was nothing he could do, he had to return to the Garden. Back in his own rooms, he felt so depressed that he decided to call on Daiyu. However, he found she was out. When he asked where she had gone, her maids told him:

“To Miss Baochai’s place.”

Baoyu went then to Alpinia Park, only to find it quiet and deserted — even the furnishings had been removed. He was very much taken aback. He inquired of an old serving-woman who chanced to come along just then what had happened.

“Miss Baochai has gone,” she informed him. “We’ve been told to look after the place until everything’s been moved away. After we’ve cleared these things away, the compound will be locked up. You’d better go now, young master, so that we can sweep up the dust. You won’t have to make any more trips here, sir, in future.”

For a while Baoyu stood there stupefied. He saw that the fragrant herbs and creepers in the courtyard were as green and luxuriant as ever, but they suddenly seemed to have grown disconsolate too, and the sight added to his grief. He left in silence. It had struck him that for some time no one had passed the tree-lined dyke outside the gate, whereas in the old days a whole succession of maids from different quarters had kept coming here all of their own accord. Looking down, and seeing that the stream at the foot of the dyke was still flowing smoothly past, he marvelled that nature could be so lacking in feeling. After grieving awhile he reflected:

“Five girls have gone, among them Siqu, Ruhua and Fangguan; and now Qingwen is dead, and Baochai’s household has left. Though Yingchun hasn’t gone yet, she’s been away these days and match-makers keep coming to arrange her marriage. It probably won’t be long before all the girls in the Garden disperse. Still, it’s no use moping over this. I may as well call on Daiyu and keep her company for a while before coming back to pass the time with Xiren. Most likely only the two or three of us will remain together till our dying day.”

Thinking in this way, he went to Bamboo Lodge; but Daiyu was still out. He thought next of attending Qingwen’s funeral, then decided against this, guessing that it would only make him feel sadder. So he returned dejectedly to his rooms.



正在不知所以之际，忽见王夫人的丫头进来找他说：“老爷回来了，找你呢，又得了好题目来了。快走，快走。”宝玉听了，只得跟了出来。到王夫人房中，他父亲已出去了。王夫人命人送宝玉到书房中。

彼时贾政正与众幕友们谈论寻秋之胜，又说：“临散时忽然谈及一事，最是千古佳谈，‘风流隽逸，忠义慷慨’八字皆备，倒是个好题目，大家都要作一首挽词。”众人听了，都忙请教是何等妙事。贾政乃说：“当日有一位恒王，出镇青州。这恒王最喜女色，且公余好武，因选了许多美女，日习武事。每公余辄开宴连日，令众美女习战斗攻拔之事。其姬中有一姓林行四者，姿色既冠，且武艺更精，皆呼为林四娘。恒王最得意，遂超拔林四娘统辖诸姬，又呼为‘姽婳将军’。”众清客都称：“妙极神奇。竟以‘姽婳’下加‘将军’二字，反更觉妩媚风流，真绝世奇文也。想这恒王也是千古第一风流人物了。”贾政笑道：“这是自然如此，但更有可奇可叹之事。”众清客都愕然惊问道：“不知何等奇事？”贾政道：“谁知次年便有‘黄巾’、‘赤眉’一千流贼余党复又乌合，抢掠山左一带。恒王意为犬羊之恶，不足大举，因轻骑前剿。





He was just wondering what to do when a maid from Lady Wang came to find him.

“The master’s back and wants you,” she announced. “He has another good subject for poetry. Go quickly. Hurry!”

Baoyu had to accompany her to Lady Wang’s place, only to find that his father had left already. His mother ordered the servants to take him to his father’s study.

Jia Zheng was discoursing with his secretaries on the beauty of the autumn scenery.

“Before the last party broke up,” he remarked, “we spoke of an incident which was surely the most enchanting tale of all times. ‘Gallantry and sublimity, loyalty and magnanimity’ — not one quality was missing. So it should make a fine subject for an elegiac poem. Suppose we write one?”

His proteges promptly asked what wonderful story this was.

“There was a certain Prince Heng who governed Qingzhou,”¹ Jia Zheng told them. “What he loved most was feminine beauty, and when at leisure he liked to practise the military arts. So he selected a number of beautiful girls and made them train for battle every day. When at a loose end, he would feast his beauties for days and ask them to display their swordsmanship or to seize or defend a bastion. One of these girls named Lin, the fourth child of her family, was a surpassing beauty and expert too in military arts. She was known as Fourth Mistress Lin. The prince, delighted with her, put her in command of all the other girls and called her his ‘Lovely General’.”

The secretaries all exclaimed in wonder.

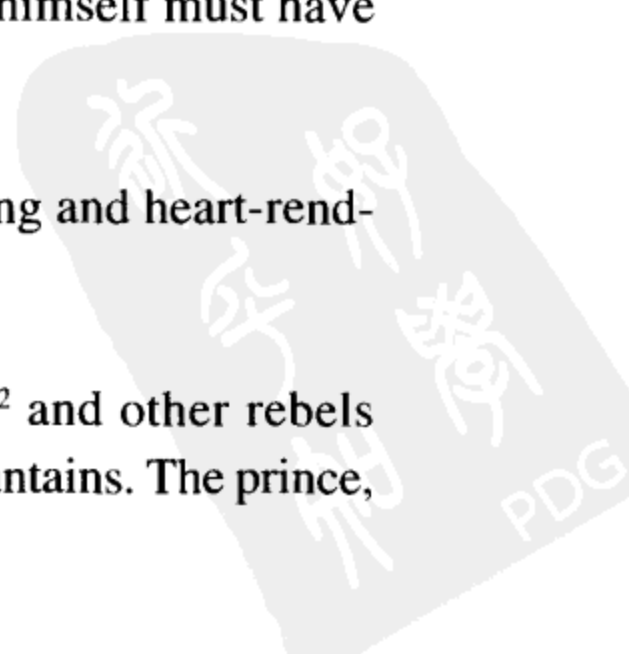
“‘Lovely’ followed by ‘General’ — what a very gallant and romantic title! This is really miraculous. Prince Heng himself must have been the most romantic figure of all time!”

Jia Zheng smiled.

“Quite so. But what followed is even more amazing and heart-rending.”

His proteges all asked eagerly, “What was that?”

“The next year the Yellow Turbans, Red Brows² and other rebels joined forces to raid the region east of the Taihang Mountains. The prince,



不意贼众颇有诡谲智术，恒王两战不胜，遂为贼众所杀。于是青州府内文武官员，各各皆谓‘王尚不胜，你我何为！’遂将有献城之举。林四娘得闻凶信，遂集聚众女将，发令说道：‘你我皆向蒙王恩，戴天履地，不能报其万一。今王既殒身国事，我意亦当殒身于王。尔等有愿随者，即时同我前往同一死战；有不愿者，亦早各散。’众女将听他这样，都一齐说愿去。于是林四娘带领众人连夜出城，直杀至贼营里头。众贼不防，也被斩戮了几员首贼。然贼见不过是几个女人，料不能济事，遂回戈倒兵，奋力一阵，把林四娘等一个不曾留下，倒作成了这林四娘的一片忠义之志。后来报至中都，自天子以至百官，无不惊骇道奇。其后朝中方遣将去剿灭了。其事不必深论。只就林四娘一节，众位听了，可羨不可羨？”众幕友都叹道：“实在可羨可奇，果是个妙题，原该大家挽一挽才是。”说着，早有人取了笔砚，按贾政口中之言稍加改易了几个字，便成了一篇短序，递与贾政看了。贾政道：“不过如此。他们那里已有原序。昨日因又奉恩旨，着察核前代以来应加褒奖而遗落未经请奏各项人等，无论僧尼乞丐与女妇人等，有一事可嘉，即行汇送履历至礼部，备





thinking them rabble who did not need to be taken seriously, led a light force to wipe them out. However, those rebels were crafty. His forces lost two battles, and the prince was killed by the rebels. Then all the civil and military officers in the provincial capital said to each other:

“If even the prince could not beat them, what can *we* do?”

“They wanted to surrender. But Fourth Mistress Lin hearing this bad news assembled her women soldiers and announced:

“We were shown such favour by the prince in the past that we shall never be able to repay a fraction of it. Now that he has fallen in defence of the royal cause, I want to die for him too. Any of you who wish to follow me may — the rest are free to leave.”

“When the other women saw how determined she was, they all volunteered to join her. So that same night Fourth Mistress Lin led them out of the city to attack the rebels’ camp. The rebels were caught unawares and several of their chieftains were killed. Then seeing that their opponents were only a few women whom they reckoned couldn’t amount to much, they counter-attacked and after some hard fighting killed them all, including Fourth Mistress Lin. And so she succeeded in proving her loyalty. When this was reported to the capital the Emperor and all his ministers were shocked and moved and naturally sent troops to crush the rebels. As soon as the Imperial troops arrived, the rebellion was suppressed — we need not go into that.

“But, gentlemen, after hearing this story of Fourth Mistress Lin, don’t you think it admirable!”

“Truly admirable and amazing!” exclaimed his secretaries. “This is really a wonderful subject. We should all write something to commemorate her.”

One of them had already picked up a brush and written a short preface based on Jia Zheng’s account simply changing a few words. He now handed this to his patron to read.

“That’s the idea,” said Jia Zheng. “Actually, a short account has already been written. The other day an Imperial Decree was issued ordering a search to be made for all those who should have been commended but were left out of past records, whether monks, nuns, beggars or women, as long as they had performed some worthy deed. The ac-



请恩奖。所以他这原序也送往礼部去了。大家听见这新闻，所以都要作一首《婉嫔词》，以志其忠义。”众人听了，都又笑道：“这原该如此。只是更可羨者，本朝皆系千古未有之旷典隆恩，实历代所不及处。可谓‘圣朝无阙事’，唐朝人预先说了，竟应在本朝。如今年代方不虚此一句。”贾政点头道：“正是。”

说话之间，贾环叔侄亦到。贾政命他们看了题目。他两个虽则能诗，较腹中之虚实，虽也去宝玉不远，但第一件他两个终是别途，若论举业一道，似高过宝玉，若论杂学，则远不能及；况他二人才思滞钝，不及宝玉空灵娟逸，每作诗亦如八股之法，未免拘板庸涩。那宝玉虽不算是个读书人，然亏他天性聪敏，且素喜好些杂书，他自谓古人中也有杜撰的，也有失误处，拘较不得许多；若只管怕前怕后起来，纵堆砌成一篇，也觉得甚无趣味。因心里怀着这念头，每见一题，不拘难易，他便毫无费力之处。就如世上的油嘴滑舌之人，无风作有，信着伶口俐舌，长篇大论，胡扳乱扯，敷衍出一篇话来。虽无稽考，却都说得四座春风。虽有正言厉语之人，亦不得压倒这一种风流去的。近日贾政年迈，名利大灰，然起初天性也是个诗酒放诞之人，因在子侄辈中，少不得规以正路。近见宝玉虽不读书，竟颇能解此，细评起来，也还不算十分玷辱了祖宗。就思及祖宗们，各各亦皆如此，



counts were to be sent to the Board of Rites for the Emperor's approval. So this account was sent to the Board of Rites. And after hearing this story, you should all write a poem on the Lovely General's loyalty and sense of honour."

"So we should," they all agreed, laughing. "And what's still more admirable is the fact that our dynasty is showing such unprecedented kindness, unmatched in earlier times. The men of Tang said, 'Our sagacious court overlooks nothing,' and this has come true today. Our dynasty lives up to this prediction."

Jia Zheng nodded.

"Exactly."

As they were speaking, Huan and Lan arrived, and Jia Zheng told them to look at the subject. Though both of them, like Baoyu, could write poetry, this was not their special line. When it came to writing examination papers, Huan and Lan might surpass Baoyu; but when it came to literature in general, they were much inferior. Besides, they lacked Baoyu's literary brilliance and poetic flair. Thus the poems they wrote were like eight-section essays, inevitably stereotyped and pedantic.

Baoyu, though not to be reckoned a good scholar, had innate intelligence and loved to browse on literature of all kinds. He believed that some ancient classics were apocryphal and contained errors too, thus they should not be taken for gospel; moreover, if one had too many scruples and just stuck together phrases from old books, such writing would be most uninteresting. These being his views, when he saw a subject for poetry — whether difficult or easy — he would write on it effortlessly, just as glib talkers having nothing to go on rely on their ready tongues to hold forth at random, spinning lengthy yarns which though they have no basis in fact delight all those who hear them. Even strict sticklers for the truth cannot beat such entertaining fantasies.

Jia Zheng, growing old now, no longer hankered after fame and profit; besides, by temperament, he was fond of poetry, wine and liberal talk. Although he felt constrained to guide his sons and nephews along the right path, when he saw that Baoyu albeit not fond of study had some understanding of poetry, he decided that this did not really disgrace their ancestors; for they themselves, he recalled, had been the same and though



虽有深精举业的，也不曾发迹过一个，看来此亦贾门之数。况母亲溺爱，遂也不强以举业逼他了。所以近日是这等待他。又要环、兰二人举业之余，怎样亦如宝玉才好，所以每欲作诗，必将三人一齐唤来对作。

闲言少述。且说贾政又命他三人各作一首，谁先成者赏，佳者额外加赏。贾环、贾兰二人近日当着多人皆作过几首了，胆气愈壮，看了这题，遂自去思索。一时，贾兰先有了。贾环生恐落后也就有了。二人皆已录出，宝玉尚出神呢。贾政与众人且看他二人的二首。贾兰的是一首七言绝，写道是：

婉姬将军林四娘，玉为肌骨铁为肠。

捐躯自报恒王后，此日青州土亦香。

众幕宾看了，便皆大赞：“小哥儿十三岁的人就如此，可知家学渊源。真不诬矣。”贾政笑道：“稚子口角，也还难为他。”又看贾环的，是首五言律，写道是：

红粉不知愁，将军意未休。

掩啼离绣幕，抱恨出青州。

自谓酬王德，讵能复寇仇。

谁题忠义墓，千古独风流。

众人道：“更佳。到底是大几岁年纪，立意又自不同。”贾政





working hard for the examinations had never distinguished themselves — apparently this was the Jia family's destiny. Moreover, his mother doted on this grandson. So Jia Zheng did not insist too much on Baoyu working for the examinations and had recently treated him more leniently. And he wished that Huan and Lan, apart from writing eight-section essays, would follow Baoyu's example. This was why, whenever they were composing poetry, he would summon all three boys together to write. But enough of this.

Now Jia Zheng told them to write a poem apiece, promising the reward to one who finished first and to give an additional prize for the best poem. As Huan and Lan had recently written several poems in company, they no longer lacked confidence. After reading the topic, they went off to think it over. Before long, Lan was the first one to finish. And Huan, afraid to be left behind, finished his too. By the time both had copied their verses out, Baoyu was still lost in thought. Jia Zheng and his secretaries read the two younger boys' verses. Lan's heptasyllabic quatrain read as follows:

Fourth Mistress Lin, Lovely General,
Had jade-like beauty but an iron will;
Because she gave her life to requite Prince Heng
Today the soil of her district is fragrant still.

The secretaries said admiringly, "When a boy of thirteen can write like this, it truly shows the influence of a scholarly family."

Jia Zheng smiled.

"The language is childish, but it's quite a good effort."

Then they read Huan's eight-line pentameter, which was as follows:

Fair young ladies know no sorrow,
But a general has no relief;
Wiping her tears she left her broidered hangings
And took the battlefield, her heart filled with grief.
She wanted to requite the prince's kindness —
Who else would wreak vengeance on the enemy?
Let us, at her grave, eulogize her loyalty
And her eternal, peerless gallantry.

"This is even better!" the secretaries exclaimed. "Being a few years



道：“还不甚大错，终不恳切。”众人道：“这就罢了。三爷才大不多两岁，俱在未冠之时如此，用了工去，再过几年，怕不是大阮、小阮了。”贾政笑道：“过奖了。只是不肯读书的过失。”因又问宝玉怎样。众人道：“二爷细心镂刻，定又是风流悲感，不同此等的了。”宝玉笑道：“这个题目似不称近体，须得古体，或歌或行，长篇一首，方能恳切。”众人听了，都立身点头拍手道：“我说他立意不同！每一题到手必先度其体格宜与不宜，这便是老手妙法。就如裁衣一般，未下剪时，须度其身量。这题目名曰《婉姬词》，且既有了序，必是长篇歌行方合题势。或拟温八叉《击瓿歌》，或拟古词，或拟白乐天《长恨歌》，半叙半咏，流利飘逸，始能尽妙。”贾政听说，也合了主意，遂自提笔向宝玉笑道：“如此，你念我写。若不好了，我捶你那肉，谁许你先大言不惭了！”宝玉只得念了一句，道是：

恒王好武兼好色，

众幕友道：“起的就有力。”贾政道：“姑存之，且看他底下。”宝玉又道：





older after all, he is more original.”

“It’s not too bad,” said Jia Zheng, “but it still lacks real feeling.”

“It’s quite good enough,” they protested. “The Third Young Master is only a couple of years older — he’s not reached manhood yet. If they go on working hard like this, in a few years they’ll be like the poets Yuan Ji and Yuan Xian.”

Jia Zheng laughed.

“You’re praising them too highly. The trouble with them is that they don’t study hard.” Then he asked Baoyu how he was getting on.

His protégés said, “The Second Young Master is composing his carefully. It’s bound to be more stylish and poignant than the others.”

Baoyu said with a smile, “This subject seems unsuitable for a poem in the later style. Only a long poem in the old style — some song or ballad — can convey the spirit.”

The secretaries rose to their feet, nodding and clapping.

“We knew he’d come out with something original,” they said. “When presented with a subject, the first thing to consider is what is the most suitable form for it. This shows he’s an old hand at versifying. This is like tailoring — you must measure your customer before cutting out a gown. As this is a eulogy of the Lovely General and there is a preface to it, it should be a longish ballad something like Wen Tingyun’s *The Pitcher Song*³ or some other old ballad, or like Bai Juyi’s *Song of Eternal Sorrow*,⁴ half narrative and half lyrical, lively and graceful. That’s the only way to do justice to such a good subject.”

Jia Zheng, approving this, took up the brush ready to write the poem down.

“Very well then,” he said to Baoyu, smiling. “Dictate it to me. If it’s no good, I’ll give you a thrashing for making such a shameless boast.”

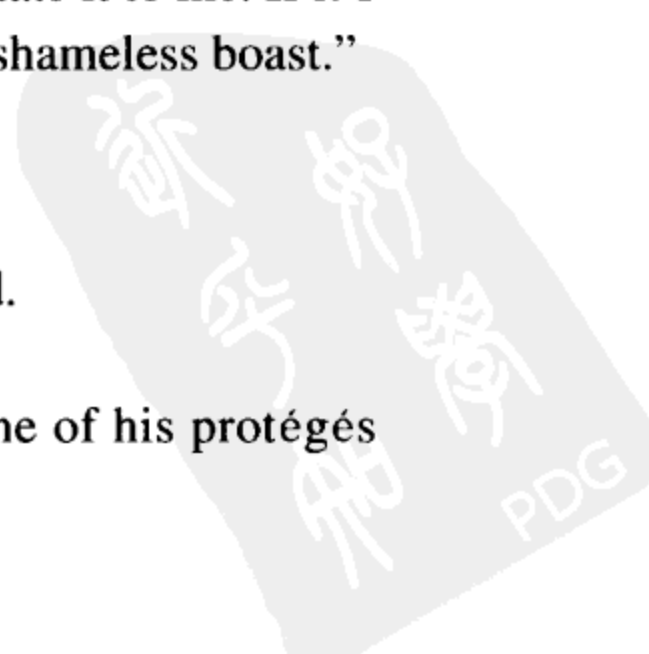
Baoyu started off with one line:

“Prince Heng loved martial arts, the fair sex too....”

Jia Zheng having written this down shook his head.

“Crude!”

“That’s the classical style. Surely not crude,” one of his protégés remonstrated. “Let’s see how he continues.”





遂教美女习骑射。秣歌艳舞不成欢，
列阵挽戈为自得。

贾政写出，众人都道：“只这第三句便古朴老健，极妙。这四句平叙出，也最得体。”贾政道：“休谬加奖誉，且看转的如何。”宝玉念道：

眼前不见尘沙起，将军俏影红灯里。

众人听了这两句，便都叫：“妙！好个‘不见尘沙起’！又承一句‘俏影红灯里’，用字用句，皆入神化了。”宝玉道：

叱咤时闻口舌香，霜矛雪剑娇难举。

众人听了，便拍手笑道：“益发画出来了。当日敢是宝公也在座，见其娇且闻其香否？不然，何体贴至此。”宝玉笑道：

“闺阁习武，纵任其勇悍，怎似男人。不待问而可知娇怯之形的了。”贾政道：“还不快续，你又说嘴了。”宝玉听了，又想了一想，念道：

丁香结子芙蓉绦，

众人都道：“转‘绦’，‘萧’韵，更妙，这才流利更飘荡。而且这一句也绮靡秀媚的妙。”贾政写了，看道：“这一句不好。已写过‘口舌香’，‘娇难举’，何必又如此。这是力量不加，故又用这些堆砌货来搪塞。”宝玉笑道：“长歌也须得要





“We’ll keep it for the time being,” Jia Zheng conceded.

Baoyu resumed:

“He taught girls horsemanship and archery,
Taking no joy in splendid song or dance,
Only in spearmanship and soldiery.”

When Jia Zheng had written this out, the secretaries said, “The third line has a classical flavour and is vigorous too — excellent. And these four lines are apt, fitting the narrative style.”

“Don’t overdo your praise.” demurred Jia Zheng. “Let’s see how he turns the subject.”

Baoyu went on:

“No dust was seen to rise by watching eyes,
By the red lantern stood the general fair.”

After these two lines the rest exclaimed in approval.

“Wonderful — ‘No dust was seen to rise’ followed by ‘the red lantern’ and ‘general fair.’ The choice of words and images is superb.”

Baoyu resumed:

“Her sweet breath scented every battle-cry,
Hard for one so frail to wield cold sword and spear.”

All clapped their hands and laughed.

“It’s drawn to the life! Was Master Bao there at the time to see her delicate form and smell her sweet breath? If not, how could he have conjured it up like this?”

“When ladies practise fighting,” Baoyu explained, “however fearless they are they’re no match for men. It goes without saying they’ll appear rather delicate.”

“Stop blethering,” said his father, “and go on quickly.”

After a moment’s reflection Baoyu recited:

“Her knots of clove and her hibiscus belt...”

The secretaries commented, “A change of rhyme here is excellent, showing flexibility and fluency. Besides, this line is charming in itself.”

Jia Zheng wrote it down, observing. “This line is no good. He’s already given us ‘sweet breath’ and ‘hard for one so frail to wield.’ Why go on like this? It’s lack of substance that makes him pad out his lines in



些词藻点缀点缀，不然便觉萧索。”贾政道：“只顾用这一句，底下如何能转至武事？若再多说两句，岂不蛇足了。”宝玉道：“如此，底下一句转煞住，想亦可矣。”贾政冷笑道：“你有多大本领？上头说了一句大开门的散话，如今又要一句连转带煞，岂不心有余而力不足些。”宝玉听了，垂头想了一想，说了一句道：

不系明珠系宝刀。

忙问：“这一句可还使得？”众人拍案叫绝。贾政写了，看着笑道：“且放着，再续。”宝玉道：“若使得，我便要一气下去了。若使不得，越性涂了，我再想别的意思出来，再另措词。”贾政听了，便喝道：“多话！不好了再作，便作十篇百篇，还怕辛苦了不成！”宝玉听说，只得想了一会，便念道：

战罢夜阑心力怯，脂痕粉渍污鲛绡。

贾政道：“又一宕。底下怎样？”宝玉道：

明年流寇走山东，强吞虎豹势如蜂。

众人道：“好个‘走’字！便见得高低了。且通句转的也不板。”宝玉又念道：

王率天兵思剿灭，一战再战不成功。

腥风吹折陇头麦，日照旌旗虎帐空。





this way.”

“A long poem needs certain ornate images to add some touches of colour,” ventured Baoyu.

“If you just hunt for images,” said his father, “how can you move on to the fighting? Another couple of lines like this will be superfluous.”

“In that case I suppose I can revert to the subject in the next line.”

Jia Zheng smiled scornfully.

“What great skill have you got? You’ve just made a fresh opening by bringing in something irrelevant. If now in one line you try to round it off and revert to the main theme, you’ll find you’ve bitten off more than you can chew.”

Baoyu lowered his head to think, and then continued:

“Enchain no pearls but a keen blade enchain.”

He asked hastily, “Will this line do?”

All the secretaries applauded.

Jia Zheng having copied this out said with a smile, “We’ll let it go. Carry on.”

“If this is all right, I’ll go straight on; if it’s not, I’ll scrap it and think up something else.”

“Be quiet!” snapped his father. “If it’s no good you’ll have to do it again. If you had to write a few dozen poems, would you complain it was hard work?”

Baoyu had to rack his brains and then declaimed:

“After a night’s manoeuvres she is exhausted,
Powder and rouge her silken headscarf stain.”

Jia Zheng said, “This is another stanza. What follows?” Baoyu resumed:

“The next year rebels rampaged east of the mountains,
Fierce tigers and leopards, swarming hornets were they.”

Again the others exclaimed, “That fine word ‘rampaged’ shows skill, and the turn in the narrative is natural too.”

Baoyu went on:

“The prince led Imperial troops to wipe them out;
One battle, then another — they lost the day.

紅樓夢
PDG



青山寂寂水淅淅，正是恒王战死时。

雨零白骨血染草，月冷黄沙鬼守尸。

众人都道：“妙极，妙极！布置，叙事，词藻，无不尽美。且看如何至四娘，必另有妙转奇句。”宝玉又念道：

纷纷将士只保身，青州眼见皆灰尘。

不期忠义明闺阁，愤起恒王得意人。

众人都道：“铺叙得委婉。”贾政道：“太多了，底下只怕累赘呢。”宝玉乃又念道：

恒王得意数谁行，婉嫔将军林四娘。

号令秦姬驱赵女，艳李秣桃临战场。

绣鞍有泪春愁重，铁甲无声夜气凉。

胜负自然难预定，誓盟生死报前王。

贼势猖獗不可敌，柳折花残实可伤。

魂依城郭家乡近，马践胭脂骨髓香。

星驰时报入京师，谁家儿女不伤悲！

天子惊慌恨失守，此时文武皆垂首。

何事文武立朝纲，不及闺中林四娘！

我为四娘长太息，歌成余意尚徬徨。





A reeking wind swept down the fields of wheat,
Flags and empty commander's tent the sun did gild;
Green hills were silent, the stream gurgled on;
Now, in the heat of battle, Prince Heng was killed.
Rain drenched the bones of the dead, blood stained the grass;
Moonlight fell cold on the sand, ghosts hovered around."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" cried the secretaries. "Composition, narration and imagery — all are perfect. Let's see how he proceeds now to the Fourth Mistress. There's bound to be another skilful transition and more remarkable lines."

Baoyu continued:

"Commanders and men thought only of fleeing to safety,
The city must speedily be razed to the ground.
Who would have looked in a boudoir for loyalty?
The prince's favourite rose up wrathfully."

All commented, "A good narrative style."

"Too wordy," said Jia Zheng. "It may grow tedious."

Then Baoyu resumed:

"Who might that be, the favourite of Prince Heng?
Fourth Mistress Lin the fair general — none but she!
She gave the order to her lovely troops,
Fair as peach and plum-blossom they set off to fight;
Tears stained their embroidered saddles, heavy their grief,
No clank from their armour in the chilly night.
None could know the outcome — victory or defeat —
But they vowed at all costs their lord's kindness to repay;
The rebels were too powerful to rout,
They crushed these willows and blooms — alack the day!
Their ghosts stayed by the city, close to home;
Steeds trampled their sweet rouged corpses where they lay;
This news, sent posthaste to the capital,
Filled every family with sore dismay.
The city's loss appalled the Emperor,
Generals and ministers hung their heads in shame,
For not one of the court officials could compare
With lovely Fourth Mistress Lin of deathless fame.





念毕，众人都大赞不止，又都从头看了一遍。贾政笑道：“虽然说了几句，到底不大恳切。”因说：“去罢。”三人如得了赦的一般，一齐出来，各自回房。

众人皆无别话，不过至晚安歇而已。独有宝玉一心凄楚，回至园中，猛然见池上芙蓉，想起小丫鬟说晴雯作了芙蓉之神，不觉又喜欢起来，乃看着芙蓉嗟叹了一会。忽又想起死后并未到灵前一祭，如今何不在芙蓉前一祭，岂不尽了礼，比俗人去灵前祭吊又更觉别致。想毕，便欲行礼。忽又止住道：“虽如此，也不可太草率了，也须得衣冠整齐，奠仪周备，方为诚敬。”想了一想：“如今若学那世俗之奠礼，断然不可；竟也还别开生面，另立个排场，风流奇异，于世无涉，方不负我二人之为人。况且古人有云：‘潢汙行潦，蘋蘩蕴藻之贱，可以羞王公，荐鬼神。’原不在物之贵贱，全在心之诚敬而已。此其一也。二则诔文挽词也须另出己见，自放手眼，亦不可蹈袭前人的套头，填写几字搪塞耳目之文，亦必须洒泪泣血，一字一咽，一句一啼，宁使文不足悲有余，万不可尚文藻而反失悲切。况且古人多有微词，非自我





For this fair lady I sigh and sigh again
And, my song ended, my thoughts with her remain.”

After Baoyu had finished, all the secretaries heaped praise on him and read through the poem once more.

Jia Zheng observed with a smile, “Well, though there are some good lines it’s not moving enough.”

Then he dismissed the three boys. They left like prisoners reprieved to return to their different quarters.

We need not concern ourselves with all the others, who went to bed as usual when night fell. Only Baoyu, whose heart was heavy as he went back to the Garden, suddenly noticed the hibiscus in bloom and remembered the young maid’s account of Qingwen’s appointment as the goddess in charge of this flower. Imperceptibly, his spirits rose again as he gazed at the hibiscus, sighing. All of a sudden it occurred to him that he had not yet paid his respects by her coffin, and it would be only fitting to sacrifice now before the flower — this would be more original than the vulgar ceremonies before the bier.

He was on the verge of bowing to the flowers when he had second thoughts. “Even if I do this, I mustn’t be too casual about it,” he told himself. “I’ll have to dress properly and have the sacrifice well prepared to show my sincere respect.”

Then he reflected, “It definitely wouldn’t do to sacrifice to her in the usual vulgar manner, I must do something different and create a new ceremony which is romantic and original with nothing mundane about it — only then will it be worthy of the two of us. Besides, the men of old said: Objects as humble as ditch-water and water-weeds can be offered to princes and deities. It’s not the value of the objects that counts, but only the heart’s sincerity and reverence. That’s the first thing.

“And secondly, the eulogy and elegy must be original too and unconventional. It’s no good following the beaten track and padding the writing with high-sounding phrases; one should shed tears of blood, making each word a sob, each phrase a groan. It’s better to show grief and to spare, even if that makes for an unpolished style. At no cost must genuine feeling be sacrificed to meretricious writing. Besides this was deprecated by

今作俑也。无奈今之人全惑于功名二字，故尚古之风一洗皆尽，恐不合时宜，于功名有碍之故也。我又不希罕那功名，不为世人观阅称赞，何必不远师楚人之《大言》、《招魂》、《离骚》、《九辩》、《枯树》、《问难》、《秋水》、《大人先生传》等法，或杂参单句，或偶成短联，或用实典，或设譬喻，随意所之，信笔而去，喜则以文为戏，悲则以言志痛，辞达意尽为止，何必若世俗之拘拘于绳尺之间哉。”宝玉本是个不读书之人，再心中有了这片歪意，怎得有好诗好文作出来。他自己却任意纂著，并不为人知慕，所以大肆妄诞之意，杜撰成一篇长文，用晴雯素日所喜之冰鲛縠一幅楷字写成，名曰《芙蓉女儿诔》，前序后歌。又备了四样晴雯所喜之物，于是夜月下，命那小丫头捧至芙蓉花之前。先行了礼，将那诔文即挂于芙蓉枝上了，涕泣念曰：

维

太平不易之元，蓉桂竞芳之月，无可奈何之日，怡红院浊玉，谨以群花之蕊、冰鲛之縠、沁芳之泉、枫露之茗，四者虽微，聊以达诚申信，乃至祭于白帝宫中抚司秋艳芙蓉女儿之前曰：窃思女儿自临浊世，迄今凡十有六载。其先之乡籍姓氏，湮沦而莫能考者久矣。而玉得于衾枕栉沐之间，栖息宴游之夕，亲昵狎褻，相与共处者，仅五年八月有奇。忆女儿曩生之



many of the ancients too — it's not a new idea of mine today. Unfortunately, men today are so keen on official advancement that they have completely discarded this classical style, for fear of not conforming to the fashion and damaging their chances of winning merit and fame. As I'm neither interested in rank or honour, nor writing something for others to read and admire, why shouldn't I follow the style of such poetic essays as *The Talk of the Great*, *Summoning the Soul*, *The Lament* and *The Nine Arguments* of the ancient Chu people, or *The Withering Tree*, *The Queries*, *The Autumn Flood* and *Life of the Great Gentlemen*? I can intersperse the writing with solitary phrases or occasional short couplets, using allusions from real life as well as metaphors, and writing whatever I feel like. If merry, I can write playfully; if sad, I can record my anguish, until I've conveyed my ideas fully and clearly. Why should I be restricted by vulgar rules and conventions?"

Baoyu had never been a good student, and now as he entertained such perverse ideas how could he produce any good poems or essays? Yet he wrote purely for his own enjoyment, not for others to read or admire. So giving free rein to his absurd imagination, he made up a long lament, and he copied this out neatly on a white translucent silk kerchief which Qingwen had fancied, entitling it *Elegy for the Hibiscus Maid* and giving it a preface and a concluding song.

He also had four of the things which Qingwen had liked best provided. When it was dark and the moon was up, he told the young maid to place these before the hibiscus. First he bowed, then hung the elegy on a spray of flowers and, shedding tears, recited:

"In this year of lasting peace, this month when hibiscus and osmanthus bloom, and on this hapless day, loutish Baoyu of Happy Red Court presents fresh flowers, icy mermaid's silk, water from Seeping Fragrance Fountain and maple-dew tea, mere trifles to convey his sincere feelings and to sacrifice to:

The Hibiscus Maid in charge of this autumn flower in the Palace of the White Emperor.

The dedication:

Pensively, I reflect that sixteen years have passed since this girl came into the dusty world, and her former name and home district have long been lost beyond recall. Only for little more than five years and eight



昔，其为质则金玉不足喻其贵，其为性则冰雪不足喻其洁，其为神则星日不足喻其精，其为貌则花月不足喻其色。姊妹悉慕媿姻，姬媪咸仰惠德。孰料鸬鸩恶其高，鹰鹯翻遭掣鬣；菘菘妒其臭，苙兰竟被芟钁！花原自怯，岂耐狂飙；柳本多愁，何禁骤雨。偶遭蛊蜮之谗，遂抱膏肓之疾。故尔樱唇红褪，韵吐呻吟；杏脸香枯，色陈颧颌。诮谣谗语，出自屏帏；荆棘蓬榛，蔓延户牖。岂招尤则替，实攘诟而终。既饨幽沉于不尽，复含罔屈于无穷。高标见嫉，闺帏恨比长沙；直烈遭危，巾幗惨于羽野。自蓄辛酸，谁怜夭折！仙云既散，芳趾难寻。洲迷聚窟，何来却死之香？海失灵槎，不获回生之药。眉黛烟青，昨犹我画；指环玉冷，今倩谁温？鼎炉之剩药犹存，襟泪之余痕尚渍。镜分鸾别，愁开麝月之奁；梳化龙飞，哀折檀云之齿。委金钿于草莽，拾翠匍于尘埃。楼空鸪鹊，徒悬七夕之针；带断鸳鸯，谁续五丝之缕？况乃金天属节，白帝司时，孤衾有梦，空室无人。桐阶月暗，芳魂与倩影同销；蓉帐香残，娇喘共细言皆绝。连天衰草，岂独蒹葭；匝地悲声，无非蟋蟀。露苔晚砌，





months did I have her together with me as a dear companion in my bed-chamber to help me with my toiler and to share my recreations. In life, neither gold nor jade could compare with her character; neither ice nor snow with her purity; neither sun nor stars with her fine spirit; neither flowers nor moon with her beauty. All the maids admired her goodness, all the nurses praised her kindness.

Who could know that the eagle would be trapped in a net because pigeons and falcons hated its soaring spirit, that the orchid would be cut down because weeds envied its fragrance? How could such a delicate flower withstand a fierce gale, or the care-stricken willow endure torrential rain? Slandered by poisonous pests, she fell mortally ill: her cherry lips lost their redness as she moaned, her apricot cheeks became wan and faded. Slandorous accusations came from behind screens and curtains; brambles and thorns choked doors and windows. It was not that she asked for trouble, but refuting false charges she was fated to die. She was trampled down without cease, endlessly accused. Like Jia Yi,⁵ She was attacked by those jealous of her noble character; and, like Gun,⁶ imperilled by her integrity. She hid her bitterness in her heart, and who is thereto lament her life cut short?

Now the fairy clouds have scattered; no trace of her can be found. No search can be made for the incense that revives the dead, as the way to the Fairy Isles is lost. No medicine that restores life can be obtained, as the Magic Barge⁷ is gone. Only yesterday I was painting those bluish eyebrows; today, who will warm her cold fingers with the jade rings? Medicine remains in the tripod on the stove; the tear-stains on my gown are still wet. Sad it is to open the mirror-case, for the phoenixes on its back have parted company with the broken mirror. Her comb has broken, alas and flown off like a vanishing dragon; her gold hair-pin has dropped in the grass; her emerald hair clasp is in the dust; the magpies⁸ are gone, the needle of the Double Seventh Festival rests idle; the love belt is broken, and who is there to weave the multicoloured silk thread?

In this autumn season ruled over by the White Emperor, I dream in my lonely bed in a deserted room. In the dim moonlight under the plane tree, her charming image and sweet spirit have vanished; fragrance clings to the lotus curtain, but her scented breath and easy talk are no more. Withered grass stretches to the horizon, and everywhere crickets keep up a mournful chirping. In the evening the mossy steps are wet with dew, but no sound of pounding clothes comes through the portiere. As rain pat-



穿帘不度寒砧；雨荔秋垣，隔院希闻怨笛。芳名未泯，檐前鸚鵡犹呼；艳质将亡，槛外海棠预老。捉迷屏后，莲瓣无声；斗草庭前，兰芽枉待。抛残绣线，银笺彩缕谁裁？折断冰丝，金斗御香未熨。昨承严命，既趋车而远涉芳园；今犯慈威，复拄杖而遽抛孤柩。及闻榱棺被燹，惭违共穴之盟；石椁成灾，愧迨同灰之谥。尔乃西风古寺，淹滞青燐；落日荒丘，零星白骨。楸榆飒飒，蓬艾萧萧。隔雾圻以啼猿，绕烟塍而泣鬼。自为红绡帐里，公子情深；始信黄土垄中，女儿命薄！汝南泪血，斑斑洒向西风；梓泽余衷，默默诉凭冷月。呜呼！固鬼蜮之为灾，岂神灵而亦妒。箝彼奴之口，讨岂从宽；剖悍妇之心，忿犹未释！在君之尘缘虽浅，然玉之鄙意岂终。因蓄惓惓之思，不禁谆谆之问。始知上帝垂旌，花宫待诏，生侪兰蕙，死辖芙蓉。听小婢之言，似涉无稽；以浊玉之思，深为有据。何也？昔叶法善摄魂以撰碑，李长吉被诏而为记，事虽殊，其理则一也。故相物以配才，苟非其人，恶乃滥乎？始信上帝委托权衡，可谓至洽至协，庶不免其所秉赋也。因希其不昧之灵，或陟降于兹；特不揣鄙俗之词，有污慧听。乃歌而招之曰：





ters down on the vine-covered wall, one hardly hears fluting from the other court. The cockatoo before the eaves still remembers her sweet name; the begonia withering outside the balustrade foretold her death. No more games of hide-and-seek behind the screen, her dainty footsteps are silent; no more matching-herbs contests in the court where orchids burgeon in vain. The embroidery thread cast aside, who is there to decide the coloured patterns on silk? Linen crumpled, who is there to iron and scent it? Yesterday, on my father's orders, I was borne far off in a carriage to another garden; today offending my mother, I wept over the removal of her lonely bier. When I heard that her coffin was to be cremated I blushed with shame at breaking my vow to die, be buried and reduced to ashes together with her!

By the old temple in the autumn wind, will-o'-the-wisps are lingering; on the desolate mount in the setting sun, a few scattered bones only remain; elm trees rustle; tangled artemisia sighs; gibbons wail beyond the misty wilderness; ghosts weep around the foggy graveyard pathways. The young lordling behind red gauze curtains is filled with longing for the ill-fated maid in her mound of yellow earth. Facing the west wind, for you I shed tears of blood, while the master of Zi Ze⁹ pours out his grief to the cold moon in silence.

Alas! This calamity was caused by evil spirits, not because the gods were jealous. Slashing the slanderer's mouth would be too good for her! Cutting out the shrew's heart could not vent my anger! Though you had a short stay on earth, so deep was my feeling for you that I took careful thought and made detailed inquiries. Then I learned that the Heavenly Emperor had graciously summoned you to the Palace of Flowers; for in life you were like an orchid, and in death you are in charge of the hibiscus. Though the young maid's words seemed fantastic, in my humble opinion there are good grounds for them. Of old, Ye Fashan¹⁰ summoned a spirit to write an epitaph for him, and Li He¹¹ was ordered by Heaven to make a record-different happenings but the same in principle. For suitable tasks are selected for different talents, and the wrong choice of person would do the flowers injustice. This convinces me that the Heavenly Emperor makes most fitting use of his power, appointing those best suited to each post.

In the hope that her immortal spirit may descend here, I offer my poor composition for her compassionate ears. And here is the song to summon her spirit:



天何如是之苍苍兮，乘玉虬以游乎穹窿耶？
地何如是之茫茫兮，驾瑶象以降乎泉壤耶？
望繖盖之陆离兮，抑箕尾之光耶？
列羽葆而为前导兮，卫危虚于旁耶？
驱丰隆以为比从兮，望舒月以离耶？
听车轨而伊轧兮，御鸾鹭以征耶？
闻馥郁而蔼然兮，纫蘅杜以为纕耶？
炫裙裾之烁烁兮，镂明月以为珰耶？
藉葳蕤而成坛坫兮，擎莲焰以烛兰膏耶？
文彪匏以为觶斝兮，漉醪醑以浮桂醕耶？
瞻云气而凝盼兮，仿佛有所觐耶？
俯窈窕而属耳兮，恍惚有所闻耶？
期汗漫而无天阍兮，忍捐弃余于尘埃耶？
倩飞廉之为余驱车兮，冀联辔而携归耶？
余中心为之慨然兮，徒嗷嗷而何为耶？
君偃然而长寝兮，岂天运之变于斯耶？
既窳窳且安稳兮，反其真而复奚化耶？
余犹桎梏而悬附兮，灵格余以嗟来耶？
来兮止兮，君其来耶？





Grey, grey is the sky!
Are you riding a jade dragon in the void?
Vast, vast is the earth!
Are you descending in jade and ivory carriage?
So bright and sparkling your canopy —
Is it the radiance from the zodiac's tail?
Are there coloured plumes leading the way
And on either side constellations?
Are you escorted by the God of Clouds,
Approaching with the Courier God of the Moon?
I hear the creaking of your carriage wheels —
Are you coming in a phoenix equipage?
I smell a subtle fragrance —
Are you wearing scented herbs?
Sparkling the light from your skirt —
Have you carved the bright moon for your pendant?
On an altar of luxuriant orchid leaves
I burn scented oil in lotus lamps,
And pour you osmanthus wine
In goblets of gourds.
Gazing intently through the cloudy air
I seem to glimpse some vision;
Bending over the depth to listen,
Methinks I catch a sound.
Can you, roaming through boundless space,
Bear abandoning me in the dust?
If I beg the God of Wind to drive my carriage,
May I hope to ride with you?
Wrathful is my heart,
But what use is it lamenting?
You are resting now in peace;
Is it destiny that has thus changed my life?
Tranquil you sleep in your secluded vault;
Can you leave it to change once more?
I remain enfettered here.
Ah, spirit, will you come at my call?
Are you approaching or tarrying?
Come, I implore you!



若夫鸿濛而居，寂静以处，虽临于兹，余亦莫睹。拏烟萝而为步幃，列枪蒲而森行伍。警柳眼之贪眠，释莲心之味苦。素女约于桂岩，宓妃迎于兰渚。弄玉吹笙，寒簧击敌。征嵩岳之妃，启骊山之姥。龟呈洛浦之灵，兽作咸池之舞。潜赤水兮龙吟，集珠林兮凤翥。爰格爰诚，匪簠匪筥。发轫乎霞城，返旌乎玄圃。既显微而若通，复氤氲而倏阻。离合兮烟云，空濛兮雾雨。尘霾敛兮星高，溪山丽兮月午。何心意之忡忡，若寤寐之栩栩。余乃欷歔怅望，泣涕徬徨。人语兮寂历，天籁兮笳笳。鸟惊散而飞，鱼噉喋以响。志哀兮是祷，成礼兮期祥。呜呼哀哉！尚飨！

读毕，遂焚帛奠茗，犹依依不舍。小鬟催至再四，方才回身。忽听山石之后有一人笑道：“且请留步。”二人听了，不免一惊。那小鬟回头一看，却是个人影从芙蓉花中走出来，他便大叫：“不好，有鬼！晴雯真来显魂了！”吓得宝玉也忙看时，——且听下回分解。



Since you live in the silent unknown, even if you approach me my eyes cannot see you. With ivy as your screen, rush-swords as your retinue, you rouse the willows to open their drowsy eyes and dispel the bitterness in lotus seeds. Met by the Goddess of Music at Cassia Cliff, you are welcomed by the Goddess of the River Luo¹² at Orchid Isle; Nong Yu¹³ plays the flute and Han Huang¹⁴ sounds the clapper to summon the Queen of Mount Song and the Dowager of Mount Li.¹⁵ The Divine Tortoise manifests itself in the River Luo, wild beasts dance to the melody *Xianchi*,¹⁶ dragons sing below the Red Stream, and phoenixes alight at the Pearl Forest.

I am sacrificing with sincerity, caring little what sacrificial vessels I am using.

Setting out in your chariot from the City of Bright Morning Clouds,¹⁷ you return with your banners to the Hanging Garden.¹⁸ One moment your form seems faintly visible, the next it is suddenly blotted out by mist. The clouds and mist converge, then part again; fog and rain obscure the sky; then the mist withdraws, high above gleam stars, and the moon in mid sky brightens the hills and streams.

My heart is beating fast, like one just waking from a dream. I weep with longing and shed tears, not knowing where to go. All human voices are hushed; the only sounds are the rustling of bamboo, birds taking wing in fright, fish blowing bubbles....

In my grief I invoke you and, these rites at an end, look for some sign.
Ah, may your spirit come to the sacrifice!"

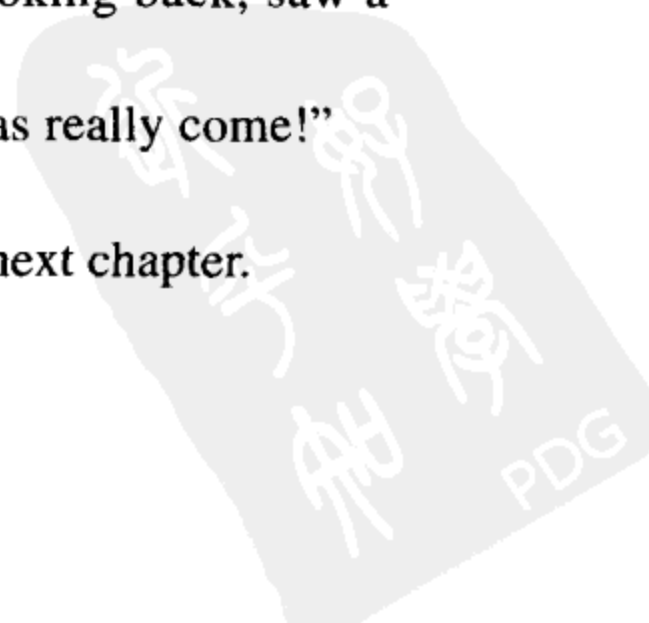
After chanting this he burned the silk and poured a libation of tea, still reluctant to leave the place. The young maid had to urge him several times before he turned away. Then, abruptly, they heard laughter behind some rocks.

"Please wait a bit!" cried a voice.

The two of them gave a start. And the maid looking back, saw a figure emerging from behind the hibiscus blooms.

"Help! A ghost!" she cried. "Qingwen's spirit has really come!"
Baoyu in fright turned to look too.

To know whether or not it was a ghost, read the next chapter.



第七十九回

薛文龙悔娶河东狮 贾迎春误嫁中山狼

话说宝玉才祭完了晴雯，只听花影中有人声，倒唬了一跳。走出来细看，不是别人，却是林黛玉，满面含笑，口内说道：“好新奇的祭文！可与曹娥碑并传的了。”宝玉听了，不觉红了脸，笑答道：“我想着世上这些祭文都蹈于熟滥了，所以改个新样，原不过是我一时的玩意，谁知又被你听见了。有什么大使不得的，何不改削改削。”黛玉道：“原稿在那里？倒要细细一读。长篇大论，不知说的是些什么，只听见中间两句，什么‘红绡帐里，公子多情；黄土垄中，女儿薄命。’这一联意思却好，只是‘红绡帐里’未免熟滥些。放着现成的真事，为什么不用？”宝玉忙问：“什么现成的真事？”黛玉笑道：“咱们如今都是霞影纱糊的窗棂，何不就说‘茜纱窗下，公子多情’呢？”宝玉听了，不禁跌足笑道：“好，是极！到底是你想的出，说的出。可知天下古今现成的好景妙事尽多，只是愚人蠢子说不出想不出罢了。但只一





Chapter 79

Xue Pan Marries a Fierce Lioness and Repents Too Late Yingchun Is Wrongly Wedded to an Ungrateful Wolf

Baoyu, after sacrificing to Qingwen, was startled to hear a voice from the shade of the flowers. Stepping forward to investigate, he found it was no other than Daiyu.

“What an original funeral ode!” she teased, smiling all over her face. “It deserves to be passed down with that epitaph commemorating Cao E,¹ the filial daughter.”

Baoyu blushed.

“The usual run of funeral odes seem to me so stereotyped,” he explained, “I tried to use a new form. It was just for fun; I never thought you’d hear it. If it won’t do, why don’t you suggest some improvements?”

“Where is your draft? I must read it carefully. I didn’t hear the whole long piece, only the two lines:

The young lordling behind red gauze curtains is filled with
longing
For the ill-fated maid in her mound of yellow earth.

That’s a felicitous couplet, except that ‘red gauze curtains’ is rather trite. There are real-life images ready at hand — why not use one of those?”

He hastily asked what she meant.

“We all have rosy-cloud gauze pasted on latticed windows nowadays,” she replied. “Why not say ‘Under madder-gauze window, a young lordling filled with longing’?”

Baoyu stamped his foot in approval.

“Excellent! Just the thing!” he exclaimed. “Trust you to think up such a phrase. It shows there are plenty of good ready-made scenes and images from olden days down to the present, but stupid fools can’t trot



件：虽然这一改新妙之极，但你居此则可，在我实不敢当。”说着，又接连说了一二十句“不敢当”。黛玉笑道：“何妨。我的窗即可为你之窗，何必分晰得如此生疏。古人异姓陌路，尚然同肥马，衣轻裘，敝之而无憾，何况咱们呢。”宝玉笑道：“论交之道，不在肥马轻裘，即黄金白璧，亦不当锱铢较量。倒是这唐突闺阁，万万使不得的。如今我率性将‘公子’‘女儿’改去，竟算是你诨他的倒妙。况且素日你又待他甚厚，故今宁可弃此一篇大文，万不可弃此‘茜纱’新句。竟莫若改作‘茜纱窗下，小姐多情；黄土垄中，丫鬟薄命。’如此一改，虽于我无涉，我也是惬怀的罢了。”黛玉笑道：“他又不是我的丫头，何用作此语。况且小姐、丫鬟亦不典雅，等我的紫鹃死了，我再如此说，还不算迟呢。”宝玉听了，忙笑道：“这是何苦又咒他。”黛玉笑道：“是你要咒他，并不是我说的。”宝玉道：“我又有了，这一改可极妥当。莫若说‘茜纱窗下，我本无缘；黄土垄中，卿何薄命。’”黛玉听了，忡然变色，心中虽有无限的狐疑乱拟，外面却不肯露出，反连忙含笑点头称妙，说：“果然改的好。再不必乱改了，快去干正经事罢。才刚太太打发人，叫你明





them out or recall them. Still, though this is a marvellous change you've made, it describes the place where *you* live — it's too good for me." He disclaimed over and over, "I am unworthy!"

Daiyu laughed.

"What does it matter? My window can be your window. Why must you draw such distinctions as if we were strangers? In ancient times, even strangers sometimes shared the same horse and fur coat without worrying if they got spoilt; and look how much closer we are."

"Among friends one shouldn't be stingy even with gold and jade, to say nothing of horses and furs," he agreed. "Still, disrespect to a lady is quite out of the question. So I'll tell you what, I may as well change the 'lordling' and 'maid' and make it your lament for her — that would be better. Besides, you used to be very good to her too. I'd rather scrap the whole thing than give up this new 'madder-gauze' image. So suppose we change it to:

Below the madder-gauze window, a young lady filled with
longing;
Under the yellow mound, her ill-fated maid.

Though this new version has nothing to do with me, I'm just as satisfied with it."

"But she wasn't my maid, so how can you say that? Besides, 'young lady' and 'maid' lack elegance. Wait till my Zijuan dies, it won't be too late for me to use that phrase then."

Baoyu laughed.

"Why bring bad luck on her with such talk?"

"It was your idea, not mine."

"I know what. Here's a more appropriate change. Let's say:

Below the madder-gauze window, I have no good fortune;
Under the yellow mound, how ill-fated you are!"

Daiyu abruptly turned pale, filled with misgivings by these ominous words. But instead of disclosing this she smiled and nodded.

"That really is a change for the better. Don't make any more alterations, but go quickly now to see to your proper business. Just now your mother sent word that first thing tomorrow you're to go to your Aunt



儿一早快过大舅母那边去。你二姐姐已有人家求准了，想是明儿那人家人来拜允，所以叫你们过去呢。”宝玉拍手道：

“何必如此忙？我身上也不大好，明儿还未必能去呢。”黛玉道：“又来了，我劝你把脾气改改罢。一年大二年小……”一面说话，一面咳嗽起来。宝玉忙道：“这里风凉，咱们只顾呆站着，快回去罢。”黛玉道：“我也家去歇息了，明儿再见罢。”说着，便自取路去了。宝玉只得闷闷的转步，又忽想起来黛玉无人随伴，忙命小丫头子跟了送回去。自己到了怡红院中，果然有王夫人打发老嬷嬷来，吩咐他明日一早过贾赦那边去，与方才黛玉之言相对。

原来贾赦已将迎春许与孙家了。这孙家乃是大同府人氏，祖上系军官出身，乃当日宁荣府中之门生，算来亦系世交。如今孙家只有一人在京，现袭指挥之职，此人名唤孙绍祖，生得相貌魁伟，体格健壮，弓马娴熟，应酬权变，年纪未满三十，且又家资饶富，现在兵部候缺题升。因未有室，贾赦见是世交之孙，且人品家当都相称合，遂青目择为东床娇婿。亦曾回明贾母。贾母心中却不十分称意，但想来拦阻亦未必听，儿女之事自有天意前因，况且自他父母主张，何必出头多事，因此只说“知道了”三字，余不多及。贾政又深恶孙家，虽是世交，当年不过是彼祖希慕荣宁之势，有不





Xing's place. Your Second Sister's been chosen by some family; so probably they want you to go over when those people call to make a formal request for her hand."

"What's the hurry? I'm not feeling too well, I may not be up to going over tomorrow," he said, clapping his hands.

"There you go again! Take my advice and stop being so wayward. You're not a child any more...."

As she spoke, she started coughing.

"The wind's cold here," he put in hastily. "It's silly to stay standing here. Do hurry back."

"I'm going home to rest. See you tomorrow."

With that Daiyu started back, and Baoyu was turning back listlessly too when it occurred to him that Daiyu had no one to escort her; so he hastily told the young maid to see her home. When he reached Happy Red Court, sure enough Lady Wang had sent a nanny to tell him to go to Jia She's place the next morning, as Daiyu had just told him.

Jia She had promised Yingchun to a family named Sun from Datong Prefecture, one of whose ancestors, a military officer, had been taken as a pupil by the Jias; thus both families could be considered as friends of long standing. The only Sun now in the capital was a police commissioner named Sun Shaozu, not yet thirty. A big man with a powerful physique, he was a good archer and horseman and well versed in the ways of society. His family was rich, and he was now waiting for some better appointment when some vacancy should occur in the Ministry of War. As he was not yet married and the Suns were old friends, and as moreover his appearance and estate were suitable, Jia She approved of him and had chosen him to be his son-in-law.

When he reported this to the Lady Dowager, she was not too pleased. However, she felt that if she raised objections he might not listen, and that young people's marriages were decreed by Heaven; besides, as this was Yingchun's own father's decision, why should she be officious?

So she just said, "I see," with no further comment.

Jia Zheng, however, had a deep aversion to the Suns, for although their families had long been connected this was simply because Sun's grandfather, wanting to make use of the Jias' influence to settle some



能了结之事才拜在门下的，并非诗礼名族之裔，因此倒劝谏过两次，无奈贾赦不听，也只得罢了。

宝玉却从未会过这孙绍祖一面的，次日只得过去聊以塞责。只听见说娶的日子甚急，不过今年就要过门的，又见邢夫人等回了贾母，将迎春接出大观园去等事，越发扫去了兴头，每日痴痴呆呆的，不知作何消遣。又听得说陪四个丫头过去，更又跌足自己叹道：“从今后这世上又少了五个清洁人了。”因此天天到紫菱洲一带地方徘徊瞻顾，见其轩窗寂寞，屏帐萧然，不过有几个该班上夜的老姬。再看那岸上的蓼花苇叶，池内的翠荇香菱，也都觉摇摇落落，似有追忆故人之态，迥非素常逞妍斗色之可比。既领略得如此寥落凄惨之景，是以情不自禁，乃信口吟成一歌曰：

池塘一夜秋风冷，吹散芰荷红玉影。
蓼花菱叶不胜愁，重露繁霜压纤梗。
不闻永昼敲棋声，燕泥点点污棋枰。
古人惜别怜朋友，况我今当手足情！

宝玉方才吟罢，忽闻背后有人笑道：“你又发什么呆呢？”宝玉回头忙看是谁，原来是香菱。宝玉忙转身笑问道：“我的姐姐，你这会子跑到这里来做什么？许多日子也不进来逛逛。”香菱拍手笑嘻嘻的说道：“我何曾不要来。如今你哥哥回来了，那里比先时自由自在的了。才刚我们奶奶使人找





private troubles, had formally acknowledged them as his teachers. They were not a family of well known literati. Hence Jia Zheng advised against the match once or twice, but desisted when Jia She paid no attention.

Baoyu had never set eyes on this Sun Shaozu, so the next day he had to go over for courtesy's sake to meet him. When he heard that the wedding would soon be taking place, that Yingchun would be going to her new home within the year and that Lady Xing and others had asked the old lady's permission to take her out of the Garden, he grew more and more dismayed. Often lost in thought, he did not know what to do. And now the news that Yingchun would be taking four maids with her when she married made him stamp his feet.

"That'll be five less clean people in the world!" he sighed.

He took to going every day to wander around Purple Caltrop Isle. He found the lodge there quiet and deserted, with only a few old women in charge of the place at night. Even the reeds and smartweed on the bank and the caltrops and water-weeds in the pool had a disconsolate look, as if longing for their old friends, not flaunting their autumn splendour as before. Struck by this scene of desolation, he could not contain his feelings but then and there made up a song which he chanted as follows:

"A pool at night; the chilly autumn wind
The red-jade shadows of caltrop apart has tossed;
Smartweed and caltrop are overcome by grief,
Their slender stems weighed down by dew and frost.
No more the chess-men clatter all day long,
The board by swallow droppings is defiled.
The men of old longed for departed friends,
Much more so I — your kinsman since a child."

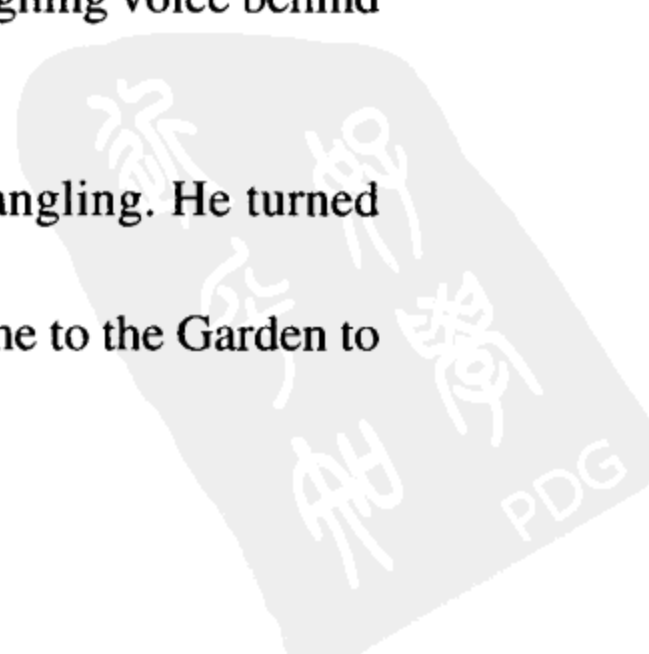
Baoyu had just declaimed this when he heard a laughing voice behind him call:

"Are your wits wandering again?"

Looking over his shoulder he saw that it was Xiangling. He turned with a smile to ask her:

"What are you doing here, sister? You haven't come to the Garden to stroll for days."

Xiangling clapped her hands.





你凤姐姐，竟找不着，说往园子里来了。我听见了，我就讨了这件差进来找他。遇见他的丫头，说在稻香村呢。如今我往稻香村去，谁知又遇见了你。我且问你，袭人姐姐这几日可好？怎么忽然把个晴雯姐姐也没了，到底是什么病？二姑娘搬出去的好快，你瞧瞧这地方好空落落的。”宝玉应之不迭，又让他同到怡红院去吃茶。香菱道：“此刻竟不能，等找着琏二奶奶，说完了正经事再来。”宝玉道：“什么正经事这么忙？”香菱道：“为你哥哥娶嫂子的事，所以要紧。”宝玉道：“正是。说的到底是那一家子的？只听见吵嚷了这半年，今儿又说张家的好，明儿又说李家的，后儿又议论王家的。这些人家的女儿他并不知道犯了什么罪，叫人家好端端的议论。”香菱道：“这如今定了，可以不用搬扯别家了。”宝玉忙问：“定了谁家的？”香菱道：“因你哥哥上次出门贸易时，在顺路到了个亲戚家去。这门亲原是老亲，且又和我们是同在户部挂名行商，也是数一数二的大门户。前日说起来时，你们两府也都知道的。合长安城中，上至王侯，下至买卖人，都称他家是‘桂花夏家’。”宝玉笑问道：“如何又称为‘桂花夏家’？”香菱道：“他家本姓夏，非常的富贵。其余田地不用说，单有几十顷地独种桂花，凡这长安城里城外桂花局，都是他家的，连宫里一应陈设盆景亦是他家贡奉，因此才有这





"It's not that I didn't want to," she cried gaily. "But now that your Cousin Pan is back, I'm no longer free to do whatever I please. Just now our mistress sent to find your Cousin Xifeng; but she wasn't at home and they said she'd come to the Garden. When I heard that, I asked for this errand and came to look for her. One of her maids whom I met told me she's in Paddy-Sweet Cottage, so I was on my way there when I came across you. Tell me: Is Sister Xiren keeping well these days? What carried off Sister Qingwen so suddenly? Just what illness did she have? And why did Miss Yingchun move out so quickly? See how empty this place has become!"

Baoyu answered her queries as quickly as he could, then invited her to Happy Red Court for some tea.

"I've no time just now," said Xiangling. "I'll come after I've found Madam Lian and delivered my message."

"What business is this that's so urgent?"

"It's to do with your Cousin Pan's wedding, that's why it's urgent."

"Tell me, which family is she from after all? They've been debating it for half a year: one day it was to be the Zhangs, next the Lis, then the Wangs. What wrong have the girls in those families done to deserve so much talk about them?"

"Well, it's settled now," Xiangling told him. "No other families need be dragged in."

"Which family has been settled on?"

"Last time your cousin went on a business trip, he called on some relatives on the way. They've been related to us since way back and are also registered in the Board of Revenue as purchasing agents for the court — they're one of the wealthiest families around. When the mistresses were chatting the other day, it turned out that your two mansions know this family too. The whole capital, from nobles down to tradesmen, all call that family the Osmanthus Xias."

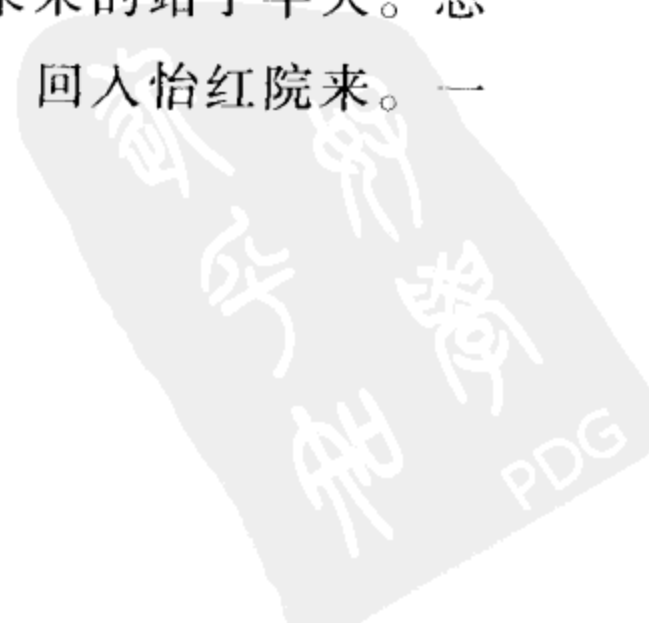
"How did they get that name?"

"Well, their surname is Xia, and they are rolling in wealth. Apart from other landed property, they have several hundred acres growing nothing but osmanthus trees. They own all the shops in the capital selling osmanthus, and they supply the Palace too with all those needed for display. That's



个浑号。如今太爷也没了，只有老奶奶带着一个亲生的姑娘过活，也并没有哥儿兄弟，可惜他们家竟绝了后。”宝玉忙道：“咱们也别管他绝后不绝后，只是这姑娘如何？你们大爷怎么就中意了？”香菱笑道：“一则是天缘，二则是‘情人眼里出西施’。当年又是通家常来往的，从小儿都一处厮混。叙老亲是姑舅兄妹，又没嫌疑。虽离了这几年，前儿一到他家，夏奶奶又是没儿子的，一见了你哥哥出落的这样，又是哭，又是笑，竟比见了儿子的还亲热。又令他兄妹相见。谁知这姑娘出落得花朵似的了，在家里也读书写字，所以你哥哥当时一心就看准了。连当铺里的伙计们，一群人糟扰了人家三四日，他们还留多住着呢，好容易苦辞才放回家。你哥哥一进门，就咕咕唧唧求我们奶奶去求亲。我们奶奶原也是见过的，又且门当户对的，也就依了。和这里姨太太凤姑娘商议了几日，打发人去一说就成了。只是娶的日子太急，所以我们忙乱的很。我也巴不得早些娶过来，又添一个作诗的人了。”宝玉冷笑道：“虽如此说，但只我倒替你耽心虑后呢。”香菱听了，不觉红了脸，正色道：“这话是什么话！素日咱们都是厮抬厮敬的，今日忽然提起这些事来，是什么意思！怪道人人都说你是个亲近不得的人。”一面说，一面转身走了。

宝玉见他这样，便怅然如有所失，呆呆的站了半天。思前想后，不觉滴下泪来，只得没精打彩，回入怡红院来。一





how they came by this name. Now old Mr. Xia is dead; his widow lives with her daughter and there are no sons — it's too bad that their male branch has died out."

"Never mind that," said Baoyu. "What's the girl like? How did he come to take a fancy to her?"

"It's partly fate, and partly a case of 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.' In the old days the two families were on close terms and as children they played together. Since they rank as cousins, they didn't have to avoid each other according to the rules of propriety. And though they hadn't met for so many years, as soon as he visited her family old Mrs. Xia, having no son herself, struck by your cousin's good looks shed tears of joy, more delighted than if he had been her own son. She presented the two young people to each other. Well, the girl who'd grown up as pretty as a flower was taught to read and write at home; so your cousin made up his mind then and there. The Xia family entertained him for three or four days, and those old pawnshop assistants of his as well, pressing them to stay even longer, and only letting them leave when they absolutely insisted.

"As soon as your cousin got home, he pestered our mistress to ask for the girl's hand. As she had seen the girl and the two families were well matched, she agreed. She talked it over with your mother and Madam Lian, then sent someone to propose the marriage, and it was immediately settled. Only there's so little time left before the wedding that we're rushed off our feet. The sooner she comes the better, I say. Then we shall have one extra poetess!"

Baoyu smiled wanly.

"Still, I'm rather worried for you."

Xiangling flushed.

"What a thing to say! We've always treated each other with respect, but now you're suddenly talking like this — the idea! No wonder everyone says it's no good being too familiar with you."

She turned then and went off.

Baoyu was very much put out. He stood there in a daze for a while, his thoughts wandering, shedding tears, then returned dejectedly to Happy Red Court.



夜不曾安稳，睡梦之中犹唤晴雯，或魇魔惊悸，种种不宁。次日便懒进饮食，身体作热。此皆近日抄检大观园、逐司棋、别迎春、悲晴雯等羞辱惊悸悲凄之所致，兼以风寒外感，故酿成一疾，卧床不起。贾母听得如此，天天亲来看视。王夫人心中自愧不该因晴雯过于逼责了他。心中虽如此，脸上却不露出。只吩咐众奶娘等好生服侍看守，一日两次带进医生来诊脉下药。一月之后，方才渐渐的痊愈。贾母命好生保养，过百日方许动荤腥油面等物，方可出门行走。这一百日内，连院门也不许出，只在房中玩笑。四五十日后，就把他拘束的火星乱迸，那里忍耐得住。诸般设法，无奈贾母王夫人执意不从，也只得罢了。因此和那些丫鬟们无所不至，恣意耍笑作戏。又听得薛蟠摆酒唱戏，热闹非常，已娶亲入门，闻得这夏家小姐十分俊俏，也略通文墨，宝玉恨不得就过去一见才好。再过些时，又闻得迎春出了阁。宝玉思及当时姊妹们一处，耳鬓厮磨，从今一别，纵得相逢，也必不似先前那等亲密了。眼前又不能去一望，真令人凄惶迫切之至。少不得潜心忍耐，暂同这些丫鬟们厮闹释闷，幸免贾政责备逼迫读书之难。这百日内，只不曾拆了怡红院，和这些丫头们无法无天，凡世上所无之事，都玩耍出来。如今且不消细说。

且说香菱自那日抢白了宝玉之后，心中自为宝玉有意唐



He passed an uneasy night. In his dreams he called for Qingwen or had frightening nightmares which gave him no peace. The next day he had no appetite and ran a fever, all because of the recent happenings — the search of the Garden, the dismissal of Siqu, the departure of Yingchun and the death of Qingwen — which had filled him with mortification, dread and grief. And on top of that he had caught cold, so now he fell ill and was confined to his bed.

When the Lady Dowager heard this, she came daily in person to see him. Lady Wang regretted having scolded him too sharply on Qingwen's account, but she gave no outward sign of her remorse, simply ordering the nurses to look after him well and sending doctors twice a day to examine him and prescribe medicine.

Not until a month had passed did Baoyu begin to recover. He was told to convalesce for a hundred days, touch no greasy food and not stir out of his rooms. During this whole period he was not even allowed to go to the gate of his court, but only to amuse himself indoors. After forty or fifty days spent in this way he felt ready to burst from boredom — how could he put up with this? But plead as he might, the old lady and Lady Wang were adamant, and he simply had to accept the situation. So he fooled about with the maids in every conceivable way.

One day he heard that Xue Pan was giving a feast and opera show to celebrate his wedding, and the party was uncommonly lively. Told that this young lady from the Xia family was a beauty with literary accomplishments too, he longed to go over then and there to see her.

Some days later he heard that Yingchun's marriage had taken place and grieved deeply that he had been unable to see her off, reflecting that he and his girl cousins had always been together, but were they to meet again after this separation they could not be as intimate as before. He found it thoroughly exasperating being unable to go and see them now. However, he had to be patient and amuse himself with his maids.

At least he was spared his father's constant reproofs and admonitions to study. So during these hundred days he and his maids rampaged as they pleased, getting up to mischief never heard of before and stopping short only of pulling down Happy Red Court. We can draw a veil over the details.



突他，“怨不得我们宝姑娘不敢亲近他，可见我不如宝姑娘远矣；怨不得林姑娘时常和他角口，气的痛哭，自然唐突他也是有的了。从此倒要远避他才好。”因此，以后连大观园也不轻易进来了。日日忙乱着，薛蟠娶过亲，自为得了护身符，自己身上分去责任，到底比这样安宁些；二则又闻得是个有才有貌的佳人，自然是温雅和平的；因此他心中盼过门的日子比薛蟠还急十倍。好容易盼得一日娶过了门，也便十分殷勤小心服侍。

原来这夏家小姐今年方才十七岁，生得亦颇有姿色，亦颇识得几个字。若论心中的丘壑经纬，颇步熙凤之后尘。只吃亏了一件，从小儿父亲去世的早，又无同胞弟兄，寡母独守此女，娇养溺爱，不啻珍宝，凡女儿一举一动，彼母皆百依百随，因此未免娇养太过，竟酿成个盗跖的性气。爱自己尊若菩萨，待他人秽如粪土；外具花柳之姿，内秉风雷之性。在家中时常就和丫鬟们使性弄气，轻骂重打的。今日出了阁，自为要作当家的奶奶，比不得作女儿时腼腆温柔，须要拿出这威风来，才钤压得住人；况且见薛蟠气质刚硬，举止骄奢，若不趁热灶一气炮制熟烂，将来必不能自竖旗帜矣；又见有香菱这等一个才貌俱全的爱妾在室，越发添了“宋太祖灭南唐”之意，“卧榻之侧，岂容他人酣睡”之心。因他家多桂花，他小名就唤做金桂。他在家时不许人口中带出“金桂”二字来，凡有不留心误道二字者，他便定要



Xiangling after scolding Baoyu that day decided that he had been deliberately rude to her.

She thought, "No wonder Miss Baochai dared not get too close to him. I lacked her foresight. And no wonder Miss Lin keeps quarrelling with him and crying for rage. He must keep teasing her too. I'd better steer clear of him."

So after that she seldom went into the Garden. Xue Pan's marriage kept her busy every day. She imagined his new wife would protect her and share her responsibilities, enabling her to lead a quieter life. And having heard that this young lady was talented as well as beautiful, she assumed she must be refined and gentle too. She was therefore ten times more eager even than Xue Pan for her arrival. Finally the day came when the bride arrived, and she began waiting hand and foot on her new mistress.

Now this Miss Xia, who had just turned seventeen, was quite good-looking and had some education. As regards ability and craftiness, she took after Xifeng. In one respect only had she been unlucky. Because her father had died when she was a child, and she had no brothers either, her widowed mother had spoiled this only daughter, doting on her and falling in with all her whims. Inevitably, this over-indulgence had made her like the brigand Dao Zhi of old: she had as high an opinion of herself as if she were a goddess, and treated others like dirt. In appearance pretty as a flower, at heart she was a termagant. At home she had vented her temper on her maids, for ever cursing them or beating them. Now that she was married, she felt it incumbent on her to behave as the mistress of the house, not with the gentle shyness befitting a girl — she must show her authority to keep others under her thumb.

In view, moreover, of Xue Pan's pig-headed pride and extravagance, she decided she must strike while the iron was hot and tame him completely, or she would never be able to have her own way. Moreover, the presence of such a charming and talented concubine as Xiangling had filled her with the same resolve as the First Emperor of Song² when he decided to wipe out the Prince of Southern Tang, demanding,³ "How can I let another sleep alongside my bed?"

As her family owned so many osmanthus trees, she had been given



苦打重罚才罢。他因想“桂花”二字是禁止不住的，须另换一名，因想桂花曾有广寒嫦娥之说，便将桂花改为嫦娥花，又寓自己身分如此。

薛蟠本是个怜新弃旧的人，且是有酒胆无饭力的，如今得了这样一个妻子，正在新鲜兴头上，凡事未免尽让他些。那夏金桂见了这般形景，便也试着一步紧似一步。一月之中，二人气概还都相平；至两月之后，便觉薛蟠的气概渐次低矮了下去。一日薛蟠酒后，不知要行何事，先与金桂商议，金桂执意不从。薛蟠忍不住便发了几句话，赌气走出去了，这金桂便气的哭如醉人一般，茶汤不进，装起病来。请医疗治，医生又说：“气血相逆，当进宽胸顺气之剂。”薛姨妈恨的骂了薛蟠一顿，说：“如今娶了亲，眼前抱儿子了，还是这样胡闹。人家凤凰蛋似的，好容易养了一个女儿，比花朵儿还轻巧，原看你是个人物，才给你作老婆。你不说收了心安分守己，一心一计和和气气的过日子，还是这样胡闹，灌了黄汤，折磨人家。这会子花钱吃药白操心。”一席话说的薛蟠后悔不迭，反来安慰金桂。金桂见婆婆如此说丈夫，越发得了意，更装出些张致来，总不理薛蟠。薛蟠没了主意，惟自怨恨。好容易十天半月之后，才渐渐的哄转过金桂来，自此更加一倍小心，不免气概又矮了半截下来。那金桂见丈夫旗纛渐倒，婆婆良善，也就渐渐的持戈试马起来。先



the pet name Jingui — Golden Osmanthus; so she forbade the whole household to use these two words. Any maid careless enough to slip up and do so was severely beaten and punished. Then, realizing the impossibility of banning any reference to osmanthus, she decided to give the flower a new name; and recalling the story of the osmanthus and the Moon Goddess,⁴ she changed the name of the flower to ‘moon-goddess flower’ to add to her own dignity in this way.

Now Xue Pan was a man who would discard the old as soon as he had something new, and one who looked tough but lacked stamina. Pleased with his new wife at the start, he humoured her. And Xia Jingui observing this tried to control him more strictly step by step. For the first month they were on equal terms; after two months Xue Pan began to give ground. One day after drinking he consulted her on something he wished to do and, when she would not hear of it, losing his temper he made an angry retort then went ahead and did it. Then Jingui cried as if she were demented, refused all food and pretended to be ill.

The doctor summoned to see her said:

“She has anger in her blood and should take some tranquillizing medicine.”

Aunt Xue berated her son.

“You’re a married man now and will soon have a son of your own, yet you’re still such a fool!” she fumed. “She was brought up like a young phoenix, a daughter as delicate as a flower; and her family agreed to let you have her, thinking you a gentleman. Yet instead of keeping yourself in check, behaving yourself and living peacefully, you act like an oaf and bully her in your cups. You’ll have to suffer for it and spend money now on medicine.”

Xue Pan, filled with remorse by these reproaches, went in to comfort his wife. But Jingui, delighted to have her mother-in-law take her side, behaved still more arrogantly in her gratification at this and out-manoeuvred him by simply ignoring him. Not knowing what to do, he had to lump it. And it took him nearly a fortnight to mollify her.

After that Xue Pan took greater pains not to provoke her, and inevitably this humbled him still more. Seeing that her husband was lowering his colours and her mother-in-law was good-natured, Jingui pressed her at-



时不过挟制薛蟠，后来倚娇作媚，将及薛姨妈，又将至薛宝钗。宝钗久察其不轨之心，每随机应变，暗以言语弹压。金桂知其不可犯，每欲寻隙，又无隙可寻，只得曲意俯就。一日，金桂无事，因和香菱闲谈，问香菱家乡父母。香菱皆答忘记，金桂便不悦，说有意欺瞒了他。因问他“香菱”二字是谁起的名字，香菱便答：“姑娘起的。”金桂冷笑道：“人人都说姑娘通，只这一个名字就不通。”香菱忙笑道：“嗳哟，奶奶不知道，我们姑娘的学问，连我们姨老爷时常还夸呢……”且听下回分解。





tack by degress. At first she simply kept Xue Pan under her thumb; later she tried artfully to control Aunt Xue as well, and Baochai too. Baochai had long recognized her impropriety and knew how to cope with it, giving her hints not to over-reach herself. When Jingui saw that she was not to be bullied, she tried to pick fault with her in various ways; but being unable to find any chinks in her armour, she finally had to come to terms with her.

One day Jingui, at a loose end, started chatting with Xiangling and asked about her home district and her parents. When Xiangling said she could not remember them, Jingui flared up and accused her of deliberately hiding things from her. She then asked who had given her the name "Xiangling," and on being told that it was Baochai she gave a scornful smile.

"Everyone says she's learned," she scoffed, "but this name doesn't make sense."

Xiangling answered with a conciliatory smile, "Aiya, madam! You may not know, but even her uncle is always praising her for her scholarship."

To know what Jingui's answer was, read the next chapter.



第八十回

美香菱屈受贪夫棒 王道士胡诌妒妇方

话说香菱言犹未尽，金桂将脖项一扭，嘴唇一撇，鼻孔里“哧”了两声，拍着手冷笑道：“菱角花谁闻见香来着？若说菱角香了，正经那些香花放在那里去？可是不通之极！”香菱道：“不独菱角花，就连荷叶莲蓬，都是有一股清香的。但他那原不是花香可比，若静日静夜或清早半夜细领略了去，那一股清香皆比是花儿都好闻呢。就连菱角、鸡头、芡叶、芦根，得了风露，那一股清香，就令人心神爽快的。”金桂说：“依你说，那兰花、桂花倒香的不好了？”香菱说到热闹头上，忘了忌讳，便接口道：“兰花、桂花的香，又非别花之香可比。”一句未说完，金桂的丫鬟名唤宝蟾者，忙指着香菱的脸说道：“要死，要死！你怎直叫起姑娘的名字来！”香菱猛省了，反不好意思，忙陪笑赔罪说：“一时说顺了嘴，奶奶别计较。”金桂笑道：“这有什么，你也太小心了。但只是我想这个‘香’字到底不妥，意思要换一个字，不知你服不服？”香菱忙笑道：“奶奶说那里话，此刻连我一身一体俱属奶奶，何得换一名字反问我服不服，叫我如何当得起。奶奶说那一个字好，就用那一个字。”金桂冷笑道：“你虽说的



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Chapter 80

Lovely Xiangling Is Unjustly Thrashed by Her Lecherous Husband The Taoist Priest Wang Prscribes a Cure for a Shrew

Jingui turned away her head, pursed her lips and snorted. Striking the palms of both hands together she sneered:

“What scent has the caltrop, pray? If caltrops count as fragrant, how can we describe those truly fragrant flowers? This name is certainly senseless!”

“Not only the caltrop, but even lotus leaves and lotus seed pods have a subtle scent,” Xiangling assured her. “But of course it can’t compare with the fragrance of flowers. On a quiet day or night, or at dawn or midnight, if you inhale that scent carefully it smells even better than flowers. In the breeze or dew, caltrops, euryale seeds, reeds and rushes too, have a subtle fragrance which is very refreshing.”

“Do you mean to say you dislike the fragrance of orchids and osmanthus?” demanded Jingui.

Xiangling, in the heat of argument, completely forgot the taboo as she answered quickly:

“The fragrance of orchids and osmanthus is unique....”

Before she could finish, Jingui’s maid Baochan wagged a warning finger at her.

“Do you want to die? Mentioning the mistress’ name!”

“I slipped up,” apologized Xiangling, embarrassed by her gaffe. “Please don’t be offended, madam.”

Jingui laughed.

“It doesn’t matter. You’re over-scrupulous. Still, I don’t think that *Xiang* for sweetness in your name is right, I’d like to change it for another word, if you agree.”

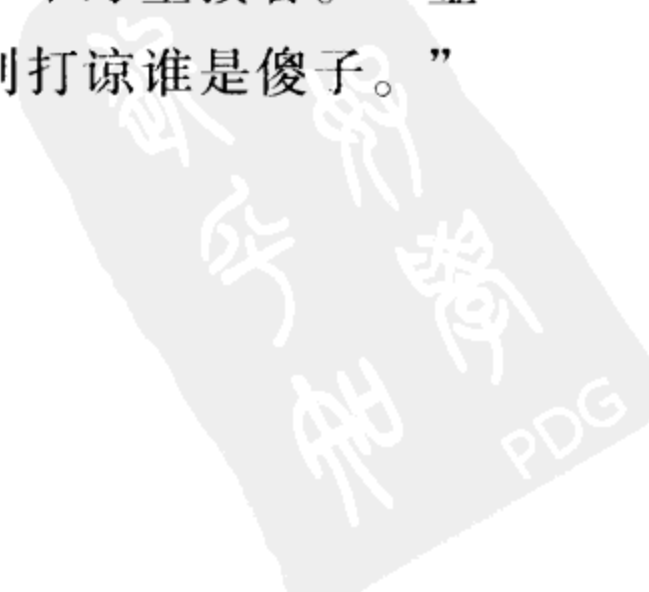
“What a thing to say, madam!” cried Xiangling gaily. “I belong to you completely, so why consult me about changing my name? This is doing



是，只怕姑娘多心，说：‘我起的名字，反不如你？你能来了几日，就驳我的回了。’”香菱笑道：“奶奶有所不知，当日买了我来的时候，原是老太太使唤的，故此姑娘起的名字。后来我自服侍了爷，就与姑娘无涉了。如今又有了奶奶，益发不与姑娘相干了。况且姑娘又是极明白的人，如何恼得这些呢。”金桂道：“既这样说来，‘香’字竟不如‘秋’字妥当。菱角菱花皆盛于秋，岂不比‘香’字有来历些。”香菱道：“就依奶奶这样罢了。”自此后遂改了“秋”字，宝钗亦不在意。

只因薛蟠天性是“得陇望蜀”的，如今得娶了金桂，又见金桂的丫鬟宝蟾有三分姿色，举止轻浮可爱，便时常要茶要水的故意撩逗他。宝蟾虽亦解事，只是怕着金桂，不敢造次，且看金桂的眼色。金桂亦颇觉察其意，想：“正要摆布香菱，无处寻隙。如今他既看上了宝蟾，如今且舍了宝蟾去与他，他一定就和香菱疏远了。我且乘他疏远之时，摆布了香菱，那时宝蟾原是我的人，也就好处了。”打定了主意，伺机而发。

这日薛蟠晚间微醺，又命宝蟾倒茶来吃。薛蟠接碗时，故意捏他的手。宝蟾又假装躲闪，连忙缩手。两下里失误，“豁啷”一声，茶碗落地，泼了一身一地的茶。薛蟠不好意思，佯说宝蟾不好生拿着。宝蟾说：“姑爷不好生接着。”金桂冷笑道：“两个人的腔调都够使的了，别打谅谁是傻子。”





me too much honour. Just use whatever word you think best, madam.”

“You may agree, but suppose my sister-in-law takes offence? She may not like the name I choose and say, ‘She’s only been here a few days, but already she’s refuting me.’”

“Let me tell you how it is, madam. When I was bought, it was to serve the old lady; that’s why Miss Baochai gave me this name. Later, when I started waiting on our master, that had nothing to do with her. And now that I’m serving you, Miss Baochai has even less to do with me. Besides, she’s such an understanding young lady, how could she take offence?”

“In that case, let’s substitute the Qiu meaning autumn for Xiang. The caltrop flourishes and flowers in autumn, so that is surely more appropriate.”

“Just as you say, madam,” agreed Xiangling cheerfully.

Thereafter her name was changed to Qiuling, and Baochai raised no objection.

Now Xue Pan was a living example of the saying “To cover the land of Shu after getting the region of Long.” After marrying Jingui, he was struck by her maid Baochan’s charms. As she seemed approachable as well as alluring, he often flirted with her when asking her to fetch him tea or water. Baochan knew what he wanted, but dared not encourage him until she knew how her mistress felt about it. Jingui was well aware of what was happening.

“It’s Xiangling I want to trap, but I can’t find any pretext,” she reflected. “As he’s keen on Baochan now, I may as well let him have her and he’s bound to lose interest in Xiangling. Then I can settle her hash. Since Baochan is my maid, she’ll be easy to handle later.”

Her mind made up, she waited for her chance.

One evening after drinking, Xue Pan ordered Baochan to bring him some tea. Before taking the cup he squeezed her hand; and Baochan, pretending to shrink away, let the cup fall with a clatter to her ground, splashing her clothes as well as the floor with tea. To cover his confusion, Xue Pan accused the maid of carelessness.

She retorted, “You didn’t take it properly sir.”

Jingui smiled sarcastically.

薛蟠只低头微笑不语，宝蟾红了脸出去。一时安歇之时，金桂便故意的撵薛蟠别处去睡，“省得你馋痨饿眼。”薛蟠只是笑。金桂道：“要作什么和我说，别偷偷摸摸的不中用。”薛蟠听了，仗着酒盖脸，便趁势跪在被上，拉着金桂笑道：“好姐姐，你若把宝蟾赏了我，你要怎样就怎样。你要活人脑子也弄来给你。”金桂笑道：“这话好不通。你爱谁，就把谁收在房里，省得别人看着不雅。我可要什么呢。”薛蟠得了这话，喜的称谢不尽，是夜曲尽丈夫之道，奉承金桂。次日也不出门，只在家中厮耐，越发放大胆了。

至午后，金桂故意出去，让个空儿与他二人。薛蟠便拉拉扯扯的起来。宝蟾心里也知八九了，也就半推半就，正要入港。谁知金桂是有心等候的，料必在难分之际，便叫丫头小舍儿过来。原来这小丫头也是金桂从小儿在家使唤的，因他自幼父母死亡，无人看管，便大家叫他作小舍儿，专作些粗笨的生活。金桂如今有意独唤他来吩咐道：“你去告诉秋菱，到我屋里将手帕取来，不必说我说的。”小舍儿听了，一径寻着香菱说：“菱姑娘，奶奶的手帕子忘记在屋里了，你去取来送上去岂不好？”香菱正因近日金桂每每的折挫他，不知何意，百般竭力挽回不暇。听了这话，忙往房里来取。不防正遇见他二人推就之际，一头撞了进去，自己倒羞的耳面飞红，忙转身回避不迭。那薛蟠自为是过了明路的，除了



“You’re both pretty obvious. Do you take me for a fool?”

Xue Pan lowered his head with a sheepish smile and said nothing as Baochan left the room, blushing.

Later, at bedtime, Jingui deliberately urged her husband to sleep elsewhere.

“I don’t want to see you eating your heart out,” she said.

He simply grinned.

“If you want something, tell me,” she continued. “Acting on the sly is no good.”

Emboldened by wine, Xue Pan knelt on the quilt and nuzzled her.

“Good sister, just give me Baochan and I’ll do whatever you say! If you want someone’s brains, I’ll get them for you!”

“What senseless talk!” she retorted. “If you’ve taken a fancy to someone, say so outright, and we can make her your concubine to avoid any hint of scandal. Why should I care?”

Xue Pan was so delighted with this assurance that he thanked her most profusely and did his best to pleasure her as a husband should that night.

The next day he stayed indoors killing time at home, feeling increasingly randy. After lunch, Jingui deliberately went out to clear the coast for them both, and Xue Pan started making advances to Baochan. Well aware of what he wanted, she only made a show of resisting. And he was about to have his way with her when Jingui who had waited till she reckoned that they would be locked together, called for young Sheer, a maid she had brought from her home. Being an orphan with no one to care for her, this girl had been given the name She meaning “waif” and assigned rough jobs to do. Now, according to her plan, Jingui summoned her.

“Go and get Qiuling to fetch my handkerchief from my room,” she ordered. “No need to tell her that these are my instructions.”

Sheer went straight to find Xiangling.

“Miss Qiuling, our mistress has left her handkerchief in her room,” she said. “Wouldn’t you like to fetch it and take it to her?”

Now Xiangling, upset by all Jingui’s recent unkindness to her, had been trying in every way to placate her; so on hearing this she hurried to her mistress’ room. All unwittingly she burst in just as the two of them



金桂，无人可怕，所以连门也不掩。今见香菱撞来，故也略有些惭愧，还不十分在意。无奈宝蟾素日最是说嘴要强的，今既被香菱遇见了，便恨无地缝儿可入，忙推开薛蟠，一径跑了出来，口内还怨恨不迭，说他强奸力逼等语。薛蟠好容易圈哄的要上手，却被香菱冲散，不免一腔兴头变作了一腔恶怒，都在香菱身上。不容分说，赶出来啐了两口，骂道：“死娼妇，你这会子作什么来撞尸游魂！”香菱料事不好，三步两步早已跑了。薛蟠再来找宝蟾，已无踪迹了，于是恨的只骂香菱。至晚饭后，已吃得醺醺然，洗澡时不防水略热了些，烫了脚，便说香菱有意害他，赤条精光赶着香菱踢打了两下。香菱虽未受过这气苦，既到了此时，也说不得了，只好自悲自怨，各自走开。

彼时金桂已暗和宝蟾说明，今夜令薛蟠和宝蟾在香菱房中去成亲，命香菱过来陪自己先睡。先是香菱不肯，金桂说他嫌脏了，再必是图安逸，怕夜里劳动服侍，又骂说：“你那没见世面的主子，见了一个，爱一个，把我的人霸占了去，又不叫你来。到底是什么主意，想必是逼我死罢了。”薛蟠听了这话，又怕闹黄了宝蟾之事，忙又赶来骂香菱：“不识抬举！再不去便要打了！”香菱无奈，只得抱了铺盖来。金桂命他在地下铺睡。香菱无奈，只得依命。刚睡下，便叫倒茶，





were setting to work. Flushing crimson up to her ears, she promptly fled.

As Xue Pan felt he had cleared himself with his wife, and apart from her there was no one he need be afraid of, he had not even bothered to bolt the door. Thus when Xiangling burst in, although a little put out he did not much care.

Baochan, however, had a sharp tongue and a strong sense of self-importance. Xiangling's sudden intrusion made her wish the earth would swallow her up. At once she pushed Xue Pan away and rushed out of the room crying rape.

Xue Pan had been to great pains getting hold of Baochan. Now his frustration, owing to Xiangling, naturally turned his excitement into savage hatred for her.

He ran out and spat at her.

"You damn bitch!" he swore. "Why come barging in here now?"

Xiangling, knowing that she was in trouble, darted away. Then Xue Pan looked for Baochan and, failing to find her, loosed off more abuse at Xiangling.

After dinner that evening, befuddled with wine, he happened to scald his feet because the bath water was rather hot. Blaming this on Xiangling he ran out, stark naked as he was, to kick and beat her. The poor girl had never been treated so badly before, but there was nothing she could do except to slip away nursing her grievance.

By now Jingui had told Baochan in confidence to spend the night with Xue Pan in Xiangling's room and become his concubine. When Xiangling, ordered to sleep with her, demurred, she accused her of thinking her bed too dirty or of being too lazy to wait on her mistress at night.

"That oaf of a master of yours falls for every girl he sees," she swore. "He's grabbed my maid, yet doesn't send you to attend me. What's his idea? Is he trying to hound me to death?"

Xue Pan, hearing this, feared he might be thwarted again and therefore joined in too.

"You ungrateful bitch!" he roared at Xiangling. "Go on at once, or I'll beat you!"

Xiangling had no choice but to carry her bedding over. And when Jingui ordered her to sleep on the floor, again she had to comply. But no



一时又叫捶腿，如是一夜七八次，总不使其安逸稳睡片时。那薛蟠得了宝蟾，如获珍宝，一概都置之不顾。恨的金桂暗暗的发恨道：“且叫你乐这几天，等我慢慢的摆布了来，那时可别怨我！”一面隐忍，一面设计摆布香菱。

半月光景，忽又装起病来，只说心疼难忍，四肢不能转动。请医疗治不效，众人都说是香菱气的。闹了两日，忽又从金桂的枕头内抖出纸人来。上面写着金桂的年庚八字，有五根针钉在心窝内。于是众人反乱起来，当作新闻，先报与薛姨妈。薛姨妈先忙手忙脚的，薛蟠自然更反乱起来，立刻要拷打众人。金桂笑道：“何必冤枉众人呢，大约是宝蟾的镇魔法儿。”薛蟠道：“他这些时并没多空儿在你房里，何苦赖好人。”金桂冷笑道：“除了他还有谁，莫不是我自己害我自己不成！虽有别人，谁可敢进我的房呢。”薛蟠道：“香菱如今是天天跟着你，他自然知道，先拷问他就知道了。”金桂冷笑道：“拷问谁，谁肯认？依我说竟装个不知道，大家丢开手罢了。横竖治死我也没什么要紧，乐得再娶好的。若据良心上说，左不过是你三个多嫌我一个。”说着，一面痛哭起来。薛蟠更被这一席话激怒，顺手抓起一根门闩来，一径抢





sooner had she lain down than Jingui called for tea, then presently told her to massage her legs, rousing her seven or eight times altogether, so that there was no sleep for Xiangling that night.

Now that Xue Pan had got possession of Baochan whom he prized as a great treasure, he had no attention to spare for anyone else, much to Jingui's disgust.

"I'll let you enjoy yourself for a few days," she thought spitefully. "But don't blame me when by and by I get my own back!"

Meanwhile, hiding her resentment, she went on tormenting Xiangling. After a fortnight she suddenly shammed ill, complaining of an unbearable pain in her heart and the loss of the use of her limbs. The doctors summoned were unable to cure her, and the household ascribed this illness to her anger caused by Xiangling.

Then one day, from Jingui's pillow-case there fell out a paper effigy inscribed with the date of her birth and her horoscope. Five needles had been thrust through it: one through the heart and one through each of the limbs. This discovery caused a commotion among the maids who reported it at once to Aunt Xue, making her consternated at first. Xue Pan, even more worked up, wanted to beat all the servants to extort a confession from them.

"That wouldn't be fair," said Jingui. "This black magic is most likely Baochan's doing."

"It couldn't be," he objected. "She's not been in your room recently. Why accuse an innocent person?"

Jingui smiled sarcastically.

"Who else could it be? Do you imagine I did it myself? Who else dares enter my room?"

"Xiangling should know — she's spent all her time with you lately. Let's beat her first, to get the truth out of her."

"Whomever you beat, no one's going to confess," scoffed Jingui. "Take my advice and pretend you know nothing about it. Just let the matter drop. Anyway, if I'm done to death what does it matter? Wouldn't you love to marry a better wife? I know very well that the three of you all want me out of the way!" By now she was sobbing.

Goaded by these taunts, Xue Pan grabbed hold of a doorbar and rushed



步找着香菱，不容分说便劈头劈脸浑身打起来，一口咬定是香菱所施。香菱叫屈不迭。薛姨妈跑来禁喝说：“不问明白，你就打起人来了。这丫头服侍了你这几年，那一点不周到，不尽心？他岂肯如今作这没良心的事！你且问个青红皂白，再动粗卤。”金桂听见他婆婆如此说，生怕薛蟠耳软心活，便益发嚎啕大哭起来，一面又哭喊道：“这半个多月把我的宝蟾霸占了去，不容他进我的房，唯有秋菱跟着我睡。我要拷问宝蟾，你又护到头里。你这会子又赌气打他去。治死我，再拣富贵的标致的娶来就是了，何苦作出这些把戏来！”薛蟠听了这些话，越发着了急。薛姨妈听见金桂句句挟制着儿子，百般恶赖的样子，十分可恨。无奈儿子偏不硬气，已是被他挟制软惯了。如今又勾搭上了丫头，被他说霸占了去，他自己反要占温柔让夫之礼。这魔魔法究竟不知谁作的，实是俗语说的“清官难断家务事”，此时正是公婆难断床帟事了。因此无法，只得赌气骂薛蟠说：“不争气的孽障！骚狗也比你体面些！谁知你三不知的把陪房丫头也摸索上了，叫老婆说嘴霸占了丫头，什么脸出去见人！也不知谁使的法子，也不问青红皂白，好歹就来打人。我知道你是个得新弃旧的东西，白辜负了我当日的心。他既不好，你也不许打，我即刻叫人牙子来卖了他，你就心净了。”说着，又命香菱“收





to find Xiangling. Without giving her a chance to speak he started beating her, insisting that she was the one who had worked this witchcraft. As Xiangling protested her innocence Aunt Xue came running over to stop her son.

“How can you beat her without first investigating?” she scolded. “The girl has served you all these years and always been very dutiful. How could she do a wicked thing like this? You must find out the truth before you start laying about you.”

At this, Jingui was afraid that Xue Pan might be over-ruled by his mother. She started bawling again.

“For over a fortnight,” she wailed, “you’ve monopolized my Baochan and won’t let her come to my room, leaving me only Qiuling to sleep with me. When I want to cross-examine Baochan, you shield her. Now you’re working off your temper by beating Qiuling. Why not murder me and have done with it? Then you can choose a beautiful wife from some rich and noble family. Why play all these silly tricks?”

This tirade made Xue Pan still more frantic.

Aunt Xue was furious at Jingui’s outrageous, overbearing ways and the pressure she was putting on Xue Pan who, unfortunately, was so spineless that he was used to giving in to her; and now his affair with Baochan enabled her to pose as a reasonable, complaisant wife whose maid he had seized. Aunt Xue, moreover, had no means of knowing who was responsible for the black magic. Just as “Not even good officials can settle family troubles,” so “Not even parents can settle disputes between son and wife.” Being at a loss, she could do nothing except berate Xue Pan.

“You degenerate wretch!” she fumed. “Even a cur in heat is less shameless than you! So you couldn’t even keep your paws off your wife’s maid but had to grab her too — giving your wife a handle to accuse you of monopolizing her maid. How can you face people after this? We don’t know who put that spell on her, but instead of finding out the facts you start beating your concubine. I know you: off with the old love and on with the new — a poor return for all I’ve done for you! Even if Xiangling did wrong, you’ve no right to beat her. I shall send for a broker at once and sell her off to set your mind at rest.”



拾了东西跟我来”，一面叫人去，“快叫个人来，找个人牙子，多少卖几两银子。拔出肉中刺，眼中钉，大家过太平日子。”薛蟠见母亲动了气，早也低了头。金桂听了这话，便隔着窗子往外哭道：“你老人家只管卖人，不必说着一个扯着一个的。我们很是那吃醋拈酸容不下人的不成，怎么‘拔出肉中刺，眼中钉’？是谁的钉，谁的刺？但凡多嫌着他，也不肯把我的丫头也收在房里了。”薛姨妈听说，气的身颤气咽道：“这是谁家的规矩？婆婆这里说话，媳妇隔着窗子拌嘴。亏你是旧家人家的女儿！满嘴里大呼小喊，说的是什么！”薛蟠急的跺脚说：“罢哟，罢哟！看人听见笑话。”金桂意谓一不作，二不休，越性发泼喊起来了，说：“我不怕人笑话！你的小老婆治我害我，我倒怕人笑话了！再不然，就留下他，卖了我罢。谁还不知道你薛家有钱，行动拿钱垫人，又有好亲戚挟制着别人。你不趁早儿施为，还等什么？嫌我不好，谁叫你们瞎了眼，三求四告的跑了我们家作什么去了！这会子人也来了，金的银的也赔了，略有个眼睛鼻子的也霸占去了，该挤发我了！”一面哭喊，一面滚揉，自己拍打。薛蟠急的说又不好，劝又不好，打又不好，央告又不好，只是出入咳声叹气，抱怨说运气不好。当下薛姨妈早被宝钗劝进去了，只命叫人来卖香菱。宝钗笑道：“咱们家从来只知买人，并不知卖人之说。妈可是气的糊涂了，倘或叫人听见，岂不



She told Xiangling, "Get your things together. Come on."

She then ordered the servants, "Fetch a broker at once. We'll sell her for whatever she'll fetch, to rid ourselves of this pest, this thorn in the flesh. Only then can we have any peace."

Xue Pan hung his head throughout this diatribe, but Jingui who had been eavesdropping called through the window:

"You can sell anyone you want, but why drag in other people? Am I such a jealous shrew that I can't tolerate a flesh? Who finds her a pest? Who thinks her a thorn in the flesh? If I were the jealous kind, I wouldn't have allowed him to have my maid."

Aunt Xue nearly choked, trembling with anger.

"What manners are these?" she spluttered. "When the mother-in-law is talking, how dare her daughter-in-law wrangle with her through the window? Imagine the daughter of a respectable family raising such a row! Outrageous, I call it!"

Xue Pan stamped his foot frantically.

"Do be quiet! Think how people will laugh if they hear us!"

Determined to go the whole hog, Jingui went on ranting more wildly.

"I'm not afraid if people laugh!" she shrieked. "Why should I be, when your concubine is trying to do me in? You'd better keep her and sell *me* instead. Everyone knows that you Xues have pots of money for bribes, as well as powerful relatives who'll shut people's mouths. So go ahead! What are you waiting for? If you think I'm no good, what blinded you before? Why keep running to our home to beg for my hand? Now you've got me as well as all the gold and silver in my dowry. And my maid, who's not bad-looking, you've even grabbed her too. So it's time to get rid of me!"

Screaming, she slapped herself and rolled on the ground.

Xue Pan was too frantic to know what to do — remonstrate, reason and plead with her, or beat her. He stumped in and out of the room, sighing and fuming, cursing his own bad luck.

Meanwhile Baochai had persuaded her mother to go back to her own room, but she insisted that Xiangling must be sold.

"Our family only buys maids, never sells any," Baochai pointed out. "Your anger's making you talk foolishly, mother. If outsiders come to



笑话!哥哥嫂嫂嫌他不好,留着我使唤,我正也没人使呢。”薛姨妈道:“留下他还是淘气,不如打发了他倒干净。”宝钗笑道:“他跟着我也是一样,横竖不叫他到前头去。从此断绝了他那里,也如卖了一般。”香菱早已跑到薛姨妈跟前痛哭哀求,只不愿出去,情愿跟着姑娘,薛姨妈也只得罢了。

自此以后,香菱果跟随宝钗去了,把前面路径竟一心断绝。虽然如此,终不免对月伤悲,挑灯自叹。本来怯弱,虽在薛蟠房中几年,皆由血分中有病,是以并无胎孕。今复加以气怒伤感,内外折挫不堪,竟酿成干血癆之症,日渐羸瘦作烧,饮食懒进,请医诊视服药,亦不效验。那时金桂又吵闹了数次,气的薛姨妈母女惟有暗中垂泪,怨命而已。薛蟠虽曾仗着酒胆挺撞过两三次,持棍欲打,那金桂便递与他身子着他随意打;这里持刀欲杀时,便伸与他脖子。薛蟠也实不能下手,只得乱闹一阵罢了。如此习惯成自然,反使金桂越发长了威风,薛蟠越发软了气骨。虽是香菱犹在,却亦如不在的一般,虽不能十分畅意,也就不觉的碍眼了,且姑置之不究。如此又渐次寻赶上宝蟾。宝蟾却不比香菱的情性,最是个烈火干柴,既和薛蟠情投意合,便把金桂忘在脑后。近见金桂又作践他,他便不肯服低容让半点儿。先是一冲一撞的拌嘴角口,后来金桂气急,甚至于骂,再至于厮打。他虽不敢还手,便大撒泼性,抬头打滚,寻死觅活,昼则刀



hear of this, how they'll laugh! If my brother and sister-in-law dislike her, why not keep her to wait on me? I need another maid."

"If she's kept it'll cause more trouble. Far simpler to throw her out."

"If she's with me that will be the same anyway. I won't let her go to their quarters in the front, so she'll be entirely cut off from them, just as if she'd been sold."

Xiangling had already run up to Aunt Xue and tearfully begged her not to drive her away but to let her wait on Miss Baochai. So finally Aunt Xue relented.

After that, Xiangling moved into Baochai's quarters and had no more to do with the young couple; still, she could not help bewailing her fate to the moon and sighing before the lamp. Though she had lived with Xue Pan for several years, because of irregular menses she had never conceived a child. Now anger and grief further undermined her health, and these upsets aggravated her anaemia. She fell into a consumption and lost her appetite. Doctors were called in, but their medicines failed to cure her.

Meanwhile Jingui continued to make scenes, upsetting Aunt Xue and Baochai; but all they could do was to shed tears in secret as they lamented their fate. Two or three times Xue Pan, emboldened by wine, stormed at his wife and threatened her with a stick, but Jingui simply dared him to beat her. When he threatened her with a knife, she stretched out her neck and challenged him to kill her. Then, unable to bring himself to it, he could only rage for a while. When this had happened several times, Jingui became even more over-bearing and Xue Pan even more spineless.

With Xiangling still in the house, Jingui could never be fully at ease; however, she let her be for the time being, as she was no longer an annoyance to her.

It was now with Baochan that she started finding fault. But Baochan, unlike Xiangling, had a fiery temper and as she was on good terms with Xue Pan she felt she could afford to ignore her mistress. When Jingui tried to bully her she refused to give ground. At first they simply wrangled. Then Jingui, when in a temper, would curse and beat her. Though Baochan could not strike back she would throw a tantrum, roll on the ground and



剪，夜则绳索，无所不闹。薛蟠此时一身难以两顾，惟徘徊观望于二者之间，十分闹的没法，便出门躲在外头。金桂不发作性气，有时欢喜，便纠聚人来斗纸牌、掷骰子作乐。又生平最喜啃骨头，每日务要杀鸡鸭，将肉赏人吃，只单以油炸焦骨头下酒。吃的不耐烦或动了气，便肆行海骂，说：“有别的忘八粉头乐的，我为什么不乐！”薛家母女总不去理他。薛蟠此时亦无别法，惟日夜悔恨不该娶这搅家星罢了，都是一时没了主意。于是宁、荣二府之人，上上下下，无有不知，无有不叹者。

此时宝玉已过了百日，出门行走。亦曾过来见过金桂，“举止形容也不怪厉，一般是鲜花嫩柳，与众姊妹不差上下的人，焉得这等样情性？可为奇之至极。”因此心下纳闷。这日与王夫人请安去，又正遇见迎春奶娘来家请安，说起孙绍祖甚属不端，“姑娘惟有背地淌眼抹泪的，只要接了来家散宕两日。”王夫人因说：“我正要这两日接他去，只因七事八事的都不遂心，所以就忘了。前儿宝玉去了，回来也曾说过的。明日是个好日子，就接他去罢。”正说着，贾母打发人来找宝玉，说：“明日一早往天齐庙还愿去。”宝玉如今巴不得各处去逛逛，听见如此说，喜的一夜不曾睡着，盼明不明的。

次日一早，梳洗穿带已毕，随了两三个老嬷嬷，坐车出



threaten to kill herself, searching for knives or Xue Pan, unable to cope with the two of them, could only pace to and fro between both women, watching. If they became too rowdy, he would go out and keep away from the house.

When Jingui happened to be in a good mood, she would gather a party together to play cards, dice and make merry. All her life she had loved gnawing bones, so she had chickens or ducks killed every day and the meat given to others while she herself chewed the fried bones to go with her wine. When she tired of this, or when anything offended her, she would flare up and begin scolding again.

“If ponces and strumpets can enjoy themselves, why shouldn’t I?” she would clamour.

Aunt Xue and Baochai paid no attention to her. And by now Xue Pan too was helpless, only regretting day and night that he had married this monster. They were all at their wits’ end. High and low in the Ning and Rong Mansions knew of this, and none of them but deplored it.

By this time Baoyu’s hundred days’ confinement was up and he was allowed out of doors. Coming over to call on Jingui, he found nothing outrageous in her looks or behaviour — she seemed just as lovely as the other girls — so he was mystified and amazed by her bad reputation.

One day when he went to pay his respects to his mother, he found Yingchun’s nanny there too, telling Lady Wang what a reprobate Sun Shaozu was.

“All our young lady can do is to cry in secret,” she said. “She’s longing to be fetched home, to have a few days’ respite.”

“The last couple of days I’ve been thinking of sending for her,” answered Lady Wang. “But so many troubles cropped up that it slipped my mind. The other day Baoyu called there, and when he came back he made the same suggestion. Well, tomorrow’s an auspicious day; we’ll send to fetch her.”

Just then a servant arrived from the Lady Dowager to tell Baoyu to go first thing the next day to Tianqi Temple, in order to offer thanks for his recovery. As Baoyu was only too eager for any outing, these instructions so delighted him that he could hardly close his eyes all night as he waited for day to break.



西城门外天齐庙来烧香还愿。这庙里已是昨日预备停妥的。宝玉天生性怯，不敢近狰狞神鬼之像。这天齐庙本系前代所修，极其宏壮。如今年深岁久，又极其荒凉，里面泥胎塑像皆极其凶恶，是以忙忙的供过纸马钱粮，便退至道院歇息。一时吃过饭，众嬷嬷和李贵等人围随着宝玉到处散宕玩耍了一回。宝玉困倦，复回至静室安歇。众嬷嬷生恐他睡着了，便请当家的老王道士来陪他说话。这王道士专在江湖上卖药，弄些海上方治人射利，这庙外现挂着招牌，丸散膏丹，色色俱备。亦常在宁、荣两府走动熟惯，都与他起了个浑号儿，唤作“王一贴”，言他的膏药最验，只一贴百病皆除之意。当下王一贴进来，宝玉正歪在炕上想睡，李贵等正说“哥儿别睡了”，厮混着。看见王一贴进来，都笑道：“来的好，来的好。王师父，你极会说古记的，说一个与我们小爷听听。”王一贴笑道：“正是呢。哥儿别睡，仔细肚子里面筋作怪。”说着，满屋里人都笑了。宝玉也笑着起身整衣。王一贴喝命徒弟们快泡好酳茶来。茗烟道：“我们爷不吃你的茶，连在这屋里坐着还嫌膏药气息呢。”王一贴笑道：“没当家花花的，膏药从不拿进这屋里来的。知道哥儿今日来，头一两天就拿香熏了又熏的。”宝玉道：“可是呢，天天只听见





The next morning after he had washed and dressed, accompanied by two or three old nurses he went by carriage out of the West Gate to burn incense and offer thanks in Tianqi Temple, where all the preparations for this had been made the previous day. Baoyu, being naturally timid, kept away from the fierce-looking images of gods and demons there. For this magnificent temple had been built in an earlier dynasty but then neglected for so many years that all the clay sculptures there struck him as monstrous and left him aghast.

After hastily burning the sacrificial paper, Baoyu retired to a quiet room to rest. When he had been served a meal, the old nurses, Li Gui and others strolled with him through the temple grounds till he was tired, when they took him back inside for another rest. Not wanting him to go to sleep, the nurses fetched Old Wang, the Taoist priest in charge of the temple, to divert him.

This old Taoist, formerly an itinerant vendor of medicine, had made a considerable profit out of his nostrums; and outside the temple hung a notice to the effect that pills, salves, plasters and powders of every kind were obtainable here. This priest also frequented the Ning and Rong Mansions, where he had come to be known as One-Plaster Wang; for he claimed that his plasters were so efficacious that each could cure all manner of different ailments.

When One-Plaster Wang entered the room, Baoyu was lying drowsily on the *kang* while Li Gui and the others were urging him not to sleep.

At sight of the priest they cried, "You've come just at the right time, father! You're so good at spinning yarns, won't you tell our young master some story?"

One-Plaster Wang laughed.

"Quite right. You mustn't fall asleep after eating the gluten in that vegetarian meal, or it'll play tricks in your belly!"¹

The whole room laughed, Baoyu too, as he got up and straightened his clothes. Then One-Plaster Wang ordered his acolytes to make them some good, strong tea.

Mingyan interposed, "Our master won't drink your tea. Even sitting in this room he's half choked by the smell of your plasters."

"We never keep plasters in here," said the priest with a grin. "A few



你的膏药好，到底治什么病？”王一贴道：“哥儿若问我的膏药，说来话长，其中细理，一言难尽。共药一百二十味，君臣相配，宾客得宜，温凉兼用，贵贱殊方。内则补元气，开胃口，养荣卫，宁神安志，去寒暑，化食化痰；外则和血脉，舒筋络，去死肌，生新肉，去风散毒。其效如神，贴过的便知。”宝玉道：“我不信一张膏药就治这些病。我且问你，倒有一种病可也贴的好么？”王一贴道：“百病千灾，无不效验。若不见效，哥儿只管揪着胡子打我的老脸，拆我的庙何如？只说出病源来。”宝玉笑道：“你猜，若你猜的着，便贴的好了。”王一贴听了，寻思一会，笑道：“这倒难猜，只怕膏药有些不灵了。”宝玉命李贵等：“你们且出去散散。这屋里人多，越发蒸臭了。”李贵等听说，且都出去自便，只留下茗烟。茗烟手内点着一枝梦甜香，宝玉命他坐在身旁，却倚在他身上。王一贴心有所动，便笑嘻嘻走近前来，悄悄的说道：“我可猜着了。想是哥儿大了，如今有了房中事情，要滋补的药，可不是？”话犹未了，茗烟先喝道：“该死，打嘴！”宝玉犹未解，忙问：“他说什么？”茗烟道：





days ago, when I learned that Master Bao would be coming today, I scented this room with incense again and again.”

“I’m always hearing how good your plasters are,” remarked Baoyu. “Just what diseases do they cure?”

“It would take too long to tell you that in full. I use one hundred and twenty different ingredients which complement each other just as do a prince and his ministers, and co-operate with each other just as do a host and his guests. Some of them are heating, some cooling, some costly, some cheap. Inwardly, they fortify the humours, build up the patient’s strength, improve the appetite, increase resistance, tranquillize the nerves, expel cold and heat, and eliminate indigestion and phlegm. Outwardly, they regulate the blood, relax the muscles, remove dead tissues and help new ones to grow, cure chills and act as an antidote to poison. They are marvellously effective, as you’d know, sir, if you’d tried one.”

“I can hardly believe that one plaster cures so many different ailments,” Baoyu answered. “I’d like to know if it’s any good for a malady I have in mind.”

“It cures all diseases,” One-Plaster Wang asserted. “If it does you no good, you can tweak my beard, slap my old face and pull down my temple — how’s that? Just tell me the symptoms of this malady.”

“Have a guess. If you guess right, I’ll believe in your medicine.”

One-Plaster Wang thought for a while.

“This is quite a poser,” he said at last with a smile. “I’m afraid my plaster may not work in this case.”

Then Baoyu told Li Gui and the other servants, “Go out and have a stroll. There are too many people in here, it’s getting stuffy.”

The servants withdrew, leaving only Mingyan in attendance. After he had lighted a stick of Sweet-Dream Incense, Baoyu told him to sit down beside him so that he could lean against him. At this point, One-Plaster Wang had a sudden idea. Smiling all over his face, he drew closer to whisper:

“I’ve guessed it! Now that the young gentleman is growing up, I suppose he wants some drug to increase his virility — right?”

Cutting him short, Mingyan snapped, “Shut up, you idiot!”

“What did he say?” asked Baoyu in bewilderment.



“信他胡说。”唬的王一贴不敢再问，只说：“哥儿明说了罢。”宝玉道：“我问你，可有贴女人的妒病方子没有？”王一贴听说，拍手笑道：“这可罢了。不但说没有方子，就是听也没听说过。”宝玉笑道：“这样还算不得什么。”王一贴又忙道：“这贴妒的膏药倒没经过，倒有一种汤药或者可医，只是慢些儿，不能立竿见影的效验。”宝玉道：“什么汤药，怎么吃法？”王一贴道：“这叫做‘疗妒汤’：用极好的秋梨一个，二钱冰糖，一钱陈皮，水三碗，梨熟为度，每日清早吃这么一个梨，吃来吃去就好了。”宝玉道：“这也不值什么，只怕未必见效。”王一贴道：“一剂不效吃十剂，今日不效明日再吃，今年不效吃到明年。横竖这三味药都是润肺开胃不伤人的，甜丝丝的，又止咳嗽，又好吃。吃过一百岁，人横竖要死去，还妒什么！那时就见效了。”说着，宝玉、茗烟都大笑不止，骂“油嘴的牛头”。王一贴笑道：“不过是闲着解午盹儿罢了，有什么关系。说笑了你们可就值钱。实告诉你们说罢，连膏药也是假的。我有真药，我还吃了作神仙去呢。有真的，跑到这里来混？”正说着，已到吉时，请宝玉出去焚化钱粮散福。功课完毕，方进城回家。





“Never mind. He was talking rot.”

One-Plaster Wang was appalled and dared not ask any more questions.

“Better tell me outright, sir,” he said.

“What I wanted to know was this: have you a prescription to cure a jealous shrew?”

The priest clapped his hands and laughed.

“I give up! Not only have I no such prescription, I’ve never even heard of one either.”

“In that case,” Baoyu teased, “your plaster doesn’t amount to much.”

“Though I’ve no plaster to cure a shrew, there is a potion which might. Only it takes time — it doesn’t work overnight.”

“What potion is that? And how should it be taken?”

“It’s called Cure for Jealousy. Take one top-quality pear, one fifth of an ounce of crystal sugar, one tenth of orange peel and three bowls of water. Boil these till the pear is soft, and let the shrew take one dose first thing each day. Then in due course she’ll be cured.”

“That wouldn’t cost much, but I doubt whether it would work.”

“If one dose doesn’t do the trick, give ten. If she’s not cured today, repeat the treatment tomorrow. If it doesn’t work this year, go on with it next year. At any rate, these ingredients aren’t injurious but good for the lungs and digestion. This sweet potion cures coughs and tastes delicious too. If she takes it for a hundred years she’ll die in any case, and once dead how can she go on being jealous? So in the end it will prove efficacious.”

By now Baoyu and Mingyan were roaring with laughter.

“You oily-mouthed ox!” they cried.

“What does it matter?” chuckled One-Plaster Wang. “I was just whiling away the time to stop you from felling sleepy. It’s worth money, making you laugh. To tell you the truth, even my plasters are bogus. If I had some really good medicine, I’d take it myself so as to become an immortal instead of coming here to fool around.”

By this time it was the hour for the sacrifice, and they asked Baoyu to go out to burn sacrificial paper, pour a libation of wine and distribute alms. The sacrifice ended, he went back to the city.



那时迎春已来家好半日，孙家的婆娘媳妇等人已待过晚饭，打发回家去了。迎春方哭哭啼啼的告诉王夫人这些委屈，说孙绍祖“一味好色，好赌酗酒，家中所有的媳妇、丫头将及淫遍。略劝过两三次，便骂我是‘醋汁子老婆拧出来的’。又说老爷曾收着他五千两银子，不该使了他的。如今他来要了两三次不得，他便指着我的脸说道：‘你别和我充夫人娘子，你老子使了我五千两银子，把你准折卖给我的。好不好，打一顿撵到下房里睡去。当日有你爷爷在时，希图仗我们的富贵，赶着相与的。论理我和你父亲是一辈，如今强压我的头，晚了一辈。又不该作了这门亲，倒没的叫人看着赶势利似的。’”一行说，一行哭的呜呜咽咽，连王夫人并众姊妹无不落泪。王夫人只得用言语解劝说：“已是遇见了这不晓事的人，可怎么样呢。想当日你叔叔也曾劝过大老爷，不叫作这门亲的。大老爷执意不听，一心情愿，到底作不好了。我的儿，这也是你的命。”迎春哭道：“我不信我的命就这么苦！从小儿没了娘，幸而过婶子这边来过了几年清静日子，如今偏又是这么个结果！”王夫人一面解劝，一面问他随意要在那里安歇。迎春道：“乍乍的离了姊妹们，只是眠思梦想。二则还记挂着我的屋子，还得在园子里住得三五天，死了也甘心。不知下次还可能得住不得住了呢！”王夫人忙劝道：“快休乱说。不过年轻的夫妻们，斗牙斗齿，亦是万万人之常事。何必说这丧气话。”仍命人忙忙的收拾紫菱洲的



By now Yingchun had already been home for some time. When the women from the Sun family who had come with her had been entertained to dinner and sent home, Yingchun, shedding tears in Lady Wang's room, described her wretchedness.

"Sun Shaozu cares for nothing but women, gambling and drinking," she sobbed. "He's had affairs with practically all our maids and young servants' wives. When I remonstrated mildly two or three times, he cursed me for being jealous, saying I must have been steeped in vinegar. He also says he put five thousand taels in father's safe-keeping and he shouldn't have spent it. He's come here several times to ask for it back, and when he fails to get it he points at me and scolds, 'Don't put on those laded airs with me! Your old man has spent five thousand taels of mine; so he's *sold* you to me. If you don't behave yourself, I'll beat you up and send you to sleep with the servants. When your grandfather was alive, seeing how rich and influential our family was, he went to great trouble to get connected with us. Actually, I belong to your father's generation. It was a mistake my marrying you because that's made me step down one generation, as if I were the one chasing after power and profit.'"

She wept as she spoke, and Lady Wang and all the girls shed tears too.

Lady Wang said soothingly, "You've already married this oaf, so it can't be helped. Your uncle did advise your father against it, but he wouldn't listen — he'd set his heart on this match. And now it's turned out badly. Well, child, this is fate."

"I can't believe I was fated to suffer like this," sobbed Yingchun. "I lost my mother when I was a child, and was lucky to have a few peaceful years here with you, auntie. But now see what's become of me!"

Lady Wang, trying to console her, asked where she would like to stay.

"Being snatched away so suddenly from my cousins, I dream of them all the time," Yingchun replied. "I long for my old rooms too. If I can spend a few more days in my old quarters in the Garden, then I shall die content. Who knows if I'll ever have such a chance again."

"Don't talk so wildly," interposed Lady Wang. "Little squabbles between young couples are quite common. Why speak in that ill-omened way?"



房屋，命姊妹们陪伴着解释，又吩咐宝玉：“不许在老太太跟前走漏一些风声，倘或老太太知道了这些事，都是你说的。”宝玉唯唯的听命。迎春是夕仍在旧馆安歇。众姊妹、丫鬟等更加亲热异常。一连住了三日，才往邢夫人那边去。先辞过贾母及王夫人，然后与众姊妹分别，更皆悲伤不舍。还是王夫人、薛姨妈等安慰劝释，方止住了过那边去。又在邢夫人处住了两日，就有孙绍祖的人来接去。迎春虽不愿去，无奈惧孙绍祖之恶，只得勉强忍情，作辞去了。邢夫人本不在意，也不问其夫妻和睦，家务烦难，只面情塞责而已。且听下回分解。





She ordered the house at Purple Caltrop Isle to be made ready at once, and told the girls to keep Yingchun company and cheer her up.

To Baoyu she said, "Mind you don't breathe a word about this to the old lady! If she gets to hear of it, I'll hold you to blame."

Baoyu promised to keep quiet.

That evening Yingchun stayed in her old quarters, and her girl cousins and the maids lavished affection on her. After three days, however, she had to go to stay with Lady Xing. First she took her leave of the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang. When it came to saying goodbye to the girls, she was prostrated by grief. It was Lady Wang and Aunt Xue who soothed her and finally persuaded her to stop weeping and go over to the other mansion, where she spent a couple of days with Lady Xing. Then Sun Shaozu sent to fetch her back and, though Yingchun dreaded returning, for fear of her cruel husband she had to hold back her grief and take her leave.

As for Lady Xing, she was so callous that she had not even asked Yingchun how she got on with her husband, or whether her household was difficult to manage, simply entertaining her in the most perfunctory manner.

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





占旺相卯美
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第八十一回

占旺相四美钓游鱼 奉严词两番入家塾

且说迎春归去之后，邢夫人像没有这事。倒是王夫人抚养了一场，却甚实伤感，在房中自己叹息了一回。只见宝玉走来请安，看见王夫人脸上似有泪痕，也不敢坐，只在旁边站着。王夫人叫他坐下，宝玉才捱上炕来，就在王夫人身旁坐了。

王夫人见他呆呆的瞅着，似有欲言不言的光景，便道：“你又为什么这样呆呆的？”宝玉道：“并不为什么。只是昨儿听见二姐姐这种光景，我实在替他受不得。虽不敢告诉老太太，却这两夜只是睡不着。我想咱们这样人家的姑娘，那里受得这样的委屈？况且二姐姐是个最懦弱的人，向来不会和人拌嘴，偏偏儿的遇见这样没人心的东西，竟一点儿不知道女人的苦处！”说着，几乎滴下泪来。王夫人道：“这也是没法儿的事。俗语说的：‘嫁出去的女孩儿，泼出去的水。’叫我能怎么样呢？”宝玉道：“我昨儿夜里倒想了一个主意：咱们索性回明了老太太，把二姐姐接回来，还叫他紫菱洲住着，仍旧我们姐妹弟兄们一块儿吃，一块儿玩，省得受孙家那混账行子的气。等他来接，咱们硬不叫他去。由他接一百回，咱们留一百回。只说是老太太的主意。这个岂不好呢？”

王夫人听了，又好笑，又好恼，说道：“你又发了呆气了！混说的是什么？大凡做了女孩儿，终久是要出门子的。嫁





Chapter 81
**Four Beauties Fish in the Pond
to Try Their Luck**
**Baoyu's Father Orders Him Back
to the Family School**

After Yingchun's departure, Lady Xing behaved just as if nothing had happened. Lady Wang, however, who had brought Yingchun up, was bitterly distressed. She was sighing to herself in her room when Baoyu came in to pay his respects. Noticing the tear-stains on her cheeks he did not venture to take a seat, simply standing on one side till she urged him to mount the *kang* and sit beside her.

His mother saw from the dazed look on his face that he had something on his mind.

"What's worrying you now?" she asked.

"It's nothing really. But after hearing yesterday what poor Yingchun has to put up with, I feel it's truly too much for her to bear! I didn't dare tell grandmother, but it kept me from sleeping all night. How can girls from a family like ours stand such cruel treatment? Yingchun especially, who's always been too timid to answer anyone back. Yet now *she* of all people is up against such an inhuman monster, who has no idea how sensitive a girl is." As he spoke his eyes brimmed with tears.

"There's no help for it," Lady Wang answered. "As the saying goes, 'A married daughter — spilt water.' So what can I do about it?"

"Last night I had an idea. Suppose we talk grandmother into having Cousin Yingchun fetched back? Then she can go on staying in Purple Caltrop Isle, eating and playing with us just like in the old days, instead of being bullied by that scoundrel Sun. When he sends to fetch her back we won't let her go, not even if he sends a hundred times! We'll just tell him this is the old lady's decision. Don't you think that's a good plan?"

Both amused and exasperated, his mother exclaimed, "There you go again — talking nonsense! Sooner or later a girl has to leave home, and once she's married off what can her mother's family do for her? If she



到人家去，娘家那里顾得？也只好看他自己的命运，碰的好就好，碰的不好也就没法儿。你难道没听见人说，‘嫁鸡随鸡，嫁狗随狗’，那里个个都象你大姐姐做娘娘呢？况且你二姐姐是新媳妇，孙姑爷也还是年轻的人，各人有各人的脾气，新来乍到，自然要有些扭拧的。过几年，大家摸着脾气儿，生儿长女以后，那就好了。你断断不许在老太太跟前说起半个字。我知道了，是不依你的。快去干你的去罢，别在这里混说了。”说的宝玉也不敢作声，坐了一回，无精打彩的出来了。拧着一肚子闷气，无处可泄，走到园中，一径往潇湘馆来。刚进了门，便放声大哭起来。

黛玉正在梳洗才毕，见宝玉这个光景，倒吓了一跳，问：“是怎么了，合谁恼了气了？”连问几声。宝玉低着头，伏在桌子上，呜呜咽咽，哭的说不出话来。黛玉便在椅子上怔怔的瞅着他，一会子问道：“到底是别人合你恼了气了，还是我得罪了你呢？”宝玉摇手道：“都不是，都不是！”黛玉道：“那么着，为什么这么伤心起来？”宝玉道：“我只想着，咱们大家越早些死的越好，活着真真没有趣儿！”黛玉听了这话，更觉惊讶，道：“这是什么话？你真正发了疯了不成？”宝玉道：“也并不是我发疯。我告诉你，你也不能不伤心。前儿二姐姐回来的样子和那些话，你也都听见看见了。我想人到了大的时候，为什么要嫁？嫁出去，受人家这般苦楚！还记得咱们初结海棠社的时候，大家吟诗做东道，那时候何等热

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happens to get a good husband, fine; if not, there's no help for it — that's fate. Surely you know the saying, 'Marry a cock and follow the cock; marry a dog and follow the dog'? How can every girl be like your eldest sister, chosen as an Imperial Consort? Besides, Yingchun's newly married; her husband's still young. People's temperaments differ, and just at the start she's bound to feel a bit awkward. A few years from now, when they know each other better and have a child or two, things should work out all right.

"Mind you don't breathe a word about this to the old lady. If I find you have, you'll catch it! Go and see to your own affairs now. Don't stay here talking nonsense."

Baoyu sat there a little longer in subdued silence, then listlessly took his leave. Thoroughly depressed and not knowing how to work off his feelings, he went back to the Garden, straight to Bamboo Lodge. Once inside, he burst out crying.

Daiyu, who had just finished dressing, was most alarmed to see the state he was in.

"What's happened?" she asked. "Who's been annoying you?"

Although she repeated her questions several times, Baoyu just went on sobbing, his head bent over the table, unable to speak. She sat on a chair in bewilderment to watch him.

"Has someone else provoked you? Or have *I* offended you?" she asked presently.

"No, neither!" he blurted out with a sweep of one hand.

"Well, what's upset you then?"

"I can't help thinking that the sooner we all die the better! Life is really so meaningless."

"What are you talking about?" she asked, more puzzled than ever.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"No, I haven't. If I tell you, it will upset you too. You saw how wretched Yingchun looked yesterday, and heard all that she said. Why must a girl get married when she grows up? That's what I'd like to know. Why put up with such bad treatment from her husband? I still remember what fun we had when we started our Begonia Club, making up poems and acting as host in turn. Now Cousin Baochai has gone home, even Xiangling



闹!如今宝姐姐家去了,连香菱也不能过来,二姐姐又出了门子了,几个知心知意的人,都不在一处,弄得这样光景!我原打算去告诉老太太,接二姐姐回来,谁知太太不依,倒说我呆、混说。我又不敢言语。这不多几时,你瞧瞧,园中光景,已经大变了;若再过几年,又不知怎么样了?故此,越想不由的人心里难受起来。”黛玉听了这番言语,把头渐渐的低了下去,身子渐渐的退至炕上,一言不发,叹了口气,便向里躺下去了。

紫鹃刚拿进茶来,见他两个这样,正在纳闷,只见袭人来了,进来看见宝玉,便道:“二爷在这里呢么?老太太那里叫呢。我估量着二爷就是在这里。”

黛玉听见是袭人,便欠身起来让坐。黛玉的两个眼圈儿已经哭的通红了。宝玉看见,道:“妹妹,我刚才说的,不过是些呆话,你也不用伤心了。要想我的话时,身子更要保重才好。你歇歇儿罢。老太太那边叫我,我看看去就来。”说着,往外走了。袭人悄问黛玉道:“你两个人又为什么?”黛玉道:“他为他二姐姐伤心;我是刚才眼睛发痒,揉的,并不为什么。”袭人也不言语,忙跟了宝玉出来,各自散了。宝玉来到贾母那边,贾母却已经歇晌,只得回到怡红院。

到了午后,宝玉睡了中觉起来,甚觉无聊,随手拿了一本书看。袭人见他看书,忙去沏茶伺候。谁知宝玉拿的那本书却是古乐府,随手翻来,正看见曹孟德“对酒当歌,人生几何”一首,不觉刺心。因放下这一本,又拿一本看时,却是晋文,翻了几页,忽然把书掩上,托着腮,只管痴痴的坐



can't come here any more; and on top of that, Yingchun has left us to get married. With these congenial spirits gone, what's to become of us? I wanted to ask grandmother to have Yingchun fetched back, but mother won't hear of it. She called me silly, said I was talking nonsense, and I dared not argue with her. Such a short time, and just see how the Garden has changed! If this goes on a few years more, goodness knows what it will be like. The more I think about it, the sadder I feel."

Daiyu, while he was speaking, had gradually lowered her head and withdrawn to the *kang*. Now, without saying a word, she heaved a sigh and lay down with her face to the wall.

Zijuan, who had just brought in tea, was puzzled to find the two of them like this. And now Xiren arrived.

"So here you are, Second Master," she said to Baoyu. "The old lady's been asking for you, and I guessed you'd be here."

Daiyu rose at this to offer Xiren a seat. Baoyu noticed that her eyes were red from weeping.

"Cousin, I was only talking nonsense just now. Don't let it upset you," he pleaded. "Take my advice and look after your health. Have a rest now. I'll be back when I've seen what the old lady wants me for."

After he had gone, Xiren asked what had happened.

"He was upset on account of Cousin Yingchun," Daiyu answered. "I was rubbing my eyes because they itched — that's all."

Xiren made no comment but hurried out after Baoyu, then went on her own way while he proceeded to his grandmother's quarters. As she was already having her siesta, he returned to Happy Red Court.

That afternoon when Baoyu got up from his nap, feeling thoroughly bored he picked up a book at random. Xiren seeing this went out to brew him some tea. The book he had happened to take was an anthology of ancient songs, and leafing through it he came upon Cao Cao's verse:

Facing the wine let us sing,
For life is short.

In dismay, he put it down and picked up a collection of Jin Dynasty prose. After turning a few pages only, however, he closed the book abruptly and rested his chin on his hands, lost in thought. This was how Xiren discov-



着。袭人倒了茶来，见他这般光景，便道：“你为什么又不看了？”宝玉也不答言，接过茶来，喝了一口，便放下了。袭人一时摸不着头脑，也只管站在旁边，呆呆的看着他。忽见宝玉站起来，嘴里咕咕哝哝的说道：“好一个‘放浪形骸之外’！”袭人听了，又好笑，又不敢问他，只得劝道：“你若不爱看这些书，不如还到园里逛逛，也省得闷出毛病来。”

那宝玉一面口中答应，只管出着神，往外走了。一时，走到沁芳亭，但见萧疏景象，人去房空。又来至蘅芜院，更是香草依然，门窗掩闭。转过藕香榭来，远远的只见几个人，在蓼溆一带栏干上靠着，有几个小丫头蹲在地下找东西。宝玉轻轻的走在假山背后听着。只听一个说道：“看他涨上来不涨上来。”好似李纹的语音。一个笑道：“好！下去了。我知道他不上来的。”这个却是探春的声音。一个又道：“是了。姐姐，你别动，只管等着，他横竖上来。”一个又说：“上来了。”这两个是李绮邢岫烟的声儿。

宝玉忍不住，拾了一块小砖头儿，往那水里一撂，“咕咚”一声，四个人都吓了一跳，惊讶道：“这是谁这么促狭？唬了我们一跳！”宝玉笑着从山子后直跳出来，笑道：“你们好乐啊！怎么不叫我一声儿？”探春道：“我就知道再不是别人，必是二哥哥这么淘气。没什么说的，你好好儿的赔我们的鱼罢！刚才一个鱼上来，刚刚儿的要钓着，叫你唬跑了。”宝玉笑道：“你们在这里玩，竟不找我，我还要罚你们

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ered him when she brought in the tea.

“Why have you stopped reading?” she asked.

Instead of answering, he merely took the bowl from her, putting it down again after one sip. Xiren stood beside him watching in mystification till he suddenly stood up.

“‘Transported beyond the earthly form’ — fine!” he muttered.

Xiren was amused but afraid to ask what he meant.

“If you don’t enjoy reading these books, why not take a stroll in the Garden?” she suggested. “Don’t make yourself unwell by moping.”

Baoyu agreed to this and walked out, still deep in thought. Soon he reached Seeping Fragrance Pavilion, but found it looking desolate and deserted. Going on to Alpinia Court, he was even more dismayed to see its plants as luxuriant as before but the doors and windows closed. Turning past Scented Lotus Pavilion, he saw a few girls in the distance who were leaning over the railings at Smartweed Bank. On the ground beside them several young maids were squatting down as if to search for something. He tiptoed behind a rockery to hear what they were saying.

“Let’s see whether it rises to the bait,” said one girl — it sounded like Li Wen.

“Good, it’s gone!” laughed Tanchun. “I knew it wouldn’t rise.”

“That’s right, cousin. Don’t move, just wait, and it’s bound to surface.”

“Here it comes!”

The last two speakers were Li Qi and Xing Xiuyan.

Baoyu could not resist picking up a stone and tossing it into the pool. The splash it made startled the four girls.

“Who’s this practical joker?” they cried. “Giving us such a fright!”

He bounded out laughingly then from behind the rockery.

“You’re having such a good time — why didn’t you let me know?”

“I knew it couldn’t be anyone else,” said Tanchun. “Only Second Brother would play such a trick. All right, to make up for that you must catch us some fish. One was rising to the bait just now, but before we could hook it you frightened it away.”

“You enjoy yourselves here, leaving me out,” he chuckled. “By rights I should penalize *you*!”



呢。”大家笑了一回。宝玉道：“咱们大家今儿钓鱼，占占谁的运气好。看谁钓得着，就是他今年的运气好；钓不着，就是他今年运气不好。咱们谁先钓？”探春便让李纹，李纹不肯。探春笑道：“这样就是我先钓。”回头向宝玉说道：“二哥哥，你再赶走了我的鱼，我可不依了。”宝玉道：“头里原是我耍你们玩，这会子你只管钓罢。”

探春把丝绳抛下，没十来句话的工夫，就有一个杨叶窠儿，吞着钩子，把漂儿坠下去。探春把竿一挑，往地下一撩，却是活进的。待书在满地上乱抓，两手捧着搁在小磁坛内，清水养着。探春把钓竿递与李纹。李纹也把钓竿垂下，但觉丝儿一动，忙挑起来，却是个空钩子。又垂下去半晌，钩丝一动，又挑起来，还是空钩子。李纹把那钩子拿上来一瞧，原来往里钩了。李纹笑道：“怪不得钓不着！”忙叫素云把钩子敲好了，换上新虫子，上边贴好了苇片儿。垂下去一会儿，见苇片直沉下去，急忙提起来，倒是一个二寸长的鲫鱼儿。李纹笑着道：“宝哥哥钓罢。”宝玉道：“索性三妹妹合邢妹妹钓了我再钓。”岫烟却不答言。只见李绮道：“宝哥哥先钓罢。”说着，水面上起了一个泡儿。探春道：“不必尽着让了。你看那鱼都在三妹妹那边呢，还是三妹妹快着钓罢。”李绮笑着接了钓竿儿，果然沉下去就钓了一个。然后岫烟来钓着了一个，随将竿子仍旧递给探春，探春才递与宝玉。

宝玉道：“我是要做姜太公的。”便走下石矶，坐在池边钓起来。岂知那水里的鱼，看见人影儿，都躲到别处去了。宝玉抡着钓竿，等了半天，那钓丝儿动也不动。刚有一个鱼



They all laughed at that.

“Let’s all fish to try our luck,” proposed Baoyu. “Whoever catches a fish will have good luck this year. Whoever doesn’t will have bad luck. Who’ll start?”

Tanchun urged Li Wen to take the lead, but she declined.

“In that case I’ll start off.” Tanchun turned to Baoyu. “If you drive away my fish again, Second Brother, I shan’t let you off!”

“I was trying to scare you for fun just then. But you can go ahead now,” he assured her.

Tanchun cast the line and, in less time than it takes to say ten sentences, a minnow swallowed the bait and the float bobbed down. With a swing of the rod she landed the little fish alive and thrashing. Shishu grabbed for it on the ground, then with both hands dropped it into a small porcelain jar filled with clear water.

Tanchun passed the rod to Li Wen, who cast in turn. When the line twitched she raised the rod, but there was nothing on the hook. She cast again, but when presently the line tautened again and she pulled it in she once more drew a blank. She examined the hook then, and found it was bent inwards.

“No wonder I caught nothing,” she said with a smile, then told Suyun to adjust the hook and bait it with another worm on which a reed had been fixed. Not long after she cast, the reed submerged, and she hastily landed a tiny carp two inches long.

“Now it’s your turn, Cousin Baoyu,” she said with a smile.

“Let the other two girls try first,” he urged.

Xiuyan said nothing, but Li Qi demurred. “No, Cousin Bao, you try first.”

“Stop deferring to each other!” cried Tanchun, who had just seen a bubble on the water. “Look, the fish have all gone over to your side. Go on!”

Li Qi took the rod then and very soon made a catch. When Xiuyan had followed suit and returned the rod to Tanchun, she handed it to Baoyu.

“I’m going to fish like Jiang Taigong,”¹ he announced as he walked down the stone steps and sat down by the pool. But his reflection frightened the fish away. Though he waited there a long time holding the rod,



儿在水边吐沫，宝玉把竿子一晃，又唬走了，急的宝玉道：“我最是个性儿急的人，他偏性儿慢，这可怎么样呢？好鱼儿，快来罢！你也成全成全我呢。”说的四人都笑了。一言未了，只见钓丝微微一动。宝玉喜极，满怀用力往上一兜，把钓竿往石上一碰，折作两段，丝也振断了，钩子也不知往那里去了。众人越发笑起来。探春道：“再没见像你这样卤人！”

正说着，只见麝月慌慌张张的跑来说：“二爷，老太太醒了，叫你快去呢。”五个人都唬了一跳。探春便问麝月道：“老太太叫二爷什么事？”麝月道：“我也不知道。就只听见说是什么闹破了，叫宝玉来问；还要叫璉二奶奶一块儿查问呢。”吓得宝玉发了一回呆，说道：“不知又是那个丫头遭了瘟了！”探春道：“不知什么事，二哥哥，你快去。有什么信儿，先叫麝月来告诉我们一声儿。”说着，便同李纹、李绮、岫烟走了。

宝玉走到贾母房中，只见王夫人陪着贾母摸牌。宝玉看见无事，才把心放下了一半。贾母见他进来，便问道：“你前年那一次得病的时候，后来亏了一个疯和尚和个癩道士治好了的。那会子病里，你觉得是怎么样？”宝玉想了一回，道：“我记得得病的时候儿，好好的站着，倒像背地里有人把我拦头一棍，疼的眼睛前头漆黑，看见满屋子里都是些青面獠牙、拿刀举棒的恶鬼。躺在炕上，觉着脑袋上加了几个脑箍似的。以后便疼的任什么不知道了。到好的时候，又记得堂



the line still did not move. And when bubbles rose from one side of the pool, he swung his rod there so fast that the fish made off quickly.

"I'm impatient but they're slow coaches! What shall I do? Good fish, come quick to my rescue!" he exclaimed so frantically that the four girls laughed.

While Baoyu was still talking, the line twitched. In delight, he yanked so hard that the rod knocked against a rock and broke into two. The line snapped as well, so that the hook was lost. A roar of laughter went up.

"I've never seen anyone so clumsy!" teased Tanchun.

Just then Sheyue hurried towards them, in a great fluster.

"The old lady's woken, Master Bao," she cried. "She wants you to go there at once."

This startled all five of them.

"What does she want him for?" Tanchun inquired.

"I don't know," the maid answered. "I heard say some scandal's come to light and she wants to ask Baoyu about it. She's going to question Madam Lian as well."

Baoyu was petrified.

"Which maid is going to catch it this time?" he wondered.

"We've no idea what it's all about," said Tanchun. "You'd better go immediately, Second Brother. If there's any news, send Sheyue to let us know."

Then the four girls went off.

When Baoyu entered the Lady Dowager's room, he was relieved to find her playing cards there with his mother as if nothing were amiss.

At sight of him she said, "The year before last when you fell ill you were cured by a crazy monk and a lame Taoist. When you had that fit, how did you feel?"

Baoyu cast his mind back.

"I remember standing up feeling quite all right before the fit came on. Then it seemed as if someone had clubbed my head from behind, and it hurt so badly that everything went black. Still, I saw green-faced, long-fanged devils all over the place, who were swinging swords and clubs. When I lay down on the *kang*, my head felt as if clamped in a vice. I passed out from the pain. When I came round, I remember seeing a shaft



屋里一片金光，直照到我床上来，那些鬼都跑着躲避，就不见了。我的头也不疼了，心上也就清楚了。”贾母告诉王夫人道：“这个样儿也就差不多了。”

说着凤姐也进来了。见了贾母，又回身见过了王夫人，说道：“老祖宗要问我什么？”贾母道：“你那年中了邪的时候儿，你还记得么？”凤姐儿笑道：“我也不很记得了。但觉自己身子不由自主，倒像有什么人，拉拉扯扯，要我杀人才好。有什么拿什么，见什么杀什么，自己原觉很乏，只是不能住手。”贾母道：“好的时候儿呢？”凤姐道：“好的时候好像空中有人说了几句话似的，却不记得说什么来着。”贾母道：“这么看起来，竟是他了。他姐儿两个病中的光景合才说的一样。这老东西竟这样坏心！宝玉枉认了他做干妈！倒是这个和尚道人——阿弥陀佛！才是救宝玉性命的。只是没有报答他。”凤姐道：“怎么老太太想起我们的病来呢？”贾母道：“你问你太太去，我懒怠说。”

王夫人道：“才刚老爷进来，说起宝玉的干妈，竟是个混账东西，邪魔外道的。如今闹破了，被锦衣府拿住送入刑部监，要问死罪的了。前几天被人告发的。那个人叫做什么潘三保，有一所房子，卖给斜对过当铺里。这房子加了几倍价钱，潘三保还要加，当铺里那里还肯？潘三保便买嘱了这老东西，——因他常到当铺里去，那当铺里人的内眷都和他好的，——他就使了个法儿，叫人家的内人便得了邪病，家翻



of golden light in the hall which shone on to my bed. All the devils ran away from it and vanished. My head stopped aching too and my mind cleared.”

“That sounds like it,” observed the old lady to Lady Wang.

At this point Xifeng came in and paid her respects to both her seniors in turn.

“What did you want to know, Old Ancestress?” she asked.

“Do you still remember what it was like when you were seized by that fit of madness that year?”

“I can’t remember too clearly,” was Xifeng’s answer, “But I felt I couldn’t control myself, as if someone was pushing and tugging me to kill people. I tried to seize every weapon I could lay hands on and kill everyone I saw. Even when I was exhausted, I couldn’t stop.”

“And when you got better?” prompted the old lady.

“I thought I heard a voice in the air — just what it said I can’t remember.”

“Judging by this, it was her all right,” said the Lady Dowager. “The way they felt during their fits coincides with what we’ve just heard. How could that old witch be so vicious! And to think that we chose her to be Baoyu’s godmother! It was that monk and priest — Buddha be praised! — who saved his life, yet we never thanked them for it.”

“Why are you interested in our illnesses, madam?” Xifeng wanted to know.

“Ask your aunt. I’m too tired to tell you.”

Then Lady Wang explained, “Just now the master was here. He told us that Baoyu’s godmother was actually a witch who practised black magic. Now that her secret’s out, she’s been arrested by the police and taken to prison to be put to death.

“A few days ago some fellow — Pan Sanbao I think his name was — brought evidence against her. He sold a house to the pawnshop across the street for several times what it was worth, but still wanted more. The pawnbroker naturally refused this demand. Then Pan bribed that old witch, as she was for ever calling in at the pawnshop and knew everybody there to cast a spell so that all their women fell ill and their homes were topsy-turvy. Thereupon she went there claiming that she could cure them, and



宅乱起来。他又去说，这个病他能治，就用些神马纸钱烧献了，果然见效。他又向人家内眷们要了十几两银子。岂知老佛爷有眼，应该败露了。这一天急要回去，掉了一个绢包儿，当铺里人捡起来一看，里头有许多纸人，还见四丸子很香的香。正诧异着呢，那老东西倒回来找这绢包儿。这里的人就把他拿住。身边一搜，搜出一个匣子，里面有象牙刻的一男一女，不穿衣裳，光着身子的两个魔王，还有七根朱红绣花针。立时送到锦衣府去，问出许多官员家大户太太姑娘们的隐情事来，所以知会了营里，把他家中一抄，抄出好些泥塑的煞神，几匣子闷香。炕背后空屋子里挂着一盏七星灯，灯下有几个草人，有头上戴着脑箍的，有胸前穿着钉子的，有项上拴着锁子的。柜子里无数纸人儿。底下几篇小账，上面记着某家验过，应找银若干。得人家油钱香分也不计其数。”

凤姐道：“咱们的病一准是他。我记得咱们病后，那老妖精向赵姨娘那里来过几次，和赵姨娘讨银子，见了我，就脸上变貌变色，两眼鹜鸡似的。我当初还猜了几遍，总不知什么原故。如今说起来，却原来都是有因的。但只我在这里当家，自然惹人恨怨，怪不得别人治我。宝玉可合人有什么仇呢？忍得下这么毒手！”贾母道：“焉知不因我疼宝玉，不疼环儿，竟给你们种了毒了呢。”王夫人道：“这老货已经问了罪，决不好叫他来对证。没有对证，赵姨娘那里肯认账？事情又大，闹出来，外面也不雅。等他自作自受，少不得要自



burnt paper offerings which proved efficacious. She got several dozen taels from them as well.

“But all-seeing Buddha meted out retribution. She left in such a hurry that day that she let fall a silk bundle, which the shop assistants picked up. On opening it, they found inside a whole lot of paper figures as well as four pills with a pungent smell. They were wondering what these could be when the old witch went back for them, and they caught and searched her. They found on her a box with two carved ivory naked devils inside, one male and one female, besides seven red embroidery needles. At once she was haled to the police court, where she disclosed many secret affairs of ladies in big official families. This being reported to the garrison, a search was made of her house and a whole lot of clay devils were brought to light together with some boxes of knockout scent. In addition, in an unoccupied room behind her *kang* hung a seven-star lamp, and under it were straw effigies — some with iron bands round their heads, some with nails stuck in their chests, some fastened with locks. In the cupboard was a great stack of paper figures. And below were account books listing the families which had employed her and the amounts of silver due to her. She had also collected a good deal of money as donations for oil and incense.”

“Yes, she must have been our jinx!” Xifeng exclaimed. “After we got well, I remember, that old witch called several times to ask Concubine Zhao for money. When she saw me, she changed colour and her eyes blazed. I couldn’t guess the reason at the time. Now it’s clear what they were up to! In my case, of course, running the household I’m bound to get myself hated by certain people, and it’s not to be wondered at if they try to kill me. But what reason has anyone to hate Baoyu? How could they be so vicious?”

“I suppose it’s because I prefer Baoyu to Huan,” said the old lady. “That sowed the seeds of hatred.”

“The old creature’s already been sentenced,” observed Lady Wang, “so we can hardly bring her here as a witness. But without her evidence, how are we to get Concubine Zhao to confess? And if such a scandal got out, our reputation would suffer. We’d better give her rope to hang herself — she’s bound to give herself away one of these days.”



已败露的。”贾母道：“你这话说的也是。这样事，没有对证，也难作准。只是佛爷菩萨看的真，他们姐儿两个，如今又比谁不济了呢？罢了，过去的事，凤哥儿也不必提了。今日你合你太太都在我这边吃了晚饭再过去罢。”遂叫鸳鸯琥珀等传饭。

凤姐赶忙笑道：“怎么老祖宗倒操起心来？”王夫人也笑了。只见外头几个媳妇伺候。凤姐连忙告诉小丫头子传饭：“我合太太都跟着老太太吃。”正说着，只见玉钏儿走来对王夫人道：“老爷要找一件什么东西，请太太伺候了老太太的饭完了，自己去找一找呢。”贾母道：“你去罢，保不住你老爷有要紧的事。”

王夫人答应着，便留下凤姐儿伺候，自己退了出来，回至房中，合贾政说了些闲话，把东西找出来了。贾政便问道：“迎儿已经回去了？他在孙家怎么样？”王夫人道：“迎丫头一肚子眼泪，说孙姑爷凶横的了不得。”因把迎春的话述了一遍。贾政叹道：“我原知不是对头。无奈大老爷已说定了，叫我也没法。不过迎丫头受些委屈罢了。”王夫人道：“这还是新媳妇，只指望他以后好了好。”说着，“嗤”的一笑。贾政道：“笑什么？”王夫人道：“我笑宝玉儿早起，特特的到这屋里来，说的都是些小孩子话。”贾政道：“他说什么？”王夫人把宝玉的言语笑述了一遍。





“You’re right,” agreed the Lady Dowager. “A case of this kind can’t be proved without a witness. But Lord Buddha is all-seeing! Haven’t Xifeng and Baoyu recovered? Never mind, Xifeng, let’s forget about the past. You and your aunt must have dinner here before you go.” She told Yuanyang and Hupo to serve the meal.

“Why trouble to order the meal yourself, Old Ancestress?” asked Xifeng with a twinkle.

Lady Wang also smiled. And as some serving-women were waiting outside for instructions, Xifeng told a young maid to order dinner, informing her that they would both be dining there.

At this moment, however, Yuchuan arrived with a message for Lady Wang:

“The master wants you to find something for him, madam, after the old lady’s meal.”

“You’d better go now,” urged the Lady Dowager. “It may be important.”

Lady Wang assented. Leaving Xifeng there, she went back to her room to chat with Jia Zheng and find him the things he wanted.

“Has Yingchun gone back?” he asked. “How’s she making out with the Sun family?”

“The poor child kept shedding tears and saying her husband’s a tyrant.” She repeated what Yingchun had told her.

Jia Zheng sighed.

“I knew it wasn’t a good match,” he recalled, “but what could I do once my brother had settled on it? The pity is, Yingchun’s the one to suffer.”

“She’s newly married. We can only hope that later they’ll get on better.” This said, his wife suddenly tittered.

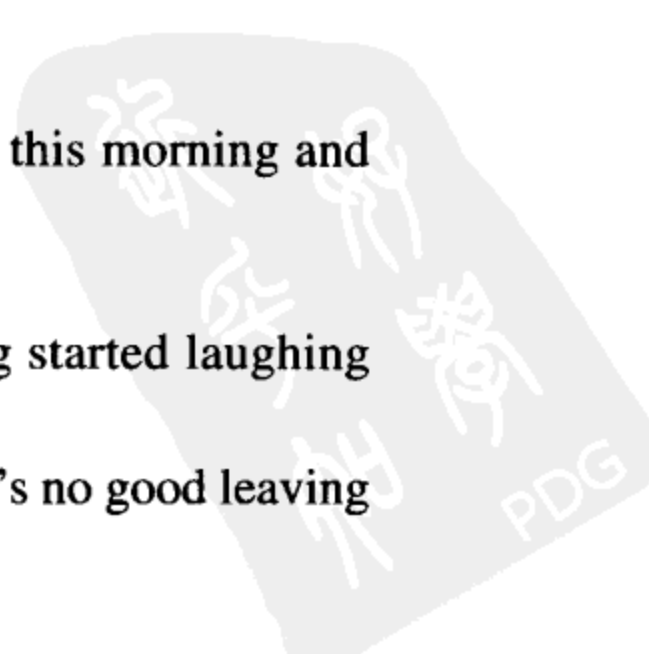
“What’s there to laugh at?”

“It’s Baoyu — he came here specially first thing this morning and talked like a silly boy.”

“What did he say?”

When she repeated their son’s remarks Jia Zheng started laughing too.

“Speaking of Baoyu, this reminds me,” he said. “It’s no good leaving





贾政也忍不住的笑，因又说道：“你提宝玉，我正想起一件事来了。这孩子天天放在园里，也不是事。生女儿不得济，还是别人家的人；生儿若不济事，关系非浅。前日倒有人和我提起一位先生来，学问人品都是极好的，也是南边人。但我想南边先生，性情最是和平。咱们城里的孩子，个个踢天弄井，鬼聪明倒是有的，可以搪塞就搪塞过去了；胆子又大，先生再要不肯给没脸，一日哄哥儿似的，没的白耽误了。所以老辈子不肯请外头的先生，只在本家择出有年纪再有点学问的请来掌家塾。如今儒大太爷虽学问也只中平，但还弹压的住这些小孩子们，不至以颠预了事。我想宝玉闲着总不好，不如仍旧叫他家塾中读书去罢了。”王夫人道：“老爷说的很是。自从老爷外任去了，他又常病，竟耽搁了好几年。如今且在家学里温习温习，也是好的。”贾政点头，又说些闲话，不提。

且说宝玉次日起来，梳洗已毕，早有小厮们传进话来，说：“老爷叫二爷说话。”宝玉忙整理了衣裳，来至贾政书房中，请了安，站着。贾政道：“你近来作些什么功课？虽有几篇字，也算不得什么。我看你近来的光景，越发比头几年散荡了；况且每每听见你推病，不肯念书。如今可大好了？我还听见你天天在园子里和姐妹们玩玩笑笑，甚至和那些丫头们混闹，把自己的正经事，总丢在脑袋后头。就是做得几句诗词，也并不怎么样，有什么稀罕处？比如应试选举，到底以文章为主。你这上头倒没有一点儿工夫。我可嘱咐你：自今日起，再不许做诗做对的了，单要习学八股文章。限你一



that boy all the time in the Garden. If a daughter turns out badly, she'll go to another family anyway; but having a bad son is serious. The other day someone recommended a tutor to me. His scholarship and moral character are excellent, and he's a southerner too. But I feel that teachers from the south are too lenient. Our young rascals here all have enough low cunning to get away with slacking. Besides, they're so unruly that a teacher who isn't strong on discipline and just humours them may let them waste their time. That's why the last generations never engaged a teacher from outside but just picked some elderly, fairly scholarly kinsman to run the family school. Uncle Dairu now, though he's no great shakes as a scholar, knows how to keep these boys under control and isn't soft with them. I don't think we should let Baoyu go on idling. We'd better send him back to the family school."

"I quite agree," approved his wife. "While you were away at your post he often fell ill, so he hasn't studied properly these last few years. It will be good for him to go over his lessons again in the family school."

Jia Zheng nodded. The rest of their talk can be passed over.

The next morning when Baoyu had finished his toilet, his pages announced that the master wanted him. He hastily straightened his clothes and went over to Jia Zheng's study. Having paid his respects he stood waiting for instructions.

"What have you been studying recently?" asked his father. "Though you've done some calligraphy, that doesn't amount to much. In these last few years, I can see, you've grown wilder than ever; and I've often heard that you refused to study on the pretext of poor health. But aren't you in good health now? I've also heard that you spend all your time in the Garden playing about with your girl cousins and even fooling about with the maids, forgetting your studies completely. You may write a few lines of poetry but it's not up to much, nothing to boast about. After all, when you come to take the examinations, it's essay-writing that counts; but you've neglected that. Here's what you're to do from now on. Stop versifying and writing couplets, and concentrate on studying eight-section essays. I give you one year. If you've made no progress by the end of that time you can stop studying, and I shall disown you!"



年，若毫无长进，你也不用念书了，我也不愿有你这样的儿子了。”遂叫李贵来，说：“明儿一早，传焙茗跟了宝玉去收拾应念的书籍，一齐拿过来我看看。亲自送他到家学里去。”喝命宝玉：“去罢！明日起早来见我。”

宝玉听了，半日竟无一言可答，因回到怡红院来。袭人正在着急听信，见说取书，倒也喜欢。独是宝玉要人即刻送信给贾母，欲叫拦阻。贾母得信，便命人叫过宝玉来，告诉他说：“只管放心先去，别叫你老子生气。有什么难为你，有我呢。”宝玉没法，只得回来，嘱咐了丫头们：“明日早早叫我，老爷要等着送我到家学里去呢。”袭人等答应了，同麝月两个倒替着醒了一夜。

次日一早，袭人便叫醒宝玉，梳洗了，换了衣裳，打发小丫头子传了焙茗在二门上伺候，拿着书籍等物。袭人又催了两遍，宝玉只得出来，过贾政书房中来，先打听老爷过来了没有。书房中小厮答应：“方才一位清客相公请老爷回话，里边说：‘梳洗呢。’命清客相公出去候着去了。”

宝玉听了，心里稍稍安顿，连忙到贾政这边来。恰好贾政着人来叫，宝玉便跟着进去。贾政不免又吩咐几句话，带了宝玉，上了车，焙茗拿着书籍，一直到家塾中来。早有人先抢一步，回代儒说：“老爷来了。”代儒站起身来，贾政早已走入，向代儒请了安。代儒拉着手问了好，又问：“老太太近日安么？”宝玉过来也请了安。贾政站着，请代儒坐了，



He called for Li Gui then and told him, "Tomorrow morning Beiming is to accompany Baoyu to the family school, after first getting ready the books he needs and bringing them to show me."

To Baoyu he said sternly, "You may go now. Come back here tomorrow morning."

Baoyu had nothing to say to this and went back to Happy Red Court, where Xiren was anxiously waiting. She was pleased by the news that he was to go back to school. He, however, sent word at once to his grandmother in the hope that she would put a stop to this scheme; and on receiving his message she sent for him.

"Don't worry," she told him. "Go to school, or your father will be angry. Anyone who makes it difficult for you will have me to reckon with."

As there was no more Baoyu could do, he went back.

"Call me early tomorrow morning," he ordered his maids. "The master's taking me to the family school."

Xiren and the others assented, and she and Sheyue took turns keeping watch that night.

Xiren woke Baoyu early the next day and, having helped him dress, sent a young maid to tell Beiming to be ready waiting by the inner gate with his books and other school things. But she had to urge Baoyu twice before he would leave. On reaching Jia Zheng's study, he asked whether his father had arrived or not.

The page on duty told him, "Just now one of his secretaries came to see him, but they said the master was still getting dressed and asked him to wait outside."

Feeling slightly relieved Baoyu hurried to Jia Zheng's apartment, arriving just as his father was sending for him. Baoyu went in and listened to his instructions, after which they mounted the carriage and, with Beiming carrying the books, drove to the family school. A servant had gone on ahead to announce their arrival.

Dairu stood up as Jia Zheng entered the classroom and greeted him. Taking him by the hand, the teacher asked after his health and that of the old lady. Then Baoyu went over to pay his respects, while his father waited for Dairu to take a seat before sitting down himself.



然后坐下。贾政道：“我今日自己送他来，因要求托一番。这孩子年纪也不小了，到底要学个成人的举业，才是终身立身成名之事。如今他在家中，只是和些孩子们混闹。虽懂得几句诗词，也是胡诌乱道的；就是好了，也不过是风云月露，与一生的正事，毫无关涉。”代儒道：“我看他相貌也还体面，灵性也还去得，为什么不念书，只是心野贪玩？诗词一道，不是学不得的，只要发达了以后，再学还不迟呢。”贾政道：“原是如此。目今只求叫他读书、讲书、作文章。倘或不听教训，还求太爷认真的管教管教他，才不至有名无实的，白耽误了他的一世。”说毕，站起来，又作了一个揖，然后说了些闲话，才辞了出去。代儒送至门首，说：“老太太前替我问好请安罢。”贾政答应着，自己上车去了。

代儒回身进来，看见宝玉在西南角靠窗户摆着一张花梨小桌，右边堆下两套旧书，薄薄儿的一篇文章，叫焙茗将纸墨笔砚都搁在抽屉里藏着。代儒道：“宝玉，我听见说你前儿有病，如今可大好了？”宝玉站起来道：“大好了。”代儒道：“如今论起来，你可也该用功了。你父亲望你成人，恳切的很。你且把从前念过的书，打头儿理一遍。每日早起理书，饭后写字，晌午讲书，念几遍文章就是了。”

宝玉答应了个“是”，回身坐下时，不免四面一看。见昔时金荣辈不见了几个，又添了几个小学生，都是些粗俗异



“I have brought my son here myself today because I have a request to make,” said Jia Zheng. “He’s no longer a child and it’s time for him to study for his career, so as to establish himself and win a name in future. At home nowadays he just fools around with the children. He may have a smattering of poetry, but the verses he writes are nonsensical; and even if they were good, those effusions about the wind and rain, moonlight and dew have no bearing on his life-work.”

“He looks a handsome, intelligent lad,” Dairu answered. “Why should he just play about instead of studying? Poetry is all very well, but he’ll have plenty of time to take that up after passing the official examinations.”

“Quite so,” agreed Jia Zheng. “All we want him to study now is the classics. He must learn how to expound them and how to write essays. If he is disobedient, I hope you will discipline him thoroughly, so that his life won’t be wasted for lack of solid learning.”

He stood up then, made a bow, and after a few more civilities took his leave. Dairu saw him to the gate and asked him to convey his respects to the Lady Dowager. Then Jia Zheng, assenting, mounted his carriage and left.

Re-entering the classroom, Dairu saw that Baoyu had a small hard-wood desk in a corner by the southwest window. On the right side of the desk he had piled two sets of old books and one slim volume of essays. Beiming, on his instructions, was arranging his writing materials in the drawers.

The teacher said, “Baoyu, I heard you were unwell some time ago. Have you recovered completely?”

Baoyu stood up to answer, “Yes, sir.”

“Well, the time has come now for you to study hard. Your father is very anxious that you should turn out well. First revise, right from the beginning, all those books you studied before. Spend every morning on that. After lunch you can practise calligraphy. In the afternoon, you’ll expound texts and read essays.”

Baoyu assented respectfully, then sat down and looked around, perceiving that several old classmates such as Jin Rong were missing, while the few younger boys who had joined since he left appeared a coarse,



常的。忽然想起秦钟来，如今没有一个做得伴、说句知心话儿的，心上凄然不乐；却不敢作声，只是闷着看书。代儒告诉宝玉道：“今日头一天，早些放你家去罢。明日要讲书了。但是你又不是很愚夯的，明日我倒要你先讲一两章书我听，试试你近来的工课何如，我才晓得你到怎么个分儿上头。”说的宝玉心中乱跳。欲知明日讲解何如，且听下回分解。



common lot. Recalling Qin Zhong, it struck him with dismay that he had no friend now with whom to exchange confidences. But not venturing to speak, he moodily started reading.

The teacher told him, "As this is your first day, I'll let you go home early. Tomorrow I want to hear you expound a text. You're by no means stupid. When you've analysed a few passages for me tomorrow, I shall be able to see how much you've read recently and what standard you've reached."

This set Baoyu's heart thumping. To know how he made out, read the following chapter.



第八十二回

老学究讲义警顽心 病潇湘痴魂惊恶梦

话说宝玉下学回来，见了贾母。贾母笑道：“好了！如今野马上了笼头了。去罢，见见你老爷去来，散散儿去罢。”宝玉答应着，去见贾政。贾政道：“这早晚就下了学了么？师父给你定了工课没有？”宝玉道：“定了：早起理书，饭后写字，晌午讲书念文章。”贾政听了，点点头儿，因道：“去罢，还到老太太那边陪着坐坐去。你也该学些人功道理，别一味的贪玩。晚上早些睡，天天上学，早些起来。你听见了？”

宝玉连忙答应几个“是”，退出来，忙忙又去见王夫人，又到贾母那边打了个照面儿，赶着出来，恨不得一走就走到潇湘馆才好。刚进门口，便拍着手笑道：“我依旧回来了。”猛可里倒唬了黛玉一跳。紫鹃打起帘子，宝玉进来坐下。黛玉道：“我恍惚听见你念书去了，这么早就回来了？”宝玉道：“嗳呀！了不得！我今儿不是被老爷叫了念书去了么？心上倒像没有和你们见面的日子了。好容易熬了一天，这会子瞧见你们，竟如死而复生的一样。真真古人说，‘一日三秋’，这话再不错的。”黛玉道：“你上头去过了没有？”宝





Chapter 82

An Old Teacher Expounds the Classics to Warn Against Mischief The Queen of Bamboos Falling Ill Has a Fearful Nightmare

Baoyu, home from school, went to call on his grandmother.

“Good! Now the wild colt’s muzzled,” she said with a smile.

“Report to your father, then go and amuse yourself.”

Baoyu, having assented, presented himself to Jia Zheng.

“Back from school so early?” his father asked. “Did the teacher assign your lessons?”

“Yes, sir. In the morning I’m to revise the Four Books; after lunch, practise writing; in the afternoon, expound texts and read essays.”

Jia Zheng nodded.

“Go and keep your grandmother company for a while. Instead of just fooling around you must learn some manners. Go to bed early, and get up early to go to school every day. Do you hear?”

“Yes, sir. Yes, sir.”

Baoyu, withdrawing, hurried to call on his mother and then to report to his grandmother, very soon leaving her again to rush to Bamboo Lodge. Once inside the gate, he clapped and crowed with laughter.

“Here I am back safe and sound!”

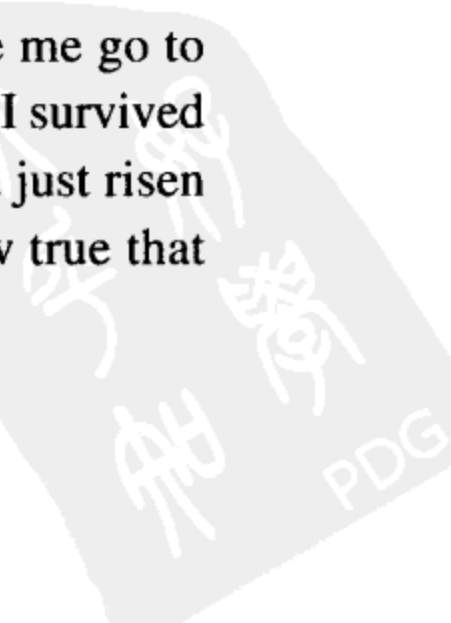
Zijuan raised the portiere and he went in and sat down.

“I thought I heard you’d gone to school,” said Daiyu, startled by his sudden return. “How come you’re back so early?”

“Ah, it’s too bad!” he exclaimed. “When my father made me go to school today, I thought I’d never set eyes on you all again. But I survived it somehow, and now that we’re together again I feel as if I’d just risen from the dead! ‘One day apart seems three autumns’ — how true that old saying is.”

“Have you paid your duty calls?”

“Yes, all of them.”





玉道：“都去过了。”黛玉道：“别处呢？”宝玉道：“没有。”黛玉道：“你也该瞧瞧他们去。”宝玉道：“我这会子懒怠动了，只和妹妹坐着，说一会子话儿罢。老爷还叫早睡早起，只好明儿再瞧他们去了。”黛玉道：“你坐坐儿，可是正该歇歇儿去了。”宝玉道：“我那里是乏？只是闷得慌。这会子咱们坐着，才把闷散了，你又催起我来！”

黛玉微微的一笑，因叫紫鹃：“把我的龙井茶给二爷沏一碗。二爷如今念书了，比不得头里。”紫鹃笑着答应，去拿茶叶，叫小丫头子沏茶。宝玉接着说道：“还提什么念书？我最厌这些道学话。更可笑的，是八股文章，拿他诓功名，混饭吃，也罢了，还要说‘代圣贤立言’！好些的，不过拿些经书凑搭凑搭还罢了；更有一种可笑的，肚子里原没有什么，东拉西扯，弄的牛鬼蛇神，还自以为博奥。这那里是阐发圣贤的道理？目下老爷口口声声叫我学这个，我又不肯违拗，你这会子还提念书呢！”黛玉道：“我们女孩儿家虽然不要这个，但小时跟着你们雨村先生念书，也曾看过。内中也有近情近理的，也有清微淡远的。那时候虽不大懂，也觉得好，不可一概抹倒。况且你要取功名，这个也清贵些。”宝玉听到这里，觉得不甚入耳，因想：“黛玉从来不是这样的人，怎么也这样势欲熏心起来？”又不敢在他跟前驳回，只在鼻子眼里笑了一声。

正说着，忽听外面两个人说话，却是秋纹和紫鹃。只听





“Called anywhere else?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“You should drop in to see your other cousins too.”

“I can’t be bothered right now. I’d rather just sit here and chat with you for a while. ‘Early to bed and early to rise’ — those are my father’s orders; so I’ll have to leave calling on them till tomorrow.”

“After sitting here a bit you must go back to rest.”

“I’m not tired, only dying of boredom. Sitting here with you I don’t feel bored, yet now you’re trying to shoo me away again!”

With a faint smile Daiyu told Zijuan, “Brew a cup of my *Longjing* tea for the Second Master. Now that he’s studying we must treat him with more respect.”

Zijuan laughingly fetched the tea leaves and told one of the younger maids to make tea.

“Don’t mention studying!” Baoyu continued. “I can’t stand such moral talk. And those eight-section essays are still more ridiculous. Using them to wangle a degree and make a living — that’s not so bad; but how can you claim they ‘voice the views of the sages’? The better ones are nothing but a hotch-potch of classical tags, while the most ludicrous ones are written by ignoramuses who drag in this, that and the other to make up a monstrous mishmash, yet boast of their erudition! How can this be called expounding the views of the sages? When father insists on my studying these essays, I can’t oppose him; but here are *you* talking about study too.”

“We girls don’t have to write essays,” Daiyu answered. “Still, when I was young and your kinsman Mr. Jia Yucun was my tutor, I read a few essays too. Some of them showed good sense, some were quite subtle. Though I didn’t altogether understand them, I thought quite highly of them. I don’t see how you can condemn them so sweepingly. Besides, if you want an official career, this is the scholarly way to go about it.”

Baoyu was disgusted by talk of this kind.

“Daiyu never used to be like this,” he reflected. “What’s made her so worldly-wise all of a sudden?” But not wanting to argue with her, he simply snorted.

Just then they heard the voices of Qiuwen and Zijuan outside.



秋纹道：“袭人姐姐叫我老太太那里接去，谁知却在这里！”紫鹃道：“我们这里才沏了茶，索性让他喝了再去。”说着，二人一齐进来。宝玉和秋纹笑道：“我就过去。又劳动你来找。”秋纹未及答言，只见紫鹃道：“你快喝了茶去罢，人家都想了一天了。”秋纹啐道：“呸！好混账丫头！”说的大家都笑了。宝玉起身，才辞了出来。黛玉送到屋门口儿，紫鹃在台阶下站着，宝玉出去，才回房里来。

却说宝玉回到怡红院中，进了屋子，只见袭人从里间迎出来，便问：“回来了么？”秋纹应道：“二爷早来了。在林姑娘那边来着。”宝玉道：“今日有事没有？”袭人道：“事却没有。方才太太叫鸳鸯姐姐来吩咐我们：如今老爷发狠叫你念书，如有丫鬟们再敢和你玩笑，都要照着晴雯司棋的例办。我想伏侍你一场，赚了这些言语，也没什么趣儿！”说着，便伤起心来。宝玉忙道：“好姐姐！你放心。我只好生念书，太太再不说你们了。我今儿晚上还要看书，明日师父叫我讲书呢。我要使唤，横竖有麝月秋纹呢，你歇歇去罢。”袭人道：“你要真肯念书，我们伏侍你也是欢喜的。”

宝玉听了，赶忙的吃了晚饭，就叫点灯，把念过的《四书》翻出来，“只是从何处看起？”翻了一本看去，章章里头，似乎明白；细按起来，却不很明白。看着小注，又看讲





"Sister Xiren said I'd find him in the old lady's place, but instead he's here," said Qiuwen.

"We've just made tea," Zijuan told her. "Wait till he's drunk it before fetching him back."

Then the two of them came in.

"I'll be coming presently," Baoyu promised Qiuwen. "I'm sorry you had the trouble of looking for me."

When Qiuwen made no answer, Zijuan said, "Drink up quickly and go. They've been longing for you all day."

"Shut up, you bitch!" cried Qiuwen.

Amid general laughter he rose to take his leave, and Daiyu saw him to the door while Zijuan waited at the foot of the steps, not reentering the house until he had gone.

Baoyu soon reached Happy Red Court. As he went in, Xiren emerged from the inner room.

"Is he back?" she called out.

"Long ago," Qiuwen answered. "I found the Second Master with Miss Lin."

"Did anything happen today?" Baoyu wanted to know.

"Nothing much," said Xiren. "Only Her Ladyship sent Sister Yuanyang over just now with a message: The master has set his mind on your studying hard, and if any maids dare fool about with you they'll be dealt with in the same way as Qingwen and Siqi. After serving you all this time, I must say I find a warning like that uncalled for!" She was looking most put out.

"Good sister, don't worry," he cried. "I'll have to study hard so that the mistress doesn't scold you again. In fact, I must do some reading this evening, as tomorrow I've got to expound texts to the teacher. If I need anything, Sheyue and Qiuwen can attend to it. You'd better go and rest."

"If you're really going to study hard, we'll be glad to wait on you," was her reply.

Baoyu had a hasty supper, then made them light the lamp so that he could revise the Four Books. But where to start? When he leafed through one volume, the text seemed clear enough; yet when he thought it over carefully, he was not too sure of the meaning. He consulted the notes and



章。闹到起更以后了，自己想道：“我在诗词上觉得很容易，在这个上头竟没头脑！”便坐着呆呆的呆想。袭人道：“歇歇罢。做工夫也不在这一时的。”

宝玉嘴里只管胡乱答应。麝月袭人才伏侍他睡下，两个才也睡了。及至睡醒一觉，听得宝玉炕上还是翻来复去。袭人道：“你还醒着呢么？你倒别混想了，养养神，明儿好念书。”宝玉道：“我也是这样想，只是睡不着，你来给我揭去一层被。”袭人道：“天气不热，别揭罢。”宝玉道：“我心里烦躁的很。”自把被窝褪下来。袭人忙爬起来按住，把手去他头上一摸，觉得微微有些发烧。袭人道：“你别动了，有些发烧了。”宝玉道：“可不是？”袭人道：“这是怎么说呢？”宝玉道：“不怕，是我心烦的原故，你别吵嚷。省得老爷知道了，必说我装病逃学；不然，怎么病的这么巧？明儿好了，原到学里去，就完事了。”

袭人也觉得可怜，说道：“我靠着你睡罢。”便和宝玉捶了一回脊梁，不知不觉，大家都睡着了，直到红日高升，方才起来。宝玉道：“不好了，晚了。”急忙梳洗毕，问了安，就往学里来了。代儒已经变着脸，说：“怪不得你老爷生气，说你没出息。第二天你就懒惰。这是什么时候才来？”宝玉把昨儿发烧的话说了一遍，方过去了，原旧念书。

到了下晚，代儒道：“宝玉，有一章书，你来讲讲。”宝





then the commentaries, until the first watch had sounded.

"I find poetry very easy, but with this I'm getting nowhere," he reflected as he sat there, his mind in a whirl.

"Go to bed now," urged Xiren: "You can't digest all that in just one night."

When Baoyu mumbled agreement she and Sheyue helped him to bed, then turned in themselves. But Xiren, waking later, heard him still tossing about.

"Are you still awake?" she asked. "Stop racking your brains! You must get some rest if you're going to study well tomorrow."

"I know, but I can't sleep. Will you come and take off one of these quilts for me?"

"Better keep it on — it's not hot."

"Well, I feel hectic."

He started kicking off one of his quilts.

Xiren promptly got up to stop him, and laying one hand on his forehead found it a little hot.

"Don't move," She coaxed. "You're rather feverish."

"I know."

"How come?"

"Don't worry. It's because I'm feeling frantic. But don't raise an alarm, or my father's bound to say I'm shamming to get out of going to school — or why else should I fall ill now of all times? I'll be well enough to go back to school tomorrow; then everything will be all right."

Taking pity on him she said, "I'll come and sleep with you."

She massaged his back for a while, then they both dozed off, not waking until the sun was high in the sky.

"Confound it, I've overslept!" exclaimed Baoyu.

He hastily dressed, paid his respects to his elders and hurried to school. Already the teacher was glowering.

"No wonder your father is angry and calls you good-for-nothing — you start slacking on your second day at school! What time is it now?"

Baoyu excused himself by explaining about his feverish night, then settled down again to study.

That afternoon Dairu set him a passage to analyse from the *Analects*,



玉过来一看，却是“后生可畏”章。宝玉心上说：“这还好！幸亏不是《学》《庸》。”问道：“怎么讲呢？”代儒道：“你把节旨句子细细儿讲来。”宝玉把这章先朗朗的念了一遍，说：“这章书是圣人勉励后生，教他及时努力，不要弄到——”说到这里，抬头向代儒一看。代儒觉得了，笑了一笑道：“你只管说，讲书是没有什么避忌的。《礼记》上说：‘临文不讳。’只管说，‘不要弄到’什么？”宝玉道：“不要弄到老大无成。先将‘可畏’二字激发后生的志气，后把‘不足畏’三字警惕后生的将来。”说罢，看着代儒。代儒道：“也还罢了。串讲呢？”宝玉道：“圣人说：人生少时，心思才力，样样聪明能干，实在是可怕的，那里料的定他后来的日子不像我的今日？若是悠悠忽忽，到了四十岁，又到五十岁，既不能够发达，这种人，虽是他后生时像个有用的，到了那个时候，这一辈子就没有人怕他了。”

代儒笑道：“你方才节旨讲的倒清楚，只是句子里有些孩子气。‘无闻’二字，不是不能发达做官的话。‘闻’是实在自己能够明理见道，就不做官也是有闻了；不然，古圣贤有遁世不见知的，岂不是不做官的人？难道也是无闻么？‘不足畏’是使人料得定，方与‘焉知’的‘知’字对针，不是‘怕’的字眼。要从这里看出，方能入细。你懂得不懂得？”宝玉道：“懂得了。”代儒道：“还有一章，你也讲一



beginning with the line "Respect the young." He thanked his lucky stars that it was not from the *Great Learning* or the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

"How am I to analyse it?" he asked.

"Carefully explain the passage and the gloss."

Baoyu read it aloud, then began, "In this passage the sage is encouraging young people, exhorting them to work hard while there is time, so as not...."

He broke off here and glanced up at the teacher, who smiled.

"Just go ahead. In expounding the classics, as the *Book of Ceremony* says, nothing is taboo. Go on, 'So as not...' — what?"

"So as not to grow old without achieving anything. First he says 'respect' to encourage young people, then warns them not to grow into men whom nobody would respect."

He looked up expectantly.

"That's more or less right," said Dairu. "Now paraphrase the whole text."

"The sage said: When people are young, their intelligence and talents all seem quite formidable. Who can be sure that in future they won't equal me today? But if they let things slide until they are forty or fifty and still not known, however promising they may have been when young, by that time nobody will ever fear them."

The teacher smiled.

"When you summarized the meaning just now, it was fairly clear," he said. "But your paraphrase was rather childish. The words 'not known' don't mean failure to attain officialdom. Here 'knowing' refers to understanding the truth, which doesn't depend on becoming an official. Didn't some sages of old turn hermit and remain unknown? They weren't officials, were they? But does that mean they were no good?"

"When he said that such cases were 'not to be feared,' he meant that people knew the limitations of their understanding; so this is in direct contrast to the previous idea — it doesn't imply fearing their power. You should examine such points carefully to grasp their subtlety. Do you understand now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then here's another passage for you to expound."

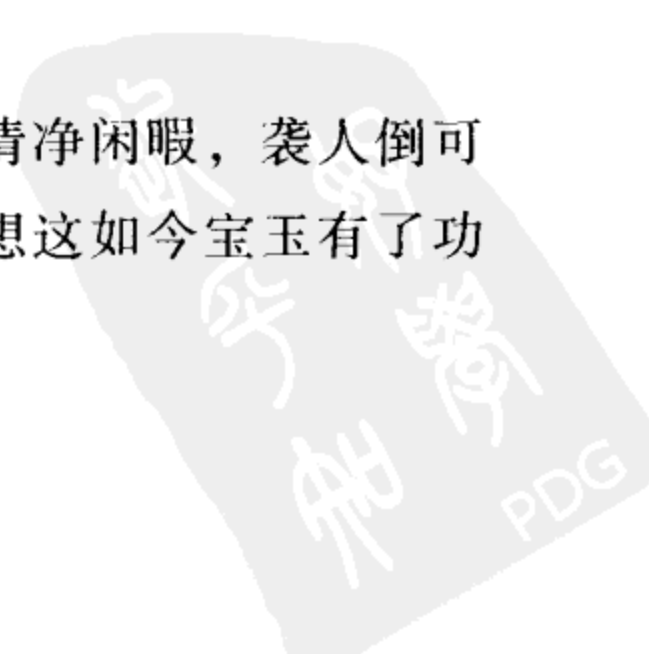


讲。”代儒往前揭了一篇，指给宝玉。宝玉看时，“吾未见好德如好色者也”。

宝玉觉得这一章却有些刺心，便陪笑道：“这句话没有什么讲头。”代儒道：“胡说！譬如场中出了这个题目，也说没有做头么？”宝玉不得已，讲道：“是圣人看见人不肯好德，见了色，便好的了不得，殊不想德是性中本有的东西，人偏都不肯好他。至于那个色呢，虽也是从先天中带来，无人不好的，但是德乃天理，色是人欲，人那里肯把天理好的像人欲似的？孔子虽是叹息的话，又是望人回转来的意思。并且见得人就有好德的，好的终是浮浅，直要像色一样的好起来，那才是真好呢。”

代儒道：“这也讲的罢了。我有句话问你：你既懂得圣人的话，为什么正犯着这两件病？我虽不在家中，你们老爷也不曾告诉我，其实你的毛病，我却尽知的。做一个人，怎么不望长进？你这会儿正是‘后生可畏’的时候。‘有闻’，‘不足畏’，全在你自己做去了。我如今限你一个月，把念过的旧书全要理清。再念一个月文章，以后我要出题目叫你作文章了。如若懈怠，我是断乎不依的。自古道：‘成人不自在，自在不成人。’你好生记着我的话。”宝玉答应了，也只得天天按着功课干去，不提。

且说宝玉上学之后，怡红院中甚觉清净闲暇，袭人倒可做些活计，拿着针线要绣个槟榔包儿。想这如今宝玉有了功





He turned to a page and pointed out for Baoyu the line, "I have never yet seen anyone who loved goodness as much as beauty."

Feeling rather sensitive on this score, Baoyu objected with a smile, "There's nothing worth expounding here."

"Nonsense! If this subject were set in the examinations, would you say it wasn't worth writing about?"

Then Baoyu had to comply.

"The sage noticed that men didn't love goodness but were enraptured with beauty when they saw it. Actually, goodness is something inherent in human nature, yet people don't hanker after it. As for beauty, though it's also born not made, and everybody loves it, it is a human desire whereas goodness is a law of nature. However, people don't love the law of nature as much as human desire. Confucius both deplored this and hoped that men would change their ways. He also noticed that though some men loved goodness, that love didn't go very deep. Only when they came to love goodness as much as beauty could that be considered true love."

"That is more or less correct," commented Dairu. "Now tell me this. If you understand the sage's teachings, why are you having trouble on both scores? Though I don't stay in your family and your father has never spoken to me of this, I am well aware of your shortcomings. Why don't you want to make progress? You're young now, just at the 'formidable' age. Whether you turn out well or not is entirely up to you. I'm going to give you a month to revise all the classics you studied before, then another month to read essays. After that I'll set you subjects to write about. And I shan't tolerate any slacking! As the proverb says, 'Men must choose between progress and comfort. Keep what I've told you in mind!'"

Baoyu promised to do so, and from that day on he had to apply himself harder to his studies.

After Baoyu went back to school, Happy Red Court was so quiet that Xiren had more time for embroidery. As she stitched a pouch for betelnuts one day, she reflected that his return to school had made life less complicated for his maids; indeed, had he gone back earlier, Qingwen



课，丫头们可也没有饥荒了，早要如此，晴雯何至弄到没有结果？兔死狐悲，不觉叹起气来。忽又想到自己终身，本不是宝玉的正配，原是偏房。宝玉的为人，却还拿得住；只怕娶了一个利害的，自己便是尤二姐香菱的后身。素来看贾母王夫人光景，及凤姐儿往往露出话来，自然是黛玉无疑了。那黛玉就是个多心人。——想到此际，脸红心热，拿着针不知戳到那里去了。便把活计放下，走到黛玉处去探探他的口气。

黛玉正在那里看书，见是袭人，欠身让坐。袭人也连忙迎上来问：“姑娘这几天身子可大好了？”黛玉道：“那里能够？不过略硬朗些。你在家里做什么呢？”袭人道：“如今宝二爷上了学，屋里一点事儿没有，因此来瞧瞧姑娘，说说话儿。”

说着，紫鹃拿茶来。袭人忙站起来道：“妹妹坐着罢。”因又笑道：“我前儿听见秋纹说，妹妹背地里说我们什么来着？”紫鹃也笑道：“姐姐信他的话！我说宝二爷上了学，宝姑娘又隔断了，连香菱也不过来，自然是闷的。”袭人道：

“你还提香菱呢！这才苦呢！撞着这位‘太岁奶奶’，难为他怎么过！”把手伸着两个指头，道：“说起来，比他还利害，连外头的脸面都不顾了。”黛玉接着道：“他也够受了！尤二姑娘怎么死了！”袭人道：“可不是！想来都是一个人，不过名分里头差些，何苦这样毒？外面名声也不好听。”黛玉从不



might never have come to such a sad end. Grieving over her friend's death, she sighed. Then it occurred to her that although at present she could control Baoyu, as she was not destined to be his wife but only a concubine, if his wife proved a termagant she herself would share the same fate as Second Sister You and Xiangling. Judging by the attitude of Their Ladyships as well as certain remarks let fall by Xifeng, it seemed as if their choice would be Daiyu — who could be difficult. Flushing at this thought, her heart beat so fast that she plied her needle at random. Finally, laying down her embroidery, she went to Daiyu's place to sound her out.

Daiyu, engrossed in reading when she arrived, got up to offer her a seat.

"Are you much better these days, miss?" asked Xiren stepping forward.

"How could I be? A bit better, that's all. What have you been doing at home?"

"Since Master Bao went back to school we've had very little to do. So I dropped in here for a chat to see how you are."

Zijuan brought in tea at this point.

"You mustn't trouble, sister!" Xiren rose to her feet, then added with a smile, "I heard the other day from Qiuwen that you'd been gossiping behind our backs!"

"Don't you believe her," Zijuan laughed. "All I said was that with Master Bao away at school, Miss Baochai gone and even Xiangling staying away, you must be feeling lonely."

"Don't talk about Xiangling!" cried Xiren. "Poor thing! She must be having a hard time of it with her mistress such a martinet, a worse terror even than her." She held up two fingers to indicate the Second Mistress — Xifeng. "She doesn't even care for appearances."

"She's no less hard-hearted," put in Daiyu. "Remember how Second Sister You died?"

"Of course," agreed Xiren. "we're all women, only a bit different in status, so I can't think why anyone should be so cruel. It spoils our reputation outside as well."

Daiyu guessed there was something behind this, as it was not Xiren's



闻袭人背地里说人，今听此话有因，心里一动，便说道：

“这也难说。但凡家庭之事，不是东风压了西风，就是西风压了东风。”袭人道：“做了旁边人，心里先怯，那里倒敢欺负人呢？”

说着，只见一个婆子在院里问道：“这里是林姑娘的屋子么？那位姐姐在这里呢？”雪雁出来一看，模糊认的是薛姨妈那边的人，便问道：“作什么？”婆子道：“我们姑娘打发来给这里林姑娘送东西的。”雪雁道：“略等等儿。”雪雁进来回了黛玉，黛玉便叫领他进来。

那婆子进来，请了安，且不说送什么，只是觑着眼瞧黛玉。看的黛玉脸上倒不好意思起来，因问道：“宝姑娘叫你来送什么？”婆子方笑着回道：“我们姑娘叫给姑娘送了一瓶儿蜜饯荔枝来。”回头又瞧见袭人，便问道：“这位姑娘，不是宝二爷屋里的花姑娘么？”袭人笑道：“妈妈怎么认的我？”婆子笑道：“我们只在太太屋里看屋子，不大跟太太姑娘出门，所以姑娘们都不大认得。姑娘们碰着到我们那边去，我们都模糊记得。”说着，将一个瓶儿递给雪雁，又回头看看黛玉，因笑着向袭人说：“怨不得我们太太说：这林姑娘和你们宝二爷是一对儿。原来真是天仙似的！”袭人见他说话造次，连忙岔道：“妈妈，你乏了，坐坐吃茶罢。”那婆子笑嘻嘻的道：“我们那里忙呢，都张罗琴姑娘的事呢。姑娘还有两瓶荔枝，叫给宝二爷送去。”说着，颤颤巍巍，告辞出去。

黛玉虽恼这婆子方才冒撞，但因是宝钗使来的，也不好



habit to gossip in such a way behind people's backs.

"Well, it's hard to say," she answered. "In every family, if the east wind doesn't prevail over the west wind, then the west wind is bound to prevail over the east wind."

"But a concubine is diffident to start with. How dare she take advantage of the wife?"

Just then a serving-woman called from the courtyard, "Is this Miss Lin's house? Is anybody in?"

Xueyan went out and, thinking she recognized one of Aunt Xue's servants, asked her business.

"Our young lady sent me to bring something to Miss Lin."

Telling her to wait, Xueyan came back to report this, and Daiyu made her fetch the woman in. The latter curtseyed to Daiyu, but instead of explaining her errand just stared at her.

Embarrassed by her scrutiny Daiyu asked, "What did Miss Baochai tell you to bring me?"

"A jar of lichees preserved in honey." Catching sight of Xiren then, the woman added, "Isn't this Miss Hua from the Second Master's place?"

"How did you know, aunty?" asked Xiren.

"We stay in mostly to keep an eye on the house, not going out much with our mistress or young ladies, so you other young ladies wouldn't be likely to know us. But as you sometimes come to our place, we have a faint recollection of you all."

Having given the jar to Xueyan she turned back to look at Daiyu again, then observed with a smile to Xiren, "No wonder our mistress says that Miss Lin here and your Master Bao would make a perfect pair. She's as pretty as a goddess, indeed she is!"

To put a stop to such foolish talk, Xiren hastily interposed, "You must be tired out, aunty. Take a rest and have some tea."

"We're all very busy over there preparing for Miss Baoqin's wedding," the woman chuckled. "And there are two more jars of lichees which Miss Baochai wants sent to Master Bao."

She took her leave then and started to hobble away. Daiyu, though annoyed by her impertinence, could hardly reprove a messenger sent by Baochai. When the woman had stepped outside she called:

怎么样他，等他出了屋门，才说一声道：“给你们姑娘道费心。”那老婆子还只管嘴里咕咕啾啾的说：“这样好模样儿，除了宝玉，什么人擎受的起！”黛玉只装没听见。袭人笑道：“怎么人到了老来，就是混说白道的，叫人听着又生气，又好笑。”一时雪雁拿过瓶子来给黛玉看，黛玉道：“我懒怠吃，拿了搁起去罢。”又说了一回话，袭人才去了。

一时，晚妆将卸，黛玉进了套间，猛抬头看见了荔枝瓶，不禁想起日间老婆子的一番混话，甚是刺心。当此黄昏人静，千愁万绪，堆上心来，想起：“自己身子不牢，牢纪又大了，看宝玉的光景，心里虽没别人，但是老太太舅母又不见有半点意思，深恨父母在时，何不早定了这头婚姻。”又转念一想道：“倘若父母在时，别处定了婚姻，怎能够似宝玉这般人材心地？不如此时尚有可图。”心内一上一下，辗转缠绵，竟像辘轳一般。叹了一口气，吊了几点泪，无情无绪，和衣倒下。

不知不觉，只见小丫头走来说道：“外面雨村贾老爷请姑娘。”黛玉道：“我虽跟他读过书，却不比男学生，要见我做什么？况且他和舅舅往来，从未提起，我也不必见的。”因叫小丫头回复：“身上有病，不能出来，与我请安道谢就是了。”小丫头道：“只怕要与姑娘道喜，南京还有人来接。”

说着，又见凤姐同邢夫人、王夫人、宝钗等都来笑道：



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“Thank Miss Baochai for me.”

The old creature was still exclaiming, “Such good looks — too good for anyone but Baoyu!”

Daiyu could only pretend not to have heard.

Xiren remarked with a smile, “When people grow old they talk so foolishly, one doesn’t know whether to be angry or laugh.”

Xueyan showed Daiyu the jar of fruit.

“I don’t want it now. Put it away,” said Daiyu, then talked a little longer with Xiren until the latter left.

That evening when Daiyu went into the inner room to get ready for bed, the sight of the jar of lichees reminded her of the old woman’s maundering and she felt a pang. In the quiet dusk, her heart filled with forebodings.

“My health’s poor and I’ve reached the age to marry,” she reflected. “Judging by Baoyu’s behaviour, he isn’t interested in anyone else; but my grandmother and aunt haven’t yet indicated their preference. If only my parents were still alive, or had fixed this match in advance!” Then it occurred to her, “Even if they’d lived they might have promised me to someone else, who couldn’t possibly be up to Baoyu. This way there may still be a chance.”

Her heart was in a turmoil, distraught as a pulley swinging up and down. After many a sigh and tear, she flung herself listlessly down on her bed fully dressed.

She was lying there in a daze when a young maid approached to report that Mr. Jia Yucun had asked to see her.

“It’s true that I studied under him,” said Daiyu. “But I’m not a boy; why should he want to see me? Besides, though he’s my uncle’s friend, my uncle’s never mentioned him to me; so it would be inappropriate to receive him.”

She told the maid, “I’m not well enough to go out. Give him my greetings and apologies.”

“I think he’s here to offer congratulations,” said the girl. “Some people have just come from Nanjing to fetch you.”

That same moment in walked Xifeng, Lady Xing, Lady Wang and

“我们一来道喜，二来送行。”黛玉慌道：“你们说什么话？”凤姐道：“你还装什么呆？你难道不知道：林姑爷升了湖北的粮道，娶了一位继母，十分合心合意；如今想着你撂在这里，不成事体，因托了贾雨村作媒，将你许了你继母的什么亲戚，还说是续弦，所以着人到这里来接你回去。大约一到家中，就要过去的。都是你继母作主。怕的是道儿上没有照应，还叫你琏二哥哥送去。”说得黛玉一身冷汗。

黛玉又恍惚父亲果在那里做官的样子。心上急着，硬说道：“没有的事，都是凤姐姐混闹！”只见邢夫人向王夫人使个眼色儿：“你还不信呢，咱们走罢。”黛玉含着泪道：“二位舅母坐坐去。”众人不言语，都冷笑而去。

黛玉此时心中干急，又说不出出来，哽哽咽咽；恍惚又是和贾母在一处的似的，心中想道：“此事惟求老太太，或还有救。”于是两腿跪下去，抱着贾母的腿说道：“老太太救我！我南边是死也不去的。况且有了继母，又不是我的亲娘，我是情愿跟着老太太一块儿的。”但见贾母呆着脸儿笑道：

“这个不干我的事。”黛玉哭道：“老太太，这是什么事呢！”老太太道：“续弦也好，倒多得一副妆奁。”黛玉哭道：“我在老太太跟前，决不使这里分外的闲钱，只求老太太救我！”贾母道：“不中用了。做了女人，总是要出嫁的。你孩



Baochai.

"We've come to congratulate you and to see you off!" they cried.

"What do you mean?" asked Daiyu in alarm.

"Don't play the innocent," teased Xifeng. "Surely you know that your father has been promoted to be the Grain Commissioner of Hubei and has taken another wife, a most suitable match. They don't feel it would be right to leave you here, so they asked Mr. Jia as go-between to arrange for you to marry a relative of your stepmother, a widower. Now they've sent to fetch you back, and the wedding will probably take place as soon as you get home. It's all been decided by your stepmother. We're sending your Second Cousin Lian to escort you and look after you on the road."

At this, Daiyu broke out in a cold sweat. She did seem to have a hazy recollection of her father's appointment to an official post there.

"This can't be true!" she protested frantically. "Cousin Xifeng must be joking."

She saw Lady Xing wink at Lady Wang, then say, "She still doesn't believe it. Let's go."

With tears in her eyes Daiyu begged, "Dear aunts, please wait!"

But in silence, smiling coldly, they all went away.

Daiyu had no means to express her desperation. Sobbing bitterly, she seemed through her tears to see the Lady Dowager standing before her. Thinking, "If I beg my grandmother, she's the only one who may save me," she fell on her knees and clasped the old lady's waist.

"Save me, madam!" she pleaded. "I'd rather die than go south. Besides, she's my stepmother, not my own mother. Do let me stay with you, madam!"

But with a look of indifference the old lady said, "This has nothing to do with me."

"What does that mean, madam?" she sobbed.

"Marrying a widower is good: you'll get two sets of wedding presents."

"If I can stay with you, madam, I promise not to put you to extra expense. I just implore you to save me!"

"It's no use. All girls must get married sooner or later. You ought to



子家，不知道。在此地终非了局。”黛玉道：“我在这里，情愿自己做个奴婢过活，自做自吃，也是愿意。只求老太太作主！”见贾母总不言语，黛玉又抱着贾母哭道：“老太太！你向来最是慈悲的，又最疼我的，到了紧急的时候儿，怎么全不管，你别说我是你的外孙女儿，是隔了一层了；我的娘是你的亲生女儿，看我娘分上，也该护庇些！”说着，撞在怀里痛哭。听见贾母道：“鸳鸯，你来送姑娘出去歇歇，我倒被他闹乏了。”

黛玉情知不是路了，求去无用，不如寻个自尽，站起来，往外就走。深痛自己没有亲娘，便是外祖母与舅母姊妹们，平时何等待的好，可见都是假的。又一想：“今日怎么独不见宝玉？或见他一面，他还有法儿。”便见宝玉站在面前，笑嘻嘻的道：“妹妹大喜呀！”黛玉听了这一句话，越发急了，也顾不得什么了，把宝玉紧紧拉住，说：“好！宝玉，我今日才知道你是个无情无义的人了！”宝玉道：“我怎么无情无义？你既有了人家儿，咱们各自干各自的了。”黛玉越听越气，越没了主意，只得拉着宝玉哭道：“好哥哥！你叫我跟了谁去？”宝玉道：“你要不去，就在这里住着。你原是许了我的，所以你才到我们这里来。我待你是怎么样的？你也想想。”

黛玉恍惚又像果曾许过宝玉的，心内忽又转悲作喜，问宝玉道：“我是死活打定主意的了，你到底叫我去不去？”宝玉道：“我说叫你住下。你不信我的话，你就瞧瞧我的心！”

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know that, child. You can't stay here for ever."

"I'd rather be a bondmaid here, earning my keep. Please, please speak up for me, madam!"

Still the old lady said nothing.

Daiyu caught hold of her again and cried, "Madam, you were always so kind, so fond of me, how can you leave me in the lurch like this? Even if I'm only your grand-daughter, removed by one generation, my mother was your own daughter — won't you protect me for her sake at least?" She gave way to a storm of weeping in the Lady Dowager's lap.

"Yuanyang, take her out to calm down," ordered the old lady. "She's wearing me out, making such a scene."

Daiyu knew then that appealing for help was useless. Determining to kill herself instead, she stood up and started out. How bitterly she grieved that she had no mother! For though her grandmother, aunts and cousins had always seemed so good to her, this now appeared to be nothing but a pretence.

"How is it I haven't seen Baoyu?" she wondered. "*He* might be able to help."

And just then Baoyu suddenly appeared.

"Congratulations, cousin!" he said with a smile.

This made Daiyu even more frantic. Forgetting all reserve she seized him by the arm.

"Fine!" she cried. "Now I know how heartless you are, Baoyu!"

"In what way am I heartless? Now that you're engaged, we must each go our own way."

Feeling yet more angry and helpless, she gripped his arm.

"Good cousin, to whom do you want me to go?" she sobbed.

"If you don't want to leave, you can stay here. You were originally promised to me: that's why you came to live here in the first place. And just think how close we've been."

Then it seemed to Daiyu that she had indeed been engaged to Baoyu. Her sorrow turned to joy.

"My mind's made up even if I die!" she cried. "Tell me honestly, do you want me to leave or to stay?"

"I want you to stay. If you doubt me, I'll show you my heart!"



说着，就拿着一把小刀子往胸口上一划，只见鲜血直流。黛玉吓得魂飞魄散，忙用手握着宝玉的心窝，哭道：“你怎么做出这个事来？你先来杀了我罢！”宝玉道：“不怕！我拿我的心给你瞧。”还把手在划开的地方儿乱抓。黛玉又颤又哭，又怕人撞破，抱住宝玉痛哭。宝玉道：“不好了！我的心没有了，活不得了！”说着，眼睛往上一翻，“咕咚”就倒了。

黛玉拼命放声大哭。只听见紫鹃叫道：“姑娘，姑娘！怎么魇住了？快醒醒儿，脱了衣服睡罢。”

黛玉一翻身，却原来是一场恶梦，喉间犹是哽咽，心上还是乱跳，枕头上已经湿透，肩背身心，但觉冰冷，想了一回，“父母死的久了，和宝玉尚未放定，这是从那里说起？”又想梦中光景，无倚无靠，再真把宝玉死了，那可怎么样好？一时痛定思痛，神魂俱乱。又哭了一回，遍身微微的出了一点儿汗。挣扎起来，把外罩大袄脱了，叫紫鹃盖好了被窝，又躺下去。翻来复去，那里睡得着？只听得外面淅淅飒飒，又像风声，又像雨声。又停了一会子，又听得远远的吆呼声儿，——却是紫鹃已在那里睡着，鼻息出入之声。自己挣扎着爬起来，围着被坐了一会，觉得窗缝里透进一缕冷风来，吹得寒毛直竖，便又躺下。正要蒙胧睡去，听得竹枝上不知有多少家雀儿的声儿，啾啾唧唧，叫个不住。那窗上的纸，隔着屋子，渐渐的透进清光来。

黛玉此时已醒得双眸炯炯，一会儿咳嗽起来，连紫鹃都咳嗽醒了。紫鹃道：“姑娘，你还没睡着么？又咳嗽起来了。想是着了风了，这会儿窗户纸发清了，也待好亮起来了。歇歇儿罢，养养神，别尽着想长想短的了。”黛玉道：“我何尝



He drew a small knife and plunged it into his chest so that blood spurted out. In terror, she thrust one hand over his heart.

“How can you do that!? You’d better kill me first!”

“Don’t be afraid,” he said. “I’ll show you my heart.”

He groped around with his hand in the gaping wound while Daiyu trembled and wept, fearful lest others see them. Racked by sobs she held him close.

Then Baoyu exclaimed, “I’m done for! Now I’ve lost my heart I must die!”

He turned up his eyes and slumped with a thud to the ground.

As Daiyu started screaming she heard Zijuan calling her.

“Miss! Miss! Have you had a nightmare? Wake up! Undress and go to bed properly.”

Daiyu turned over and found it was all a dream. She was still sobbing, her heart beating wildly. Her pillow was drenched and she felt icy cold.

She thought, “My parents both died long ago and never engaged me to Baoyu, so how could such ideas occur to me?” Recalling the dream and her helplessness, she wondered what would become of her if Baoyu were really to die. Her mind in a turmoil of anguish, she burst out weeping again until soon she was perspiring. Struggling up to take off her robe, she told Zijuan to tuck in her quilt and lay down again, but toss and turn as she might she could not sleep. There was a rustling outside like wind or rain, and presently some way off she heard heavy breathing — it was Zijuan, fast asleep and beginning to snore. She sat up again with an effort, wrapping the bedding around her; but a cold draught through the window cracks made her shiver, so once more she lay down. As she was dozing off, she heard sparrows twittering on the bamboo; and although the blinds were drawn, light gradually filtered through the windowpaper.

By now Daiyu was wide-awake. She started coughing, waking up Zijuan.

“Still not asleep, miss?” she asked. “And coughing again! You must have caught cold. Look, the window’s light and it will soon be dawn. You must rest properly, not let your thoughts wander.”

“I *want* to sleep, but I can’t. You can go back to sleep.” Talking set her coughing again.



不要睡?只是睡不着。你睡你的罢。”说了,又嗽起来。

紫鹃见黛玉这般光景,心中也自伤感,睡不着了。听见黛玉又嗽,连忙起来,捧着痰盒。这时天已亮了。黛玉道:

“你不睡了么?”紫鹃笑道:“天都亮了,还睡什么呢?”黛玉道:“既这样,你就把痰盒儿换了罢。”

紫鹃答应着,忙出来换了一个痰盒儿,将手里的这个盒儿放在桌上,开了套间门出来,仍旧带上门,放下撒花软帘,出来叫醒雪雁。开了屋门去倒那盒子时,只见满盒子痰,痰中有些血星,唬了紫鹃一跳,不觉失声道:“嗟哟!这还了得!”黛玉里面接着问:“是什么?”紫鹃自知失言,连忙改说道:“手里一滑,几乎撻了痰盒子。”黛玉道:“不是盒子里的痰有了什么?”紫鹃道:“没有什么。”说着这句话时,心中一酸,那眼泪直流下来,声儿早已岔了。

黛玉因为喉间有些甜腥,早自疑惑;方才听见紫鹃在外边诧异,这会子又听见紫鹃说话声音带着悲惨的光景,心中觉了八九分,便叫紫鹃:“进来罢,外头看冷着。”紫鹃答应了一声,这一声更比头里凄惨,竟是鼻中酸楚之音。黛玉听了,冷了半截。看紫鹃推门进来时,尚拿绢子拭眼。黛玉道:“大清早起,好好的为什么哭?”紫鹃勉强笑道:“谁哭来?这早起起来,眼睛里有些不舒服。姑娘今夜大概比往常醒的时候更大罢?我听见咳嗽了半夜。”黛玉道:“可不是?越要睡,越睡不着。”紫鹃道:“姑娘身上不太好,依我说,还得自己开解着些。身子是根本,俗语说的:‘留得青山在,依旧有柴烧。’况这里自老太太、太太起,那个不疼姑娘?”只



But Zijuan was too upset by Daiyu's fit of coughing to sleep any longer. She hastily got up to fetch the spittoon. By now it was light.

"Are you getting up?" Daiyu asked.

"It's already bright. How can I go on sleeping?"

"In that case, you may as well change the spittoon."

Zijuan, assenting, hurried out to fetch a clean spittoon, placing the used one on the table in the outer room. Having closed the door behind her, she let down the soft flowered portiere before going to wake Xueyan. When she came back to empty the spittoon, she was shocked to find the sputum in it flecked with blood.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Heaven help us!"

"What's the matter?" called Daiyu from the inner room.

Aware of her gaffe Zijuan hedged, "It's the spittoon — it nearly slipped from my hand."

"It wasn't because there's something in the sputum?"

"Oh no!" But her voice was quavering with distress and tears gushed from her eyes.

Daiyu's suspicions had been aroused by the sweet-salty taste in her throat, and now they were confirmed by Zijuan's exclamation of dismay as well as the catch in her voice.

"Come in!" she called. "It's cold out there."

"Yes, miss." Zijuan sounded even more woeful, and the sadness in her voice set Daiyu shivering.

She came in, wiping her eyes with a handkerchief.

"Why are you crying for no reason so early in the morning?" Daiyu asked.

"Who's crying?" She forced a smile. "When I got up my eyes felt itchy. You must have slept even less than usual last night, miss. I heard you coughing half the time."

"That's right. The harder I tried to sleep, the more wide-awake I felt."

"You're so delicate, miss, I don't think you should worry so much. Health is what counts. As the saying goes, 'As long as the mountain's there we shan't lack fuel.' Besides, everyone here from Their Ladyships down is ever so fond of you."

这一句话，又勾起黛玉的梦来，觉得心里一撞，眼中一黑，神色俱变。紫鹃连忙端着痰盒，雪雁捶着脊梁，半日才吐出一口痰来，痰中一缕紫血，簌簌乱跳。紫鹃雪雁脸都吓黄了。两个旁边守着，黛玉便昏昏躺下。紫鹃看着不好，连忙努嘴叫雪雁叫人去。

雪雁才出屋门，只见翠缕翠墨两个人笑嘻嘻的走来。翠缕便道：“林姑娘怎么这早晚还不出门？我们姑娘和三姑娘都在四姑娘屋里，讲究四姑娘画的那张园子景儿呢。”雪雁连忙摆手儿。翠缕翠墨二人倒都吓了一跳，说：“这是什么原故？”雪雁将方才的事一一告诉他二人。二人都吐了吐舌头儿，说：“这可不是玩的！你们怎么不告诉老太太去？这还了得！你们怎么这么糊涂？”雪雁道：“我这里才要去，你们就来了。”

正说着，只听紫鹃叫道：“谁在外头说话？姑娘问呢。”三个人连忙一齐进来。翠缕翠墨见黛玉盖着被，躺在床上，见了他二人，便说道：“谁告诉你们了，你们这样大惊小怪的？”翠墨道：“我们姑娘和云姑娘才都在四姑娘屋里，讲究四姑娘画的那张园子图儿，叫我们来请姑娘。不知道姑娘身上又欠安了。”黛玉道：“也不是什么大病，不过觉得身子略软些，躺躺儿就起来了。你们回去告诉三姑娘和云姑娘，饭后若无事，倒是请他们到这里坐坐罢。宝二爷没到你们那边去？”二人答道：“没有。”翠墨又道：“宝二爷这两天上了学了，老爷天天要查功课，那里还能像从前那么乱跑呢？”黛玉听了，默然不言。二人又略站了一回，都悄悄的退出来了。





Unfortunately, this last remark reminded Daiyu of her dream. Her heart missed a beat, all turned dark before her eyes, and the colour drained from her face. Zijuan hastily held up the spittoon for her while Xueyan patted her back, and after retching she spat out some dark, bloody mucus. Her two maids turned pale with fright. As they stood there gaping, she fell back in a faint. In dismay, Zijuan signalled to Xueyan to go for help.

As soon as Xueyan went out she saw Cuilu and Cuimo approaching.

“Why hasn’t Miss Lin come out yet?” asked? Cuilu with a smile. “Our young lady and Miss Tanchun are in Miss Xichun’s place, discussing that painting she’s done of the Garden.” Xueyan waved her hands to stop them.

“What does this mean?” they asked in astonishment.

When she explained what had happened they thrust out their tongues in dismay.

“This is no joking matter. You must report it at once to the old lady. Heavens! How can you be so stupid?”

“I was on my way there when you turned up,” she countered.

Just then Zijuan called from the house, “who’s that out there Miss Lin would like to know.”

They hurried in, and the two newcomers saw Daiyu lying in bed covered with a quilt.

“Who told you to make such a fuss over nothing?” she asked them.

Cuimo said, “Our young lady and Miss Xiangyun are in Miss Xichun’s place discussing that painting she’s made of the Garden. They told us to invite you over, miss. We didn’t realize you were unwell.”

“It’s nothing serious: I just feel a bit limp. I shall get up after I’ve rested. Go back and tell Miss Tanchun and Miss Xiangyun I’d like them to drop in if they’ve time after lunch. Has Master Bao gone there too?”

“No.”

Cuimo added, “Master Bao’s going to school these days. The master checks up on his lessons every day, so he can’t run around the way he used to.”

When Daiyu made no response, after waiting a little the two maids slipped away.



且说探春湘云正在惜春那边评论惜春所画“大观园图”，说：这个多一点，那个少一点；这个太疏，那个太密。大家又议着题诗，着人去请黛玉商议。正说着，忽见翠缕翠墨二人回来，神色匆忙。湘云便先问道：“林姑娘怎么不来？”翠缕道：“林姑娘昨日夜里又犯了病了，咳嗽了一夜。我们听见雪雁说，吐了一盒子痰血。”探春听了，诧异道：“这话真么？”翠缕道：“怎么不真？”翠墨道：“我们刚才进去去瞧了瞧，颜色不成颜色，说话儿的气力儿都微了。”湘云道：“不好的这么着，怎么还能说话呢？”探春道：“怎么你这么糊涂！不能说话，不是已经——”说到这里，却咽住了。惜春道：“林姐姐那样一个聪明人，我看他总有些瞧不破，一点半点儿都要认起真来，天下事那里有多少真的呢？”探春道：“既这么着，咱们都过去看看。倘若病的利害，咱们也过去告诉大嫂子，回老太太，传大夫进来瞧瞧，也得个主意。”湘云道：“正是这样。”惜春道：“姐姐们先去，我回来再过去。”

于是探春湘云扶了小丫头，都到潇湘馆来。进入房中，黛玉见他二人，不免又伤起心来。因又转念，想起梦中，“连老太太尚且如此，何况他们？况且我不请他们，他们还不来呢！”心里虽是如此，脸上却碍不过去，只得勉强令紫鹃扶起，口中让坐。

探春湘云都坐在床沿上，一头一个；看了黛玉这般光景，也自伤感。探春便道：“姐姐怎么身上又不舒服了？”黛玉道：“也没什么要紧，只是身子软得很。”紫鹃在黛玉身



Let us turn now to Tanchun and Xiangyun in Xichun's room. Commenting on her painting of Grand View Garden, they found it rather overcrowded in parts and rather empty in others. When it came to discussing a suitable inscription, they sent to invite Daiyu over to consult her. And now they saw Cuilu and Cuimo return looking thoroughly disconcerted.

"Why hasn't Miss Lin come?" asked Xiangyun.

"Last night her illness flared up again, and she coughed all night," Cuilu answered. "We heard from Xueyan that she spat out a whole lot of blood."

"Is that true?" exclaimed Tanchun in consternation.

"Of course it's true," Cuilu insisted.

"Just now when we went in to see her," Cuimo added, "she looked in a very bad way, hardly able to talk."

"If she's in a bad way, of course she can't talk," said Xiangyun.

"How can you be so dense?" cried Tanchun. "If she can't speak, that means..." Her voice trailed away.

Xichun said, "Cousin Lin is very intelligent but I think she takes things too much to heart — she's so serious about even the least little thing. How can one take everything so seriously?"

"Well, if that's the case," said Tanchun, "we should all go and see her. If she's so very ill, we must get our sister-in-law to report in to the old lady and send for a doctor, so that we'll know how to cope."

"That's right," agreed Xiangyun.

"The two of you go on ahead," said Xichun. "I'll go over later on."

Then Tanchun and Xiangyun, helped along by some young maids, went to Bamboo Lodge. Their arrival upset Daiyu, reminding her of her dream.

"What can I expect of them, when even my grandmother cold-shouldered me like that?" she wondered. "Besides, they wouldn't have come unless I'd invited them." But instead of showing what was in her mind, she made Zijuan help her to sit up and offered them seats.

Tanchun and Xiangyun sat down, one on either side of her on the edge of the bed, distressed to see her so ill.

"What brought on this relapse, cousin?" Tanchun asked.

"It's nothing serious. I just feel very limp."

后，偷偷的用手指那痰盒儿。湘云到底年轻，性情又兼直爽，伸手便把痰盒拿起来看。不看则已，看了吓的惊疑不止，说：“这是姐姐吐的？这还了得！”

初时黛玉昏昏沉沉，吐了也没细看；此时见湘云这么说，回头看时，自己早已灰了一半。探春见湘云冒失，连忙解说道：“这不过是肺火上炎，带出一半点来，也是常事。偏是云丫头，不拘什么，就这样蝎蝎螫螫的！”湘云红了脸，自悔失言。

探春见黛玉精神短少，似有烦倦之意，连忙起身说道：“姐姐静静的养养神罢。我们回来再瞧你。”黛玉道：“累你二位惦着。”探春又嘱咐紫鹃：“好生留神伏侍姑娘。”紫鹃答应着。探春才要走，只听外面一个人嚷起来。未知是谁，下回分解。





Zijuan standing behind her pointed surreptitiously at the spittoon. And Xiangyun, being young and straightforward, picked it up to have a look. What she saw horrified her.

“Did you bring this up, cousin?” she exclaimed. “Heaven help us!”

Daiyu had been too dazed before to look carefully at her sputum. At Xiangyun’s ejaculation she turned to look, her heart already sinking.

To cover up Xiangyun’s tactlessness, Tanchun hastily put in, “This is nothing out of the usual — it’s just that a hot humour in the lungs made her bring up a drop or two. But Xiangyun is so silly, the least little thing always makes her fly off the handle.”

Xiangyun, regretting her blunder, blushed at this.

Seeing how listless and tired Daiyu seemed, Tanchun got up and said, “You must rest well, cousin. We’ll call again later on.”

“Thank you both for your concern.”

Tanchun urged Zijuan, “Look after your young lady well!”

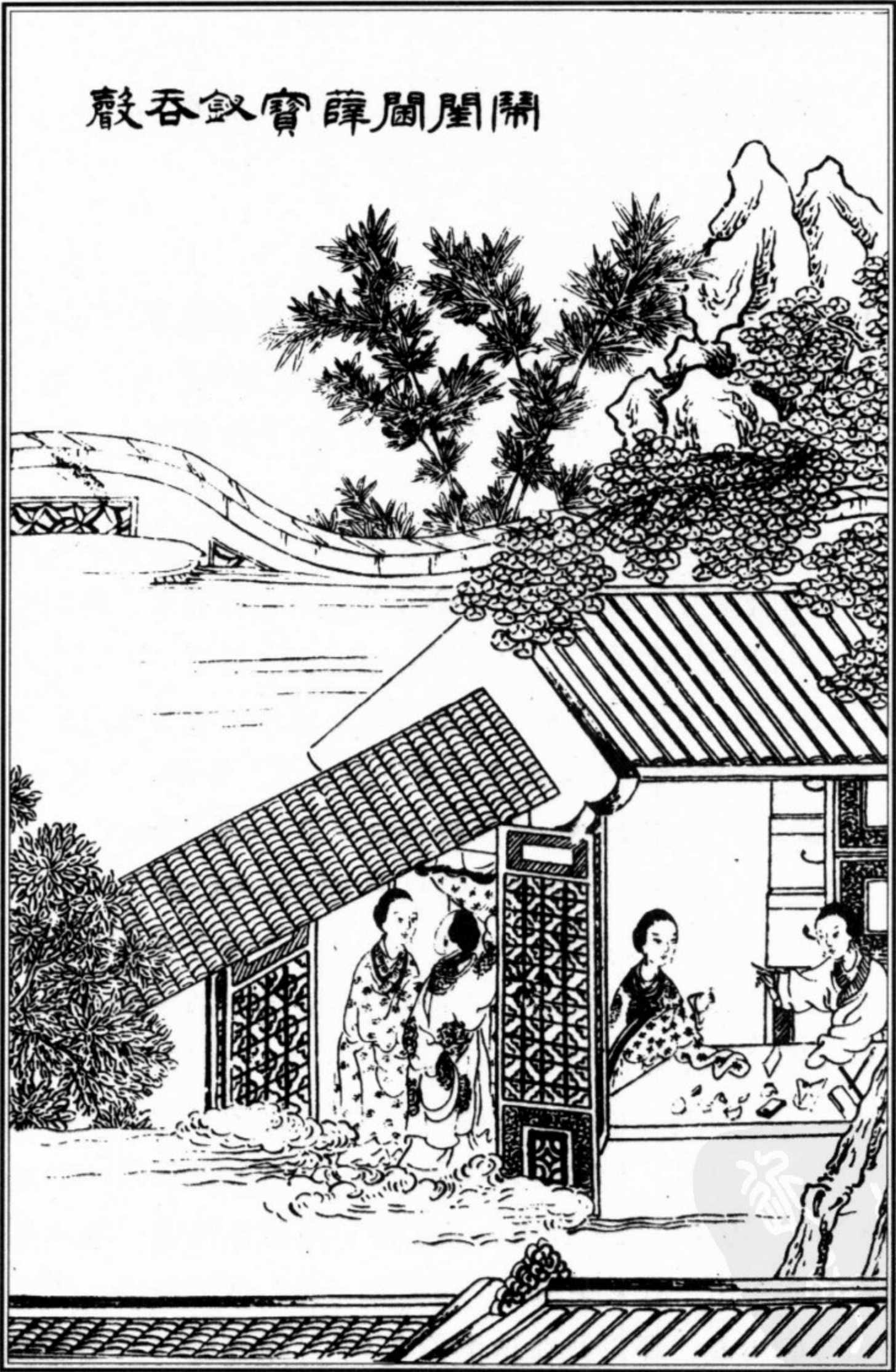
As Zijuan assented Tanchun turned to leave; but just then somebody outside started shouting.

To know who it was, read on.





鬧閨闈寶釵吞麝



第八十三回

省宫闱贾元妃染恙 闹闺阃薛宝钗吞声

话说探春湘云才要走时，忽听外面一个人嚷道：“你这不成人的小蹄子！你是个什么东西，来这园子里头混搅！”黛玉听了，大叫一声道：“这里住不得了！”一手指着窗外，两眼反插上去。

原来黛玉住在大观园中，虽靠着贾母疼爱，然在别人身上，凡事终是寸步留心。听见窗外老婆子这样骂着，在别人呢，一句是贴不上的，竟像专骂着自己的。自思一个千金小姐，只因没了爹娘，不知何人指使这老婆子来这般辱骂，那里委屈得来？因此，肝肠崩裂，哭的过去了。紫鹃只是哭叫：“姑娘怎么样了？快醒来罢！”探春也叫了一回。半晌，黛玉回过这口气，还说不出话来，那手仍向窗外指着。

探春会意，开门出去，看见老婆子手中拿着拐棍，赶着一个不干不净的毛丫头道：“我是为照管这园中的花果树木，来到这里，你作什么来了？等我家去，打你一个知道！”这丫头扭着头，把一个指头探在嘴里，瞅着老婆子笑。探春骂道：“你们这些人，如今越发没了王法了！这里是你骂人的地方儿吗？”老婆子见是探春，连忙陪着笑脸儿说道：“刚才是我的外孙女儿，看见我来了，他就跟了来。我怕他闹，所以才吆喝他回去，那里敢在这里骂人呢？”探春道：“不用多说





Chapter 83

The Imperial Consort Falls Ill and Her Relatives Call at the Palace Jingui Makes a Scene and Baochai Has to Swallow Her Anger

Tanchun and Xiangyun, on the point of leaving, heard an old woman shouting outside, "You good-for-nothing little bitch! Who are you to come and fool around in our Garden?"

At this Daiyu pointed outside. Showing the whites of her eyes she exclaimed, "I shall have to leave here!"

For ever since moving into Grand View Garden, though able to rely on her grandmother's partiality Daiyu had always watched her step with other people. When she heard this abuse shouted outside her window, she was sure it must be aimed at nobody else but her. Reflecting that she was a finely brought up young lady but now had lost her parents, she wondered who had sent this old creature to insult her. This was too much to bear! With a heart-rending cry she fainted away.

"What's come over you, miss?" wailed Zijuan. "Wake up, quick!"

Tanchun called her too, and after a while Daiyu regained consciousness. Still she could not speak, just kept pointing out of the window.

Tanchun caught her meaning and opening the door went out. She saw an old woman with a stick chasing after a grubby little girl.

"I'm here to look after the flowers and fruit trees," the old crone was shouting. "Why should you come too? Wait till we get home and I'll give you a good thrashing."

The child looked round, sucking one finger, and laughed at her.

Tanchun scolded, "You people are getting too out of hand! Is this the place for you to bawl abuse?"

When the old woman saw who it was she said sheepishly, "It's my grand-daughter who followed me here. I was afraid she'd make a noise, so I told her to go back. I wouldn't dare bawl her out here."

"That's enough. Hurry up and go, the two of you. Miss Lin's not



了，快给我都出去。这里林姑娘身上不大好，还不快去么！”老婆子答应了几个“是”，说着，一扭身去了，那丫头也就跑了。

探春回来，看见湘云拉着黛玉的手只管哭，紫鹃一手抱着黛玉，一手给黛玉揉胸口，黛玉的眼睛方渐渐的转过来了。探春笑道：“想是听见老婆子的话，你疑了心了么？”黛玉只摇摇头儿。探春道：“他是骂他外孙女儿；我才刚也听见了。这种东西说话，再没有一点道理的。他们懂得什么避讳！”

黛玉听了，叹了口气，拉着探春的手道：“姐儿——”叫了一声，又不言语了。探春又道：“你别心烦。我来看你，是姊妹们应该的。你又少人伏侍。只要你安心肯吃药，心上把喜欢事儿想想，能够一天一天的硬朗起来，大家依旧结社做诗，岂不好呢？”湘云道：“可是三姐姐说的，那么着不乐？”黛玉哽咽道：“你们只顾要我喜欢，可怜我那里赶得上这日子？只怕不能够了！”探春道：“你这话说的太过分了。谁没个病儿灾儿的？那里就想到这里来了？你好生歇歇儿罢。我们到老太太那边，回来再看你。你要什么东西，只管叫紫鹃告诉我。”黛玉流泪道：“好妹妹！你到老太太那里，只说我请安，身上略有点不好，不是什么大病，也不用老太太烦心的。”探春答应道：“我知道，你只管养着罢。”说着，才同湘云出去了。

这里紫鹃扶着黛玉躺在床上，地下诸事，自有雪雁照料，自己只守着旁边看着黛玉，又是心酸，又不敢哭泣。那黛玉闭着眼躺了半晌，那里睡得着？觉得园里头平日只见寂寞，如今躺在床上，偏听得风声，虫鸣声，鸟语声，人走的



feeling well. Hurry!"

"Yes, miss."

The old woman made off, the small girl running after her.

Going back inside Tanchun found Xiangyun in tears, holding Daiyu's hand. Zijuan supported the invalid with one arm and massaged her chest till, slowly, she opened her eyes.

"What did you think that old woman meant?" Tanchun asked her with a smile.

Daiyu just shook her head.

"She was scolding her grand-daughter. I heard her just now. Such creatures talk nothing but nonsense. They don't understand that some things aren't allowed."

"Cousin..." sighed Daiyu, then broke off, clasping her hand.

"Don't fret yourself. It's only right that we should come to see you as you haven't anyone to look after you. If you'll just rest, take your medicine and look on the bright side of things, you'll gradually get well enough for us all to start the poetry club again. Wouldn't that be nice?"

"That's right," chimed in Xiangyun. "That would be fun."

"You want me to cheer up," sobbed Daiyu. "But how can I? I shan't live to see that day."

"That's taking too gloomy a view!" protested Tanchun. "Who doesn't fall ill or have trouble from time to time? How can you think in that way? Now just have a good rest while we go to see the old lady. We'll look in again by and by. If there's anything you want, tell Zijuan to let me know."

"Dear Cousin!" cried Daiyu, in tears. "When you see the old lady, please give her my respects and tell her I'm a bit poorly, but it's nothing serious — she's not to worry."

"I know. You just have a good rest."

When Tanchun had gone off with Xiangyun, Zijuan helped her young mistress to lie down again and stayed by her side while Xueyan saw to other things. Her heart ached but she dared not weep. Daiyu lay there awhile with closed eyes but could not sleep. Normally she found the Garden very quiet, but now lying in bed she was conscious of the sighing of the wind, the chirr of insects, the chirping of birds, and the sound of passing footsteps. She seemed to hear children, too, crying in the dis-

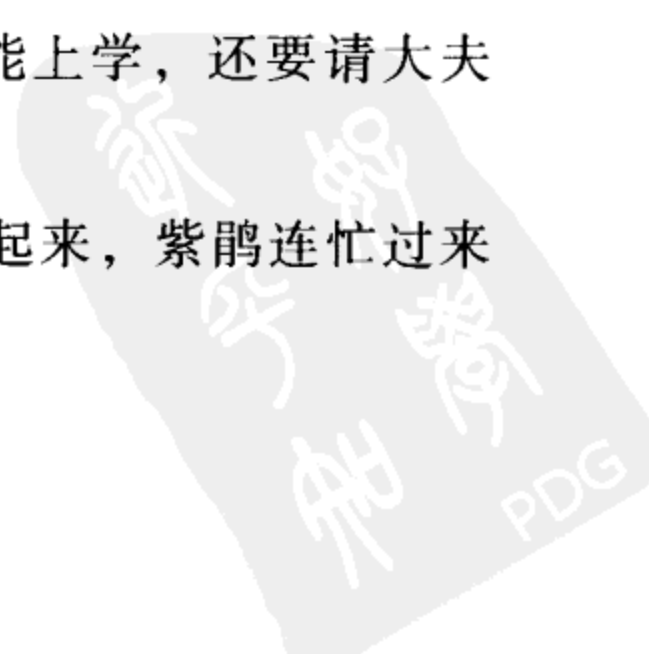


脚步声，又像远远的孩子们啼哭声，一阵一阵的聒噪的烦躁起来，因叫紫鹃放下帐子来。雪雁捧了一碗燕窝汤，递给紫鹃。紫鹃隔着帐子，轻轻问道：“姑娘，喝一口汤罢？”黛玉微微应了一声，紫鹃复将汤递给雪雁，自己上来，搀扶黛玉坐起，然后接过汤来，搁在唇边试了一试，一手搂着黛玉肩臂，一手端着汤送到唇边。黛玉微微睁眼喝了两三口，便摇摇头儿不喝了。紫鹃仍将碗递给雪雁，轻轻扶黛玉睡下。

静了一时，略觉安顿，只听窗外悄悄问道：“紫鹃妹妹在家么？”雪雁连忙出来，见是袭人，因悄悄说道：“姐姐屋里坐着。”袭人也便悄悄问道：“姑娘怎么着？”一面走，一面雪雁告诉夜间及方才之事。袭人听了这话，也唬怔了，因说道：“怪道刚才翠缕到我们那边说你们姑娘病了，唬的宝二爷连忙打发我来，看看是怎么样？”

正说着，只见紫鹃从里间掀起帘子，望外看见袭人，招手儿叫他。袭人轻轻走过来，问道：“姑娘睡着了吗？”紫鹃点点头儿，问道：“姐姐才听见说了？”袭人也点点头儿，蹙着眉道：“终久怎么样好呢？那一位昨夜也把我唬了个半死儿！”紫鹃忙问：“怎么了？”袭人道：“昨日晚上睡觉，还是好好儿的。谁知半夜里，一叠连声的嚷起心疼来，嘴里胡说白道，只说好像刀子割了去的似的。直闹到打亮梆子以后才好些了。你说唬人不唬人？今日不能上学，还要请大夫来吃药呢。”

正说着，只听黛玉在帐子里又咳嗽起来，紫鹃连忙过来





tance. Disturbed by these noises, she told Zijuan to let down her bed-curtains.

Presently Xueyan brought in a bowl of bird's-nest soup which she passed to Zijuan.

"Will you have some soup, miss?" asked Zijuan outside the curtain.

When Daiyu assented faintly she gave the bowl back to Xueyan to hold while she helped the patient sit up. Having tested the temperature of the soup herself, still supporting Daiyu she raised the bowl to her mouth. Daiyu, her eyes half closed, took two or three sips, then shook her head and would not drink any more. Zijuan handed the bowl back to Xueyan and gently laid her young mistress down once more. After a little rest, feeling slightly better, Daiyu heard a low voice outside asking:

"Is Sister Zijuan at home?"

Xueyan hurried out and saw it was Xiren.

"Come in, sister," she said softly.

"How is your young lady?"

As they started in Xueyan described what had happened just now and the night before.

"No wonder Cuilu just came to our place and said Miss Lin was ill!" exclaimed Xiren in dismay. "Master Bao was so alarmed, he told me to come and see how she is."

While they were whispering, Zijuan lifted the portiere of the inner room and beckoned Xiren over.

"Is she asleep?" asked Xiren tiptoeing towards her.

Zijuan nodded. "Have you only just heard about it?"

Xiren inclined her head with a worried look. "How is this going to end? I was nearly scared to death too last night by the other!"

Zijuan asked what had happened.

"He was all right when he went to bed in the evening," Xiren told her. "But in the middle of the night he suddenly yelled that he had a pain in his heart, and raved that someone seemed to have cut it out! He kept up this rumpus quite a time, not quieting down till after the last watch had sounded. Wouldn't you call that frightening? Today he couldn't go to school, and we're sending for a doctor to prescribe medicine."

Just then they heard Daiyu coughing behind her bed-curtains, and



捧痰盒儿接痰。黛玉微微睁眼问道：“你合谁说话呢？”紫鹃道：“袭人姐姐来瞧姑娘来了。”说着，袭人已走到床前。黛玉命紫鹃扶起，一手指着床边，让袭人坐下。袭人侧身坐了，连忙陪着笑劝道：“姑娘倒还是躺着罢。”黛玉道：“不妨，你们快别这样大惊小怪的。刚才是说谁半夜里心疼起来？”袭人道：“是宝二爷偶然魔住了，不是认真怎么样。”

黛玉会意，知道是袭人怕自己又悬心的原故，又感激，又伤心，因趁势问道：“既是魔住了，不听见他还说什么？”袭人道：“也没说什么。”黛玉点点头儿，迟了半日，叹了一口气，才说道：“你们别告诉宝二爷说我不好，看耽搁了他的工夫，又叫老爷生气。”袭人答应了，又劝道：“姑娘，还是躺躺歇歇罢。”黛玉点头，命紫鹃扶着歪下。袭人不免坐在旁边，又宽慰了几句，然后告辞。回到怡红院，只说黛玉身上略觉不受用，也没什么大病。宝玉才放了心。

且说探春湘云出了潇湘馆，一路往贾母这边来。探春因嘱咐湘云道：“妹妹回来见了老太太，别像刚才那样冒冒失失的了。”湘云点头笑道：“知道了。我头里是叫他唬的忘了神了。”

说着，已到贾母那边，探春因提起黛玉的病来。贾母听了，自是心烦，因说道：“偏是这两个‘玉’儿多病多灾的。林丫头一来二去的大了，他这个身子也要紧。我看那孩子太是个心细。”众人也不敢答言。贾母便向鸳鸯道：“你告诉他



Zijuan hurriedly took her the spittoon. Daiyu languidly opened her eyes.

“Whom were you talking to?”

“Sister Xiren has come to see you, miss.”

By now Xiren had come over to her bed. Daiyu made Zijuan help her sit up, then indicating the edge of the bed invited Xiren to be seated. Perching sideways, Xiren urged her with a smile:

“You’d better lie down, miss.”

“I’m all right. Don’t be such alarmists. What was that you were saying just now about someone having a pain in the heart in the middle of the night?”

“Master Bao had a nightmare, nothing of consequence.”

Daiyu was touched and at the same time distressed, knowing that Xiren had said this for fear she might be anxious.

“Did you hear him talk in his sleep?”

“He didn’t say anything.”

Daiyu nodded. After a while she sighed.

“Don’t tell Master Bao that I’m ill. It would make him waste time, and his father would be angry.”

“Yes, miss. You’d better rest now.”

Daiyu nodded and asked Zijuan to lower her to her pillow. Xiren stayed to say a few more encouraging words, then took her leave and went back to Happy Red Court where she simply told Baoyu, to his great relief, that Daiyu was a little unwell but not in any danger.

Tanchun and Xiangyun, leaving Bamboo Lodge, had set off to call on the Lady Dowager. On the way Tanchun warned her cousin:

“When you see the old lady, mind you don’t talk in that wild way you did just now!”

Xiangyun lowered her head. “I know. It’s because just now I was frightened out of my wits!”

When they arrived, Tanchun’s report that Daiyu was unwell worried the old lady.

“That precious pair are always falling ill,” she said. “Now that Daiyu’s growing up she should pay more attention to her health. I think the child broods too much.” When no one ventured to make any comment she



们，明儿大夫来瞧了宝玉，叫他再到林姑娘那屋里去。”鸳鸯答应着出来，告诉了婆子们。婆子们自去传话。这里探春湘云就跟着贾母吃了晚饭，然后同回园中去，不提。

到了次日，大夫来了。瞧了宝玉，不过说饮食不调，着了点儿风邪，没大要紧，疏散疏散就好了。这里王夫人凤姐等，一面遣人拿了方子回贾母；一面使人到潇湘馆，告诉说：“大夫就过来。”紫鹃答应了，连忙给黛玉盖好被窝，放下帐子，雪雁赶着收拾房里的东西。

一时，贾琏陪着大夫进来了，便说道：“这位老爷是常来的，姑娘们不用回避。”老婆子打起帘子，贾琏让着，进入房中坐下。贾琏道：“紫鹃姐姐，你先把姑娘的病势向王老爷说说。”王大夫道：“且慢说。等我诊了脉，听我说了，看是对不对。若有不合的地方，姑娘们再告诉我。”紫鹃便向帐中扶出黛玉的一只手来，搁在迎手上。紫鹃又把镯子连袖子轻轻的撸起，不叫压住了脉息。

那王大夫诊了好一会儿，又换那只手也诊了，便同贾琏出来，到外间屋里坐下，说道：“六脉皆弦，因平日郁结所致。”说着，紫鹃也出来，站在里间门口。那王大夫便向紫鹃道：“这病时常应得头晕，减饮食，多梦；每到五更，必醒个几次；即日间听见不干自己的事，也必要动气，且多疑多惧。不知者疑为性情乖诞，其实因肝阴亏损，心气衰耗，都





ordered Yuanyang, "Go and tell them: After the doctor's seen Baoyu tomorrow he must go to Miss Lin's place too."

Yuanyang assented and withdrew to pass on these instructions to serving-women, who went off to relay the message. Tanchun and Xiangyun took dinner with the old lady before going back to the Garden, where we will leave them.

The next day the doctor came. He diagnosed Baoyu's upset as a slight one, a mild case of indigestion and a chill which sweating would put right. Lady Wang and Xifeng sent servants with his prescription to report this to the old lady, at the same time sending word to Bamboo Lodge that the doctor was on his way. Zijuan promptly tucked Daiyu's quilt round her and put down the bed-curtains, while Xueyan hastily tidied up the room.

Soon Jia Lian arrived with the doctor.

"This gentleman often comes to our house," he said, "so there's no need for all the maids to hide."

An old nurse raised the portiere, the doctor was invited in and they took seats. Then Jia Lian suggested that Zijuan should first describe her young lady's symptoms.

"Wait a bit," said Doctor Wang. "Suppose I first feel the pulse to make my own diagnosis. If these girls think it wrong or there's something I've omitted, then they can let me know."

Zijuan drew one of Daiyu's hands out from the curtain, rested it on a cushion, and gently pulled her sleeve and bracelet up out of the way. Doctor Wang felt the pulse for some time, then that of the other wrist, after which he and Jia Lian withdrew to take seats in the outer room.

"All six pulses¹ are tense," he announced, "due to bottled up emotion."

At this point Zijuan came out too and stood in the doorway, and Doctor Wang, addressing her, continued:

"I would expect this illness to give rise to constant dizzy spells, loss of appetite as well as frequent dreams; and no doubt she wakes several times in the night. She must be hypersensitive, taking offence at remarks which don't even concern her. People not knowing the truth may think her cross-grained, when in fact it's all due to this illness which has upset

是这个病在那里作怪。——不知是否？”紫鹃点点头儿，向贾琏道：“说的很是。”王太医道：“既这样，就是了。”说毕，起身同贾琏往外书房去开方子。

小厮们早已预备下一张梅红单帖。王太医吃了茶，因提笔先写道：

六脉弦迟，素由积郁。左寸无力，心气已衰。关脉独洪，肝邪偏旺。木气不能疏达，势必上侵脾土，饮食无味；甚至胜所不胜，肺金定受其殃。气不流精，凝而为痰；血随气涌，自然咳吐。理宜疏肝保肺，涵养心脾。虽有补剂，未可骤施。姑拟“黑逍遥”以开其先，后用“归肺固金”以继其后。不揣固陋，俟高明裁服。

又将七味药与引子写了。

贾琏拿来看时，问道：“血势上冲，柴胡使得么？”王大夫笑道：“二爷但知柴胡是升提之品，为吐衄所忌，岂知用鳖血拌炒，非柴胡不足宣少阳甲胆之气。以鳖血制之，使其不致升提，且能培养肝阴，制遏邪火。所以《内经》说‘通因通用，塞因塞用。’柴胡用鳖血拌炒，正是‘假周勃以安刘’的法子。”贾琏点头道：“原来是这么着。这就是了。”王大夫又道：“先请服两剂，再加减，或再换方子罢。我还有点小事，不能久坐，容日再来请安。”说着，贾琏送了出



her liver and weakened her heart. Am I right?"

Zijuan nodded and said to Jia Lian, "The gentleman is absolutely right."

"So that's how it is," said the doctor.

He got up and went with Jia Lian to the study to write out a prescription. The pages there had already prepared a sheet of pink stationery. After Doctor Wang had sipped some tea he took a brush and wrote:

The six pulses are tense and slow owing to pent-up grief. The feebleness of the left *cun* pulse shows debility of the heart. The strength of the *guan* pulse shows an over-heated liver. When the liver humour cannot disperse, it is bound to invade the spleen, causing loss of appetite and inevitably affecting the lungs too. The humours, failing to turn into vital force, will congeal as phlegm and agitate the blood, so that naturally there will be coughing.

The treatment should calm the liver, protect the lungs and strengthen the heart and the spleen. But invigorants must not be rashly administered. I suggest starting off with thorowax boiled with turtleblood, followed with medicine to soothe and strengthen the lungs. This is my humble proposal for your wise consideration.

He then listed seven drugs and an adjuvant.

Jia Lian reading this asked, "When the blood is agitated, is it safe to use thorowax?"

Doctor Wang smiled.

"I see you know, sir, that thorowax is a stimulant, not to be used in cases of vomiting blood or nose-bleed; but actually, boiled with turtleblood, this is the only drug which will stimulate the digestive system and release the humour from the gall. Instead of agitating the blood it can strengthen the liver and keep down hot humours. This is why the *Yellow Emperor's Manual of Medicine* says, 'Use stimulants for a haemorrhage, occludents for a blockage.' This method is similar to 'using Zhou Bo's strength to stabilize the Liu's dynasty'² — applying turtle-blood to mitigate the stimulating function of the thorowax."

Jia Lian nodded. "So that's how it is. Very well, then."

"Let her take two doses first, after which we can add or cancel certain ingredients or perhaps try a different prescription. I still have a little business to attend to and mustn't stay longer, sir. I shall come to pay my



来，说道：“舍弟的药就是那么着了？”王大夫道：“宝二爷倒没什么大病，大约再吃一剂就好了。”说着，上车而去。

这里贾琏一面叫人抓药，一面回到房中告诉凤姐黛玉的病原，与大夫用的药，述了一遍。只见周瑞家的走来，回了几件没要紧的事。贾琏听到一半，便说道：“你回二奶奶罢，我还有事呢。”说着，就走了。

周瑞家的回完了这件事，又说道：“我方才到林姑娘那边，看他那个病，竟是不好呢！脸上一点血色也没有，摸了摸身上，只剩了一把骨头。问问他，也没有话说，只是淌眼泪。回来紫鹃告诉我说：‘姑娘现在病着，要什么，自己又不肯要，我打算要问二奶奶那里支用一两个月的月钱。如今吃药，虽是公中的，零用也得几个钱。’我答应了他，替他来回奶奶。”凤姐低了半日头，说道：“竟这么着罢，我送他几两银子使罢。也不用告诉林姑娘。这月钱却是不好支的。一个人开了例，要是都支起来，那如何使得呢？你不记得赵姨娘和三姑娘拌嘴了？也无非为的是月钱。况且近来你也知道，出去的多，进来的少，总绕不过弯儿来。不知道的，还说我打算的不好。更有那一种嚼舌根的，说我搬运到娘家去了。周嫂子，你倒是那里经手的人，这个自然还知道些。”

周瑞家的道：“真正委屈死人！这样大门头儿，除了奶奶这样心计儿当家罢了。——别说是女人当不来，就是三头六臂的男人，还撑不住呢。还说这些个混账话！”说着，又笑了一声，道：“奶奶还没听见呢，外头的人还更糊涂呢！前



respects some other day.”

As Jia Lian saw him out he asked, “What about Cousin Bao’s prescription?”

“There’s nothing much wrong with Master Bao. I think another dose should set him right.”

The doctor mounted his carriage then and left.

Jia Lian, having ordered servants to get the medicine, had just gone back to tell Xifeng about Daiyu’s illness and the doctor’s prescription, when Zhou Rui’s wife arrived to report on some matters of no great consequence.

“Tell the mistress that,” he cut in halfway. “I’m busy.” With that he left.

“Just now I went to Miss Lin’s place,” said Zhou Rui’s wife after transacting her business. “She seems in a very bad way! Her face has no colour at all; she’s nothing but skin and bones. And when I asked how she felt, not a word did she say — simply cried. Later Zijuan told me, ‘Our young lady’s ill, yet when she needs something she won’t ask for it. So I mean to ask Madam Lian to advance us a couple of months’ allowance. Although we get issued medicine, we need some cash for incidental expenses.’ I promised to pass on this request to you.”

Xifeng lowered her head in thought.

“I’ll tell you what,” she said presently. “I’ll give her a few taels to use, and you needn’t let Miss Lin know. I can’t very well advance the monthly allowance. If once the precedent was set and everyone else followed suit, what should we do? Remember how Concubine Zhao quarrelled with Miss Tanchun — all because of the monthly allowance? Besides, as you know, our outlay exceeds our income these days and we’ve never got around this. Those not in the know think me a bad manager. Some gossips even accuse me of spiriting stuff away to my own family. But you as a stewardess, Mrs. Zhou, must naturally know better.”

“The injustice of it!” exclaimed Mrs. Zhou. “A big household like this can only be run by someone with your forethought, madam. No ordinary woman could manage it; no, not even a man with three heads and six arms! Yet people still talk such rubbish.” She suddenly laughed. “You



儿，周瑞回家来，说起外头的人，打量着咱们府里不知怎么样有钱呢。也有说：‘贾府里的银库几间，金库几间，使的家伙都是金子镶了、玉石嵌了的。’也有说：‘姑娘做了王妃，自然皇上家的东西分的了一半子给娘家。前儿贵妃娘娘省亲回来，我们还亲见他带了几车金银回来，所以家里收拾摆设的水晶宫似的。那日在庙里还愿，花了几万银子，只算是牛身上拔了一根毛罢咧。’有人还说：‘他门前的狮子，只怕还是玉石的呢！园子里还有金麒麟，叫人偷了一个去，如今剩下一个了。家里的奶奶姑娘不用说，就是屋里使唤的姑娘们，也是一点儿不动的，喝酒下棋，弹琴画画，横竖有人伏侍呢，单管穿罗罩纱；吃的带的，都是人家不认得的。那些哥儿姐儿们，更不用说了，要天上的月亮，也有人去拿下来给他玩。’还有歌儿呢，说是：‘宁国府，荣国府，金银财宝如粪土。吃不穷，穿不穷，算来——’”说到这里，猛然咽住。原来那时歌儿说道是“算来总是一场空”，这周瑞家的说溜了嘴，说到这里，忽然想起这话不好，因咽住了。

凤姐儿听了，已明白必是句不好的话了，也不便追问。因说道：“那都没要紧，只是这‘金麒麟’的话从何而来？”周瑞家的笑道：“就是那庙里的老道士送给宝二爷的小金麒麟





haven't heard the even more stupid things they say outside, madam. The other day when Zhou Rui came home, he told me outsiders imagine we're *made* of money. They talk of the Jia family having so many storerooms for gold, so many for silver, and of using nothing but golden utensils studded with gems!

"Some say, 'When their daughter became an Imperial Consort, naturally the Emperor would give half his things to her family. That time Her Highness paid a visit home, we saw with our own eyes the cartloads of gold and silver that she brought, which is why the house is fitted out like the crystal palace of the Dragon King. And that day they went to give offerings in the temple, they spent tens of thousands of taels, but to them that's just one hair from the hide of an ox.'

"Other people say, 'The lions outside their gate must be made of jade. In their Garden they had two gold unicorns, but one got stolen so now there's only one left. Not to say the mistresses of the house, even the maids have nothing to do except drink, play chess, strum the lyre or paint — they have attendants to wait on them anyway. The silks and gauzes they wear, all their food and ornaments too, are things that common folk never even heard of. As for the young masters and mistresses, of course it goes without saying that if they want the moon from the sky someone will pluck it down for them to play with!'

"Then, madam, there's a song:

The House of Ning, the House of Rong,
Treat silver and gold as clay;
No end to their victuals and clothing,
but at last...."

She broke off here because the final line ran:

But at last all will vanish away.

Mrs. Zhou had been rattling on, only pulling up short when she suddenly remembered how ominous this sounded. And Xifeng, guessing this, did not press her to finish.

"Well, never mind that," she said. "But where did they get that story about the gold unicorn?"

"That was the small gold unicorn presented to Master Bao by the old

儿。后来丢了几天，亏了史姑娘捡着，还了他，外头就造出这个谣言来了。奶奶说这些人可笑不可笑？”凤姐道：“这些话倒不是可笑，倒是可怕的！咱们一日难似一日，外面还是这么讲究。俗语儿说的，‘人怕出名猪怕壮’，况且又是个虚名儿。终久还不知怎么样呢！”周瑞家的道：“奶奶虑的也是。只是满城里茶坊酒铺儿以及各胡同儿，都是这样说，况且不是一年了。那里握的住众人的嘴？”

凤姐点点头儿。因叫平儿称了几两银子，递给周瑞家的道：“你先拿去交给紫鹃，只说我给他添补买东西的。若要官中的，只管要去，别提这月钱的话。他也是个伶俐人，自然明白我的话。我得了空儿，就去瞧姑娘去。”周瑞家的接了银子，答应着自去，不提。

且说贾琏走到外面，只见一个小厮迎上来，回道：“大老爷叫二爷说话呢。”贾琏急忙过来，见了贾赦。贾赦道：“方才风闻宫里头传了一个太医院御医、两个吏目去看病，想来不是宫女儿下人了。这几天，娘娘宫里有什么信儿没有？”贾琏道：“没有。”贾赦道：“你去问问二老爷和你珍大哥；不然，还该叫人去到太医院里打听打听才是。”

贾琏答应了，一面吩咐人往太医院去，一面连忙去见贾政贾珍。贾政听了这话，因问道：“是那里来的风声？”贾琏



Taoist priest of that temple.” Mrs. Zhou smiled. “Later it was lost for a few days, but Miss Shi found it and returned it to him. Then they made up this story outside. Ridiculous, isn’t it, madam?”

“Not ridiculous, actually, but rather alarming! Things are getting harder for us every day, and yet we still keep up such an outward show. ‘Bad for a man to be famed, bad for a pig to grow fat,’ the proverb says. Especially as with us this is empty fame. Goodness knows what the end will be.”

“You have reason to worry, madam. Still, for years now that has been the talk of the town — in teashops, taverns and every least little alley. And how can you stop people talking?”

Xifeng nodded, then asked Pinger to weigh out a few ounces of silver for Mrs. Zhou.

“Take this to Zijuan,” she instructed her. “Just tell her I’m giving her this for sundries, and she mustn’t hesitate to ask for things that are their due, but let’s have no more talk of advancing the monthly allowance. She’s quite clever enough to catch on. When I’ve time, I shall call to see Miss Lin.”

Mrs. Zhou, assenting, took the silver and left. No more of this.

Now as Jia Lian was on his way out a page had approached and reported, “The Elder Master wants you, sir.”

He hurried over and Jia She informed him, “We’ve just had word that an Imperial Physician and two assistants were summoned to the Palace to attend a patient — it can hardly be one of the maids-of-honour or attendants. Has there been any news from the Imperial Consort’s palace these last few days?”

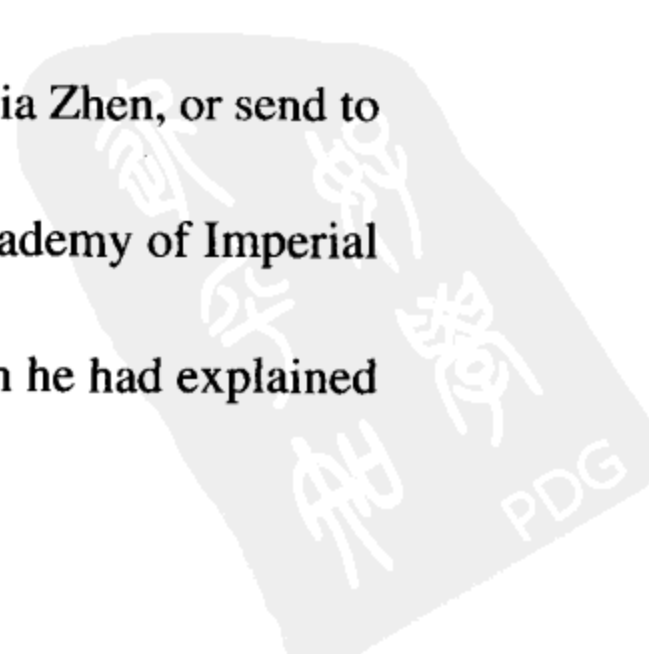
“None, sir.”

“Go and ask the Second Master and your brother Jia Zhen, or send to find out from the Academy of Imperial Physicians.”

Accordingly, Jia Lian dispatched a man to the Academy of Imperial Physicians, then went over to see Jia Zheng.

“Where did you hear that?” asked Jia Zheng when he had explained his errand.

“From the Elder Master just now.”





道：“是大老爷才说的。”贾政道：“你索性和你珍大哥到里头打听打听。”贾琏道：“我已经打发人往太医院打听去了。”一面说着，一面退出来去找贾珍。只见贾珍迎面来了，贾琏忙告诉贾珍。贾珍道：“我正为也听见这话，来回大老爷二老爷去呢。”于是两个人同着来见贾政。贾政道：“如系元妃，少不得终有信的。”说着，贾赦也过来了。

到了晌午，打听的尚未回来，门上人进来回说：“有两个内相在外，要见二位老爷呢。”贾赦道：“请进来。”门上的人领了老公进来。贾赦贾政迎至二门外，先请了娘娘的安，一面同着进来，走至厅上，让了坐。老公道：“前日这里贵妃娘娘有些欠安，昨日奉过旨意，宣召亲丁四人，进里头探问。许各带丫头一人，余皆不用。亲丁男人，只许在宫门外递个职名请安，听信，不得擅入。准于明日辰巳时进去，申酉时出来。”

贾政贾赦等站着听了旨意，复又坐下，让老公吃茶毕，老公辞了出去。贾赦贾政送出大门，回来先禀贾母。贾母道：“亲丁四人，自然是我和你们两位太太了。那一个人呢？”众人也不敢答言。贾母想了想，道：“必得是凤姐儿，他诸事有照应。你们爷儿们各自商量去罢。”





“You and your brother Zhen had better go to the Palace to find out.”

“I’ve already sent to the Academy of Imperial Physicians.”

Jia Lian then withdrew to find Jia Zhen and, meeting him, told him about this.

“I heard the same news,” said Jia Zhen. “I was on my way to tell Their Lordships.”

Both went together to Jia Zheng, who said, “If it’s *our* Imperial Consort, we’re bound to be sent some word.”

Jia She joined them then and they waited till the afternoon, but the messengers sent out had still not returned. Then in came a gatekeeper.

“Two Imperial eunuchs have come, asking to see Your Lordships,” he announced.

“Invite them in,” said Jia She.

Servants led in the eunuchs, who were met by Jia She and Jia Zheng at the inner gate. Their Lordships first inquired after the health of Her Highness, then ushered the eunuchs into the hall and invited them to sit down.

“The other day the Imperial Consort from your house became indisposed,” the eunuchs informed them. “Yesterday we received the order to summon four of her female relatives to the Palace to see her. Each may bring one maid, no more. As for male relatives, they may send in their cards at the gate to pay their respects and await further orders there; but they must not enter the Palace. You are to go between eight and ten tomorrow morning and leave between four and six in the afternoon.”

Jia Zheng and Jia She had risen respectfully to hear these injunctions. When they had resumed their seats tea was offered to the eunuchs, who then took their leave. Their Lordships escorted them out of the main gate, returning to report this to the Lady Dowager.

“Four female relatives,” she said. “Naturally there’s myself and your wives, but who’s to be the fourth?”

No one venturing to answer her, she thought it over.

“It will have to be Xifeng,” she concluded. “She always knows how to cope. You menfolk go and discuss which of you will go.”



贾赦贾政答应了出来，因派了贾琏贾蓉看家外，凡“文”字辈至“草”字辈一应都去。遂吩咐家人预备四乘绿轿，十余辆翠盖车，明儿黎明伺候。家人答应去了。贾赦贾政又进去回明贾母：“辰巳时进去，申酉时出来。今日早些歇歇，明日好早些起来，收拾进宫。”贾母道：“我知道，你们去罢。”赦政等退出。这里邢夫人、王夫人、凤姐儿也都说了一会子元妃的病，又说了些闲话，才各自散了。

次日黎明，各屋子里丫头们将灯火俱已点齐，太太们各梳洗毕，爷们亦各整顿好了；一到卯初，林之孝合赖大进来，至二门口回道：“轿车俱已齐备，在门外伺候着呢。”不一时，贾赦邢夫人也过来了。大家用了早饭，凤姐先扶老太太出来，众人围随，各带使女一人，缓缓前行。又命李贵等二人先骑马去外宫门接应，自己家眷随后。“文”字辈至“草”字辈各自登车骑马，跟着众家人，一齐去了。贾琏贾蓉在家中看家。

且说贾家的车辆轿马，俱在外西垣门口歇下等着，一会儿，有两个内监出来，说道：“贾府省亲的太太奶奶们，着令人宫探问；爷们，俱着令内宫门外请安，不得入见。”门上人叫：“快进去。”贾府中四乘轿子跟着小内监前行，贾家爷们在轿后步行跟着，令众家人在外等候。走近宫门口，只见





Their Lordships assented and withdrew. They decided that apart from Jia Lian and Jia Rong, who would be left in charge at home, all the other men of the family should go. They ordered four green sedan-chairs and some dozen carriages to be made ready by dawn, and servants went to carry out these instructions. Then Jia She and Jia Zheng went in again to report:

"You are to enter the Palace between eight and ten in the morning and leave between four and six in the afternoon; so you'd better retire early, madam, in order to make an early start tomorrow."

"I know," she said. "You may go."

After their withdrawal Lady Xing, Lady Wang and Xifeng stayed behind a little longer to talk of Yuanchun's illness and other things, then went back to their own quarters.

The next day at dawn, the maids in the different houses lit the lamps, their mistresses washed and dressed, and the masters made ready too. It was about six when Lin Zhixiao and Lai Da came to the inner gate to announce:

"The sedan-chairs and carriages are ready outside the gate."

Presently Jia She and Lady Xing came over. When all had breakfasted Xifeng escorted the old lady out first, followed by the other ladies, each supported by one maid, advancing slowly. Li Gui and another steward were ordered to ride ahead, followed by their wives, to the outer gate of the Palace. Their Lordships and the gentlemen of lower generations rode in carriages or on horseback, with a great retinue of servants, leaving Jia Lian and Jia Rong at home in charge.

The Jia family's carriages, sedan-chairs and horses had halted for some time outside the gate of the outer west wall when at last two eunuchs emerged.

"The Jia ladies come to see their noble relative can enter the Palace now," they announced. "The gentlemen are to pay their respects outside the inner gate, but may not go in."

Guards at the gate cried, "Make haste!"

The four sedan-chairs were borne in behind some young eunuchs, while the gentlemen followed on foot. All the menservants had been ordered to wait outside. When they approached the inner gate, some old



几个老公在门上坐着。见他们来了，便站起来说道：“贾府爷们至此。”贾赦贾政便捱次立定。轿子抬至宫门口，便都出了轿，早有几个小内监引路，贾母等各有丫头扶着步行。走至元妃寝宫，只见奎壁辉煌，琉璃照耀。又有两个小宫女儿传谕道：“只用请安，一概仪注都免。”

贾母等谢了恩，来至床前，请安毕，元妃都赐了坐。贾母等又告了坐。元妃便问贾母道：“近日身上可好？”贾母扶着小丫头，颤颤巍巍站起来，答应道：“托娘娘洪福，起居尚健。”元妃又向邢夫人王夫人问了好。邢王二夫人站着回了话。元妃又问凤姐：“家中过的日子若何？”凤姐站起来回奏道：“尚可支持。”元妃道：“这几年来，难为你操心！”凤姐正要站起来回奏，只见一个宫女传进许多职名，请娘娘龙目。元妃看时，说是贾赦贾政等若干人。那元妃看了职名，心里一酸，止不住早流下泪来。宫女儿递过绢子，元妃一面拭泪，一面传谕道：“今日稍安，令他们外面暂歇。”贾母等站起来，又谢了恩。元妃含泪道：“父女弟兄，反不如小家子得以常常亲近！”贾母等都忍着泪道：“娘娘不用悲伤，家中已托着娘娘的福多了。”

元妃又问：“宝玉近来若何？”贾母道：“近来颇肯念书。因





eunuchs sitting there rose to their feet.

“No further, gentlemen!” they ordered.

Then Jia She, Jia Zheng and the rest ranged themselves at attention in order of seniority while the ladies alighted from their chairs which had also stopped at the gate and, each supported by her maid, were led in by the young eunuchs. Soon they came to the bed-chamber of Imperial Consort Yuanchun, its walls dazzling with gleaming glazed tiles. Two young maids-of-honour told them:

“You need only pay your respects. Other formalities can be dispensed with.”

The Lady Dowager’s party, having thanked the Imperial Consort, went over to the bed and paid their respects. The Imperial Consort told them to sit down, which they did with murmured thanks.

“How has your health been recently?” she asked her grandmother. The old lady stood up, leaning on her maid’s arm.

“By grace of Your Highness, my health is still good.”

Lady Xing and Lady Wang were questioned next, and they rose to answer too.

Then Xifeng was asked, “How are you managing at home?”

Rising she replied, “We are managing all right.”

“It’s not been easy for you all these years working so hard.”

Before Xifeng could answer, a maid-of-honour brought in a list for Her Highness to inspect. When she saw on it the names of Jia She, Jia Zheng and others, her heart ached and she could not hold back her tears. The maid passed her a handkerchief.

“I’m a little better today,” she said wiping her eyes. “Tell them to rest outside.”

Her relatives rose to their feet again to give thanks for her graciousness.

With tears in her eyes she told them, “We are less fortunate than humble folk whose daughters can keep close to their fathers and brothers.”

Suppressing their own grief they answered, “Don’t grieve, Your Highness. Our family has benefited so much from your grace!”

“How is Baoyu these days?”

他父亲逼得严紧，如今文字也都做上来了。”元妃道：“这样才好。”遂命外宫赐宴。便有两个宫女儿，四个小太监，引了到一座宫里。已摆得齐整，各按坐次坐了。不必细述。

一时吃完了饭，贾母带着他婆媳三人，谢过宴。又耽搁了一回，看看已近酉初，不敢羁留，俱各辞了出来。元妃命宫女儿引道，送至内宫门，门外仍是四个小太监送出。贾母等依旧坐着轿子出来，贾赦接着，大伙儿一齐回去。到家，又要安排明后日进宫，仍令照应齐集，不提。

且说薛家金桂自赶出薛蟠去了，日间拌嘴，没有对头，秋菱又住在宝钗那边去了，只剩得宝蟾一人同住。既给与薛蟠作妾，宝蟾的意气又不比从前了；金桂看去，更是一个对头，自己也后悔不来。一日，吃了几杯闷酒，躺在炕上，便要借那宝蟾作个醒酒汤儿，因问着宝蟾道：“大爷前日出门，到底是到那里去？你自然是知道的了？”宝蟾道：“我那里知道？他在奶奶跟前还不说，谁知道他那些事？”金桂冷笑道：“如今还有什么‘奶奶’‘太太’的？都是你们的世界了！别人是惹不得的，有人护庇着，我也不敢去虎头上捉虱子；你还是我的丫头，问你一句话，你就和我摔脸子，说撻话！你既这么有势力，为什么不把我勒死了，你和秋菱，不拘谁做了奶奶，那不清净了么？偏我又不死，碍着你们的道儿！”



“Working much harder at his books,” said the old lady. “Because his father makes strict demands on him, he can write essays now.”

“That’s good.”

She ordered a feast to be served to them outside. Then two maids-of-honour and four young eunuchs led them to another palace where the feast was already laid, and they sat down in due order. But we need not dwell on this.

After dining, the old lady led the three others back to thank the Imperial Consort for the feast, and they kept her company until nearly five when, not daring to stay any longer, they took their leave. The Imperial Consort ordered her maids-of-honour to show them to the inner gate, outside which the same four young eunuchs escorted them. When the ladies had seated themselves once more in their chairs, Jia She and the other gentlemen followed them home, where similar arrangements were made for visiting the Palace on the two following days. No more of this.

Let us turn back now to Jingui in the Xue family. After driving Xue Pan away she had no one to squabble with as Qiuling had gone to stay with Baochai, leaving only Baochan with her. And Baochan since becoming Xue Pan’s concubine showed more spirit than before, so that Jingui found in her an even worse rival and repented — too late — of having made her a secondary wife.

One day after drinking a few cups alone Jingui, lying on the *kang*, decided to work off her spleen on Baochan.

“Where did the master go when he left home the other day?” she asked. “You must of course know.”

“How should I?” answered Baochan. “If he wouldn’t tell even *you*, madam, who can possibly know what he’s up to?”

Jingui laughed scornfully.

“Are you still calling me ‘madam’? You two have it all your own way. *She*’s untouchable because she has a protectress, and I dare not catch the lice on a tiger’s head, but *you* are still my maid. Yet when I ask you a question you scowl at me and snap back! If you’re so powerful, why not strangle me? Then either you or Qiuling could be the mistress — wouldn’t you like that better? It’s too bad that I’m not



宝蟾听了这话，那里受得住？便眼睛直直的瞅着金桂道：“奶奶这些闲话只好说给别人听去！我并没合奶奶说什么。奶奶不敢惹人家，何苦来拿着我们小软儿出气呢？正经的，奶奶又装听不见，‘没事人一大堆’了。”说着，便哭天哭地起来。金桂越发性起，便爬下炕来，要打宝蟾。宝蟾也是夏家的风气，半点儿不让。金桂将桌椅杯盏尽行打翻，那宝蟾只管喊冤叫屈，那里理会他？

岂知薛姨妈在宝钗房中，听见如此吵嚷，便叫：“香菱，你过去瞧瞧，且劝劝他们。”宝钗道：“使不得，妈妈别叫他去。他去了，岂能劝他？那更是火上浇了油了。”薛姨妈道：“既这么样，我自己过去。”宝钗道：“依我说，妈妈也不用去，由着他们闹去罢。这也是没法儿的事了。”薛姨妈道：“这那里还了得！”说着，自己扶了丫头，往金桂这边来。宝钗只得也跟着过去。又嘱咐香菱道：“你在这里罢。”

母女同至金桂房门口，听见里头正还嚷哭不止。薛姨妈道：“你们是怎么着，又这么家翻宅乱起来？这还像个人家儿吗？矮墙浅屋的，难道都不怕亲戚们听见笑话了么？”金桂屋里接声道：“我倒怕人笑话呢！只是这里‘扫帚颠倒竖，——’也没主子，也没奴才，也没大老婆，没小老婆，都是‘混账世界’了！我们夏家门子里没见过这样规矩，实在受不得你们家这样委屈了！”宝钗道：“大嫂子，妈妈因听见闹得慌才过来的，就是问的急了些，没有分清‘奶奶’‘宝

数字水印
PDG



dead yet, blocking your path!"

Unable to stomach this, Baochan glared at her.

"Save that talk for someone else, madam!" she retorted. "I haven't said anything wrong. Why should you work off your anger on someone weaker because you daren't challenge *her*? If someone really offends you, you pretend not to hear so as to keep out of harm's way." She burst out crying.

More enraged than ever, Jingui scrambled down from the *kang* to beat her. But Baochan had also acquired the Xia family ways, and she would not give an inch. While Jingui smashed cups and saucers and overturned tables and chairs, Baochan paid no attention, just bewailing her unjust fate at the top of her voice.

Aunt Xue in Baochai's room heard this commotion.

"Xiangling," she said, "go over and see what's happening. Tell them to calm down."

"That won't do, mother. Don't tell *her* to go," said Baochai. "How could she stop them? It would simply pour oil on the flames."

"In that case, I'll go myself."

"I don't think you need go either. Let them make a scene. There's nothing we can do about it."

"But this is outrageous!"

With that Aunt Xue took a maid and headed for Jingui's room. Baochai, impelled to go with her, told Xiangling to stay behind. As mother and daughter reached Jingui's door they heard unabated shouting and sobbing inside.

"What are you doing?" cried Aunt Xue. "Turning the house upside-down again! What way is this to behave? The walls are so thin, aren't you afraid our relatives may hear and laugh at you?"

Jingui called back from inside, "Of course I don't want people to laugh at us. But things here are topsy-turvy, with no distinction between mistress and maid, between wife and concubine — this whole household's a mix-up! That's not how we behave in our Xia family. I really can't stand your household any longer!"

"Sister-in-law," put in Baochai, "mother came because you're making too much noise. Even if she spoke a little hastily, lumping mistress and



蟾’两字，也没有什么。如今且先把事情说开，大家和和气的过日子，也省了妈妈天天为咱们操心哪。”薛姨妈道：

“是啊，先把事情说开了，你再问我的不是，还不迟呢。”金桂道：“好姑娘，好姑娘！你是个大贤大德的。你日后必定有个好人家，好女婿，决不像我这样守活寡，举眼无亲，叫人家骑上头来欺负的。我是个没心眼儿的人，只求姑娘，我说话，别往死里挑检！我从小儿到如今，没有爹娘教道。再者，我们屋里老婆、汉子、大女人、小女人的事，姑娘也管不得！”

宝钗听了这话，又是羞，又是气，见他母亲这样光景，又是疼不过。因忍了气，说道：“大嫂子，我劝你少说句儿罢。谁挑检你？又是谁欺负你？别说是嫂子啊，就是秋菱，我也从来没有加他一点声气儿啊。”金桂听了这几句话，更加拍着炕檐大哭起来说：“我那里比得秋菱？连他脚底下的泥我还跟不上呢！他是来久了的，知道姑娘的心事，又会献勤儿。我是新来的，又不会献勤儿，如何拿我比他？何苦来！天下有几个都是贵妃的命？行点好儿罢。别修的像我嫁个糊涂行子，守活寡；那就是活活儿的现了眼了！”

薛姨妈听到这里，万分气不过，便站起身来道：“不是我护着自己的女孩儿，他句句劝你，你却句句恼他。你有什么过不去，不用寻他，勒死我倒也是希松的！”宝钗忙劝道：

“妈妈，你老人家不用动气。咱们既来劝他，自己生气，倒多了一层气。不如且去，等嫂子歇歇儿再说。”因吩咐宝蟾道：“你也别闹了。”说着，跟了薛姨妈，便出来了。

走过院子里，只见贾母身边的丫头同着秋菱迎面走来。



maid together, never mind. Let's first clear things up, so that we can live in peace and mother can stop worrying about us."

"That's right," said Aunt Xue. "Let's first clear everything up. You'll have plenty of time to grouse about me later."

Jingui sneered, "Dear sister, good sister! What a paragon you are! You're bound to marry into a good family and get yourself a good husband. You certainly won't be a grass-widow like me, lone and lorn, trampled on and bullied by everyone. I'm a foolish creature but all I beg of you, sister, is not to twist my words like that so as to run me down! My parents never taught me properly. Besides, what goes on here between wife and husband, wife and concubine, is hardly the business of an unmarried girl!"

Baochai was mortified and enraged by such talk, but what rankled most was the affront to her mother.

Suppressing her anger she said, "Watch your tongue, sister-in-law. Who's run you down? Who's bullied you? Why, not to say you, not even Qiuling has ever had a single harsh word from me."

This only made Jingui pound the edge of the *kang*.

"How can I compare with Qiuling?" she wailed. "I'm not even as good as the dirt beneath her feet. She's been here so long, she's in your confidence and knows how to make up to you. I'm a newcomer and no good at flattery. How can I compare with her? Why be so hard on me? How many girls are fated to be Imperial Consorts? Do a few good turns, or else you'll end up like me — married to a fool, a grass-widow and a disgrace to the family!"

By now Aunt Xue could contain herself no longer. She sprang up.

"I'm not defending my own child," she cried. "She was advising you for your own good, yet you keep taunting her. If you have grievances, don't quarrel with her. Better strangle me instead!"

Baochai hastily intervened, "Mother, don't be angry. We came here to calm her down, but by losing our own tempers we're making things worse. Let's go now, and wait till sister-in-law feels better before we say any more." She told Baochan, "You stop your rumpus too."

As she and her mother went out to cross the courtyard, they saw one of the Lady Dowager's maids approaching with Xiangling.



薛姨妈道：“你从那里来？老太太身上可安？”那丫头道：“老太太身上好，叫来请姨太太安，还谢谢前儿的荔枝，还给琴姑娘道喜。”宝钗道：“你多早晚来的？”那丫头道：“来了好一会子了。”薛姨妈料他知道，红着脸说道：“这如今，我们家里闹的也不像个过日子的人家了，叫你们那边听见笑话。”丫头道：“姨太太说那里的话？谁家没个‘碟大碗小，磕着碰着’的呢？那是姨太太多心罢咧。”说着，跟了回到薛姨妈房中，略坐了一回，就去了。

宝钗正嘱咐香菱些话，只听薛姨妈忽然叫道：“左肋疼痛的很！”说着，便向炕上躺下。唬得宝钗香菱二人手足无措。要知后事如何，下回分解。



“Where have you come from?” asked Aunt Xue. “Is the old lady well?”

“Yes, madam, she is. She sent me to give you her greetings and thank you for those lichees the other day, as well as to congratulate Miss Baoqin.”

“How long have you been here?” asked Baochai.

“Quite a while now.”

Aunt Xue flushed, aware that she must have overheard them.

“Nowadays we have these disgraceful scenes — not like a respectable family,” she said. “It must sound ridiculous to you over there.”

“Don’t say that, madam! What family doesn’t have a few tiffs and squabbles? You are over-sensitive.”

The maid followed them to their room and after sitting there for a while went off. Baochai was just giving Xiangling some instructions when Aunt Xue suddenly let out a cry:

“I’ve such a pain in my left side!”

To their consternation, she collapsed on the *kang*. To know the upshot of this, read the next chapter.



第八十四回

试文字宝玉始提亲 探惊风贾环重结怨

却说薛姨妈一时因被金桂这场气恼得肝气上逆，左胁作痛。宝钗明知是这个原故，也等不及医生来看，先叫人去买了几钱钩藤来，浓浓的煎了一碗，给他母亲吃了。又和秋菱给薛姨妈捶腿揉胸。停了一会儿，略觉安顿些。

薛姨妈只是又悲又气：气的是金桂撒泼；悲的是宝钗见涵养，倒觉可怜。宝钗又劝了一回，不知不觉的睡了一觉，肝气也渐渐平复了。宝钗便说道：“妈妈，你这种闲气不要放在心上才好。过几天走的动了，乐得往那边老太太姨妈处去说说话儿，散散闷也好。家里横竖有我和秋菱照看着，谅他也不敢怎么着。”薛姨妈点点头道：“过两日看罢了。”

且说元妃疾愈之后，家中俱各喜欢。过了几日，有几个老公走来，带着东西银两，宣贵妃娘娘之命，因家中省问勤劳，俱有赏赐，把物件银两一一交代清楚。贾赦贾政等禀明了贾母，一齐谢恩毕，太监吃了茶去了。大家回到贾母房中，说笑了一回，外面老婆子传进来说：“小厮们来回道：‘那边有人请大老爷说要紧的话呢。’”贾母便向贾赦道：“你去罢。”贾赦答应着，退来自去了。





Chapter 84

Baoyu's Writing Is Tested and His Marriage Considered Jia Huan Visits an Invalid and Arouses Fresh Resentment

Aunt Xue's anger over the scene with Jingui upset her liver, bringing on a pain in her left side. Baochai, knowing the cause, did not wait for the doctor to come but first sent out to buy a little *Ourouparia rbyncbopbylla* and brewed a strong bowlful of this for her to drink. Then she and Xiangling massaged the patient's legs and rubbed her chest until presently she felt better.

Aunt Xue was both angry and sad: angry with Jingui who had proved such a shrew, and sorry for Baochai who was so forbearing. Baochai soothed her till she drifted off to sleep, and her liver gradually ceased to trouble her.

"You mustn't take these quarrels to heart, mother," Baochai urged her. "In a few days, when you feel up to it, why not go and enjoy a chat with the old lady and Aunt Wang. After all, Xiangling and I are here to see to things at home, and I don't suppose she'll dare try anything."

Aunt Xue nodded. "I'll wait a couple of days and see."

The Imperial Consort's recovery restored the whole household's good humour. Especially when, a few days later, some old eunuchs came with gifts and silver from her, announcing that Her Highness wished to express her gratitude for the family's concern, and apportioning each one's share. Jia She and Jia Zheng sent word of this to the Lady Dowager, and together they returned thanks to Her Highness. After some tea the eunuchs left, and Their Lordships went to the old lady's room to chat until one of the serving-women outside reported:

"The pages say someone has come to see the Elder Master on important business."

The old lady urged him to go, and Jia She withdrew.



这里贾母忽然想起，合贾政笑道：“娘娘心里却甚实惦记着宝玉，前儿还特特的问他来着呢。”贾政陪笑道：“只是宝玉不大肯念书，辜负了娘娘的美意。”贾母道：“我倒给他上了个好儿，说他近日文章都做上来了。”贾政笑道：“那里能象老太太的话呢。”贾母道：“你们时常叫他出去作诗作文，难道他都没作上来么？小孩子家，慢慢的教导他。可是人家说的：‘胖子也不是一口儿吃的。’”贾政听了这话，忙陪笑道：“老太太说的是。”

贾母又道：“提起宝玉，我还有一件事和你商量：如今他也大了，你们也该留神，看一个好孩子，给他定下。这也是他终身的大事。也别论远近亲戚，什么穷啊富的，只要深知那姑娘的脾性儿好、模样儿周正的，就好。”贾政道：“老太太吩咐的很是。但只一件：姑娘也要好，第一要他自己学好才好；不然，不稂不莠的，反倒耽误了人家的女孩儿，岂不可惜？”贾母听了这话，心里却有些不喜欢，便说道：“论起来，现放着你们作父母的，那里用我去操心？但只我想宝玉这孩子，从小儿跟着我，未免多疼他一点儿，耽误了他成人的正事，也是有的；只是我看他那生来的模样儿，也还齐整，心性儿也还实在，未必一定是那种没出息的、必至遭塌了人家的女孩儿。也不知是我偏心？——我看着横竖比环儿略好些。不知你们看着怎么样？”

几句话，说得贾政心中甚实不安，连忙陪笑道：“老太太看的人也多了，既说他好，有造化，想来是不错的。只是儿子望他成人的性儿太急了一点，或者竟合古人的话相反，倒



Struck by a sudden thought then, she remarked cheerfully to Jia Zheng, "Her Imperial Highness is really very concerned about Baoyu. The other day she asked after him specially."

"But the scamp has fallen short of her kind expectations," he answered. "He won't study properly."

"Well, I put in a good word for him. I told her that recently he'd learned to write essays."

"No, he still isn't up to that, madam."

"You're always sending him to write poems and essays outside, and doesn't he do all right? He's only a child; you have to teach him slowly. As the saying goes, 'No one grows fat on just one mouthful.'"

"Quite right, madam," he agreed at once with a smile.

"Talking of Baoyu," she went on, "I want to consult you on something. Now that he's growing up, you should look out for some nice girl for him. After all, marriage is for life — it's very important. Whether she's a distant relative or a close one, wealthy or poor, is immaterial. Provided we know for sure that she has a good temper and is nice-looking, that will do well enough."

"That's very true, madam, but I'd just like to add this: Before we find a good girl for him he must learn better ways himself. Otherwise, if he turned out a ne'er-do-well and spoilt some girl's life, that would be deplorable."

This answer vexed the old lady.

"Of course," she said, "with his father and mother at hand, why should I worry my head over this? I suppose, as Baoyu's been with me since he was small, I may have spoilt him a bit and held up his progress. Still, he seems to me quite handsome and, what's more, he has a good heart. How can you be so sure he's a good-for-nothing, bound to spoil some girl's life? Or am I prejudiced? I think he's better anyway than Huan. What's your opinion?"

Disconcerted by this, Jia Zheng answered with a smile, "You have so much experience of people, madam, if you approve of him and think him promising, you can't be wrong. I was just a little too anxious for him to grow up quickly. This may be the reverse of that old saying, 'No man recognizes his son's good qualities.'"¹

是‘莫知其子之美’了。”一句话把贾母也恹笑了，众人也都陪着笑了。贾母因说道：“你这会子也有了几岁年纪，又居着官，自然越历练越老成。”说到这里，回头瞅着邢夫人合王夫人，笑道：“想他那年轻的时候，那一种古怪脾气，比宝玉还加一倍呢。直等娶了媳妇，才略略的懂了些人事儿。如今只抱怨宝玉。这会子，我看宝玉比他还略体些人情儿呢！”说的邢夫人王夫人都笑了，因说道：“老太太又说起逗笑儿的话儿来了。”

说着，小丫头们进来告诉鸳鸯：“请示老太太，晚饭伺候下了。”贾母便问：“你们又咕咕唧唧的说什么？”鸳鸯笑着回明了。贾母道：“那么着，你们也都吃饭去罢，单留凤姐儿和珍哥媳妇跟着我吃罢。”贾政及邢王二夫人都答应着，伺候摆上饭来，贾母又催了一遍，才都退出各散。

却说邢夫人自去了。贾政同王夫人进入房中。贾政因提起贾母方才的话来，说道：“老太太这么疼宝玉。毕竟要他有些实学，日后可以混得功名才好：不枉老太太疼他一场，也不至遭塌了人家的女儿。”王夫人道：“老爷这话自然是该当的。”贾政因派个屋里的丫头传出去告诉李贵：“宝玉放学回来，索性吃饭后再叫他过来，说我还要问他话呢。”李贵答应了“是”。至宝玉放了学，刚要过来请安，只见李贵道：“二爷先不用过去。老爷吩咐了，今日叫二爷吃了饭就过去呢。听见还有话问二爷呢。”宝玉听了这话，又是一个闷雷，只得见过贾母，便回园吃饭。三口两口吃完，忙漱了



The old lady laughed at this and the others joined in.

“Now that you’re getting on in years and have an official post you’re naturally growing more diplomatic,” she chuckled. She turned to tell Lady Xing and Lady Wang, “When I think of him as a boy, with his cranky ways, he was twice as bad as Baoyu! It was only after his marriage that he began to learn a little sense. Now he’s for ever complaining about his son, but to my mind Baoyu shows a bit more understanding than *he* does!”

Both her daughters-in-law laughed, “You will have your little joke, madam!”

Some young maids came in then to ask Yuanyang to announce that dinner was ready.

“What are you whispering about over there?” the old lady asked. When told by Yuanyang she said, “In that case the rest of you had better all go and have dinner, leaving just Xifeng and Zhen’s wife to eat with me.”

Jia Zheng and Their Ladyships agreed to this but waited none the less till the meal was served and she dismissed them again before withdrawing, Lady Xing returning to the other mansion.

Jia Zheng and Lady Wang went back to their own quarters, where he reverted to his mother’s proposal.

“The old lady dotes on Baoyu,” he said. “But he must have some solid learning if he’s to get an official rank in future. Then all her affection for him won’t have been wasted, and he won’t ruin some girl’s life.”

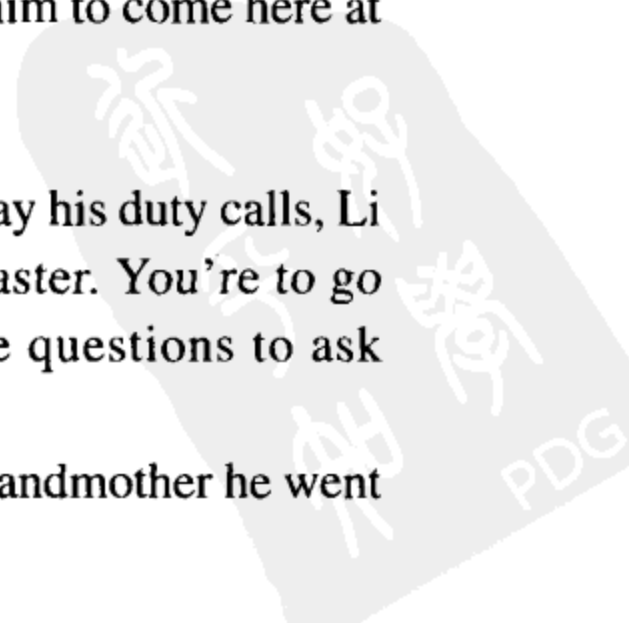
“Of course you are right, sir,” agreed Lady Wang.

He sent one of the maids to Li Gui with the message: “When Baoyu gets back from school and has had his dinner, I want him to come here at once. I have something to ask him.”

“Very good,” was Li Gui’s answer.

So when Baoyu, back from school, was about to pay his duty calls, Li Gui told him, “There’s no need for that, Second Master. You’re to go to see your father after dinner. I hear he has some questions to ask you.”

Baoyu was thunder-struck. Having called on his grandmother he went



口，便往贾政这边来。

贾政此时在内书房坐着。宝玉进来请了安，一旁侍立。贾政问道：“这几日我心上有事，也忘了问你。那一日，你说你师父叫你讲一个月的书，就要给你开笔。如今算来，将两个月了，你到底开了笔了没有？”宝玉道：“才做过三次，师父说：‘且不必回老爷知道；等好些，再回老爷知道罢。’因此，这两天总没敢回。”贾政道：“是什么题目？”宝玉道：“一个是‘吾十有五而志于学’，一个是‘人不知而不愠’，一个是‘则归墨’三字。”贾政道：“都有稿儿么？”宝玉道：“都是作了抄出来，师父又改的。”贾政道：“你带了家来了，还是在学房里呢？”宝玉道：“在学房里呢。”贾政道：“叫人取了来我瞧。”宝玉连忙叫人传话与焙茗，叫他往学房中去，“我书桌子抽屉里有一本薄薄儿竹纸本子，上面写着‘窗课’两字的就是，快拿来。”

一回儿，焙茗拿了来，递给宝玉，宝玉呈与贾政。贾政翻开看时，见头一篇写着题目是“吾十有五而志于学”。他原本破的是“圣人有志于学，幼而已然矣”。代儒却将“幼”字抹去，明用“十五”。贾政道：“你原本‘幼’字便扣不清题目了，幼字是从小起，至十六以前都是‘幼’。这章书是圣人自言学问工夫与年俱进的话，所以十五，三十，四十，五十，六十，七十，俱要明点出来，才见得到了几时有这么个光景，到了几时又有那么个光景。师父把你幼字改了十五，便明白了好些。”看到承题，那抹去的原本云：



back to the Garden for a hasty meal, then rinsed his mouth and hurried over to see his father, whom he found sitting in his inner study. Baoyu paid his respects, then stood there at attention.

“These days I have had other things on my mind, so there’s something I forgot to ask you,” said Jia Zheng. “Earlier on, you said your teacher had told you to expound the classics for a month, after which he would start you off on essay-writing. Nearly two months have passed since then. Have you started writing essays?”

“I’ve only written three, sir. The teacher said, there was no need to tell you until I can write better. That’s why I didn’t venture to report it.”

“What were the subjects?”

“One was ‘At fifteen I set my mind on study,’ one was ‘When people do not know him he bears no resentment,’ one was ‘Then they followed the Mohists.’”²

“Do you have the drafts?”

“I copied them all out and the teacher corrected them.”

“Did you bring them home or leave them at school?”

“They are at school.”

“Have them fetched for me to see.”

Baoyu promptly sent word to Beiming that he was to fetch him quickly from the school a thin bamboo-paper copybook labelled Class Work, which was in the drawer of his desk.

Soon Beiming brought in the exercise book and gave it to Baoyu, who handed it to his father. Opening it he read the first essay entitled “At fifteen I set my mind on study.” Baoyu had started off, “Even as a child the sage had already set his mind on study.” Dairu had crossed out “child” and substituted “at fifteen.”

Jia Zheng commented, “Your use of ‘child’ doesn’t make the meaning clear, because childhood lasts until the age of sixteen. In this passage the sage explained how his learning and understanding improved with the years; that is why he specified clearly his attainments at fifteen, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty and seventy, to show different stages of development. By changing your ‘child’ to ‘at fifteen’ your teacher made it much clearer.”

Going on to read the exegesis he saw that the original, which had been



“夫不志于学，人之常也。”贾政摇头道：“不但是孩子气，可见你本性不是个学者的志气。”又看后句：“圣人十五而志之，不亦难乎？”说道：“这更不成话了！”然后看代儒的改本云：“夫人孰不学？而志于学者卒鲜。此圣人所为自信于十五时欤？”便问：“改的懂得么？”宝玉答应道：“懂得。”

又看第二艺，题目是“人不知而不愠”。便先看代儒的改本云：“不以不知而愠者，终无改其说乐矣。”方觑着眼看那抹去的底本，说道：“你是什么？——‘能无愠人之心，纯乎学者也。’上一句似单做了‘而不愠’三个字的题目，下一句又犯了下文君子的分界；必如改笔，才合题位呢。且下句找清上文，方是书理。须要细心领略。”宝玉答应着。贾政又往下看：“夫不知，未有不愠者也；而竟不然。是非由说而乐者，曷克臻此？”原本末句“非纯学者乎。”贾政道：“这也与破题同病的。这改的也罢了，不过清苦，还说得去。”

第三艺是“则归墨”。贾政看了题目，自己扬着头想了一想，因问宝玉道：“你的书讲到这里了么？”宝玉道：“师父说，《孟子》好懂些，所以倒先讲《孟子》，大前日才讲完了。如今讲上《论语》呢。”贾政因看这个破承，倒没大





crossed out, started, "Now it is common for people not to be bent on study." He shook his head.

"Not only is this childish, it shows you have no desire to become a scholar."

He read on, "For the sage to set his mind on it at fifteen was surely very rare."

"This is even greater nonsense!" he exclaimed.

Then he read Dairu's correction, "Who is there who does not study? But few set their minds on it. This was why the sage had faith in himself when he was fifteen."

"Do you understand his corrections?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

His father then turned to the second essay on "When people do not know him he bears no resentment." First he read the teacher's correction: "One who does not grieve because other people do not recognize his merits will remain well content." Then strained his eyes to read what had been crossed out.

"What is this? 'When one is not annoyed with people, he is truly a scholar.' First you tackle only the idea of 'no resentment'. Then you confuse the definition of a gentleman. Of course that had to be changed to fit the subject. Besides, to be logical, the second part should refer to what precedes it. You need to think things over more carefully."

"Yes, sir."

Jia Zheng read on, "Now all men grieve if their talents go unrecognized, yet he was an exception. How could he have achieved this unless he was well content?" And Baoyu's conclusion read, "Wasn't he a true scholar?"

Jia Zheng commented, "This has the same fault as the opening. The correction, though a little flat, will pass muster."

The third essay was on "Then they followed the Mohists."

After reading the title he looked up thoughtfully to ask Baoyu, "Have you studied *Mencius* already?"

"The teacher said *Mencius* was easier to understand, so he taught me that first, sir. We finished three days ago and are on the first half of *The Analects* now."



改。破题云：“言于舍杨之外，若别无所归者焉。”贾政道：“第二句倒难为你。”“夫墨，非欲归者也，而墨之言已半天下矣，则舍杨之外，欲不归于墨，得乎？”贾政道：“这是你做的么？”宝玉答应道：“是。”贾政点点头儿，因说道：“这也并没有什么出色处，但初试笔能如此，还算不离。前年我在任上时，还出过‘惟士为能’这个题目。那些童生都读过前人这篇，不能自出心裁，每多抄袭。你念过没有？”宝玉道：“也念过。”贾政道：“我要你另换个主意，不许雷同了前人，只做个破题也使得。”

宝玉只得答应着，低头搜索枯肠。贾政背着手，也在门口站着作想。只见一个小小厮往外飞走，看见贾政，连忙侧身垂手站住。贾政便问道：“作什么？”小厮回道：“老太太那边姨太太来了，二奶奶传出话来，叫预备饭呢。”贾政听了，也没言语，那小厮自去了。

谁知宝玉自从宝钗搬回家去，十分想念，听见薛姨妈来了，只当宝钗同来，心中早已忙了，便乍着胆子回道：“破题倒作了一个，但不知是不是？”贾政道：“你念来我听。”宝玉念道：“天下不皆士也，能无产者，亦仅矣。”贾政听了，点着头道：“也还使得。以后作文，总要把界限分清，把神理想明白了，再去动笔。你来的时候，老太太知道不知





Jia Zheng saw that the opening was virtually unaltered. "It seems there was no other course to follow apart from that of Yang Zhu."

"That's not too bad for you," he commented, then read on, "It is not that men wanted to follow the Mohists, but as Mozi's teachings swayed half the world, apart from Yang Zhu who else was there to follow?"

"Did you write this?" he asked his son.

"Yes, sir."

Jia Zheng nodded. "It's nothing very brilliant; still it's not bad for a beginner. The other year at my post I set the subject 'Only a knight is capable of this.'³ Those candidates had all read essays on this theme, and instead of writing something original they could only plagiarize. Have you studied that passage?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to introduce some ideas of your own. Don't imitate earlier writers. Just broach the theme and that will be enough."

Baoyu, forced to accept this assignment, lowered his head and cudgelled his brains while his father, his hands clasped behind his back, also stood by the door thinking. Just then a young page came dashing towards the gate. At sight of the master he pulled up and stood respectfully with his arms at his sides.

"What are you doing?" Jia Zheng asked.

"Madam Xue has called on the old lady, and Madam Lian has told us to order dinner."

As Jia Zheng made no comment, the page withdrew.

Now ever since Baochai had left the Garden, Baoyu had missed her acutely. On hearing that Aunt Xue had called, he assumed that Baochai must be with her. He braced himself to say:

"I've broached the subject, sir, but don't know whether it will do or not."

"Read it out."

"Not all men in the world are knights. If one without property can remain steadfast, that is quite exemplary."

Jia Zheng nodded. "That will do. In future when you write essays, you must first make clear the definitions and grasp the meaning and logic. Does the old lady know that you're here?"



道？”宝玉道：“知道的。”贾政道：“既如此，你还到老太太处去罢。”

宝玉答应了个“是”，只得拿捏着，慢慢的退出。刚过穿廊月洞门的影屏，便一溜烟跑到贾母院门口。急得焙茗在后头赶着叫道：“看跌倒了！老爷来了。”宝玉那里听的见？刚进得门来，便听见王夫人、凤姐、探春等笑语之声。丫鬟们见宝玉来了，连忙打起帘子，悄悄告诉道：“姨太太在这里呢。”宝玉赶忙进来给薛姨妈请安，过来才给贾母请了晚安。贾母便问：“你今儿怎么这早晚才散学？”宝玉悉把贾政看文章并命作破题的话述了一遍。贾母笑容满面。宝玉因问众人道：“宝姐姐在那里坐着呢？”薛姨妈笑道：“你宝姐姐没过来，家里和香菱作活呢。”

宝玉听了，心中索然，又不好就走。只见说着话儿已摆上饭来。自然是贾母薛姨妈上坐，探春等陪坐。薛姨妈道：“宝哥儿呢？”贾母笑着说道：“宝玉跟着我这边坐罢。”宝玉连忙回道：“头里散学时，李贵传老爷的话，叫吃了饭过去，我赶着要了一碟菜，泡茶吃了一碗饭，就过去了。老太太和姨妈、姐姐们用罢。”贾母道：“既这么着，凤丫头就过来跟着我。你太太才说他今儿吃斋，叫他们自己吃去罢。”王夫人也道：“你跟着老太太姨太太吃罢，不用等我，我吃斋呢。”于是凤姐告了坐，丫头安了杯筋。凤姐执壶，斟了一巡，才归坐。



"Yes, sir."

"In that case, you had better go now to her place."

Baoyu assented. Controlling his impatience he slowly withdrew. However, once past the screen by the moon-gate at the end of the corridor, he ran like the wind to the Lady Dowager's compound, paying no attention to Beiming who called frantically after him:

"Mind you don't fall! The master's coming!"

As soon as he entered the gate, Baoyu heard his mother and Xifeng laughing and chatting with Tanchun and some others. At sight of him the maid who lifted the portière whispered:

"Your aunt is here."

Baoyu hurried in to greet Aunt Xue, then paid his evening respects to the old lady.

"How is it you're so late back from school?" she asked.

He explained that his father had been reading his essays and had made him broach a new theme. His grandmother beamed.

Then he asked the others, "Where is Cousin Baochai?"

"She didn't come," answered Aunt Xue with a smile. "She's doing needlework at home with Xiangling."

Baoyu, disappointed as he was, could hardly leave at once. As they were chatting dinner was served, and naturally the Lady Dowager and Aunt Xue took the seats of honour, with Tanchun and the others in lower seats.

"How about Baoyu?" asked Aunt Xue.

"Baoyu, come and sit with me," said the old lady.

"When I came back from school," he countered quickly, "Li Gui said my father wanted to see me after my meal; so I asked at once for one dish and one bowl of rice with some tea, then went over there. Please go on with your meal, ladies."

"In that case, Xifeng can sit with me. Your mother just told me that this is one of her fast days, so she'll be eating separately."

Lady Wang also told Xifeng, "Go ahead and eat with the old lady and Aunt Xue. You needn't wait for me, I'm fasting today."

Xifeng acquiescing, a maid set a cup and chopsticks before her. She rose to take the wine-pot and fill the others' cups before resuming her



大家吃着酒，贾母便问道：“可是才姨太太提香菱；我听见前儿丫头们说‘秋菱’，不知是谁，问起来才知道是他。怎么那孩子好好的又改了名字呢？”薛姨妈满脸飞红，叹了口气，道：“老太太再别提起！自从蟠儿娶了这个不知好歹的媳妇，成日家咕咕唧唧，如今闹的也不成个人家了。我也说过他几次，他牛心不听说，我也没那么大精神和他们尽着吵去，只好由他们去。可不是他嫌这丫头的名儿不好改的！”贾母道：“名儿什么要紧的事呢。”薛姨妈道：“说起来，我也怪臊的。其实老太太这边，有什么不知道的？他那里是为这名儿不好？听见说，他因为是宝丫头起的，他才有心要改。”贾母道：“这又是什么原故呢？”薛姨妈把手绢子不住的擦眼泪，未从说，又叹了一口气，道：“老太太还不知道呢！这如今媳妇子专和宝丫头呕气。前日老太太打发人看我去，我们家里正闹呢。”贾母连忙接着问道：“可是前儿听见姨太太肝气疼，要打发人看去；后来听见说好了，所以没着人去。依我劝，姨太太竟把他们别放在心上。再者，他们也是新过门的小夫妻，过些时，自然就好了。我看宝丫头性格儿温厚和平，虽然年轻，比大人还强几倍。前日那小丫头子回来说，我们这边，还都赞叹了他一会子。都象宝丫头那样心胸儿，脾气儿，真是百里挑一的！不是我说句冒失话，那给人家作了媳妇儿，怎么叫公婆不疼、家里上上下下的不宾服呢？”

宝玉头里已经听烦了，推故要走，及听见这话，又坐下

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seat.

As they drank the Lady Dowager remarked, "Just now, aunt, you mentioned Xiangling. The other day I heard the maids speak of Qiuling, and had no idea whom they meant. When I asked, I discovered it was Xiangling! Why should the child change a perfectly good name?"

Aunt Xue flushed crimson and sighed.

"Don't mention that, madam!" she said. "Since Pan married that senseless wife of his they bicker all day long, not like a proper family at all. I've spoken to her several times, but she's too stubborn to listen and I haven't the energy to wrangle with them; so I just let them do as they please. It was *she* who disliked the maid's name and must needs change it."

"Why, what was wrong with it?"

"I'm ashamed to speak of it, madam. But you over here know all that goes on in our household. Of course it wasn't because the name was no good but because it was chosen by Baochai — or so I've heard. That's why she wanted to change it."

"But why should that be?"

Aunt Xue wiped her tears with her handkerchief. Before going on she sighed.

"You've no idea, madam! Nowadays my daughter-in-law keeps picking on Baochai. The other day when you sent someone to see me, we were in the middle of a family row."

"Yes, the other day I heard you had liver trouble and meant to send someone to ask after you; but then I didn't, because they said you were better. My advice to you is: Don't take such things to heart. The young couple are newly married; they'll get straightened out in time. Not everyone can have Baochai's sweet disposition — young as she is, she's much better than most older folk. The other day when the maid came back to report, we all lauded her to the skies as one in a hundred, so broad-minded and sweet-tempered! I'm willing to guarantee that, once she marries, her in-laws are bound to love her and high and low in their house will look up to her."

Baoyu, who had been listlessly waiting for an excuse to leave, sat down again now to listen carefully.



呆呆的往下听。薛姨妈道：“不中用。他虽好，到底是女孩儿家，养了蟠儿这个糊涂孩子，真真叫我不放心。只怕在外头喝点子酒，闹出事来。幸亏老太太这里的大爷二爷常和他在一块儿，我还放点儿心。”宝玉听到这里，便接口道：“姨妈更不用悬心。薛大哥相好的都是些正经买卖大客人，都是有体面的，那里就闹出事来？”薛姨妈笑道：“依你这样说，我敢只不用操心了。”说话间，饭已吃完。宝玉先告辞了：“晚间还要看书。”便各自去了。

这里丫头们刚捧上茶来，只见琥珀走过来向贾母耳朵旁边说了几句，贾母便向凤姐儿道：“你快去罢，瞧瞧巧姐儿去罢。”凤姐听了，还不知何故。大家也怔了。琥珀遂过来向凤姐道：“刚才平儿打发小丫头子来回二奶奶，说：‘巧姐儿身上不大好，请二奶奶忙着些过来才好呢。’”贾母因说道：“你快去罢，姨太太也不是外人。”凤姐连忙答应，在薛姨妈跟前告了辞。又见王夫人说道：“你先过去，我就去。小孩子家魂儿还不全呢，别叫丫头们大惊小怪的。屋里的猫儿狗儿，也叫他们留点神儿。——尽着孩子贵气，偏有这些琐碎。”凤姐答应了，然后带了小丫头回房去了。

这里薛姨妈又问了一回黛玉的病。贾母道：“林丫头那孩子倒罢了，只是心重些，所以身子就不大很结实了。要赌灵怪儿，也和宝丫头不差什么；要赌宽厚待人里头，却不济他宝姐姐有耽待、有尽让了。”薛姨妈又说了两句闲话儿，便道：“老太太歇着罢，我也要到家里去看看，只剩下宝丫头和香菱了。打那么同着姨太太看看巧姐儿。”贾母道：“正是。姨太太上年纪的人，看看是怎么不好，说给他们，也得点主



"It's no use," said Aunt Xue. "However good she is, she's only a girl. And Pan's grown up such a fool, he really causes me endless anxiety. I'm always afraid he'll drink too much outside and land himself in trouble. Luckily he's often with the gentlemen here: That makes me feel easier in my mind."

Baoyu put in, "Don't worry, aunty. All his friends are big merchants and respectable people. How could he get into trouble?"

Aunt Xue smiled at him. "If you're right, then I needn't worry."

The meal at an end, Baoyu excused himself on the pretext that he had to study that evening. And while some maids were serving tea, Hupo came in with a whispered message for the old lady, who turned to tell Xifeng:

"You must go home at once to see to Qiaojie."

Xifeng did not know what had happened, and the others were mystified too until Hupo explained:

"Just now Pinger sent a girl to report that Qiaojie is poorly. She hopes you'll go back at once, madam."

"Go on," urged the Lady Dowager. "You don't have to stand on ceremony with your aunty."

Xifeng promptly assented and took her leave of Aunt Xue.

"You go first," put in Lady Wang. "I'll be coming presently. Poor little soul! Don't let the maids make a commotion, and tell them to keep your pet dogs and cats quiet too. A delicately nurtured child like her is bound to have these little upsets."

Murmuring assent, Xifeng went off with her maid.

Aunt Xue asked now about Daiyu's illness.

"She's a good child, only too sensitive," said the old lady. "That's undermined her health. As far as intelligence goes, she's a match for Baochai; but regarding consideration for other people, she hasn't her thoughtfulness and unselfishness."

After a little more idle talk Aunt Xue said, "You should rest now, madam, and I must get back to see how things are doing, as there are only Baochai and Xiangling at home. And from there I must go with my sister to see Qiaojie."

"That's right. You've had a great deal of experience. Tell them if



意儿。”薛姨妈便告辞，同着王夫人出来，往凤姐院里去了。

却说贾政试了宝玉一番，心里却也喜欢，走向外面和那些门客闲谈，说起方才的话来。便有新近到来最善大棋的一个王尔调，名作梅的，说道：“据我们看来，宝二爷的学问已是大进了。”贾政道：“那有进益？不过略懂得些罢咧。‘学问’两个字，早得很呢！”詹光道：“这是老世翁过谦的话。不但王大兄这般说，就是我们看，宝二爷必定要高发的。”贾政笑道：“这也是诸位过爱的意思。”那王尔调又道：“晚生还有一句话，不揣冒昧，合老世翁商议。”贾政道：“什么事？”王尔调陪笑道：“也是晚生的相与，做过南韶道的张大老爷家，有一位小姐，说是生的德容功貌俱全，此时尚未受聘。他又没有儿子，家资巨万，但是要富贵双全的人家，女婿又要出众，才肯作亲。晚生来了两个月，瞧着宝二爷的人品学业，都是必要大成的。老世翁这样门楣，还有何说！若晚生过去，包管一说就成。”贾政道：“宝玉说亲，却也是年纪了，并且老太太常说起。但只张大老爷素来尚未深悉。”詹光道：“王兄所提张家，晚生却也知道，况合大老爷那边是旧亲，老世翁一问便知。”贾政想了一回，道：“大老爷那边，





you notice anything amiss, so that they'll know what to do."

Thereupon Aunt Xue took her leave, accompanying Lady Wang to Xifeng's quarters.

Jia Zheng, pleased by the results of Baoyu's test, brought the subject up when he went out to chat with his secretaries. One of them was the relative newcomer Wang Ertiao, a good chess-player whose courtesy name was Zuomei.

"We can see that Master Bao has made great progress in learning," he observed.

"Progress? No," said Jia Zheng. "He's only just making a start. And it's too early by far to talk of 'learning.'"

Zhan Guang demurred, "You are too modest, sir. This is the opinion of us all, not only Mr. Wang. Master Bao is sure to distinguish himself in the examinations."

"You are too partial to him, gentlemen."

"I have a proposal to make, sir," added Wang Ertiao, "If you don't think it presumptuous."

"What is it?"

With a deferential smile Wang answered, "Some acquaintances of mine, the family of Old Mr. Zhang the former Governor of Nanshao, have a daughter who is said to be a paragon of virtue and a beauty, and she is not yet bespoken. The Zhangs have no son, and a property worth millions; but they won't agree to a match until they can find a young man from a rich and noble house who is himself outstanding. After two months here I can see that Master Bao, with his disposition and scholarship, will go far. And your family, sir, is of course unexceptionable! If I propose the match, I can vouch for it that they will agree at once."

"Yes, Baoyu has reached the right age, and the old lady often speaks of this," Jia Zheng answered. "But I know very little about this Old Mr. Zhang."

"I know this family Brother Wang means," said Zhan Guang. "The Zhangs are related to the Elder Master. You can ask him about them, sir."

After a moment's reflection Jia Zheng remarked, "I have never heard



不曾听得这门亲戚。”詹光道：“老世翁原来不知：这张府上原和邢舅太爷那边有亲的。”

贾政听了，方知是邢夫人的亲戚。坐了一回，进来了，便要同王夫人说知，转问邢夫人去。谁知王夫人陪了薛姨妈到凤姐那边看巧姐儿去了。那天已经掌灯时候。薛姨妈去了，王夫人才过来了。贾政告诉了王尔调和詹光的话，又问：“巧姐儿怎么了？”王夫人道：“怕是惊风的光景。”贾政道：“不甚利害呀？”王夫人道：“看着是搐风的来头，只还没搐出来呢。”贾政听了，“咳”了一声，便不言语，各自安歇不提。

却说次日邢夫人过贾母这边来请安，王夫人便提起张家的事，一面回贾母，一面问邢夫人。邢夫人道：“张家虽系老亲，但近年来久已不通音信，不知他家的姑娘是怎么样的。倒是前日孙亲家太太打发老婆子来问安，却说起张家的事，说他家有个姑娘，托孙亲家那边有对劲的提一提。听见说，只这一个女孩儿，十分娇养，也识得几个字，见不得大阵仗儿，常在屋里不出来的。张大老爷又说：只有这一个女孩儿，不肯嫁出去，怕人家公婆严，姑娘受不得委屈。必要女婿过门，赘在他家，给他料理些家事。”贾母听到这里，不等说完，便道：“这断使不得。我们宝玉，别人伏侍他还不够呢，倒给人家当家去！”邢夫人道：“正是老太太这个话。”贾母因向王夫人道：“你回来告诉你老爷，就说我的话：这张家的亲事是作不得的。”王夫人答应了。



him speak of this connection.”

“You wouldn’t know of them, sir, because they are related to his brother-in-law Mr. Xing,” Zhan Guang explained, whereupon Jia Zheng realized that they were relatives of Lady Xing.

After sitting there for a while he went in to pass on this proposal to his wife and get her to make inquiries of Lady Xing. But his wife had gone with Aunt Xue to see Qiaojie, and she did not come back till the evening when Aunt Xue had left. Only after telling her what his secretaries had said did Jia Zheng ask:

“How is Qiaojie?”

“She seems to have had some kind of fit.”

“Is it serious?”

“It looks like epilepsy, but she hasn’t had convulsions.”

He simply coughed by way of comment, after which both of them retired for the night.

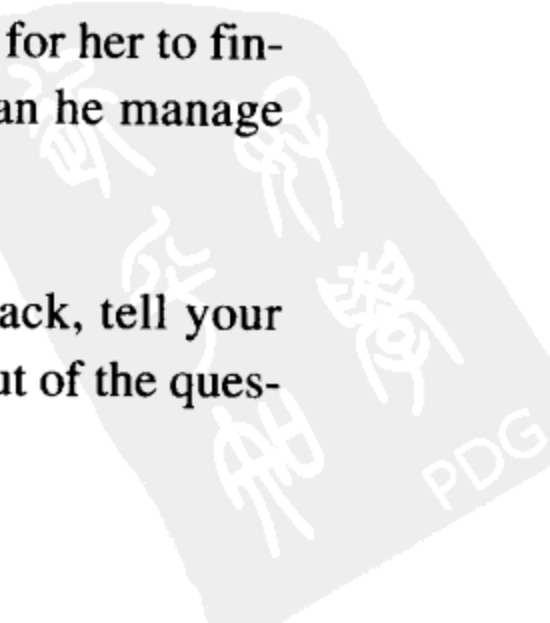
The next day, when Lady Xing came over to pay her respects, Lady Wang told her mother-in-law of this proposal and asked her sister-in-law about the Zhang family.

“Though we are relatives from way back, these last few years we’ve been out of touch,” was the answer. “I don’t know what that girl is like. But the other day Yingchun’s mother-in-law Mrs. Sun sent an old woman to ask after us and she mentioned this Zhang family, saying they wanted Mrs. Sun to find a suitable husband for their daughter. I hear she’s an only child and very pampered. She has studied a little, but being shy of company she always stays at home. Because she’s the only daughter, Old Mr. Zhang won’t hear of her leaving home to be married, for fear her in-laws are too strict with her. They want a son-in-law who will live with them and help to manage the household.”

“That would never do!” cried the old lady, not waiting for her to finish. “Our Baoyu needs people to look after *him*: how can he manage someone else’s household?”

“Quite so, madam,” agreed Lady Xing.

The old lady turned to Lady Wang. “When you go back, tell your husband from me: This match with the Zhang family is out of the question.”



贾母便问：“你们昨日看巧姐儿怎么样？头里平儿来回我，说很不大好，我也要过去看看呢。”邢王二夫人道：“老太太虽疼他，他那里耽的住？”贾母道：“却也不止为他，我也要走动走动，活活筋骨儿。”说着，便吩咐：“你们吃饭去罢，回来同我过去。”

邢王二夫人答应着出来，各自去了。一时，吃了饭，都来陪贾母到凤姐房中。凤姐连忙出来，接了进去。贾母便问：“巧姐儿到底怎么样？”凤姐儿道：“只怕是搐风的来头。”贾母道：“这么着还不请人赶着瞧？”凤姐道：“已经请去了。”贾母因同邢王二夫人进房来看。只见奶子抱着，用桃红綾子小绵被儿裹着，脸皮趣青，眉梢鼻翅，微有动意。贾母同邢王二夫人看了看，便出外间坐下。

正说间，只见一个小丫头回凤姐道：“老爷打发人问姐儿怎么样。”凤姐道：“替我回老爷，就说请大夫去了。一会儿开了方子，就过去回老爷。”贾母忽然想起张家的事来，向王夫人道：“你该就去告诉你老爷，省了人家去说了，回来又驳回。”又问邢夫人道：“你们和张家如今为什么不走了？”邢夫人因又说：“论起那张家行事，也难合咱们作亲，太啬克，没的玷辱了宝玉。”凤姐听了这话，已知八九，便问道：“太太不是说宝兄弟的亲事？”邢夫人道：“可不是么！”贾母接着，因把刚才的话，告诉凤姐，凤姐笑道：“不是我当着老祖



Lady Wang promised to do so.

“And how did you find Qiaojie yesterday?” the old lady asked them next. “Just now Pinger came over and said she’s in a bad way. I intend to go and see her too.”

“We know how fond you are of her, but you shouldn’t trouble, madam,” they demurred.

“No, it’s not just to see her. I need a bit of exercise to loosen my joints.”

They went off then, on her instructions, to have their meal, after which they escorted her to Xifeng’s compound. Xifeng, hurrying out to meet them, invited them in.

“How is Qiaojie?” asked the old lady.

“We’re afraid it’s epilepsy,” was the reply.

“In that case why don’t you send for a doctor at once?”

“We already have, madam.”

Their Ladyships went into the inner room where the nurse was holding the child wrapped up in a peach-red silk-padded quilt. Her face was deathly pale, her forehead contorted and her nose feebly twitching. After looking at her they went back to the other room and had just sat down to have a consultation when a young maid came in.

“His Lordship has sent to ask after Qiaojie,” she announced.

“Tell him from me that we’ve sent for the doctor,” answered Xifeng. “We’ll let the master know what prescription he makes out.”

The old lady, recollecting the Zhangs’ proposal, reminded Lady Wang, “You should go and let your husband know what we decided. Otherwise the Zhangs may send a matchmaker and their request.” She asked Lady Xing, “How is it you have nothing to do with the Zhang family these days?”

“Because their stingy ways don’t suit us, madam. They’re not good enough for Baoyu!”

From this Xifeng inferred what was afoot.

“Are you talking about Brother Bao’s marriage, madam?” she asked.

Lady Xing having confirmed this, the old lady explained the conclusion they had reached.

“Excuse my presumption, Old Ancestress,” said Xifeng with a twinkle.



宗太太们跟前说句大胆的话：现放着天配的姻缘，何用别处去找？”贾母笑问道：“在那里？”凤姐道：“一个‘宝玉’，一个‘金锁’，老太太怎么忘了？”贾母笑了一笑，因说：“昨日你姑妈在这里，你为什么不提？”凤姐道：“老祖宗和太太们在前头，那里有我们小孩子家说话的地方儿？况且姨妈过来瞧老祖宗，怎么提这些个？这也得太太们过去求亲才是。”贾母笑了，邢王二夫人也都笑了。贾母因道：“可是我背晦了。”

说着，人回：“大夫来了。”贾母便坐在外间，邢王二夫人略避。那大夫同贾璉进来，给贾母请了安，方进房中。看了出来，站在地下，躬身回贾母道：“姐儿一半是内热，一半是惊风。须先用一剂发散风痰药，还要用四神散才好，因病势来的不轻。如今的牛黄都是假的，要找真牛黄方用得。”贾母道了乏。那大夫同贾璉出去，开了方子，去了。凤姐道：“人参家里常有，这牛黄倒怕未必有，外头买去，只是要真的才好。”王夫人道：“等我打发人到姨太太那边去找找。他家蟠儿向来和那些西客们做买卖，或者有真的，也未可知。我叫人去问问。”正说话间，众姊妹都来瞧来了。坐了一回，也都跟着贾母等去了。

这里煎了药，给巧姐儿灌下去了，只见“喀”的一声，连药带痰都吐出来，凤姐才略放了一点儿心。只见王夫人那边的小丫头，拿着一点儿的小红纸包儿，说道：“二奶奶，牛





“But there’s an ideal match *here*. Why look elsewhere?”

The old lady, chuckling, asked what she meant.

“One ‘precious jade’ and one ‘gold locker’ — how could you forget that, madam?”

“Why didn’t you propose it yesterday when your aunt was here?” countered the old lady, laughing.

“In the presence of our Old Ancestress and Their Ladyships, how could we young people presume? Besides, how could I bring that up when it was our Old Ancestress aunty came to see? The way to do it is for Their Ladyships to call on her and make a formal proposal.”

The Lady Dowager smiled, as did both her daughters-in-law.

“Yes, that was stupid of me,” she conceded.

Just then the doctor was announced. The old lady remained in the outer room while Lady Xing and Lady Wang went inside. The doctor, led in by Jia Lian, paid his respects to the Lady Dowager before going into the sickroom. Returning after examining the patient, he bowed to the old lady and standing before her reported:

“The child’s trouble is half owing to hot humours, half to some external shock. First we should dose her to clear up the cold and phlegm, then give her Four-Spirit Powder, because this illness is quite serious. Nowadays the cow bezoar sold in the market is usually counterfeit. We’ll have to find the genuine article.”

When the old lady had thanked him the doctor went out with Jia Lian to write his prescription, then left.

“We usually keep a stock of ginseng,” said Xifeng. “But I doubt if we have any cow bezoar. If we buy some outside we must make sure it’s genuine.”

“Let me send to Aunt Xue for some,” proposed Lady Wang. “Xue Pan does so much business with overseas merchants, he may have some genuine bezoar. I’ll send to ask them.”

At this point the girls of the family came to ask after Qiaojie, and after a short visit left with the old lady.

When the medicine was ready they forced it down Qiaojie’s throat and, gagging, she brought it up with some phlegm, much to her mother’s relief. And now one of Lady Wang’s young maids came in with a small



黄有了。太太说了，叫二奶奶亲自把分两对准了呢。”凤姐答应着，接过来，便叫平儿配齐了真珠、冰片、朱砂，快熬起来。自己用戥子按方秤了，搀在里面，等巧姐儿醒了，好给他吃。只见贾环掀帘进来，说：“二姐姐，你们巧姐儿怎么了？妈叫我来瞧瞧他。”凤姐见了他母子便嫌，说：“好些了。你回去说，叫你们姨娘想着。”

那贾环口里答应，只管各处瞧看。看了一回，便问凤姐儿道：“你这里听见说有牛黄，不知牛黄是怎么个样儿？给我瞧瞧呢。”凤姐道：“你别在这里闹了，姐儿才好些。那牛黄都煎上了。”贾环听了，便去伸手拿那锦子瞧时，岂知措手不及，“沸”的一声，锦子倒了，火已泼灭了一半。贾环见不是事，自觉没趣，连忙跑了。凤姐急的火星直爆，骂道：“真真那一世的对头冤家！你何苦来还来使促狭！从前你妈要想害我，如今又来害姐儿，我和你几辈子的仇呢？”一面骂平儿不照应。

正骂着，只见丫头来找贾环。凤姐道：“你去告诉赵姨娘，说他操心也太苦了！巧姐儿死定了，不用他惦着了。”平儿急忙在那里配药再熬。那丫头摸不着头脑，便悄悄问平儿道：“二奶奶为什么生气？”平儿将环哥弄倒药锦子说了一遍。丫头道：“怪不得他不敢回来，躲了别处去了。这环哥儿明日还不知怎么样呢！平姐姐，我替你收拾罢。”平儿说：“这倒不消。幸亏牛黄还有一点，如今配好了，你去罢。”丫头

红楼梦
PDG



red package.

"Here's the bezoar, madam," she said. "Her Ladyship wants you to weigh it yourself to make sure the amount is correct."

Xifeng took it, assenting, and told Pinger to make haste and brew the pearl powder, baroos camphor and cinnabar while she herself used a small steelyard to weigh out the required amount of cow bezoar. This had just been mixed with the other ingredients, ready to dose Qiaojie when she woke up, when Jia Huan raised the portiere and came in.

"What's the matter with Qiaojie, Second Cousin?" he asked. "My mother sent me to see her."

"She's better," answered Xifeng, who had an aversion to both him and Concubine Zhao. "Go back and thank your mother for her concern."

Jia Huan, while agreeing to this, kept staring around.

"I hear you've got cow bezoar here. What's it like?" he asked. "Can I have a look?"

"Don't be such a nuisance!" she scolded. "Qiaojie's only just on the mend. The bezoar is being brewed."

Jia Huan reaching out for the skillet bumped against it. It overturned with a splash, dousing the fire, and ashamed of his bungling he took to his heels.

Beside herself with fury Xifeng cursed, "Our true sworn enemy, aren't you! Why play such dirty tricks here? Your mother tried to do me in before; now you come to do for Qiaojie! What cause have I given you to make you hate us so?"

She swore at Pinger too for not stopping him.

As she was raging a maid came in looking for Huan.

"Go and tell Concubine Zhao to stop trying so hard!" snapped Xifeng. "Qiaojie's done for: she needn't worry!"

Pinger was hastily brewing a fresh lot of medicine, and the maid not knowing what was amiss asked in a whisper why Madam Lian was so angry. Pinger told her how Huan had upset the skillet.

"No wonder he dared not go home!" exclaimed the maid. "He must be hiding somewhere. Goodness knows what he'll be up to next! Let me clear up for you, sister."

"There's no need. Luckily there was still a bit of cow bezoar left, and



道：“我一准回去告诉赵姨奶奶，也省了他天天说嘴。”

丫头回去，果然告诉了赵姨娘。赵姨娘气的叫快找环儿。环儿在外间屋子里躲着，被丫头找了来。赵姨娘便骂道：“你这个下作种子！你为什么弄撒了人家的药，招的人家咒骂？我原叫你去问一声，不用进去。你偏进去，又不就走，还要‘虎头上捉虱子’！你看我回了老爷，打你不打！”这里赵姨娘正说着，只听贾环在外间屋子里，更说出些惊心动魄的话来。未知何言，下回分解。





it's ready now. You'd better go."

"I'm going back to tell Concubine Zhao," said the maid. "This should stop her singing his praises every day."

On her return she was as good as her word. Concubine Zhao sent angrily for her son, and the maid found him skulking in an outer room.

"You good-for-nothing!" scolded his mother. "Why spill their medicine, giving them a chance to curse us? I told you to call to ask after her, not to go in. But in you went, and instead of leaving at once you had to 'catch lice on the tiger's head.' Just wait till I tell your father, and see what a thrashing he'll give you!"

As Concubine Zhao was storming, Jia Huan in the outer room made an even more startling statement. To know what it was, read on.

紅樓夢
第八十四回
PDG

第八十五回

贾存周报升郎中任 薛文起复惹放流刑

话说赵姨娘正在屋里抱怨贾环，只听贾环在外间屋里发话道：“我不过弄倒了药锦子，撒了一点子药，那丫头子又没就死了，值的他也骂我，你也骂我，赖我心坏，把我往死里遭塌？等着我明儿还要那小丫头子的命呢！看你们怎么着！只叫他们堤防着就是了。”那赵姨娘赶忙从里间出来，握住他的嘴，说道：“你还只管信口胡噉，还叫人家先要了你的命呢！”娘儿两个吵了一回。赵姨娘听见凤姐的话，越想越气，也不着人来安慰凤姐一声儿。过了几天，巧姐儿也好了。因此，两边结怨比从前更加一层了。

一日，林之孝进来回道：“今日是北静郡王生日，请老爷的示下。”贾政吩咐道：“只按向年旧例办了，回大老爷知道，送去就是了。”林之孝答应了，自去办理。

不一时，贾赦过来同贾政商议带了贾珍、贾琏、宝玉去给北静王拜寿。别人还不理论，惟有宝玉素日仰慕北静王的容貌威仪，巴不得常见才好，遂连忙换了衣服，跟着来过北府。贾赦贾政递了职名候谕。不多时，里面出来了一个太监，手里掐着数珠儿。见了贾赦贾政，笑嘻嘻的说道：“二位老爷好？”贾赦贾政也都赶忙问好，他兄弟三人也过来问了





Chapter 85

Jia Zheng Is Promoted to the Rank of Vice-Minister Xue Pan Is Involved in Another Manslaughter Case

As Concubine Zhao in her room was raging at Jia Huan in the outer room, he suddenly blurted out:

“All I did was upset the skillet and spill some medicine — I didn’t kill the brat! Why should everyone curse me as if I were a monster? Do you want to hound me to death? Some day I’ll kill that little bitch, and let’s see what you do then! Just tell them to watch out.”

His mother hurried out to stop his mouth.

“Still raving!” she cried. “Do you want them to kill me first?”

Mother and son wrangled for a time. And Xifeng’s taunts so rankled with Concubine Zhao that she sent her no further condolences. Although in a few days Qiaojie recovered, their two households were on even worse terms than before.

One day, Lin Zhixiao reported to Jia Zheng, “Today is the birthday of the Prince of Beijing. What are your instructions, sir?”

“Just send presents as we did in the past, after letting Lord She know.”

The steward accepted these orders and went to carry them out.

Presently Jia She came over and they decided to take Jia Zhen, Jia Lian and Baoyu with them to offer congratulations. The others took this as a matter of course, but Baoyu was most eager to see more of the prince whose distinguished appearance and manners had so impressed him. He changed hastily into ceremonial dress and went with his father to the prince’s mansion, where Their Lordships sent in their cards, then waited to be summoned. Soon a eunuch came out, a chaplet in his hand, and beamed at the sight of them, asking:

“How are you two gentlemen?”

Jia She and Jia Zheng greeted him in return, and the three young men



好。那太监道：“王爷叫请进去呢。”

于是爷儿五个跟着那太监进入府中。过了两层门，转过一层殿去，里面方是内宫门。刚到门前，大家站住，那太监先进去回王爷去了。这里门上小太监都迎着问了好。

一时，那太监出来说了个“请”字，爷儿五个肃敬跟人。只见北静郡王穿着礼服，已迎到殿门廊下。贾赦贾政先上来请安，捱次便是珍、琏、宝玉请安。那北静郡王单拉着宝玉道：“我久不见你，很惦记你。”因又笑问道：“你那块玉好？”宝玉躬着身打着一半千儿回道：“蒙王爷福庇，都好。”北静王道：“今日你来，没有什么好东西给你吃的，倒是大家说说话儿罢。”说着，几个老公打起帘子。北静王说：“请。”自己却先进去，然后贾赦等都躬着身跟进去。先是贾赦请北静王受礼，北静王也说了两句谦辞。那贾赦早已跪下，次及贾政等捱次行礼，自不必说。

那贾赦等复肃敬退出，北静王吩咐太监等让在众戚旧一处，好生款待，却单留宝玉在这里说话儿，又赏了坐。宝玉又磕头谢了恩，在挨门边绣墩上侧坐，说了一回读书作文诸事。北静王甚加爱惜，又赏了茶。因说道：“昨儿巡抚吴大人来陛见，说起令尊翁前任学政时，秉公办事，凡属生童，俱心服之至。他陛见时，万岁爷也曾问过，他也十分保举，可知是令尊翁的喜兆。”宝玉连忙站起，听毕这一段话，才回启道：“此是王爷的恩典，吴大人的盛情。”

正说着，小太监进来回道：“外面诸位大人老爷都在前殿



followed suit.

“His Highness asks you to come in,” said the eunuch.

The five of them followed him in past two gates and one court to the inner palace gate, where they halted while he went in to announce their arrival and the young eunuchs there stepped forward to greet them.

Before long, the eunuch returned to invite them in, and they followed him respectfully. The Prince of Beijing in ceremonial robes had come out to the corridor to meet them. First Their Lordships stepped forward to pay their respects, and after them Jia Zhen, Jia lian and Baoyu.

The prince took Baoyu by the hand. “It’s so long since I saw you,” he said, “I’ve been thinking of you.” With a smile he asked, “Have you kept that jade of yours safe?”

Baoyu bowed and bent one knee as he replied, “By the grace of Your Highness, yes.”

“I’ve no rich fare to offer you today, but let us have a chat,” the prince proposed.

Some eunuchs raised the portiere and he led the way in, followed by Jia She’s party with bowed heads. First Jia She asked to pay homage and knelt down even while the prince was declining. Then Jia Zheng and the others made obeisance too.

As they were withdrawing respectfully, the prince ordered eunuchs to take them — all but Baoyu — to join his relatives and friends and to entertain them well. He offered Baoyu a seat so that they could talk, and the boy kowtowed his thanks. Then seated on the edge of an openwork porcelain stool near the door he launched into a description of his studies and essaywriting, to which the prince listened with sympathetic interest.

“Yesterday,” the prince told him after tea had been served, “Governor Wu came to court and spoke of your honourable father’s probity as an examiner, and the great respect in which all the candidates held him. His Majesty asked about this when he received him, and the governor commended your father most highly. This augurs well for him.”

Baoyu who had stood to hear this replied, “Your gracious Highness and Governor Wu are most kind.”

At this point a young eunuch entered to report, “The gentlemen in the front court thank Your Highness for the feast.”



谢王爷赏宴。”说着，呈上谢宴并请午安的片子来。北静王略看了看，仍递给小太监，笑了一笑，说道：“知道了，劳动他们。”那小太监又回道：“这贾宝玉，王爷单赏的饭预备了。”北静王便命那太监带了宝玉到一所极小巧精致的院里，派人陪着吃了饭，又过来谢了恩。北静王又说了些好话儿，忽然笑说道：“我前次见你那块玉，倒有趣儿，回来说了个式样，叫他们也作了一块来。今日你来得正好，就给你带回去玩罢。”因命小太监取来，亲手递给宝玉。宝玉接过来捧着，又谢了，然后退出，北静王又命两个小太监跟出来，才同着贾赦等回来了。

贾赦见过贾母，便各自回去。这里贾政带着他三人请过了贾母的安，又说了些府里遇见什么人。宝玉又回了贾政，吴大人陛见保举的话。贾政道：“这吴大人，本来咱们相好，也是我辈中人，还倒是有骨气的。”又说了几句闲话儿，贾母便叫：“歇着去罢。”贾政退出，珍、琏、宝玉都跟到门口。贾政道：“你们都回去陪老太太坐着去罢。”说着便回房去。刚坐了一坐，只见一个小丫头回道：“外面林之孝请老爷回话。”说着递上个红单帖来，写着吴巡抚的名字。贾政知道来拜，便叫小丫头叫林之孝进来。贾政出至廊檐下。林之孝进来回道：“今日巡抚吴大人来拜，奴才回了去了。再奴才还听见说，现今工部出了一个郎中缺，外头人和部里都吵嚷





He presented the cards on which the guests paid their respects, and the prince after glancing at them handed them back, remarking with a smile:

“I have put them to undue trouble.”

“And the special meal Your Highness is conferring on Jia Baoyu is ready now.”

He received orders then to take Baoyu to a small courtyard, a charming place where attendants waited on him at his meal. On his return to offer thanks, the prince spoke to him kindly again and suddenly remarked with a smile:

“Last time I was so intrigued by that jade of yours that on my return I had a replica made. I’m glad you have come today — you can take it back for your amusement.”

He made the young eunuch fetch it and gave it to Baoyu, who received it with both hands, thanked him and then withdrew. Two young eunuchs escorted him out on their master’s orders and he went back with Jia She and the rest.

While Jia She went home, Jia Zheng took the three young men to call on the old lady and tell her whom they had met in the prince’s mansion, after which Baoyu reported to his father how Governor Wu had recommended him to the Emperor.

“This Governor Wu is an old family friend,” observed Jia Zheng. “He is one of our sort, a man of integrity.”

After a little more casual talk the Lady Dowager urged them to go and rest. Jia Zheng took his leave but told his three juniors, who were following him to the door, to stay and keep the old lady company. Back in his room he had barely sat down when a maid announced:

“Lin Zhixiao is outside with something to report, sir.” She presented Governor Wu’s red visiting-card.

Realizing that Governor Wu had called in his absence, Jia Zheng told her to bring the steward in, and went out to the corridor to see him.

Lin Zhixiao reported, “Today Governor Wu came to call, and I told him where you had gone, sir. I also heard that a vacancy for a vice-minister has come up in the Ministry of Works, and people outside and in the ministry are all saying that you are to be appointed, sir.”



是老爷拟正呢。”贾政道：“瞧罢咧。”林之孝又回了几句话，才出去了。

且说珍、琏、宝玉三人回去，独有宝玉到贾母那边，一面述说北静王待他的光景，并拿出那块玉来。大家看着，笑了一回，贾母因命人：“给他收起来罢，别丢了。”因问：“你那块玉好生带着罢，别闹混了。”宝玉便在项上摘下来，说：“这不是我那一块玉？那里就掉了呢！比起来，两块玉差远着呢，那里混得过？我正要告诉老太太：前儿晚上，我睡的时候，把玉摘下来挂在帐子里，他竟放起光来了，满帐子都是红的。”贾母说道：“又胡说了。帐子的檐子是红的，火光照着，自然红是有的。”宝玉道：“不是。那时候灯已灭了，屋里都漆黑的了，还看的见他呢。”邢王二夫人抿着嘴笑。凤姐道：“这是喜信发动了。”宝玉道：“什么喜信？”贾母道：“你不懂得。今儿个闹了一天，你去歇歇儿去罢，别在这里说呆话了。”宝玉又站了一会儿，才回园中去了。

这里贾母问道：“正是，你们去看姨太太，说起这事来没有？”王夫人道：“本来就要去看，因凤丫头为巧姐儿病着，耽搁了两天，今儿才去的。这事我们告诉了，他姨妈倒也十分愿意，只说蟠儿这时候不在家，目今他父亲没了，只得和他商量商量再办。”贾母道：“这也是情理的话。既这么样，大家先别提起，等姨太太那边商量定了再说。”

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“That remains to be seen,” replied Jia Zheng.

Lin Zhixiao reported then on a few other matters and left.

Now Baoyu, the only one of the three young men to have stayed with his grandmother, described how the prince had entertained him and displayed the jade given him. When it had been admired by all, the old lady ordered the maids to put it away so that he would not lose it.

“Mind you keep your own jade safely,” she warned Baoyu. “Don’t mix them up!”

Taking his jade from his neck he rejoined, “*This* is mine — how could I lose it? They’re quite different when you compare them. Impossible to confuse them. And there’s something else I’ve been meaning to tell you, madam. The other night when I went to bed and hung my jade on the curtain, it started glowing, making the whole curtain red!”

“You’re talking nonsense again,” she said. “The valance of the canopy is red, so naturally when it catches the light the curtain seems red too.”

“No, the light was out by then. The whole room was pitch dark, and yet I saw it clearly.”

Lady Xing and Lady Wang exchanged meaning smiles.

“It’s a lucky sign,” Xifeng assured him.

“A lucky sign? What do you mean?”

“You wouldn’t understand,” said his grandmother. “You’ve had an exciting day, so go and rest now. Don’t stay here talking nonsense.”

Baoyu hung around for a while before going back to the Garden, and as soon as he had gone the old lady said:

“That reminds me, when you went to see Aunt Xue did you broach that business?”

“We only went today,” replied Lady Wang, “because Xifeng was held up for two days by Qiaojie’s illness. We told Aunt Xue, and she was only too willing. However, she says she must first consult Xue Pan — as his father’s gone — and Pan’s still away from home.”

“Quite right too,” agreed the old lady. “We’d better not make it public, in that case, until Aunt Xue has decided.”

But no more of their discussion about Baoyu’s marriage.



不说贾母处谈论亲事。且说宝玉回到自己房中，告诉袭人道：“老太太和凤姐姐方才说话，含含糊糊，不知是什么意思？”袭人想了想，笑了一笑，道：“这个，我也猜不着。但只刚才说这些话时，林姑娘在跟前没有？”宝玉道：“林姑娘才病起来，这些时何曾到老太太那边去呢？”

正说着，只听外间屋里麝月与秋纹拌嘴。袭人道：“你两个又闹什么？”麝月道：“我们两个斗牌，他赢了我的钱，他拿了去；他输了钱，就不肯拿出来。这也罢了，他倒把我的钱都抢了去了。”宝玉笑道：“几个钱，什么要紧？傻东西，不许闹了！”说的两个人都咕嘟着嘴，坐着去了。这里袭人打发宝玉睡下，不提。

却说袭人听了宝玉方才的话，也明知是给宝玉提亲的事，因恐宝玉每有痴想，这一提起，不知又招出他多少呆话来，所以故作不知。自己心上，却也是头一件关切的事。夜间躺着，想了个主意：不如去见见紫鹃，看他有什么动静，自然就知道了。次日，一早起来，打发宝玉上了学，自己梳洗了，便慢慢的去到潇湘馆来。只见紫鹃正在那里掐花儿呢，见袭人进来，便笑嘻嘻的道：“姐姐屋里坐着。”袭人道：“坐着，妹妹，——掐花儿呢吗？姑娘呢？”紫鹃道：“姑娘才梳洗完了，等着温药呢。”

紫鹃一面说着，一面同袭人进来。见了黛玉正在那里拿着一本书看，袭人陪着笑道：“姑娘怨不得劳神，起来就看书。我们宝二爷念书，若能像姑娘这样，岂不好了呢！”黛



Baoyu back in his own quarters told Xiren, "Just now my grandmother and Cousin Xifeng were talking so cryptically, I'd no idea what they meant."

Xiren reflected, then smiled.

"I can't guess either," she said. "Was Miss Lin there at the time?"

"No, she hasn't been over there recently — she's only just left her bed."

Just then they heard a quarrel break out in the outer room between Sheyue and Qiuwen.

"What are you two scrapping about now?" called Xiren.

"We were playing cards," said Sheyue, coming in. "When she won she took my money, but when *I* won she wouldn't pay. To make it worse, she grabbed my whole bank too."

"What does a little money matter?" chuckled Baoyu. "Stop making such a noise, you silly things."

The two girls went off then and sat down to sulk while Xiren helped Baoyu to bed.

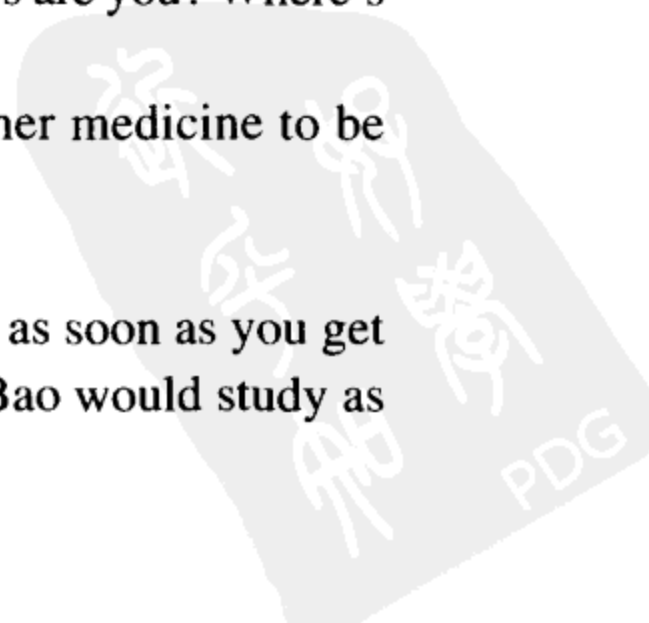
Xiren had realized from Baoyu's remark that his marriage was under discussion. She had not told him this, however, for fear that his senseless notions would make him burst out again with a flood of foolish talk. But as she too was deeply concerned about his marriage, she lay awake that night thinking and decided to go to see if Zijuan knew of any developments which might shed light on the matter. The next day she rose early. Having seen Baoyu off to school, she spruced herself up and walked slowly to Bamboo Lodge. Zijuan, whom she found picking flowers, invited her to go in and take a seat.

"Thanks, sister, I will," said Xiren. "Picking flowers are you? Where's your young lady?"

"She's just finished dressing and is waiting for her medicine to be heated."

She led Xiren inside, where Daiyu was reading.

"No wonder you wear yourself out, miss, reading as soon as you get up," said Xiren cheerfully. "I only wish our Master Bao would study as hard as you do!"





玉笑着把书放下。雪雁已拿着个小茶盘里托着一钟药，一钟水，小丫头在后面捧着痰盒漱盂进来。

原来袭人来时，要探探口气，坐了一回，无处入话。又想着黛玉最是心多，探不成消息，再惹着了，倒是不好。又坐了坐，搭趣着辞了出来。将到怡红院门口，只见两个人在那里站着呢，袭人不便往前走。那一个早看见了，连忙跑过来。袭人一看，却是锄药，因问：“你作什么？”锄药道：“刚才芸二爷来了，拿了个帖儿，说给咱们宝二爷瞧的，在这里候信。”袭人道：“宝二爷天天上学，你难道不知道？还候什么信呢？”锄药笑道：“我告诉他了，他叫告诉姑娘，听姑娘的信呢。”

袭人正要说话，只见那一个也慢慢的蹭过来了。细看时，就是贾芸，溜溜湫湫往这边来了。袭人见是贾芸，连忙向锄药道：“你告诉说：知道了，回来给宝二爷瞧罢。”那贾芸原要过来和袭人说话，无非亲近之意，又不敢造次，只得慢慢踱来。相离不远，不想袭人说出这话，自己也不好再往前走，只好站住。这里袭人已掉背脸往回里去了。贾芸只得快快而回，同锄药出去了。

晚间，宝玉回房，袭人便回道：“今日廊下小芸二爷来了。”宝玉道：“作什么？”袭人道：“他还有个帖儿呢。”宝玉道：“在那里？拿来我看看。”麝月便走去，在里间屋里书榻子上头拿了来。宝玉接过看时，上面皮儿上写着：“叔父大人安稟。”宝玉道：“这孩子怎么又不认我作父亲了？”袭人道：“怎么？”宝玉道：“前年他送我白海棠时，称我作父亲大人，今日



Daiyu smilingly put down her book. By now Xueyan had brought in a small tray on which were one cup of medicine, another of water, while a young maid behind her was holding a spittoon and rinse-bowl.

Xiren had come to size up the situation. But although she sat there for a while she found it impossible to approach the subject; and she did not like to risk upsetting Daiyu, sensitive as she was, by fishing for information. So presently she made some excuse to leave. Approaching Happy Red Court, she halted at sight of two people standing outside. One of them, spotting her, ran over and Xiren saw it was Chuyao.

“What are *you* doing here?” she asked.

“Just now Master Yun came with a note for Master Bao. He’s waiting here for a reply.”

“Surely you know that Master Bao goes to school every day. Why wait for a reply?”

“I told him that, but he wanted me to tell *you*, miss, so that you can give him an answer.”

Before Xiren could make any comment she recognized the other person as Jia Yun, now sidling sheepishly towards her.

“Tell him I’ve got the note and I’ll give it to Master Bao later,” she told Chuyao.

Jia Yun had been hoping to engage Xiren in conversation in order to ingratiate himself with her, but for fear of seeming presumptuous he had come over slowly. Being close enough now to hear this remark, he could hardly come any further. And as Xiren now turned her back on him and went in, he had to leave dejectedly with Chuyao.

When Baoyu came home that evening Xiren told him, “Today young Master Yun who lives in the lane called.”

“What did he want?”

“He left a note.”

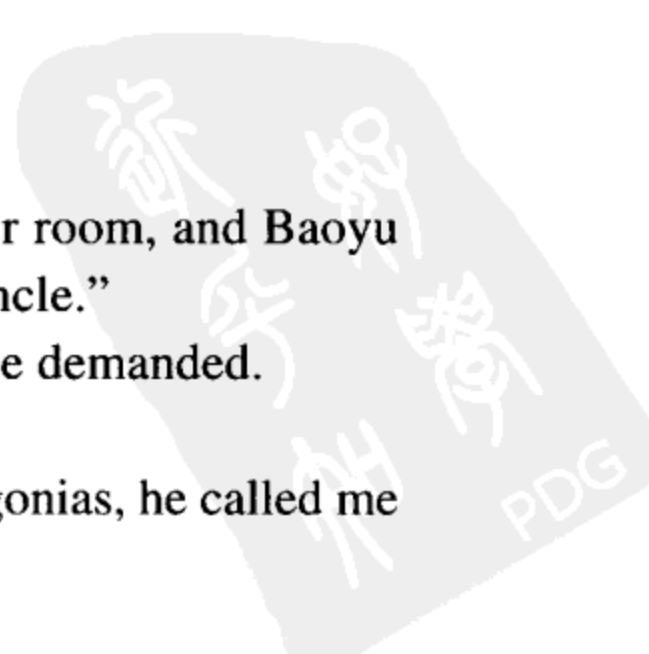
“Where is it? Let me see it.”

Sheyue fetched it from the bookcase in the inner room, and Baoyu saw that the envelope was inscribed “Respected Uncle.”

“Why has this boy stopped calling me father?” he demanded.

“What do you mean?” asked Xiren.

“The other year when he sent me those white begonias, he called me



这帖子封皮上写着叔父，可不是又不认了么。”袭人道：“他也不害臊，你也不害臊！他那么大了，倒认你这么大的作父亲，可不是他不害臊？你正经连个——”刚说到这里，脸一红，微微的一笑。宝玉也觉得了，便道：“这倒难讲，俗语说：‘和尚无儿孝子多着呢。’只是我看着他还伶俐得人心儿，才这么着；他不愿意，我还不希罕呢！”说着一面拆那帖儿。袭人也笑道：“那小芸二爷也有些鬼鬼头头的。什么时候又要看人，什么时候又躲躲藏藏的，可知也是个心术不正的货！”

宝玉只顾拆开看那字儿，也不理会袭人这些话。袭人见他看那字儿，皱一回眉，又笑一笑儿，又摇摇头儿，后来光景竟不大耐烦起来。袭人等他看完了，问道：“是什么事情？”宝玉也不答言，把那帖子已经撕作几断。袭人见这般光景，也不便再问，便问宝玉：“吃了饭还看书不看？”宝玉道：“可笑芸儿这孩子，竟这样的混账！”袭人见他所答非所问，便微微的笑着问道：“到底是什么事？”宝玉道：“问他作什么！咱们吃饭罢。吃了饭歇着罢。心里闹的怪烦的。”说着，叫小丫头子点了一点火儿来，把那撕的帖儿烧了。

一时，小丫头们摆上饭来，宝玉只是怔怔的坐着。袭人连哄带催，催着，吃了一口儿饭，便搁下了，仍是闷闷的歪在床上。一时间，忽然掉了泪来。

此时袭人麝月都摸不着头脑。麝月道：“好好儿的，这又是为什么？都是什么‘芸儿’‘雨儿’的！不知什么事，弄了这么个浪帖子来，惹的这么傻了的似的，哭一会子，笑一会子。要天长日久，闹起这闷葫芦来，可叫人怎么受呢！”说着，竟伤起心来。袭人旁边由不得要笑，便劝道：“好妹妹，





his god-father. Now on this envelope he's written 'uncle.' Evidently he no longer considers me as his father."

"He has no sense of shame, and neither have you!" she scolded. "A big fellow like him calling a boy like you father — isn't that shameless? Why, you're not even..." She broke off, blushing and smiling.

Baoyu knowing what she meant rejoined, "That doesn't follow. As the saying goes, 'A childless monk may have many filial sons.' I agreed to it only because he struck me as clever and pleasant. If he backs out, what do I care!" While saying this he opened the letter.

"There's something shifty about young Master Yun," observed Xiren. "At times he insists on seeing you, at others he looks around slyly; it shows he's up to no good."

Baoyu concentrating on his letter ignored her comments, and Xiren saw that its contents made him frown, smile and shake his head by turns. He ended up looking exasperated.

"Well, what does he say?" she asked.

By way of answer he tore the note into pieces.

To change the subject she asked, "Will you be studying again after dinner?"

Leaving her question unanswered he exclaimed, "What a swine this young Yun is — ridiculous!"

"What's the matter anyway?" she asked with a smile.

"Why ask? Let's eat now, then we can rest. I'm fed up."

He told a young maid to light a fire and burned the scraps of the letter. But when the meal was ready presently, he sat down in a daze and Xiren had to coax him to get him to eat one mouthful. Soon he pushed aside his bowl and flung himself down moodily on the couch. Then he suddenly burst into tears.

Xiren and Sheyue were nonplussed.

"Why carry on like this for no reason at all?" cried Sheyue. "It's all that Jia Yun's fault! Why should he send such a stupid note to addle Master Bao's wits and send him into hysterics. If he goes on bottling up his feelings like this, what are we to do?" She started sobbing too.

Xiren could hardly help laughing.

"Cut that out, good sister!" she urged her. "It's bad enough him mak-

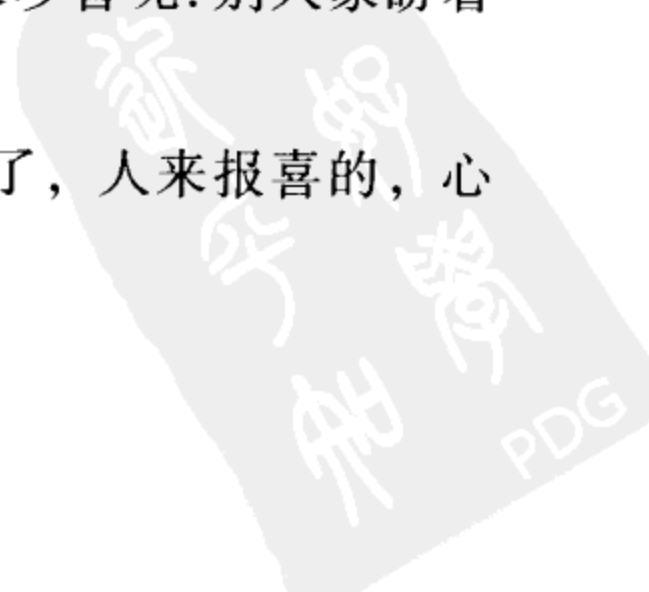


你也别恼人了。他一个人就够受了，你又这么着。他那帖子上的事，难道与你相干？”麝月道：“你混说起来了。知道他帖儿上写的是什么混帐话？你混往人身上扯。要那么说，他帖儿上只怕倒与你相干呢！”袭人还未答言，只听宝玉在床上“扑哧”的一声笑了，爬起来，抖了抖衣裳，说：“咱们睡觉罢，别闹了。明日我还起早念书呢。”说着便躺下睡了。一宿无话。

次日，宝玉起来，梳洗了，便往家塾里去。走出院门，忽然想起，叫焙茗略等，急忙转身回来叫：“麝月姐姐呢？”麝月答应着出来问道：“怎么又回来了？”宝玉道：“今日芸儿要来了。告诉他别在这里闹。再闹，我就回老太太和老爷去了。”麝月答应了。宝玉才转身去了。刚往外走着，只见贾芸慌慌张张往里来。看见宝玉，连忙请安，说：“叔叔大喜了！”那宝玉估量着是昨日那件事，便说道：“你也太冒失了！不管人心里有事没事，只管来搅。”贾芸陪笑道：“叔叔不信，只管瞧去。人都来了，在咱们大门口呢。”宝玉越发急了，说：“这是那里的话？”

正说着，只听外边一片声嚷起来。贾芸道：“叔叔听！这不是？”宝玉越发心里狐疑起来。只听一个人嚷道：“你们这些人好没规矩！这是什么地方，你们在这里混嚷！”那人答道：“谁叫老爷升了官呢！怎么不叫我们来吵喜呢？别人家盼着吵还不能呢。”

宝玉听了，才知道是贾政升了郎中了，人来报喜的，心





ing a scene without *your* joining in. What has that letter got to do with you?"

"That's crazy talk," Sheyue countered. "Who knows what rubbish he wrote? Why pin it on me? Come to that, his note may have had to do with *you!*"

Before Xiren could answer Baoyu burst out laughing and, scrambling off the couch, smoothed out his clothes.

"Stop squabbling and let's sleep now," he said. "I must get up early tomorrow to go to school."

So they went to bed, passing an uneventful night.

The next morning when Baoyu had dressed he set off to school. But as he was leaving his compound, struck by a thought he told Beiming to wait, then turned to call Sheyue.

"What brings you back?" she asked him, coming out.

"If Jia Yun comes again today, tell him not to fool about here. If he does, I'll tell the old lady and the master."

Sheyue agreed to this. But Baoyu had no sooner started off again than he saw Jia Yun hurrying towards him. At sight of Baoyu he swept him a bow.

"Congratulations, uncle!"

"You've got a nerve!" Baoyu retorted, remembering his note of the previous day. "Disturbing me when I have other things on my mind."

"You can have a look, uncle, if you don't believe me. The heralds are already here at the main gate."

More exasperated than ever Baoyu cried, "What are you talking about?"

Just then they heard shouting outside.

"Listen, uncle, to that!"

This set Baoyu wondering.

"Have you no manners?" they heard someone shout. "How dare you make such a row here?"

Another voice answered, "Your master has been promoted! How can you stop us proclaiming the good news? Other families would be only too pleased to hear us!"

Then Baoyu realized with delight that they were announcing his



中自是甚喜。连忙要走时，贾芸赶着说道：“叔叔乐不乐？叔叔的亲事要再成了，不用说，是两层喜了。”宝玉红了脸，啐了一口，道：“呸！没趣儿的东西！还不快走呢。”贾芸把脸红了，道：“这有什么的？我看你老人家就不——”宝玉沉着脸道：“就不什么？”贾芸未及说完，也不敢言语了。

宝玉连忙来到家塾中，只见代儒笑着说道：“我才刚听见你老爷升了，你今日还来了么？”宝玉陪笑道：“过来见了太爷，好到老爷那边去。”代儒道：“今日不必来了，放你一天假罢。可不许回园子里玩去。你年纪不小了，虽不能办事，也当跟着你大哥他们学学才是。”

宝玉答应着回来。刚走到二门口，只见李贵走来迎着，旁边站住，笑道：“二爷来了么？奴才才要到学里请去。”宝玉笑道：“谁说的？”李贵道：“老太太才打发人到院里去找二爷。那边的姑娘们说：二爷学里去了。刚才老太太打发人出来，叫奴才去给二爷告几天假。听说还要唱戏贺喜呢。二爷就来了。”

说着，宝玉自己进来。进了二门，只见满院里丫头老婆都是笑容满面；见他来了，笑道：“二爷这早晚才来？还不快进去给老太太道喜去呢。”宝玉笑着进了房门，只见黛玉挨着贾母左边坐着呢，右边是湘云。地下邢王二夫人，探春、惜春、李纨、凤姐、李纹、李绮、邢岫烟一干姐妹，都在屋里，只不见宝钗、宝琴、迎春三人。

宝玉此时喜的无话可说，忙给贾母道了喜，又给邢王二夫人道喜，一一见了众姐妹，便向黛玉笑道：“妹妹身体可大



father's promotion to be vice-minister. He started off.

Jia Yun caught up with him, saying, "Are you pleased, uncle? Once your marriage is fixed, that'll be double happiness for you!"

Baoyu flushed and spat. "Clear off, you oaf!"

"What have I said wrong?" Jia Yun reddened. "Wouldn't you...?"

"Wouldn't I what?" demanded Baoyu sternly.

Then Jia Yun dared say no more, and Baoyu hurried off to school.

"What brings you here today?" asked Dairu beaming. "I just heard of your father's promotion."

"I came to see you, sir, before going to my father," said Baoyu respectfully.

"You need not study today, you can have a holiday. But don't spend it playing in the Garden. You're no longer a child, remember. Though you can't handle affairs yet, you should learn from your elder cousins."

Baoyu assented and went home. At the inner gate he met Li Gui coming out.

"So here you are, young master!" The steward halted, smiling. "I was just going to the school to fetch you."

"On whose instructions?"

"The old lady sent to find you, and your maids said you'd gone to school. So just now she sent again to tell me to ask for a few days' leave for you — I hear operas will be put on to celebrate. You've turned up just in time, Master Bao."

Passing through the gate, Baoyu observed that all the maids and matrons in the court were beaming.

"Why so late, Master Bao?" they cried. "Go in and congratulate the old lady, quick!"

Baoyu entered his grandmother's room and his face lit up when he saw Daiyu sitting on her left, Xiangyun on her right. All the ladies of the house had assembled there except for Baochai, Baoqin and Yingchun. Beside himself with joy, he offered congratulations to his grandmother and then to Their Ladyships, after which he greeted his cousins one by one.

"Are you better, cousin?" he asked Daiyu.

"Yes, much better," she answered with a smile. "I heard you were



好了？”黛玉也微笑道：“太好了。听见说二哥哥身上也欠安，好了么？”宝玉道：“可不是！我那日夜里，忽然心里疼起来，这几天刚好些，就上学去了，也没能过去看妹妹。”黛玉不等他说完，早扭过头和探春说话去了。凤姐在地下站着，笑道：“你两个那里像天天在一块儿的？倒像是客，有这么些套话！可是人说的‘相敬如宾’了。”说的大家都一笑。黛玉满脸飞红，又不好说，又不好不说，迟了一会儿，才说道：“你懂得什么！”众人越发笑了。

凤姐一时回过味来，才知道自己出言冒失，正要拿话岔时，只见宝玉忽然向黛玉道：“林妹妹，你瞧芸儿这种冒失鬼——”说了这一句，方想起来，便不言语了。招的大家又都笑起来，说：“这从那里说起？”黛玉也摸不着头脑，也跟着讪讪的笑。宝玉无可搭趣，因又说道：“可是刚才我听见有人要送戏，说是几儿？”大家都瞅着他笑。凤姐儿道：“你在外头听见，你来告诉我们，你这会子问谁呢？”宝玉得便说道：“我外头再去问问去。”贾母道：“别跑到外头去。头一件，看报喜的笑话；第二件，你老子今日大喜，回来碰见你，又该生气了。”宝玉答应了个“是”，才出来了。

这里贾母因问凤姐：“谁说送戏的话？”凤姐道：“说是二舅舅那边说：后儿日子好，送一班新出的小戏儿给老太太、老爷、太太贺喜。”因又笑着说道：“不但日子好，还是好日子





unwell too. Are you all right now?"

"Oh yes. That night I suddenly had a pain in my heart, but these last few days I've been well enough to go back to school. That's why I've had no time to call on you."

While he was still speaking Daiyu turned away to talk to Tanchun. Xifeng standing near them smiled.

"You two are behaving like guests, not like inseparables," she teased. All these civilities! Well, as the saying goes, 'you show each other respect as to a guest.'"¹

The others laughed while Daiyu blushed furiously, not knowing whether to let this go or not. After some hesitation she blurted out:

"What do *you* know about it?"

That set the company laughing even more loudly. Xifeng, conscious of her gaffe, was wondering how to change the subject when Baoyu suddenly exclaimed to Daiyu:

"Cousin Lin, you never saw anyone as *boorish* as Jia Yun..." He broke off without finishing the sentence.

This provoked a fresh gale of mirth.

"What *is* all this?" others asked.

Daiyu, also in the dark, smiled shyly too.

Baoyu hedged, "Just now I heard that some operas are to be presented. When will that be?"

All looked at him, still laughing.

"If you heard that outside," quipped Xifeng, "you should come and tell us, not ask *us* about it."

"I'll go and find out," he offered.

"Don't go running around outside," warned the old lady. "For one thing, the heralds would laugh at you. For another, your father's in a good humour today, but if he saw you outside he would be angry."

"Yes, madam," said Baoyu, then slipped away.

The old lady asked Xifeng, "Who's talked of presenting operas?"

"Uncle Wang. He said that the day after tomorrow, which is an auspicious day, he'll send over a new company of actresses to congratulate you, madam, as well as the master and mistress." She added with a twinkle, "It'll not only be an auspicious day but a happy occasion too."

呢!后日还是……”却瞅着黛玉笑。黛玉也微笑。王夫人因道:“可是呢,后日还是外甥女儿的好生日呢。”贾母想了一想,也笑道:“可见我如今老了,什么事都糊涂了。亏了有我这凤丫头,是我个‘给事中’。既这么着,很好。他舅舅家给他们贺喜,你舅舅家就给你做生日,岂不好呢?”说的大家都笑起来,说道:“老祖宗说句话儿,都是上篇上论的;怎么怨得有这么大福气呢!”

说着,宝玉进来,听见这些话,越发乐的手舞足蹈了。一时大家都在贾母这边吃饭,甚实热闹,自不必说。饭后,贾政谢恩回来,给宗祠里磕了头,便来给贾母磕头。站着说了几句话,便出去拜客去了。这里接连着亲戚族中的人,来来去去,闹闹攘攘,车马填门,貂蝉满坐。真个是:花到正开蜂蝶闹,月逢十足海天宽。

如此两日,已是庆贺之期。这日一早,王子胜和亲戚家已送过一班戏来,就在贾母正厅前,搭起行台。外头爷们都穿着公服陪侍。亲戚来贺的约有十余桌酒。里面为着是新戏,又见贾母高兴,便将琉璃戏屏隔在后厦,里面也摆下酒席。上首薛姨妈一桌,是王夫人宝琴陪着;对面老太太一桌,是邢夫人岫烟陪着。下面尚空两桌,贾母叫他们快来。

一回儿,只见凤姐领着众丫头,都簇拥着黛玉来了。那黛玉略换了几件新鲜衣服,打扮得宛如嫦娥下界,含羞带笑



That day..." She winked at Daiyu, who smiled back.

"Why, of course!" exclaimed Lady Wang. "It's our niece's birthday."

The old lady thought for a second and then said, "It shows I'm growing old, I get so muddled. "It's lucky I have Xifeng as my mentor. All right then. If Baoyu's uncle wants to offer congratulations, Daiyu's uncle's family can celebrate her birthday too."

Everybody laughed.

"Whatever our Old Ancestress says is so aptly put, no wonder she has such good fortune!" someone exclaimed.

Baoyu coming back just then was in raptures when he heard about Daiyu's birthday. Presently they all had a meal there and made merry with the old lady.

After the meal, Jia Zheng came back from thanking the Emperor and kowtowed to the ancestors, then to his mother. Standing before her, he spoke to her briefly before going out to entertain his guests. A constant stream of kinsmen was coming and going now, with a great noise and bustle. Carriages and horses thronged the gate; silks and sables filled the hall. Truly:

Bees and butterflies converge on flowers in bloom;
Sea and sky stretch boundless under the full moon!

These visits continued for two days till the time for the celebration. Early that morning Wang Ziteng and other kinsmen had sent over a company of actresses, and a stage was set up in front of the Lady Dowager's main hall. Outside it waited the men of the family, in official robes. More than ten tables of feasts had been prepared for relatives; and as the actresses were new and the old lady was in high spirits, they set up a glass screen in the inner hall to feast the ladies there. At the table of honour sat Aunt Xue accompanied by Lady Wang and Baoqin. Opposite was the table for the old lady accompanied by Lady Xing and Xiuyan. The two lower tables were vacant, and the old lady urged the girls to seat themselves there quickly.

Presently Xifeng, a troop of maids behind her, escorted in Daiyu. Dressed in new clothes and made up, she appeared like the moon goddess come down to earth as she greeted the others with a bashful smile.



的，出来见了众人。湘云、李纹、李绮都让他上首坐，黛玉只是不肯。贾母笑道：“今日你坐了罢。”薛姨妈站起来问道：“今日林姑娘也有喜事么？”贾母笑道：“是他的生日。”薛姨妈道：“咳！我倒忘了。”走过来说道：“恕我健忘！回来叫宝琴过来拜姐姐的寿。”黛玉笑说：“不敢。”大家坐了。

那黛玉留神一看，独不见宝钗，便问道：“宝姐姐可好么？为什么不过来？”薛姨妈道：“他原该来的，只因无人看家，所以不来。”黛玉红着脸，微笑道：“姨妈那里又添了大嫂子，怎么倒用宝姐姐看起家来？大约是他怕人多热闹，懒怠来罢？我倒怪想他的。”薛姨妈笑道：“难得你惦记他。他也常想你们姐儿们。过一天，我叫他来大家叙叙。”

说着，丫头们下来斟酒上菜，外面已开戏了。出场自然是一两出吉庆戏文。及至第三出，只见金童玉女，旗旛宝幢，引着一个霓裳羽衣的小旦，头上披着一条黑帕，唱了几句儿进去了。众皆不知。听见外面人说：“这是新打的《蕊珠记》里的‘冥升’。小旦扮的是嫦娥，前因堕落入寰，几乎给人配；幸亏观音点化，他就未嫁而逝。此时升引月宫。不听见曲里头唱的：‘人间只道风情好，那知道秋月春花容易抛？几乎不把广寒宫忘却了！’”第四出是“吃糠”。第五出





Xiangyun, Li Wen and Li Qi invited her to take the best seat at their table, but she declined.

“You must sit there today.” insisted the old lady, smiling.

Aunt Xue rose to ask, “Is this a happy occasion for Miss Lin too?”

“Yes, it’s her birthday.”

“How could I have forgotten!” Aunt Xue went over to Daiyu. “Excuse my bad memory, child! I’ll send Baoqin over presently to offer her congratulations.”

“You are too kind.” Daiyu smiled. While every one took a seat, she looked around and seeing Baochai was not there, she asked Aunt Xue, “How’s Cousin Baochai? Why hasn’t she come today?”

“She should have come, but we have no one to keep an eye on things at home, so she has to stay in,” Aunt Xue explained.

“But now she has a sister-in-law, aunty, surely you don’t need Baochai to mind the house? I suppose she doesn’t like joining in noisy parties, but I do miss her so!”

“It’s good of you to think of her,” said Aunt Xue. “She longs to see you all too. One of these days I’ll send her over to have a chat with you.”

Now maids came in to pour wine and bring in dishes, while outside the performance had started. The first two items, of course, had propitious themes. When it came to the third, they saw fairy pages and maids with flags and pennons lead in a girl dressed as a goddess, with black gauze on her head, who sang an aria and then left the stage. No one knew what opera this was till they heard it said outside that this was the scene “Returning to Heaven from Hell” from the new opera *The Tale of Ruizhu*.² The girl was the moon goddess who descended to earth and became betrothed to a mortal; luckily the goddess Guanyin had shown her the right course and she died before her marriage took place. She was now going back to the moon. That was why she sang:

Sweet they say is the love of mortals,
Yet autumn moon and spring flowers are soon abandoned,
And I nearly forgot the palace of the moon.

The fourth item was “Eating Husks” from *The Tale of the Lute*.³ The



是达摩带着徒弟过江回去。正扮出些海市蜃楼，好不热闹。

众人正在高兴时，忽见薛家的人满头汗闯进来，向薛蝌说道：“二爷快回去！一并里头回明太太，也请回去！家里有要紧事。”薛蝌道：“什么事？”家人道：“家去说罢。”薛蝌也不及告辞，就走了。薛姨妈见里头丫头传进话去，更吓得面如土色，即忙起身，带着宝琴，别了一声，即刻上车回去了。弄得内外愕然。贾母道：“咱们这里打发人跟过去听听，到底是什么事，大家都关切的。”众人答应了个“是”。

不说贾府依旧唱戏，单说薛姨妈回去，只见有两个衙役站在二门口，几个当铺里伙计陪着，说：“太太回来，自有道理。”正说着，薛姨妈已进来了。那衙役们见跟从着许多男妇，簇拥着一位老太太，便知是薛蟠之母。看见这个势派，也不敢怎么，只得垂手侍立，让薛姨妈进去了。那薛姨妈走到厅房后面，早听见有人大哭，却是金桂。薛姨妈赶忙走来，只见宝钗迎出来，满面泪痕，见了薛姨妈，便道：“妈妈听见了，先别着急，办事要紧！”

薛姨妈同宝钗进了屋子，因为头里进门时，已经走着听见家人说了，吓的战战兢兢的了，一面哭着，因问：“到底是合谁？”只见家人回道：“太太此时且不必问那些底细。凭他是谁，打死了总是要偿命的，且商量怎么办才好。”薛姨妈哭着出来道：“还有什么商议？”家人道：“依小的们的主见：今夜打点银两，同着二爷赶去，和大爷见了面，就在那里访一



fifth was about Bodhidharma leading his disciples back across the river — a fantastic and most spectacular performance.

At the height of their enjoyment, one of the Xue family servants came rushing in, pouring with sweat.

“Go back quickly, sir!” he panted to Xue Ke. “And ask madam to go back too. There’s bad trouble at home!”

“What’s happened?” Xue Ke demanded.

“I’ll tell you when we get back, sir.” Xue Ke went off without stopping to take his leave. And when maids took word of this to Aunt Xue, she turned pale with alarm. After a hasty leave-taking she mounted her carriage with Baoqin to go back, amid general consternation.

“We must send someone over to find out what’s amiss and to show our concern,” said the Lady Dowager.

The others approved this, then went on watching the opera.

Aunt Xue, reaching home, saw court runners standing by the inner gate. Some assistants from the pawnshop were telling them:

“Wait till the mistress comes home, then everything can be settled.”

The runners, at the arrival of an old lady attended by so many servants, knew that this must be Xue Pan’s mother. And as she looked someone of consequence they kept themselves in check, standing at attention to let her pass. She went to the back from whence came sounds of wailing, and discovered Jingui there. As she hurried forward Baochai came out to meet her, her face wet with tears.

“So you’ve heard the news, mother,” she said. “Don’t worry. We must find some way to square things!”

Aunt Xue went inside with her daughter, trembling with fright after having heard from the servants in the court what her son had done.

“Whom had he been quarrelling with?” she asked tearfully.

“Don’t try to get to the bottom of it now, madam,” they urged her. “Taking a life is a capital offence regardless of persons. We had better discuss what to do.”

“What is there to discuss?” she sobbed.

“What we propose is this,” they said. “We’ll get ready some silver tonight and go straight with Master Ke to see Master Pan. We can find



个有斟酌的刀笔先生，许他些银子，先把死罪撕掳开，回来再求贾府去上司衙门说情。还有外面的衙役，太太先拿出几两银子来打发了他们，我们好赶着办事。”薛姨妈道：“你们找着那家子，许他发送银子，再给他些养济银子。原告不追，事情就缓了。”宝钗在帘内说道：“妈妈，使不得。这些事，越给钱越闹的凶，倒是刚才小厮说的话是。”薛姨妈又哭道：“我也不要命了！赶到那里见他一面，同他死在一处就完了！”宝钗急的一面劝，一面在帘子里叫人：“快同二爷办去罢。”丫头们搀进薛姨妈来。薛蝌才往外走，宝钗道：“有什么信，打发人即刻寄了来，你们只管在外头照料。”薛蝌答应着去了。

这宝钗方劝薛姨妈，那里金桂趁空儿抓住香菱，又和他嚷道：“平常你们只管夸他们家里打死了人，一点事也没有，就进京来了的；如今撞掇的真打死人了！平日里只讲有钱，有势，有好亲戚，这时候我看着也是吓的慌手慌脚的了。大爷明儿有个好歹儿不能回来时，你们各自干你们的去了，撂下我一个人受罪！”说着，又大哭起来。

这里薛姨妈听见，越发气的发昏，宝钗急的没法。正闹着，只见贾府中王夫人早打发大丫头过来打听来了。宝钗虽心知自己是贾府的人了，一则尚未提明，二则事急之时，只得向那大丫头道：“此时事情头尾尚未明白，就只听见说我哥哥在外头打死了人，被县里拿了去了，也不知怎么定罪呢。刚才二爷才去打听去了。一半日得了准信，赶着就给那边太

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some shrewd scrivener there and pay him to tear up that capital offence charge; then we can ask the Jia family to intercede with the magistrate of the yamen. There are those runners waiting outside too. First give them a few taels of silver to get rid of them, madam, and then we can get started."

"Better find the other man's family," was Aunt Xue's counter-proposal. "Promise them some money for the funeral as well as for compensation. If they drop the charge, the matter can be hushed up."

"That won't do, mother!" called Baochai from the inner room. "In a business like this, the more money you pay them the more trouble they'll make. What the servants suggested was right."

"I wish I were dead!" wailed Aunt Xue. "I'll go and see my son for the last time, then die together with him!"

Baochai urged her to be of good comfort and called to the servants in the outer room, "Quickly go with Master Ke to deal with this business."

Maids helped Aunt Xue inside.

"If you have any news, cousin, send word at once!" called Baochai to Xue Ke who was starting out. "But stay there yourselves to cope."

Xue Ke assented and left. And Jingui seized this chance, while Baochai was consoling her mother, to round upon Xiangling.

"You used to boast that this family came to the capital after getting away scot-free with murder!" she raged. "Now he's really gone and killed a man! And for all your bragging about the Xues' wealth and powerful connections, look at the panic everybody's in now! If my husband's for it and can't come back, you'll all clear off leaving me to bear the brunt!" She burst out storming and sobbing.

Aunt Xue hearing this nearly fainted away with anger and Baochai, though frantic, was helpless. At the height of this scene, one of Lady Wang's trusted maids came from the Jia Mansion to ascertain what had happened. Baochai knew she was going to marry into their household, but as this had not yet been announced, and she was feeling desperate, she did not hide herself as etiquette demanded but told the maid:

"At present this business isn't very clear. All we've heard is that my brother has been arrested by the county yamen for killing a man outside. We don't know what the verdict will be. Xue Ke has just gone to make inquiries. As soon as we have definite news, we'll send word to your



太送信去。你先回去道谢太太惦记着，底下我们还有多少仰仗那边爷们的地方呢。”那丫头答应着去了。

薛姨妈和宝钗在家，抓摸不着；过了两日，只见小厮回来，拿了一封书，交给小丫头拿进来。宝钗拆开看时，书内写着：

大哥人命是误伤，不是故杀。今早用蜥出名，补了一张呈纸进去，尚未批出。大哥前头口供甚是不好。待此纸批准后，再录一堂，能够翻供得好，便可得生了。快向当铺内再取银五百两来使用，千万莫迟！并请太太放心。余事问小厮。

宝钗看了，一一念给薛姨妈听了。薛姨妈拭着眼泪说道：“这么看起来，竟是死活不定了！”宝钗道：“妈妈先别伤心，等着叫进小厮来问明了再说。”一面打发小丫头把小厮叫进来。薛姨妈便问小厮道：“你把大爷的事细说与我听听。”小厮道：“我那一天晚上，听见大爷和二爷说的，把我唬糊涂了。”未知小厮说出什么话来，下回分解。



mistress. Go back now and thank her for her concern. We shall be asking later for help from your master.”

The maid accepted these instructions and left.

Aunt Xue and Baochai stayed at home in suspense until, two days later, a page came back with a letter which a young maid brought in. Baochai opened it and read:

This case involving Brother Pan was inadvertent manslaughter, not murder. This morning I sent in a plea in my name, but it has not yet been approved. Brother Pan's first confession was most unfortunate. Once my plea is ratified, we shall ask to go to court again to retract it, and then he may be let off. Five hundred more taels of silver to cover expenses are needed at once from our pawnshop. There must be no delay! Tell Aunt not to worry. For the rest you can question the page.

Having perused this, Baochai read it out again in full for her mother. “So it seems his fate is still in the balance!” cried Aunt Xue, wiping her tears.

“Don't be upset, mother,” urged Baochai. “Let's first call in the page and find out the details.”

She sent a maid to fetch him in, and Aunt Xue asked him to tell them just what had happened.

“When I heard what Master Pan told Master Ke the other evening, I was frightened out of my wits!” he began.

To know his account of the matter, read the next chapter.



第八十六回

受私贿老官翻案牒 寄闲情淑女解琴书



话说薛姨妈听了薛蝌的来书，因叫进小厮，问道：“你听见你大爷说，到底是怎么就把人打死了呢？”小厮道：“小的也没听真切。那一日，大爷告诉二爷说——”说着回头看了一看，见无人，才说道：“大爷说：自从家里闹的特利害，大爷也没心肠了，所以要到南边置货去。这日想着约一个人同行，这人在咱们这城南二百多地住。大爷找他去了。遇见在先和大爷好的那个蒋玉菡，带着些小戏子进城，大爷同他在个铺子里吃饭喝酒。因为这当槽儿的尽着拿眼膘蒋玉菡，大爷就有了气了。后来蒋玉菡走了。第二天，大爷就请找的那个人喝酒。酒后想起头一天的事来，叫那当槽儿的换酒，那当槽儿的来迟了，大爷就骂起来了。那个人不依，大爷就拿起酒碗照他打去。谁知那个人也是个泼皮，便把头伸过来叫大爷打。大爷拿碗就砸他的脑袋，一下子就冒了血了，躺在地下。头里还骂，后头就不言语了。”薛姨妈道：“怎么也没人劝劝吗？”那小厮道：“这个没听见大爷说，小的不敢妄言。”薛姨妈道：“你先去歇歇罢。”小厮答应出来。

这里薛姨妈自来见王夫人，托王夫人转求贾政。贾政问了前后，也只好含糊应了，只说等薛蝌递了呈子，看他本县



Chapter 86

An Old Magistrate Takes a Bribe to Re-open a Case A Young Girl, to While Away Time, Explains a Lute Score

After listening to Xue Ke's letter, Aunt Xue called in the page who had brought it.

"You heard what Master Pan said. How did he come to kill a man?" she asked.

"I didn't get it too clear, madam. That day he told Master Ke...." The page looked round to make sure they were alone before continuing, "Master Pan said he was so sick of all these rows at home that he made up his mind to go south to buy goods. He decided to ask somebody to go with him — a certain Wu Liang who lives more than two hundred *li* south of this city. On his way to find him he met that Jiang Yuhan who used to be such a friend of his, bringing some young actors to town. While they were having a meal and drinking together in his inn, Master Pan was annoyed by the way the waiter kept staring at Jiang Yuhan. But then Jiang left.

"The next day, while drinking with Wu Liang, Master Pan remembered what had happened the day before and, when the waiter was slow in bringing fresh wine, he started cursing him. When the fellow answered back, he threatened him with his wine bowl. The rogue craned his neck, daring our master to hit him. Then Master Pan brought the bowl down on his head. Blood spurted out and he dropped to the ground swearing — but very soon he fell silent."

"Why did no one stop him?" scolded Aunt Xue.

"That, Master Pan didn't say and I dare not make anything up."

"You go and rest now."

"Yes, madam."

When the page had gone Aunt Xue went to see Lady Wang, to enlist her husband's help. Learning what had happened, he hedged. They must



怎么批了，再作道理。

这里薛姨妈又在当铺里兑了银子，叫小厮赶着去了。三日后，果有回信，薛姨妈接着了，即叫小丫头告诉宝钗，连忙过来看了。只见书上写道：

带去银两做了衙门上下使费。哥哥在监，也不大吃苦，请太太放心。独是这里的人很刁，尸亲见证都不依，连哥哥请的那个朋友也帮着他们。我与李祥两个俱系生地生人，幸找着一个好先生，许他银子，才讨个主意，说是：须得拉扯着同哥哥喝酒的吴良，弄人保出他来，许他银两，叫他撕掳。他若不依，便说张三是他打死，明推在异乡人身上。他吃不住，就好办了。我依着他，果然吴良出来。现在买嘱尸亲见证，又做了一张呈子，前日递的，今日批来，请看呈底便知。

因又念呈底道：

“具呈人某，呈为兄遭飞祸、代伸冤抑事：窃生胞兄薛蟠，本籍南京，寄寓西京，于某年月日，备本往南贸易。去未数日，家奴送信回家，说遭人命，生即奔宪治，知兄误伤张姓。及至囹圄，据兄泣告，实与张姓素不相认，并无仇隙。偶因换酒角口，先兄将酒泼地，恰值张三低头拾物，一时失手，酒碗误碰凶门身死。蒙恩拘讯，兄惧受刑，承认斗殴致死。仰蒙宪天仁慈，知有冤抑，尚未定案。生兄在禁，具呈诉辩，有干例禁；生念手足，



wait to see the magistrate's response to Xue Pan's petition, he said, before deciding on a course of action.

Aunt Xue sent the page back with more money from the pawnshop, and three days later received another letter. She sent to tell Baochai, who came at once and read it out as follows:

With the money you sent we have squared the yamen officers. Brother Pan is not being ill-treated in jail; don't worry. Only the local people are cutting up rough. The dead man's family and the witnesses are holding out, and even that friend invited by Brother Pan is taking their side.

I and Li Xiang are strangers here, but luckily we found a good pettifogger, and after his palm was greased he came up with a plan. He advised us to get hold of Wu Liang who was drinking with Brother Pan and bail him out, then offer him money to enlist his help. If he wouldn't agree, we could say he was the one who killed Zhang San then laid the blame on an outsider. If that scared him, then it should be easy to handle.

I took his advice and got Wu Liang out; then we bribed the dead man's relatives and the witnesses; and the day before yesterday I sent in another petition. Today the answer has come, and I enclose a copy for you to see.

Baochai next read out the petition:

Petitioner....

Petition on behalf of his brother, a victim of foul play who has been unjustly accused.

My elder brother Xue Pan, a native of Nanjing now resident in the capital, set off on such and such a day to go south on business. A few days after he left home, a family servant brought the news that he had been involved in manslaughter. I came immediately to Your Honour's county and learned that he had accidentally injured a man named Zhang. When I went to the jail, he told me with tears that this Zhang was a stranger to him and there had been no enmity between them. An accidental quarrel had broken out when my brother, asking for wine, spilt some on the ground. Zhang San happened to be stooping to pick something up, and my brother, whose hand slipped, struck the top of his head with the wine bowl and killed him. During interrogation, for fear of torture, he confessed that he had killed the man in a fight. But Your Honour, in your infinite goodness, realized that this could not have been the case and deferred giving a verdict. As my brother in jail is forbidden to send in a



冒死代呈。伏乞宪慈恩准提证质讯，开恩莫大，生等举家仰戴鸿仁，永永无既矣！激切上呈。”批的是：“尸场检验，证据确凿。且并未用刑，尔兄自认斗杀，招供在案。今尔远来，并非目睹，何得捏词妄控？理应治罪；姑念为兄情切，且恕。不准。”

薛姨妈听到那里，说道：“这不是救不过来了么！这怎么好呢？”宝钗道：“二哥的书还没看完，后面还有呢。”因又念道：“有要紧的，问来使便知。”薛姨妈便问来人。因说道：“县里早知我们的家当充足。须得在京里谋干得大情，再送一分大礼，还可以复审，从轻定案。太太此时，必得快办，再迟了就怕大爷要受苦了。”

薛姨妈听了，叫小厮自去，即刻又到贾府与王夫人说明原故，恳求贾政。贾政只肯托人与知县说情，不肯提及银物。薛姨妈恐不中用，求凤姐与贾琏说了，花上几千银子，才把知县买通，薛蝌那里也便弄通了，然后知县挂牌坐堂，传齐了一干邻保、证见、尸亲人等，监里提出薛蟠，刑房书吏俱一一点名。知县便叫地保对明初供，又叫尸亲张王氏并尸叔张二问话。

张王氏哭禀：“小的的男人是张大，南乡里住，十八年头里死了。大儿子、二儿子，也都死了。光留下这个死的儿





plea, on account of our close relationship I am venturing to intercede for him. I hope Your Honour will graciously permit another trial. This will be a great act of mercy, and my whole family will for ever remember your ineffable goodness. This is my earnest petition.

The magistrate's rescript read:

Investigation at the scene of the crime uncovered definite proof; and your brother, without being tortured, confessed in writing to killing a man in a brawl. Coming from far away and not being an eye-witness, how can you trump up a case? By law you should be punished, but in view of your brotherly concern I shall pardon you. Your petition is rejected.

"He's done for, then!" exclaimed Aunt Xue. "What shall we do?"

"Wait till you hear the end of Brother Ke's letter," said Baochai, then read it out.

What really matters, the messenger can tell you.

Then Aunt Xue questioned the page.

"The magistrate knows that our family is well off, madam," he said. "If we get help from people of consequence in the capital, then send him a handsome present, he can hold another trial and lighten the sentence. There's no time to be lost. Any delay, and the master will suffer for it."

Aunt Xue dismissed the page and went straight to the Jia Mansion to tell Lady Wang of this and appeal to her husband. Jia Zheng agreed only to send someone to speak to the magistrate — not to send him a bribe. And doubting the use of this, Aunt Xue prevailed on Xifeng to send Jia Lian with several thousand taels to buy off the magistrate, while Xue Ke at the same time squared the others involved.

Then the magistrate held a fresh trial, to which he summoned the local bailiff, witnesses and dead man's relatives as well as Xue Pan, who was fetched from the jail. When the secretaries of the criminal department had checked the roll of names, the magistrate ordered the bailiff to identify the original deposition, then called forward the dead man's mother Mrs. Zhang and his uncle Zhang Er for questioning.

Mrs. Zhang, weeping, testified, "My husband, Zhang Da, lived in the southern suburbs and died eighteen years ago. My first and second sons died too, leaving me only Zhang San — who has been killed. He was



子，叫张三，今年二十三岁，还没有娶女人呢。为小人家里穷，没得养活，在李家店里做当槽儿的。那一天晌午，李家店里打发人来叫俺，说：‘你儿子叫人打死了。’我的青天老爷！小的就唬死了！跑到那里，看见我儿子头破血出的躺在地下喘气儿，问他话也说不出来，不多一会儿，就死了。小人就要揪住这个小杂种拼命！”众衙役吆喝一声，张王氏便磕头道：“求青天老爷伸冤！小人就只这一个儿子了！”

知县便叫：“下去。”又叫李家店的人问道：“那张三是在你店内佣工的么？”那李二回道：“不是佣工，是做当槽儿的。”知县道：“那日尸场上，你说张三是薛蟠将碗砸死的，你亲眼见的么？”李二说道：“小的在柜上，听见说客房里要酒，不多一回，便听见说，‘不好了，打伤了！’小的跑进去，只见张三躺在地下，也不能言语。小的便喊禀地保，一面报他母亲去了。他们到底怎样打的，实在不知道，求太爷问那喝酒的便知道了。”知县喝道：“初审口供你是亲见的，怎么如今说没有见！”李二道：“小的前日唬昏了乱说。”衙役又吆喝了一声。

知县便叫吴良问道：“你是同在一处喝酒的么？薛蟠怎么打的？据实供来！”吴良说：“小的那日在家，这个薛大爷叫我喝酒。他嫌酒不好，要换，张三不肯。薛大爷生气，把酒向他脸上泼去，不晓得怎么样，就碰在那脑袋上了。这是亲眼见的。”知县道：“胡说！前日尸场上，薛蟠自己认拿碗砸死的，你说你亲眼见的，怎么今日的供不对！掌嘴！”衙役答应着要



twenty-three this year and not yet married. Because our family is poor, with no means of livelihood, he worked as a waiter in Li Family Inn. That afternoon, they sent from the inn to tell me he had been killed. I was frightened to death, Your Honour! I rushed there and saw him lying on the ground, at his last gasp, bleeding from a gash on his head. When I called him he could not answer, and soon he died. I must have it out with that young devil!"

The runners raised an intimidating shout.

Then she kowtowed, pleading, "Your Honour, avenge me! He was the only son I had left."

The magistrate waved her aside and called for the inn-keeper.

"Was Zhang San a workman in your inn?" he asked.

"Not a workman but a waiter," Li Er replied.

"At the autopsy, you said that Xue Pan killed Zhang San with a bowl. Did you see him do it?"

"I was serving at the bar. I heard a customer call for wine, and soon after that someone cried, 'Confound it! He's knocked out!' I ran there and saw Zhang San flat on the ground, unable to speak. I lost no time in summoning the bailiff and sent word to Zhang's mother too. But as to how the fight started, I really have no idea. The man who was drinking with him must know that, Your Honour."

"In your testimony at the first trial you said you witnessed the fight," said the magistrate sternly. "How is it you're now retracting?"

"The funk that I was in made me muddle things up."

Once more the runners raised a warning shout.

Next the magistrate asked Wu Liang, "You were drinking with Xue Pan, weren't you? How did he come to strike the waiter? Out with the truth!"

"I was at home that day when this Mr. Xue asked me out to drink with him. Not liking the wine he called for a different kind; and when Zhang San refused to fetch it, he flared up. He dashed the wine over the waiter's face, and somehow or other the bowl struck his head. This I saw with my own eyes."

"Rubbish! At the autopsy, Xue Pan admitted to killing him with the bowl, and you confirmed that. Why are you eating your words now? Slap



打。吴良求着说：“薛蟠实没有和张三打架，酒碗失手，碰在脑袋上的。求老爷问薛蟠，便是恩典了！”

知县叫上薛蟠，问道：“你与张三到底有什么仇隙？毕竟是如何死的？实供上来！”薛蟠道：“求太老爷开恩！小的实没有打他，为他不肯换酒，故拿酒泼地。不想一时失手，酒碗误碰在他的脑袋上。小的即忙掩他的血，那里知道再掩不住，血淌多了，过一回就死了。前日尸场上，怕太老爷要打，所以说是拿碗砸他的。只求太老爷开恩！”知县便喝道：“好个糊涂东西！本县问你怎样砸他的，你便供说恼他不换酒，才砸的，今日又供是失手碰的！”知县假作声势，要打要夹。薛蟠一口咬定。知县叫仵作：“将前日尸场填写伤痕，据实报来。”仵作禀报说：“前日验得张三尸身无伤，惟凶门有磁器伤，长一寸七分，深五分，皮开，凶门骨脆，裂破三分。实系磕碰伤。”

知县查对尸格相符，早知书吏改轻，也不驳诘，胡乱便叫画供。张王氏哭喊道：“青天老爷！前日听见还有多少伤，怎么今日都没有了？”知县道：“这妇人胡说！现有尸格，你不知道么？”叫尸叔张二，便问道：“你侄儿身死，你知道有几





his face!”

With an answering shout the runners raised threatening hands.

“Xue Pan didn’t fight Zhang San — truly!” faltered Wu Liang. “His hand slipped — that’s how the wine bowl hit Zhang San’s head. Please have the goodness to ask Xue Pan, Your Honour!”

The magistrate summoned Xue Pan.

“What feud was there between you and Zhang San?” he demanded. “How did he die? Tell the truth!”

“Be merciful, Your Honour!” begged Xue Pan. “I truly never hit him. Because he wouldn’t bring us better wine, I was emptying my bowl on the ground when my hand slipped and the bowl smashed in his head. I tried to stem the bleeding, but couldn’t. Blood came pouring out, and presently he died. At the autopsy that day, for fear Your Honour would have me beaten, I said I’d struck him with the bowl. I beg Your Honour’s pardon.”

“You dolt!” bellowed the magistrate. “When first I asked why you struck him, you said you were angry because he wouldn’t fetch fresh wine. But now you say it was an accident!”

Glaring, he threatened to have him beaten and tortured. But Xue Pan stuck to his statement.

The magistrate ordered the coroner, “Give me an honest report of the wounds you recorded in the autopsy that day.”

“When I examined Zhang San’s corpse,” said the coroner, “the only wound on the body was one gash on the skull caused by a porcelain object. Half an inch deep and 1.7 inches long, it had broken the skin and fractured 0.3 inch of the parietal bone. This wound was undoubtedly caused by a blow.”

The magistrate checked this with the post-mortem record. Although knowing that the secretaries had altered this he did not dispute it but ordered them, hugger-mugger, to sign the new confession.

“Your Honour!” sobbed Mrs. Zhang. “Last time, I heard there were other wounds. How are there none today?”

“You are talking nonsense,” he fumed. “Here is the post-mortem record. Can’t you read?”

He then summoned the dead man’s uncle Zhang Er to ask him, “How



处伤？”张二忙供道：“脑袋上一伤。”知县道：“可又来！”叫书吏将尸格给张王氏瞧去，并叫地保、尸叔指明与他瞧：现有尸场亲押、证见，俱供并未打架，不为斗殴，只依误伤，吩咐画供，将薛蝌监禁候详，余令原保领出，退堂。张王氏哭着乱嚷，知县叫众衙役：“撵他出去！”张二也劝张王氏道：“实在误伤，怎么赖人？现在太老爷断明，别再胡闹了。”

薛蝌在外打听明白，心内喜欢，便差人回家送信，等批详回来，便好打点赎罪，且住着等信。只听路上三三两两传说：“有个贵妃薨了，皇上辍朝三日。”这里离陵寝不远，知县办差垫道，一时料着不得闲，住在这里无益，不如到监，告诉哥哥：“安心等着，我回家去，过几日再来。”薛蝌也怕母亲痛苦，带信说：“我无事，必须衙门再使费几次，便可回家了，只是别心疼银子钱。”薛蝌留下李祥在此照料，一径回家，见了薛姨妈，陈说知县怎样徇情，怎样审断，终定了误伤：“将来尸亲那里再花些银子，一准赎罪，便没事了。”薛姨妈听说，暂且放心，说：“正盼你来家中照应。贾府里本





many wounds were there on your nephew's body?"

"One on the head," replied Zhang Er hastily.

"Quite so," said the magistrate.

He made a secretary show Mrs. Zhang the record, and told the bailiff and Zhang Er to point out the testimony of all the eye-witnesses that there had been no fight and that this was not murder but simply an accident. Having made them append their signatures, he consigned Xue Pan to jail until further notice, ordered the bailiff to take the others away, and declared the court adjourned. When Mrs. Zhang wept and clamoured, he told runners to throw her out.

"It really was an accident," Zhang Er assured her. "How can we hold him to blame? Now His Honour has decided the case, don't make a scene."

Xue Ke, outside, was pleased when he heard the upshot. He sent word home but stayed there himself, waiting to pay the plaintiffs compensation once the verdict was announced. Then he overheard several passers-by in the street saying that an Imperial Concubine had died, and the Emperor had suspended court for three days. As this place was not far from the Imperial Sepulchres, the local magistrate had to prepare for the funeral and would probably be occupied for some time. Xue Ke, knowing that waiting there would serve no purpose, went to see Xue Pan in prison.

"Just wait with an easy mind, cousin," he urged him. "I'm going home but will be back before long."

To allay his mother's anxiety, Xue Pan gave him a note for her in which he had written:

I am all right now. After a few more payments to the yamen I'll be able to return home. Don't begrudge spending money!

Then, leaving Li Xiang to attend to things there, Xue Ke went home. When he saw Aunt Xue, he told her how the magistrate had been suborned and decided the case in their favour, returning a verdict of death by misadventure.

"After paying the dead man's family more compensation, we should have no further trouble," he concluded.

Aunt Xue said with relief, "I was hoping you'd come back to see to



该谢去，况且周贵妃薨了，他们天天进去，家里空落落的。我想着要去替姨太太那边照应照应，作伴儿，只是咱们家又没人，你这来的正好。”薛蝌道：“我在外头，原听见说是贾妃薨了，这么才赶回来的。我们娘娘好好儿的，怎么就死了？”薛姨妈道：“上年原病过一次，也就好了。这回又没听见娘娘有什么病，只闻那府里头几天老太太不大受用，合上眼便看见元妃娘娘，众人都不放心。直至打听起来，又没有什么事。到了大前儿晚上，老太太亲口说是‘怎么元妃独自一个人到我这里？’众人只道是病中想的话，总不信。老太太又说：‘你们不信，元妃还和我说是：“荣华易尽，须要退步抽身。”’众人都说：‘谁不想到？这是有年纪的人思前想后的心事。’所以也不当件事。恰好第二天早起，里头吵嚷出来，说娘娘病重，宣各诰命进去请安。他们就惊疑的了不得。赶着进去。他们还没有出来，我们家里已听见周贵妃薨逝了。你想外头的讹言，家里的疑心，恰碰在一起，可奇不奇？”

宝钗道：“不但是外头的讹言舛错，便在家里的，一听见‘娘娘’两个字，也就都忙了，过后才明白。这两天那府里这些丫头婆子来说，他们早知道不是咱们家的娘娘。我说：‘你们那里拿得定呢？’他说道：‘前几年正月，外省荐了一个算命的，说是很准的。老太太叫人将元妃八字夹在丫头们八





our family affairs. I ought to go to thank the Jia family. Besides, now that Imperial Concubine Zhou had died they have to go to court every day, leaving the house empty. I was thinking of going over to help see to things and keep your aunt company, but we have no one at home. You've come just at the right time."

"It's because I heard outside that Imperial Consort *Jia* had died that I hurried back. I did wonder, though, how that could be, as she had been in good health."

"Last year she had one bout of illness, then recovered. This time we hadn't heard that she was unwell, but we were told that for several days the old lady in the Jia Mansion had been poorly, and whenever she closed her eyes she saw Her Highness — that had everyone worried! Yet when they sent to make inquiries, it seemed nothing was amiss. Then three nights ago the old lady asked, 'How could Her Highness come all by herself to see me?' No one took her seriously, thinking this another hallucination brought on by illness. 'You don't believe me,' she said, 'but Yuanchun herself just told me: Prosperity and splendour soon run out; some way of escape must be found!'

"Still no one paid much attention, thinking it natural for an old soul of the worrying sort to have such notions. But the very next morning, word came from the Palace that the Imperial Consort was mortally ill and all ladies of rank were to go to pay their respects. That threw them into a fluster, and they hurried to the Palace. Before their return, though, word reached us here that it was Imperial Concubine *Zhou* who died. Just fancy, isn't it remarkable the way these rumours outside and our suspicions at home coincided!"

Baochai put in, "It wasn't just the rumours outside that misled us, but the mere words 'Her Highness' set her family in a tizzy, and only afterwards did they find out the truth. The last couple of days their maids have come and told us that they knew earlier on it couldn't be *their* Royal Highness.

"How can you be sure?" I asked.

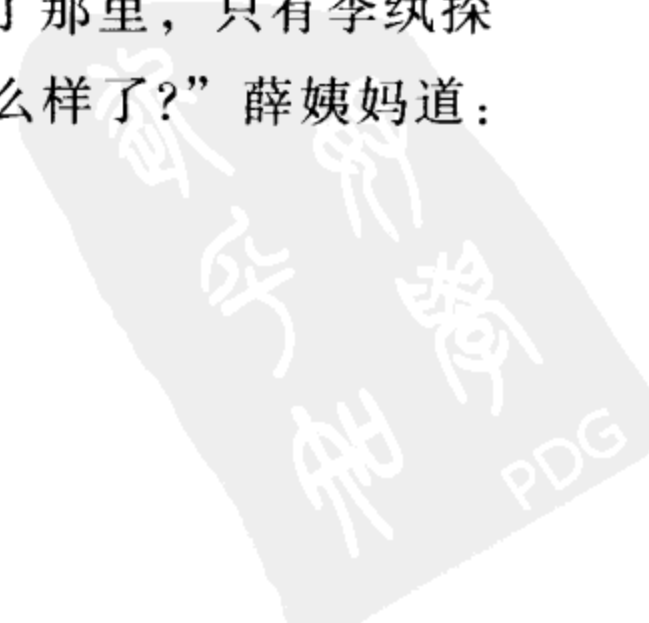
"The answer was, 'A few years ago at New Year, someone in the provinces introduced to us a fortune-teller, said to be infallible. The old lady told us to put Her Highness' horoscope in with the maids' for him to



字里头，送出去叫他推算，他独说：“这正月初一日生日的那位姑娘，只怕时辰错了；不然，真是个贵人，也不能在这府中。”老爷和众人说：“不管他错不错，照八字算去。”那先生便说：“甲申年，正月丙寅，这四个字内，有‘伤官’‘败财’。惟‘申’字内有‘正官’‘禄马’，这就是家里养不住的，也不见什么好。这日子是乙卯，初春木旺，虽是‘比肩’，那里知道愈‘比’愈好，就像那个好木料，愈经斫削，才成大器。”独喜得时上什么辛金为贵，什么巳中“正官”“禄马”独旺：这叫作“飞天禄马格”。又说什么“日逢‘专禄’，贵重的很。‘天月二德’坐本命，贵受椒房之宠。这位姑娘，若是时辰准了，定是一位主子娘娘。”这不是算准了么？我们还记得说：“可惜荣华不久；只怕遇着寅年卯月，这就是‘比’而又‘比’，‘劫’而又‘劫’，譬如好木，太要做玲珑剔透，本质就不坚了。”他们把这些话都忘记了，只管瞎忙。我才想起来，告诉我们大奶奶，今年那里是寅年卯月呢？”

宝钗尚未述完这话，薛蝌急道：“且别管人家的事！既有这个神仙算命的，我想哥哥今年什么恶星照命，遭这么横祸？快开八字儿，我给他算去，看有妨碍么。”宝钗道：“他是外省来的，不知今年在京不在了。”

说着，便打点薛姨妈往贾府去。到了那里，只有李纨探春等在家接着，便问道：“大爷的事，怎么样了？”薛姨妈道：





work out.

“He said, ‘There must be some mistake in the hour of birth of that girl born on the first of the first month. Otherwise, she must be of high degree — she couldn’t be in this house.’

“Lord Zheng said, ‘Never mind whether there’s a mistake or not. Just predict her fortune.’

“‘She was born in the year *Jiashen*, the month *bingyin*,’ he said. ‘Three of these characters signify ‘demotion’ and ‘bankruptcy.’ Only *shen* augurs well for officialdom and wealth; still that doesn’t hold good for a girl who has to leave home. The day of her birth is *yimao*. In early spring the ‘wood’ element is in the ascendant. Although the two signs clash, the bigger the clash the better, just as in the case of good wood — the more you polish it, the greater its value. But most auspicious of all is the hour sign *xinshi*, *xin* meaning precious as gold, *shi* high rank and wealth. Combined, they make up the ‘winged horse’ sign, and the day in this combination is so exceptionally auspicious that she should soar up like the moon in the sky and rank high in the Emperor’s favour. If the hour of her birth is correct, she must be a sovereign lady.’

“‘Wasn’t that an accurate forecast?’ said the maids. ‘We also remember his saying that unluckily her splendour would be short-lived. If a *mao* month happened to fall in a *yin* year, there would be a double clash and that would undermine her strength, just as in the case of good wood if it’s carved too intricately. They forgot all those predictions and got worked up over nothing. But we remembered the other day and told our mistress. This isn’t the *yin* year nor the *mao* month, is it?’”

Before Baochai could finish, Xue Ke said excitedly, “Never mind about other people. If you know of such a miraculous fortune-teller, quickly give me Xue Pan’s horoscope — I’m sure he’s under some evil star this year to have such a bad stroke of luck — and I’ll get him to work out what’s going to happen.”

“That man came from the provinces,” said Baochai. “We don’t know whether he’s still in the capital this year or not.”

Baochai then helped her mother get ready to go to the Jia Mansion. At the time of Aunt Xue’s arrival, the only ones of the family at home were Li Wan, Tanchun and Xichun, who asked her about Xue Pan’s



“等详了上司才定，看来也到不了死罪。”这才大家放心。探春便道：“昨晚太太想着说：‘上回家里有事，全仗姨太太照应；如今自己有事，也难提了。’心里只是不放心。”薛姨妈道：“我在家里，也是难过。只是你大哥遭了这事，你二兄弟又办事去了，家里你姐姐一个人，中什么用？况且我们媳妇儿又是个不大晓事的，所以不能脱身过来。目今那里知县也正为预备周贵妃的差使，不得了结案件，所以你二兄弟回来了，我才得过来看看。”李纨便道：“请姨太太这里住几天更好。”薛姨妈点头道：“我也要在这边给你们姐妹们作伴儿，——就只你宝妹妹冷静些。”惜春道：“姨妈要惦着，为什么不把宝姐姐也请过来？”薛姨妈笑着说道：“使不得。”惜春道：“怎么使不得？他先怎么住着来呢？”李纨道：“你不懂的。人家家里如今有事，怎么来呢？”惜春也信以为实，不便再问。

正说着，贾母等回来，见了薛姨妈，也顾不得问好，便问薛蟠的事。薛姨妈细述了一遍。宝玉在旁听见什么蒋玉菡一段，当着人不问，心里打量是：“他既回了京，怎么不来瞧我？”又见宝钗也不过来，不知是怎么个原故，心内正自呆呆的想呢，恰好黛玉也来请安，宝玉稍觉心里喜欢，便把想宝钗来的念头打断，同着姊妹们在老太太那里吃了晚饭。大





case.

"It won't be settled till the court has reported it to the higher-ups," Aunt Xue told them. "But it looks as if it won't be too serious."

They were relieved to hear this.

Tanchun remarked, "Yesterday evening Her Ladyship, thinking back, said, 'Last time we had trouble at home, Aunt Xue rallied round. But now, with troubles of our own, we're in no position to help her.' This has been preying on her mind."

"I've been feeling bad myself," answered Aunt Xue. "But with your Cousin Pan in this fix and your Cousin Ke away to sort things out, there was only Baochai at home — and what could *she* do? I couldn't leave her before, especially not with my daughter-in-law so senseless. At present the magistrate there is so busy preparing the funeral of Imperial Concubine Zhou, he has no time to wind up Pan's case. So your Cousin Ke has come back, making it possible for me to come over."

"Won't you stay here for a few days, aunt?" urged Li Wan.

"I'd like to stay and keep you company for a bit." Aunt Xue nodded. "But that would be rather lonely for Baochai."

"If that's what worries you, aunty, why not bring her over too?" suggested Xichun.

Aunt Xue smiled.

"No, that wouldn't do."

"Why not?" asked Xichun. "Didn't she stay here before?"

"You don't understand," put in Li Wan. "She has work to do at home. How could she come?"

Xichun, thinking this the truth, did not press the point.

As they were chatting, the Lady Dowager's party returned.

At sight of Aunt Xue, without stopping to exchange greetings, they asked her for news of Xue Pan, which she gave them in full. When she described his encounter with Jiang Yuhuan, Baoyu — though he could not ask in front of the rest — knew that this was his friend the actor. He wondered, "If he's back in the capital, why hasn't he come to see me?" Baochai's absence puzzled him too, and he remained lost in thought till Daiyu's arrival cheered him up and stopped him thinking about her. He and the girls stayed to dine with the old lady, after which they dispersed,



家散了，薛姨妈将就住在老太太的套间屋里。

宝玉回到自己房中，换了衣裳，忽然想起蒋玉菡给的汗巾，便向袭人道：“你那一年没有系的那条红汗巾子，还有没有？”袭人道：“我搁着呢，问他做什么？”宝玉道：“我白问问。”袭人道：“你没有听见薛大爷相与这些混账人，所以闹到人命关天！你还提那些做什么？有这样白操心，倒不如静静儿的念念书，把这些个没要紧的事撻开了也好。”宝玉道：“我并不闹什么，偶然想起，有也罢，没也罢，我白问一声，你们就有这些话。”袭人笑道：“并不是我多话。一个人知书达礼，就该往上巴结才是。就是心爱的人来了，也叫他瞧着喜欢尊敬啊。”宝玉被袭人一提，便说：“了不得！方才我在老太太那边，看见人多，没有和林妹妹说话，他也不曾理我。散的时候，他先走了。此时必在屋里，我去就来。”说着就走。袭人道：“快些回来罢。这都是我提头儿，倒招起你的高兴来了。”

宝玉也不答言，低着头，一径走到潇湘馆来，只见黛玉靠在桌上看书。宝玉走到跟前，笑说道：“妹妹早回来了？”黛玉也笑道：“你不理我，我还在那里做什么？”宝玉一面笑说：“他们人多说话，我插不下嘴去，所以没有和你说话。”一面瞧着黛玉看的那本书，书上的字一个也不认得。有的象“芍”字；有的象“茫”字；也有一个“大”字旁边“九”字加上一勾，中间又添个“五”字；也有上头“五”字“六”字又添一个“木”字，底下又是一个“五”字；看着又奇怪，又纳闷，便说：“妹妹近日越发进了，看起天书来了！”



Aunt Xue staying on to sleep in the old lady's annex.

Once home again, Baoyu was changing his clothes when he remembered the sash given him by Jiang Yuhan.

He asked Xiren, "Do you still have that red sash which you refused to wear the other year?"

"I put it away," she said. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, for no special reason."

"Didn't you hear how Master Pan got charged with murder through mixing with such riffraff? Why bring that up again? You'd better study quietly and forget about such trifles, instead of worrying your head over nothing."

"I'm not doing anything wrong, am I?" he demanded. "It just happened to cross my mind. What does it matter whether you have it or not? I ask one little question, and listen to the way you run on!"

"I didn't mean to nag." She smiled. "But someone who studies the classics and knows the rules of propriety ought to aim high. Then, when the one you love comes, she'll be pleased and respect you."

This reminded Baoyu of something.

"Botheration!" he exclaimed. "There was such a crowd with the old lady just now that I wasn't able to talk with Cousin Lin. She paid me no attention either. By the time I left, she'd already gone. She must be in her place now. I'll drop in to see her." With that he started out.

"Don't be too long," said Xiren. "I shouldn't have said that, getting you all worked up."

Baoyu made no reply but went off with lowered head to Bamboo Lodge where Daiyu, bending over her desk, was reading. He approached her with a smile.

"Have you been back long?"

"You cut me, so why should I stay there?" She asked archly.

"There were so many people talking, I couldn't get a word in. That's why I didn't speak to you."

He had been eyeing Daiyu's book, but could not recognize the characters in it. Some looked familiar, others were combinations of various radicals and numerals.

In puzzled surprise he observed, "You're getting more erudite, cousin,



黛玉“嗤”的一声笑道：“好个念书的人！连个琴谱都没有见过？”宝玉道：“琴谱怎么不知道？为什么上头的字一个也不认得？妹妹，你认得么？”黛玉道：“不认得瞧他做什么？”宝玉道：“我不信，从没有听见你会抚琴。我们书房里挂着好几张，前年来了一个清客先生，叫做什么嵇好古，老爷烦他抚了一曲。他取下琴来，说都使不得，还说：‘老先生若高兴，改日携琴来请教。’想是我们老爷也不懂，他便不来了。怎么你有本事藏着？”黛玉道：“我何尝真会呢？前日身上略觉舒服，在大书架上翻书，看有一套琴谱，甚有雅趣，上头讲的琴理甚通，手法说的也明白，真是古人静心养性的工夫。我在扬州，也听得讲究过，也曾学过，只是不弄了，就没有了。这果真是‘三日不弹，手生荆棘’。前日看这几篇，没有曲文，只有操名，我又到别处找了一本有曲文的来看，才有意思。究竟怎么弹的好，实在也难。书上说的：师旷鼓琴，能来风雪龙凤。孔圣人尚学琴于师襄，一操便知其为文王。高山流水，得遇知音……”说到这里，眼皮儿微微一动，慢慢的低下头去。

宝玉正听得高兴，便道：“好妹妹，你才说的实在有趣！只是我才见上头的字，都不认得，你教我几个呢。”黛玉道：





all the time, reading something so esoteric!”

Daiyu burst out laughing.

“What a scholar!” she teased. “Have you never seen a lute score before?”

“Of course I have. But how come I don’t know any of those characters there? Do you understand them, cousin?”

“Would I read it if I didn’t?”

“I don’t believe you. I’ve never seen you playing a lute. We have several hanging in our study. The other year a scholar called, Ji Haogu I think his name was. My father asked him to play, but when he took the lutes down he said none of them was any good and proposed, ‘If you like, sir, I’ll bring my own lute some day to play for you.’ But he never turned up again, probably because my father’s no connoisseur. Why have you been hiding this accomplishment from me?”

“I’m no good at it really,” she said. “The other day, feeling a bit better, I rummaged through the books on the big bookcase and found a set of lute scores which looked intriguing. It gives a lucid account of musical theory and clear instructions for playing. Luting was truly an art the men of old cultivated to achieve tranquillity and integrity. In Yangzhou, I heard it explained and learned to play, but then I gave up and that was the end of that. As the saying goes, ‘Three days without playing, and fingers become thumbs.’”

“The other day when I read those scores, there were no words to the music, only titles. Then I found a score somewhere else with words set to the music, which made it more interesting. It’s really hard to play well. We read that when the musician Kuang played the lute, he could summon up wind and thunder, dragons and phoenixes. Even the sage Confucius learned from the musician Xiang, and as soon as he played a piece he realized that this was King Wen’s music. Then there was the musician who, playing of mountains and streams, met a man of true understanding...” Here her eyelashes fluttered and, slowly, she lowered her head.

By now Baoyu’s enthusiasm was aroused.

“Dear cousin, how fascinating you make it sound!” he exclaimed. “But I can’t read any of those characters. Won’t you teach me a few of them.”



“不用教的，一说便可以知道的。”宝玉道：“我是个糊涂人，得教我那个‘大’字加一勾，中间一个‘五’字的。”黛玉笑道：“这‘大’字‘九’字是用左手大拇指按琴上的‘九徽’，这一勾加‘五’字是右手钩‘五弦’，并不是一个字，乃是一声：是极容易的。还有吟、揉、绰、注、撞、走、飞、推等法，是讲究手法的。”

宝玉乐得手舞足蹈的说：“好妹妹，你既明琴理，我们何不学起来？”黛玉道：“琴者，禁也。古人制下，原以治身，涵养性情，抑其淫荡，去其奢侈。若要抚琴，必择静室高斋，或在层楼的上头，在林石的里面，或是山巅上，或是水涯上。再遇着那天地清和的时候，风清月朗，焚香静坐，心不外想，气血和平，才能与神合灵，与道合妙。所以古人说：‘知音难遇。’若无知音，宁可独对着那清风明月，苍松怪石，野猿老鹤，抚弄一番，以寄兴趣，方为不负了这琴。还有一层，又要指法好，取音好。若必要抚琴，先须衣冠整齐，或鹤氅，或深衣，要如古人的象表，那才能称圣人之器。然后盥了手，焚上香，方才将身就在榻边，把琴放在案上，坐在第五徽的地方儿，对着自己的当心，两手方从容抬起：这才心身俱正。还要知道轻重疾徐、卷舒自若、体态尊重方好。”宝玉道：“我们学着玩，若这么讲究起来，那就难了。”





“You don’t have to be taught. Once I explain, you’ll catch on.”

“I’m a stupid fellow, so tell me what that character like ‘big’ (大) with a hook to it means, and the one that has a ‘five’ in it.”

Daiyu rejoined gaily, “the one made up of ‘big’ and ‘nine’ means that you must thumb the ninth note of the lute. The hook combined with ‘five’ means that you must pluck the fifth string with your right hand. They’re not characters actually but musical signs, which are very easy to follow. Then there are various methods of fingering: Whirring, stroking, plucking, damping, tapping, sliding, gliding, pushing and so forth.”

Baoyu was delighted.

“Good cousin, since you understand all about it, why don’t we learn to play the lute?” he proposed.

“No,” she said. “The men of old made music to induce self-restraint, curb passion, and suppress licence and extravagance. So anyone wanting to play the lute should choose some quiet, lofty studio either in some attic among forests and rocks, or on the summit of a hill or the bank of a stream. A fine, mild day should be chosen too, with a cool breeze and bright moon. Then one should burn incense and sit quietly, one’s mind a blank, one’s breathing regular, to become one with the spirit world and the Way. This is why the ancients said ‘Hard to meet one who understands music’. When there are no understanding listeners, one should play to the cool breeze and bright moon, green pines and rugged rocks, wild monkeys and hoary cranes, conveying one’s emotions in solitude so as not to do injustice to the lute.

“Then again, good fingering and execution are needed. Before playing one must dress fittingly in a loose cape or long robe like the men of old, to be worthy of this instrument of the sage’s. This done, the hands should be washed, incense lit, and the lutist should sit lightly on the couch with the lute on his desk, its fifth note facing his heart. Only then, when mind and body are well-regulated, can the two hands be raised slowly. And whether soft or loud, fast or slow, the playing must be natural and dignified.”

“We’re only learning for fun!” exclaimed Baoyu. “If you’re so particular, it’ll be too hard.”

While they were talking Zijuan had come in. She smiled at the sight of



两个人正说着，只见紫鹃进来，看见宝玉，笑说道：“宝二爷，今日这样高兴！”宝玉笑道：“听见妹妹讲究的，叫人顿开茅塞，所以越听越爱听。”紫鹃道：“不是这个高兴，说的是二爷到我们这边来的话。”宝玉道：“先时妹妹身上不舒服，我怕闹的他烦，再者，我又上学，因此显着就疏远了似的。”紫鹃不等说完，便道：“姑娘也是才好。二爷既这么说，坐坐也该让姑娘歇歇儿了，别叫姑娘只是讲究劳神了。”宝玉笑道：“可是我只顾爱听，也就忘了妹妹劳神了。”黛玉笑道：“说这些倒也开心，也没有什么劳神的。只是怕我只管说，你只管不懂呢。”宝玉道：“横竖慢慢的自然明白了。”说着，便站起来，道：“当真的妹妹歇歇儿罢。明儿我告诉三妹妹和四妹妹去，叫他们都学起来，让我听。”黛玉笑道：“你也太受用了。即如大家学会了抚起来，你不懂，可不是对——”黛玉说到那里，想起心上的事，便缩住口，不肯往下说了。

宝玉便笑着道：“只要你们能弹，我便爱听，也不管‘牛’不‘牛’的了。”黛玉红了脸一笑，紫鹃雪雁也都笑了。于是走出门来。只见秋纹带着小丫头，捧着一小盆兰花来，说：“太太那边有人送了四盆兰花来，因里头有事，没有空儿玩他，叫给二爷一盆，林姑娘一盆。”黛玉看时，却有几枝双朵儿的，心中忽然一动，也不知是喜是悲，便呆呆的呆看。那宝玉此时却一心只在琴上，便说：“妹妹有了兰花，就可以做《猗兰操》了。”

黛玉听了，心里反不舒服。回到房中，看着花，想到：“草木当春，花鲜叶茂，想我年纪尚小，便像三秋蒲柳。若



Baoyu.

“So you’re in good spirits today, Master Bao!” she remarked.

“My cousin’s conversation is so illuminating, I could never tire of listening,” he told her.

“That’s not what I meant,” said the maid. “You must have been in good spirits today to come here.”

“While she was unwell, I was afraid to disturb her; besides, I had to go to school. That’s why I gave the impression of keeping away....”

“Miss Lin’s only just better,” Zijuan interrupted. “As you know that, Master Bao, you should let her rest now and not wear her out.”

“I was so intent on listening, I forgot that she might be tired.”

“It’s not tiring but fun to discuss such things,” said Daiyu with a smile. “I’m only afraid you may not understand.”

“Well, anyway, I’ll get it clear gradually.” With that he stood up saying, “Really you’d better rest now. Tomorrow I’ll ask Tanchun and Xichun to learn to play the lute for me too.”

“You’re too spoilt!” chuckled Daiyu. “If we all learn to play but you don’t understand, won’t that be a case of playing a lute to an....”¹ Here she recollected herself and broke off.

“So long as you can play, I’ll be only too glad to listen,” said Baoyu cheerfully. “I don’t care if you think me an ox.”

Daiyu blushed and smiled while Zijuan and Xueyan laughed.

Baoyu was on his way out when along came Qiuwen with a younger maid carrying a small pot of orchids.

“Someone sent four pots of orchids to Her Ladyship,” she announced. “They’re too busy to enjoy them, so Her Ladyship told us to take one pot to Master Bao, one to Miss Lin.”

Daiyu saw that a few sprays had double blooms. The sight stirred her, but whether with joy or with grief she did not know as she stared at them blankly. Baoyu’s mind, however, was still set on the lute.

“Now that you have these orchids, cousin,” he said, “you can play that tune *The Orchid*.”²

This remark upset Daiyu. Going back to her room she gazed at the orchids, reflecting, “In spring, plants put out fresh blooms and luxuriant leaves. I’m still young, yet already I’m like a plant in late autumn. If my



是果能如愿，或者渐渐的好来；不然，只恐似那花柳残春，怎禁得风催雨送！”想到那里，不禁又滴下泪来。紫鹃在旁看见这般光景，却想不出原故来：“方才宝玉在这里，那么高兴；如今好好的看花，怎么又伤起心来？”正愁着没法儿劝解，只见宝钗那边打发人来。未知何事，下回分解。





wish comes true, I may gradually grow stronger. If not, I fear I'll be like a fading flower — how can I stand buffeting by rain and wind?" She could not hold back her tears.

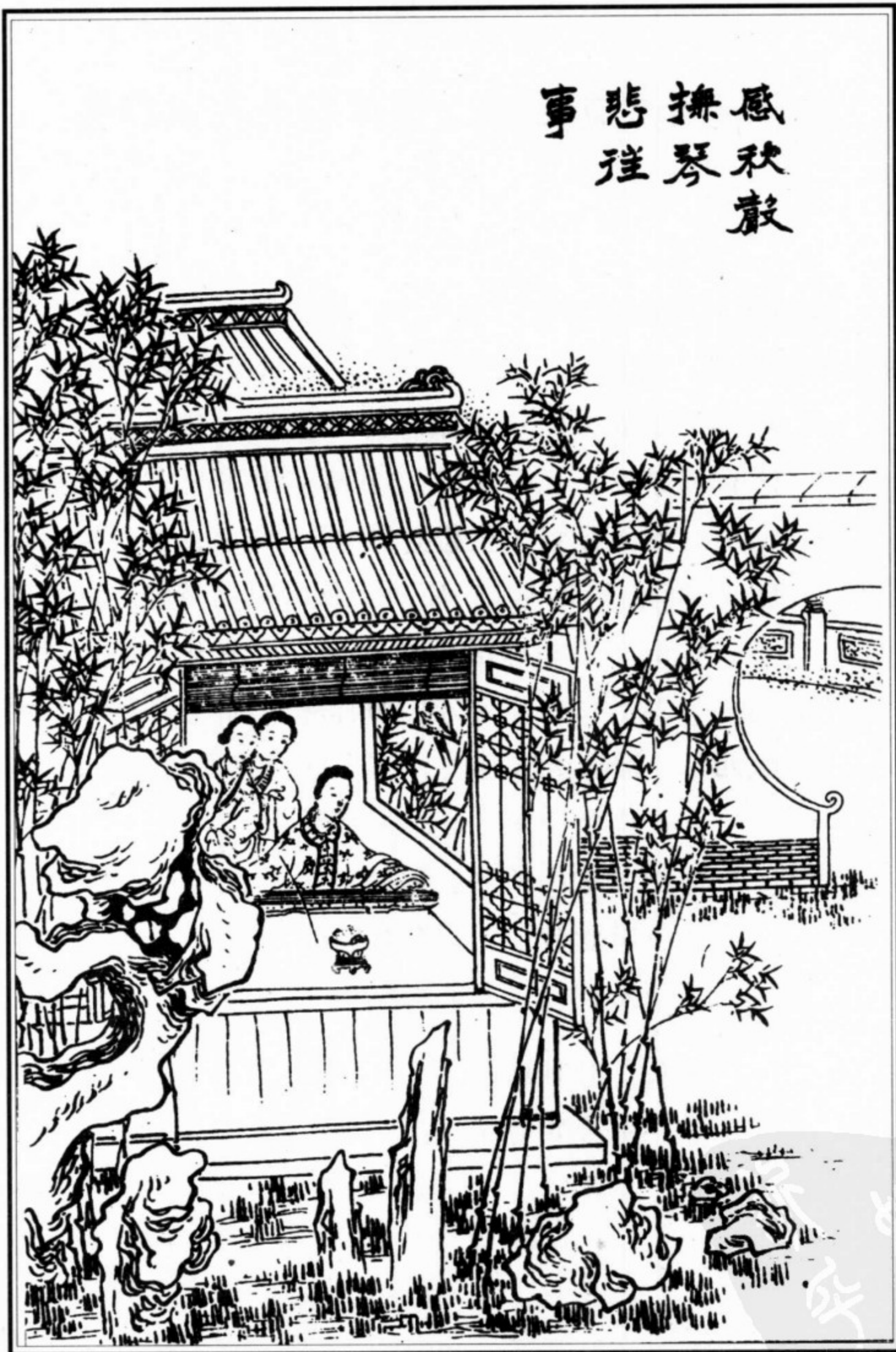
Zijuan seeing this could not understand the reason. She thought, "Just now with Baoyu here she was so happy. Why has looking at orchids made her sad again?"

She was anxiously wondering how to comfort her mistress when a maid arrived with a message from Baochai. To know what it was, read on.





感秋散
撫琴
悲佳
事



第八十七回

感秋声抚琴悲往事 坐禅寂走火入邪魔

却说黛玉叫进宝钗家的女人来，问了好，呈上书子，黛玉叫他去喝茶，便将宝钗来书打开看时，只见上面写着：

妹生辰不偶，家运多艰，姊妹伶仃，萱亲衰迈。兼之猊声狺语，旦暮无休；更遭惨祸飞灾，不啻惊风密雨。夜深辗转，愁绪何堪！属在同心，能不为之愍惻乎？回忆海棠结社，序属清秋，对菊持螯，同盟欢洽。犹记“孤标傲世偕谁隐，一样花开为底迟”之句，未尝不叹冷节余芳，如吾两人也！感怀触绪，聊赋四章。匪曰无故呻吟，亦长歌当哭之意耳。

悲时序之递嬗兮，又属清秋。

感遭家之不造兮，独处离愁。

北堂有萱兮，何以忘忧？

无以解忧兮，我心咻咻！

云凭凭兮秋风酸，

步中庭兮霜叶干。





Chapter 87

Moved by an Autumn Poem, a Lutist Mourns the Past One Practising Yoga Is Possessed Through Lust

Baochai's maid, called in by Daiyu, presented her young lady's greetings and letter, then was sent off to have some tea. Opening the letter, Daiyu found written there:

Born on an unlucky day in an ill-fated family, I have no sister and my mother is failing. Day and night there is bickering and brawling here, on top of which fearful disasters have assailed us thick and fast. At dead of night I toss and turn, overwhelmed by anxiety. Surely you who understand me must sympathize with me?

I recall the Begonia Club we formed in autumn and how we enjoyed chrysanthemums and crabs in happy harmony. When I remember those lines:

Proud recluse, with what hermit are you taking refuge?

All flowers must bloom, what makes you bloom so late?

I cannot but feel that the chrysanthemum's old fragrance is like the two of us! Moved by these thoughts I have scribbled out four stanzas. Though simply an empty lament, they voice my distress.

1

Sad to see the passing of seasons,
Cool autumn is here once more;
My family is ill-fated,
Alone I dwell, my heart sore.
Day-lilies in the northern hall
Cannot make me forget my cares.
With no means to banish grief,
My heart despairs.

2

Low hang the clouds,
The autumn wind makes moan;
I pace the court





何去何从兮，失我故欢！
静言思之兮，恻肺肝！

惟鲋有潭兮，惟鹤有梁。
鳞甲潜伏兮，羽毛何长！

搔首问兮茫茫，
高天厚地兮，谁知余之永伤？

银河耿耿兮寒飞侵，
月色横斜兮玉漏沉。
忧心炳炳兮，发我哀吟。
吟复吟兮，寄我知音。

黛玉看了，不胜伤感。又想：“宝姐姐不寄与别人，单寄与我，也是‘惺惺惜惺惺’的意思。”正在沉吟，只听见外面有人说道：“林姐姐在家里呢么？”黛玉一面把宝钗的书叠起，口内便答应道：“是谁？”正问着，早见几个人进来，却是探春、湘云、李纹、李绮。彼此问了好，雪雁倒上茶来，大家喝了，说些闲话。因想起前年的“菊花诗”来，黛玉便道：“宝姐姐自从挪出去，来了两遭，如今索性有事也不来了。真真奇怪！我看他终久还来我们这里不来！”探春微笑





Through withered leaves turned roan.
Where can I go?
Lost, my past happiness.
Remembered joys
But fill me with distress.

3

The sturgeon has its tarn,
The crane its nest,
One lurking within scales,
One with long plumage dressed!
At my wit's end
I ask infinity:
High heaven, vast earth,
Who knows my misery?

4

The Milky Way is twinkling,
The atmosphere strikes chill;
The moon is sloping down the sky,
The jade clepsydra's still.
There is no sleep for aching hearts.
My grief I must impart;
Chanting again and yet again
For one who knows my heart.

Daiyu after reading these lines was plunged in grief. She reflected, "The fact that Cousin Baochai didn't send these to anyone else, only to me, shows that we are kindred spirits."

She was lost in thought when someone outside called out, "Is Cousin Lin at home?"

Putting Baochai's letter away she asked who was there, even as Tanchun, Xiangyun, Li Wen and Li Qi trooped in. They exchanged greetings while Xueyan brought them tea, after which they chatted. Remembering the poems they had written that year on chrysanthemums, Daiyu remarked:

"Baochai came over twice after moving out, yet these days — even when something happens — she doesn't come. Isn't that odd? I wonder whether she'll ever come back or not!"

"Why shouldn't she?" asked Tanchun with a smile. "She's bound to



道：“怎么不来？横竖要来的。如今是他们尊嫂有些脾气，姨妈上了年纪的人，又兼有薛大哥的事，自然得宝姐姐照料一切。那里还比得先前有工夫呢？”

正说着，忽听得“唿喇喇”一片风声，吹了好些落叶打在窗纸上。停了一回儿，又透过一阵清香来。众人闻着，都说道：“这是何处来的香风？这像什么香？”黛玉道：“好像木樨香。”探春笑道：“林姐姐终不脱南边人的话。这大九月里的，那里还有桂花呢？”黛玉笑道：“原是啊！不然，怎么不竟说‘是’桂花香，只说似乎‘像’呢？”湘云道：“三姐姐，你也别说。你可记得‘十里荷花，三秋桂子’？在南边正是晚桂开的时候了，你只没有见过罢了。等你明日到南边去的时候，你自然也就知道了。”探春笑道：“我有什么事到南边去？况且这个也是我早知道的，不用你们说嘴。”李纹李绮只抿着嘴儿笑。

黛玉道：“妹妹，这可说不齐。俗语说：‘人是地行仙。’今日在这里，明日就不知在那里。譬如我原是南边人，怎么到了这里呢？”湘云拍着手笑道：“今儿三姐姐可叫林姐姐问住了！不但林姐姐是南边人到这里，就是我们这几个人就不同：也有本来是北边的；也有根子是南边，生长在北边的；也有生长在南边，到这北边的。今儿大家都凑在一处，可见人总有一个定数。大凡地和人，总是各自有缘分的。”众人听了，都点头。探春也只是笑。又说了一会子闲话儿，大家散出。黛玉送至门口，大家都说：“你身上才好些，别出来了，看着了风。”



eventually.... Just now, of course, she has too much to see to, what with her sister-in-law's cranky ways, aunty getting on in years, and on top of everything this trouble of Cousin Pan's. She hasn't the time to spare that she used to have."

Just then a gust of wind sprang up, dashing fallen leaves against the window paper. By and by they smelt a faint fragrance.

"Where does this scent come from?" they wondered. "What can it be?"

"It's like fragrant osmanthus," observed Daiyu.

"Cousin Lin is talking like a southerner," teased Tanchun. "How could fragrant osmanthus bloom in the ninth month?"

"Quite so." Daiyu laughed. "That's why I said it's *like* fragrant osmanthus."

"You'd better pipe down, Tanchun." put in Xiangyun. "Don't you remember the lines:

Ten *li* of lotus blooms.

And in late autumn fragrant osmanthus seeds.

This is the season for it to blossom down south, only you've never seen it. When you go south in future, you'll find out."

"Why should I go south?" asked Tanchun. "Besides, I knew that without your telling me."

Li Wen and Li Qi said nothing, only smiled.

"Don't be so sure about that, cousin," said Daiyu. "As the saying goes, 'Man is a wanderer, here today but gone tomorrow'. For example, how did I get here, when I'm a southerner?"

Xiangyun clapped her hands and laughed.

"Today Cousin Lin's floored Cousin Tanchun!" she crowed. "Not only is Daiyu here from the south, the rest of us come from different places too. Some are northerners, others were born in the south and brought up in the north, still others were brought up in the south and then came north. Our coming together now in one place shows that everyone's fate is fixed. Each individual is destined for different places."

The others nodded approval while Tanchun merely smiled. And after more casual talk the visitors left. When Daiyu saw them to the door they said, "You've only just got a bit better, don't come out. We don't want



于是黛玉一面说着话儿，一面站在门口，又与四人殷勤了几句，便看着他们出院去了。进来坐着，看看已是林鸟归山，夕阳西坠。因史湘云说起南边的话，便想着：“父母若在……南边的景致，春花秋月，水秀山明，二十四桥，六朝遗迹……不少下人伏侍，诸事可以任意，言语亦可不避……香车画舫，红杏青帘，惟我独尊……今日寄人篱下，纵有许多照应，自己无处不要留心……不知前生作了什么罪孽，今生这样孤凄！真是李后主说的‘此间日中只以眼泪洗面’矣！”一面思想，不知不觉神往那里去了。

紫鹃走来，看见这样光景，想着必是因刚才说起南边北边的话来，一时触着黛玉的心事了，便问道：“姑娘们来说了半天话，想来姑娘又劳了神了。刚才我叫雪雁告诉厨房里，给姑娘作了一碗火肉白菜汤，加了一点儿虾米儿，配了点青笋紫菜，姑娘想着好么？”黛玉道：“也罢了。”紫鹃道：“还熬了一点江米粥。”黛玉点点头儿，又说道：“那粥得你们两个自己熬了，不用他们厨房里熬才是。”紫鹃道：“我也怕厨房里弄的不干净，我们自己熬呢。就是那汤，我也告诉雪雁合柳嫂儿说了，要弄干净着。柳嫂儿说了：他打点妥当，拿到他屋里，叫他们五儿瞅着嫩呢。”黛玉道：“我倒不是嫌人家腌臢；只是病了好些日子，不周不备，都是人家，这会子又汤儿粥儿的调度，未免惹人厌烦。”说着，眼圈儿又红了。

紫鹃道：“姑娘这话也是多想。姑娘是老太太的外孙女



you to catch cold.”

She stood in the doorway exchanging civilities with them until they left the compound, then went back to her room and sat down. It was sunset now, birds were winging back to the hills. And Xiangyun’s talk about the south filled Daiyu’s mind with fancies.

“If my parents were still alive... the south with spring flowers and autumn moonlight, limpid streams and lucent hills, Yangzhou’s twenty-four bridges and Six Dynasties’ relics... no lack of maids to wait on me, and freedom to do as I pleased without worrying... a scented carriage and a painted barge, the red apricots and green signs of country taverns, my own mistress, respected by all.... Now, living with another family, although they treat me so well I have to watch my step all the time.... What sins did I commit in my last life to be so wretched now? In the words of the deposed king of Southern Tang, ¹ ‘Here I can only bathe my face in tears every day’....” She lost herself in these reflections.

Zijuan coming back supposed that her melancholy had been induced by the talk about south and north which Daiyu had taken to heart.

“The young ladies were here so long chatting, you must be tired, miss,” she said. “I just told Xueyan to get the kitchen to prepare you a bowl of cabbage soup with ham and dried shrimps, as well as some bamboo shoots and laver in it. Is that all right?”

“It will do.”

“There’ll be congee too.”

Daiyu nodded, then said, “I’d like you two to cook it, not leave it to the kitchen.”

“Yes, we will,” Zijuan assured her. “I was afraid, too, that the kitchen wouldn’t be clean enough. As for the soup, I asked Xueyan to tell Mrs. Liu that it must be very clean. And Mrs. Liu said she’d get together the ingredients, then ask their Wuer to cook it on the small stove in their own room.”

“It’s not that I think them dirty,” said Daiyu. “But all this time I’ve been unwell I’ve had to depend on them for everything. So now they may resent these special instructions about soup and congee.” Her eyes brimmed with tears again.

“Don’t go imagining things, miss,” urged Zijuan. “You’re the old



儿，又是老太太心坎儿上的。别人求其在姑娘跟前讨好儿还不能呢，那里有抱怨的？”黛玉点点头儿，因又问道：“你才说的五儿，不是那日合宝二爷那边的芳官在一处的那个女孩儿？”紫鹃道：“就是他。”黛玉道：“不听见说要进来么？”紫鹃道：“可不是！因为病了一场；后来好了，才要进来，正是晴雯他们闹出事来的时候，也就耽搁住了。”黛玉道：“我看那丫头倒也还头脸儿干净。”

说着，外头婆子送了汤来。雪雁出来接时，那婆子说道：“柳嫂儿叫回姑娘：这是他们五儿作的，没敢在大厨房里作，怕姑娘嫌腌臢。”雪雁答应着，接了进来。黛玉在屋里，已听见了，吩咐雪雁：“告诉那老婆子回去说，叫他费心。”雪雁出来说了，老婆子自去。

这里雪雁将黛玉的碗筋安放在小几儿上，因问黛玉道：“还有咱们南来的五香大头菜，拌些麻油、醋，可好么？”黛玉道：“也使得，只不必累坠了。”一面盛上粥来。黛玉吃了半碗，用羹匙舀了两口汤喝，就搁下了。两个丫鬟撤下来了，拭净了小几，端下去，又换上一张常放的小几。黛玉漱了口，盥了手，便道：“紫鹃，添了香了没有？”紫鹃道：“就添去。”黛玉道：“你们就把那汤合粥吃了罢，味儿还好，且是干净。待我自己添香罢。”两个人答应了，在外间自吃去了。

这里黛玉添了香，自己坐着，才要拿本书看，只听得园内的风，自西边直透到东边，穿过树枝，都在那里“唏溜哗喇”不住的响。一会儿，檐下的铁马也只管“叮叮当当”的乱敲起来。

一时，雪雁先吃完了，进来伺候。黛玉便问道：“天气冷



lady's grand-daughter and she dotes on you. They're only too glad of a chance to please you. How can they possibly complain?"

Daiyu nodded. Then she asked, "That Wuer you mentioned just now, isn't she the girl who was with Fangguan in Master Bao's place?"

"That's the one."

"Didn't I hear say she'd be coming to work in the Garden?"

"Yes, miss. But she fell ill, and when she got over it and was to come, there was all that trouble over Qingwen and the rest, and so it got delayed."

"She looked to me a neat girl," Daiyu said.

Now a serving-woman outside delivered the soup, Xueyan went out to fetch it.

The woman reported, "Mrs. Liu says to tell your young lady that this was prepared by her Wuer. She didn't dare have it prepared in the big kitchen for fear your young lady might think it not clean enough."

Xueyan voiced approval and brought the soup in. Daiyu, who had heard this exchange, made Xueyan tell the woman to thank them for their trouble, after which the latter left. Then Xueyan set Daiyu's bowl and chopsticks on the small table.

"We've those five-spice pickles from the south too," she said. "Would you like some with sesame oil and vinegar?"

"All right, if it's not too much trouble."

When the congee was served, Daiyu ate half a bowl and two spoonfuls of the soup, but then gave up. Two maids cleared and wiped the table, took it away, then brought in the small table which she liked to use.

Daiyu, having rinsed her mouth and washed her hands, asked Zijuan, "Have you added fresh incense?"

"I'll do it now, miss."

"You two may as well finish up the congee and soup; they taste quite good and they're clean. I'll see to the incense myself."

The two maids agreed and sat down to supper in the outer room.

After adding fresh incense, Daiyu settled down to read when a west wind sprang up and set all the trees rustling. Presently the iron chimes swinging from the eaves raised a loud tinkling too. Xueyan, her supper finished, now came back.



了，我前日叫你们把那些小毛儿衣裳晾晾，可曾晾过没有？”雪雁道：“都晾过了。”黛玉道：“你拿一件来我披披。”雪雁走去，将一包小毛衣裳抱来，打开毡包，给黛玉自拣。只见内中夹着个绢包儿。黛玉伸手拿起，打开看时，却是宝玉病时送来的旧绢子，自己题的诗，上面泪痕犹在。里头却包着那剪破了的香囊，扇袋并宝玉通灵玉上的穗子。原来晾衣裳时，从箱中检出，紫鹃恐怕遗失了，遂夹在这毡包里的。

这黛玉不看则已，看了时，也不说穿那一件衣裳，手里只拿着那两方手帕，呆呆的看那旧诗；看了一回，不觉得簌簌泪下。紫鹃刚从外间进来，只见雪雁正捧着一毡包衣裳，在旁边呆立。小几上却搁着剪破了的香囊和两三截儿扇袋并那较拆了的穗子；黛玉手中却拿着两方旧帕子，上边写着字迹，在那里对着滴泪呢。正是：

失意人逢失意事，新啼痕间旧啼痕。

紫鹃见了这样，知是他触物伤情，感怀旧事，料道劝也无益，只得笑着道：“姑娘，还看那些东西作什么？那都是那几年宝二爷和姑娘小时，一时好了，一时恼了，闹出来的笑话儿。要象如今这样斯抬斯敬的，那里能把这些东西白遭塌了呢？”紫鹃这话原给黛玉开心，不料这几句话更提起黛玉初来时和宝玉的旧事来，一发珠泪连绵起来。紫鹃又劝道：“雪雁这里等着呢，姑娘披上一件罢。”那黛玉才把手帕撂下，紫鹃连忙拾起，将香袋等物包起拿开。



“It’s grown cold,” Daiyu told her. “Have you aired my fur clothes, as I asked you the other day?”

“Yes, all of them.”

“Bring me something to put over my shoulders.”

Xueyan fetched in a bundle of fur-lined clothes and unwrapped it for Daiyu to make her choice. The first thing her eye fell on was a silk wrapper. Undoing this, she found the old handkerchiefs Baoyu had sent her when he was ill, on which she had written poems — they still had her tear-stains on them. Wrapped inside were the scented pouch which she had cut up, a fan-case and the tassel from Baoyu’s Jade of Spiritual Understanding. These had been in the chest when it was opened to sun the clothes, and Zijuan for fear that they might get mislaid had put them in the bundle.

The sight of these things made Daiyu forget about putting on something warmer. She picked up the two handkerchiefs and gazed blankly at her old poems, then started weeping. Zijuan coming in now saw Xueyan standing there stockstill, holding a felt wrapper of clothes. The mutilated pouch, the fan-case in two or three pieces and the snipped off tassel were on the little table; and Daiyu, clutching two old handkerchiefs with writing on them, was gazing at them in tears. Truly:

When the sad meet with sadness,
New tears mingle with the old!

Zijuan realized that these things had reopened old wounds, making her young mistress grieve over the past, and guessed it would be useless to reason with her.

“Why look at those, miss?” she asked, smiling. “They’ll only remind you of the pranks Master Bao and you got up to when you were young, quarrelling one day and making it up the next. If he’d been as well-mannered then as he is now, these things would never have got spoilt.”

To Zijuan’s surprise, this banter reminded Daiyu even more of her first years here. Big tears streamed down her cheeks.

“Xueyan’s standing waiting,” Zijuan reminded her. “Do put on something warmer.”

Then at last Daiyu put down the handkerchiefs. Zijuan promptly picked



这黛玉方披了一件皮衣，自己闷闷的走到外间来坐下。回头看见案上宝钗的诗启尚未收好，又拿出来瞧了两遍，叹道：“境遇不同，伤心则一。不免也赋四章，翻入琴谱，可弹可歌，明日写出来寄去，以当和作。”便叫雪雁将外边桌上笔砚拿来，濡墨挥毫，赋成四叠。又将琴谱翻出，借他“猗兰”“思贤”两操，合成音韵。与自己做的配齐了，然后写出，以备送与宝钗，又即叫雪雁向箱中将自己带来的短琴拿出，调上弦，又操演了指法。黛玉本是个绝顶聪明人，又在南边学过几时，虽是手生，到底一理就熟。抚了一番，夜已深了，便叫紫鹃收拾睡觉，不提。

却说宝玉这日起来，梳洗了，带着焙茗正往书房中来，只见墨雨笑嘻嘻的跑来，迎头说道：“二爷，今日便宜了！太爷不在书房里，都放了学了。”宝玉道：“当真的么？”墨雨道：“二爷不信，那不是三爷和兰哥来了？”宝玉看时，只见贾环贾兰跟着小厮们，两个笑嘻嘻的，嘴里咕咕呱呱，不知说些什么，迎头来了，见了宝玉都垂手站住。宝玉问道：“你们两个怎么就回来了？”贾环道：“今日太爷有事，说是放一天学，明儿再去呢。”

宝玉听了，方回身到贾母贾政处去禀明了，然后回到怡





them up to wrap them up with the pouch and other things and whisk them away.

Daiyu, draping a fur-lined jacket over her shoulders, went disconsolately to the outer room to sit down. Turning her head she noticed that she had not yet put away Baochai's poems. She picked them up, reread them twice, then sighed:

"Though our positions are different, we're one in our distress. I may as well write four verses too and set them to music, to sing them to a lute accompaniment. Tomorrow I'll copy them out and send them to her by way of reply."

She told Xueyan to fetch the brush and ink-stone from her desk, then wrote four stanzas, after which she got out the lute scores and set her verses to the melodies *Quiet Orchid* and *Longing for a Worthy Man*. She made a copy to send to Baochai, then told Xueyan to fetch from the chest the short lute she had brought north with her. Having tuned the strings she practised some finger exercises. And as Daiyu was so intelligent and had learned to play a little in the south, although out of practice she soon regained her old skill. She played until it was late, then called Zijuan in to clear up and went to bed.

To return to Baoyu. He got up and dressed the next morning and was on his way to school with Beiming when Moyu came running towards them, grinning from ear to ear.

"Master Bao, you've got off cheap today!" cried Moyu. "The tutor's not at school; it's a holiday."

"Is that true?" demanded Baoyu.

"If you don't believe me, look! Can't you see Master Huan and Master Lan coming?"

Sure enough, Baoyu saw the two boys accompanied by their pages laughing and chatting together as they approached. At sight of him they stood at respectful attention.

"Why are you coming back?" he asked.

Huan answered, "The tutor has some business today, so he's given us one day's holiday. We're to go back tomorrow."

Baoyu went to report this to his grandmother and father, then returned



红院中。袭人问道：“怎么又回来了？”宝玉告诉了他；只坐了一坐儿，便往外走，袭人道：“往那里去，这样忙法？就放了学，依我说，也该养养神儿了。”宝玉站住脚，低了头，说道：“你的话也是，但是好容易放一天学，还不散散去？你也该可怜我些儿了。”袭人见说的可怜，笑道：“由爷去罢。”

正说着，端了饭来。宝玉也没法儿，只得且吃饭。三口两口，忙忙的吃完，漱了口，一溜烟往黛玉房中去了。走到门口，只见雪雁在院中晾绢了呢。宝玉因问：“姑娘吃了饭了么？”雪雁道：“早起喝了半碗粥，懒怠吃饭，这时候打盹儿呢。二爷且到别处走走，回来再来罢。”

宝玉只得回来。无处可去，忽然想起惜春有好几天没见，便信步走到蓼风轩来。刚到窗下，只见静悄悄一无人声；宝玉打量他也睡午觉，不便进去。才要走时，只听屋里微微一响，不知何声；宝玉站住再听，半日，又“啪”的一响。宝玉还未听出，只见一个人道：“你在这里下了一个子儿，那里你不应么？”宝玉方知是下棋呢。但只急切听不出这个人的语音是谁。底下方听见惜春道：“怕什么？你这么一吃我，我这么一应，你又这么吃，我又这么应：还缓着一着儿呢，终久连的上。”那一个又道：“我要这么一吃呢？”惜春道：“阿嘎！还有一着反扑在里头呢，我倒没防备。”





to Happy Red Court.

“Why are you back?” asked Xiren.

He told her the reason, and after sitting down for a short time started out.

“Where are you off to?” she wanted to know. “What’s the hurry? You’ve just been given a day off. I advise you to have a rest.”

He halted then with lowered head and said, “You’re right, of course. But it’s so seldom I get a free day, why shouldn’t I have some fun? Do have a heart!”

He looked so pathetic that Xiren chuckled, “All right, go wherever you like, sir!”

Just then lunch was served, however, and Baoyu had to eat. But after gobbling his food and rinsing his mouth he dashed off to find Daiyu. When he reached her gate, he saw Xueyan hanging out some handkerchiefs in the courtyard.

“Has your mistress had her meal?” he asked.

“She had half a bowl of congee in the morning, but didn’t want any lunch. She’s taking a nap now. You’d better come back later, Master Bao.”

Baoyu had to turn back. He did not know where to go until it occurred to him that he had not seen Xichun for several days; so he strolled over to Smartweed Breeze Cot. Stopping outside her window, he discovered that all was quiet and thought he had better not enter as she must be having a siesta too. He was on the point of leaving when he heard a faint sound inside, but could not make out what it was. He stopped to listen, and after some time heard a chinking sound. Still he could not make out what it was.

“If you move that piece here,” said a voice inside, “what about your position *there*?”

At that he realized they were playing draughts, but could not identify the voice. Then he heard Xichun say, “What do I care? If you take that piece of mine, I’ll move here. If you take this piece, I’ll move there. I shall still be able to encircle that place in the end.”

“What if I do this?” asked the other.

“Ah!” exclaimed Xichun. “I didn’t guard against a thrust like that!”



宝玉听了听，那一个声音很熟，却不是他们姊妹。料着惜春屋里也没外人，轻轻的掀帘进去，看时，不是别人，却是那栊翠庵的“槛外人”妙玉。这宝玉见是妙玉，不敢惊动。妙玉和惜春正在凝思之际，也没理会。宝玉却站在旁边，看他两个的手段。只见妙玉低着头，问惜春道：“你这个畸角儿不要了么？”惜春道：“怎么不要？你那里头都是死子儿，我怕什么？”妙玉道：“且别说满话，试试看。”惜春道：“我便打了起来，看你怎么着。”妙玉却微微笑着，把边上子一接，却搭转一吃，把惜春的一个角儿都打起来了，笑着说道：“这叫做‘倒脱靴势’。”

惜春尚未答言，宝玉在旁，情不自禁，哈哈一笑。把两个人都唬了一大跳。惜春道：“你这是怎么说？进来也不言语。这么使促狭唬人！你多早晚进来的？”宝玉道：“我头里就进来了，看着你们两个争这个畸角儿。”说着，一面与妙玉施礼，一面又笑问道：“妙公轻易不出禅关，今日何缘下凡一走？”

妙玉听了，忽然把脸一红，也不答言，低了头，自看那棋。宝玉自觉造次，连忙陪笑道：“倒是出家人比不得我们在家的俗人。头一件，心是静的。静则灵，灵则慧——”宝玉尚未说完，只见妙玉微微的把眼一抬，看了宝玉一眼，复又低下头去，那脸上的颜色渐渐的红晕起来。宝玉见他不理，只得讪讪的旁边坐了。

惜春还要下子，妙玉半日说道：“再下罢。”便起身理理衣裳，重新坐下，痴痴的问着宝玉道：“你从何处来？”宝玉

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The second voice sounded familiar, but Baoyu knew it was not one of his cousins'. Assuming that the other player could not be an outsider, he softly raised the portiere and went in, only to discover that the visitor was no other than the "outsider" Miaoyu of Green Lattice Nunnery. Seeing this, he dared not disturb them; and the two girls, intent on their game, did not notice him. Baoyu stood beside them watching.

Miaoyu, her head lowered, asked, "Don't you want this corner?"

"Of course I do," said Xichun. "But your pieces there are all dead, so what have I to fear?"

"Don't be so sure," said Miaoyu. "Wait and see."

"I'll attack here and see what you can do."

Miaoyu, smiling, linked her pieces in one continuous border and counter-attacked, threatening Xichun's corner.

"This is called 'pulling off the boot, '" she chuckled.

Before Xichun could reply Baoyu burst out laughing, making the two girls start.

"Why do such a thing?" exclaimed Xichun. "Coming in without a word to startle us! How long have you been there?"

"Quite a while. I've been watching you fight for that corner."

He greeted Miaoyu and said to her with a smile, "It's rarely that you leave your saintly abode. Why have you descended today to the mundane world?"

Miaoyu flushed up but said nothing, lowering her head to keep her eyes on the board. Conscious of his gaffe, Baoyu tried to cover it up.

"You who have renounced the world are not like us vulgar worldlings," he said with a conciliatory smile. "First of all, your hearts are at peace, so you are more spiritual and have quiet perception...."

He was running on like this when Miaoyu glanced up at him, then lowered her head again, blushing furiously. Baoyu, cold-shouldered like this, sat down sheepishly at one side.

Xichun wanted to finish the game, but after a while Miaoyu said, "Let's play some other time." She stood up to smooth down her clothes, but then sat down again and asked Baoyu fatuously, "Where did you come from?"

He had been waiting for her to address him so that he could make up



巴不得这一声，好解释前头的话，忽又想道：“或是妙玉的机锋？”转红了脸，答应不出来。妙玉微微一笑，自合惜春说话。惜春也笑道：“二哥哥，这什么难答的？你没有听见人家常说的，‘从来处来’么？这也值得把脸红了，见了生人的似的！”

妙玉听了这话，想起自家，心上一动，脸上一热，必然也是红的，倒觉不好意思起来。因站起来说道：“我来得久了，要回庵里去了。”惜春知妙玉为人，也不深留，送出门口。妙玉笑道：“久已不来，这里弯弯曲曲的，回去的路头都要迷住了。”宝玉道：“这倒要我来指引指引，何如？”妙玉道：“不敢，二爷前请。”

于是二人别了惜春，离了蓼风轩，弯弯曲曲，走近潇湘馆，忽听得叮咚之声。妙玉道：“那里的琴声？”宝玉道：“想必是林妹妹那里抚琴呢。”妙玉道：“原来他也会这个吗？怎么素日不听见提起？”宝玉悉把黛玉的事说了一遍，因说：“咱们去看他。”妙玉道：“从古只有听琴，再没有看琴的。”宝玉笑道：“我原说我是个俗人。”说着，二人走至潇湘馆外，在山子石上坐着静听，甚觉音调清切。只听得低吟道：

风萧萧兮秋气深，美人千里兮独沉吟。

望故乡兮何处？倚栏杆兮涕沾襟。

歇了一回，听得又吟道：





for his earlier tactlessness. However, it occurred to him that she might be testing his understanding. He reddened and could not answer. With a faint smile Miaoyu turned to talk to Xichun.

“Is that so hard to answer, Second Brother?” chuckled Xichun. “Have you never heard the saying, ‘I came from where I’ve been’? Why blush like that as if she were a stranger?”

Miaoyu took this dig personally. Her heart misgave her and her cheeks burned — she knew she must be red in the face too. In her embarrassment she stood up and said, “I’ve been here so long, I must be getting back to my nunnery.”

As Xichun knew her ways, instead of pressing her to stay she saw her to the door.

“It’s so long since last I was here,” said Miaoyu, “I may not be able to find my way back with all those twists and turns.”

“Why not let me show you the way?” Baoyu volunteered.

“Thank you, sir. Please lead on!”

Taking their leave of Xichun, they left Smartweed Breeze Cot and followed a winding path which took them near Bamboo Lodge. Suddenly they heard a twanging.

“Where does that luting come from?” Miaoyu asked.

“It must be Cousin Lin playing the lute.”

“Can she play too? Why did she never mention it?”

Baoyu repeated what Daiyu had said to him.

“Let’s call on her,” he proposed.

“One can only listen to luting, not look at it — that’s always been the rule,” she objected.

“I’m a vulgar person, I know,” he said with a grin.

Being outside Bamboo Lodge now, they seated themselves on an artificial hill to listen quietly to the clear music. Daiyu was chanting softly:

The wind is sighing, the days drawing in,
Far away, lost in thought, the lovely maid;
I gaze towards my home — where is it?
Tears stain my dress beside the balustrade.

After a pause she continued:





山迢超兮水长，照轩窗兮明月光。

耿耿不寐兮银河渺茫，罗衫怯怯兮风露凉。

又歇了一歇，妙玉道：“刚才‘侵’字韵是第一叠，如今‘扬’字韵是第二叠了。咱们再听。”里边又吟道：

子之遭兮不自由，予之遇兮多烦忧。

之子与我兮心焉相投，思古人兮俾无尤。

妙玉道：“这又是一拍。何忧思之深也！”宝玉道：“我虽不懂得，但听他声音，也觉得过悲了。”里头又调了一回弦。妙玉道：“君弦太高了，与无射律只怕不配呢。”里边又吟道：

人生斯世兮如轻尘，天上人间兮感夙因。

感夙因兮不可懈，素心如何天上月！

妙玉听了，呀然失色道：“如何忽作变徵之声！音韵可裂金石矣！只是太过。”宝玉道：“太过便怎么？”妙玉道：“恐不能持久。”正议论时，听得君弦“嘣”的一声断了。妙玉站起来，连忙就走。宝玉道：“怎么样？”妙玉道：“日后自知，你也不必多说。”竟自走了。弄得宝玉满肚疑团，没精打采的，归至怡红院中，不表。

且说妙玉归去，早有道婆接着，掩了庵门，坐了一回，





Far-stretching hills, long rivers,
Bright moonlight shining on my window-sill;
Sleepless I lie beneath faint Milky Way,
Clad in thin silk; the wind and dew are chill.

As she paused again, Miaoyu remarked, “The first stanza used the *qin* rhyme, the second the *yang* rhyme. Let’s hear what follows.”

Then they heard fresh chanting inside:

Your lot is not of your choosing,
And mine is filled with care;
You and I are kindred spirits,
Revering the ancients that we may not err.

Miaoyu commented, “Another stanza, but how mournful!”

“Though I don’t understand music, it *does* sound too sad,” Baoyu agreed.

Inside, they heard the strings being retuned.

“The main string is too high!” Miaoyu exclaimed. “It may not fit that scale.”

Inside, Daiyu resumed:

Life in this world is but a speck of dust,
Karma ordains all mortals’ destiny;
If Karma rules, then why repine?
Would that my heart were pure as the moon in the sky!

The colour draining from her face Miaoyu exclaimed, “Why did she suddenly play such a high note? It’s enough to crack metal or stone! This is too extreme.”

“What do you mean?”

“I doubt if she can keep it up.”

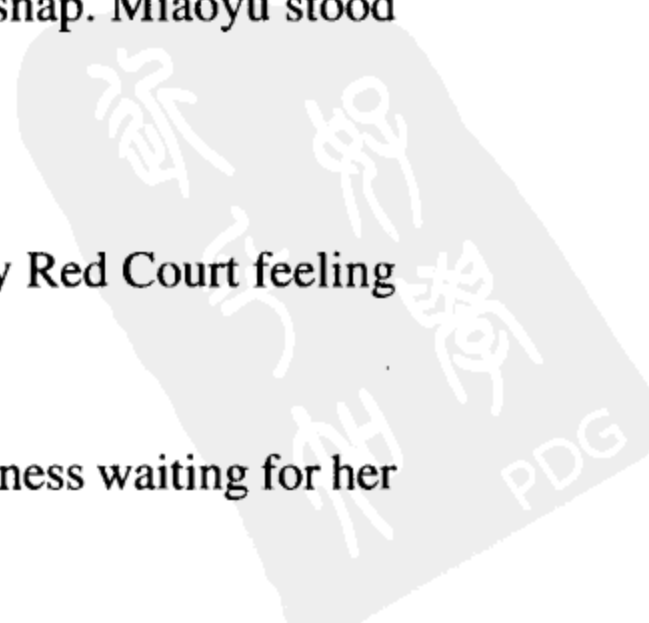
Even as she said this, they heard the main string snap. Miaoyu stood up and hastily started off.

“What’s the matter?” Baoyu asked.

“You’ll know later; don’t talk about it.”

With that she left, and Baoyu went back to Happy Red Court feeling puzzled and depressed.

Miaoyu returned to the nunnery, and the old deaconess waiting for her



把“禅门日诵”念了一遍。吃了晚饭，点上香，拜了菩萨，命道婆子自去歇着，自己的禅床靠背俱已整齐，屏息垂帘，趺跏坐下，断除妄想，趋向真如。坐到三更以后，听得房上“噌碌碌”一片响声，妙玉恐有贼来，下了禅床，出到前轩，但见云影横空，月华如水。那时天气尚不很凉，独自一个，凭栏站了一回，忽听房上两个猫儿一递一声嘶叫。

那妙玉忽想起日间宝玉之言，不觉一阵心跳耳热，自己连忙收摄心神，走进禅房，仍到禅床上坐了。怎奈神不守舍，一时如万马奔驰，觉得禅床便恍荡起来，身子已不在庵中。便有许多王孙公子，要来娶他；又有些媒婆，扯扯拽拽，扶他上车，自己不肯去。一回儿，又有盗贼劫他，持刀执棍的逼勒，只得哭喊求救。

早惊醒了庵中女尼道婆等众，都拿火来照看，只见妙玉两手撒开，口中流沫。急叫醒时，只见眼睛直竖，两颧鲜红，骂道：“我是有菩萨保佑，你们这些强徒敢要怎么样？”众人都唬的没了主意，都说道：“我们在这里呢，快醒转来罢！”妙玉道：“我要回家去！你们有什么好人，送我回去罢！”道婆道：“这里就是你住的房子。”说着，又叫别的女尼忙向观音前祷告。求了签，翻开签书看时，是触犯了西南角上的阴人。就有一个说：“是了！大观园中西南角上本来没有人住，阴气是有的。”一面弄汤弄水的在那里忙乱。





there closed the gate. She sat down for a while to chant the sutra for the day, and after supper burned incense and worshipped Buddha. This done, she dismissed the deaconess for the night. As her couch and back-rest were ready, she quietly let down the curtain and sat cross-legged to meditate, banishing all frivolous thoughts to concentrate on the truth.

Some time after midnight, she heard a thud on the roof. Suspecting a thief, she left her couch and went out to the veranda. She saw cloud streamers in the sky and moonlight limpid as water. As it was not yet too cold, she stood there alone for a while by the balustrade till a sudden caterwauling broke out on the roof. Abruptly recalling Baoyu's remarks that day, her heart started beating faster and her face burned. Hastily suppressing her feelings, she returned to her cell and sat down again on the couch.

But her fancy, now running as wild as galloping horses, made her imagine that the couch was rocking and she was no longer in the nunnery. Many young lordlings had come to ask for her hand and, against her wishes, go-betweens were tugging and pushing her into a carriage. Then brigands kidnapped her and threatened her with swords and clubs, so that she screamed for help.

This aroused the novices and deaconess, who came with torches to see what was the matter. Finding Miaoyu with outflung arms, frothing at the mouth, they hastily woke her up.

Her eyes staring, crimson in the face, she shouted, "How dare you thugs attack one under Buddha's protection!"

Frightened out of their wits they assured her, "It's us! Wake up!"

"I want to go home," she cried. "If there's any kind soul among you, take me back!"

"You're here in your own cell," said the deaconess, then told the novices to pray to Guanyin and ask for an oracle. They opened the book of oracles at a passage indicating that she had "offended a spirit in the southwest corner."

"That's right!" one of them exclaimed. "No one lives in the southwest corner of Grand View Garden, so there are bound to be evil spirits there."

They busied themselves getting soup for her and boiled water. And

那女尼原是自南边带来的，伏侍妙玉，自然比别人尽心，围着妙玉坐在禅床上。妙玉回头道：“你是谁？”女尼道：“是我。”妙玉仔细瞧了一瞧道：“原来是你！”便抱住那女尼，呜呜咽咽的哭起来，说道：“你是我的妈呀，你不救我，我不得活了！”

那女尼一面唤醒他，一面给他揉着。道婆倒上茶来喝了，直到天明才睡了。女尼便打发人去请大夫来看脉。也有说是思虑伤脾的，也有说是热入血室的，也有说是邪祟触犯的，也有说是内外感冒的：终无定论。后请得一个大夫来看了，问：“曾打坐过没有？”道婆说道：“向来打坐的。”大夫道：“这病可是昨夜忽然来的么？”道婆道：“是。”大夫道：“这是走魔入火的原故。”众人问：“有碍没有？”大夫道：“幸亏打坐不久，魔还入得浅，可以有救。”写了降伏心火的药，吃了一剂，稍稍平复些。

外面那些游头浪子听见了，便造作许多谣言，说：“这么年纪，那里忍得住？况且又是很风流的人品，很乖觉的性灵！以后不知飞在谁手里，便宜谁去呢！”过了几日，妙玉病虽略好了些，神思未复，终有些恍惚。

一日，惜春正坐着，彩屏忽然进来，回道：“姑娘知道妙玉师父的事吗？”惜春道：“他有什么事？”彩屏道：“我昨日听见那姑娘和大奶奶在那里说呢：他自从那日合姑娘下棋回



the novice who took the best care of Miaoyu, being a southerner herself, sat on the couch and put one arm around her.

Miaoyu turned to her and demanded, "Who are you?"

"Don't you know me?"

Miaoyu looked more carefully. "So it's you!" she cried, hugging the novice to her. "If you don't save me, mother," she sobbed, "I'm done for!"

The novice tried to bring her to her senses. She massaged her while the deaconess brought tea, and not till dawn did Miaoyu fall asleep. They sent for doctors then. One diagnosed her trouble as debility of the spleen brought on by worry; one attributed it to a hot humour in the blood; another to offending evil spirits; and yet another diagnosed a chill. They could not reach agreement.

Later they called in another doctor who after examining the patient asked, "Did she practise yoga?"

"Yes, every night," answered the deaconess.

"Was this a sudden fit last night?"

"That's right."

"Then it came on because evil thoughts crossed her mind and kindled a hot humour."

"Is it dangerous?"

"It can be cured, as luckily she did not meditate very long, so the evil did not penetrate too deep."

He prescribed some medicine to alleviate the hot humour in her heart, and after taking it Miaoyu felt some relief.

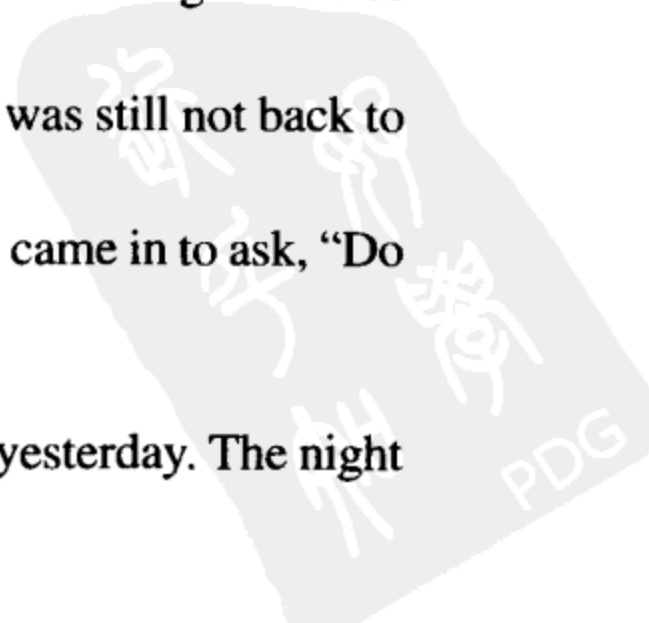
When young dandies heard this story, they spread all manner of rumours and commented, "She's too young — romantic and intelligent too — to stand such an austere life. Who knows what lucky man will get hold of her in future?"

After a few days, although Miaoyu felt better, she was still not back to normal, her mind remaining confused.

One day, Xichun was sitting quietly when Caiping came in to ask, "Do you know, miss, what happened to Sister Miaoyu?"

"No. What?"

"I heard Miss Xing and Madam Zhu discussing it yesterday. The night





去，夜间忽然中了邪，嘴里乱嚷，说强盗来抢他来了。到如今还没好呢。姑娘，你说这不是奇事吗？”

惜春听了，默默无语。因想：“妙玉虽然洁净，毕竟尘缘未断。可惜我生在这种人家，不便出家，我若出了家时，那有邪魔缠扰？一念不生，万缘俱寂。”想到这里，蓦与神会，若有所得，便口占一偈云：

大造本无方，云何是应住？

既从空中来，应向空中去。

占毕，即命丫头焚香。自己静坐了一回，又翻开那棋谱来，把孔融、王积薪等所著看了几篇。内中“茂叶包蟹势”、“黄莺搏兔势”，都不出奇；“三十六局杀角势”，一时也难会难记；独看到“十龙走马”，觉得甚有意思。正在那里作想，只听见外面一个人走进院来，连叫：“彩屏！”未知是谁，下回分解。





after she went back from playing chess with you, some evil spirit took possession of her, and she started raving that bandits had come to kidnap her! Even now she hasn't recovered. Isn't that extraordinary?"

Xichun remained silent, thinking, "Though Miaoyu is so chaste, she's not severed all earthly ties yet. It's too bad that I live in a family like this and can't become a nun. If *I* renounced the world, how could evil thoughts assail me? Not one would cross my mind — all desires would be stilled!" Then, suddenly struck by an idea, she chanted:

In the beginning Creation had no abode;
Where, then, should we abide?
Since we come from the void
We should return to the void.

She told a maid to burn incense and sat quietly for a while, then looked up the treatises on draughts by Kong Rong,² Wang Jixin³ and others. After reading a few pages, she was not impressed by such gambits as "thick foliage enfolds crabs" and "yellow hawks seize a hare," while the "thirty-six ways to enclose a corner" struck her as too hard to remember. She was intrigued, however, by "ten galloping dragons" and was thinking this over when someone entered her compound calling "Caiping!"

If you want to know who it was, read the following chapter.



第八十八回

博庭欢宝玉赞孤儿 正家法贾珍鞭悍仆

却说惜春正在那里揣摩棋谱，忽听院内有人叫彩屏，不是别人，却是鸳鸯的声儿。彩屏出去，同着鸳鸯进来。那鸳鸯却带着一个小丫头，提了一个小黄绢包儿。惜春笑问道：“什么事？”鸳鸯道：“老太太因明年八十一岁，是个‘暗九’，许下一场九昼夜的功德，发心要写三千六百五十零一部《金刚经》。这已发出外面人写了。但是俗说：《金刚经》就像那道家的符壳，《心经》才算是符胆，故此，《金刚经》内必要插着《心经》，更有功德。老太太因《心经》是更要紧的，观自在又是女菩萨，所以要几个亲丁奶奶姑娘们写上三百六十五部。如此，又虔诚，又洁净。咱们家中，除了二奶奶：头一宗，他当家没有空儿；二宗，他也写不上来。其余会写字的，不论写得多少，连东府珍大奶奶姨娘们都分了去。本家里头自不用说。”惜春听了，点头道：“别的我做不来，若要写经，我最信心的。你搁下，喝茶罢。”鸳鸯才将那小包儿搁在桌上，同惜春坐下。

彩屏倒了一钟茶来。惜春笑问道：“你写不写？”鸳鸯道：



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Chapter 88

Baoyu, to Please His Grandmother, Praises a Fatherless Boy Jia Zhen, to Uphold Household Discipline, Has Unruly Servants Whipped

As Xichun was studying the treatise on draughts, she heard Caiping's name called in the courtyard and recognized Yuanyang's voice. Caiping went out to usher in Yuanyang, who had brought a young maid carrying a small yellow silk bundle.

"What brings you here?" asked Xichun with a smile.

"The old lady will be eighty-one next year, miss. As that's nine times nine, she's going to offer sacrifices for nine days and nine nights, and she's vowed to have three thousand six hundred and fifty-one copies of the *Diamond Sutra* made. This work has been given to copyists outside. But as people say this sutra, like Taoist canons, is only the shell of truth whereas the *Prajnaparamitra Sutra* is the kernel, this second sutra must be included as well to make the offering more meritorious. Since the *Prajnaparamitra Sutra* is the more important, and Guanyin is a female bodhisattva, the old lady wants some mistresses and young ladies of the family to make three hundred and sixty-five copies of it, as an act of reverence. In our family — except for Madam Lian who's too busy with household affairs and, besides, can't write — all the ladies are going to write copies, some more, some less. Even Madam Zhen and the concubines of the East Mansion will be doing their share. So of course all the ladies over here must join in."

Xichun nodded. "Other tasks may be beyond me, but I've every confidence when it comes to copying sutras. Just put your things down, and now have some tea."

Yuanyang placed the little bundle on the table and sat down with her. Caiping brought them tea.

"Will you do some copying too?" Xichun asked Yuanyang.

"You must be joking, miss! In the past I might have managed, but



“姑娘又说笑话了。那几年还好；这三四年来，姑娘还见我拿了拿笔儿么？”惜春道：“这却是有功德的。”鸳鸯道：“我也有一件事：向来伏侍老太太安歇后，自己念上米佛，已经念了三年多了。我把这个米收好，等老太太做功德的时候，我将他衬在里头，供佛施食；也是我一点诚心。”惜春道：“这样说来，老太太做了观音，你就是龙女了。”鸳鸯道：“那里跟得上这个分儿？却是除了老太太，别的也伏侍不来，不晓得前世什么缘分儿！”说着要走，叫小丫头把小绢包打开，拿出来道：“这素纸一扎，是写《心经》的。”又拿起一子儿藏香，道：“这是叫写经时点着写的。”惜春都应了。

鸳鸯遂辞了出来，同小丫头来至贾母房中，回了一遍，看见贾母与李纨打双陆，鸳鸯旁边瞧着。李纨的骰子好，掷下去，把老太太的锤打下了好几个去，鸳鸯抿着嘴儿笑。

忽见宝玉进来，手中提了两个细篾丝的小笼子，笼内有几个蝓蝓儿，说道：“我听说老太太夜里睡不着，我给老太太留下解解闷。”贾母笑道：“你别瞅着你老子不在家，你只管淘气。”宝玉笑道：“我没有淘气。”贾母道：“你没淘气，不在学房里念书，为什么又弄这个东西呢？”宝玉道：“不是我自己弄的。前儿因师父叫环儿和兰儿对对子，环儿对不来，我悄悄的告诉了他。他说了，师父喜欢，夸了他两句。他感激我的情，买了来孝敬我的。我才拿了来孝敬老太太的。”贾





these last three or four years have you ever seen me with a brush in my hand?"

"Still, it would be a meritorious deed."

"Well, I'm doing something else. Every night after helping the old lady to bed, I pray to Buddha and set aside a grain of rice for each time I invoke his name. I've been doing that for more than three years, and saved the rice. When the old lady makes her sacrifice, I shall add my rice to it for alms as an offering to Buddha, to show my devotion."

"In that case," joked Xichun, "when the old lady becomes Guanyin you'll be her Dragon Maid."¹

"How could I aspire to that? It's true, though, that it's the old lady and nobody else that I want to serve. I don't know if this was predestined!"

Making ready to go, she told the little maid to unwrap the bundle and take out its contents.

"This stack of paper is for copying the sutra. And this" — she held up a bundle of Tibetan incense — "is for you to light while copying."

Xichun agreed to this.

Yuanyang, leaving her, went back with the little maid to make her report to the Lady Dowager. Finding her playing *shuanglu*² with Li Wan, she stood and watched. Li Wan made some lucky throws and captured several of the old lady's pieces, at which Yuanyang inwardly chuckled.

Then in came Baoyu with two miniature cages made of thin bamboo splints, containing green crickets.

"I heard you're not sleeping well at night, madam," he said. "So I'll leave you these to amuse you."

"Don't go fooling around now your father's away!" she warned him with a smile.

"I haven't been fooling around."

"If you haven't been playing truant from school, how did you get hold of these?"

"I didn't get them myself. This morning, our teacher set Huan and Lan some couplets to write. Huan couldn't do them, so I secretly helped him. When he recited them the teacher was pleased and commended him. He bought these for me to show his gratitude. That's why I'm

母道：“他没有天天念书么？为什么对不上来？对不上来，就叫你儒大爷爷打他的嘴巴子，看他臊不臊！你也够受了。不记得你老子在家时，一叫做诗做词，唬的倒像个小鬼儿似的？这会子又说嘴了。那环儿小子更没出息：求人替做了，就变着方法儿打点人。这么点子孩子，就闹鬼闹神的，也不害臊！赶大了，还不知是个什么东西呢！”说的满屋子人都笑了。

贾母又问道：“兰小子呢，做上来了没有？——这该环儿替他了，他又比他小了，是不是？”宝玉笑道：“他倒没有，却是自己对的。”贾母道：“我不信；不然，就也是你闹了鬼了。如今你还了得，‘羊群里跑出骆驼来了’，就只你大，你又会做文章了！”宝玉笑道：“实在是他作的，师父还夸他明儿一定有大出息呢。老太太不信，就打发人叫了他来亲自试试，老太太就知道了。”贾母道：“果然这么着，我才喜欢。我不过怕你撒谎。既是他做的，这孩子明儿大概还有一点儿出息。”因看着李纨，又想起贾珠来，又说：“这也不枉你大哥哥死了你大嫂子拉扯他一场！日后也替你大哥哥顶门壮户。”说到这里，不禁泪下。

李纨听了这话，却也动心，只是贾母已经伤心，自己连忙忍住泪，笑劝道：“这是老祖宗的余德，我们托着老祖宗的福罢咧。只要他应的了老祖宗的话，就是我们的造化了。老祖宗看着也喜欢，怎么倒伤起心来呢？”因又回头向宝玉道：“宝叔叔明儿别这么夸他，他多大孩子，知道什么？你不过是爱惜他的意思，他那里懂得？一来二去，眼大心肥，那里还



making you a present of them.”

“Doesn’t he study every day? Why can’t he write a couplet? If he can’t, your Grandad Ru should slap his face to shame him! You’re bad enough yourself. Remember, when your father was at home, how devilish scared you were every time he made you write poems. But now you’re bragging again. Of course, Huan is even worse, getting other people to do his work for him, then thinking up ways to bribe them. A child of his age up to such dirty tricks, and with no sense of shame either! What sort of creature will he grow up to be?”

Everyone in the room burst out laughing.

“What about young Lan?” the old lady asked. “Did he manage to write the couplets? Or did Huan do them for him, as Lan’s smaller?”

“No,” said Baoyu with a smile. “Lan did them himself.”

“I don’t believe you. You must have been up to more monkey business. You’re getting above yourself nowadays — a camel in a flock of sheep — being the eldest and the one who can write!”

“He really wrote them himself,” insisted Baoyu, smiling. “And our teacher praised him, saying he’ll go far in future. If you don’t believe me, madam, you can send for him and test him yourself; then you’ll know.”

“Well, if that’s truly the case I’m very glad. I was just afraid you were fibbing. If he’s up to writing couplets, the boy should get somewhere in future.” Her eye fell on Li Wan, reminding her of Jia Zhu. “That means your sister-in-law hasn’t brought him up in vain since your brother Zhu died. He’ll become the mainstay of the house some day in place of his father.”

She could not refrain from tears.

Li Wan was very moved too, but held back her own tears to comfort the old lady.

“This is all owing to the virtue of our Old Ancestress,” she said with a smile. “We all benefit from your good fortune. If he lives up to your expectations, madam, how lucky we shall be! You should be pleased, Old Ancestress, not sad.” She turned to tell Baoyu, “You mustn’t praise your nephew like that in future. What does a child of his age understand? I know you just meant to be kind, but he has no sense. If he gets con-



能够有长进呢？”贾母道：“你嫂子这也说的是。就只他还太小呢，也别逼得紧了他；小孩子胆儿小，一时逼急了，弄出点子毛病来，书倒念不成，把你的工夫都白遭塌了。”贾母说到这里，李纨却忍不住，扑簌簌掉下泪来，连忙擦了。

只见贾环贾兰也都进来给贾母请了安。贾兰又见过他母亲，然后过来，在贾母傍边侍立。贾母道：“我刚才听见你叔叔说你对的好对子，师父夸你来着。”贾兰也不言语，只管抿着嘴儿笑。鸳鸯过来说道：“请示老太太，晚饭伺候下了。”贾母道：“请你姨太太去罢。”琥珀接着便叫人去王夫人那边请薛姨妈。

这里宝玉贾环退出，素云和小丫头们过来把双陆收起，李纨尚等着伺候贾母的晚饭。贾兰便跟着他母亲站着。贾母道：“你们娘儿两个跟着我吃罢。”李纨答应了。一时，摆上饭来，丫鬟回来禀道：“太太叫回老太太：姨太太这几天浮来暂去，不能过来回老太太，今日饭后家去了。”于是贾母叫贾兰在身傍边坐下，大家吃饭，不必细言。

却说贾母刚吃完了饭，盥漱了，歪在床上，说闲话儿。只见小丫头子告诉琥珀，琥珀过来回贾母道：“东府大爷请晚安来了。”贾母道：“你们告诉他：如今他办理家务乏乏的，叫他歇着去罢。我知道了。”小丫头告诉老婆子们，老婆子才告诉贾珍，贾珍然后退出。





ceited and cocky, he won't make any progress."

"Quite right," the old lady agreed. "Still, he's too small to be driven too hard. A little boy is timid. If you force him too hard his health may suffer and he won't be able to study. Then all your efforts would be wasted."

At this, Li Wan could no longer restrain herself. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she hastily wiped her eyes.

Jia Huan and Jia Lan now came in to pay their respects to the old lady. Lan greeted his mother too, after which he came over and stood at attention beside his great-grandmother.

"Just now," she said, "I heard from your uncle that your teacher commended you for writing a good couplet."

Lan said nothing, only smiled. Then Yuanyang came to announce that dinner was ready.

"Ask Aunt Xue to come over," ordered the old lady.

Hupo sent to Lady Wang's place to deliver this message. Baoyu and Huan withdrew then while Suyun and some young maids cleared away the dice game. Li Wan stayed to wait on the old lady, and Lan remained by his mother.

"You two had better eat with me," said the old lady.

Li Wan assented, and the table was laid.

Then a maid came in to announce, "Her Ladyship told me to report that Madam Xue has been shuttling back and forth these days and can't come to see you today, madam, because after lunch she went home."

Thereupon the old lady made Lan sit beside her.

Dinner at an end, the old lady washed and rinsed her mouth, then lay down on the couch. They were chatting together when a young maid came in and whispered to Hupo. The latter reported to the Lady Dowager:

"Master Zhen of the East Mansion has come to pay his respects."

"Tell him not to trouble, and thank him. As he must be tired out with family business, he should go and rest."

This message passed on by a maid to the serving-woman outside was relayed to Jia Zhen, who withdrew.



到了次日，贾珍过来料理诸事。门上小厮陆续回了几件事。又一个小厮回道：“庄头送果子来了。”贾珍道：“单子呢？”那小厮连忙呈上。贾珍看时，上面写着不过是时鲜果品，还夹带菜蔬野味若干在内。贾珍看完，问：“向来经管的是谁？”门上的回道：“是周瑞。”便叫周瑞：“照账点清，送往里头交代。等我把来账抄下一个底子，留着好对。”又叫：“告诉厨房，把下菜中添几宗，给送果子的来人，照常赏饭给钱。”

周瑞答应了，一面叫人搬至凤姐儿院了里去，又把庄上的账和果子交代明白，出去了。一回儿，又进来回贾珍道：“才刚来的果子，大爷曾点过数目没有？”贾珍道：“我那里有工夫点这个呢？给了你账，你照账点就是了。”周瑞道：“小的曾点过，也没有少，也不能多出来。大爷既留下底子，再叫送果子来的人问问他，这账是真的假的。”贾珍道：“这是怎么说？不过是几个果子罢咧，有什么要紧？我又没有疑你。”说着，只见鲍二走来磕了一个头，说道：“求大爷原旧放小的在外头伺候罢。”贾珍道：“你们这又是怎么着？”鲍二道：“奴才在这里又说不上话来。”贾珍道：“谁叫你说话？”鲍二道：“何苦来在这里做眼睛珠儿？”周瑞接口道：“奴才在这里经管地租庄子银钱出入，每年也有三五十万来往，老爷太太奶奶们从没有说过话的，何况这些零星东西？若照鲍二说起来，爷们家里的田地房产都被奴才们弄完了。”贾珍想道：“必是



The next day, Jia Zhen came over to attend to certain business. Servants at the gate reported on several matters, one of them announcing, "The bailiff of our farm has brought some produce."

"Where's the list?" demanded Jia Zhen.

The man presented it, and he saw that it comprised simply fresh fruits, vegetables, game and the like.

"Which is the steward in charge of these things?" he asked.

One of the gate-keepers replied, "Zhou Rui."

Then Jia Zhen ordered Zhou Rui, "Check the list and take the produce inside. I'll have a copy of the list made later, to see that the accounts tally. Tell the kitchen to add a few dishes to the lowest-grade meal of the fellow who brought these things, and tip him according to the usual practice."

Zhou Rui assented and had the things delivered to Xifeng's compound. After handing over the list and the produce he left. Before long he returned to ask Jia Zhen, "Have you checked the amounts of the things that just arrived, sir?"

"What time do I have? I gave you the list to check."

"I have, sir. There's nothing short, and of course nothing extra. As you've kept a copy, sir, please call the messenger in to ask whether this is the genuine list or faked."

"What are you driving at? Only a little fruit, what does it matter? And I'm not doubting your word."

Just at this point, Bao Er came in and kowtowed.

"Please, sir, let me go back to working outside," he requested.

"What have the two of you been up to now?" demanded Jia Zhen.

"I can't speak out here," said Bao Er.

"Who's asking you to speak?"

"Why should I stay here — getting in people's way?"

Zhou Rui cut in, "I handle the rents and the income and expenditure of the farm — a matter of three to five hundred thousand a year — and the master and mistresses have never found fault, not to say over a few trifles like these. Yet, judging by Bao Er, we've eaten up all our masters' farms and properties!"

It was clear to Jia Zhen that Bao Er had been making trouble and he



鲍二在这里拌嘴，不如叫他出去。”因向鲍二说道：“快滚罢！”又告诉周瑞说：“你也不用说了，你干你的事罢。”二人各自散了。

贾珍正在书房里歇着，听见门上闹的翻江搅海，叫人去查问，回来说道：“鲍二和周瑞的干儿子打架。”贾珍道：“周瑞的干儿子是谁？”门上的回道：“他叫何三，本来是个没味儿的，天天在家里吃酒闹事，常来门上坐着。听见鲍二和周瑞拌嘴，他就插在里头。”贾珍道：“这却可恶！把鲍二和那个什么何三给我一块儿捆起来！周瑞呢？”门上的回道：“打架时，他先走了。”贾珍道：“给我拿了来！这还了得了！”众人答应了。

正嚷着，贾琏也回来了，贾珍便告诉了一遍。贾琏道：“这还了得！”又添了人去拿周瑞。周瑞知道躲不过，也找到了。贾珍便叫：“都捆上！”贾琏便向周瑞道：“你们前头的话也不要紧，大爷说开了很是了，为什么外头又打架？你们打架已经使不得，又弄个野杂种什么何三来闹。你不压伏压伏他们，倒竟走了！”就把周瑞踢了几脚。贾珍道：“单打周瑞不中用。”喝命人把鲍二和何三各人打了五十鞭子，撵了出去，方和贾琏两个商量正事。

下人背地里便生出许多议论来：也有说贾珍护短的；也有说不会调停的；也有说他本不是好人，“前儿尤家姐妹弄



had better dismiss him.

“Clear off, quick!” he ordered, then turned to Zhou Rui. “You needn’t say any more either. Go and attend to your business.”

Then the two men went away.

Jia Zhen was relaxing in his study when he heard a great uproar at the gate. He sent to find out what had happened and the gate-keepers reported:

“Bao Er is fighting with Zhou Rui’s adopted son.”

“And who may that be?” he asked.

“A rascal called He San, who gets drunk and brawls every day at home and often comes to sit at our gate. When he heard Bao Er scuffling with Zhou Rui he joined in.”

“Outrageous!” swore Jia Zhen. “Have Bao Er and that fellow He San tied up. Where is Zhou Rui?”

“When they started fighting, he slipped away.”

“Bring him here! This is the limit!”

The servants assented.

In the midst of this commotion Jia Lian came back and his cousin described what had happened.

“Scandalous!” exclaimed Jia Lian.

He sent more servants in search of Zhou Rui, who came, knowing he was in for it.

“Tie them all up!” Jia Zhen ordered.

Jia Lian fumed at Zhou Rui, “Your earlier dispute could have been overlooked, and the master had already dismissed you both. Why start another fight outside? The two of you fighting was bad enough, but you dragged in that bastard He San as well to make trouble. And instead of checking them, you cleared off!” He gave Zhou Rui several kicks.

“Just beating Zhou Rui is not enough,” said Jia Zhen.

He ordered his men to give Bao Er and He San fifty lashes apiece, then drive them out, after which he and Jia Lian discussed other business.

The servants, in private, aired different views about this. Some said Jia Zhen was biased, unable to settle disputes, others that he was a debauchee.



出许多丑事来，那鲍二不是他调停着二爷叫了来的吗？这会子又嫌鲍二不济事，必是鲍二的女人伏侍不到了。”人多嘴杂，纷纷不一。

却说贾政自从在工部掌印，家人中尽有发财的。那贾芸听见了，也要插手弄一点事儿，便在外头说了几个工头，讲了成数，便买了些时新绣货，要走凤姐儿的门子。

凤姐正在屋里，听见丫头们说：“大爷二爷都生了气，在外头打人呢。”凤姐听了，不知何故。正要叫人去问问，只见贾琏已进来了，把外面的事告诉了一遍。凤姐道：“事情虽不要紧，但这风俗儿断不可长。此刻还算咱们家里正旺的时候儿，他们就敢打架，以后小辈儿们当了家，他们越发难制伏了。前年我在东府里亲眼见过焦大吃的烂醉，躺在台阶子底下骂人，不管上上下下，一混汤子的混骂。他虽是有过功的人，倒底主子奴才的名分，也要存点体统儿才好。珍大奶奶——不是我说——是个老实头，个个人都叫他养得无法无天的。如今又弄出一个什么鲍二！我还听见是你和珍大爷得用的人，为什么今儿又打他呢？”贾琏听了这话刺心，便觉赧赧的，拿话来支开，借有事，说着就走了。

小红进来回道：“芸二爷在外头要见奶奶。”凤姐一想：“他又来做什么？”便道：“叫他进来罢。”

小红出来，瞅着贾芸微微一笑。贾芸赶忙凑近一步，问道：“姑娘替我回了没有？”小红红了脸，说道：“我就是见二

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“Earlier on, when the You sisters were carrying on in that shameless way, wasn’t it he who persuaded Master Lian to take Bao Er on?” one pointed out. “Now it must be because he’s lost interest in Bao Er’s wife that he’s found fault with Bao Er.”

Thus they argued the matter at length.

Now Jia Zheng’s post in the Ministry of Works enabled his domestics to enrich themselves. And Jia Yun, getting wind of this, hoped to procure some lucrative job himself. He approached contractors outside, and after coming to terms with them bought some fashionable embroidery with which to persuade Xifeng to secure him a commission.

Xifeng, at home, heard from the maids that Jia Zhen and her husband, angry with some of the servants, were having them beaten. She was about to send to find out what had happened, when Jia Lian came in and told her the whole story.

“It’s a small matter in itself,” was Xifeng’s comment, “but we’ll have to put a stop to such behaviour. Our family still counts as enjoying good fortune, but even so these underlings dare fight! Later on, when the younger generation takes over, they’ll get quite out of hand. The other year, in the East Mansion, I saw Jiao Da lying as drunk as a lord at the foot of the steps cursing wildly. Swearing at high and low he was, quite regardless! He may have served his first master well, but still he’s only a servant and ought to show some respect. Your Cousin Zhen’s wife — if you don’t mind my saying so — is so easy-going that all her staff are spoilt and quite above themselves. And now there’s this fellow Bao Er! I understood that he was a favourite with you and your Cousin Zhen, so why did you beat him today?”

Embarrassed by this question, Jia Lian sheepishly changed the subject, then left her on the pretext that he had business.

Xiaohong came in next to report that Jia Yun was outside asking to see her.

“Invite him in,” said Xifeng, wondering why he had come.

Hongyu went out and smiled at Jia Yun, who hastily stepped closer.

“Did you give her my message, miss?” he asked.

Blushing she said, “You seem to have a lot of business, sir!”



爷的事多!”贾芸道:“何曾有多少事能到里头来劳动姑娘呢?就是那一年姑娘在宝二叔房里,我才和姑娘——”小红怕人撞见,不等说完,连忙问道:“那年我换给二爷的一块绢子,二爷见了没有?”

那贾芸听了这句话,喜的心花俱开,才要说话,只见一个小丫头从里面出来,贾芸连忙同着小红往里走。两个人一左一右,相离不远。贾芸悄悄的道:“回来我出来,还是你送出我来。我告诉你,还有笑话儿呢。”小红听了,把脸飞红,瞅了贾芸一眼,也不答言。和他到了凤姐门口,自己先进去回了,然后出来,掀起帘子,点手儿,口中却故意说道:“奶奶请芸二爷进来呢。”

贾芸笑了一笑,跟着他走进房来,见了凤姐儿,请了安,并说:“母亲叫问好。”凤姐也问了他母亲好。凤姐道:“你来有什么事?”贾芸道:“侄儿从前承婶娘疼爱,心上时刻想着,总过意不去。欲要孝敬婶娘。又怕婶娘多想。如今重阳时候,略备了一点儿东西。婶娘这里那一件没有呢?不过是侄儿一点孝心。只怕婶娘不赏脸。”凤姐儿笑道:“有话坐下说。”贾芸才侧身坐了,连忙将东西捧着搁在傍边桌上。凤姐又道:“你不是什么有余的人,何苦又去花钱?我又不等着使。你今儿来意,是怎么个想头儿,你倒是实说。”贾芸道:“并没有别的想头儿,不过感念婶娘的恩惠,过意不去罢咧。”说着,微微的笑了。凤姐道:“不是这么说。你手里窄,我很知道,我何苦白白儿使你的?你要我收下这个东西,须先和我说明白了。要是这么‘含着骨头露着肉’的,我倒不收。”



“How often have I troubled you before?” he protested. “Only once, the other year when you were in Uncle Bao’s place....”

For fear of detection she cut him short by asking, “Did you see the handkerchief I left you that time, sir?”

Jia Yun was overjoyed by this question. But before he could answer a young maid came out, and he and Hongyu hurried towards the house, walking side by side, not keeping their distance from each other.

“When I come out presently,” whispered Jia Yun, “I want you to see me out, I’ve something amusing to tell you.” Hongyu blushed and glanced at him, but did not answer. When they reached Xifeng’s room, she went in first to announce him, then came out again and raised the portiere. She beckoned him in, but said deliberately, “Madam Lian asks you to come in, Master Yun.”

Smiling, he followed her into the room and paid his respects to Xifeng.

“My mother sends her greetings,” he added.

Xifeng inquired after his mother too, then asked, “What can I do for you?”

“I’ve never forgotten your past goodness to me, aunt, and have always wished I could show my gratitude. Only I was afraid you might suspect I had ulterior motives. Now I’ve brought you a little gift for the Double-Ninth Festival. Of course you lack for nothing here, but this is just to show your nephew’s respect. I only hope you’ll condescend to accept it.”

Xifeng smiled. “Sit down if you have something to say.”

Jia Yun perched on the edge of a chair, hastily placing his present on the table beside him.

“You’re not all that well off,” said Xifeng. “Why waste money on this? And I don’t need such things. So tell me honestly what you’ve come here for.”

“I didn’t have anything special in mind, just wanted to show how I appreciate your kindness to me, aunt,” he said with a smirk.

“That’s no way to talk,” she answered. “You’re badly off, I know that perfectly well; so why should you spend money on me for nothing? If you want me to accept this, you must tell me your reason clearly. If you beat about the bush like this, I won’t take it.”



贾芸没法儿，只得站起来，陪着笑儿说道：“并不是有什么妄想：前几日听见老爷总办陵工，侄儿有几个朋友办过好些工程，极妥当的，要求婶娘在老爷跟前提一提。办得一两种，侄儿再忘不了婶娘的恩典！若是家里用得着侄儿，也能给婶娘出力。”凤姐道：“若是别的，我却可以作主。至于衙门里的事，上头呢，都是堂官司员定的；底下呢，都是那些书班衙役们办的：别人只怕插不上手，连自己的家人也不过跟着老爷伏侍伏侍；就是你二叔去，亦只是为的是各自家里的事，他也并不能搀越公事。论家事，这里是晒一头儿撬一头儿的，连珍大爷还弹压不住。你的年纪儿又轻，辈数儿又小，那里缠的清这些人呢？况且衙门里头的事差不多儿也要完了，不过吃饭瞎跑。你在家里什么事作不得，难道没了这碗饭吃不成？我这是实在话，你自己回去想想就知道了。你的情意，我已经领了，把东西快拿回去，是那里弄来的，仍旧给人家送了去罢。”

正说着，只见奶妈子一大起带了巧姐儿进来。那巧姐儿身上穿得锦团花簇，手里拿着好些玩意儿，笑嘻嘻走到凤姐身边学舌。贾芸一见，便站起来，笑盈盈的赶着说道：“这就是大妹妹么？你要什么好东西不要？”那巧姐儿便“啞”的一声哭了。贾芸连忙退下。凤姐道：“乖乖不怕。”连忙将巧姐揽在怀里，道：“这是你芸大哥哥，怎么认起生来了？”贾芸道：“妹妹生得好相貌，将来又是个有大造化的。”那巧姐儿回头把贾芸一瞧，又哭起来；叠连几次。

贾芸看这光景坐不住，便起身告辞要走。凤姐道：“你把



Jia Yun had no choice but to come out with the truth. Standing up with an obsequious smile he said, "Well, it's not too high-flown, what I'm hoping. The other day I heard that Lord Zheng was in charge of the construction of the Imperial Sepulchres. I have several friends who have done work of this kind and are most reliable; so please, aunt, will you recommend us to the master? If you get us a couple of contracts, I'll be eternally grateful! And if you need me for anything at home, I'll serve you to the best of my ability."

"On other matters I have some say," she replied. "But these government jobs are fixed by officials above and seen to by the secretaries and runners under them, so that other people can hardly get a look-in. Even our servants only go along to wait on the master. Your uncle Lian too only goes there in connection with family business — he can't interfere with public works.

"As for our family affairs, as soon as one trouble's settled another crops up. Not even Master Zhen can keep order here. So how could you, young as you are and junior in status, possibly cope with these people? Besides, those cushy government jobs are nearly finished: they're simply spinning them out. Can't you make do by finding other commissions at home? This is honest advice. Go back and think it over and you'll see that. I appreciate your offer, but take these things back and return them to whomever you got them from."

Just then in came some nannies with little Qiaojie, tricked out in embroidered silks, her arms filled with toys. She went up to her mother, smiling, to prattle to her. At once Jia Yun sprang to his feet.

Beaming, he asked, "Is this my younger sister? Do you want something nice?"

The child burst out crying, and he quickly stepped back.

"Don't be frightened, darling," said Xifeng, taking Qiaojie on her lap. "This is your big Cousin Yun. Why be shy?"

"What a pretty child!" he exclaimed. "She's another who's destined to enjoy great good fortune."

Qiaojie turned to look at him, then started crying again.

When this had happened several times, Jia Yun saw that it was impossible to stay and got up to take his leave.



东西带了去罢。”贾芸道：“这一点子，婶娘还不赏脸？”凤姐道：“你不带去，我便叫人送到你家去。芸哥儿，你不要这么着。你又不是外人。我这里有机会，少不得打发人去叫你；没有事也没法儿，不在乎这些东东西西上的。”贾芸看见凤姐执意不受，只得红着脸道：“既这么着，我再找得用的东西来孝敬婶娘罢。”凤姐儿便叫小红：“拿了东西，跟着送出芸哥去。”

贾芸走着，一面心中想道：“人说二奶奶利害，果然利害。一点儿都不漏缝，真正斩钉截铁！怪不得没有后世。这巧姐儿更怪，见了我好像前世的冤家似的，真正晦气。白闹了这么一天！”

小红见贾芸没得彩头，也不高兴，拿着东西跟出来。贾芸接过来，打开包儿，拣了两件，悄悄的递给小红。小红不接，嘴里说道：“二爷别这么着。看奶奶知道了，大家倒不好看。”贾芸道：“你好生收着罢。怕什么，那里就知道了呢？你若不要，就是瞧不起我了。”小红微微一笑，才接过来，说道：“谁要你这些东西？算什么呢？”说了这句话，把脸又飞红了。贾芸也笑道：“我也不是为东西。况且那东西也算不了什么。”

说着话儿，两个已走到二门口。贾芸把下剩的仍旧揣在怀内。小红催着贾芸道：“你先去罢。有什么事情，只管来找我。我如今在这院里了，又不隔手。”贾芸点点头儿，说道：“二奶奶太利害，我可惜不能常来！刚才我说的话，你横竖心里明白，得了空儿，再告诉你罢。”小红满脸羞红，说道：“你去罢。明儿也常来走走。谁叫你和他生疏呢？”贾芸道：



“Take those things with you,” Xifeng reminded him.

“They’re only trifles, aunt. Won’t you do me the honour of accepting them?”

“If you won’t take them, I’ll have them sent back to your place. Don’t behave this way, Yun. It’s not as if you were an outsider. When there’s some opening I’ll certainly send for you; but if there’s none, what can I do about it? These things are quite superfluous.”

Seeing her so adamant he reddened and said, “In that case, aunt, I’ll look for something more acceptable to show my respect.”

Xifeng told Hongyu, “Take those things and see Master Yun out.”

Jia Yun left thinking to himself, “People call her a martinet, and she certainly is one! There’s no chink in her armour — she’s as hard as nails. No wonder she’s never had a son. And this Qiaojie is even odder, treating me as if we’d been enemies in some past life. I’m really out of luck — all this trouble for nothing!”

As Jia Yun had been rebuffed, Hongyu was upset too as she followed him out. Jia Yun took the bundle from her and unwrapped it, then chose two pieces of embroidery to slip to her. But Hongyu thrust them back.

“Don’t, sir!” she said. “If the mistress knew, it would look bad for both of us.”

“Just take them. What is there to be afraid of? How could she possibly know? If you refuse, that means you look down on me.”

Hongyu accepted them with a smile but said, “Why should I want these things of yours? What is this anyway?” She blushed crimson again.

“It’s the thought that counts,” he chuckled. “Besides, these aren’t worth much.”

They had now reached the compound gate, and Jia Yun tucked the rest of the embroidery inside his jacket while Hongyu urged him to leave.

“If there’s anything you want, just come and ask me,” she said. “Now that I’m working here it’s easy to find me.”

Jia Yun nodded. “It’s too bad your mistress is such a martinet that I can’t call too often. Anyway you must understand what I meant just now. I’ve something more to tell you when I have the chance.”

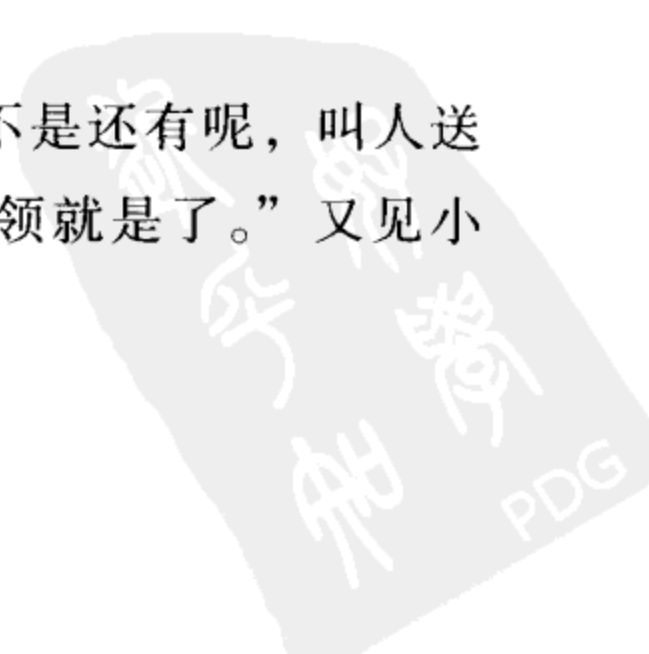
Blushing all over her face she answered, “Go now. You must call more often in future. You shouldn’t have kept at such a distance from her.”



“知道了。”贾芸说着，出了院门。这里小红站在门口，怔怔的看他去远了，才回来了。

却说凤姐在屋里吩咐预备晚饭，因又问道：“你们熬了粥了没有？”丫鬟们连忙去问，回来回道：“预备了。”凤姐道：“你们把那南边来的糟东西弄一两碟来罢。”秋桐答应了，叫丫头们伺候。平儿走来笑道：“我倒忘了：今儿晌午，奶奶在上头老太太那边的时候，水月庵的师父打发人来，要向奶奶讨两瓶南小菜，还要支用几个月的月钱，说是身上不受用。我问那道婆来着：‘师父怎么不受用？’他说：‘四五天了。前儿夜里，因那些小沙弥小道士里头有几个女孩子，睡觉没有吹灯，他说了几次不听。那一夜，看见他们三更以后灯还点着呢，他便叫他们吹灯，个个都睡着了，没有人答应，只得自己亲自起来给他们吹灭了。回到炕上，只见有两个人，一男一女，坐在炕上。他赶着问是谁，那里把一根绳子往他脖子上一套，他便叫起人来。众人听见，点上灯火，一齐赶来，已经躺在地下，满口吐白沫子。幸亏救醒了。此时还不能吃东西，所以叫来寻些小菜儿的。’我因奶奶不在屋里，不便给他。我说：‘奶奶此时没有空儿，在上头呢，回来告诉。’便打发他回去了。刚才听见说起南菜，方想起来了；不然，就忘了。”

凤姐听了，呆了一呆，说道：“南菜不是还有呢，叫人送些去就是了。那银子，过一天叫芹哥来领就是了。”又见小





“Right.”

Then Jia Yun left the compound. Hongyu stood at the gate watching till he was out of sight before finally turning back.

Xifeng in her room now ordered dinner and asked the maids if they had prepared any congee. Some went to ask, returning with the answer, “Yes, we have.”

“Get a couple of southern dishes preserved in liquor.”

“Very good, madam,” said Qiutong, and sent some young maids for these.

Pinger now stepped forward and said, “It had slipped my mind, but at noon today while you were with the old lady, the abbess of Water Moon Convent sent a nun to ask for two jars of southern pickles, madam. She wants a few months’ allowance advanced too, because she isn’t well. I asked the nun what was wrong, and she said the abbess has been unwell for four or five days. The other night some acolytes and novices refused to blow out the light when they went to bed. She scolded them several times, but they paid no attention. When she saw that the lamp was still burning after midnight, she told them to blow it out; but as they were all asleep no one answered, so she had to get up herself to put it out. When she went back to her room, she saw a man and a woman sitting on the *kang*. And when she asked who they were, they fastened a rope round her neck! She screamed for help. That roused the others who lit lamps and hurried over. They found her lying on the ground, foaming at the mouth. Luckily they managed to bring her round. But she still has no appetite; that’s why she asked for the pickles. As I couldn’t give her any in your absence, I told the nun you were busy with the old lady and I would tell you after you came back. Then I sent her away. Just now that talk about preserves from the south reminded me; otherwise I’d have forgotten.”

Xifeng digested this in silence.

“We still have some of those preserves from the south, don’t we?” she said. “Send her some. As for the money, tell Master Qin to come in a day or so to take it.”

Then Hongyu came and reported, “Just now Master Lian sent a mes-



红进来回道：“刚才二爷差人来，说是今晚城外有事，不能回来，先通知一声。”凤姐道：“是了。”

说着，只听见小丫头从后面喘吁吁的嚷着，直跑到院子里来。外面平儿接着，还有几个丫头们，咕咕唧唧的说话。凤姐道：“你们说什么呢？”平儿道：“小丫头子有些胆怯，说鬼话。”凤姐说：“那一个？”小丫头进来。问道：“什么鬼话？”那丫头道：“我刚才到后边去叫打杂儿的添煤，只听得三间空屋子里‘哗喇哗喇’的响，我还道是猫儿耗子；又听得‘暖’的一声，像个人出气儿的似的。我害怕，就跑回来了。”凤姐骂道：“胡说！我这里断不兴说神说鬼。我从来不信这些个话，快滚出去罢！”那小丫头出去了。

凤姐便叫彩明将一天零碎日用账对过一遍。时已将近二更，大家又歇了一回，略说些闲话，遂叫各人安歇去罢。凤姐也睡下了。将近三更，凤姐似睡不睡，觉得身上寒毛一乍，自己惊醒了，越躺着越发起渗来，因叫平儿秋桐过来作伴。二人也不解何意。那秋桐本来不顺凤姐，后来贾琏因尤二姐之事，不大爱惜他了，凤姐又笼络他，如今倒也安静，只是心里比平儿差多了，外面情儿。今见凤姐不受用，只得端上茶来。凤姐喝了一口道：“难为你，睡去罢，只留平儿在这里就够了。”秋桐却要献勤儿，因说道：“奶奶睡不着，倒是我们两个轮流坐坐也使得。”凤姐一面说，一面睡着了。平儿秋桐看见凤姐已睡，只听得远远的鸡声叫了，二人方都

数字水印
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senger to let you know that he has business to see to outside town and won't be back tonight."

"Very well," said Xifeng.

Just then they heard a young maid screaming at the back and come panting to the courtyard. Pinger, going out to investigate, found several maids chattering there.

"What's all the excitement?" Xifeng called out.

Pinger, returning, told her, "One girl who's scary was talking about ghosts."

"Which one?"

The girl came in and was asked, "What's this about ghosts?"

"I went just now to the back to get a servant to put more coal on the stove, and I heard a scuffling in those three empty rooms. First I thought it was a cat chasing rats, but then I heard a sound like someone sighing. I got scared and ran back."

"Nonsense!" Xifeng scolded. "We don't allow talk about ghosts and spirits here. I never believe such tales. Hurry up and get out!"

At once the young maid withdrew.

Next Xifeng made Caiming check their account for that day. By the time this was done it was nearly the second watch and after sitting up for a while to chat she sent them all to bed, then retired herself.

Towards midnight, sleeping fitfully, Xifeng found herself shivering and woke with a start. Her trepidation growing as she lay there, she surprised Pinger and Qitong by calling them over to keep her company. Qitong had formerly often defied Xifeng, but she had become more obedient after Jia Lian began to slight her owing to her treatment of Second Sister You, and Xifeng had done her best to win her over. Still, she lacked Pinger's devotion to their mistress, making only a show of complaisance. Now that Xifeng was unwell, she brought her some tea.

"Thank you." Xifeng took a sip. "Go back to bed now. It's enough if just Pinger stays here."

To please her, however, Qitong said, "If you can't sleep, madam, we can take it in turns to sit with you."

Xifeng talked with them for a while, then dozed off. By the time she was sound asleep they heard cocks crowing in the distance; so they lay

穿着衣裳略躺了一躺，就天亮了，连忙起来伏侍凤姐梳洗。

凤姐因夜中之事，心神恍惚不宁，只是一味要强，仍然挣扎起来。正坐着纳闷，忽听个小丫头子在院里问道：“平姑娘在屋里么？”平儿答应了一声。那小丫头掀起帘子进来，却是王夫人打发过来来找贾琏，说：“外头有人回要紧的官事。老爷才出了门，太太叫快请二爷过去呢。”凤姐听见，唬了一跳。未知何事，下回分解。





down fully dressed till dawn, when they got up to help her with her toilet.

Xifeng was on edge and upset after her bad night, but not wanting to show this she forced herself to get up. She was sitting there listlessly when she heard a maid in the courtyard asking for Pinger.

"I'm in here," Pinger called.

The girl lifted the portiere and came in, having been sent by Lady Wang to find Jia Lian.

She reported, "Someone outside has come on urgent official business. As the master has just gone out, Her Ladyship wants Master Lian to go over at once."

Xifeng was startled by this. To know what this business was, you must read the next chapter.





詞
人止物在公子填



第八十九回

人亡物在公子填词 蛇影杯弓颦卿绝粒

却说凤姐正自起来纳闷，忽听见小丫头这话，又唬了一跳，连忙又问：“什么官事？”小丫头道：“也不知道。刚才二门上小厮回进来，回老爷有要紧的官事，所以太太叫我请二爷来了。”凤姐听了工部里的事，才把心略略的放下。因说道：“你回去回太太，就说二爷昨日晚上出城有事，没有回来，打发人先回珍大爷去罢。”那丫头答应着去了。

一时，贾珍过来，见了部里的人，问明了，进来见了王夫人，回道：“部中来报：昨日总河奏到，河南一带决了河口，湮没了几府州县。又要开销国帑，修理城工。工部司官又有一番照料。所以部里特来报知老爷的。”说完退出。及贾政回家来，回明。从此，直到冬间，贾政天天有事，常在衙门里。宝玉的工课也渐渐松了，只是怕贾政觉察出来，不敢不常在学房里去念书，连黛玉处也不敢常去。

那时已到十月中旬，宝玉起来，要往学房中去。这日天气陡寒，只见袭人早已打点出一包衣裳，向宝玉道：“今日天气很凉，早晚宁可暖些。”说着，把衣裳拿出来，给宝玉挑





Chapter 89

A Memento of a Dead Maid Leads Baoyu to Write a Poem A False Suspicion Makes Daiyu Abstain from Food

Xifeng, in low spirits that morning, was shocked by the young maid's announcement.

"Official business!" she exclaimed, "What is it?"

"I don't know, ma'am. Just now a page from the inner gate reported that urgent business has come up at His Lordship's ministry, so Her Ladyship sent me to ask Master Lian to go over."

Relieved to know that the matter concerned the Ministry of Works, Xifeng told her, "Go and tell Her Ladyship that Master Lian left town on business last night, and hasn't yet returned. But first send someone to let Master Zhen know."

The maid assented and left.

Before long, Jia Zhen came over to question the messenger from the ministry. Then he went in to inform Lady Wang, "Word has come from the Ministry of Works that yesterday they heard from the Yellow River Commission that the dyke in Henan has been breached, flooding several prefectures and districts. State funds have been allocated for repair work, and this will be keeping the whole ministry busy. So they sent specially to report this to His Lordship." This said he withdrew, and on Jia Zheng's return relayed this message to him.

From then on right up till winter, as Jia Zheng was busy every day and constantly in his yamen, Baoyu grew more slack in his studies, although for fear of his father he still attended school. He dared not call on Daiyu too often either.

One morning in the middle of the tenth month, a sudden drop in the temperature made Xiren prepare a bundle of warm clothes for him before he set off to school.

"It's so cold today," she said, "you must dress more warmly first



了一件穿。又包了一件，叫小丫头拿出，交给焙茗，嘱咐道：“天气冷，二爷要换时，好生预备着。”焙茗答应了，抱着毡包，跟着宝玉自去。

宝玉到了书房中，做了自己的工课，忽听得纸窗“呼喇喇”一派风声。代儒道：“天气又变了。”把风门推开一看，只见西北上一层层的黑云，渐渐往东南扑上来。焙茗走进来回宝玉道：“二爷，天气冷了，再添些衣裳罢。”宝玉点点头儿。只见焙茗拿进一件衣裳来。宝玉不看则已，看了时，神已痴了。那些小学生都巴着眼瞧。却原是晴雯所补的那件雀金裘。宝玉道：“怎么拿这一件来？是谁给你的？”焙茗道：“是里头姑娘们包出来的。”宝玉道：“我身上不大冷，且不穿呢，包上罢。”代儒只当宝玉可惜这件衣裳，却也心里喜他知道俭省。焙茗道：“二爷穿上罢。着了冷，又是奴才的不是了。二爷只当疼奴才罢！”宝玉无奈，只得穿上，呆呆的对着书坐着。代儒也只当他看书，不甚理会。

晚间放学时，宝玉便往代儒托病告假一天。代儒本来上年纪的人，也不过伴着几个孩子解闷儿，时常也八病九痛的，乐得去一个少操一日心。况且明知贾政事忙，贾母溺爱，便点点头儿。

宝玉一径回来，见过贾母王夫人，也是这么说，自然没有不信的。略坐一坐，便回园中去了。见了袭人等，也不似往日有说有笑的，便和衣躺在炕上。袭人道：“晚饭预备下

数字水印
PDG



thing and in the evening.”

She took out a coat for him to wear, and wrapped up a cape for a young maid to give Beiming with the message, “Now that it’s cold, you must keep this ready for Master Bao.”

The page assented, took the bundle, and followed Baoyu to school.

Baoyu was doing his lessons when a wind sprang up, buffeting the window paper.

“The weather is changing,” remarked Dairu and, opening the window, he saw that tiers of black clouds in the northwest were bearing slowly southeast.

Beiming now came in. “Master Bao, it’s getting colder; better put on more clothes,” he advised.

When Baoyu nodded, Beiming brought in a cape. At sight of it Baoyu became lost in thought. All the other boys stared at it too. For it was the peacock-feather cape which Qingwen had mended.

“Why bring this?” demanded Baoyu. “Who gave it to you?”

“The girls in your place brought it out in a wrapper,” said Beiming.

“I’m not too cold; I won’t wear it. Wrap it up.”

Dairu imagined that Baoyu thought the cape too good to wear, and was pleased by this evidence of frugality.

But Beiming urged, “Do put it on, Master Bao. If you catch cold, I’ll be the one who’s blamed. Please wear it for my sake!”

Baoyu had to comply then. He sat staring at his book in a dazed fashion; but the tutor paid no attention, thinking he was studying.

That evening, when the class was dismissed, Baoyu asked for a day’s sick leave. And as old Dairu simply coached these boys to while away the time when he himself was not ailing, as often happened, he was glad to have one less to worry about the next day. Knowing, moreover, that Jia Zheng was busy and that Baoyu’s grandmother doted on the boy, he nodded his consent.

Baoyu on his return reported this to his grandmother and mother, who naturally believed him. After sitting there for a while he went back to the Garden to join Xiren and the others. He was not his usual cheerful and talkative self, however, for he lay down, still wearing the cape, on the *kang*.



了，这会儿吃，还是等一等儿？”宝玉道：“我不吃了，心里不舒服。你们吃去罢。”袭人道：“那么着，你也该把这件衣裳换下来了。那个东西那里禁得住揉搓？”宝玉道：“不用换。”袭人道：“倒也不但是娇嫩物儿，你瞧瞧那上头的针线，也不该这么遭塌他呀。”宝玉听了这话，正碰在他心坎儿上，叹了一口气道：“那么着，你就收起来，给我包好了。我也总不穿他了！”说着，站起来脱下。袭人才过来接时，宝玉已经自己叠起。袭人道：“二爷怎么今日这样勤谨起来了？”宝玉也不答言，叠好了，便问：“包这个的包袱呢？”麝月连忙递过来，让他自己包好，回头和袭人挤着眼儿笑。

宝玉也不理会，自己坐着，无精打彩。猛听架上钟响，自己低头看了看表针已指到酉初二刻了。一时小丫头点上灯来。袭人道：“你不吃饭，喝半碗热粥儿罢，别净饿着。看仔细饿上虚火来，那又是我们的累赘了。”宝玉摇摇头儿，说：“这不大饿，强吃了倒不受用。”袭人道：“既这么着，就索性早些歇着罢。”于是袭人麝月铺设好了，宝玉也就歇下。翻来复去，只睡不着，将及黎明，反蒙眬睡去，有一顿饭时，早又醒了。

此时袭人麝月也都起来。袭人道：“昨夜听着你翻腾到五更天，我也不敢问你。后来我就睡着了，不知到底你睡着了没有？”宝玉道：“也睡了一睡，不知怎么就醒了。”袭人道：





“Supper’s ready,” Xiren announced. “Would you like it now, or a bit later?”

“I don’t want any, I’m not feeling well,” he answered. “You go ahead and have yours.”

“In that case, you’d better take your cape off. You’ll spoil it if you crumple it like that.”

“Never mind.”

“It’s not just that it’s flimsy, but look at that stitching on it — you shouldn’t spoil it.”

Touched to the quick by this he sighed, “All right then, wrap it up carefully for me and put it away. I’ll never wear it again!”

He stood up to take off the cape and folded it up himself before Xiren could take it.

“Well, Master Bao!” she exclaimed. “Why are you putting yourself out like this today?”

Instead of answering he asked, “Where is the wrapper?”

Sheyue quickly passed it to him and while he wrapped the cape up turned to wink at Xiren.

Baoyu sat down by himself then, in low spirits, ignoring them. When the clock on the shelf struck, he looked down at his watch and saw it was half past five. By and by a young maid came in to light the lamp.

“If you don’t want supper,” said Xiren, “at least have half a bowl of hot congee. If you go without food that may arouse hot humours; then we shall have more trouble.”

He shook his head. “I’m not hungry. If I force myself to eat, I shall feel worse.”

“Then you’d better go to bed early.”

She and Sheyue prepared the bed, and Baoyu lay down. He tossed and turned but could not sleep, only dozing off when it was nearly dawn. But after no more than the time it takes for a meal, he was awake again.

By now Xiren and Sheyue were up.

Xiren said, “I heard you tossing about last night till the fifth watch, but I didn’t like to disturb you. And then I dropped off myself. Did you get any sleep or not?”

“A little, but then somehow I woke up again.”



“你没有什么不受用？”宝玉道：“没有，只是心上发烦。”袭人道：“今日学房里去不去？”宝玉道：“我昨儿已经告了一天假了，今儿我要想园里逛一天，散散心，只是怕冷。你叫他们收拾一间屋子，备了一炉香，搁下纸墨笔砚，你们只管干你们的，我自己静坐半天才好，别叫他们来搅我。”麝月接着道：“二爷要静静儿的用工夫，谁敢来搅！”袭人道：“这么着很好，也省得着了凉，自己坐坐，心神也不搅。”因又问：“你既懒怠吃饭，今日吃什么，早说，好传给厨房里去。”宝玉道：“还是随便罢，不必闹的大惊小怪的。倒是要几个果子搁在那屋里，借点果子香。”袭人道：“那个屋里好？别的都不大干净，只有晴雯起先住的那一间，因一向无人，还干净。——就是清冷些。”宝玉道：“不妨，把火盆挪过去就是了。”袭人答应了。

正说着，只见一个小丫头端了一个茶盘儿，一个碗，一双牙筋，递给麝月，道：“这是刚才花姑娘要的，厨房里老婆子送了来了。”麝月接了一看，却是一碗燕窝汤，便问袭人道：“这是姐姐要的么？”袭人笑道：“昨夜二爷没吃饭，又翻腾了一夜，想来今儿早起心里必是发空的，所以我告诉小丫头们，叫厨房里做了这个来的。”袭人一面叫小丫头放桌儿。麝月打发宝玉喝了，漱了口，只见秋纹走来说道：“那屋里已经收拾妥了，但等着一时炭劲过了，二爷再进去罢。”



“Aren’t you feeling well?”

“I’m all right, just rather edgy.”

“Are you going to school today?”

“No, yesterday I asked for a day’s leave. I’d like to amuse myself in the Garden today, but just now I feel cold. Get them to clean up a room for me, and put ready some incense, paper, ink and a brush; then you can get on with your work while I sit there quietly for a bit. I don’t want to be disturbed.”

“If you want to study quietly,” Sheyue said, “who’d dream of disturbing you?”

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Xiren. “You won’t catch cold, and sitting quietly by yourself you won’t be distracted either. But what will you eat today, if you’ve lost your appetite? Let us know in good time so that we can tell the kitchen.”

“Anything will do; don’t fuss. But I’d like some fruit put in that room to scent it.”

“Which room would be best?” Xiren wondered. “The only clean one, really, is Qingwen’s old room. As no one goes there nowadays, it’s quite tidy. Only it may be chilly.”

“That’s all right,” he said. “Just put a brazier in there.”

She readily agreed to this.

While they were talking a young maid had brought in a saucer, bowl and pair of chopsticks, which she handed to Sheyue saying:

“Just now Miss Xiren asked for these, and the old woman from the kitchen has brought them.”

Sheyue saw that it was a bowl of bird’s-nest soup.

“Did you order this?” she asked Xiren.

“He had no supper yesterday evening and passed a sleepless night,” Xiren explained. “I thought he must be feeling hollow inside this morning; so I got the girls to ask the kitchen for this.”

She told the younger maids to bring a table, and Sheyue waited on Baoyu while he finished the soup and rinsed his mouth. Then Qiuwen came in.

“The room’s been tidied,” she said. “But Master Bao had better wait till the charcoal is red before going there.”



宝玉点头，只是一腔心事，懒意说话。

一时，小丫头来请，说：“笔砚都安放妥当了。”宝玉道：“知道了。”又一个小丫头回道：“早饭得了，二爷在那里吃？”宝玉道：“就拿了来罢，不必累赘了。”小丫头答应了自去，一时端上饭来。宝玉笑了一笑，向麝月袭人道：“我心里闷得很，自己吃只怕又吃不下去，不如你们两个同我一块儿吃，或者吃的香甜，我也多吃些。”麝月笑道：“这是二爷的高兴，我们可不敢。”袭人道：“其实也使得，我们一处喝酒，也不止今日。只是偶然替你解闷儿，还使得；若认真这样，还有什么规矩体统呢！”说着，三人坐下：宝玉在上首，袭人麝月两个打横陪着。吃了饭，小丫头端上漱口茶来，两个看着撤了下去。

宝玉因端着茶，默默若有所思，又坐了一坐，便问道：“那屋里收拾妥了么？”麝月道：“头里就回过了。这会子又问！”宝玉略坐了一坐，便过这间屋子来。亲自点了一炷香，摆上些果品，便叫人出去，关上门。外面袭人等都静悄无声。宝玉拿了一幅泥金角花的粉红笺出来，口中祝了几句，便提起笔来写道：

怡红主人焚付晴姐知之：酌茗清香，庶几来飧！

其词云：

随身伴，独自意绸缪。谁料风波平地起，顿教躯命





Baoyu nodded, too preoccupied by his own thoughts to talk.

Soon a young maid came to announce, "The writing things have been put ready."

"Good," he said.

Yet another girl announced, "Breakfast is ready. Where will you have it, sir?"

"Just bring it here; that's simplest."

She assented and went out to fetch the food.

Baoyu remarked with a smile to Xiren and Sheyue, "I'm feeling so depressed, I doubt if I can eat anything alone. Why don't you have breakfast with me? If I see you enjoying it, I may eat more."

"You may like the idea, Master Bao," chuckled Sheyue. "But that would never do!"

"Actually it doesn't matter," countered Xiren. "We've drunk together more than once before. But we can only do this occasionally to cheer you up, young master. If it wasn't in fun, that would be against all the rules of propriety!"

So the three of them sat down, Baoyu in the top place, the two girls on either side. After they had finished the meal, a young maid brought them tea to rinse their mouths and they had the table removed.

Baoyu holding his cup sat silent, lost in thought.

"Is that room ready?" he asked presently.

"We told you it was," said Sheyue. "Why ask again?"

After a while he went to Qingwen's old room, lit a stick of incense and set out some fruit. Then he sent the others away and closed the door. Xiren and the other girls outside took care to keep very quiet.

Baoyu chose a sheet of pink paper with a gilded border and floral designs on one of the top and bottom corners.

After a short invocation he picked up his brush and wrote:

The Master of Happy Red Court burns incense to Sister Qingwen, and presents tea with a sweet fragrance. Pray come to the sacrifice!

He then penned the verse:

My close companion, you alone
My inmost thoughts could share;
A sudden storm out of the blue

红楼梦
第八十九回
PDG



即时休；孰与话轻柔？ 东逝水，无复向西流。

想象更无怀梦草，添衣还见翠云裘；脉脉使人愁！

写毕，就在香上点个火，焚化了。静静儿等着，直待一炷香点尽了，才开门出来。袭人道：“怎么出来了？想来又闷的慌了？”

宝玉笑了一笑，假说道：“我原是心里烦，才找个清静地方儿坐坐。这会子好了，还要外头走走去呢。”说着，一径出来。到了潇湘馆里，在院里问道：“林妹妹在家里呢么？”紫鹃接应道：“是谁？”掀帘看时，笑道：“原来是宝二爷。姑娘在屋里呢，请二爷到屋里坐着。”宝玉同着紫鹃走进来。黛玉却在里间呢，说道：“紫鹃，请二爷屋里坐罢。”

宝玉走到里间门口，看见新写的一副紫墨色泥金云龙笺的小对，上写着：“绿窗明月在，青史古人空。”宝玉看见，笑了一笑，走入门去，笑问道：“妹妹做什么呢？”黛玉站起来，迎了两步，笑着让道：“请坐。我在这里写经，只剩得两行了。等写完了再说话儿。”因叫雪雁倒茶。宝玉道：“你别动，只管写。”说着，一面看见中间挂着一幅单条，上面画着一个嫦娥，带着一个侍者；又一个女仙，也有一个侍者，捧着一个长长儿的衣囊似的：二人身旁边略有些云护，别无





Cut short your life of care.
Who is there now to speak so sweet and low?

Streams flowing east can no more westward flow.
I long for you, but have no herb¹
To bring you back again.
Glimpsing the cape — a turquoise cloud —
Fills me with endless pain.

This written, using the incense stick as a taper, he burned his poem to ashes, then sat quietly till the incense was burnt up, whereupon he left the room.

“Why are you coming out?” Xiren asked. “Were you feeling bored again?”

“I was in the dumps and wanted a quiet place where I could sit for a bit,” he prevaricated, smiling. “Now that I’ve got over it, I’m going to have a stroll outside.”

He went out, making straight for Bamboo Lodge, and on reaching the courtyard called, “Is Cousin Lin in?”

“Who is it?” asked Zijuan, raising the portiere. “Oh, Master Bao. She’s in her room. Please come in.”

As Baoyu followed her in, Daiyu called from the inner room, “Zijuan, bring Master Bao in here.”

Flanking the door of her room, Baoyu saw a newly written couplet on purple paper with gilded cloud-dragon designs. It read:

Green casement and bright moon remain,
But the men of old annals are gone.

He smiled and walked in, asking, “What are you doing, cousin?”

She rose to meet him and said with a smile, “Sit down. I’m copying a sutra, and have only two lines left. Let me finish it and then we can talk.” She told Xueyan to bring tea.

“Don’t trouble,” said Baoyu. “Just go on with your copying.”

He noticed in the middle of the wall a scroll painting of the Moon Goddess Change and another goddess, each with an attendant, the second one carrying what looked like a long clothing bag. There were only a few clouds surrounding them, with no other decorations. It was done in



点缀，全仿李龙眠白描笔意，上有“斗寒图”三字，用八分书写着。宝玉道：“妹妹这幅斗寒图可是新挂上的？”黛玉道：“可不是！昨日他们收拾屋子，我想起来，拿出来叫他们挂上的。”宝玉道：“是什么出处？”黛玉笑道：“眼前熟的很的，还要问人！”宝玉笑道：“我一时想不起，妹妹告诉我罢。”黛玉道：“岂不闻‘青女素娥俱耐冷，月中霜里斗婵娟’？”宝玉道：“是啊！这个实在新奇雅致！却好此时拿出来挂。”说着，又东瞧瞧，西走走。

雪雁沏了茶来，宝玉吃着。又等了一会子，黛玉经才写完，站起来道：“简慢了。”宝玉笑道：“妹妹还是这么客气。”但见黛玉身上穿着月白绣花小毛皮袄，加上银鼠坎肩；头上挽着随常云髻，簪上一枝赤金扁簪，别无花朵；腰下系着杨妃色绣花绵裙。真比如：

亭亭玉树临风立，冉冉香莲带露开。

宝玉因问道：“妹妹这两日弹琴来着没有？”黛玉道：“两日没弹了。因为写字已经觉得手冷，那里还去弹琴？”宝玉道：“不弹也罢了。我想琴虽是清高之品，却不是好东西，从没有弹琴里弹出富贵寿考来的，只有弹出忧思怨乱来的。再者，弹琴也得心里记谱，未免费心。依我说，妹妹身子又单薄，不操这心也罢了。”黛玉抿着嘴儿笑。宝玉指着壁上道：“这张琴可就是么？怎么这么短？”黛玉笑道：“这张琴不是





the style of Li Longmian's² outline drawings. The inscription "Contending in the Cold" was written in the old official script.

"Have you just put this painting up, consin?" he asked.

"That's right," said Daiyu. "Yesterday when they were tidying up, I thought of it and took it out for them to hang."

"What's its story?"

"Surely everybody knows it," she said with a smile, "Why ask?"

"I can't for the moment remember. Do tell me, cousin."

"You must know the lines:

The Green Nymph and Change, both able to stand cold,
Are vying in beauty in the frosty moon."³

"Of course!" he exclaimed. "How original and cultured! And this is the right season, too, to hang this up."

He strolled around looking at this and that till Xueyan brought him some tea. And soon Daiyu, her copying finished, stood up.

"Excuse me for neglecting you," she said.

"Always so polite, cousin!" he chuckled.

He noticed now that Daiyu was wearing a pale-blue embroidered fur-lined jacket under a short white squirrel tunic, and a pink embroidered silk padded skirt of the kind worn by Lady Yang. With no flowers in her cloudy tresses, which were loosely knotted and clasped with a flat gold pin, she was truly like:

A jade tree standing gracefully in the breeze.
Or sweet dewy lotus in bloom.

"Have you been playing the lute these days, cousin?" he asked.

"Not for the last two days, because I found copying made my fingers too cold."

"It's just as well not to play. Though the lute is a refined instrument, I don't think much of it. No one ever won wealth, nobility or long life from playing it, only grief and longing. Besides, to play, you have to memorize the score which is rather an effort. As you're so delicate, cousin, it seems to me you shouldn't waste energy on it."

Daiyu simply smiled and said nothing.

Then, pointing at a lute on the wall, he asked, "Is this yours? Why is it



短，因我小时学抚的时候，别的琴都彀不着，因此特地做起来的。虽不是焦尾枯桐，这鹤仙凤尾，还配得齐整；龙池雁足，高下还相宜。你看这断纹，不是牛旄似的么？所以音韵也还清越。”宝玉道：“妹妹这几天来做诗没有。”黛玉道：“自结社以后，没大做。”宝玉笑道：“你别瞒我。我听见你吟的，什么‘不可憊，素心如何天上月’，你搁在琴里，觉得音响分外的响亮。有的没的？”黛玉道：“你怎么听见了？”宝玉道：“我那一天从蓼风轩来听见的，又恐怕打断你的清韵，所以静听了一会，就走了。我正要问你：前路是平韵，到末了儿忽转了仄韵，是个什么意思？”黛玉道：“这是人心自然之音，做到那里就到那里，原没有一定的。”宝玉道：“原来如此。可惜我不知音，枉听了一会子！”黛玉道：“古来知音人能有几个？”

宝玉听了，又觉得出言冒失了，又怕寒了黛玉的心。坐了一坐，心里象有许多话，却再无可讲的。黛玉因方才的话也是冲口而出，此时回想，觉得太冷淡些，也就无话。宝玉越发打量黛玉设疑，遂讪讪的站起来说道：“妹妹坐着罢，我还要到三妹妹那里瞧瞧去呢。”黛玉道：“你若见了三妹妹，替我问候一声罢。”宝玉答应着，便出来了。

黛玉送至屋门口，自己回来，闷闷的坐着，心里想道：“宝玉近来说话，半吐半吞，忽冷忽热，也不知他是什么意思





so short?"

"Because when I first learned to play, being small I couldn't reach the strings of regular lutes, so this was specially made for me. Though it's not anything exceptional, its parts are well fitted and it's well proportioned. See the grain of the wood. Isn't it as fine as yak hair? So it has quite a clear timbre."

"Have you written any poems these days?"

"Hardly any since the last poetry club."

Baoyu smiled and said, "Don't try to hide it from me! I heard you chanting something like 'Why repine? Would that my heart were pure as the moon in the sky.' You accompanied it on the lute, and the sound seemed exceptionally clear. Can you deny that?"

"How did you happen to hear?"

"I heard it the other day on my way back from Smartweed Breeze Cot, and not wanting to disturb you I just listened quietly then went away. I've been meaning to ask you: Why did you start with level rhymes, then at the end change suddenly to an oblique one?⁴ What was the reason for that?"

"Music comes naturally from the heart," she answered. "There are no set rules — you just play as you feel."

"So that's the reason. It's too bad I don't understand music and so it was wasted on me."

"How many understanding people have there been since of old?" she replied.

At that, Baoyu realized that he had been tactless, and feared he had hurt her feelings. He sat there with so much he longed to say, yet not knowing how to word it. Daiyu also felt that her last remark had been thoughtless, and must have sounded cold; so she too was silent. This convinced Baoyu that she took this personally, and he rose sheepishly to say:

"I'll leave you to rest now, cousin. I'm off to see Tanchun."

"When you see her, give her my regards."

He agreed to this and went out.

After seeing him off, Daiyu came back and sat down dejectedly.

"Nowadays Baoyu talks in such an ambiguous way, blowing hot and



思。”正想着，紫鹃走来道：“姑娘，经不写了？我把笔砚都收好了？”黛玉道：“不写了，收起去罢。”说着，自己走到里间屋里床上歪着，慢慢的细想。紫鹃进来问道：“姑娘喝碗茶罢？”黛玉道：“不吃呢。我略歪歪罢。你们自己去罢。”

紫鹃答应着出去，只见雪雁一个人在那里发呆。紫鹃走到他跟前，问道：“你这会子也有了什么心事了么？”雪雁只顾发呆，倒被他吓了一跳；因说道：“你别嚷，今日我听见了一句话，我告诉你听，奇不奇。你可别言语！”说着，往屋里努嘴儿，因自己先行，点着头儿叫紫鹃同他出来，到门外平台底下，悄悄儿的道：“姐姐，你听见了么？宝玉定了亲了。”紫鹃听见，吓了一跳，说道：“这是那里来的话？只怕不真罢？”雪雁道：“怎么不真！别人大概都知道，就只咱们没听见。”紫鹃道：“你在那里听来的？”雪雁道：“我听见待书说的，是个什么知府家，家资也好，人才也好。”

紫鹃正听时，只听见黛玉咳嗽了一声，似乎起来的光景。紫鹃恐怕他出来听见，便拉了雪雁，摇摇手儿，往里望望，不见动静，才又悄悄儿的问道：“他到底怎么说来着？”雪雁道：“前儿不是叫我到三姑娘那里去道谢吗，三姑娘不在屋里，只有待书在那里。大家坐着，无意中说起宝二爷淘气来。他说：‘宝二爷怎么好！只会玩儿，全不像大人的样子，已经说亲了，还是这么呆头呆脑。’我问他：‘定了没有？’他说是：‘定了，是个什么王大爷做媒的。那王大爷是东府里的亲戚，所以也不用打听，一说就成了。’”紫鹃侧着头想了一

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cold by turns, I can't tell what he means," she thought.

Just then Zijuan came in to ask, "Have you finished copying, miss? Shall I put away the brush and inkstone?"

"Yes, you can. I shan't be doing any more."

She went into the inner room then to lie down, turning the problem over in her mind.

Zijuan came in again to ask if she would like some tea.

"No, I just want to rest a bit. You needn't stay here."

Zijuan going out found Xueyan all alone in a brown study.

"What's worrying you?" she asked, going up to her.

Xueyan gave a start, then said, "Don't make such a noise! Today I heard something very strange. I don't mind telling you, but you mustn't pass it on!" She signed towards the inner room, then started out, beckoning Zijuan to follow. At the foot of the steps she said softly, "Did you know, sister, that Baoyu is engaged?"

Zijuan was flabbergasted.

"Who says so?" she demanded. "Surely not!"

"It's true, I assure you. Most likely, apart from us, all the others know."

"Where did you hear this?"

"From Daishu. She says the girl's father is a prefect. It's a wealthy family, and she's good-looking too."

Just then Zijuan heard Daiyu coughing as if she had got up. Afraid she had come to the outer room and overheard them, she caught hold of Xueyan and signed to her to keep quiet. But when she looked into the room there was no one there.

She whispered to Xueyan, "What exactly did she say?"

"The other day wasn't I sent to Miss Tanchun's place to thank her?" said Xueyan. "She wasn't in. Daishu was the only one there. As we sat chatting we happened to speak of Master Bao's mischievous ways. 'He's really a problem!' she said. 'Just playing about, not at all like a grown man. Already engaged, yet still so muddle-headed!'"

"Is it settled?" I asked."

"She said, 'Yes. Some Mr. Wang was the go-between — he's related to the East Mansion; so without making further inquiries they accepted out of hand. '"



想，“这句话奇！”又问道：“怎么家里没有人说起？”雪雁道：“待书也说的，是老太太的意思。若一说起，恐怕宝玉野了心，所以都不提起。待书告诉了我，又叮咛千万不可露风说出来，知道是我多嘴。”把手往里一指，“所以他面前也不提。今日是你问起，我不犯瞒你。”

正说到这里，只听鸚鵡叫唤，学着说：“姑娘回来了，快倒茶来！”倒把紫鹃雪雁吓了一跳。回头并不见有人，便骂了鸚鵡一声。走进屋内，只见黛玉喘吁吁的刚坐在椅子上。紫鹃搭趣着问茶问水。黛玉问道：“你们两个那里去了？再叫不出一个人来。”说着，便走到炕边，将身子一歪，仍旧倒在炕上，往里躺下，叫把帐儿撩下。紫鹃雪雁答应出去，他两个心里疑惑方才的话只怕被他听了去了，只好大家不提。

谁知黛玉一腔心事，又窃听了紫鹃雪雁的话，虽不很明白，已听得了七八分，如同将身撂在大海里一般。思前想后，竟应了前日梦中之谶，千愁万恨，堆上心来。左右打算，不如早些死了，免得眼见了意外的事情，那时反倒无趣。又想起自己没了爹娘的苦，自今以后，把身子一天一天的遭塌起来，一年半载，少不得身登清静。打定了主意，被也不盖，衣也不添，竟是合眼装睡。紫鹃和雪雁来伺候几次，不见动静，又不好叫唤。晚饭都不吃。点灯以后，紫鹃掀开帐子，见已睡着了，被窝都蹬在脚后。怕他着了凉，轻轻儿拿来盖上。黛玉也不动，单待他出去，仍然褪下。



Zijuan cocked her head, thinking this extremely strange.

“Why has nobody in the house mentioned it?” she pressed.

“Daishu explained that too. It was the old lady’s idea. She was afraid that if Baoyu knew about it he’d start running wild. That’s why it’s never mentioned. And after telling me this Daishu told me on no account to pass it on — she said that I like to blab.” She pointed at the house. “That’s why I didn’t tell her a word about this. Since you asked me today, I couldn’t hide it from you.”

At this point they heard the cockatoo, which had learned this from them, call out, “The young lady’s back! Bring tea! Quick.”

Startled, they turned to look, and seeing no one there they scolded the bird. Going back inside, they discovered Daiyu just about to sit down on a chair, panting for breath. Zijuan asked in confusion if she wanted a drink.

“Where have you two been?” gasped Daiyu. “I called but nobody came.”

She went back to the *kang* and sank down with her face to the wall, telling them to let down the curtain. Having done this, the two maids went out, each wondering whether she had overheard them, but neither liking to express her misgiving.

Now Daiyu had been brooding anxiously, then eavesdropped on her two maids’ conversation. Though she did not hear everything, she caught the main gist and felt as if plunged into a raging sea. Thinking it over, it bore out the ominous dream she had so recently had. Frustration and grief filled her heart. Die and be done with it, she thought, rather than have a blow like this sprung upon her. She also reflected bitterly that she had no parents to turn to. Well then, she would let her health run down, and in half a year or so leave this sea of troubles. Having reached this resolve, she closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep, without covering herself with the quilt or putting on more clothes.

Zijuan and Xueyan came in several times to see if she needed anything, but as she lay motionless they did not like to call her. She went without supper that evening. After the lamps were lit, Zijuan raised the curtain and found her asleep, her quilt kicked to the bottom of the bed. She covered her gently to stop her from catching cold, and Daiyu did not move; but as soon as the maid had left she kicked off the bedding again.



那紫鹃只管问雪雁：“今儿的话到底是真的是假的？”雪雁道：“怎么不真！”紫鹃道：“待书怎么知道的？”雪雁道：“是小红那里听来的。”紫鹃道：“头里咱们说话，只怕姑娘听见了。你看刚才的神情，大有原故。今日以后，咱们倒别提这件事了。”说着，两个人也收拾要睡。紫鹃进来看时，只见黛玉被窝又蹬下来，复又给他轻轻盖上。一宿晚景不提。

次日，黛玉清早起来，也不叫人，独自一个，呆呆的坐着。紫鹃醒来，看见黛玉已起，便惊问道：“姑娘怎么这样早？”黛玉道：“可不是！睡得早，所以醒得早。”紫鹃连忙起来，叫醒雪雁，伺候梳洗。那黛玉对着镜子，只管呆呆的自看。看了一回，那珠泪儿断断连连，早已湿透了罗帕。正是：

瘦影正临春水照，卿须怜我我怜卿。

紫鹃在旁也不敢劝，只怕倒把闲话勾引旧恨来。迟了好一会，黛玉才随便梳洗了，那眼中泪渍，终是不干。又自坐了一会，叫紫鹃道：“你把藏香点上。”紫鹃道：“姑娘，你睡也没睡得几时，如何点香？不是要写经？”黛玉点点头儿。紫鹃道：“姑娘今日醒得太早，这会子又写经，只怕太劳神了罢。”黛玉道：“不怕！早完了早好！况且我也并不是为经，倒借着写字解解闷儿。以后你们见了我的字迹，就算见了我的





Zijuan felt constrained to ask Xueyan, "Was it really true what you told me earlier on?"

"Of course it was."

"How did Daishu get to know?"

"She heard it from Hongyu."

Then Zijuan confided, "I'm afraid our young lady overheard us. Look at the state she was in just now; that must be the reason for it. We mustn't ever mention it again."

They got ready to go to bed then. But first Zijuan went in to have another look at their young mistress, and found that she had kicked off her bedding again. Once more she gently tucked the quilt around her. But no more about that night.

The next day Daiyu rose early, and instead of calling her maids sat there alone lost in thought. When Zijuan woke and saw her already up, she exclaimed in surprise:

"You're up very early, miss!"

"I know," said Daiyu. "I went to bed early, that's why I woke early."

Zijuan hastily got up and roused Xueyan to help Daiyu with her toilet. She just stared blankly, however, at the mirror and soon was weeping so copiously that her silk handkerchief was drenched. Truly:

Gazing into the mirror at her emaciated face,
Both she and her reflection pitied each other!

Zijuan refrained from trying to comfort her, for fear of making matters worse. Some time passed before Daiyu set about her toilet, but listlessly, her tears still flowing. She then sat there a little longer.

"Light a stick of that Tibetan incense," she told Zijuan presently.

"You had hardly any sleep, miss. What do you want incense for? To copy more sutras?"

Daiyu nodded.

"You woke up too early, miss," protested Zijuan. "If you copy sutras now, I'm afraid you'll wear yourself out."

"Don't worry. The sooner I finish the better. Besides, it's not the sutra I'm thinking about, but writing will help distract me. And later, when you see my calligraphy, it'll be like seeing me again," She shed



面儿了。”说着，那泪直流下来。紫鹃听了这话，不但不能再劝，连自己也撑不住滴下泪来。

原来黛玉立定主意，自此以后，有意遭塌身子，茶饭无心，每日渐减下来。宝玉下学时，也常抽空问候。只是黛玉虽有万千言语，自知年纪已大，又不便似小时可以柔情挑逗，所以满腔心事，只是说不出来。宝玉欲将实言安慰，又恐黛玉生嗔，反添病症。两个人见了面，只得用浮言劝慰，真真是“亲极反疏”了。

那黛玉虽有贾玉王夫人等怜恤，不过请医调治，只说黛玉常病，那里知他的心病？紫鹃等虽知其意，也不敢说。从此，一天一天的减。到半月之后，肠胃日薄一日，果然粥都不能吃了。黛玉日间听见的话，都似宝玉娶亲的话；看见怡红院中的人，无论上下，也像宝玉娶亲的光景。薛姨妈来看，黛玉不见宝钗，越发起疑心。索性不要人来看望，也不肯吃药，只要速死。睡梦之中，常听见有人叫“宝二奶奶”的。一片疑心，竟成蛇影。一日竟是绝粒，粥也不喝，恹恹一息，垂毙殆尽。未知黛玉性命如何，且看下回分解。





tears anew.

Knowing that it was useless to reason with her, Zijuan could not hold back her own tears.

Now that Daiyu had made up her mind to ruin her health, she wanted no nourishment and ate less every day. Baoyu often made time to visit her after school; but although she had so much she longed to tell him, now that they were no longer children she could hardly tease him playfully as before or express her pent-up feelings. He, too, wanted to bare his heart to her to console her, yet he feared this might offend her and make her illness worse. So when they met they could only express their concern in the most superficial way. Truly, theirs was a case of "devotion leading to alienation."

The Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, fond as they were of Daiyu, simply called in doctors to attend her as she was so often ill, with no inkling that she was wasting away for love. And though Zijuan knew the truth, she dared not reveal it. So for a fortnight Daiyu ate daily less, till her appetite had so diminished that she could not even swallow a mouthful of congee. Any talk she heard she suspected concerned Baoyu's marriage. Anyone from Happy Red Court, whether master or maid, made her think of his impending marriage too. When Aunt Xue called on her without Baochai, this made her still more suspicious. She even wished everyone would keep away, and refused to take any medicine in the hope of hastening her death. In her dreams, she kept hearing people refer to "Madam Bao." Suspicion poisoned her mind. And at last the day came when, refusing both rice and congee, she was at her last gasp, at death's door.

To know what became of her, read the chapter which follows.



第九十回

失绵衣贫女耐嗷嘈 送果品小郎惊叵测

却说黛玉自立意自戕之后，渐渐不支，一日竟至绝粒。从前十几天内，贾母等轮流看望，他有时还说几句话；这两日索性不大言语。心里虽有时昏晕，却也有时清楚。贾母等见他这病不似无因而起，也将紫鹃雪雁盘问过两次。两个那里敢说？便是紫鹃欲向待书打听消息，又怕越闹越真，黛玉更死得快了，所以见了待书，毫不提起。那雪雁是他传话弄出这样原故来，此时恨不得长出百十个嘴来说“我没说”，自然更不敢提起。到了这一天黛玉绝粒之日，紫鹃料无指望了，守着哭了会子，因出来偷向雪雁道：“你进屋里来，好好儿的守着他，我去回老太太、太太和二奶奶去。今日这个光景，大非往常可比了。”雪雁答应，紫鹃自去。

这里雪雁正在屋里伴着黛玉，见他昏昏沉沉，小孩子家那里见过这个样儿，只打量如此便是死的光景了，心中又痛又怕，恨不得紫鹃一时回来才好。正怕着，只听窗外脚步走响，雪雁知是紫鹃回来，才放下心了，连忙站起来，掀着里间帘子等他。只见外面帘子响处，进来了一个人：却是待书。那待书是探春打发来看黛玉的，见雪雁在那里掀着帘子，便问道：“姑娘怎么样？”雪雁点点头儿，叫他进来。待





Chapter 90

The Loss of a Padded Jacket Involves a Poor Girl with a Scold A Gift of Sweetmeats Perturbs a Young Gentleman

After Daiyu had resolved on self-destruction she went into a decline, until there came a day when she could eat nothing. For the first fortnight or so, when the old lady and others took it in turn to call, she had still been able to say a few words, but these last two days she remained virtually silent. Sometimes she lay in a coma, sometimes she had lucid spells. Wondering what had brought on this illness, her grandmother questioned her maids a couple of times. But how dared they tell her the truth?

Zijuan wanted to ask Daishu to confirm the report but feared that would only hasten her young lady's death, and so when she saw Daishu she held her tongue. And Xueyan, as she knew that her tattling was the root of this trouble and only wished she could grow a hundred tongues to deny it, was of course even more afraid to speak out.

The day that Daiyu abstained completely from food, Zijuan felt that the end had come and, for a while, remained weeping at her side.

Then she came out and whispered to Xueyan, "Go in and look after her carefully while I go to tell the mistresses. She's never been as bad as this before."

Xueyan agreeing to this, Zijuan went off.

Xueyan stayed watching over Daiyu, now in a coma. Too young to have seen anything like this before, she thought her young mistress was dying and, torn between grief and alarm, longed for Zijuan's return. Then the frightened girl heard footsteps outside the window. It must be Zijuan, she thought with relief. As she sprang up to raise the portiere for her, the outside portiere swished and in came Daishu, sent by Tanchun to inquire after the invalid.

Seeing Xueyan waiting there Daishu asked, "How is she?"

Xueyan nodded and beckoned her in. Daishu noticed Zijuan's ab-



书跟进来，见紫鹃不在屋里，瞧了瞧黛玉，只剩得残喘微延，唬的惊疑不止。因问：“紫鹃姐姐呢？”雪雁道：“告诉上屋里去了。”

那雪雁此时只打量黛玉心中一无所知了，又见紫鹃不在面前，因悄悄的拉了待书的手问道：“你前日告诉我说的什么王大爷给这里宝二爷说了亲，是真话么？”待书道：“怎么不真！”雪雁道：“多早晚放定的？”待书道：“那里就放定了呢？那一天我告诉你时，是我听见小红说的。后来我到二奶奶那边去，二奶奶正和平姐姐说呢，道：‘那都是门客们借着这个事讨老爷的喜欢，往后好拉拢的意思。别说大太太说不好，就是大太太愿意，说那姑娘好，那大太太眼里看的出什么人来？再者，老太太心里早有了人了，就在咱们园子里的，大太太那里摸的着底呢？老太太不过因老爷的话，不得不问问罢咧。’又听见二奶奶说：‘宝玉的事，老太太总是要亲上作亲的，凭谁来说亲，横竖不中用。’”雪雁听到这里，也忘了神了，因说道：“这是怎么说！白白的送了我们这一位的命了！”待书道：“这是从那里说起？”雪雁道：“你还不知道呢！前日都是我和紫鹃姐姐说来着，这一位听见了，就弄到这步田地了。”待书道：“你悄悄儿的说罢，看仔细他听见了。”雪雁道：“人事都不醒了，瞧瞧罢，左不过在这一两天了。”正说着，只见紫鹃掀帘进来说：“这还了得！你们有什么话还不出去说，还在这里说！索性逼死他就完了！”待书道：“我不信有这样奇事。”紫鹃道：“好姐姐，不是我说，你又该恼了！你懂得什么呢？懂得也不传这些舌了。”



sence, and was terrified by the sight of Daiyu apparently at her last gasp.

“Where’s Sister Zijuan?” she asked.

“Gone to tell the mistresses.”

Under the impression that Daiyu was unconscious, and as Zijuan was away, Xueyan took Daishu’s hand and asked her in a low voice, “Was it true what you told me the other day about some Mr. Wang proposing a match for our Master Bao?”

“Of course it was.”

“When was the engagement fixed?”

“How could it be fixed? What I told you that day was what I heard from Hongyu. Later I went to Madam Lian’s place when she was talking it over with Sister Pinger. She said, ‘This is just a pretext for those proteges to suck up to His Lordship, so that he’ll help them in future. Not to say Lady Xing didn’t approve of the girl, even if she did what does her judgement count for? Besides, unknown to her, the old lady long ago decided on one of the girls in our Garden. She just made a show of consulting her because His Lordship mentioned this proposal.’

“I also heard Madam Lian say, ‘For Baoyu, the old lady’s bound to choose some relative. No other proposals, no matter from whom, would even be considered.’”

Xueyan, forgetting herself, blurted out, “Why, then, our young lady’s dying for no reason!”

“What do you mean?”

“You wouldn’t know, but she overheard me telling Sister Zijuan about this the other day. That’s why she’s wasting away.”

“Keep your voice down, or she may hear us!”

“She’s already unconscious. Look! She can hardly last more than a day or two now.”

Just then Zijuan lifted the portiere and stepped in.

“What’s all this?” she exclaimed softly. “If you want to talk, talk outside instead of here. You’ll be the death of her!”

“This is so extraordinary,” cried Daishu, “I simply can’t believe it!”

“Good sister, don’t take offence,” retorted Zijuan, “but really you have no sense! You should have known better than to spread such gossip.”



这里三个人正说着，只听黛玉忽然又嗽了一声，紫鹃连忙跑到炕沿前站着，待书雪雁也都不言语了。紫鹃弯着腰，在黛玉身后轻轻问道：“姑娘，喝口水罢？”黛玉微微答应了一声。雪雁连忙倒了半钟滚白水，紫鹃接了托着，待书也走近前来。紫鹃和他摇头儿，不叫他说话，待书只得咽住了。站了一回，黛玉又嗽了一声。紫鹃趁势问道：“姑娘，喝水呀！”黛玉又微微应了一声，那头似有欲抬之意，那里抬得起？紫鹃爬上炕去，爬在黛玉傍边，端着水，试了冷热，送到唇边，扶了黛玉的头，就到碗边，喝了一口。紫鹃才要拿时，黛玉意思还要喝一口，紫鹃便托着那碗不动。黛玉又喝了一口，摇摇头儿，不喝了。喘了一口气，仍旧躺下。半日，微微睁眼，说道：“刚才说话不是待书么？”紫鹃答应道：“是。”待书尚未出去，因连忙过来问候。黛玉睁眼看了，点点头儿，又歇了一歇，说道：“回去问你姑娘好罢。”待书见这番光景，只当黛玉嫌烦，只得悄悄的退出去了。

原来那黛玉虽则病势沉重，心里却还明白。起先待书雪雁说话时，他也模糊听见了一半句，却只作不知，也因实无精神答理。及听了雪雁待书的话，才明白过前头的事情原是议而未成的。又兼待书说是凤姐说的，老太太的主意，亲上作亲，又是园中住着的，非自己而谁？因此一想，阴极阳生，心神顿觉清爽许多，所以才喝了两口水，又要想问待书的话。恰好贾母、王夫人、李纨、凤姐听见紫鹃之言都赶着

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As they were talking they heard Daiyu cough. Zijuan ran to the *kang* to attend to her while the two other girls fell silent.

Bending over Daiyu, Zijuan asked her softly, "Do you want some water, miss?"

"Yes," was the faint reply.

Xueyan at once poured half a cup of boiled water which Zijuan took from her. Daishu stepped forward too, but Zijuan shook her head to make her keep quiet. They stood there until Daiyu coughed again.

"Do you want some water, miss?" Zijuan asked again.

Once again Daiyu murmured her assent and tried to raise her head, but this was beyond her. Zijuan clambered on to the *kang* beside her, the cup in her hand. First she made sure that the water was neither too hot nor too cold, then held it to Daiyu's lips, supporting her head while she sipped. As she looked eager for more, instead of removing the cup Zijuan held it there while she took another sip. Then Daiyu shook her head, declining more, and lay down again with a sigh. After a while, half opening her eyes, she asked:

"Was that Daishu talking?"

"Yes, miss," said Zijuan.

Daishu, who had not yet left, came over to greet her. Daiyu opened her eyes to look at her and nodded.

After a pause she said, "When you go back, give my regards to your mistress."

Guessing that she wanted to be left in peace, Daishu quietly slipped away.

Now Daiyu though so gravely ill had been clear in her mind. She had caught a sentence here and there of the conversation between Daishu and Xueyan, but she lay as if unconscious, owing partly to sheer weakness. From what she overheard she realized that the match proposed had not been agreed to. And then Daishu had quoted Xifeng as saying that the old lady had decided on choosing some relative from the girls in the Garden. Who could this mean if not her? At this thought, her despair gave way to joy and her mind became clearer too. That was why she had drunk some water and why she had wanted to question Daishu.

Just then the old lady arrived with Lady Wang, Li Wan and Xifeng



来看。黛玉心中疑团已破，自然不似先前寻死之意了。虽身骨软弱，精神短少，却也勉强答应一两句话了。

凤姐因叫过紫鹃，问道：“姑娘也不至这样。这是怎么说，你这样唬人！”紫鹃道：“实在头里看着不好，才敢去告诉的。回来见姑娘竟好了许多，也就怪了。”贾母笑道：“你也别信他。他懂得什么？看见不好就言语，这倒是他明白的地方。小孩子家不嘴懒脚嫩就好。”说了一回，贾母等料着无妨，也就去了。正是：

心病终须心药治，解铃还是系铃人。

不言黛玉病渐减退。且说雪雁紫鹃背地里都念佛。雪雁向紫鹃说道：“亏他好了！只是病的奇怪，好的也奇怪。”紫鹃道：“病的倒不怪，就只好的奇怪。想来宝玉和姑娘必是姻缘。人家说的：‘好事多磨。’又说道：‘是姻缘棒打不回。’这么看起来，人心天意，他们两个竟是天配的了。再者，你想那一年，我说了林姑娘要回南去，把宝玉没急死了，闹得家翻宅乱；如今一句话又把这一个弄的死去活来：可不说的‘三生石上’百年前结下的么？”说着，两个悄悄的抿着嘴笑了一回。雪雁又道：“幸亏好了！咱们明儿再别说了，就是宝玉娶了别的人家儿的姑娘，我亲见他在那里结亲，我也再露一句话了。”紫鹃笑道：“这就是了。”





who had hurried over after hearing Zijuan's report. Daiyu, her fears set at rest now, naturally no longer wanted to die. Though still weak and lacking in energy, she managed to answer their inquiries briefly. Seeing this, Xifeng called Zijuan over.

"What do you mean by frightening us like that?" she demanded: "Your young lady's not in such a bad way after all."

"She really looked bad," replied Zijuan. "Otherwise I wouldn't have presumed to disturb you. Now, coming back, I'm quite amazed to find her so much better."

"Don't listen to her. What does she know?" said the old lady with a smile. "When something's wrong, it shows good sense to report it. I like a girl who's not too lazy to use her tongue and feet."

They stayed talking a little longer, then believing Daiyu to be in no danger they left, Truly:

The cure for a broken heart is heartening news;
The knot must be untied by the one who tied it.

So by degrees Daiyu recovered, and her two maids secretly gave thanks to Buddha.

Xueyan remarked to Zijuan, "Thank goodness she's better now! Her falling ill was odd, and so was her recovery."

"Her falling ill wasn't odd," replied Zijuan, "but her recovery is. I suppose she and Baoyu must be destined for each other. As people say, 'The way to happiness is never smooth' and 'Nothing can prevent a match made in Heaven.' So it seems human wishes are willed by Providence, and they are fated to marry. Another thing: remember that year when I told Baoyu Miss Lin would be going back south? He flew into such a frenzy, he nearly turned the whole household upside down! This time another casual remark nearly cost our young lady her life. What is this if not a case of predestined fate?"

They had a good laugh in secret, after which Xueyan said again, "Well, thank goodness she's better. We must be careful not to gossip in future. Even if Baoyu marries some other girl and I see the wedding myself, I won't breathe a word about it."

"That's right," agreed Zijuan, smiling.



不但紫鹃和雪雁在私下里讲究，就是众人也都知道黛玉的病也病的奇怪，好也好得奇怪，三三两两，唧唧啾啾议论着。不多几时，连凤姐儿也知道了，邢王二夫人也有些疑惑，倒是贾母略猜着了八九。

那时正值邢王二夫人、凤姐等在贾母房中说闲话，说起黛玉的病来。贾母道：“我正要告诉你们。宝玉和林丫头是从小儿在一处的，我只说小孩子们，怕什么？以后时常听得林丫头忽然病，忽然好，都为有了些知觉了。所以我想他们若尽着搁在一块儿，毕竟不成体统。你们怎么说？”王夫人听了，便呆了一呆，只得答应道：“林姑娘是个有心计儿的。至于宝玉，呆头呆脑，不避嫌疑是有的。看起外面，却还都是个小孩儿形象。此时若忽然或把那一个分出园外，不是倒露了什么痕迹了么？古来说的：‘男大须婚，女大须嫁。’老太太想，倒是赶着把他们的事办办也罢了。”

贾母皱了一皱眉，说道：“林丫头的乖僻，虽也是他的好处，我的心里不把林丫头配他，也是为这点子；况且林丫头这样虚弱，恐不是有寿的。只有宝丫头最妥。”王夫人道：“不但老太太这么想，我们也是这么。但林姑娘也得给他说了人家儿才好。不然，女孩儿家长大了，那个没有心事？倘或真与宝玉有些私心，若知道宝玉定下宝丫头，那倒不成事了。”贾母道：“自然先给宝玉娶了亲，然后给林丫头说人家。再没有先是外人、后是自己的。况且林丫头年纪到底比宝玉小两岁。依你们这么说，倒是宝玉定亲的话，不许叫他知道倒罢了。”凤姐便吩咐众丫头们道：“你们听见了？宝二爷



These two were not the only ones to be talking this business over. All the domestics knew of Daiyu's strange illness and strange recovery, and in twos and threes they canvassed the matter together, till very soon this came to Xifeng's ears. Lady Xing and Lady Wang also found it puzzling. Only the Lady Dowager had a good inkling of the reason.

One day Their Ladyships and Xifeng, chatting with the old lady in her room, brought up the subject of Daiyu's illness again.

"I was just going to tell you something," said the old lady. "Baoyu and Daiyu have been inseparable since they were small, and I didn't think it mattered as they were children. Since then, though, there's been all this talk about her sudden illness and sudden recovery — just because they are growing up now. So I don't think it proper to leave them together all the time. What do you say?"

Taken aback, Lady Wang could only answer, "Daiyu is a bright, intelligent girl. As for Baoyu, he's such a simpleton he may get himself talked about sometimes. On the face of it, though, they're both of them still children. If we move one of them out of the Garden now, all of a sudden, won't that give people ideas? As they say: When the time comes do not tarry; boys must wed and girls must marry. Don't you think it would be better, madam, to lose no time in arranging their marriages?"

Frowning, the old lady said, "Daiyu is over-sensitive, and though that's not a bad thing in a way it's also the reason why I don't want to marry her to Baoyu. Besides, she's so delicate. I doubt whether she's long for this world. The most suitable choice is Baochai."

"We all agree with you there, madam," said Lady Wang. "But we must arrange a marriage for Daiyu too. A growing girl is bound to get ideas into her head. If she's really set her heart on Baoyu and hears that he's engaged to Baochai, we're going to have a problem on our hands."

"But we can't marry her off before Baoyu," objected the old lady. "Who ever heard of arranging a marriage for someone else's child before one's own? Especially as she's two years younger than he is. Still, there's truth in what you said, so we'll just have to see to it that there's no talk about Baoyu's engagement."

At once Xifeng turned to the maids.

"Did you hear that? Mind you don't gossip about Master Bao's en-



定亲的话，不许混吵嚷；若有多嘴的，堤防着他的皮！”贾母又向凤姐道：“凤哥儿，你如今自从身上不大好，也不大管园里的事了。我告诉你，须得经点儿心。不但这个，就象前年那些人喝酒耍钱，都不是事。你还精细些，少不得多分点心儿，严紧严紧他们才好。况且我看他们也就还服你些。”凤姐答应了。娘儿们又说了一回话，方各自散了。

从此，凤姐常到园中照料。一日，刚走进大观园，到了紫菱洲畔，只听见一个老婆子在那里嚷。凤姐走到跟前，那婆子才瞧见了，早垂手侍立，口里请了安。凤姐道：“你在这里闹什么？”婆子道：“蒙奶奶们派我在这里看守花果，我也没有差错，不料那姑娘的丫头说我们是贼。”凤姐道：“为什么呢？”婆子道：“昨儿我们家的黑儿跟着我到这里玩了一回，他不知道，又往那姑娘那边去瞧了一瞧，我就叫他回去了。今儿早起，听见他们丫头说，丢了东西了。我问他丢了什么，他就问起我来了。”凤姐道：“问了你一声，也犯不着生气呀。”婆子道：“这里园子，到底是奶奶家里的，并不是他们家里的。我们都是奶奶派的，贼名儿怎么敢认呢？”凤姐照脸啐了一口，厉声道：“你少在我跟前唠唠叨叨的！你在这里照看，姑娘丢了东西，你们就该问哪！怎么说出这些没道理的话来？把老林叫了来，撵他出去！”丫头们答应了。只见那岫烟赶忙出来，迎着凤姐陪笑道：“这使不得，没有的事。事情早过去了。”凤姐道：“姑娘，不是这个话。倒不讲事情，这名分上太岂有此理了！”岫烟见婆子跪在地下告



gagement. I'll flay anyone who blabs!"

"Xifeng," said the old lady, "since that illness of yours you've stopped paying much attention to what goes on in the Garden. I want you to keep your eyes open, and not just with regard to this. The way the servants there were drinking and gambling the other year was disgraceful. You have sharper eyes than the rest of us, so we must trouble you to keep them under stricter control. Besides, I think they're more obedient to you."

Xifeng promised to do her best, and after a little further talk they dispersed.

After that, Xifeng often went to check up in the Garden. One day she had just gone in when she heard an old woman at Purple Caltrop Isle raising a rumpus. As soon as the old woman saw her approaching, she stood at attention and greeted her.

"Why are you making such a noise here?" demanded Xifeng.

"The mistresses put me in charge of the flowers and fruit here, madam. I've done nothing wrong, yet Miss Xiuyan's maid says we're thieves!"

"Tell me what happened."

"Yesterday our Heier came here with me to play for a bit. Having no sense, she went to Miss Xiuyan's place to peek around, and then I sent her home. This morning, her maid told me something was missing. When I asked what it was, she started questioning *me!*"

"That's nothing to get so worked up about."

"Well, this Garden belongs to our mistress' family, not to theirs. It's our mistress who put us in charge here; so how dare they call us thieves?"

Xifeng spat in her face. "Don't give me that talk!" she said sternly. "You're here to keep an eye on things. When a young lady loses something, you should look into it. How can you maunder in this senseless fashion?"

She ordered her maids to fetch Lin Zhixiao's wife to drive the woman away. At once Xiuyan came out to greet her with a smile.

"Please don't," she said. "It's of no account — over and done with."

"That's not the point, cousin," said Xifeng. "Quite apart from your losing something, she's gone too far, forgetting her place like that."

Seeing that the woman was kneeling to beg for pardon, Xiuyan invited



饶，便忙请凤姐到里边去坐。凤姐道：“他们这种人，我知道他，除了我，其余都没上没下的了。”岫烟再三替他讨饶，只说自己的丫头不好。凤姐道：“我看着那姑娘的分上，饶你这一次！”婆子才起来磕了头，又给岫烟磕了头，才出去了。

这里二人让了坐，凤姐笑问道：“你丢了什么东西了？”岫烟笑道：“没有什么要紧的，是一件红小袄儿，已经旧了的。我原叫他们找，找不着就罢了。这小丫头不懂事，问了那婆子一声，那婆子自然不依了。这都是小丫头糊涂不懂事，我也骂了几句。已经过去了，不必再提了。”凤姐把岫烟内外一瞧，看见虽有些皮绵衣裳，已是半新不旧的，未必能暖和，他的被窝多半是薄的。至于房中桌上摆设的东西，就是老太太拿来的，却一些不动，收拾的干干净净。凤姐心上便很爱敬他，说道：“一件衣裳，原不要紧。这时候冷，又是贴身的，怎么就不问一声儿呢？这撒野的奴才，了不得了！”

说了一回，凤姐出来，各处去坐了一坐，就回去了。到了自己房中，叫平儿取了一件大红洋绉的小袄儿，一件松花色绫子一抖珠儿的小皮袄，一条宝蓝盘锦厢花线裙，一件佛青银鼠褂子，包好叫人送去。

那时岫烟被那老婆子聒噪了一场，虽有凤姐来压住，心上终是不定。想起“许多姐妹们在这里，没有一个下人敢得罪他的，独自我这里，他们言三语四，刚刚凤姐来碰见。”想来想去，终是没意思，又说不出。正在吞声饮泣，看见凤姐那边的丰儿送衣裳过来。岫烟一看，决不肯受。丰儿



Xifeng in to sit down.

“I know these creatures,” Xifeng went on. “I’m the only one of the mistresses they treat with any respect.”

Still Xiuyan begged her to let the woman off, saying her own maid was to blame.

“Well, for Miss Xing’s sake then, I’ll overlook it this time,” conceded Xifeng.

The woman kowtowed her thanks to them both and went off, whereupon they sat down.

“What have you lost?” asked Xifeng with a smile.

“Nothing much, just a red jacket, an old one. When I told them to look for it and they couldn’t find it, I said it didn’t matter. But my maid is so silly she asked that woman about it, and of course that put her back up. It’s all this silly girl’s fault, and I’ve given her a scolding, so that’s that. We may as well forget about it.”

Xifeng looked her up and down and saw that though she had on some fur-lined and padded clothes, they were rather worn and could not be too warm. Her quilts too were on the thin side. But the knick-knacks in the room and on the desk, all provided by the Lady Dowager, were neatly set out and spotless. Impressed by this and drawn to her, Xifeng said:

“Of course a jacket isn’t all that important, but now that it’s cold you need something snug to wear. Naturally you should try to trace it. The insolence of that old slave, talking back!”

After a little more chat Xifeng took her leave, and having paid various other calls she went home. There she told Pinger to fetch a red crepe inner jacket, a deep green satin jacket lined with sheepskin, a sapphire blue embroidered padded skirt and a bright green gown lined with white squirrel. When these had been wrapped up she had them sent to Xiuyan.

Xiuyan was still upset after the old scold’s tirade, even though Xifeng had put a stop to it. She thought, “No one dares to offend any of the other girls here except me. With me, though, they keep making snide remarks — and now Xifeng knows about it.” The more she brooded the more wretched she felt, but there was nobody in whom to confide. She was choking back her sobs when Fenger brought in the clothes sent by Xifeng. Xiuyan most resolutely declined the gift.



道：“奶奶吩咐我说：‘姑娘要嫌是旧衣裳，将来送新的来。’”岫烟笑谢道：“承奶奶的好意。只是因我丢了衣裳，他就拿来，我断不敢受的。拿回去，千万谢你们奶奶！承你奶奶的情，我算领了。”倒拿个荷包给了丰儿，那丰儿只得拿了去了。

不多时，又见平儿同着丰儿过来，岫烟忙迎着问了好，让了坐。平儿笑说道：“我们奶奶说：姑娘特外道的了不得！”岫烟道：“不是外道，实在不过意。”平儿道：“奶奶说：‘姑娘要不收这衣裳，不是嫌太旧，就是瞧不起我们奶奶。’刚才说了：我要拿回去，奶奶不依我呢。”岫烟红着脸笑谢道：“这样说了，叫我不敢不收。”又让了一回茶。

平儿和丰儿回去，将到凤姐那边，碰见薛家差来的一个老婆子，接着问好。平儿便问道：“你那里去的？”婆子道：“那边太太、姑娘叫我来请各位太太、奶奶、姑娘们的安。我才刚在奶奶前问起姑娘来，说姑娘到园中去了。可是从邢姑娘那里来么？”平儿道：“你怎么知道？”婆子道：“方才听见说，真真的二奶奶和姑娘们的行事叫人感念！”平儿笑了一笑说：“你回来坐着罢。”婆子道：“我还有事，改日再过来瞧姑娘罢。”说着走了。平儿回来，回复了凤姐。不在话下。





"My mistress says that if you think these too worn, she'll send new ones later," said Fenger.

"It's very kind of your mistress." Xiuyan smiled. "She's sent me these because I lost a jacket, but I really can't accept them. So take them back and be sure to thank her for me. I do appreciate her thoughtfulness."

She gave Fenger a pouch, and with that the girl had to leave.

Before long, Fenger came back again with Pinger. Xiuyan welcomed them and asked them to sit down.

Pinger told her with a smile, "Our mistress says you're treating us like strangers."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Xiuyan. "But I really can't accept such a handsome gift."

"Our mistress says that if you won't accept, it must be either because you think these clothes too shabby or because you look down on her. Just now our mistress insisted that if I were to bring back the clothes the way Fenger did, she'd be really angry with me."

Blushing, Xiuyan said gratefully, "Well then, I dare not refuse." Then she urged them to have some tea.

On their way back, Pinger and Fenger were accosted by one of the old women who worked for Aunt Xue.

"Where have you been?" Pinger asked her.

"Our mistress and young lady sent me to give their regards to all the ladies here," the woman replied. "Just now I asked Madam Lian where you were, and she said you'd gone to the Garden. Have you come from Miss Xing's place?"

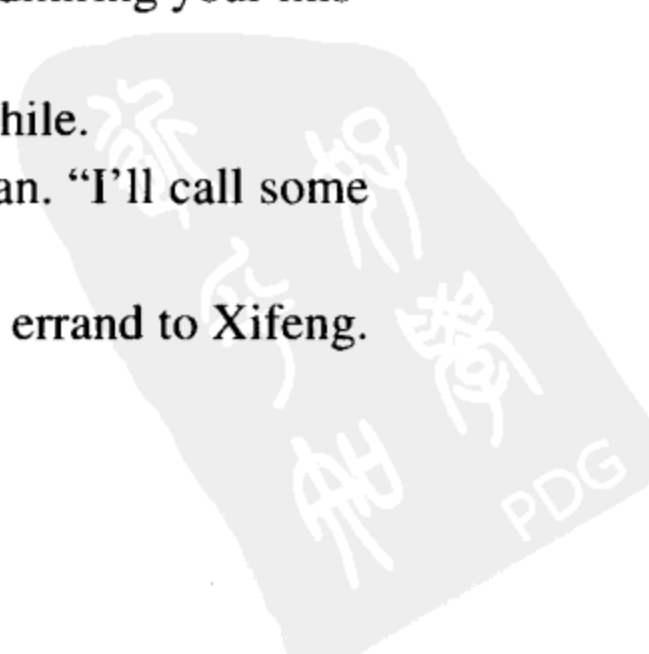
"How did you know?"

"I just heard about it. And, truly, no one can help admiring your mistress and you, the way you both behave!"

Pinger laughed and invited her back to rest for a while.

"I have something else to do now," said the woman. "I'll call some other day."

She went off, and Pinger returned to report on her errand to Xifeng. No more of this.





且说薛姨妈家中被金桂搅得翻江倒海，看见婆子回来，说起岫烟的事，宝钗母女二人不免滴下泪来。宝钗道：“都为哥哥不在家，所以叫那姑娘多吃几天苦。如今还亏凤姐姐不错。咱们底下也得留心，到底是咱们家里人。”说着，只见薛蝌进来说道：“大哥哥这几年在外头相与的都是些什么人！连一个正经的也没有，来一起子，都是些狐群狗党！我看他们那里是不放心？不过将来探探消息儿罢咧！这两天都被我赶出去了。以后吩咐了门上，不许传进这种人来。”薛姨妈道：“又是蒋玉菡那些人哪？”薛蝌道：“蒋玉菡却倒没来，倒是别人。”

薛姨妈听了薛蝌的话，不觉又伤起心来，说道：“我虽有儿，如今就象没有的了。就是上司准了，也是个废人。你虽是我侄儿，我看你还比你哥哥明白些，我这后辈子全靠你了。你自己从今后要学好。再者，你聘下的媳妇儿，家道不比往时了。人家的女孩儿出门子不是容易，再没别的想头，只盼着女婿能干，他就有日子过了。若那丫头也象这个东西……”说着，把手往里头一指，道：“我也不说了。那丫头实在是个有廉耻有心计儿的，又守得贫，耐得富。只是等咱们的事过去了，早些儿把你们的正经事完结了，也了我一宗心事。”薛蝌道：“琴妹妹还没有出门子，这倒是太太烦心的一件事。至于这个，可算什么呢！”

大家又说了一回闲话，薛蝌回到自己屋里，吃了晚饭，想起那岫烟住在贾府园中，终是寄人篱下；况且又穷，日用起居不想可知。况兼当初一路同来，模样儿，性格儿，都知



Now Aunt Xue's household had been turned upside-down by Jingui. When the woman went back and told them about Xiuyan, Baochai and her mother shed tears.

"It's all because brother's away that Xiuyan has to go on putting up with these slights," said Baochai. "I'm glad Cousin Xifeng is so considerate. In future we must see what we can do too as, after all, she'll be marrying into our family."

Just then Xue Ke came in.

"The friends Brother Pan has been making these years!" he fumed. "There's not a single decent sort among the whole foxy lot. They're a pack of curs! I don't believe they feel any concern for him. They just come to ferret our news. The last couple of days I've sent the whole lot packing. I've told the gateman, too, not to admit such scoundrels from now on."

"Are they Jiang Yuhan's lot?" asked Aunt Xue.

"No, Jiang Yuhan hasn't come. These are some others."

Xue Ke's outburst had further lowered Aunt Xue's spirits.

"Though I have a son, it's as if I had none," she sighed. "Even if the authorities let him off, he'll be useless. Though you're my nephew, and not so close, I can see that you have more sense than Pan and will be my only prop in my old age. It's up to you to make a success of your life. Especially as the family of your betrothed isn't as well off as before. It's hard for a girl to leave home and get married, and all she hopes for is an able husband who will provide for her. If Xiuyan were like that creature...." — she pointed towards the inner rooms — "well, enough said! But Xiuyan is truly modest, sensible too. She can put up with poverty, and wealth wouldn't spoil her either. Once this trouble blows over we must hurry up and arrange your wedding, and that will be one less thing on my mind."

"There's still Sister Baoqin's marriage which must be on your mind, aunt," he said. "As for mine, don't worry about it."

After some more talk Xue Ke went back to his room for supper. He thought to himself, "Xiuyan's living in the Jias' Garden as a dependent, and being a poor relation she must be having a thin time of it. As we travelled here together, I know her character and what she's like. Heaven



道的。可知天意不均：如夏金桂这种人，偏叫他有钱，娇养得这般泼辣；邢岫烟这种人，偏叫他这样受苦。阎王判命的时候，不知如何判法的？想到闷来，也想吟诗一首，写出来出出胸中的闷气，又苦自己没有工夫，只得混写道：

蛟龙失水似枯鱼，两地情怀感索居。

同在泥涂多受苦，不知何日向清虚！

写毕，看了一回，意欲拿来粘在壁上，又不好意思，自己沉吟道：“不要被人看见笑话。”又念了一遍，道：“管他呢！左右粘上自己看着解闷儿罢。”又看了一回，到底不好，拿来夹在书里。又想：“自己年纪可也不小了，家中又碰见这样飞灾横祸，不知何日了局。致使幽闺弱质，弄得这般凄凉寂寞！”

正在那里想时，只见宝蟾推进门来，拿着一个盒子，笑嘻嘻放在桌上。薛蝌站起来让坐。宝蟾笑着向薛蝌道：“这是四碟果子，一小壶儿酒：大奶奶叫给二爷送来的。”薛蝌陪笑道：“大奶奶费心！但是叫小丫头们送来就完了，怎么又劳动姐姐呢？”宝蟾道：“好说。自家人，二爷何必说这些套话？再者，我们大爷这件事，实在叫二爷操心，大奶奶久已要亲自弄点什么儿谢二爷，又怕别人多心。二爷是知道的，咱们家里都是言合意不合，送点子东西没要紧，倒没的惹人七嘴八舌的讲究。所以今儿些微的弄了一两样果子，一壶酒，叫我亲自悄悄儿的送来。”说着，又笑瞅了薛蝌一眼，道：“明儿二爷再别说这些话，叫人听着怪不好意思的。我们不过也是底下的人；伏侍的着大爷，就伏侍的着二爷，这有何妨呢？”



is really unjust, giving a spoilt bitch like Xia Jingui money while a girl like Xiuyan is so badly off. How does the King of Hell decide these things, I wonder?"

He wanted to write a poem to vent his frustration, but as he had no training in versification he could only pen the following doggerel:

A dragon stranded, a fish high and dry;
Apart we think of each other, you and I.
In mud and slime our bitter days are passed;
When will we find clear water at long last?

This written, he read it through and was tempted to paste it on the wall but diffidently told himself, "I don't want people seeing it to laugh at me." After a second reading he thought, "Never mind! I may as well paste it up for my own amusement." Reading it once more, however, he decided it really was no good and put it between the pages of a book.

"I'm no longer a boy," he mused, "but now our family's run into this bad trouble and there's no knowing when it will blow over. It's keeping that sweet, gentle girl so sad and lonely!"

His reflections were cut short by the arrival of Baochan with a hamper which she put on the table, smiling. Xue Ke got up and invited her to be seated.

"Here are four dishes of sweetmeats and one small pot of wine," she announced archly. "My mistress told me to bring them to you."

"Please thank my sister-in-law. But why didn't she send a young maid instead of troubling you?"

"That's all right. We're one family, so why stand on ceremony? Besides, you've put yourself out so much over Master Pan's business, our mistress has long been wanting to show her appreciation, but she was afraid people might suspect her motives. You know how it is in our family — all sweet talk hiding inward disagreement. It shouldn't matter sending you a small present, but it might give rise to a whole lot of gossip. So today she simply prepared a couple of dishes and a pot of wine and told me to bring them to you secretly." She glanced at him with a meaningful smile and added. "You mustn't talk in that formal way again, sir, or you'll embarrass me. I'm only a servant. If I can wait on Master Pan, what's to stop me from waiting on you, sir?"

薛蝌一则秉性忠厚，二则到底年轻，只是向来不见金桂和宝蟾如此相待，心中想到刚才宝蟾说为薛蟠之事，也是情理，因说道：“果子留下罢，这个酒儿，姐姐只管拿回去。我向来的酒上实在很有限，挤住了，偶然喝一钟；平白无事，是不能喝的。难道大奶奶和姐姐还不知道么？”宝蟾道：“别的我作得主，独这一件事，我可不敢应。大奶奶的脾气儿，二爷是知道的：我拿回去，不说二爷不喝，倒要说我不尽心了。”薛蝌没法，只得留下。宝蟾方才要走，又到门口往外看看，回过头来向着薛蝌一笑；又用手指着里面说道：“他还只怕要来亲自给你道乏呢。”薛蝌不知何意，反倒讪讪的起来，因说道：“姐姐替我谢大奶奶罢。天气寒，看凉着。再着，自己叔嫂也不必拘这些个礼。”宝蟾也不答言，笑着走了。

薛蝌始而以为金桂为薛蟠之事，或者真是不过意，备此酒果给自己道乏，也是有的。及见了宝蟾这种鬼鬼祟祟、不尴不尬的光景，也觉了几分，却自己回心一想：“他到底是嫂子的名分，那里就有别的讲究了呢？或者宝蟾不老成，自己不好意思怎么着，却指着金桂的名儿，也未可知。然而到底是哥哥的屋里人，也不好……”忽又一转念：“那金桂素性为人，毫无闺阁理法，况且有时高兴，打扮的妖调非常，自以为美，又怎么不是怀着坏心呢？不然，就是他和琴妹妹也有了什么不对的地方儿，所以设下这个毒法儿，要把我拉在浑水里，弄一个不清不白的名儿，也未可知。”想到这里，索性倒怕起来了。正在不得主意的时候，忽听窗外“噗哧”的笑了一声，把薛蝌倒唬了一跳。未知是谁，下回分解。





Xue Ke was a simple, honest young fellow. He had never been treated like this by Jingui and Baochan before; yet as the latter said it was to thank him for helping Xue Pan, this seemed to him quite natural.

"Leave the dishes, sister," he said. "But please take back the wine. I really can't drink much, just a cup occasionally when I'm forced to, but ordinarily I never drink. Surely your mistress and you knew that?"

"I can use my own discretion in other matters," she replied, "but I can't obey you in this. You know what our mistress is like. If I took it back, she wouldn't think it's because you don't drink but because I'd been remiss."

So Xue Ke had to let her leave the wine. Then Baochan went to the door and peeped outside. Turning back to smile at him, she pointed towards the inner rooms.

"I dare say she'll be coming herself to thank you," she said.

Not knowing what she meant, he felt rather put out.

"Please thank her for me, sister," he rejoined. "I don't want her to catch a chill in this cold weather. Besides, as we're relatives there's no need to be so polite."

Baochan made no answer to this but went away smiling.

At first Xue Ke had believed that Jingui had sent him these things out of gratitude for his services to Xue Pan. But Baochan's secretive ways and meaning glances made him afraid there was more to it than that.

"But what other designs could she have on me?" he wondered. "After all, she's my sister-in-law. Maybe this hussy Baochan, not liking to make advances herself, is using Jingui's name. Still, she's Cousin Pan's concubine too, so how could she...." Then it occurred to him, "Jingui has never shown the least sense of propriety. When the fancy takes her she gets herself up like a vamp, preening herself on her beauty; so for all I know she *may* have designs on me. Or maybe, because she bears Sister Baoqin some grudge, she's playing this dirty trick to get me into hot water and give me a bad name — that's possible too."

The likelihood of this alarmed him, and he was in a quandary when he heard someone giggling outside his window. Xue Ke gave a start. But to know who it was you must read the following chapter.

第九十一回

纵淫心宝蟾工设计 布疑阵宝玉妄谈禅

话说薛蝌正在狐疑，忽听窗外一笑，唬了一跳，心中想道：“不是宝蟾，定是金桂。只不理他们，看他们有什么法儿！”听了半日，却又寂然无声。自己也不敢吃那酒果，掩上房门，刚要脱衣时，只听见窗纸上微微一响。薛蝌此时被宝蟾鬼混了一阵，心中七上八下，竟不知如何是好，听见窗纸微响，细看时又无动静，自己反倒疑心起来，掩了怀，坐在灯前，呆呆的细想；又把那果子拿了一块，翻来复去的细看。猛回头，看见窗上的纸湿了一块。走过来觑着眼看时，冷不防外面往里一吹，把薛蝌唬了一大跳，听得“吱吱”的笑声，薛蝌连忙把灯吹灭了，屏息而卧。只听外面一个人说道：“二爷为什么不喝酒吃果子，就睡了？”这句话仍是宝蟾的话音，薛蝌只不作声装睡。又隔了两句话时，听得外面似有恨声道：“天下那里有这样没造化的人！”薛蝌听了似是宝蟾，又似是金桂的语音，这才知道他们原来是这一番意思。翻来复去，直到五更后才睡着了。

刚到天明，早有人来扣门。薛蝌忙问：“是谁？”外面也不答应。薛蝌只得起来，开了门看时，却是宝蟾，拢着头发，掩着怀，穿了件片金边琵琶襟小紧身，上面系一条松花



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Chapter 91

Wanton Baochan Lays a Cunning Plot Baoyu Makes Extravagant Answers When Catechized

Xue Ke was in a quandary when giggling outside the window made him start. "That must be Baochan or Jingui," he thought. "I'll pay no attention and just see what they can do."

He listened for some time. When there was no further sound, not venturing to eat any sweetmeats or drink the wine, he bolted the door and set about undressing. Then the window paper rustled. By now he was so flustered by Baochan's tricks that he did not know what to do. He peered at the window but could see nothing stirring and suspected that he had been imagining things. Fastening his clothes again he sat down by the lamp to think hard, then picked up a sweetmeat and scrutinized it intently. Turning his head abruptly, he saw that a patch of the window paper was wet. He went over to have a look, and jumped for fright when suddenly someone outside blew into his face. This was followed by more giggling. Xue Ke hastily put out the lamp and, with bated breath, lay down.

"Why don't you have some wine and a snack before turning in, Master Ke?" called the person outside.

He recognized Baochan's voice but made no sound, pretending to be asleep.

"How on earth could anyone be such a fool!" someone sneered after another couple of minutes.

He could not tell whether this was said by Baochan or Jingui, but it convinced him that they were up to no good. He tossed and turned and did not fall asleep until after the fifth watch.

At daybreak, somebody knocked at his door.

"Who's there?" he called.

When there was no response, he had to get up and open the door. He found it was Baochan again, her hair dishevelled, her clothes loose. She





绿半新的汗巾，下面并无穿裙，正露着石榴红洒花夹裤，一双新绣红鞋。原来宝蟾尚未梳洗，恐怕人见，赶早来取

薛蝌见他这样打扮便走进来，心中又是一动，只得陪笑问道：“怎么这么早就起来了？”宝蟾把脸红着，并不答言，只管把果子折在一个碟子里，端着就走。薛蝌见他这般，知是昨晚的原故，心里想道：“这也罢了。倒是他们恼了，索性死了心，也省了来缠。”于是把心放下，叫人舀水洗脸，自己打算在家里静坐两天：一则养养神，二则出去怕人找他。

原来和薛蟠好的那些人，因见薛家无人，只有薛蝌办事，年纪又轻，便生出许多覬觐之心。也有想插在里头做跑腿儿的；也有能做状子、认得一两个书办、要给他上下打点的；甚至有叫他在内趁钱的；也有造作谣言恐吓的；种种不一。薛蝌见了这些人，远远的躲避，又不敢面辞，恐怕激出意外之变，只好藏在家中听候转详，不提。

且说金桂昨夜打发宝蟾送了些酒果去探探薛蝌的消息，宝蟾回来，将薛蝌的光景一一的说了。金桂见事有些不大投机，便怕白闹一场，反被宝蟾瞧不起；要把两三句话遮饰，改过口来，又撻不开这个人。心里倒没了主意，只是怔怔的坐着。

那知宝蟾也想薛蟠难以回家，正要寻个路头儿，因怕金桂拿他，所以不敢透漏。今见金桂所为，先已开了端了，他便乐得借风使船，先弄薛蝌到手，不怕金桂不依，所以用言挑拨。见薛蝌似非无情，又不甚兜揽，一时也不敢造次。后



had on a tight-fitting bodice with a gold border and rows of long buttons and loops in front, over which she had tied a none too new dark green sash. As she was not wearing a skirt, he could see her pomegranate-red trousers with floral designs and her new embroidered red slippers. She had evidently not yet made her toilet but come early to fetch the hamper to avoid being seen.

Her appearance in such a costume dismayed Xue Ke.

“You are up early,” he faltered, forcing a smile.

She blushed but did not answer, simply putting the sweetmeats back into the hamper, which she then took away. Supposing that she was vexed by his behaviour the previous night, he thought, “Just as well. If they’re annoyed, they’ll give up and leave me in peace.”

Feeling easier in his mind he called for water to wash in and decided to stay quietly at home for a couple of days, partly to rest, partly to avoid outside contacts. For Xue Pan’s old associates were trying to cash in on the situation, now that there was only young Xue Ke to manage the family’s affairs. Some officiously offered to run errands for him; others who could write legal complaints or knew a few clerks in government offices proffered their services to bribe the court; yet others urged him to appropriate family funds or tried to blackmail him. Each used a different approach. He steered clear of these hangers-on as far as he could, but dared not refuse them outright for fear of future trouble. So he felt constrained to lie low at home till orders came down from above. But no more of this.

Let us revert to Jingui, who had sent Baochan with refreshments to sound out Xue Ke. Baochan on her return reported in full what had happened. As the young man had not risen to the bait, Jingui feared Baochan might despise her for this fiasco and therefore tried to cover up, changing her tune. However, not wanting to relinquish Xue Ke, she sat there in silence wondering what to do.

Baochan did not expect Xue Pan back and was casting about for a lover, but had not disclosed this to Jingui for fear of the consequences. Now that her mistress had made the first move, she saw it as a good chance to pre-empt Xue Ke herself, for then Jingui could hardly raise any objection. That was why she had spoken provocatively to him. When he



来见薛蝌吹灯自睡，大觉扫兴，回来告诉金桂，看金桂有甚方法儿，再作道理。及见金桂怔怔的，似乎无技可施，他也只得陪金桂收拾睡了。夜里那里睡的着？翻来复去，想出一个法子来：不如明儿一早起来，先去取了家伙，却自己换上一两件颜色娇嫩的衣服，也不梳洗，越显出一番慵妆媚态来；只看薛蝌的神情，自己反倒装出恼意，索性不理他；那薛蝌若有悔心，自然移船就岸，不愁不先到手，——是这个主意。及至见了薛蝌，仍是昨晚光景，并无邪僻，自己只得以假为真，端了碟子回来；却故意留下酒壶，以为再来搭转之地。

只见金桂问道：“你拿东西去，有人碰见么？”宝蟾道：“没有。”金桂道：“二爷也没问你什么？”宝蟾道：“也没有。”金桂因一夜不曾睡，也想不出个法子来，只得回思道：“若作此事，别人可瞒，宝蟾如何能瞒？不如分惠于他，他自然没的说了。况我又不能自去，少不得要他作脚，索性和他商量个稳便主意。”因带笑说道：“你看二爷到底是怎么样的个人？”宝蟾道：“倒像是个糊涂人。”金桂听了笑道：“你怎么遭塌起爷们来了？”宝蟾也笑道：“他辜负奶奶的心，我就说得他！”金桂道：“他怎么辜负我的心？你倒得说说。”宝蟾道：“奶奶给他好东西吃，他倒不吃，这不是辜负奶奶的心么？”说着，把眼溜着金桂一笑。金桂道：“你别胡想！我给他送东西，为大爷的事不辞劳苦，我所以敬他；又怕人说瞎话，所

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seemed neither entirely unresponsive nor very forthcoming either, she had hesitated to do anything more rash. Later, when he blew out the light and lay down to sleep, she went back, very disappointed, to tell Jingui and see what she would do. Now that her mistress kept silent as if at a loss, she had to help her to bed and retire herself. But that night how could she sleep? She tossed and turned until she hit on a plan. She would get up first thing the next morning to fetch the hamper, alluringly dressed and with her hair uncombed to reveal her drowsy charms. While watching Xue Ke's reaction she would put on a show of anger and ignore him; but if he showed regret, naturally she would smooth his way and then she could get him first — she was sure of that. Such was her plan. However, when she tried to execute it, he behaved just as properly as the previous night. All she could do was act as if really affronted and take the dishes back. She deliberately left the wine-pot, though, to provide an excuse for returning.

Jingui asked her, "Did anyone see you fetch those things?"

"No, madam."

"Did Master Ke ask you anything?"

"No."

Since Jingui had lain awake all night unable to think of a plan she now decided, "If I go ahead with this affair, I may be able to keep it a secret from others, but how can I hide it from her? I'd better go shares with her, to keep her quiet. Besides, I can't seek out Xue Ke myself, I'll need her as go-between. So I may as well work out a sound plan with her."

She therefore asked with a smile, "What is your honest opinion of Master Ke?"

"He strikes me as a fool."

Jingui laughed. "How can you run down a gentleman like that?"

"His ingratitude for your kindness gives me the right to, madam," Baochan sniggered.

"His ingratitude? What do you mean?"

"You sent him goodies but he didn't eat them. Wasn't that ungrateful?" She winked with a knowing smile.

"Don't go imagining things," scolded Jingui. "I sent him those things to express my appreciation for all he's done for the master. And I asked if anyone saw you because I was afraid there might be talk. So I don't



以问你。你这些话和我说，我不懂是什么意思。”宝蟾笑道：“奶奶别多心。我是跟奶奶的，还有两个心么？但是事情要密些，倘或声张起来，不是玩的。”

金桂也觉得脸飞红了，因说道：“你这个丫头，就不是个好货！想来你心里看上了，却拿我作筏子，是不是呢？”宝蟾道：“只是奶奶那么想罢咧，我倒是替奶奶难受。奶奶要真瞧二爷好，我倒有个主意。奶奶想，‘那个耗子不偷油’呢？他也不过怕事情不密，大家闹出乱子来不好看。依我想：奶奶且别性急，时常在他身上不周不备的去处，张罗张罗。他是个小叔子，又没娶媳妇儿，奶奶就多尽点心儿，和他贴个好儿，别人也说不出什么来。过几天，他感奶奶的情，他自然要谢候奶奶。那时奶奶再备点东西儿在咱们屋里，我帮着奶奶灌醉了他，还怕他跑了吗？他要不应，咱们索性闹起来，就说他调戏奶奶。他害怕，自然得顺着咱们的手儿。他再不应，他也不是人，咱们也不至白丢了脸：奶奶想怎么样？”金桂听了这话，两颧早已红晕了，笑骂道：“小蹄子，你倒像偷过多少汉子似的！怪不得大爷在家时，离不开你！”宝蟾把嘴一撇，笑说道：“罢哟！人家倒替奶奶拉缰，奶奶倒和我们说这个话咧！”从此，金桂一心笼络薛蝌，倒无心混闹了，家中也少觉安静。

当日宝蟾自去取了酒壶，仍是稳稳重重，一脸的正气。薛蝌偷眼看了，反倒后悔，疑心“或者是自己错想了他们，也未可知。果然如此，倒辜负了他这一番美意，保不住日后倒要和自己也闹起来，岂非自惹的呢？”过了两天，甚觉安静。薛蝌遇见宝蟾，宝蟾便低头走了，连眼皮儿也不抬；遇见金桂，金桂却一盆火儿的赶着。薛蝌见这般光景，反倒过意不去。这且不表。



understand what you mean, speaking like that.”

“Don’t get me wrong, madam,” said Baochan with a smile. “I’m your maid; how could I be disloyal to you? But you must keep this secret. If word got out, it would be no joke.”

“You dirty-minded creature!” Jingui flushed. “I suppose you’ve taken a fancy to him, but want to use me as your go-between, is that it?”

“Think whatever you want, madam, but I honestly feel for you. And if you really like him, I have a plan. Just think, what rat won’t steal oil? All he’s afraid of is the trouble there’d be if the secret got out, making him lose face. Take my advice, madam, and don’t be impatient but do him certain favours from time to time. He’s Master Pan’s younger cousin and not yet married. If you show more concern and are friendly with him, how can anyone find fault? Before long, he’ll naturally want to thank you. Then you can prepare some refreshments in our room, and when I’ve helped you to get him drunk, how can he run away. If he refuses, we’ll make a scene and accuse him of trying to seduce you. Then of course, out of fright, he’ll have to do as we want. If he still refuses, we can discredit him without spoiling our own reputation. What do you think of this, madam?”

Jingui, blushing crimson, cursed her laughingly, “Little bitch! You seem an old hand at seduction! No wonder Master Pan, when he was home, couldn’t bear to leave your side.”

Baochan pouted then giggled, “Here I am trying to help you, yet you call me such names!”

After that, Jingui was so intent on inveigling Xue Ke that she lost interest in making scenes, and there was more peace in the household.

That day when Baochan went back to fetch the wine-pot, she acted most demurely and decorously. Stealing a glance at her, Xue Ke regretted his suspicions and wondered, “Could I, perhaps, have misjudged them? If so, that was a poor return for their kindness, and I’ve only myself to blame if they turn against me in future.”

A couple of days passed very peacefully. Whenever Xue Ke met Baochan, she would walk past with lowered head, not even lifting her eyes. When he met Jingui, she would greet him very warmly. This made the young man feel rather ashamed of himself. But enough of this.

且说宝钗母女觉得金桂几天安静，待人忽然亲热起来，一家子都为罕事。薛姨妈十分欢喜，想到“必是薛蟠娶这媳妇时冲犯了什么，才败坏了这几年。目今闹出这样事来，亏得家里有钱，贾府出力，方才有了指望。媳妇忽然安静起来，或者是蟠儿转过运气来，也未可知。”于是自己心里倒以为希有之奇。这日饭后，扶了同贵过来，到金桂房里瞧瞧。走到院中，只听一个男人和金桂说话。同贵知机，便说道：“大奶奶，老太太过来了。”说着，已到门口，只见一个人影儿在房门后一躲。薛姨妈一吓，倒退了出来。

金桂道：“太太请里头坐，没有外人。他就是我的过继兄弟，本住在屯里，不惯见人。因没有见过太太，今儿才来，还没去请太太的安。”薛姨妈道：“既是舅爷，不妨见见。”金桂叫兄弟出来见了薛姨妈，作了个揖，问了好。薛姨妈也问了好，坐下叙起话来。薛姨妈道：“舅爷上京儿时了？”那夏三道：“前月我妈没有人管家，把我过继来的。前日才进京，今日来瞧姐姐。”薛姨妈看那人不尴尬，于是略坐坐儿，便起身道：“舅爷坐着罢。”回头向金桂道：“舅爷头上未下的来，留在咱们这里吃了饭再去罢。”金桂答应着，薛姨妈自去了。

金桂见婆婆去了，便向夏三道：“你坐着罢。今日可是过了明路的了，省了我们二爷查考。我今日还要叫你买些东西，只别叫别人看见。”夏三道：“这个交给我就完了。你要



Baochai and her mother, for their part, were most astonished by Jingui's new sedateness and sudden cordiality to others. Aunt Xue thought happily, "When Pan married her, they must have transgressed somehow, which brought on all the trouble we've had these years. Now he's in a bad way but luckily we have money and, with the Jia family helping, there's still some hope. His wife's sudden change for the better may mean that his luck will change too."

Considering this, indeed, quite a miracle, one day after lunch, leaning on Tonggui's arm, she went to call on Jingui. When they entered the courtyard they heard her talking with a man.

Tonggui was smart enough to call out, "Madam, here's the old lady to see you!"

By now they had reached the door. The sight of a figure flitting behind it made Aunt Xue step back in alarm.

"Please come in, madam!" called Jingui. "This is no stranger here but my stepbrother. He's a villager, unused to company. As he has never called on you yet, he came today meaning to pay his respects."

"If it's your brother," said Aunt Xue, "ask him to join us."

Jingui told the young man, whose name was Xia San, to come out to meet her mother-in-law, and he raised clasped hands to greet her. She returned his greetings and they sat down to talk.

"How long have you been in the capital?" asked Aunt Xue.

"My stepmother adopted me a couple of months ago, as she had no man in the house to see to things. I only came to the capital the day before yesterday; so I called on my sister today."

As he looked rather embarrassed, after sitting there for a while Aunt Xue got up. "Do stay longer," she urged, then turned to tell Jingui, "since this is your brother's first visit here, you must keep him for a meal."

Jingui assented to this and Aunt Xue left.

As soon as she had gone Jingui told Xia San, "Sit down. Now we're above-board, so Master Ke won't have to pry into our affairs. I want you to buy something for me today, but don't let anyone see it."

"Just leave it to me. Provided you have the money, I can get whatever you want."



什么，只要有钱，我就买的了来。”金桂道：“且别说嘴。等你买上了当，我可不收。”说着，二人又嘲谑了一回，然后金桂陪着夏三吃了晚饭，又告诉他买的东西，又嘱咐一回，夏三自去。

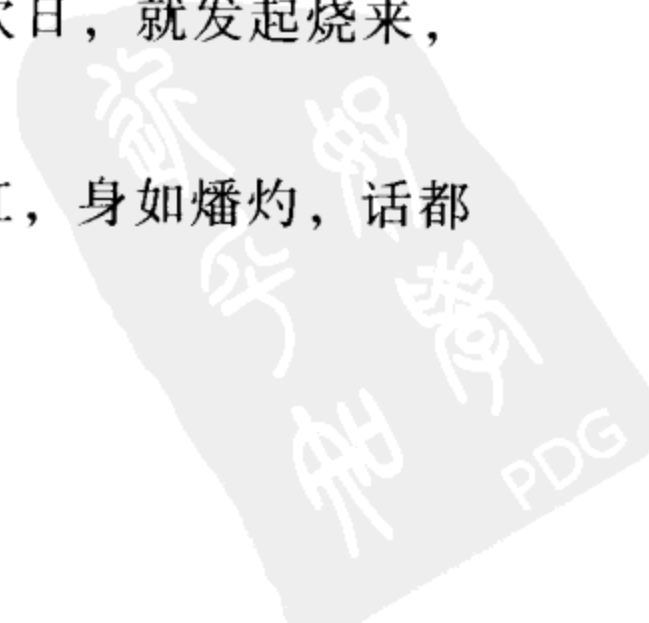
从此夏三往来不绝。虽有个年老的门上人，知是舅爷，也不常回。从此生出无限风波来。这是后话不表。

一日，薛蟠有信寄回，薛姨妈打开叫宝钗看时，上写：

男在县里也不受苦，母亲放心。但昨日县里书办说，府里已经准详，想是我们的情到了。岂知府里详上去，道里反驳下来了。亏得县里主文相公好，即刻做了回文顶上去了，那道里却把知县申饬。现在道里要亲提，若一上去，又要吃苦。必是道里没有托到。母亲见字，快快托人求道爷去！还叫兄弟快来！不然，就要解道。银子短不得！火速，火速！

薛姨妈听了，又哭了一场。宝钗和薛蝌一面劝慰，一面说道：“事不宜迟！”薛姨妈没法，只得叫薛蝌到那里去照料，命人即忙收拾行李，兑了银子，同着当铺中一个伙计，连夜起程。那时手忙脚乱，虽有下人办理，宝钗怕他们想不到，亲来帮着收拾，直闹至四更才歇。到底富家女子娇养惯了的，心上又急，又劳苦了一夜，到了次日，就发起烧来，汤水都吃不下去。莺儿忙回了薛姨妈。

薛姨妈急来看时，只见宝钗满面通红，身如燔灼，话都





“Don’t boast! If you get overcharged I’m not having it.”

When they had exchanged some more banter, Jingui kept Xia San to dinner, then gave him her commission and some instructions, after which he left.

Subsequently, Xia San was a frequent visitor. And the old gatekeeper, having heard that this was Jingui’s brother, usually neglected to report his arrival. This led to endless trouble later on, but we need not go into that now.

One day a letter arrived from Xue Pan. His mother opened it and told Baochai to read it. He had written:

. . . I am doing all right in the county jail, so mother needn’t worry. Yesterday a clerk in the county yamen told me that though the prefectural court has approved our plea — I suppose you must have squared them — the provincial court has rejected it. The chief secretary in the county was decent enough to write at once requesting a remission; but the provincial governor has reprimanded the county magistrate. Now the governor wants to try the case himself, and if that happens I’ll be for it again. You can’t have bought over the provincial court. So as soon as you get this, mother, ask someone to put in a word at once with the governor; and get Xue Ke to come quickly. Otherwise I shall be transferred to the provincial court. Don’t stint silver! This is desperately urgent!

This reduced Aunt Xue once more to tears. Baochai and Xue Ke while consoling her warned:

“There’s no time to be lost!”

She had to send Xue Ke to smooth matters over with the county court. Servants were ordered to pack his luggage and weigh out silver at once so that he could set out that same night, as Li Xiang was already in the county, one of the pawnshop assistants was sent to accompany Xue Ke there. In the bustle and confusion, Baochai helped with the packing herself in case the domestics should overlook anything, not lying down to rest till nearly dawn. Being a cosseted girl from a wealthy family, the anxiety on top of her night-long exertions brought on a fever, she was unable to eat or even drink water. Yinger hastily reported this to her mother.

Hurrying to Baochai’s side, Aunt Xue found her fearfully flushed,



不说。薛姨妈慌了手脚，便哭得死去活来。宝琴扶着劝解。秋菱见了，也泪如泉涌，只管在旁哭叫。宝钗不能说话，连手也不能摇动，眼干鼻塞。叫人请医调治，渐渐苏醒回来，薛姨妈等大家略略放心。早惊动荣宁两府的人。先是凤姐打发人送十香返魂丹来，随后王夫人又送至宝丹来，贾母邢王二夫人以及尤氏等都打发丫头来问候，却都不叫宝玉知道。一连治了七八天，终不见效。还是他自己想起“冷香丸”，吃了三丸，才得病好。后来宝玉也知道了，因病好，没有瞧去。

那时薛蝌又有信回来。薛姨妈看了，怕宝钗耽忧，也不叫他知道，自己来求王夫人，并述了一会子宝钗的病。薛姨妈去后，王夫人又求贾政。贾政道：“此事上头可托，底下难托，必须打点才好。”王夫人又提起宝钗的事来，因说道：“这孩子也苦了。既是我家的人了，也该早些娶了过来才是，别叫他遭塌坏了身子。”贾政道：“我也是这么想。但是他家忙乱，况且如今到了冬底，已经年近岁逼，无不各自要料理些家务。今冬且放了定，明春再过礼。过了老太太的生日，就定日子娶。你把这番话先告诉薛姨太太。”王夫人答应了。

到了次日，王夫人将贾政的话向薛姨妈说了，薛姨妈想着也是。到了饭后，王夫人陪着来到贾母房中，大家让了坐。贾母道：“姨太太才过来？”薛姨妈道：“还是昨儿过来的，因为晚了，没得过来给老太太请安。”王夫人便把贾政



burning with fever and unable to speak. She lost her head then and wept till she nearly fainted away. Baoqin supported her and tried to console her while Xiangling's tears flowed like a fountain too as she called Baochai's name to awaken her. For she was speechless, as if paralysed, her eyes sunken, her nose blocked. Doctors were called in to attend her and gradually, to their great relief, she recovered consciousness.

This news had alarmed both the Ning and the Rong Mansions. First Xifeng sent over a maid with some Ten-Spices Restorative Pills; then Lady Wang sent some Wonder-Working Powder. The old lady, Lady Xing, Lady Wang and Madam You all sent maids to ask after Baochai; but none of them let Baoyu know of this. For seven or eight days she took medicine with very little effect, until bethinking herself of her Cool Fragrance Pills she took three of these and finally recovered. When some time later Baoyu heard of her illness, as she was already better he did not call to see her.

And now a letter came from Xue Ke which Aunt Xue had read to her. Instead of telling Baochai, for fear of worrying her, she went to enlist Lady Wang's help, then described her daughter's illness. After she had gone, Lady Wang passed on her request to her husband.

"We can ask the ministry to help, but not the provincial authorities," said Jia Zheng. "The only way is to spend money."

"That child Baochai is having a hard time," continued Lady Wang. "As she's betrothed to our family, I think we should fix up the wedding soon, before she ruins her health."

"I agree," he replied. "But her family's in too much of a commotion now; and as winter is nearly over, with the New Year in the offing, we have a good many affairs to attend to ourselves. Suppose we send the betrothal gifts this winter and the wedding gifts next spring — fix the date for the wedding after the old lady's birthday. You can tell Aunt Xue this first."

The next day, Lady Wang let her sister know this proposal, and Aunt Xue agreed to it. After lunch, the two of them called on the Lady Dowager. When they had taken seats she asked Aunt Xue:

"Have you just come over?"

"Actually I came yesterday," replied Aunt Xue. "But it was too late

昨夜所说的话向贾母述了一遍，贾母甚喜。

说着，宝玉进来了，贾母便问道：“吃了饭了没有？”宝玉道：“才打学房里回来，吃了，要往学房里去，先见见老太太。又听见说姨妈来了，过来给姨妈请请安。”因问：“宝姐姐大好了？”薛姨妈笑道：“好了。”

原来方才大家正说着，见宝玉进来，都掩住了。宝玉坐了坐，见薛姨妈神情不似从前亲热，“虽是此刻没有心情，也不犯大家都不言语……”满腹猜疑，自往学中去了。晚上回来，都见过了，便往潇湘馆来。掀帘进去，紫鹃接着。见里间屋内无人。宝玉道：“姑娘那里去了？”紫鹃道：“上屋里去了。听见说姨太太过来，姑娘请安去了。二爷没有到上屋里去么？”宝玉道：“我去了来的，没有见你们姑娘。”紫鹃道：“没在那里吗？”宝玉道：“没有。到底那里去了？”紫鹃道：“这就不定了。”

宝玉刚要出来，只见黛玉带着雪雁，冉冉而来。宝玉道：“妹妹回来了。”缩身退步，仍跟黛玉回来。黛玉进来，走入里间屋内，便请宝玉里头坐，——紫鹃拿了一件外罩换上，——然后坐下，问道：“你上去，看见姨妈了没有？”宝玉道：“见过了。”黛玉道：“姨妈说起我来没有？”宝玉道：“不但没说你，连见了我也不像先时亲热。我问起宝姐姐的病来，他不过笑了一笑，并不答言。难道怪我这两天没去瞧他么？”黛玉笑了一笑，道：“你去瞧过没有？”宝玉道：“头几天



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then to pay my respects.”

Then Lady Wang repeated her husband’s proposal, and the old lady thoroughly approved. As Baoyu happened to come in just then, she asked him whether he had had his lunch.

“I had it as soon as I got back just now,” he said. “As I’m off to school again now, I wanted to call on you first. Besides, hearing that aunty was here, I wanted to pay my respects to her as well.” He asked Aunt Xue, “Is Cousin Baochai better?”

“Yes, she is,” was the answer.

As their conversation had stopped at his arrival, and as Aunt Xue seemed less cordial to him than before, Baoyu felt mystified.

“Even if she’s upset, why should they all keep so quiet?” he asked himself as he went back to school.

On his return that evening, having paid his respects to his elders, he went straight to Bamboo Lodge. But when he raised the portière and went in there was only Zijuan there — the inner room was empty.

“Where is your mistress?” he asked.

“With the old lady,” said Zijuan. “When she heard that Madam Xue had called, she went over to pay her respects. Didn’t you go too, Master Bao?”

“I did, but I didn’t see your young lady there.”

“She wasn’t there?”

“No. Where else could she have gone?”

“That’s hard to say.”

He was on the point of leaving when Daiyu returned with Xueyan.

“So you’re back, cousin!” He turned to follow her in.

Daiyu invited him into the inner room and, when Zijuan had brought her a housecoat into which to change, she sat down.

“Did you see aunty?” she asked.

“Yes, I did.”

“Did she mention me?”

“No. And not only that, she didn’t treat me as warmly as she used to. When I asked after Baochai’s illness, she simply smiled and said nothing. Could she be annoyed because recently I haven’t called to see her?”

Daiyu smiled. “You haven’t been?”





不知道；这两天知道了，也没去。”黛玉道：“可不是呢！”宝玉道：“当真的，老太太不叫我去，太太也不叫去，老爷又不叫去，我如何敢去？要像从前这小门儿通的时候儿，我一天瞧他十趟也不难，如今把门堵了，要打前头过去，自然不便了。”黛玉道：“他那里知道这个原故！”宝玉道：“宝姐姐为人是最体谅我的。”黛玉道：“你不要自己打错了主意。若论宝姐姐，更不体谅，——又不是姨妈病，是宝姐姐病：向来在园中做诗，赏花，饮酒，何等热闹，如今隔开了，你看见他家里有事了，他病到那步田地，你像没事人一般，他怎么不恼呢？”宝玉道：“这样，难道宝姐姐便不和我好了不成？”黛玉道：“他和你好不好，我却不知，我也不过是照理而论。”

宝玉听了，瞪着眼呆了半晌。黛玉看见宝玉这样光景，也不睬他，只是自己叫人添了香，又翻出书来，看了一会。只见宝玉把眉一皱，把脚一跺，道：“我想这个人，生他做什么！天地间没有了我，倒也干净！”黛玉道：“原是有了我，便有了人；有了人，便有无数的烦恼生出来：恐怖，颠倒，梦想，更有许多缠碍。才刚我说的，都是玩话。你不过是看见姨妈没精打彩，如何便疑到宝姐姐身上去？姨妈过来原为他的官司事情，心绪不宁，那里还来应酬你？都是你自己心上胡思乱想，钻入魔道里去了。”宝玉豁然开朗，笑道：“很是，很是。你的性灵，比我竟强远了。怨不得前年我生气的





"I knew nothing about it at first. A couple of days ago I heard; but I didn't go."

"What do you expect then?"

"But, honestly," he protested, "the old lady, my mother and my father all told me not to. I could hardly defy them could I? If this were like the old days when we could slip through the small gate, I could easily call on her *ten* times a day; but now that gate's closed and going round from the front is inconvenient."

"I don't suppose that occurred to her," said Daiyu.

"But I've always found Baochai most understanding."

"Don't flatter yourself. She'd be the last one to excuse you. Especially as *she* was the invalid, not aunty. Think how jolly it used to be before, when we wrote poems, enjoyed the flowers and drank in the Garden together. Now she's cut off and her family's in trouble, yet when she falls so badly ill you behave as if nothing had happened! How could she help being annoyed?"

"Does that mean we won't be on speaking-terms any more?"

"How am I to know on what terms you'll be? I was iust talking about natural reactions."

Baoyu started thinking this over, glassy-eyed, whereupon Daiyu ignored him, just telling one of her maids to add a fresh slab of incense to the brazier while she picked up a book to read. After a while Baoyu frowned and stamped his foot.

"Why was I born?" he exclaimed. "The world would be a better place without me!"

She commented, "When 'I' exists, so do others; and where there are people you'll have no end of worries, fears, fancies and dreams, not to mention all sorts of entanglements. I was only joking just now. Simply seeing aunty in low spirits shouldn't make you start suspecting Baochai, should it? Aunty called, not to entertain you, but because that lawsuit is weighing on her mind. But by letting your fancy run away with you, you end up thinking the worst."

Baoyu laughed suddenly, as if seeing the light.

"Quite right, quite right," he cried. "You are much more perspicacious than I am. No wonder the other year when I was angry you put me



时候，你和我说过几句禅话，我实在对不上来。我虽丈六金身，还借你一茎所化。”

黛玉乘此机会，说道：“我便问你一句话，你如何回答？”宝玉盘着腿，合着手，闭着眼，撅着嘴，道：“讲来。”黛玉道：“宝姐姐和你好，你怎么样？宝姐姐不和你好，你怎么样？宝姐姐前儿和你好，如今不和你好，你怎么样？今儿和你好，后来不和你好，你怎么样？你和他好，他偏不和你好，你怎么样？你不和他好，他偏要和你好，你怎么样？”宝玉呆了半晌，忽然大笑道：“任凭弱水三千，我只取一瓢饮。”黛玉道：“瓢之漂水，奈何？”宝玉道：“非瓢漂水；水自流，瓢自漂耳。”黛玉道：“水止珠沉，奈何？”宝玉道：“禅心已作沾泥絮，莫向春风舞鹧鸪。”黛玉道：“禅门第一戒是不打诳语的。”宝玉道：“有如三宝。”

黛玉低头不语。只听见檐外老鸦“呱呱”的叫了几声，便飞向东南上去。宝玉道：“不知主何吉凶？”黛玉道：“‘人有吉凶事，不在鸟音中’。”忽见秋纹走来说道：“请二爷回去。老爷叫人到园里来问过，说：二爷打学里回来了没有？袭人姐姐只说：‘已经回来了。’快去罢。”吓的宝玉站起身来，往外忙走。黛玉也不敢相留。未知何事，下回分解。





through that Buddhist catechism, and I was stumped. If ever I become a real Buddha, I shall still need your guidance.”

She took this chance to sound him out. “Then let me ask you something, and see how you answer.”

Baoyu crossed his legs and folded his hands as if in prayer, his eyes closed, his face solemn.

“Go on,” he said.

“Suppose Cousin Baochai befriended you? Suppose she cold-shouldered you? Suppose she befriended you first but not later? Suppose she befriends you now but not in future? Suppose you befriend her but she cold-shoulders you? Suppose you cold-shoulder her but she befriends you? What would you do in all those different cases?”

Baoyu thought for a while, then burst out laughing.

“However much water there is in the stream, one gourdful will suffice me,” was his reply — indicating that, for him, she alone counted.

“What if your gourd is drifted off by the water?”

“No, the gourd is not drifted off by the water. The water flows where it wills and the gourd drifts of its own accord.”

“What if the stream runs dry and the pearl is lost?”

“My heart is a willow-catkin caught in the mud; how can it dance like a partridge in the spring wind?” he answered — affirming that he would be true to her.

“The first Buddhist commandment is not to lie,” she warned.

“The Buddhist Trinity will bear me witness!”

Daiyu lowered her head and was silent. Then, outside the eaves, they heard a crow caw before winging off southeast.

“Is that a good omen or a bad one?” wondered Baoyu.

““Good fortune or bad in the affairs of men does not depend on a bird’s cry,” she quoted.

They were interrupted by Qiuwen who came in to say, “Please go back, sir. His Lordship sent to ask whether you’re back from school, and Sister Xiren said you were. You’d better go quickly.”

Baoyu sprang up in alarm and hurried out, and Daiyu did not venture to detain him. To know what the upshot was, read the next chapter.

第九十二回

评女传巧姐慕贤良 玩母珠贾政参聚散

话说宝玉从潇湘馆出来，连忙问秋纹道：“老爷叫我作什么？”秋纹笑道：“没有叫。袭人姐姐叫我请二爷，我怕你不来，才哄你的。”宝玉听了，才把心放下，因说：“你们请我也罢了，何苦来唬我？”说着，回到怡红院内。袭人便问道：“你这好半天到那里去了？”宝玉道：“在林姑娘那边，说起姨妈家宝姐姐的事来，就坐住了。”袭人又问道：“说些什么？”宝玉将打禅语的话述了一遍。袭人道：“你们再没个计较。正经说些家常闲话儿，或讲究些诗句，也是好的，怎么又说到禅语上了？又不是和尚。”宝玉道：“你不知道，我们有我们的禅机，别人是插不下嘴去的。”袭人笑道：“你们参禅参翻了，又叫我们跟着打闷葫芦了。”宝玉道：“头里我也年纪小，他也孩子气，所以我说了不留神的话，他就恼了。如今我也留神，他也没有恼的了。只是他近来不常过来，我又念书，偶然到一处，好象生疏了似的。”袭人道：“原该这么着才是。都长了几岁年纪了，怎么好意思还像小孩子时候的样子？”





Chapter 92

Comments on the Lives of Worthy Women of Old Fill Qiaojie with Admiration Jia Zheng, Toying with a Mother Pearl, Discourses on the Rise and Fall of Great Houses

Baoyu, as soon as he had left Bamboo Lodge, asked Qiuwen, "What does my father want me for?"

"He doesn't want you," she chuckled. "Sister Xiren sent me to fetch you, and for fear you wouldn't come I made that up."

In relief he cried, "It's all very well to fetch me, but why give me such a fright?"

Back in Happy Red Court, Xiren wanted to know where he had been all this time.

"With Miss Lin. We got talking about Cousin Baochai; that's what kept me there so long."

"What were you discussing?"

He told her then about his catechism.

"You two have no sense," scolded Xiren. "It's all right to chat about family affairs or discuss certain lines of poetry; but why go in for Buddhist cant? It's not as if you were a monk."

"You don't understand. We have our own esoteric talk which no one else can join in."

"If your esoteric repartee leads to squabbles, we shall have to try to guess your riddles too," she answered teasingly.

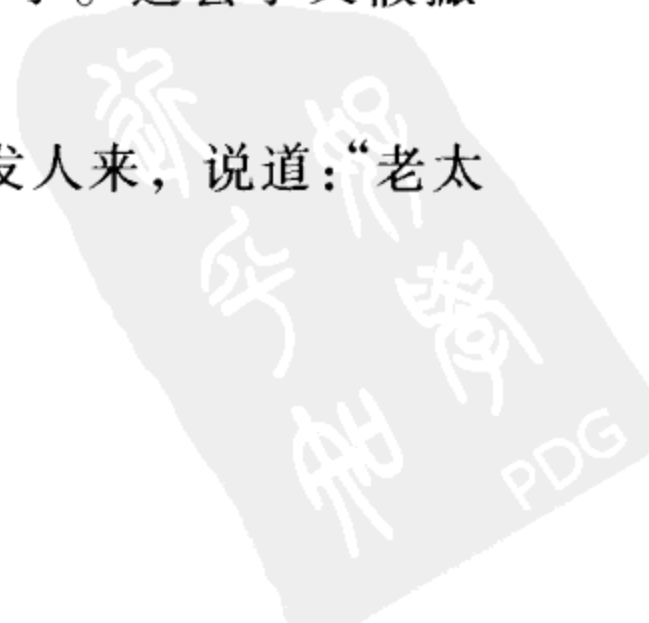
"In the past I was young and she was childish too, so if I spoke tactlessly she used to flare up. Now that I'm more careful she never takes offence. But recently she's stopped coming here so often, and I have to go to school. That's why, when we do happen to meet, we feel rather like strangers."

"That's how it should be," approved Xiren. "Now that you're both several years older, how can you go on behaving as if you were children?"



宝玉点头道：“我也知道。如今且不用说那个。我问你：老太太那里打发人来说什么来着没有？”袭人道：“没有说什么。”宝玉道：“必是老太太忘了。明儿不是十一月初一日么？年年老太太那里必是个老规矩，要办‘消寒会’，齐打伙儿坐下，喝酒说笑。我今日已经在学房里告了假了。这会子没有信儿，明儿可是去不去呢？若去了呢，白白的告了假；若不去，老爷知道了，又说我偷懒。”袭人道：“据我说，你竟是去的是，才念的好些儿了，又想歇着。我劝你也该上点紧儿了。昨儿听见太太说，兰哥儿念书真好，他打学房里回来，还各自念书作文章，天天晚上弄到四更多天才睡。你比他大多了，又是叔叔，倘或赶不上他，又叫老太太生气，倒不如明儿早起去罢。”麝月道：“这么冷天，已经告了假，又去，叫学房里说：既这么着，就不该告假呀。显见的是告谎假，脱滑儿。依我说，乐得歇一天。就是老太太忘记了，咱们这里就不消寒了么？咱们也闹个会儿，不好么？”袭人道：“都是你起头儿，二爷更不肯去了。”麝月道：“我也是乐一天是一天，比不得你要好名儿，使唤一个月，再多得二两银子。”袭人啐道：“小蹄子儿！人家说正经话，你又来胡拉混扯的了！”麝月道：“我倒不是混拉扯，我是为你。”袭人道：“为我什么？”麝月道：“二爷上学去了，你又该咕嘟着嘴想着，巴不得二爷早些儿回来，就有说有笑的了。这会子又假撇清，何苦呢！我都看见了！”

袭人正要骂他，只见老太太那里打发人来，说道：“老太





He nodded. "I know. Never mind about that now. Tell me: Has the old lady sent any message for me?"

"No, none."

"She must have forgotten. Tomorrow's the first of the eleventh month, isn't it? It used to be her rule every year to hold a 'cold-dispelling party' that day, getting everybody together to drink and have fun. Today I asked for leave from school. As no message has come, shall I go tomorrow or not? If I do, I'll have asked for leave all for nothing. If I don't, and my father knows, he'll call me an idler."

"I think you'd better go," she said. "You're just beginning to study seriously, yet here you are wanting to rest. My advice to you is to work harder. Yesterday I heard your mother praise Master Lan for really concentrating on his books. Every evening after he comes back from school, he reads and writes essays on his own, not sleeping till nearly dawn. You're much older than he is, and his uncle too. If you lag behind him the old lady will be angry. So you'd better go to school tomorrow morning."

Sheyue objected, "It's so cold, and he's already asked leave. If he goes, the tutor will want to know why he asked for leave in the first place. It'll look as if he fibbed so as to play truant. Let him have a day off, I say. Even if the old lady's forgotten, can't we have our own cold-dispelling party here? Wouldn't that be fun?"

"If you take that line," complained Xiren, "he'll be even less willing to go."

"Well, I like a day's fun whenever I can get it. How can I compare with you, working so hard to keep your good reputation for the sake of two extra ounces of silver a month?"

"Little bitch!" swore Xiren. "We were speaking seriously, but you go talking such nonsense."

"This isn't nonsense. It's you I'm thinking of."

"What do you mean?"

"If Master Bao goes to school, you'll wait glumly longing for his return to cheer us all up again. It's no use your playing the innocent. I know you!"

Before Xiren could answer back, one of the Lady Dowager's maids arrived.



太说了，叫二爷明儿不用上学去呢。明儿请了姨太太来给他解闷，只怕姑娘们都来家里的。史姑娘、邢姑娘、李姑娘们都请了，明儿来赴什么‘消寒会’呢。”宝玉没有听完，便喜欢道：“可不是？老太太最高兴的！明日不上学，是过了明路的了。”袭人也不便言语了。那丫头回去。

宝玉认真念了几天书，巴不得玩这一天，又听见薛姨妈过来，想着宝姐姐自然也来，心里喜欢，便说：“快睡罢，明日早些起来。”于是一夜无话。到了次日，果然一早到老太太那里请了安，又到贾政王夫人那里请了安，回明了老太太今儿不叫上学。贾政也没言语，便慢慢退出来。走了几步，便一溜烟跑到贾母房中。见众人都没来，只有凤姐那边的奶妈子，带了巧姐儿，跟着几个小丫头，过来给老太太请了安，说：“我妈妈先叫我来请安，陪着老太太说说话儿。妈妈回来就来。”贾母笑着道：“好孩子！我一早就起来了。等他们总不来，只有你二叔叔来了。”那奶妈子便说：“姑娘，给叔叔请安。”巧姐便请了安。宝玉也问了一声“姐姐好？”巧姐道：“昨夜听见我妈妈说，要请二叔叔去说话。”宝玉道：“说什么？”巧姐道：“我妈妈说，跟着李妈认了几年字，不知道





“The old lady says Master Bao needn’t go to school tomorrow,” she announced. “She has asked Aunt Xue to come over to help pass the time, and most likely all our young ladies will come too. Miss Xiangyun, Miss Xiuyan and Madam Zhu’s cousins have been invited as well to this ‘cold-dispelling party’”

Before she could finish Baoyu cried excitedly, “You see? The old lady always enjoyed this party. So it’s on the level, my cutting school tomorrow.”

Xiren could say nothing to this, and the maid went back.

After a spell of hard study Baoyu had been counting on having good fun the next day. And the news that Aunt Xue would be coming made him assume that Baochai would be present too.

He said cheerfully, “Let’s turn in now, so that we can get up early tomorrow morning.”

That night passed without incident.

The next day, sure enough, he went over early to pay his respects to the Lady Dowager and then to his parents. When he reported that his grandmother had exempted him from attending school today, Jia Zheng raised no objections, and Baoyu slowly withdrew. Once outside, he ran like the wind to the old lady’s quarters. None of the others had yet arrived except the nurse bringing Xifeng’s daughter Qiaojie, attended by several young maids.

Qiaojie paid her respects to the old lady then said, “Mama told me to come on ahead, to greet you and keep you company, great-grandmama. She’ll be coming presently.”

“Good child!” said the Lady Dowager with a fond smile. “I got up early and all this time I’ve been waiting, but so far only your Uncle Bao has come.”

“Pay your respects to your uncle, miss,” prompted the nurse.

Qiaojie curtseyed to Baoyu, who returned her greeting.

“Last night,” prattled Qiaojie, “I heard mama say she wants to invite you over for a talk, uncle.”

“To talk about what?”

“Mama says Nanny Li has been teaching me to read for several years, but she doubts if I really know many characters. I told her, ‘I can



我认得不认得。我说：‘都认得。我认给妈妈瞧。’妈妈说我瞎认，不信，说我一天尽子玩，那里认得！我瞧着那些字也不要紧，就是那《女孝经》也是容易念的。妈妈说我哄他，要请二叔叔得空儿的时候给我理理。”

贾母听了，笑道：“好孩子。你妈妈是不认得字的，所以说你哄他。明儿叫你二叔叔理给他瞧瞧，他就信了。”宝玉道：“你认了多少字了？”巧姐儿道：“认了三千多字。念了一本《女孝经》，半个月头里又上了《列女传》。”宝玉道：“你念了懂的吗？你要不懂，我倒是讲讲这个你听罢。”贾母道：“做叔叔的也该讲给侄女儿听听。”

宝玉便道：“那文王后妃不必说了。那姜后脱簪待罪和齐国的无盐安邦定国，是后妃里头的贤能的。”巧姐听了，答应个“是”。宝玉又道：“若说有才的，是曹大姑、班婕妤、蔡文姬、谢道韞诸人。”巧姐问道：“那贤德的呢？”宝玉道：“孟光的荆钗布裙，鲍宣妻的提瓮出汲，陶侃母的截发留宾：这些不厌贫的，就是贤德了。”巧姐欣然点头。宝玉道：“还有苦的，象那乐昌破镜，苏蕙回文。那孝的，木兰代父从军，曹娥投水寻尸等类，也难尽说。”巧姐听到这些，却默默若有所思。宝玉又讲那曹氏的引刀割鼻及那些守节的，巧姐听着更觉肃敬起来。

宝玉恐他不自在，又说：“那些艳的，如王嫱、西子、樊



read all right. Let me show you.' She thought I was making it up, though, and didn't believe me, saying I couldn't possibly have learned because I play around the whole day long. I told her I don't find learning characters hard. Even the *Book of Filial Women* is easy to read. But mama says I'm trying to fool her. She wants you to test me, uncle, when you have time."

"There's a good child!" exclaimed the old lady, laughing. "It's because your mother can't read that she thought you were fooling her. Get your uncle to test you tomorrow, and that'll convince her."

"How many characters do you know?" asked Baoyu.

"More than three thousand. I've read the *Book of Filial Women*, and a fortnight ago I started on the *Lives of Chaste Martyrs*."

"Can you understand them?" he asked. "If not, I can explain them to you."

"Yes, as her uncle you should do that for your niece," the old lady approved.

"We can pass over King Wen's queen," began Baoyu. "Other virtuous and able queens were Queen Jiang who took off her trinkets and blames herself for the king's indolence, and Queen Wuyan who was plain but able to pacify the state of Qi. As for talented women, there were Cao Dagu, Ban Jieyu, Cai Wenji and Xie Daoyun.

"Meng Guang who wore a thorn hairpin and cloth skirt; Bao Xuan's wife who fetched water herself with a pitcher; Tao Kan's mother who cut off her hair and sold it to buy wine to entertain a guest; and Ouyang Xiu's mother who used a grass stalk to write characters on the ground to teach her son to read and write, all could put up with poverty.

"There were others who had a hard time like Princess Lechang who kept a broken mirror and was finally reunited with her husband, and Su Hui who wove a brocade with a palindrome on it to send to her husband and moved him. While as for such dutiful daughters as Mulan who went to war in her father's place and Cao E who plunged into the river to recover her father's body, they are past counting.

"Then there were many chaste ladies such as Caoshi, who cut off her own nose rather than remarry; that's a story of the Wei State.

"There were such famous beauties as Wang Qiang, Xi Shi, Fan Su,



素、小蛮、绛仙、文君、红拂，都是女中的——”尚未说出，贾母见巧姐默然，便说：“够了，不用说了。讲的太多，他那里记得！”巧姐道：“二叔叔才说的，也有念过的，也有没念过的。念过的一讲我更知道好处了。”宝玉道：“那字是自然认得的，不用再理了。”巧姐道：“我还听见我妈妈说：我们家的小红，头里是二叔叔那里的，我妈妈要了来，还没有补上人呢。我妈妈想着要把什么柳家的五儿补上，不知二叔叔要不要。”

宝玉听了更喜欢，笑着道：“你听你妈妈的话！要补谁就补谁罢咧，又问什么要不要呢！”因又向贾母笑道：“我瞧大姐姐这个小模样儿，又有这个聪明儿，只怕将来比凤姐姐还强呢，又比他认的字。”贾母道：“女孩儿家认得字也好，只是女工针黹倒是要紧的。”巧姐儿道：“我也跟着刘妈妈学着做呢。什么扎花儿咧，拉锁子咧，我虽弄不好，却也学着会做几针儿。”贾母道：“咱们这样人家，固然不仗着自己做，但只到底知道些，日后才不受人家的拿捏。”巧姐答应着“是”，还要宝玉解说《列女传》，见宝玉呆呆的，也不好再问。

你道宝玉呆的是什么？只因柳五儿要进怡红院，头一次





Xiaoman and Jiang Xian. There were also jealous wives such as Ren Gui's wife who burned up two concubines' hair, and Liu Baiyu's wife who jumped into the Luo River and died after hearing him praise the charming Goddess of the River Luo. Of course Zhuo Wenjun and the girl with the red whisk¹ were known for their...."

"That's enough," put in the old lady. "No need to go on. If you list too many, how can she remember them all?"

"I've read about some of those Uncle Bao named, but not all of them," said Qiaojie. "What he says about those I've read about helps me understand them better."

"As you obviously know how to read, there's no need to test you on that," he observed. "Besides, I'll have to go to school myself tomorrow."

"I heard mama say too that our maid Hongyu used to work for you, Uncle Bao; and after mama took her she's never sent you another girl instead. Now mama wants to send you one called Wuer from the Liu family, but she doesn't know whether you'll have her or not."

"Just listen to her!" exclaimed Baoyu in delight. "Your mother can send anyone she likes. Why ask me if I'll have her?" He turned to say laughingly to his grandmother, "Judging by my niece's looks and intelligence, she should outdo even Cousin Xifeng in future. Especially as she can read as well."

"It's good when girls can read," agreed the old lady. "But needlework is more important for them."

"I'm learning that too from Nanny Liu," said Qiaojie. "Appliqué work, chain-stitch and so on. I'm not much good at it, but I'm learning some different stitches."

"In a family like ours," said the old lady, "of course we don't have to do such chores ourselves, but still it's best to know how to, so as not to have to depend on others in future."

"Yes, great-grandmama."

Qiaojie would have liked Baoyu to explain the *Lives of Chaste Martyrs* to her, but he looked so preoccupied that she refrained from making this request.

Do you know what was preoccupying Baoyu? It was the thought of



是他病了，不能进来；第二次王夫人撵了晴雯，大凡有些姿色的，都不敢挑；后来又在吴贵家看晴雯去，五儿跟着他妈给晴雯送东西去，见了一面，更觉娇娜妩媚。今日亏得凤姐想着，叫他补入小红的窝儿，竟是喜出望外了，所以呆呆的发呆。

贾母等着那些人，见这时候还不来，又叫丫头去请。回来李纨同着他妹子、探春、惜春、史湘云、黛玉都来了。大家请了贾母的安，众人厮见。独有薛姨妈未到，贾母又叫请去。果然薛姨妈带着宝琴过来。宝玉请了安，问了好，只不见宝钗邢岫烟二人。黛玉便问起：“宝姐姐为何不来？”薛姨妈假说身上不好。——邢岫烟知道薛姨妈在坐，所以不来。——宝玉虽见宝钗不来，心中纳闷，因黛玉来了，便把想宝钗的心暂且搁开。

不多时，邢王二夫人也来了。凤姐听见婆婆们先到了，自己不好落后，只得打发平儿先来告假，说是：“正要过来，因身上发热，过一回儿就来。”贾母道：“既是身上不好，不来也罢。咱们这时候很该吃饭了。”丫头们把火盆往后挪了一挪，就在贾母榻前一溜摆下两桌，大家序次坐下。吃了饭，依旧围炉闲谈，不须多赘。

且说凤姐因何不来？头里为着倒比邢王二夫人迟了不好意思，后来来旺家的来回说：“迎姑娘那里打发人来请奶奶安，还说并没有到上头，只到奶奶这里来。”凤姐听了纳

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Wuer. When first she was to have come to Happy Red Court, she had been prevented by illness; then when Lady Wang dismissed Qingwen, they dared not choose any maids who were good-looking. Later Baoyu had visited Qingwen in Wu Gui's house and seen Wuer and her mother take things to her, and on that occasion he had thought Wuer charming. How lucky that Xifeng had remembered her and was sending her to replace Hongyu! So the foolish youth lost himself in rapturous day-dreams.

The old lady, grown tired of waiting, now sent maids to fetch her other visitors and presently Li Wan and her girl cousins arrived, as well as Tanchun, Xichun, Xiangyun and Daiyu. Having paid their respects to the Lady Dowager they greeted each other. Only Aunt Xue was still missing. Maids were sent to invite her, and she brought Baoqin with her. Baoyu paid his respects to Aunt Xue and greeted Baoqin but looked in vain for Baochai and Xiuyan.

"Why hasn't Cousin Baochai come?" asked Daiyu.

Aunt Xue gave the excuse that she was unwell — and Xing Xiuyan had naturally not come because her future in-laws were present. Baoyu was disappointed by Baochai's absence, but as he had Daiyu's company he dismissed her from his mind.

Soon Lady Xing and Lady Wang arrived too. When Xifeng heard of this, as it would be remiss for her to lag behind Their Ladyships she sent Pinger to excuse her, saying that she had a temperature but would come a little later.

"If she's not well, she needn't come," said the old lady. "It's time now for our meal."

Maids moved back the brazier and set out two tables in front of the old lady's couch. This done, the party sat down in due order. After dinner, they chatted around the fire, but there is no need to record their conversation.

Now what had kept Xifeng away? In the beginning it was embarrassment at going later than Lady Xing and Lady Wang. And then Lai Wang's wife had arrived.

"Miss Yingchun has sent someone with her regards," she announced. "And the woman says she's not called on Their Ladyships but come



闷，不知又是什么事，便叫那人进来，问：“姑娘在家好？”那人道：“有什么好的！奴才并不是姑娘打发来的，实在是司棋的母亲央我来求奶奶的。”凤姐道：“司棋已经出去了，为什么来求我？”

那人道：“自从司棋出去，终日啼哭。忽然那一日，他表兄来了。他母亲见了，恨的什么儿似的，说他害了司棋，一把拉住要打。那小子不敢言语。谁知司棋听见了，急忙出来，老着脸，和他母亲说：‘我是为他出来的，我也恨他没良心。如今他来了，妈要打他，不如勒死了我罢！’他妈骂他：‘不害臊的东西！你心里要怎么样？’司棋说道：‘一个女人嫁一个男人。我一时失脚，上了他的当，我就是他的人，决不肯再跟着别人的。我只恨他为什么这么胆小！“一身作事一身当”，为什么逃了呢？就是他一辈子不来，我也一辈子不嫁人的。妈要给我配人，我原拼着一死。今儿他来了，妈问他怎么样。要是他不改心，我在妈跟前磕了头，只当是我死了，他到那里，我跟到那里，就是讨饭吃也是愿意的。’他妈气的了不得，便哭着骂着说：‘你是我的女儿，我偏不给他，你敢怎么着？’那知道司棋这东西糊涂，便一头撞在墙上，把脑袋撞破，鲜血流出，竟碰死了！他妈哭着，救不过来，便要叫那小子偿命。他表兄也奇，说道：‘你们不用着急。我在外头原发了财，因想着他才回来的，心也算是真了。你们要不信，只管瞧。’说着，打怀里掏出一匣子金珠首饰来。他妈妈看见了，心软了，说：‘你既有心，为什么总



straight here.”

Not knowing what to make of this, Xifeng called the messenger in.

“Is your mistress well?” she asked.

“No, it wasn’t Miss Yingchun who sent me,” was the answer. “The fact is, Siqi’s mother has begged me to come to ask you a favour, madam.”

“Siqi has already been dismissed, so what can I do to help?”

“After Siqi left here she kept weeping all day long. Then, the other day, that cousin of hers turned up. At sight of him, her mother was furious — she accused him of ruining her daughter’s life and grabbed hold of him to beat him. Not a word did the young fellow say in self-defence. Siqi hearing this came running out, bold as brass.

“‘It’s because of him that I was dismissed,’ she told her mother. ‘I hate him too for his heartlessness. If you want to beat him now that he’s come, you’d better strangle me first!’

“Her mother swore, ‘Shameless slut! What do you want to do?’”

“Siqi said, ‘A woman can only marry once. I slipped up and let him take advantage of me, so now I belong to him, and I’ll never, never marry anyone else. But what makes me angry is his lack of guts. A man should be responsible for his actions. Why run away? If he’d never shown up, I’d have stayed single all my life. If you’d tried to marry me to someone else, ma, I should have killed myself. Now that he’s here, ask him what his intentions are. If he hasn’t had a change of heart, I’ll kowtow farewell to you, ma, and you can count me as dead, for wherever he goes I’ll go too, content even if we have to beg for food.’

“Her mother wept with rage and swore, ‘You’re my daughter. I won’t let you marry him! How dare you defy me?’

“Then the silly girl smashed her head against the wall so that her brains spilled out, and she died in a pool of blood. Her mother wept, but as it was too late to save her she wanted her nephew to pay with his own life.

“That nephew of hers was an odd fellow too. He said, ‘Don’t worry. I’ve made some money outside, and I came back because of her — I was true to her. If you don’t believe me, look here.’ He took from his pocket a case of jewelry.

“Her mother relented then and asked, ‘If that was what you wanted,



不言语?’他外甥道：‘大凡女人都是水性扬花，我要说有钱，他就是贪图银钱了。如今，他这为人就是难得的。我把首饰给你们，我去买棺盛殓他。’那司棋的母亲接了东西，也不顾女孩儿了，由着外甥去。那里知道他外甥叫人抬了两口棺杖来。司棋的母亲看见，诧异说：‘怎么棺材要两口?’他外甥笑道：‘一口装不下，得两口才好。’司棋的母亲见他外甥又不哭，只当是他心疼的傻了。岂知他忙着把司棋收拾了，也不啼哭，眼错不见，把带的小刀子往脖子里一抹，也就抹死了。司棋的母亲懊悔起来，倒哭的了不得。如今坊里知道了，要报官。他急了，央我来求奶奶说个人情，他再过来给奶奶磕头。”

凤姐听了，诧异道：“那有这样傻丫头，偏偏的就碰见这个傻小子！怪不得那一天翻出那些东西来，他心里没事人似的。敢只是这么个烈性孩子！论起来我也没这么大工夫管他这些闲事，但只你才说的，叫人听着，怪可怜见儿的。也罢了，你回去告诉他，我和你二爷说，打发来旺给他撕掳就是了。”凤姐打发那人去了，才过贾母这边来，不提。

且说贾政这日正与詹光下大棋，通局的输赢也差不多，单为着一只角儿，死活未分，在那里打结。门上的小厮进来回道：“外面冯大爷要见老爷。”贾政说：“请进来。”小厮出去请了，冯紫英走进门来，贾政即忙迎着。冯紫英进来，在书

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why didn't you say so?"

"He told her, 'Most women are fickle. If I'd said I had money, it might have tempted her. Now I can see she was truly one in a thousand. I'll leave you these jewels and go and buy a coffin for her.'

"Siqi's mother took the jewels and let him go, not carrying on any more about her daughter. Who could have imagined, though, that he got people to carry back *two* coffins.

"What do you want two coffins for?" she asked.

"He said with a smile, 'One's not enough. We need two.'

"The fact that he wasn't weeping made her think he was stupefied with grief. But after laying Siqi in one coffin — without so much as a whimper — before anyone could see what he was doing he whipped out a small knife and cut his own throat! Siqi's mother sobbed bitterly then with remorse. And now the whole neighbourhood knows of this and they want to report it to the authorities. She's frantic, that's why she's sent me to beg you to help. She'll be coming later to kowtow her thanks."

"What a silly girl!" exclaimed Xifeng in amazement. "And up against such a simpleton too — it's too bad! No wonder she took it so calmly when they found those things during the search that day. I'd no idea she was such a strong character! Actually I've no time to mind other people's business, but what you've told me really makes my heart bleed. All right then, go and tell Siqi's mother that I'll get my husband to send Lai Wang to straighten things out for her."

Only when Xifeng had sent this woman away did she go over to the old lady's place.

To return to Jia Zheng. He was playing draughts one day with Zhan Guang, and both still had about the same number of pieces; but in one corner the issue was not yet decided and each was trying to enclose that sector.

A gateman came in to announce, "Mr. Feng is waiting outside to see you, sir."

"Show him in," ordered Jia Zheng.

The man withdrew to do so, and as Feng Ziyong entered Jia Zheng rose to welcome him. Having taken a seat in the study, Feng saw that



房中坐下，见是下棋，便道：“只管下棋，我来观局。”詹光笑道：“晚生的棋是不堪瞄的。”冯紫英道：“好说，请下罢。”贾政道：“有什么事么？”冯紫英道：“没有什么话。老伯只管下棋，我也学几着儿。”贾政向詹光道：“冯大爷是我们相好的，既没事，我们索性下完了这一局再说话儿。冯大爷在旁边瞧着。”冯紫英道：“下采不下采？”詹光道：“下采的。”冯紫英道：“下采的是不好多嘴的。”贾政道：“多嘴也不妨，横竖他输了十来两银子，终久是不拿出来的。往后只好罚他做东便了。”詹光笑道：“这倒使得。”冯紫英道：“老伯和詹公对下么？”贾政笑道：“从前对下，他输了；如今让他两个子儿，他又输了。时常还要悔几着。不叫他悔，他就急了。”詹光也笑道：“没有的事。”贾政道：“你试试瞧。”大家一面说笑，一面下完了，做起棋来，詹光还了棋头，输了七个子儿。冯紫英道：“这盘总吃亏在打结里头。老伯结少，就便宜了。”

贾政对冯紫英道：“有罪，有罪，咱们说话儿罢。”冯紫英道：“小侄与老伯久不见面。一来会会，二来因广西的同知进来引见，带了四种洋货，可以做得贡的。一件是围屏，有二十四扇榻子，都是紫檀雕刻的。中间虽说不是玉，却是绝





they had been playing draughts.

"Please go on with your game," he urged them. "I'd like to watch."

"My game isn't worth watching," said Zhan Guang with a smile.

"Don't be so modest," replied Feng. "Please carry on."

"Have you come on business?" Jia Zheng wanted to know.

"Nothing of any importance. Please go on with your game, uncle, and I can learn by watching."

Jia Zheng told Zhan, "Master Feng is a good friend of ours. As he's in no hurry, let's finish this game and then we can have a chat. You can watch from the side, Master Feng."

"Are you playing for stakes?"

"Yes, we are," said Zhan.

"In that case I mustn't interfere."

"It doesn't matter if you do," joked Jia Zheng. "He's lost over ten taels already, but he never pays up. I shall have to make him stand us a meal some day instead."

"That's all right," chuckled Zhan.

"Do you gentlemen both play from scratch?" asked Feng.

"We used to." Jia Zheng smiled. "But he kept losing. Now I'm handicapped by giving him two pieces at the start, yet he still loses. From time to time he revokes too, and if I challenge him he gets worked up."

"That's not true!" protested Zhan Guang laughingly.

"Just wait and see," said Jia Zheng.

They played as they chatted, and when the game was finished they counted their pieces. After deducting the one with which he had opened, Zhan had lost by seven pieces.

Feng remarked, "You lost out trying to enclose uncle's pieces. And so, being less vulnerable, he got the upper hand."

"Excuse us for ignoring you," Jia Zheng apologized. "Now we can talk."

"I haven't seen you for some time, uncle, so I called in the first place to pay my respects," said Feng. "Another reason is that the vice-prefect of Guangxi has come to the capital with four novelties from the south or overseas, all fit to present to the court. One is a carved ebony screen with twenty-four leaves. They're inlaid not with jade but with the finest



好的硝子石，石上镂出山水、人物、楼台、花鸟儿来。一扇上有五六十个人，都是宫妆的女子。名为‘汉宫春晓’。人的眉、目、口、鼻以及出手、衣褶，刻得又清楚，又细腻。点缀布置，都是好的。我想尊府大观园中正厅上恰好用的着。还有一架钟表，有三尺多高，也是一个童儿拿着时辰牌，到什么时候儿，就报什么时辰；里头还有消息人儿打十番儿。这是两件重笨的，却还没有拿来。现在我带在这里的两件，却倒有些意思儿。”就在身边拿出一个锦匣子来，用几重白绫裹着，揭开了绵子，第一层是一个玻璃盒子，里头金托子，大红绉绸托底，上放着一颗桂圆大的珠子，光华耀目。

冯紫英道：“据说这就叫做‘母珠’。”因叫：“拿一个盘儿来。”詹光即忙端过一个黑漆茶盘，道：“使得么？”冯紫英道：“使得。”便又向怀里掏出一个白绢包儿，将包儿里的珠子都倒在盘里散着，把那颗母珠搁在中间，将盘放于桌上。看见那些小珠子儿，滴溜滴溜都滚到大珠子身边，回来把这颗大珠子抬高了，别处的小珠子一颗也不剩，都粘在大珠上。詹光道：“这也奇！”贾政道：“这是有的，所以叫做‘母珠’，原是珠之母。”

那冯紫英又回头看着他跟来的小厮道：“那个匣子呢？”小厮赶忙捧过一个花梨木匣子来。大家打开看时，原来匣内衬着虎纹锦，锦上叠着一束蓝纱。詹光道：“这是什么东西？”冯紫英道：“这叫做‘蛟绡帐’。”在匣子里拿出来时，



marble carved with landscapes, figures, pavilions, flowers and birds. On each leaf are fifty to sixty girls in palace costume, so the screen is called 'Spring Dawn in the Han Palace.' All the girls' features, their hands and the draperies are most delicately carved. The embellishments and designs are excellent too. It seems to me just the thing for the main hall of your honourable Grand View Garden.

"Then there's a clock more than three feet high in the form of a boy holding a time-piece, which announces each hour in turn, while inside some clock-work figures play musical chimes. As both these are heavy objects, I didn't bring them. But the two things I have with me are quite intriguing too."

With that he produced a brocade box swathed in white silk floss and, having removed some padding, showed them a glass case in which was a gold stand mounted on red crepe. On the stand lay a dazzling bright pearl, as large as a dried longan.

"This is called a mother pearl," Feng told them, then asked for a plate.

Zhan Guang at once passed him a black lacquer tea-tray.

"Will this do?"

"Yes, that's fine."

Feng took a silk pouch from his pocket and emptied all the pearls in it on to the tray, then placed the mother pearl in the middle and set the tray on the table. At once, all the small pearls rolled over and over until they were close to the big one, propping it up, all without exception nestling against the big pearl.

"Fantastic!" exclaimed Zhan.

"I've heard of this," said Jia Zheng. "This is how it came by its name as the mother of pearls."

Now Feng turned to the page who had accompanied him.

"Where is that box?" he called.

The page at once brought over a rosewood box. When opened it disclosed, on a lining of striped silk, some folded blue gauze.

"What is this?" asked Zhan.

"A curtain of mermaid-gauze."

When Feng took it out of the box, the curtain — each fold less than



叠得长不满五寸，厚不上半寸。冯紫英一层一层的打开，打到十来层，已经桌上铺不下了。冯紫英道：“你看，里头还有两褶，必得高屋里去，才张得下。这就是鲛丝所织。暑热天气，张在堂屋里头，苍蝇蚊子，一个不能进来，又轻又亮。”贾政道：“不用全打开，怕叠起来倒费事。”詹光便与冯紫英一层一层折好收拾了。

冯紫英道：“这四件东西，价儿也不贵，两万银他就卖。母珠一万，鲛绡帐五千，‘汉宫春晓’与自鸣钟五千。”贾政道：“那里买的起！”冯紫英道：“你们是个国戚，难道宫里头用不着么？”贾政道：“用得着的很多，只是那里有这些银子？等我叫人拿进去给老太太瞧瞧。”冯紫英道：“很是。”

贾政便着人叫贾璉把这两件东西送到老太太那边去，并叫人请了邢王二夫人、凤姐儿都来瞧着，又把两件东西一一试过。贾璉道：“他还有两件：一件是围屏，一件是乐钟。共总要卖二万银子呢。”凤姐儿接着道：“东西自然是好的，但是那里有这些闲钱？咱们又不比外任督抚要办贡。我已经想了好些年了，像咱们这种人家，必得置些不动摇的根基才好：或是祭地，或是义庄，再置些坟屋。往后子孙遇见得意的事，还是点儿底子，不到一败涂地。我的意思是这样，不知老太太、老爷、太太们怎么样？若是外头老爷们要买只





five inches long — was less than half an inch thick. He unfolded it layer by layer. And by the time he had unfolded some ten layers, it was already too big for the table.

“See, there are two more folds,” he said. “It can only be hung in a room with a high ceiling. This is woven of mermaidsilk. In the heat of summer, hung in the hall, it will keep out all flies and mosquitoes. It is light and transparent too.”

“Don’t spread it all out,” interposed Jia Zheng, “or you’ll have trouble folding it up again.”

Then Zhan helped Feng refold the curtain.

“The price for these four things isn’t exorbitant,” Feng said. “He’s willing to sell them for twenty thousand taels: ten thousand for the mother pearl, five thousand for the curtain, and five thousand for the screen and the clock combined.”

“We can’t afford that!” exclaimed Jia Zheng.

“You are related to the Imperial House,” said Feng. “Couldn’t they use things of this sort in the Palace?”

“There are plenty of things they could use, but where is so much money to come from?” Jia Zheng retorted. “Wait, though, till I’ve sent these inside to show the old lady.”

“Certainly,” Feng agreed.

Jia Zheng ordered a servant to ask Jia Lian to take the pearl and curtain to the old lady; and Lady Xing, Lady Wang and Xifeng were invited over to see them. They examined each in turn.

“He has two other novelties: a screen and a musical clock,” Jia Lian informed them. “He’s asking twenty thousand taels for all four.”

“Of course they’re good,” said Xifeng. “But we haven’t so much spare money. And we’re not like those provincial governors who have to send tribute to court. In fact, for years I’ve been thinking that a family like ours should invest in some real estate — sacrificial land, manor houses or burial sites. Then in future, if things go badly for our descendants, they’ll have something to fall back on and won’t be bankrupted. This is my idea, but I don’t know whether the old lady and the masters and mistresses agree or not. If the gentlemen want to buy these — that’s up to them.”



管买。”贾母与众人都说：“这话说的倒也是。”贾琏道：“还了他罢。原是老爷叫我送给老太太瞧，为的是宫里好进；谁说买来搁在家里？老太太还没开口，你便说了一大堆丧气话。”说着，便把两件东西拿出去了，告诉贾政，只说：“老太太不要。”便与冯紫英道：“这两件东西，好可好，就只没银子。我替你留心，有要买的人我便送信给你去。”

冯紫英只得收拾好了，坐下说些闲话，没有兴头，就要起身。贾政道：“你在这里吃了晚饭去罢。”冯紫英道：“罢了，来了就叨搅老伯吗？”贾政道：“说那里的话！”正说着，人回：“大老爷来了。”贾赦早已进来。彼此相见，叙些寒温。

不一时，摆上酒来，肴馔罗列，大家喝着酒。至四五巡后，说起洋货的话。冯紫英道：“这种货本是难消的。除非要象尊府这样人家，还可消得，其余就难了。”贾政道：“这也不见得。”贾赦道：“我们家里也比不得从前了，这回儿也不过是个空门面。”

冯紫英又问：“东府珍大爷可好么？我前儿见他，说起家常话儿来，提到他令郎续娶的媳妇远不及头里那位秦氏奶奶了。如今后娶的到底是那一家的？我也没有问起。”贾政道：“我们这个侄孙媳妇儿也是这里大家，从前做过京畿道的胡老爷的女孩儿。”冯紫英道：“胡道长我是知道的。但是他家教上也不怎么样。——也罢了，只要姑娘好就好。”

贾琏道：“听得内阁里人说起，雨村又要升了。”贾政道：

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The old lady and the rest agreed with her.

“Then I’ll take them back,” said Jia Lian. “It was Lord Zheng who told me to bring these to show the old lady, thinking they could be presented to the Palace — no one spoke of buying them to keep ourselves. But before the old lady says a word you come out with all that ill-omened talk!”

He took the things away, simply telling Jia Zheng that the old lady did not want them.

Then Jia Zheng told Feng, “These are excellent things, but we haven’t got the money. I’ll keep my eyes open, though, and if I find someone who wants them I’ll let you know.”

Feng had to put pearl and curtain away and sit down again to make polite conversation, but feeling disheartened he soon rose to take his leave.

“Do stay and have dinner with us,” urged Jia Zheng.

“I don’t want to put you to too much trouble, uncle.”

“It’s no trouble at all.”

Just at this point, a servant announced Lord She even as he walked in, and there was the usual exchange of civilities.

Presently wine and dishes were brought in and the gentlemen started drinking. After four or five cups, mention was made again of the novelties from the south.

“Such things are hard to dispose of,” remarked Feng. “Apart from distinguished families like yours, who else can afford to buy them?”

“That’s not necessarily so,” Jia Zheng demurred.

Jia She added, “Our family isn’t what it was — we’re simply keeping up appearances.”

“How is Master Zhen of the East Mansion?” Feng inquired. “Last time I met him, in the course of conversation he mentioned that his son’s second wife can’t compare with his first from the Qin family. I forgot to ask which family the new young mistress comes from.”

“She’s from a noble family too,” said Jia Zheng. “She’s the daughter of old Mr. Hu, who was Governor of the Metropolitan Circuit.”

“I know Mr. Hu,” replied Feng. “His household isn’t too well regulated. Still, that doesn’t matter if the girl herself is good.”

Jia Lian changed the subject by saying, “I’ve heard from someone in



“这也好。不知准不准？”贾琏道：“大约有意思的了。”冯紫英道：“我今儿从吏部里来，也听见这样说。雨村老先生是贵本家不是？”贾政道：“是。”冯紫英道：“是有服的，还是无服的？”贾政道：“说也话长。他原籍是浙江湖州府人，流寓到苏州，甚不得意。有个甄士隐和他相好，时常周济他。以后中了进士，得了榜下知县，便娶了甄家的丫头。如今的太太不是正配。岂知甄士隐弄到零落不堪，没有找处。雨村革了职以后，那时还与我家并未相识。只因舍妹丈林如海林公在扬州巡盐的时候，请他在家做西席，外甥女儿是他的学生。因他有起复的信，要进京来，恰好外甥女儿要上来探亲，林姑老爷便托他照应上来的。还有一封荐书托我吹嘘吹嘘。那时看他不错，大家常会。岂知雨村也奇：我家世袭起，从‘代’字辈下来，宁荣两宅，人口房舍，以及起居事宜，一概都明白。因此，遂觉得亲热了。”因又笑说道：“几年间，门子也会钻了，由知府推升转了御史，不过几年，升了吏部侍郎，兵部尚书。为着一件事降了三级。如今又要升了。”

冯紫英道：“人世的荣枯，仕途的得失，终属难定。”贾政道：“天下事都是一个样的理哟。比如方才那珠子，那颗大的，就像有福气的人似的，那些小的都托赖着他的灵气护庇着。要是那大的没有了，那些小的也就没有收揽了。就像人家儿当头人有了事，骨肉也都分离了，亲戚也都零落了，就是好朋友也都散了。转瞬荣枯，真似春云秋叶一般。你想做官有什么趣儿呢？像雨村算便宜的了。还有我们差不多的人家儿，就是甄家，从前一样功勋，一样世袭，一样起居，我



the cabinet that Yucun is to be promoted again.”

“Good,” said Jia Zheng. “But is this news reliable, I wonder?”

“There must be something in it,” insisted Jia Lian.

“I was at the Ministry of Civil Affairs earlier on, and I heard the same talk,” confirmed Feng. “Is respected Master Yucun a member of your honourable clan?”

“Yes, he is,” said Jia Zheng.

“A close relation or a distant connection?”

“It’s a long story. He’s a native of Huzhou Prefecture in Zhejiang, who moved to Suzhou and didn’t make out too well there; but a certain Zhen Shiyin befriended him and helped him out. Then he passed the palace examination and was appointed a magistrate, after which he married one of the Zhen family’s maids — his present wife is his second. Then Zhen Shiyin lost all his money and seems to have disappeared. At the time when Yucun was dismissed from his post, he didn’t know our family. My brother-in-law Lin Ruhai, who was Salt Commissioner of Yangzhou then, engaged him as a tutor for his daughter. When word came that he might be reinstated, he decided to return to the capital; and as my niece happened to be coming to visit us, her father asked Yucun to escort her here and wrote a letter recommending him to me. Since he made a fairly good impression on me; we saw quite a bit of each other. The strange thing was that Yucun knew our whole family history from the start — all about our Rong and Ning Mansions, the inmates of each, and different happenings here. So we were soon on a familiar footing.” He added with a smile, “He very soon learned how to climb the official ladder, getting himself promoted from the post of a prefect to that of a censor and then, in another few years, becoming Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs and Minister of War. After that, for some reason, he was demoted three ranks. Now it seems he is going up again.”

“Prosperity and ruin,” observed Feng, “are as unpredictable as success or failure in one’s official career.”

“Yucun counts as one who has got off lightly,” rejoined Jia Zheng. “There are other families much like ours, the Zhen family for instance, who had the same achievements to their credit, the same hereditary honours, the same way of life, with whom we were very close. A few



们也是时常来往。不多几年，他们进京来，差人到我这里请安，还很热闹。一会儿抄了原籍的家财，至今杳无音信。不知他近况若何，心下也着实惦记着。”

贾赦道：“什么珠子？”贾政同冯紫英又说了一遍给贾赦听。贾赦道：“咱们家是再没有事的。”冯紫英道：“果然尊府是不怕的：一则里头有贵妃照应；二则故旧好，亲戚多；三则你们家自老太太起，至于少爷们，没有一个刁钻刻薄的。”贾政道：“虽无刁钻刻薄的，却没有德行才情。白白的衣租食税，那里当得起？”贾赦道：“咱们不用说这些话，大家吃酒罢。”大家又喝了几杯，摆上饭来。

吃毕喝茶。冯家的小厮走来，轻轻的向紫英说了一句。冯紫英便要告辞。贾赦问那小厮道：“你说什么？”小厮道：“外面下雪，早已下了梆子了。”贾政叫人看时，已是雪深一寸多了。贾政道：“那两件东西，你收拾好了么？”冯紫英道：“收好了。若尊府要用，价钱还自然让些。”贾政道：“我留神就是了。”紫英道：“我再听信罢。天气冷，请罢，别送了。”贾赦贾政使命贾琏送了出去。未知后事如何，下回分解。





years ago when they came to the capital, they would send people to call on us and they cut quite a dash. Before long, though, their property was confiscated and no more has been heard of them ever since. We don't know what's become of the family and can't help worrying about them. Don't you think this must strike fear into officials?"

"Well, our family should be safe," Jia She observed.

"Of course, your honourable family has nothing to fear," Feng assured him. "You have Her Highness in the Palace to watch over you, and a host of good friends and kinsmen. Besides, not one of your family from the old lady down to your young masters is grasping or niggardly."

"That may be so," said Jia Zheng. "But they have no virtue or ability either. How long can they go on just living on their capital?"

"Don't talk that," protested Jia She. "Let's have some more drinks."

They drank a few more cups, then rice was served. After they had finished the meal and drunk some tea, Feng's page came over to whisper something to him, and he asked permission to leave.

Jia She asked the page what he had said.

"It's snowing outside, sir, and the first watch has sounded."

Jia Zheng sent a servant to look, who reported that more than one inch of snow had fallen.

"Have you put those valuables away?" Jia Zheng asked.

"Yes, uncle," said Feng. "If your honourable family has any use for them, we can of course negotiate the price."

"I'll keep it in mind."

"I'll wait to hear from you. It's cold; please don't see me out."

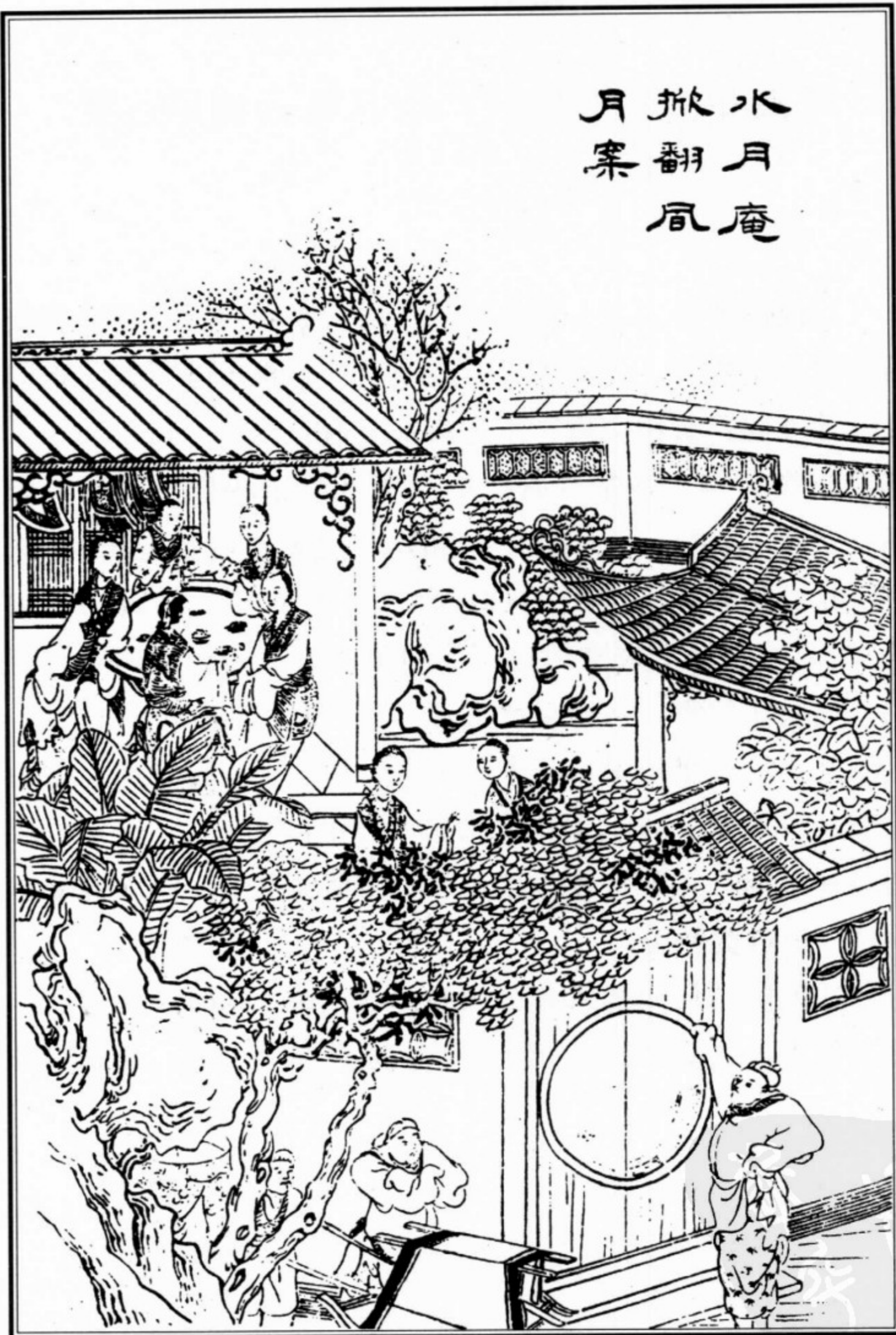
Jia Zheng and Jia She told Jia Lian to see him out. If you wish to know the sequel, read the next chapter.



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水掀月
月翻案
風庵



第九十三回

甄家仆投靠贾家门 水月庵掀翻风月案

却说冯紫英去后，贾政叫门上的人来吩咐道：“今儿临安伯那里来请吃酒，知道是什么事？”门上的人道：“奴才曾问过，并没有什么喜庆事，不过南安王府里到了一班小戏子，都说是个名班，伯爷高兴，唱两天戏，请相好的老爷们瞧瞧，热闹热闹。大约不用送礼的。”说着，贾赦过来问道：“明儿二老爷去不去？”贾政道：“承他亲热，怎么好不去的？”说着，门上进来回道：“衙门里书办来请老爷明日上衙门。有堂派的事，必得早些去。”贾政道：“知道了。”说着，只见两个管屯里地租子的家人走来，请了安，磕了头，旁边站着。贾政道：“你们是郝家庄的？”两个答应了一声。贾政也不往下问，竟与贾赦各自说了一回话儿散了。家人等秉着手灯，送过贾赦去。

这里贾琏便叫那管租的人道：“说你的。”那人说道：“十月里的租子，奴才已经赶上来了。原是明儿可到，谁知京外



Chapter 93

A Servant of the Zhen Family Offers His Services to the Jias A Scandal in Water Moon Convent Is Exposed

After Feng Ziyang had gone, Jia Zheng summoned the gateman.

"Today the Duke of Linan sent invitations to a banquet," he said. "Do you know what the occasion is?"

"I asked, sir," replied the gateman. "It's no special celebration, but a company of young actors — a company with a fine reputation — has come to the Prince of Nanan's Mansion; and the duke is so pleased with them that he's putting on two days' performances for his friends' enjoyment. It should be very lively. There's probably no need to send presents."

Jia She came over at this point to ask Jia Zheng if he would be going the next day.

"I suppose we'll have to," was the reply, "to show our appreciation."

Just then the gateman came back to report, "The secretary from your yamen has come to ask you to go there tomorrow, sir, as the minister has some business and will need you earlier than usual."

"Very well."

Then two of the family's bailiffs came in and paid their respects. After kowtowing they stood there at attention.

"Are you two from Hao Village?" Jia Zheng asked.

"Yes, sir."

Instead of inquiring their business, he chatted with Jia She till the latter rose to go and was escorted home by servants with lanterns.

Jia Lian then asked the bailiffs, "Well, what have you come for?"

"We collected the rent in kind for the tenth month," they reported. "It should have arrived here tomorrow, but outside the city our carts were commandeered and, when we protested, all the things on them were



拿车，把车上的东西，不由分说，都掀在地下。奴才告诉他，说是府里收租子的车，不是买卖车，他更不管这些。奴才叫车夫只管拉着走，几个衙役就把车夫混打了一顿，硬扯了两辆车去了。奴才所以先来回报。求爷打发个人到衙门里去要了来才好。再者，也整治整治这些无法无天的差役才好。爷还不知道呢：更可怜的是那买卖车，客商的东西全不顾，掀下来，赶着就走。那些赶车的但说句话，打的头破血出的。”

贾琏听了，骂道：“这个还了得！”立刻写了一个帖儿，叫家人：“拿去向拿车的衙门里要车去，并车上东西。若少了一件，是不依的！快叫周瑞。”周瑞不在家，又叫来旺。来旺晌午出去了，还没有回来。贾琏道：“这些忘八日的，一个都不在家！他们成年家吃粮不管事！”因吩咐小厮们：“快给我找去！”说着，也回到自己屋里，睡下不提。

且说临安伯第二天又打发人来请。贾政告诉贾赦道：“我是衙门里有事。琏儿要在家等候拿车的事情，也不能去。倒是大老爷带着宝玉应酬一天也罢了。”贾赦点头道：“也使得。”贾政遣人去叫宝玉，说：“今儿跟大爷到临安伯那里听戏去。”

宝玉喜欢的了不得，便换上衣服，带了焙茗、扫红、锄药三个小子，出来见了贾赦，请了安，上了车，来到临安伯府里。门上人回进去，一会子出来说：“老爷请。”于是贾赦带着宝玉走入院内，只见宾客喧阗。贾赦宝玉见了临安伯，又与众宾客都见过了礼，大家坐着，说笑了一回。只见一个



dumped on the ground. We told them these weren't merchants' carts but were delivering rent to your mansions. Still they paid no attention. When we told the carters to drive on, some runners beat them up and made off with our two carts. So we've come to report this, sir, and ask you to send to the yamen to get them back. Those lawless runners should be punished too. You've no idea, sir, how hard it is on merchants. All their goods are unloaded, regardless, and their carts are driven away. If the carters so much as murmur, they get their heads smashed in."

"Outrageous!" swore Jia Lian.

He there and then wrote a note and told the servants, "Take this to the local yamen and demand the return of the carts as well as the produce. We won't stand for it if one single thing is missing! And send Zhou Rui here at once!"

But Zhou Rui was absent. And when they looked for Lai Wang, they found he had gone out after lunch and not yet returned.

"Not one of the bastards is here!" swore Jia Lian. "They do not work — just gorge themselves all the year round." He ordered his pages, "Go and find them, quick!" Then he went home to sleep.

The next day the Duke of Linan sent over again to invite them.

Jia Zheng told Jia She, "I have business in my yamen. And Lian can't go either, he has to stay in to deal with this commandeering of our carts. For politeness' sake, you'd better take Baoyu over for the day."

Jia She nodded. "That's all right."

Then Jia Zheng sent for Baoyu. "You're to go with Lord She to the opera in the Duke of Linan's place," he told him.

Baoyu, only too delighted, changed his clothes and went off with Beiming, Saohong and Chuyao to present himself to Jia She and pay his respects. They drove to the duke's mansion, where the gateman announced their arrival then ushered them in. Jia She led Baoyu into the courtyard in which a lively party had assembled. After they had paid their respects to the duke and greeted the other guests, everyone sat down to talk. Then the manager of the company stepped forward with an ivory tablet and a compendium of their repertoire. Falling on one knee he said:

"Please make your choice, gentlemen."

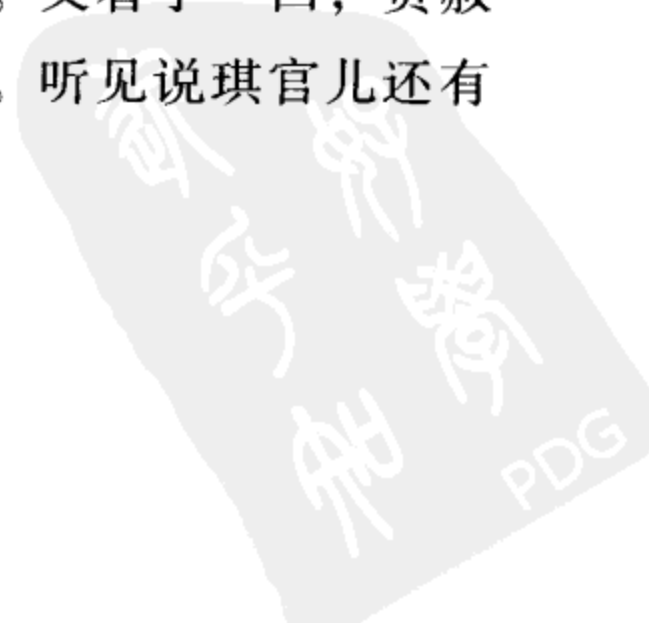


掌班拿着一本戏单，一个牙笏，向上打了一个千儿，说道：“求各位老爷赏戏。”先从尊位点起，挨至贾赦，也点了一出。那人回头见了宝玉，便不向别处去，竟抢步上来，打个千儿道：“求二爷赏两出。”

宝玉一见那人，面如傅粉，唇若涂朱；鲜润如出水芙蓉，飘扬似临风玉树：原来不是别人，就是蒋玉菡。前日听得他带了小戏儿进京，也没有到自己那里；此时见了，又不好站起来，只得笑道：“你多早晚来的？”蒋玉菡把眼往左右一溜，悄悄的笑道：“怎么二爷不知道么？”宝玉因众人在坐，也难说话，只得乱点了一出。

蒋玉菡去了，便有几个议论道：“此人是谁？”有的说：“他向来是唱小旦的，如今不肯唱小旦，年纪也大了，就在府里掌班。头里也改过小生。他也攒了好几个钱，家里已经有两三个铺子，只是不肯放下本业，原旧领班。”有的说：“想必成了家了。”有的说：“亲还没有定。他倒拿定一个主意：说是人生婚配，关系一生一世的事，不是混闹得的，不论尊卑贵贱，总要配的上他的才能。所以到如今还并没娶亲。”宝玉暗忖度道：“不知日后谁家的女孩儿嫁他？要嫁着这么样的人才儿，也算是不辜负了。”

那时开了戏，也有昆腔，也有高腔，也有弋腔，平腔：热闹非常。到了晌午，便摆开桌子吃酒。又看了一回，贾赦便欲起身。临安伯过来留道：“天色尚早。听见说琪官儿还有





In order of seniority they selected operas. And when it came to Jia She's turn, the manager caught sight of Baoyu. He hurried straight over to him and saluted.

"Please choose a couple of scenes, Master Bao," he said.

This man with his clear complexion and red lips was fresh as lotus taken from the water, graceful as a jade tree in the breeze. Baoyu recognized him at one glance as Jiang Yuhan. He had heard not long before that Jiang had brought a company of young actors to the capital, but his old friend had failed to come to see him. He could hardly stand up in this company to greet him.

"When did you come back?" he asked him with a smile.

Jiang pointing at himself murmured, "Surely you know, Second Master."

As they could not very well converse in public, Baoyu just picked one item at random. After Jiang Yuhan had moved on, there was some speculation about him.

"Who is he?" someone asked.

"He used to play young ladies," another man answered. "Now that he's too old for that, he acts as manager instead and sometimes takes young men's roles. He's put aside a tidy sum of money and owns a couple of shops, but he won't give up his profession and goes on managing an opera company."

"I suppose he must have married," one guest remarked.

"No, he's not engaged yet. He's got this idea fixed that marriage is for keeps, affecting one's whole life, not something to enter into casually; so his wife, regardless of her social status, must measure up to his talent. That's why he's still unmarried."

Baoyu wondered who the lucky girl would be to marry a man of his ability.

Then the performance started. And very lively it was too, with *Kunqu*, *Yiqiang*, *Gaoqiang* and *Bangzi operas*.¹ At noon tables were set out for the feast, and when they had watched a little longer Jia She rose to leave.

"It's still early," said the duke, coming over to press him to stay. "And I've heard that Jiang Yuhan is going to play in their best item — a



一出‘占花魁’，他们顶好的首戏。”宝玉听了，巴不得贾赦不走；于是贾赦又坐了一会。果然蒋玉菡扮了秦小官，伏侍花魁醉后神情，把那一种怜香惜玉的意思，做得极情尽致。以后对饮对唱，缠绵缱绻。

宝玉这时不看花魁，只把两支眼睛独射在秦小官身上。更加蒋玉菡声音响亮，口齿清楚，按腔落板，宝玉的神魂都唱的飘荡了。直等这出戏煞场后，更知蒋玉菡极是情种，非寻常脚色可比。因想着：“《乐记》上说的是：‘情动于中，故形于声；声成文，谓之音。’所以知声，知音，知乐，有许多讲究。声音之原，不可不察。诗词一道，但能传情，不能入骨，自后想要讲究讲究音律。”宝玉想出了神，忽见贾赦起身，主人不及相留。宝玉没法，只得跟了回来。

到了家中，贾赦自回那边去了。宝玉来见贾政。贾政才下衙门，正向贾琏问起拿车之事。贾琏道：“今儿叫人拿帖儿去，知县不在家。他的门上说了：‘这是本官不知道的，并无牌票出去拿车，都是那些混账东西在外头撒野挤讹头。既是老爷府里的，我便立刻叫人去追办，包管明儿连车连东西一并送来。如有半点差迟，再行禀过本官，重重处治。此刻本官不在家，求这里老爷看破些，可以不用本官知道更好。’”贾政道：“既无官票，到底是何等样人在那里作怪？”贾琏道：“老爷不知，外头都是这样。想来明儿必定送来的。”贾琏说





scene from *The Oil-Vendor and the Courtesan*.”

Baoyu hearing this was most eager to stay, and so Jia She resumed his seat. Then, sure enough, Jiang Yuhuan came on in the role of the oil-vendor Qin, and gave an excellent performance of how the young man cared for the courtesan when she was drunk, after which the two of them drank and sang together in affectionate intimacy.

Baoyu was not interested in the heroine, having eyes only for the young hero. And he was quite enraptured by his singing, for Jiang Yuhuan had a resonant voice, clear enunciation and good sense of rhythm. By the time this scene ended he was firmly convinced that Jiang was a romantic, completely unique. He thought, “*The Book of Music* rightly says, ‘Stirred feelings find expression in sound, and when the sound follows a pattern we call it music.’ So sounds, notes and music take some understanding, and a study has to be made of their origin. Poetry can convey emotions, but it can’t thrill us to the marrow. In future I really must make a study of music.”

His reverie was interrupted by Jia She rising to leave. As their host could not prevail on him to stay, Baoyu had no choice but to go back with him.

On their return Jia She went home. And Baoyu, paying his duty call on his father, found him just back from the ministry questioning Jia Lian about the seizure of their carts.

Jia Lian said, “I sent servants there today with my card, but the magistrate was out. His factotum said, ‘His Excellency knew nothing about this, and gave no orders for the requisition of carts. It’s all the fault of those trouble-making scoundrels who take unfair advantage of people outside. As these are His Lordship’s carts, I’ll send at once to investigate and guarantee to return them as well as the things tomorrow. If there is any delay, I shall report it to His Excellency and have them severely punished. But since he is away now, I hope His Lordship will be understanding, as it would be better not to trouble my master.’”

“Without some official order, who would dare do such a thing?” demanded Jia Zheng.

“You don’t understand, sir,” said Jia Lian. “It’s like this everywhere outside the city. I’m sure they’ll return our property tomorrow.” With



完下来。宝玉上去见了。贾政问了几句，便叫他往老太太那里去。

贾琏因为昨晚叫空了家人，出来传唤，那起人都已伺候齐全。贾琏骂了一顿，叫大管家赖大：“将各行档的花名册子拿来，你去查点查点，写一张谕帖，叫那些人知道。若有并未告假，私自出去，传唤不到，贻误公事的，立刻给我打了撵出去！”赖大连忙答应了几个“是”，出来吩咐了一回，家人各自留意。

过不几时，忽见有一个人，头上戴着毡帽，身上穿着一身青布衣裳，脚下穿着一双撒鞋，走到门上，向众人作了个揖。众人拿眼上上下下打量了他一番，便问他：“是那里来的？”那人道：“我自南边甄府中来的。并有家老爷手书一封，求这里的爷们呈上尊老爷。”众人听见他是甄府来的，才站起来让他坐下，道：“你乏了，且坐坐。我们给你回就是了。”门上一面进来回明贾政，呈上来书。贾政拆书看时，上写着：

世交夙好，气谊素敦，遥仰檐帷，不胜依切！弟因菲材获谴，自分万死难偿，幸邀宽宥，待罪边隅。迄今门户雕零，家人星散。所有奴子包勇，向曾使用，虽无奇技，人尚慤实。倘使得备奔走，糊口有资，屋乌之爱，感佩无涯矣！专此奉达，余容再叙，不宣。

年家眷弟甄应嘉顿首。



that he withdrew.

Then Baoyu paid his respects to his father, who questioned him briefly before sending him to call on his grandmother.

As the stewards had been out the day before when Jia Lian sent for them, he had summoned them all and now they were ready waiting. Having cursed them roundly he told the chief steward Lai Da, "Bring me the roster of servants and check their names; then write an announcement for them all to read. If anyone sneaks off without asking leave and isn't on hand when called, holding up our business, you're to beat him for me and drive him out forthwith!"

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!"

Lai Da went out to pass on this warning, and thereafter the servants were more circumspect.

Soon after this, a man came to the gate wearing a felt cap, blue cotton clothes and slippers with cloth soles and leather uppers. He saluted the servants on duty, who looked him over from head to foot before asking where he came from.

"From the Zhen family in the south," he answered. "I've a letter from my master which I'd like to trouble you gentlemen to take in to His Lordship."

When they heard this they stood up and offered him a seat.

"You must be tired. Sit down," they urged. "We'll see to it for you."

One gateman went in and reported this, handing Jia Zheng the letter which he opened and read:

... Our families have been long-standing friends sharing similar tastes, and I have the greatest admiration for you. My criminal incompetence deserved punishment by a thousand deaths, but instead the court with gracious clemency sent me to this border region. Now our fortunes have declined and our family is scattered. Our servant's son Bao Yong, who used to serve me, though he has no outstanding ability is quite honest. If you would take him on, enabling him to support himself, I should be infinitely grateful for your kindness. This is my letter's sole purpose. I shall write more fully later.

After reading this Jia Zheng smiled.



贾政看完，笑道：“这里正因人多，甄家倒荐人来。又不好却的。”吩咐门上：“叫他见我，且留他住下，因材施教便了。”门上出去，带进人来，见贾政，便磕了三个头，起来道：“家老爷请老爷安。”自己又打个千儿，说：“包勇请老爷安。”

贾政回问了甄老爷的好，便把他上下一瞧，但见包勇身长五尺有零，肩背宽肥，浓眉爆眼，磕额长髯，气色粗黑，垂着手站着。便问道：“你是向来在甄家的，还是住过几年的？”包勇道：“小的向在甄家的。”贾政道：“你如今为什么要出来呢？”包勇道：“小的原不肯出来，只是家老爷再四叫小的出来，说别处你不肯去，这里老爷家里和在咱们自己家里一样的，所以小的来的。”贾政道：“你们老爷不该有这样事情，弄到这个田地。”包勇道：“小的本不敢说：我们老爷只是太好了，一味的真心待人，反倒招出事来。”贾政道：“真心是最好的了。”包勇道：“因为太真了，人人都不喜欢，讨人厌烦是有的。”贾政笑了一笑道：“既这样，皇天自然不负他的。”

包勇还要说时，贾政又问道：“我听见说你们家的哥儿不是也叫宝玉么？”包勇道：“是。”贾政道：“他还肯向上巴结么？”包勇道：“老爷若问我们哥儿，倒是一段奇事。哥儿的脾气也和我家老爷一个样子，也是一味的诚实，从小儿只爱和那些姐妹们在一处玩。老爷太太也狠打过几次，他只是不





“We were thinking that our staff is too large,” he said. “However, we can’t turn away someone recommended by the Zhen family.” He told the gateman, “Bring him here. We’ll keep him and find him some appropriate work.”

So the gateman fetched Bao Yong, who kowtowed three times to Jia Zheng. Getting up again he said, “My master sends his respects, sir.” Then he went down on one knee in salute, saying, “Bao Yong pays his respects, sir.”

Jia Zheng asked after Mr. Zhen’s health and scrutinized Bao Yong as he stood there in an attitude of respect. Just over five feet and broad-shouldered, he had thick eyebrows, protuberant eyes and a low forehead. His face was bearded and swarthy.

“Have you always been in the Zhen family or only worked there for a few years?” Jia Zheng asked.

“I have always been their man, sir.”

“Then why do you want to leave them now?”

“I didn’t want to, but my master insisted. He said, ‘You wouldn’t agree to going anywhere else, but serving the Jia family will be like serving us.’ So I came, sir.”

“Your master should never have got into such trouble, reducing him to these straits.”

“If I may make bold to say so, it’s because my master’s too good. He always treats people honestly, and that landed him in trouble.”

“Surely it’s good to be honest.”

“But because he was *too* honest, sir, nobody liked him and he offended some people.”

“Well, in that case Heaven will give him his due deserts,” Jia Zheng laughed. Before Bao Yong could reply he went on to ask, “Is it true, as I heard, that your younger master’s name is also Baoyu?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Is he doing well?”

“As for our Master Bao, sir, that’s a strange story. He’s like his father — too honest. As a child, what he liked best was playing about with girls, and though his parents gave him several good beatings he wouldn’t mend his ways. That year our mistress came to the capital, Master Bao fell very



改。那一年太太进京的时候儿，哥儿大病了一场，已经死了半日，把老爷几乎急死，装裹都预备了。幸喜后来好了，嘴里说道：走到一座牌楼那里，见了一个姑娘，领着他到了一座庙里，见了好些柜子，里头见了好些册子；又到屋里，见了无数女子，说是都变了鬼怪似的，也有变做骷髅儿的；他吓急了，就哭喊起来。老爷知他醒过来了，连忙调治，渐渐的好了。老爷仍叫他在姐妹们一处玩去，他竟改了脾气了：好着时候的玩意儿一概都不要了，惟有念书为事。就有什么人来引诱他，他也全不动心。如今渐渐的能够帮着老爷料理些家务了。”贾政默然想了一回，道：“你去歇歇去罢。等这里用着你时，自然派你一个行次儿。”包勇答应着，退下来，跟着这里人出去歇息不提。

一日贾政早起，刚要上衙门，看见门上那些人在那里交头接耳，好像要使贾政知道的似的，又不好明回，只管咕咕唧唧的说话。贾政叫上来问道：“你们有什么事这么鬼鬼祟祟的？”门上的人回道：“奴才们不敢说。”贾政道：“有什么事不敢说的？”门上的人道：“奴才今儿起来，开门出去，见门上贴着一张白纸，上写着许多不成事体的字。”贾政道：“那里有这样的事！写的是是什么？”门上的人道：“是水月庵的腌脏话。”贾政道：“拿给我瞧。”门上的人道：“奴才本要揭下来，谁知他贴的结实，揭不下来，只得一面抄，一面洗。刚才李德揭了一张给奴才瞧，就是那门上贴的话。奴才们不敢隐瞒。”说着，呈上那帖儿。贾政接来看时，上面写道：



ill. He lost consciousness for so long that his father was frantic and had all the funeral preparations made. Then, luckily, he came round. But he started raving that he'd met a girl by an archway who took him into a temple, inside which were many cabinets filled with albums. Then going into a room he saw countless girls who'd all turned into ghosts or skeletons. That set him screaming with fright. As soon as our master saw that he'd come to he gave him good medical treatment, and gradually he recovered. After that, when our master sent him off to amuse himself with the girls, as he always used to, we discovered that he'd changed — he no longer enjoyed his old pleasures but much preferred to study. Even when they tried to coax him away from his books, he took no interest at all. So now, little by little, he's learning to help his father manage the household."

Jia Zheng digested this in thoughtful silence.

"Go off and rest now," he said presently. "When a task comes up that you can do, of course we'll assign you some duties."

Bao Yong thanked him and withdrew, going out with the gateman to rest. But no more of this.

One morning, Jia Zheng rose early and was setting off to his yamen when he noticed the servants at the gate whispering and muttering among themselves as if they had some news for him which they dared not report outright. He called them over.

"What is this hole-and-corner business?" he demanded.

"We hardly dare tell you, sir," one of them answered.

"Why not? Out with it!"

"This morning when we got up and opened the gate, we found a sheet of paper pasted on it, covered with scurrilous writing."

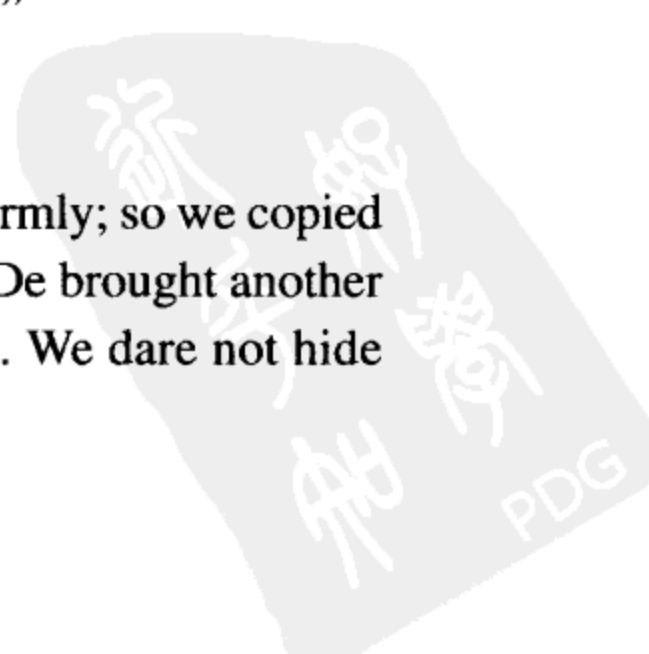
"The idea!" exclaimed Jia Zheng. "What was it?"

"Dirty talk about Water Moon Convent, sir."

"Bring me the paper," he ordered.

"We tried to take it down, but it was glued on too firmly; so we copied it out, then soaked the paper to get it off. Just now Li De brought another sheet to show us — the same as the one on the gate. We dare not hide it from you, sir."

They presented the paper, and he read:





“西贝草斤”年纪轻，水月庵里管尼僧。

一个男人多少女，窝娼聚赌是陶情。

不肖子弟来办事，荣国府内好声名！

贾政看了，气的头昏目晕，赶着叫门上的人不许声张，悄悄叫人往宁荣两府靠近的夹道子墙壁上再去找寻。随即叫人去唤贾璉出来。贾璉即忙赶至。贾政忙问道：“水月庵中寄居的那些女尼女道，向来你也查考查考过没有？”贾璉道：“没有，一向都是芹儿在那里照管。”贾政道：“你知道芹儿照管得来，照管不来？”贾璉道：“老爷既这么说，想来芹儿必有不妥当的地方儿。”贾政叹道：“你瞧瞧这个帖儿写的是什么！”贾璉一看道：“有这样事么！”正说着，只见贾蓉走来，拿着一封书子，写着“二老爷密启”。打开看时，也是无头榜一张，与门上所贴的话相同。贾政道：“快叫赖大带了三四辆车到水月庵里去，把那些女尼姑女道士一齐拉回来。不许泄漏，只说里头传唤。”赖大领命去了。

且说水月庵中小女尼女道士等，初到庵中，沙弥与道士原系老尼收管，日间教他些经忏。以后元妃不用，也便习学得懒惰了。那些女孩子们年纪渐渐的大了，都也有些知觉了。更兼贾芹也是风流人物，打量芳官等出家，只是小孩子性儿，便去招惹他们。那知芳官竟是真心，不能上手，便把这心肠移到女尼女道士身上。因那小沙弥中有个名叫沁香的，和女道士中有个叫做鹤仙的，长的都甚妖娆，贾芹便和这两个人勾搭上了，闲时便学些丝弦，唱个曲儿。



Jia Qin, a young supervisor,
To Water Moon Convent came.
One male among so many females,
He's free to drink, whore and game.
This worthless young master set in charge
Is giving the Rong Mansion a bad name!

So enraged by this that his mind reeled, Jia Zheng ordered the servants to say nothing about it but to make a quiet search of the walls of the alleys in the vicinity. He then sent for Jia Lian, who came hurrying over.

Without any preliminaries Jia Zheng asked him, "Have you ever checked up on those novices in Water Moon Convent?"

"No," said Jia Lian. "Qin's always been in charge of them."

"Do you think him capable of such a trust?"

"Since you ask, sir, I suppose he must have fallen down on the job."

Jia Zheng sighed. "Look what's written on this poster!"

Jia Lian read it and exclaimed, "Could this be true?"

Just then along came Jia Rong with an envelope marked "Confidential" addressed to Jia Zheng. When they opened it, they found another copy of the same anonymous lampoon as that pasted on the gate.

Jia Zheng said, "Tell Lai Da to go at once with three or four carriages to the convent, to bring back all those novices. Don't let word of this get out. Just tell them that they're wanted in the Palace."

Lai Da went off to carry out these orders.

Now the young Buddhist and Taoist novices when first they went to the convent had been in the charge of an old abbess who daily taught them litanies and invocations. But because the Imperial Consort never sent for them, they gradually became lax in their devotions; and as they grew older they began to take an interest in men. Jia Qin was a romantic. In his view, it had simply been a childish whim which made these actresses enter a convent, and accordingly he went to dally with them. As Fangguan, genuinely devout, was deaf to his enticements, he turned his attention to the other girls. Among these were a Buddhist named Qinxiang and a Taoist named Hexian, both of whom had seductive charm. So Jia Qin became their lover and whenever they had the time they would get



那时正当十月中旬，贾芹给庵中那些人领了月例银子，便想起法儿来，告诉众人道：“我为你们领月钱，不能进城，又只得在这里歇着。怪冷的，怎么样？我今儿带些果子酒，大家吃着乐一夜，好不好？”那些女孩子都高兴，便摆起桌子，连本庵的女尼也叫了来。惟有芳官不来。贾芹喝了几杯，便说道要行令。沁香等道：“我们都不会，倒不如撺拳罢。谁输了喝一钟，岂不爽快？”本庵的女尼道：“这天刚过晌午，混嚷混喝的不像，且先喝几钟，爱散的先散去。谁爱陪芹大爷的，回来晚上尽子喝去，我也不管。”

正说着，只见道婆急忙进来说：“快散了罢！府里赖大爷来了。”众女尼忙乱收拾，便叫贾芹躲开。贾芹因多喝了几杯，便道：“我是送月钱来的，怕什么！”话犹未完，已见赖大进来。见这般样子，心里大怒。为的是贾政吩咐“不许声张”，只得含糊装笑道：“芹大爷也在这里呢么？”贾芹连忙站起来道：“赖大爷，你来作什么？”赖大说：“大爷在这里更好。快快叫沙弥道士收拾，上车进城，宫里传呢。”贾芹等不知原故，还要细问。赖大说：“天已不早了，快快的，好赶进城。”众女孩子只得一齐上车。赖大骑着大走骡，押着赶





together and learn how to sing and play the fiddle.

Since this was the middle of the tenth month and Jia Qin had just brought the monthly allowance for the convent, he hit on an idea.

"I've brought your allowance," he told the girls. "But as I can't get back to town today, I'll have to spend the night here. It's very cold, isn't it? So suppose we sit up together to enjoy these sweetmeats and wine that I've brought with me?"

The novices, very pleased, set tables ready and invited the older nuns too. Fangguan was the only one who declined to join them. After a few cups Jia Qin proposed playing some drinking games.

"We don't know how to," said Qinxiang and the others. "Let's just play the guessing-fingers game, and whoever loses must drink. Wouldn't that be simpler?"

The older nuns objected, "It's only just after noon, and it wouldn't look right to have a rowdy party. Let's drink a few cups, then those who like can leave first. Those who want to keep Master Qin company can drink all they please this evening, and we won't interfere."

Just then a serving-woman hurried in.

"Break this up, this minute!" she cried. "Here's Mr. Lai from the Jia Mansion!"

The novices hastily set about clearing the tables and urged Jia Qin to hide.

But emboldened by a few cups of wine he blustered, "I came to bring the monthly allowance. I'm not afraid!"

While he was still speaking, in came Lai Da. The sight that met his eyes enraged him. But as Jia Zheng had enjoined strict secrecy, he forced himself to smile.

"So you are here too, Master Qin," he said.

"What brings you here, Mr. Lai?" asked Jia Qin who had risen to his feet.

"I'm glad you're here, sir. Tell these novices to get ready at once to drive to town. They're wanted in the Palace."

This puzzled them all, but before they could question him the steward continued, "Time presses. Be quick about it, or we may be shut out."

The novices had to mount the carriages then. And Lai Da, riding a big

进城，不提。

却说贾政知道这事，气的衙门也不能上了，独坐在内书房叹气。贾琏也不敢走开。忽见门上的进来禀道：“衙门里今夜该班是张老爷。因张老爷病了，有知会来请老爷补一班。”贾政正等赖大回来要办贾芹，此时又要该班，心里纳闷，也不言语。贾琏走上去说道：“赖大是饭后出去的，水月庵离城二十来里，就赶进城，也得二更天。今日又是老爷的帮班，请老爷只管去。赖大来了，叫他押着，也别声张，等明儿老爷回来再发落。倘或芹儿来了，也不用说明，看他明儿见了老爷怎么样说。”贾政听来有理，只得上班去了。贾琏抽空才要回到自己房中，一面走着，心里抱怨凤姐出的主意，欲要埋怨，因他病着，只得隐忍，慢慢的走着。

且说那些下人，一人传十，传到里头，先是平儿知道，即忙告诉凤姐。凤姐因那一夜不好，恹恹的总没精神，正是惦记铁槛寺的事情。听见“外头贴了匿名揭帖”的一句话，吓了一跳，忙问：“贴的是什么？”平儿随口答应，不留神，就错说了，道：“没要紧，是馒头庵里的事情。”凤姐本是心虚，听见“馒头庵的事情”，这一唬直唬怔了，一句话没说出来，急火上攻，眼前发晕，咳嗽了一阵，便歪倒了，两只眼却只是发怔。

平儿慌了，说道：“水月庵里，不过是女沙弥女道士的



mule, escorted them back to the city.

Meanwhile Jia Zheng, too angry to go to his yamen, sat alone in his study sighing over this scandal, and Jia Lian felt constrained to stay with him.

Then a gateman came in to announce, "His Lordship Zhang who should be on duty in the yamen this evening is ill, sir, and they would like you to take over for him."

Jia Zheng was waiting for Lai Da's return to deal with Jia Qin. Exasperated at having to go back on duty now, he made no answer. Jia Lian stepped up to him.

"Lai Da left after lunch, and the convent is some twenty *li* from town; so even if he hurries he can't get back till the second watch," he said. "If you are needed at the yamen, sir, you can go with an easy mind. When Lai Da gets back, I'll tell him to detain the novices and keep the matter quiet. You can deal with them when you come home tomorrow. If Jia Qin comes, we needn't tell him anything either, but see how he accounts for himself to you tomorrow."

Jia Zheng seeing reason in this went off to his yamen, finally giving Jia Lian a chance to go home. He made his way slowly back, inwardly blaming Xifeng for recommending Jia Qin; but as she was ill he knew he would have to wait before reproaching her.

However, through the servants' gossiping word of this had already reached the inner chambers. Pinger, who heard it first, at once told Xifeng. After a bad night Xifeng was in low spirits, worried over the trouble at Iron-Threshold Temple. The news that an anonymous lampoon had been put up outside alarmed her.

"What does it say?" she asked quickly.

Here Pinger slipped up. "It's nothing important," she said casually. "Something to do with Steamed-Bread Convent."

Xifeng with her guilty conscience was so consternated by this that she could not speak. She came over dizzy and after a fit of coughing spat out a mouthful of blood.

In a fluster Pinger corrected herself. "It's only some problem over

事，奶奶着什么急呢？”凤姐听是水月庵，才定了定神，道：“嗳！糊涂东西！到底是水月庵，是馒头庵呢？”平儿道：“是我头里错听了馒头庵，后来听见不是馒头庵，是水月庵。我刚才也就说溜了嘴，说成馒头庵了。”凤姐道：“我就知道是水月庵。那馒头庵与我什么相干！原是水月庵是我叫芹儿管的。大约刻扣了月钱。”平儿道：“我听着不像月钱的事，还有些腌脏话呢。”凤姐道：“我更不管那个。你二爷那里去了？”平儿说：“听见老爷生气，他不敢走开。我听见事情不好，我吩咐这些人不许吵嚷，不知太太们知道了没有。就听见说，老爷叫赖大拿这些女孩子去了。且叫人前头打听打听。奶奶现在病着，依我竟先别管他们的闲事。”

正说着，只见贾琏进来。凤姐欲待问他，见贾琏一脸怒气，暂且装作不知。贾琏没吃完饭，来旺来说：“外头请爷呢，赖大回来了。”贾琏道：“芹儿来了没有？”来旺道：“也来了。”贾琏便道：“你去告诉赖大，说：老爷上班儿去了，把这些个女孩子暂且收在园里，明日等老爷回来，送进宫去。只叫芹儿在内书房等着我。”来旺去了。

贾芹走进书房，只见那些下人指指戳戳不知说什么，看起这个样儿来，不像宫里要人。想着问人，又问不出来。正在心里疑惑，只见贾琏走出来，贾芹便请了安，垂手侍立，说道：“不知道娘娘宫里即刻传那些孩子们做什么？叫侄儿好



those Buddhist and Taoist novices in Water Moon Convent. Why should that upset you so, madam?"

"Ai! You fool!" exclaimed Xifeng in her relief. "Was it Water Moon Convent or Steamed-Bread Convent? Make up your mind!"

"I misheard it the first time, then discovered that it was Water Moon Convent, not Steamed-Bread Convent. Just now, by a slip of the tongue, I gave you the wrong name."

"I knew it must be Water Moon Convent. What have I to do with Steamed-Bread Convent? I did put Qin in charge of that convent. Probably he's been helping himself to their monthly allowance."

"I didn't hear talk of that but of some scandal."

"Well, I care even less about that. Where is Master Lian?"

"They say Lord Zheng is so angry that he can't very well leave him. When I learned there was trouble I told the maids they mustn't blab about it; but who knows whether Their Ladyships have heard this talk or not. It seems the master ordered Lai Da to fetch those girls back. I've sent to find out what's up. As you're unwell, madam, I don't think you need bother about their affairs."

Just then Jia Lian came in. Xifeng wanted to question him, but his scowling face made her pretend to know nothing about this business.

While Jia Lian was having supper Lai Wang came in to report, "They're asking for you outside, sir. Lai Da is back."

"Is Qin with him?" asked Jia Lian.

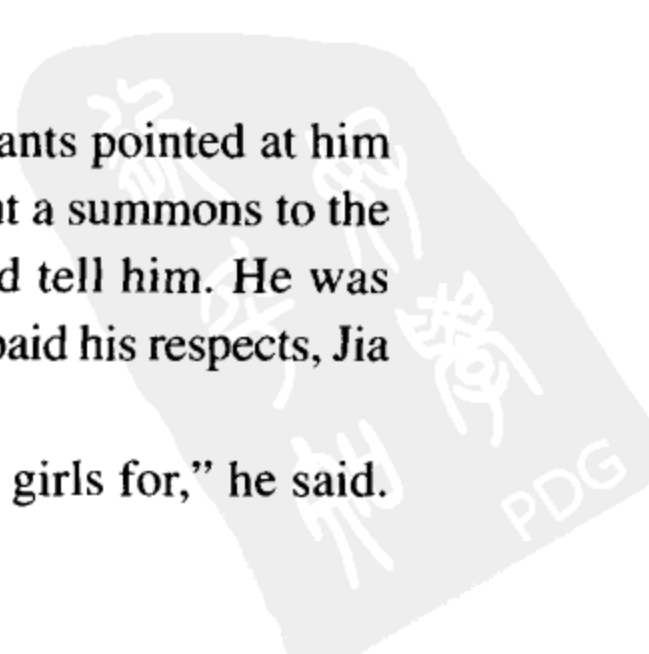
"Yes, he's come too."

"Go and tell Lai Da that the master has gone to his yamen. The girls are to stay in the Garden for the time being. Tomorrow, when the master comes back, they'll be sent to the Palace. Tell Qin to wait for me in the inner study."

Then Lai Wang went off.

When Jia Qin went to the study, the way the servants pointed at him and nudged each other made him doubt this talk about a summons to the Palace. He asked what was afoot, but no one would tell him. He was puzzling over this when Jia Lian came in and, having paid his respects, Jia Qin stood at attention.

"We don't know what Her Highness wants these girls for," he said.



赶! 幸喜侄儿今儿送月钱去, 还没有走, 便同着赖大来了。二叔想来是知道的。”贾琏道: “我知道什么? 你才是明白的呢!”

贾芹摸不着头脑儿, 也不敢再问。贾琏道: “你干的好事啊! 把老爷都气坏了!” 贾芹道: “侄儿没有干什么。庵里月钱是月月给的, 孩子们经忏是不忘的。”贾琏见他不知, 又是平素常在一处玩笑的, 便叹口气道: “打嘴的东西! 你各自去瞧瞧罢。”便从靴掖儿里头拿出那个揭帖来, 扔与他瞧。

贾芹拾来一看, 吓得面如土色, 说道: “这是谁干的! 我并没得罪人, 为什么这么坑我? 我一月送钱去, 只走一趟, 并没有这些事。若是老爷回来, 打着问我, 侄儿就屈死了! 我母亲知道, 更要打死。”说着, 见没人在旁边, 便跪下央及道: “好叔叔! 救我一救儿罢!” 说着, 只管磕头, 满眼流泪。

贾琏想道: “老爷最恼这些, 要是问准了有这些事, 这场气也不小。闹出去也不好听, 又长那个贴帖儿的人的志气了。将来咱们的事多着呢。倒不如趁着老爷上班儿, 和赖大商量着, 要混过去, 就可以没事了。现在没有对证。”想定主意, 便说: “你别瞒我。你干的鬼儿, 你打量我都不知道呢! 若要完事, 除非是老爷打着问你, 你只一口咬定没有才好。没脸的东西! 起去罢!” 叫人去叫赖大。

不多时, 赖大来了, 贾琏便和他商量。赖大说: “这芹大爷本来闹的不像了。奴才今儿到庵里的时候, 他们正在那里



"I brought them as fast as I could. Luckily I took them their allowance today and was still there, so I came back with Lai Da. I suppose you know all this, uncle.

"What do I know? *You're* the one in the know," Jia Lian rapped out. Jia Qin, though mystified, dared not ask his meaning.

"Fine goings-on!" Jia Lian fumed. "The master is furious!"

"I've done nothing wrong, uncle. I take them their allowance every month, and the girls keep up their devotions."

Jia Lian saw that he was in the dark, and as they had been playmates together he sighed.

"Shut up! Take a look at this."

He drew the lampoon from his boot and tossed it to him. Jia Qin picked it up and read it.

"Who's behind this?" he faltered, pale with fright. "I haven't offended anyone — why go for me like this? I only go there once a month to take them the money. These charges are sheer lies. But if the master comes back and has me beaten up, I shall die of the injustice! Worse still, if my mother hears of it she'll have me beaten to death!" As they were alone he went down on his knees to plead, "Have a heart, uncle! Save me!" He then kowtowed repeatedly, tears streaming from his eyes.

Jia Lian reflected, "This is the sort of thing the master abominates. If investigation proves that it's true, there will be a fearful scene. If the scandal gets out, our reputation will suffer and that lampoonist will become even bolder. Then we'll have a lot more trouble later on. It would be better, while the master's on duty, to fix up some way with Lai Da to hush it up so as to avoid further trouble. So far no evidence has been produced."

His mind made up he said, "Don't try to fool me. Do you think I don't know the devilry you've been up to? If the master beats you to make you confess, your only way out is to refuse to admit it. Get up now, you shameless creature!"

Soon after this Lai Da joined them, and Jia Lian discussed his plan with him.

"Master Qin has really behaved outrageously," said Lai Da. "When I went to the convent just now they were drinking! The charges in that

喝酒呢。帖儿上的话，一定是有的。”贾璉道：“芹儿，你听！赖大还赖你不成？”

贾芹此时红涨了脸，一句也不敢言语。还是贾璉拉着赖大，央他：“护庇护庇罢，只说芹哥儿是在家里找了来的。你带了他去，只说没有见我。明日你求老爷，也不用问那些女孩子了。竟是叫了媒人来，领了去，一卖完事。果然娘娘再要的时候儿，咱们再买。”赖大想来，闹也无益，且名声不好，也就应了。贾璉叫贾芹：“跟了赖大爷去罢！听着他教你，你就跟着他。”

说罢，贾芹又磕了一个头，跟着赖大出去。到了没人的地方儿，又给赖大磕头。赖大说：“我的小爷，你太闹的不像了！不知得罪了谁，闹出这个乱儿来。你想想，谁和你不对罢？”贾芹想了一会子，并无不对的人，只得无精打彩，跟着赖大走回。未知如何抵赖，且听下回分解。





lampoon must be true.”

“Hear that, Qin?” said Jia Lian. “Lai Da wouldn’t make that up, would he?”

Jia Qin blushed and dared not say a word.

Then Jia Lian urged Lai Da, “Just say that you found Master Qin at home and so you brought him along, but you haven’t seen me. Tomorrow you must try to persuade the master not to question those girls, but instead to fetch a broker to take them away and sell them. If Her Highness asks for them, we can buy some others.”

Thinking this over, Lai Da realized that a scandal would do no good but would further damage the family’s reputation. Accordingly he agreed.

Then Jia Lian said to Jia Qin, “Go with Mr. Lai and do whatever he tells you.” Jia Qin kowtowed his thanks and went off with the steward, to whom he kowtowed again when they came to a quiet spot.

“You’re really gone too far, Master Qin,” declared Lai Da. “I don’t know whom you offended to land yourself in this mess. Just think, what enemies have you?”

Jia Qin racked his brains and suddenly thought of one.

To know who it was, read the next chapter.



第九十四回

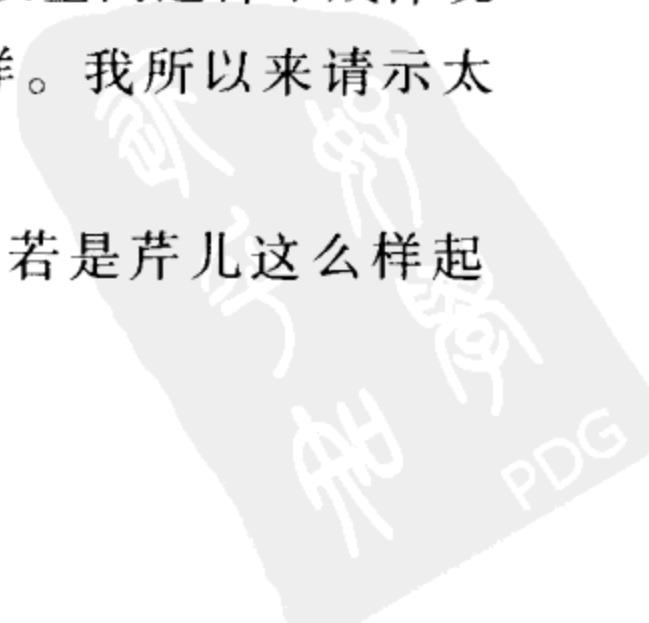
宴海棠贾母赏花妖 失宝玉通灵知奇祸

话说赖大带了贾芹出来，一宿无话，静候贾政回来。单是那些女尼女道重进园来，都喜欢的了不得，欲要到各处逛逛，明日预备进宫。不料赖大便吩咐了看园的婆子并小厮看守，惟给了些饭食，却是一步不准走开。那些女孩子摸不着头脑，只得坐着，等到天亮。园里各处的丫头虽都知道拉进女尼们来，预备宫里使唤，却也不能深知原委。

到了明日早起，贾政正要下班，因堂上发下两省城工估销册子，立刻要查核，一时不能回家，便叫人回来告诉贾琏，说：“赖大回来，你务必查问明白。该如何办就如何办了，不必等我。”

贾琏奉命，先替芹儿喜欢，又想到：若是办得一点影儿都没有，又恐贾政生疑，“不如回明二太太，讨个主意办去，便是不合老爷的心，我也不至甚担干系。”主意定了，进内去见王夫人，陈说：“昨日老爷见了揭帖生气，把芹儿和女尼女道等都叫进府来查办。今日老爷没空问这件不成体统的事，叫我来回太太，该怎么便怎么样。我所以来请示太太，这件事如何办理？”

王夫人听了诧异道：“这是怎么说！若是芹儿这么样起



Chapter 94

The Lady Dowager Gives a Feast to Celebrate the Strange Blossoming of the Crab-Apple Trees The Loss of Baoyu's Jade of Spiritual Understanding Heralds Trouble



After Lai Da had taken Jia Qin off, the night passed without incident as they waited for Jia Zheng's return. The novices, overjoyed to be back in the Garden, hoped to have a good look round before going to the Palace the next day. However, Lai Da ordered the matrons and pages there to keep watch and to supply them with food but not allow them to stir a single step. So the girls, although puzzled by this, had to stay there quietly until it was light. The maids in the different lodges in the Garden had heard of their arrival and summons to the Palace, but did not know the real facts of the case.

The next morning, Jia Zheng was about to leave his office when the minister sent him estimates of the costs for public works in two provinces, which he had to check at once before going home. He therefore sent Jia Lian instructions not to wait for his return but to make a thorough investigation as soon as Lai Da was back, and then to take what action he thought fit.

This message pleased Jia Lian on Qin's account. He reflected, "If I hush up this business completely, uncle may smell a rat. I'd better report it to Her Ladyship and do as she suggests; for then even if it's not what he would have done he can't hold *me* to blame." Thus resolved, he went in to see Lady Wang.

"Yesterday the master was angry over that lampoon," he announced, explaining its contents. "He had Qin and the novices brought here for an investigation. Today, as he has no time to look into this scandal, he's told me to report it to you, madam, to do as you think fit. So I've come to ask you how we should deal with this."

"How disgraceful!" exclaimed Lady Wang, very shocked. "If Qin really carried on like that, our family should disown him. But what a



来，这还成咱们家的人了么？但只这个贴帖儿的也可恶！这些话可是混嚼说得的么？你到底问了芹儿有这件事没有呢？”贾琏道：“刚才也问过了。太太想，别说他干了没有，就是干了，一个人干了混账事也肯应承么？但只我想芹儿也不敢行此事：知道那些女孩子都是娘娘一时要叫的，倘或闹出事来，怎么样呢？依侄儿的主见，要问也不难，若问出来，太太怎么个办法呢？”王夫人道：“如今那些女孩子在那里？”贾琏道：“都在园里锁着呢。”王夫人道：“姑娘们知道不知道？”贾琏道：“大约姑娘们也都知道是预备宫里头的话，外头并没提起别的来。”

王夫人道：“很是。这些东西一刻也是留不得的。头里我原要打发他们去来着，都是你们说留着好，如今不是弄出事来了么？你竟叫赖大带了去细细儿的问他的本家儿有人没有，将文书查出，花上几十两银子，雇只船，派个妥当人，送到本地，一概连文书发还了，也落得无事。若是为着一两个不好，个个都押着他们还俗，那又太造孽了；若在这里发给官媒，虽然我们不要身价，他们弄去卖钱，那里顾人的死活呢？芹儿呢，你便狠狠的说他一顿，除了祭祀喜庆，无事叫他不用到这里来。看仔细碰在老爷气头儿上，那可就吃不了兜着走了。也说给账房儿里，把这一项钱粮档子销了。还打发个人到水月庵说：老爷的谕，除了上坟烧纸，要有本家爷们到他那里去，不许接待。若再有一点不好风声，连老姑子一块儿撵出去。”

贾琏一一答应了出去，将王夫人的话告诉赖大，说：“太太的主意，叫你这么办。办完了，告诉我去回太太。你快办



scoundrel that lampoonist must be! How could he sling mud like that? Have you asked Qin whether there's any truth in it?"

"I did ask him just now. But think, madam, who would admit to anything so shameless even if he'd really done it? Still, I don't believe Qin would dare, for fear of the consequences, knowing that Her Highness might send for these girls any time. To my mind, it shouldn't be hard to find out the truth. But suppose it *is* true, madam, what will you do?"

"Where are those girls now?"

"All locked up in the Garden."

"Do the young ladies know about this?"

"I expect they've all heard of their summons to the Palace. There hasn't been any other gossip outside."

"That's good. These creatures mustn't be kept here a moment longer. I was in favour of packing them off before, but the rest of you insisted on keeping them — and now see what's come of it! Tell Lai Da to take them away and carefully trace their families, if they have any. Then let him get out the bonds of those whose families can be found and draw a few dozen taels to hire a boat and send them back, with a reliable escort, to where they came from. When they've all been manumitted that will be the end of that. If we were to force them all to go back to secular life just because one or two of them have gone to the bad, that would be too heartless. And if we made them over to official brokers here, even though *we* didn't ask for any money they'd still sell them, not caring at all whether they lived or died.

"As for Qin, you must give him a good talking to. He's not to show his face here any more, except for sacrifices and celebrations. And he'd better be careful to steer clear of the master if he's in one of his tempers, or else he'll settle Qin's hash! Another thing: tell the accountants' office to cancel this allowance. And send word to Water Moon Convent that, on the master's orders, they're not to receive young gentlemen from our house except when they go to sacrifice at one of the graves there. If there's any more talk we'll drive away the whole lot, including the old abbess."

Jia Lian assented and withdrew to notify Lai Da.

"This is how Her Ladyship wants you to handle this business," he



去罢。回来老爷来，你也按着太太的话回去。”赖大听说，便道：“我们太太真正是个佛心！这班东西还着人送回去。既是太太好心，不得不挑个好人。芹哥儿竟交给二爷开发了罢。那贴帖儿的，奴才想法儿查出来，重重的收拾他才好！”贾琏点头说：“是了。”即刻将贾芹发落。赖大也赶着把女尼等领出，按着主意办去了。

晚上贾政回来，贾琏赖大回明贾政。贾政本是省事的人，听了也便撂开手了。独有那些无赖之徒，听得贾府发出二十四个女孩子来，那个不想？究竟那些人能够回家不能，未知着落，亦难虚拟。

且说紫鹃因黛玉渐好，园中无事，听见女尼等预备宫内使唤，不知何事，便到贾母那边打听打听。恰遇着鸳鸯下来闲着，坐下说闲话儿，提起女尼的事，鸳鸯诧异道：“我并没有听见。回来问问二奶奶就知道了。”

正说着，只见傅试家两个女人过来请贾母的安，鸳鸯要陪了上去。那两个女人因贾母正睡晌觉，就与鸳鸯说了一声儿，回去了。紫鹃问：“这是谁家差来的？”鸳鸯道：“好讨人嫌！家里有了一个女孩儿，长的好些儿，就献宝的似的，常在老太太跟前夸他们姑娘怎么长的好，心地儿怎么好，礼貌





informed him. "When it's done, let me know so that I can report to her. And better see to it quickly; then when the master comes back you can report to him that these were her instructions."

"Our mistress is really a saintly soul!" was Lai Da's comment. "Fancy sending those creatures home, with an escort too! Well, as she's so kind-hearted, I shall have to find some reliable man. As for Master Qin, I'll leave you to deal with him. And I'll try to track down that lampoonist so that we can crack down on him."

Jia Lian nodded and said, "Right."

He lost no time then in dismissing Jia Qin, while Lai Da made haste to take the novices away and deal with them according to his instructions.

That evening when Jia Zheng came back, they reported this to him; and as Jia Zheng disliked trouble, on hearing this he let the matter drop. Of course rogues outside, when they heard that twenty-four girls had been dismissed from the Jia Mansion, all wanted to get their hands on them; so whether they ever reached home or not is uncertain, and we have no means of guessing.

Now that Daiyu's health was improving, Zijuan had time on her hands, and being puzzled by the report that the novices had been summoned to the Palace she went to the old lady's place for news. She happened to find Yuanyang free too, and sitting down to chat she asked her about the nuns.

"This is news to me," said Yuanyang in surprise. "I'll find out later on from Madam Lian."

As they were talking, two serving-women from Fu Shi's family arrived to pay their respects to the Lady Dowager. Yuanyang was taking them there when they heard that the old lady was having a nap, so the women delivered their message to her and left.

"Where are they from?" asked Zijuan.

"They're perfect pests!" Yuanyang told her. "The Fuses have a daughter who is not bad-looking, so they keep coming to praise her to the old lady for her good looks, good heart and good manners. They say she's no chatter-box but a skilled needlewoman, who can write and keep accounts too, most dutiful to her elders and kind to the servants. Each time they



上又好，说话儿又简绝，做活计儿手儿又巧，会写会算，尊长上头最孝敬的，就是待下人也是极和平的，——来了就编这么一大套，常说给老太太听。我听着很烦。这几个老婆子真讨人嫌！我们老太太偏爱听那些个话！老太太也罢了，还有宝玉，素常见了老婆子，便很厌烦的，偏见了他们家的老婆子就不厌烦，你说奇不奇？前儿还来说：他们姑娘现有多少人家儿来求亲，他们老爷总不肯应，心里只要和咱们这样人家作亲才肯。夸奖一回，奉承一回，把老太太的心都说活了。”紫鹃听了一呆，便假意道：“若老太太喜欢，为什么不就给宝玉定了呢？”

鸳鸯正要说出原故，听见上头说：“老太太醒了。”鸳鸯赶着上去，紫鹃只得起身出来。回到园里，一头走，一头想道：“天下莫非只有一个宝玉？你也想他，我也想他！我们家的那一位，越发痴心起来了！看他的那个神情儿，是一定在宝玉身上的了：三番两次的病，可不是为着这个是什么？这家里‘金’的‘银’的还闹不清，再添上一个什么傅姑娘，更了不得了！我看宝玉的心也在我们那一位的身上啊；听着鸳鸯的话，竟是见一个爱一个的！这不是我们姑娘白操了心了吗？”

紫鹃本是想着黛玉，往下一想，连自己也不得主意了，不免神都痴了。要想叫黛玉不用瞎操心呢，又恐怕他烦恼；要是看着他这样，又可怜见儿的。左思右想，一时烦躁起来，自己啐自己道：“你替人耽什么忧！就是林姑娘真配了宝玉，他的那性情儿也是难伏侍的。宝玉性情虽好，又是贪多嚼不烂的。我倒劝人不必瞎操心，我自己才是瞎操心呢！从今以后，我尽我的心伏侍姑娘，其余的事全不管！”这么一想，心里倒觉清静。回到潇湘馆来，见黛玉独自一人，坐在



come they reel all this off, as if offering the old lady some rare treasure. I can't bear listening to them! But although they're such a nuisance, our old lady loves that kind of talk. She isn't the only one either. Even Baoyu who can't abide most old women doesn't mind these from the Fu family. Odd, isn't it? Only the other day they came to say that lots of people are asking for their young lady, but her father won't give his consent — hinting that only a family like ours would be good enough for her. All their praise and flattery are having some effect on the old lady."

Though taken aback, Zijuan asked with a show of indifference, "If she thinks it a good match for Baoyu, then why not fix it up?"

Before Yuanyang could explain someone inside called out, "The old lady's woken!"

Yuanyang hurried in then and Zijuan got up to leave. On her way back to the Garden she ruminated, "Is there only one Baoyu in the world that everybody should want him? And our young lady's the one who dotes on him most. You can see by the way she behaves that she's set her heart on him: why else should she keep falling ill? There's confusion enough here already, what with gold unicorns and gold lockets, without foisting another Miss Fu on us too! I think it's our young lady that Baoyu fancies; but judging by what Yuanyang says, he falls in love with every girl he meets. If so, our young lady's eating her heart out for nothing."

From thinking of Daiyu she went on to wonder what she herself should do, until she felt quite distracted. Though tempted to advise Daiyu to stop caring so much for Baoyu, she was afraid this would upset her; yet seeing her like this made her heart bleed. The more she brooded the more anxious she grew.

"Why worry about someone else?" she scolded herself. "Even if she really marries Baoyu, the way she is it won't be easy to please her; and Baoyu, for all he's good-natured, is too much of a flirt. But here I am hoping she'll stop worrying yet worrying *myself* for nothing! From now on I'll look after her as best I can and not care about anything else."

This conclusion helped to calm her down by the time she reached Bamboo Lodge, where she found Daiyu sitting all by herself on the *kang* sorting out her old poems and essays. She looked up when Zijuan came in.



炕上理从前做过的诗文词稿，抬头见紫鹃进来，便问：“你到那里去了？”紫鹃道：“今儿瞧了瞧姐妹们去。”黛玉道：“可是找袭人姐姐去么？”紫鹃道：“我找他做什么？”

黛玉一想，“这话怎么顺口说出来了呢？”反觉不好意思，便啐道：“你找不找与我什么相干！倒茶去罢。”紫鹃也心里暗笑，出来倒茶。只听园里一叠声乱嚷，不知何故。一面倒茶，一面叫人去打听。回来说道：“怡红院里的海棠本来萎了几棵，也没人去浇灌。昨日宝玉走去瞧，见枝头上好象有了蓓朵儿似的。人都不信，没有理他。忽然今日开的很好的海棠花，众人诧异，都争着去看，连老太太、太太都哄动了，来瞧花儿呢。所以大奶奶叫人收拾园里的树叶子，这些人在那里传唤。”

黛玉也听见了，知道老太太来，便更了衣，叫雪雁去打听：“若是老太太来了，即来告诉我。”雪雁去不多时，便跑来说：“老太太、太太好些人都来了，请姑娘就去罢。”黛玉略自照了一照镜子，掠了一掠鬓发，便扶着紫鹃到怡红院来，已见老太太坐在宝玉常卧的榻上。黛玉便说道：“请老太太安。”退后便见了邢王二夫人，回来与李纨、探春、惜春、邢岫烟彼此问了好。只有凤姐因病未来；史湘云因他叔叔调任回京，接了家去；薛宝琴跟他姐姐家去住了；李家姐妹因见园内多事，李婶娘带了在外居住；所以黛玉今日见的只有数人。



"Where have you been?" she asked.

"To call on some other girls."

"Did you see Sister Xiren?"

"Why should I go to see *her*?"

Daiyu wondered how she had come to blurt out such a question, and in embarrassment she answered curtly, "I don't care *where* you go. Fetch me some tea."

Laughing up her sleeve, Zijuan went out to do this and heard a clamour of voices in the Garden. As she poured the tea she sent someone to find out what had happened.

The girl came back and told her, "Some crab-apple trees in Happy Red Court had withered, and nobody watered them; but yesterday when Baoyu had a look he claimed he saw buds on the branches. No one believed him or paid any attention. Today, all of a sudden, they burst into bloom with lovely crab-apple flowers! People were so amazed that they rushed over there to look. It's caused such a sensation that even the old lady and Her Ladyship are coming to see the flowers. So Madam Zhu's given orders to have the leaves in the Garden swept up, and they were calling servants just now to do this."

Daiyu, overhearing that the old lady was coming, at once changed her clothes and sent Xueyan out to keep watch.

"Tell me as soon as the old lady comes," she said.

It was not long before Xueyan came running back. "The old lady and the mistress have come with quite a party," she announced. "You'd better go right away, miss."

Daiyu glanced at herself in the mirror and smoothed her hair, then took Zijuan's arm to go to Happy Red Court, where she found the Lady Dowager seated on Baoyu's couch. Daiyu paid her respects to her, then to Lady Xing and Lady Wang, after which she greeted Li Wan, Tanchun, Xichun and Xiuyan. The only ones absent were Xifeng, who was unwell; Xiangyun, who had been fetched home now that her uncle had a post in the capital; Baoqin, who was staying with Baochai; and the two Li sisters, who had moved out to live with Aunt Li on account of all the troubles in the Garden. So Daiyu saw only a few of the girls.

For a while they discussed this strange phenomenon of blossom out of



大家说笑了一回，讲究这花开得古怪。贾母道：“这花儿应在三月里开的，如今虽是十一月，因节气迟，还算十月，应着小阳春的天气，因为和暖，开花也是有的。”王夫人道：“老太太见的多，说得是，也不为奇。”邢夫人道：“我听见这花已经萎了一年，怎么这回不应时候儿开了？必有个原故。”李纨笑道：“老太太和太太说的都是。据我的糊涂想头，必是宝玉有喜事来了，此花先来报信。”探春虽不言语，心里想道：“必非好兆。大凡顺者昌，逆者亡；草木知运，不时而发，必是妖孽。”但只不好说出来。独有黛玉听说是喜事，心里触动，便高兴说道：“当初田家有荆树一棵，弟兄三个因分了家，那荆树便枯了；后来感动了他弟兄们，仍旧归在一处，那荆树也就荣了。可知草木也随人的。如今二哥哥认真念书，舅舅喜欢，那棵树也就发了。”贾母王夫人听了喜欢，便说：“林姑娘比方得有理，很有意思。”

正说着，贾赦、贾政、贾环、贾兰都进来看花。贾赦便说：“据我的主意，把他砍去。必是花妖作怪。”贾政道：“‘见怪不怪，其怪自败。’不用砍他，随他去就是了。”贾母听见，便说：“谁在这里混说？人家有喜事好处，什么怪不怪的！若有好事，你们享去；若是不好，我一个人当去。你们不许混说！”贾政听了，不敢言语，赧赧的同贾赦等走了出来。





season.

"Crab-apple should blossom in the third month," said the old lady. "Although it's now the eleventh, because the solar seasons are late this year it's actually like the tenth, and we're having an Indian summer which makes it warm enough for trees to blossom."

"You've seen so much, madam, you must be right," Lady Wang concurred. "It's not all that remarkable."

"I heard this plant had withered for a whole year," said Lady Xing. "Why is it blossoming *now*? There must be some reason."

"I'm sure the old lady and mistress are right," put in Li Wan with a smile. "In my foolish opinion, this blossoming shows that something good is coming Baoyu's way."

Tanchun remained silent, thinking, "It can't be a good omen. All living things which obey Heaven's will must prosper, while all which flout it must die — even plants know that. So unseasonable blossom must be an evil omen." She could not say this, however.

Daiyu, elated by this talk of good luck for Baoyu, said gaily, "The Tian family of old had a redbud tree which withered when the three brothers split up the property. That made them go back in remorse to live together, and then the tree blossomed again. This shows that plants change in accordance with human beings. Now Cousin Bao is studying hard and uncle is pleased with him, so these crab-apples have blossomed again."

The old lady and Lady Wang were delighted with this explanation. "Daiyu's made an apt comparison," they said. "Most interesting!"

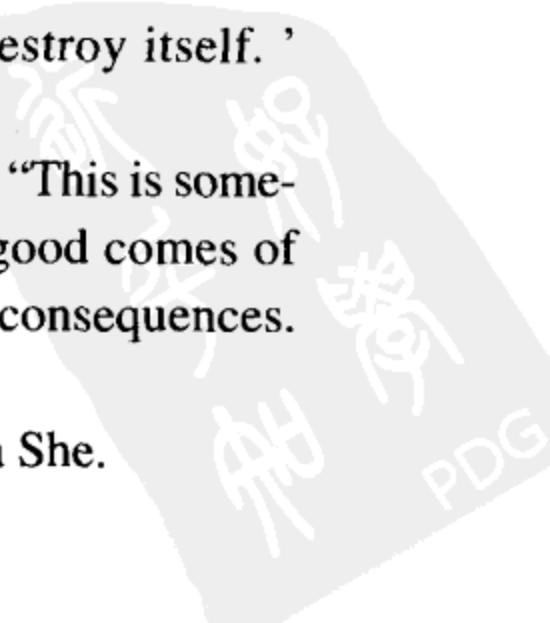
As they were talking, Jia She and Jia Zheng arrived with Huan and Lan to look at the flowers.

"If I were you, I'd cut them down," said Jia She. "It must be some flower-monster making trouble."

Jia Zheng retorted, "Ignore a monster and it will destroy itself. Just let it be. There's no need to cut it down."

"What nonsense are you talking?" his mother protested. "This is something auspicious and good; there's no monster here. If good comes of this, you can enjoy it. If bad comes of it, I'll take all the consequences. But I won't have you talking such rubbish!"

Thus silenced, Jia Zheng withdrew sheepishly with Jia She.



那贾母高兴，叫人：“传话到厨房里，快快预备酒席，大家赏花。”叫“宝玉、环儿、兰儿各人做一首诗志喜。林姑娘的病才好，别叫他费心；若高兴，给你们改改。”对着李纨道：“你们都陪我喝酒。”李纨答应了“是”，便笑对探春笑道：“都是你闹的。”探春道：“饶不叫我们做诗，怎么我们闹的？”李纨道：“海棠社不是你起的么？如今那棵海棠也要来入社了。”大家听着，都笑了。

一时，摆上酒菜，一面喝着。彼此都要讨老太太的喜欢，大家说些兴头话。宝玉上来斟了酒，便立成了四句诗，写出来念与贾母听，道：

海棠何事忽摧陨？今日繁花为底开？
应是北堂增寿考，一阳旋复占先梅。

贾环也写了来，念道：

草木逢春当茁芽，海棠未发候偏差。
人间奇事知多少，冬月开花独我家。

贾兰恭楷誊正，呈与贾母。贾母命李纨念道：

烟凝媚色春前萎，霜浥微红雪后开。
莫道此花知识浅，欣荣预佐合欢杯。

贾母听毕，便说：“我不大懂诗，听去倒是兰儿的好，环儿做的不好。——都上来吃饭罢。”宝玉看见贾母喜欢，更是兴





Then the old lady in high spirits told them to order the kitchen to prepare a feast at once, so that they could enjoy the flowers.

“Baoyu, Huan and Lan must each write a poem to commemorate this happy event,” she decreed. “Daiyu’s just over her illness, so we mustn’t trouble her to write; but if she’s in the mood she can polish your lines.” She told Li Wan, “All of you must drink with me.”

Li Wan agreed to this, then said teasingly to Tanchun, “This is all *your* fault.”

“We’ve not even been allowed to write poems,” retorted Tanchun. “So surely this has nothing to do with *us*?”

“Didn’t you start the Begonia Society? Now these crab-apples¹ want to join your club too.”

At that everybody laughed.

Presently wine and dishes were served. And as they drank they all tried to please the old lady by cheerful talk. Baoyu poured wine for the others, then made up and wrote out a quatrain which he read to his grandmother. It was as follows:

What made the crab-apple wither away?
And today why have fresh blossoms come?
To foretell a long life for our Old Ancestress
It is flowering anew, ahead of the plum.

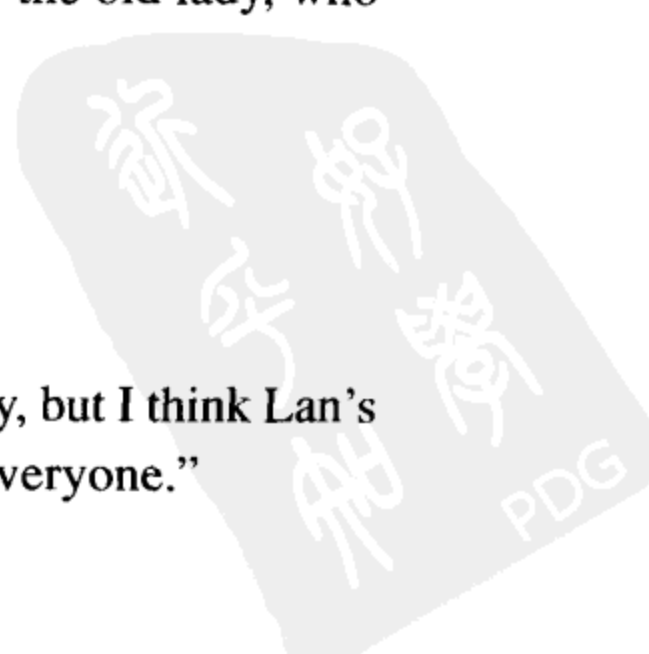
Huan also wrote and read out this poem:

Crab-apples should burgeon in the spring,
But ours were bare this year.
The world is full of strange phenomena,
Yet only here do winter blooms appear.

Lan wrote out his verse neatly and presented it to the old lady, who made Li Wan read it out as follows:

Its misty charm had faded by last spring,
But after snow and frost pink blooms unfold.
Do not accuse this flower of ignorance—
Good fortune at this feast it has foretold.

The old lady said, “I don’t know much about poetry, but I think Lan’s is the best. Huan’s is no good. Now come and eat, everyone.”





头，因想起：“晴雯死的那年，海棠死的；今日海棠复荣，我们院内这些人，自然都好，但是晴雯不能像花的死而复生了！”顿觉转喜为悲。忽又想起前日巧姐提凤姐要把五儿补人，“或此花为他而开，也未可知。”却又转悲为喜，依旧说笑。

贾母还坐了半天，然后扶了珍珠回去了，王夫人等跟着过来。只见平儿笑嘻嘻的迎上来，说：“我们奶奶知道老太太在这里赏花，自己不得来，叫奴才来伏侍老太太、太太们。还有两匹红送给宝二爷包裹这花，当作贺礼。”袭人过来接了，呈与贾母看。贾母笑道：“偏是凤丫头行出点事儿来，叫人看着又体面，又新鲜，很有趣儿！”袭人笑着向平儿道：“回去替宝二爷给二奶奶道谢：要有喜，大家喜！”贾母听了，笑道：“暖哟！我还忘了呢！凤丫头虽病着，还是他想的到，送的也巧！”一面说着，众人就随着去了。

平儿私与袭人道：“奶奶说，这花儿开的怪，叫你铰块红绸子挂挂，就应在喜事上去了。以后也不必只管当作奇事混说。”袭人点头答应，送了平儿出去不提。

且说那日宝玉本来穿着一裹圆的皮袄在家歇息，因见花开，只管出来看一回、赏一回、叹一回、爱一回的，心中无数悲喜离合，都弄到这株花上去了。忽然听说贾母要来，便



Baoyu was pleased to see her in a good mood until it occurred to him, "The crab-apple died at the same time as Qingwen. Now that it's blossoming again, of course that augurs well for us in this compound, but it can't bring Qingwen back to life like this flower." At once his joy turned to sadness, till he remembered Qiaojie telling him that Xifeng would be sending Wuer to take Hongyu's place. "This flower may be blossoming for *her*," he thought, and his spirits rising again he chatted with the rest of them as before.

After some time the old lady left, leaning on Zhenzhu's arm and accompanied by Lady Wang and the others. On their way back Pinger accosted them.

"Our mistress heard that the old lady was enjoying the flowers here," she said with a smile. "As she couldn't come herself, she's sent me to help wait on Your Ladyships. Here are two rolls of red silk too, a congratulatory gift for Master Bao to drape over the trees."

Xiren took the silk and showed it to the old lady, who commented laughingly, "Whatever Xifeng does is in good form, besides being original and great fun!"

Xiren told Pinger, "When you go back please thank Madam Lian for Master Bao. If we're to have good fortune, we'll all share it."

"Aha!" chuckled the old lady. "I forgot that. Though Xifeng is unwell she's still so thoughtful. This was just the present to give."

She went on then and the others followed her, while Pinger confided to Xiren, "Our mistress says this blossoming now is odd; so she wants you to cut strips of that red silk and hang them over the trees to bring good luck. And don't let anyone spread foolish talk about this being a miracle."

Xiren nodded agreement and then saw her off.

Baoyu had been resting at home that day, wearing a fur-lined gown, when he noticed that the crab-apples had blossomed and went out to look at them, sighing with admiration. So enchanted with them was he that he became quite wrapped up in their flowers, which evoked in him mixed feelings of grief and joy. At the sudden news that the old lady was coming, he changed into a fox-fur archer's jacket and black fox-fur coat,



去换了一件狐腋箭袖，罩一件玄狐腿外褂，出来迎接贾母。匆匆穿换，未将“通灵宝玉”挂上。及至后来贾母去了，仍旧换衣，袭人见宝玉脖子上没有挂着，便问：“那块玉呢？”宝玉道：“刚才忙乱换衣，摘下来放在炕桌上，我没有带。”袭人回看桌上，并没有玉，便向各处找寻，踪影全无，吓得袭人满身冷汗。宝玉道：“不用着急，少不得在屋里的。问他们就知道了。”

袭人当作麝月等藏起吓他玩，便向麝月等笑着说道：“小蹄子们！玩呢，到底有个玩法。把这件东西藏在那里了？别真弄丢了，那可就大家活不成了！”麝月等都正色道：“这是那里的话？玩是玩，笑是笑，这个事非同儿戏，你可别混说！你自己昏了心了！想想罢，想想搁在那里了？这会子又混赖人了！”袭人见他这般光景，不像是玩话，便着急道：“皇天菩萨！小祖宗！你到底撂在那里了？”宝玉道：“我记的明明儿放在炕桌上，你们到底找啊。”

袭人麝月等也不敢叫人知道，大家偷偷儿的各处搜寻。闹了大半天，毫无影响，甚至翻箱倒笼，实在没处去找，便疑到方才这些人进来，不知谁检了去了。袭人说道：“进来的，谁不知道这玉是性命似的的东西呢？谁敢检了去！你们好歹先别声张，快到各处问去。若是姐妹们检着和我们玩呢，你们给他磕个头，要了来；要是小丫头们偷了去，问出来，也不回上头，不论做些什么送他换了来，都使得的。这可不是小事！真要丢了这个，比丢了宝二爷的还利害呢！”



then went out so hurriedly to welcome her that he omitted to put on his Precious Jade of Spiritual Understanding. Not till the old lady had left and he had changed back into a gown did Xiren see that the pendant which usually hung around his neck was missing.

“Where is your jade?” she asked.

“When I changed just now in such a hurry, I took it off and put it on the small table on the *kang* instead of wearing it.”

Xiren could not see it on the small table. She searched the whole room, but there was no trace of it. Dismay made her break out into a cold sweat.

“Don’t worry,” said Baoyu. “It’s bound to be somewhere here. Ask the others. They must know.”

It occurred to Xiren that one of the other girls must have hidden it to tease her. “You bitches!” she said playfully to Sheyue and the rest. “What sort of joke is this to play? Where have you hidden it? If it really got lost, that would be the end of us all!”

“What are you talking about?” they answered seriously. “Joking is all very well, but this is no joking matter. Don’t talk nonsense. You must be crazy! Better think back to where you put it instead of accusing *us*.”

“Heavens!” cried Xiren anxiously, seeing them so much in earnest. “Where exactly did you put it, Master Bao?”

“I remember quite clearly putting it on that table,” he assured her. “Make a good search for it.”

Not daring to let outsiders know, Xiren, Sheyue, Qiuwen and the other girls quietly searched the whole place. They hunted around for hours, even turning out cases and crates — but all in vain. When the jade was nowhere to be found, they wondered if one of their visitors that day could have taken it.

But Xiren said, “All of them know how precious this jade is. Who’d dare take it? You mustn’t, for goodness’s sake, let word of this get out, but go and make inquiries at different households. If one of the other girls took it to play a trick on us, kowtow to her and beg her to return it. And if you find out that one of the little maids stole it, don’t report it to the mistresses but give her something in exchange for it. This isn’t just anything! If it’s really lost, that’s more serious than losing Master Bao!”



麝月秋纹刚要往外走，袭人又赶出来嘱咐道：“头里在这里吃饭的倒别先问去。找不成，再惹出些风波来，更不好了。”麝月等依言，分头各处追问。人人不晓，个个惊疑。二人连忙回来，俱目瞪口呆，面面相窥，宝玉也吓怔了，袭人急的只是干哭。找是没处找，回又不敢回：怡红院里的人吓的一个个像木雕泥塑一般。

大家正在发呆，只见各处知道的都来了。探春叫把园门关上，先叫个老婆子带着两个丫头，再往各处去寻去；一面又叫告诉众人：“若谁找出来，重重的赏他。”大家头宗要脱干系，二宗听见重赏，不顾命的混找了一遍，甚至于茅厕里都找到了。谁知那块玉竟像绣花针儿一般，找了一天，总无影响。

李纨急了，说：“这件事不是玩的，我要说句无礼的话了。”众人道：“什么话？”李纨道：“事情到了这里，也顾不得了。现在园里，除了宝玉都是女人。要求各位姐姐、妹妹、姑娘都要叫跟来的丫头脱了衣服，大家搜一搜。若没有，再叫丫头们去搜那些老婆子并粗使的丫头，不知使得使不得？”大家说道：“这话也说的有理。现在人多手乱，鱼龙混杂，倒是这么着，他们也洗洗清。”探春独不言语。

那些丫头们也都愿意洗净自己。先是平儿起。平儿说道：“打我先搜起。”于是各人自己解怀。李纨一气儿混搜。探春嗔着李纨道：“大嫂子，你也学那起不成材料的样子来

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As Sheyue and Qiuwen were leaving, she hurried after them with a final warning: "Don't start by asking those who came to the feast. Because then, if you can't find it, that will cause more trouble and make matters worse."

Sheyue and Qiuwen agreed and went off separately to make inquiries; but nobody had seen the jade, and they were all alarmed. The two of them hurried back to eye each other blankly in consternation. By now Baoyu was alarmed too, while Xiren could only sob in desperation. The jade had vanished, and they dared not report it. All the inmates of Happy Red Court were petrified.

While they were in this state of stupefaction, along came some people who had heard of their loss. Tanchun ordered the Garden gate to be closed and sent an old serving-woman with two young maids to make another comprehensive search, promising a handsome reward to anyone who found the jade. Eagerness to clear themselves and receive a reward made everyone search frantically high and low — they even scoured the privies. But it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. They searched all day in vain.

"This is no laughing matter," said Li Wan in desperation. "I've a blunt proposal to make."

"What is it?" the others asked.

"Things have come to such a pass, we can't be too nice. Now apart from Baoyu all the others in the Garden are women. I'm going to ask all you girls, as well as the maids you brought with you, to take off your clothes to be searched. If the jade isn't found, we'll tell the maids to search the serving-women and the maids doing the rough work. What do you say?"

"That's an idea," they agreed. "With such a crowd of us here we're a mixed lot, and this would be a way to clear ourselves."

Only Tanchun made no comment.

As the maids also wanted to clear themselves of suspicion, Pinger volunteered to be the first to be searched. Then the others stripped too, and Li Wan searched them in turn.

"Sister-in-law!" snapped Tanchun. "Where did you learn to behave in this scandalous way? If anyone stole it she wouldn't keep it on her,



了!那个人既偷了去还肯藏在身上?况且这件东西,在家里是宝,到了外头不知道的是废物,偷他做什么?我想来必是有人使促狭。”

众人听说,又见环儿不在这里,昨儿是他满屋里乱跑,都疑到他身上,只是不肯说出来。探春又道:“使促狭的只有环儿。你们叫个人去悄悄的叫了他来,背地里哄着他,叫他拿出来,然后吓着他,叫他别声张,就完了。”大家点头。李纨便向平儿道:“这件事还得你去才弄的明白。”平儿答应,就赶着去了。不多时,同着贾环来了。众人假意装出没事的样子,叫人沏了茶,搁在里间屋里。众人故意搭趣走开,原叫平儿哄他。

平儿便笑着向贾环道:“你二哥哥的玉丢了,你瞧见了没有?”贾环便急的紫涨了脸,瞪着眼,说道:“人家丢了东西,你怎么又叫我来查问疑我!我是犯过案的贼么?”平儿见这样子,倒不敢再问,便又陪笑道:“不是这么说。怕三爷要拿了去吓他们,所以白问问瞧见了没有,好叫他们找。”贾环道:“他的玉在他身上,看见没看见该问他,怎么问我呢?你们都捧着!得了什么不问我,丢了东西就来问我!”说着,起身就走。众人不好拦他。

这里宝玉倒急了,说道:“都是这劳什子闹事!我也不要他了,你们也不用闹了。环儿一去,必是嚷的满院里都知道了,这可不是闹事了么?”袭人等急的又哭道:“小祖宗儿,

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would she? Besides, this jade may be treasured here but to outsiders not in the know it's quite useless, so why should anyone steal it? I'm sure that someone is up to monkey tricks."

When they heard this and noticed Huan's absence — though earlier on he had been running all over the place — they suspected him but were unwilling to say so.

"Huan's the only one who'd play such a trick," Tanchun continued. "Send somebody to fetch him quietly and persuade him to return it; then give him a scare to make him keep his mouth shut, and that will be that."

The others nodded approval.

Li Wan told Pinger, "You're the only one who can get the truth out of him."

Pinger agreed to try and hurried off, coming back before long with Jia Huan. The rest pretended that nothing was amiss and told maids to serve him tea in the inner room. Then they excused themselves, leaving him to Pinger.

"Your Brother Bao has lost his jade," she told him with a smile. "Have you seen it?"

Jia Huan flushed scarlet and glared.

"When he loses something, why suspect *me*?" he protested. "Am I a convicted thief?"

He looked so worked up that Pinger dared not press him. "I didn't mean that,"

She explained with a smile. "I thought you might have taken it to scare them; that's why I simply asked if you'd seen it or not, to help them find it."

"He was the one wearing the jade, so he's the one you should ask instead of me. You all make so much of him! When there's something good going, you don't ask me to share it; but when anything's lost, I'm the one you ask about it!" He got up and marched out, and they could not stop him.

"All this trouble's due to that silly thing!" burst out Baoyu. "I don't want it, so you needn't make such a fuss. When Huan gets back he's bound to tell everyone and raise a fearful rumpus."

Weeping in desperation Xiren said, "You may not care that the jade's



你看这玉丢了没要紧；要是上头知道了，我们这些人就要粉身碎骨了！”说着，便嚎啕大哭起来。

众人更加着急，明知此事掩饰不来，只得要商议定了话，回来好回贾母诸人。宝玉道：“你们竟也不用商量，硬说我砸了就完了。”平儿道：“我的爷！好轻巧话儿！上头要问为什么砸的呢？他们也是个死啊！倘或要起砸破的碴儿来，那又怎么样呢？”宝玉道：“不然，就说我出门丢了。”众人一想：“这句话倒还混的过去，但只这两天又没上学，又没往别处去。”宝玉道：“怎么没有？大前儿还到临安伯府里听戏去了呢。就说那日丢的就完了。”探春道：“那也不妥。既是前儿丢的，为什么当日不来回？”

众人正在胡思乱想要装点撒谎，只听见赵姨娘的声儿，哭着喊着走来，说：“你们丢了东西，自己不找，怎么叫人背地里拷问环儿！我把环儿带了来，索性交给你们这一起淤上水的。该杀该剐，随你们罢！”说着，将环儿一推，说：“你是个贼！快快的招罢！”气的环儿也哭喊起来。

李纨正要劝解，丫头来说：“太太来了。”袭人等此时无地可容。宝玉等赶忙出来迎接。赵姨娘暂且也不敢作声，跟了出来。王夫人见众人都有惊惶之色，才信方才听见的话，便道：“那块玉真丢了么？”众人都不敢作声。王夫人走进屋





lost, Little Ancestor, but if this comes to the mistresses' ears it'll be the death of us!" She broke down and sobbed.

Now that it was clear that this could not be hushed up, feeling even more worried they discussed how best to report it to the old lady and other mistresses.

"There's no need to discuss it," expostulated Baoyu. "Just say I've smashed it."

"How casually you're taking it, sir!" rejoined Pinger. "Suppose they ask why you smashed it? These girls will still be the ones to take the blame. And suppose they ask to see the broken bits?"

"Well then, say I lost it outside."

That sounded more plausible, until they remembered that Baoyu had not been to school for a couple of days or paid any visits outside. They pointed this out.

"That's not true," he remonstrated. "Three days ago I went to see the opera in the Duke of Linan's mansion. Just say I lost it that day."

"That won't do," countered Tanchun. "If you lost it then, why didn't you report it at the time?"

They were racking their brains to think up some good story when they heard sobbing and wailing — it was Concubine Zhao approaching.

"You lose something, yet instead of looking for it you torture my Huan behind my back!" she screamed. "I've brought him here to hand him over to you arse-lickers. You can kill him or slice him to pieces just as you please!" With that she shoved Huan forward. "You're a thief!" she cried. "Own up, quick."

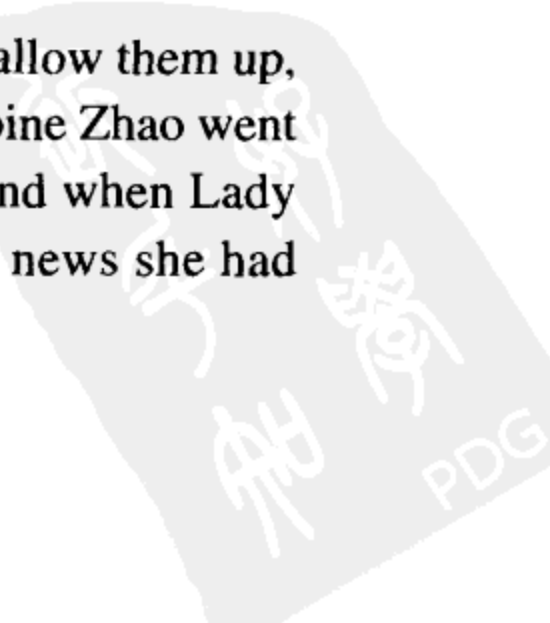
Then Huan started crying too from mortification.

Before Li Wan could placate them a maid announced, "Here comes the mistress!"

Xiren and the other maids wished the earth would swallow them up, but they had to hurry out with Baoyu to meet her. Concubine Zhao went with them, afraid to say any more for the time being. And when Lady Wang saw the panic they were in, she realized that the news she had heard was true.

"Is the jade really lost?" she demanded.

No one dared answer.





里坐下，便叫袭人，慌的袭人连忙跪下，含泪要禀。王夫人道：“你起来，快快叫人细细的找去，一忙乱倒不好了。”袭人哽咽难言。

宝玉恐袭人直告诉出来，便说道：“太太，这事不与袭人相干，是我前日到临安伯府里听戏在路上丢了。”王夫人道：“为什么那日不找呢？”宝玉道：“我怕他们知道，没有告诉他们。我叫焙茗等在外头各处找过的。”王夫人道：“胡说！如今脱换衣服，不是袭人他们伏侍的么？大凡哥儿出门回来，手巾荷包短了，还要个明白，何况这块玉不见了！难道不问么？”宝玉无言可答。赵姨娘听见，便得意了，忙接口道：“外头丢了东西，也赖环儿——”话未说完，被王夫人喝道：“这里说这个，你且说那些没要紧的话！”赵姨娘便也不敢言语了。还是李纨探春从实的告诉了王夫人一遍。王夫人也急的眼中落泪，索性要回明了贾母，去问邢夫人那边来的这些人去。

凤姐病中，也听见宝玉失玉，知道王夫人过来，料躲不住，便扶了丰儿来到园里。正值王夫人起身要走，凤姐姣怯怯的说：“请太太安。”宝玉等过来问了凤姐好。王夫人因说道：“你也听见了么？这可不是奇事吗？刚才眼错不见就丢了，再找不着。你去想想：打老太太那边的丫头起，至你们平儿，谁的手不稳，谁的心促狭；我要回了老太太，认真的查





Lady Wang went inside and sat down, then called for Xiren, who fell on her knees in confusion, tears in her eyes, preparing to make her report.

“Get up,” ordered Lady Wang, “Have another careful search made. It’s no use losing your heads.”

Xiren sobbed, unable to speak.

For fear she might tell the truth Baoyu put in. “This has nothing to do with Xiren, madam. I lost it on the road the other day when I went to the duke’s mansion to see the opera.”

“Why didn’t you look for it then?”

“I was afraid to let on, so I didn’t tell them. Instead I asked Beiming and the rest to hunt for it outside.”

“Nonsense!” his mother exclaimed. “Don’t Xiren and the other girls help you off with your clothes? Whenever you come back from outside, if so much as a handkerchief or pouch is missing they have to look into it, not to mention that jade! They would certainly have asked about it.”

This silenced Baoyu but pleased Concubine Zhao.

“If he lost it outside why should they accuse Huan...” she began.

Before she could finish Lady Wang rapped out, “We’re talking about the jade. Stop drivelling!”

With Concubine Zhao crushed, Li Wan and Tanchun told Lady Wang all that had happened, making her shed tears in dismay. She decided to report this to the old lady so that she could send people to question those members of Lady Xing’s household who had come with her to Happy Red Court that morning.

Just then, however, along came Xifeng, having heard about the loss of Baoyu’s jade and Lady Wang’s visit to the Garden. Although still an invalid, feeling unable to hold aloof she now arrived leaning on Fenger’s arm, just as Lady Wang was about to leave.

“How are you madam?” she faltered.

Baoyu and the others went over and greeted her.

“So you’ve heard too?” said Lady Wang. “Isn’t it odd? It just vanished all of a sudden and can’t be found. Think now: which of the maids from the old lady’s place down to your Pinger is unreliable and a mischief-maker? I shall have to report this to the old lady and organize a



出来才好。不然，是断了宝玉的命根子了！”凤姐回道：“咱们家人多手杂，自古说的，‘知人知面不知心’，那里保的住谁是好的？但只一吵嚷，已经都知道了，偷玉的人，要叫太太查出来，明知是死无葬身之地，他着了急，反要毁坏了灭口，那时可怎么处呢？据我的糊涂想头，只说宝玉本不爱他，撂丢了，也没有什么要紧，只要大家严密些，别叫老太太老爷知道；这么说了，暗暗的派人去各处察访，哄骗出来，那时玉也可得，罪名也可定；不知太太心里怎么样？”

王夫人迟了半日，才说道：“你这话虽也有理，但只是老爷跟前怎么瞒的过呢？”便叫环儿来说道：“你二哥哥的玉丢了，白问了你一句，怎么你就乱嚷？要是嚷破了，人家把那个毁坏了，我看你活得活不得！”贾环吓得哭道：“我再不敢嚷了！”赵姨娘听了，那里还敢言语。王夫人便吩咐众人道：“想来自然有没找到的地方儿。好端端的在家里的，还怕他飞到那里去不成？只是不许声张。限袭人三天内给我找出来。要是三天找不着，只怕也瞒不住，大家那就不用过安静日子了！”说着，便叫凤姐儿跟到邢夫人那边，商议跽缉不提。

这里李纨等纷纷议论，便传唤看园子的一干人来，叫把园门锁上，快传林之孝家的来，悄悄儿的告诉了他，叫他：“吩咐前后门上：三天之内，不论男女下人，从里头可以走动，要出去时，一概不许放出。只说里头丢了东西，等这件东西有了着落，然后放人出来。”林之孝家的答应了“是”，因说：“前儿奴才家里也丢了一件不要紧的东西，林之孝必要



thorough-going search. Otherwise, Baoyu's life may be cut short!"

"Our household's so big, it's a mixed lot," Xifeng answered. "As the proverb says, you can't judge by appearances, madam. Who can guarantee that everyone here is honest? But if we raise a hue and cry so that this becomes public knowledge, the thief will realize that if you find him out — or her, as the case may be — he will have to pay for it with his life, and in desperation he may smash the jade to destroy the evidence. Then what shall we do? In my foolish opinion, we'd better say that Baoyu never liked it and its loss is of no consequence, so long as we all keep this secret and don't let the old lady and the master know. At the same time, we can secretly send people to search high and low and trick the thief into producing it. Once we have the jade back, we can punish the culprit. What do you think of this, madam?"

After some thought Lady Wang answered, "You're right of course, but how are we to keep this from the master?" She called Huan over and told him, "Your brother's jade is lost. Why should you raise such a row when simply asked a question? If you spread the news and the thief smashes the jade, I can't see you living it down!"

In his terror Huan sobbed, "I won't breathe a word about it!"

And Concubine Zhao was too cowed to say any more.

Lady Wang now told the others, "There must be places you haven't searched. It was here all right, so how could it fly away? But the thing is to keep this quiet. I give you three days, Xiren, to find it for me. If you still haven't recovered it by then, I'm afraid we shan't be able to hush it up and there will be no peace for anyone!" She told Xifeng to go with her to Lady Xing's house to discuss plans for a search.

Li Wan and the others talked it over again, then summoned the servants in charge of the Garden and made them lock the gates. Next they sent for Lin Zhixiao's wife and told her to order the gatekeepers both at the front and the back not to let out any domestics, whether male or female, for the next three days. All were to remain in the Garden until something missing had been found again.

"Very well," said Mrs. Lin, adding, "the other day we lost something at home of no great value. But to trace it my husband went out to consult a fortune-teller, a man called Iron-Mouth Liu, who cleared up the prob-



明白，上街去找了一个测字的。那人叫做什么刘铁嘴，测了一个字，说的很明白，回来按着一找，就找着了。”袭人听见，便央及林家的道：“好林奶奶！出去快求林大爷替我们问问去！”那林之孝家的答应着出去了。

那岫烟道：“若说那外头测字打卦的，是不中用的。我在南边闻妙玉能扶乩，何不烦他问一问？况且我听见说，这块玉原有仙机，想来问的出来。”众人都诧异道：“咱们常见的，从没有听他说起。”麝月便忙问岫烟道：“想来别人求他是不肯的，好姑娘，我给姑娘磕个头，求姑娘就去！若问出来了，我一辈子总不忘你的恩！”说着，赶忙就要磕下头去，岫烟连忙拦住。黛玉等也都怂恿着岫烟速往栊翠庵去。

一面林之孝家的进来说道：“姑娘们大喜！林之孝测了字回来，说这玉是丢不了的，将来横竖有人送还来的。”众人听了，也都半信半疑。惟有袭人麝月喜欢的了不得。探春便问：“测的是什么字？”林之孝家的道：“他的话多，奴才也学不上来。记得是拈了个赏人东西的‘赏’字。那刘铁嘴也不问，便说：‘丢了东西不是？’”李纨道：“这就算好。”林之孝家的道：“他还说：“‘赏’字上头一个‘小’字，底下一个‘口’字，这件东西，很可嘴里放得，必是个珠子宝石。”众人听了，夸赞道：“真是神仙！往下怎么说？”林之孝家的道：“他说：‘底下“贝”字拆开，不成一个“见”字，可不是“不见”了？’因上头拆了‘當’字，叫快到当铺里找去。”



lem for us by analysing a character. And sure enough, when Zhixiao came back and looked where he suggested, we found the thing at once.”

“Good Mrs. Lin,” Xiren begged her, “do go and get your husband to consult that fortune-teller for us now.”

Mrs. Lin agreed readily to this and left.

“Actually those fortune-tellers and diviners outside are no use,” said Xiuyan. “When I was down south, I heard that Miaoyu was able to divine by writing on sand. Why don’t we consult *her*? Besides, this jade is said to be supernatural, so the oracle should disclose its whereabouts.”

The others rejoined in surprise, “We often see her but never heard tell of this.”

“I doubt if she’ll agree if we others ask her, miss,” said Sheyue to Xiuyan. “So let me kowtow to you and beg you to take this errand on yourself. If she clears up this mystery, we shall never forget your kindness as long as we live!”

She knelt down to kowtow but Xiuyan stopped her, while Daiyu and the other girls also urged her to go straight to Green Lattice Nunnery.

Just then, however, Mrs. Lin came back. “Good news, young ladies!” she cried. “My husband’s been to see the fortune-teller and he says the jade can’t be lost: someone is bound to return it.”

Most of them found this hard to believe, but Xiren and Sheyue were overjoyed.

“What character did he analyse?” Tanchun asked.

“He said a whole lot, too much for me to repeat,” answered Mrs. Lin. “I remember that the character he picked was *shang* meaning ‘gift.’ Then, without asking any questions, that Iron Mouth Liu said, ‘You’ve lost something, I take it.’”

“A good guess!” exclaimed Li Wan.

Mrs. Lin continued, “Then he said the upper part of the character is the *xiao* for ‘small’ with the *kou* for ‘mouth’ below; so the thing should be small enough to put in the mouth and must be some sort of jewel.”

“That’s really miraculous!” they cried. “What else did he say?”

“The lower half of the character was a stroke or two short of *jian* meaning ‘see,’ so the object must have disappeared from sight. And as the top half was the same as in *dang* for ‘pawn,’ we should look for the



““赏”字加一“人”字，可不是“赏”字？只要找着当铺就有人，有了人便赎了来：可不是偿还了吗？”众人道：“既这么着，就先往左近找起。横竖几个当铺都找遍了，少不得就有了。咱们有了东西，再问人就容易了。”李纨道：“只要东西，那怕不问人都使得。林嫂子，你去就把测字的话快告诉了二奶奶，回了太太，先叫太太放心。就叫二奶奶快派人查去。”林家的答应了便走。

众人略安了一点儿神，呆呆的等岫烟回来。正呆等时，只见跟宝玉的焙茗在门外招手儿，叫小丫头子快出来。那小丫头赶忙的出去了。焙茗便说道：“你快进去告诉我们二爷和里头太太、奶奶、姑娘们，天大的喜事！”那小丫头子道：“你快说罢！怎么这么累赘？”焙茗笑着拍手道：“我告诉姑娘，姑娘进去回了，咱们两个人都得赏钱呢！你打量是什么事情？宝二爷的那块玉呀，我得了准信儿来了。”未知如何，下回分解。





missing object in a pawnshop. When we add *ren*, a 'man,' to *shang*, it gives *chang* meaning to 'redeem.'² So once we hit on the right pawnshop, we'll find whoever pawned it and then we can redeem it."

"In that case," said the others, "let's first look near by. If we search the neighbourhood pawnshops we're bound to find it. Once we have the jade, it'll be easy to question the thief."

"Provided we get the jade back, it doesn't matter whether we question the thief or not," was Li Wan's opinion. "Please go right away, Mrs. Lin, to tell Madam Lian what the fortune-teller says, and report it to Her Ladyship too so that she can stop worrying. Then ask Madam Lian to send men to investigate."

Mrs. Lin went off on this errand.

Feeling a little more reassured, they were waiting blankly for Xiuyan's return when they saw Baoyu's page Beiming beckoning outside the door to a young maid. The girl at once went out.

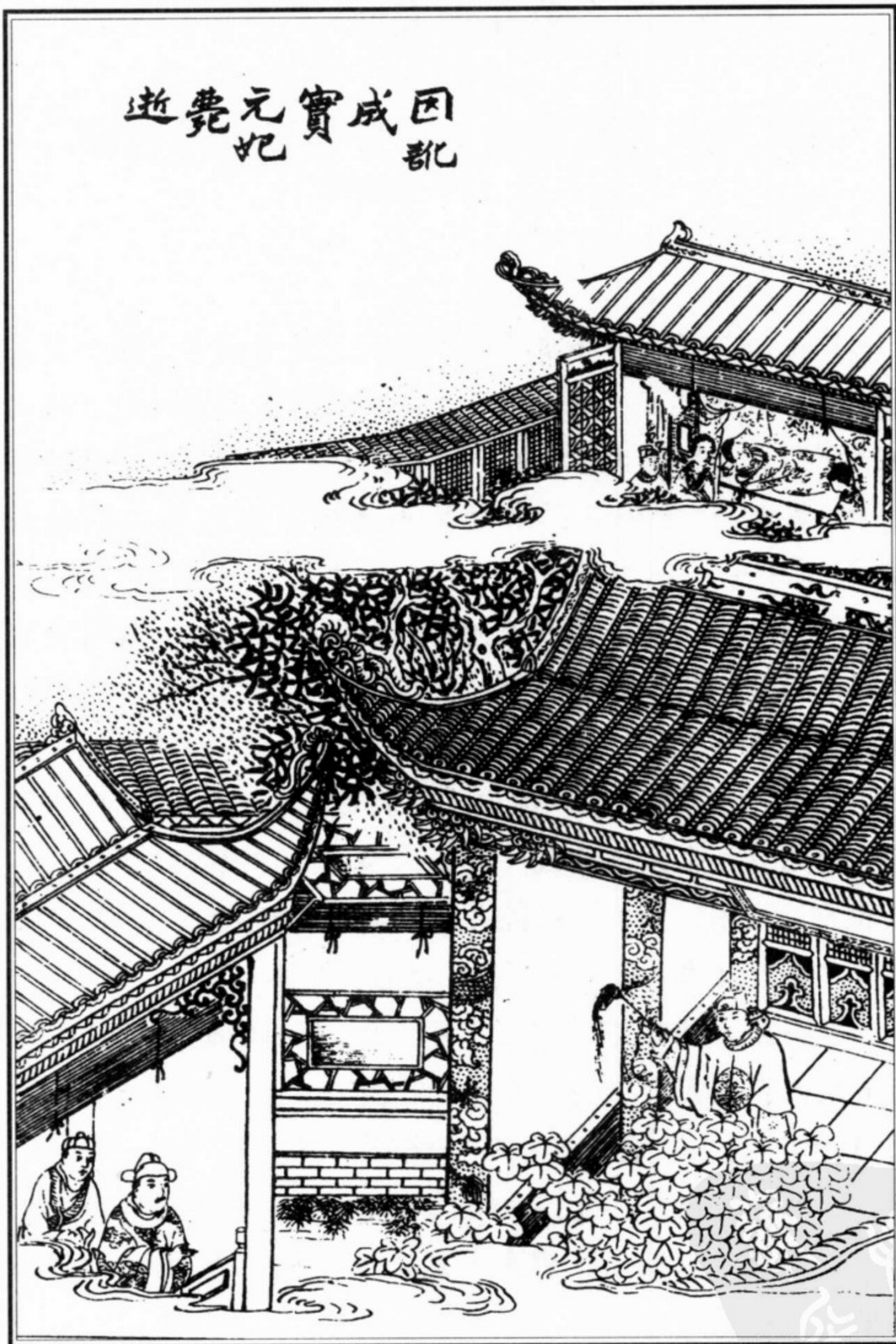
"Wonderful news!" he told her. "Hurry up and tell our Master Bao and all the ladies inside."

"Tell me what it is, quick!" she retorted. "Don't drag it out."

Beiming clapped his hands, chuckling. "When I've told you, miss, and you go in and pass on the news, we'll both of us get tipped. Can you guess what's happened? I've got definite news about Master Bao's jade."

If you want to know the upshot, read the next chapter.





第九十五回

因讹成实元妃薨逝 以假混真宝玉疯癫

话说焙茗在门口和小丫头子说宝玉的玉有了，那小丫头急忙回来告诉宝玉。众人听了，都推着宝玉出去问他。众人在廊下听着。宝玉也觉放心，便走到门口，问道：“你那里得了？快拿来。”焙茗道：“拿是拿不来的，还得托人做保去呢。”宝玉道：“你快说是怎么得的，我好叫人取去。”焙茗道：“我在外头，知道林爷爷去测字，我就跟了去。我听见说在当铺里找，我没等他说完，便跑到几个当铺里去。我比给他们瞧，有一家便说‘有’。我说：‘给我罢。’那铺子里要票子。我说：‘当多少钱？’他说：‘三百钱的也有，五百钱的也有。前儿有一个人拿这么一块玉，当了三百钱去；今儿又有人也拿一块玉，当了五百钱去。’”宝玉不等说完，便道：“你快拿三百五百钱去取了来，我们挑着看是不是。”

里头袭人便啐道：“二爷不用理他！我小时候儿听见我哥哥常说，有些人卖那些小玉儿，没钱用，便去当。想来是家家当铺里有的。”众人正在听得诧异，被袭人一说，想一想，倒大家笑起来，说：“快叫二爷进来罢，不用理那糊涂东西了。他说的那些玉，想来不是正经东西。”宝玉正笑着，只见岫烟来了。



大中华文库
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Chapter 95

A Rumour Comes True and the Imperial Consort Yuanchun Dies A Fraud Is Perpetrated After Baoyu Loses His Mind

After hearing from Beiming that the jade had been found, the young maid hurried in to report this to Baoyu. The others all urged him to go out to question his page, and stepped into the corridor themselves to listen. Feeling reassured, Baoyu went to the door and asked:

“Where did you find it? Bring it here at once.”

“I can’t do that,” said Beiming, “till we’ve found a guarantor.”

“Tell me where it is then, and I’ll send someone to get it.”

“When I learned outside that Mr. Lin was going to consult a fortune-teller, I followed him. Then, hearing that it could be found in a pawnshop, without waiting for him to finish I rushed over to several pawnshops and gave them a description of the jade, and one shop said they’d got it. When I asked for it, though, they wanted the pawn-ticket. ‘How much was it hocked for?’ I asked. They said, ‘We give from three hundred to five hundred cash. The other day someone brought in a jade like that and pawned it for three hundred. Today another man came with a piece and pawned it for five hundred.’”

Baoyu cut him short with the order, “Go at once, taking money to redeem both; then we’ll see whether one is the right piece or not.”

“Don’t listen to him, Master Bao!” scoffed Xiren from inside. “When I was small my brother often told me that hawkers of small pieces of jade pawn them when they need cash. Every single pawnshop must have some.”

The others had been surprised by Beiming’s report. Now, thinking over Xiren’s comment, they laughed.

“Tell Master Bao to come in,” they cried. “Pay no attention to that simpleton. The jade he’s talking about can’t be the right one.”

Baoyu was laughing too when Xiuyan came back.



原来岫烟走到栊翠庵，见了妙玉，不及闲话，便求妙玉扶乩。妙玉冷笑几声，说道：“我与姑娘来往，为的是姑娘不是势利场中的人。今日怎么听了那里的谣言，过来缠我？况且我并不晓得什么叫‘扶乩’。”说着，将要不理。岫烟懊悔此来：知他脾气是这么着的，“一时我已说出，不好白回去。”又不好与他质证他会扶乩的话，只得陪着笑将袭人等性命关系的话说了一遍。见妙玉略有活动，便起身拜了几拜。妙玉叹道：“何必为人作嫁？但是我进京以来，素无人知，今日你来破例，恐将来缠绕不休。”岫烟道：“我也一时不忍。知你必是慈悲的。便是将来他人求你，愿不愿在你，谁敢相强？”

妙玉笑了一笑，叫道婆焚香，在箱子里找出沙盘乩架，书了符，命岫烟行礼祝告毕，起来同妙玉扶着乩。不多时，只见那仙乩疾书道：

噫！来无迹，去无踪，青埂峰下倚古松。欲追寻，
山万重，入我门来一笑逢。

书毕，停了乩。岫烟便问：“请的是何仙？”妙玉道：“请的是拐仙。”岫烟录了出来，请教妙玉识。妙玉道：“这个不可能，连我也不懂。你快拿去，他们的聪明人多着哩。”

岫烟只得回来。进入院中，各人都问：“怎么样了？”岫





Now Xiuyan on reaching Green Lattice Nunnery, as soon as she saw Miaoyu had asked her — without any preliminaries — to consult an oracle for them by writing on sand. Miaoyu laughed disdainfully.

“I’ve treated you as my friend,” she said, “because you’re not one of the vulgar herd. Why trouble me like this today on the base of some rumour? Besides, I know nothing about ‘writing on sand.’” And this said, she ignored her.

Knowing the young nun’s temperament, Xiuyan regretted having come. Still she reflected, “After telling the others, I can hardly go back empty-handed.” Since she could not very well argue with Miaoyu and affirm that she could use a planchette, she explained to her with a conciliatory smile that the lives of Xiren and the other maids depended on this. When she saw her wavering, she got up and curtsayed to her several times.

Miaoyu sighed, “Why should you put yourself out for others? No one’s known, since I came to the capital, that I can consult oracles. If I make an exception for you today, I’m afraid I shall have a lot of trouble in future.”

“I couldn’t help blurting it out, counting on your kindness,” said Xiuyan. “If you’re pestered in future, it’s up to you whether you agree or not — who’d dare to force you?”

Miaoyu smiled and told the old deaconess to burn some incense, then from her case she took out a sand-board and stand and wrote an incantation. Xiuyan, after bowing and praying on her instructions, got up to help hold the planchette. Presently the wand wrote swiftly:

Ah! Come and gone without a trace
By the ancient pine at the foot of Blue Ridge Peak.
To seek it, cross myriads of mountains:
Entering my gate with a smile you will meet again.

This written, the wand stopped.

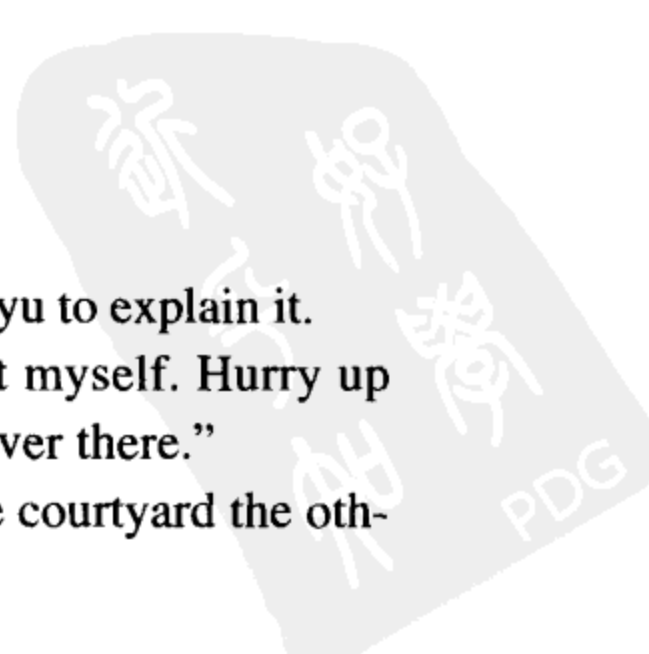
“Which deity did you invoke?” Xiuyan asked.

“Saint Li the Cripple.”

Xiuyan wrote down the oracle, then begged Miaoyu to explain it.

“I can’t,” was the answer. “I don’t understand it myself. Hurry up and take it back. You have plenty of clever people over there.”

Xiuyan went back, and as soon as she entered the courtyard the oth-





烟不及细说，便将所录乱语递与李纨，众姊妹及宝玉争看，都解的是：“一时要找是找不着的，然而丢是丢不了的，不知几时不找便出来了。但是青埂峰不知在那里？”李纨道：“这是仙机隐语。咱们家里那里跑出青埂峰来？必是谁怕查出，撂在有松树的山子石底下，也未可定。独是‘入我门来’这句，到底是入谁的门呢？”黛玉道：“不知请的是谁？”岫烟道：“拐仙。”探春道：“若是仙家的门，便难入了！”

袭人心里着忙，便捕风捉影的混找，没一块石底下不找到，只是没有。回到院中，宝玉也不问有无，只管傻笑。麝月着急道：“小祖宗！你到底是那里丢的？说明了，我们就是受罪，也在明处啊！”宝玉笑道：“我说外头丢的，你们又不依。你如今问我，我知道么？”李纨探春道：“今儿从早起闹起，已到三更来的天了。你瞧林妹妹已经撑不住，各自去了。我们也该歇歇儿了，明儿再闹罢。”说着，大家散去。宝玉即便睡下。可怜袭人等哭一回，想一回，一夜无眠，暂且不提。

且说黛玉先自回去，想起“金”“石”的旧话来，反自欢喜；心里也道：“和尚道士的话真个信不得。果真‘金’‘玉’有缘，宝玉如何能把这玉丢了？或者因我之事，拆散他们的‘金玉’，也未可知。”想了半天，更觉安心，把这一天的



ers all wanted to know how she had fared. Without giving them the details, she handed Li Wan the oracle she had transcribed. The girls and Baoyu crowded round to read it and took it to mean that the jade could not be found quickly, but it would turn up some time when they were not looking.

“But where is this Blue Ridge Peak?” they asked.

“That must be some divine riddle,” said Li Wan. “We’ve no such peak here, have we? I expect the thief has thrown it under some rockery with pine trees on it, for fear of detection. But it says ‘entering my gate’ — whose gate would that be?”

Daiyu remarked, “I wonder whom she invoked.”

“Saint Li the Cripple,” Xiuyan told her.

“If it’s an immortal’s gate, that won’t be easy to enter!” exclaimed Tanchun.

Xiren hunted frantically round, clutching at shadows and searching under each rock, but there was no trace of the jade. When she came back, Baoyu smiled foolishly instead of asking whether she had found it.

“Little Ancestor!” cried Sheyue in desperation. “Where exactly did you lose it? If you tell us, even if we suffer for it, we shall have something to go on.”

“When I said I lost it outside, you wouldn’t have it,” he reminded her. “Now how can I answer your question?”

Li Wan and Tanchun interposed, “We’ve been in a flurry ever since this morning, and now it’s nearly midnight. Look, Cousin Lin’s already left — she couldn’t last out any longer. We ought to get some rest too: we’ll have our hands full tomorrow.”

They all dispersed then, and Baoyu went to bed. But poor Xiren and the other maids wept and racked their brains all night, unable to sleep.

When Daiyu, having gone home first, recalled all the earlier talk about gold and jade she told herself with inward satisfaction, “Monks and priests can’t be believed, and that’s a fact. If a match between the gold and the jade was predestined, how could Baoyu lose the jade? Maybe it’s because of me that this match between gold and jade has been broken up.” Consoled by these reflections, she forgot the fatigues of the day and



劳乏，竟不理睬，重新倒看起书来。紫鹃倒觉身倦，连催黛玉睡下。黛玉虽躺下，又想到海棠花上，说：“这块玉原是胎里带来的，非比寻常之物，来去自有关系。若是这花主好事呢，不该失了这玉呀。看来此花开的不祥，莫非他有不吉之事？”不觉又伤起心来。又转想到喜事上头，此花又似应开，此玉又似应失：如此一悲一喜，直想到五更方睡着。

次日，王夫人等早派人到当铺里去查问，凤姐暗中设法找寻。一连闹了几天，总无下落。还喜贾母贾政未知。袭人等每日提心吊胆。宝玉也好几天不上学，只是怔怔的，不言不语，没心没绪的。王夫人只知他因失玉而起，也不大着意。那日正在纳闷，忽见贾琏进来请安，嘻嘻的笑道：“今日听得雨村打发人来告诉咱们二老爷，说：‘舅太爷升了内阁大学士，奉旨来京，已定于明年正月二十日宣麻，有三百里的文书去了。’想舅太爷昼夜趲行，半个多月就要到了。侄儿特来回太太知道。”

王夫人听说，便欢喜非常。正想娘家人少，薛姨妈家又衰败了；兄弟又在外任，照应不着。今日忽听兄弟拜相回京，王家荣耀，将来宝玉都有倚靠。便把失玉的心又略放开些了，天天专望兄弟来京。

忽一天，贾政进来，满脸泪痕，喘吁吁的说道：“你快去禀知老太太，即刻进宫！不用多人的，是你伏侍进去。因娘





started reading again, till Zijuan who was worn out urged her to sleep. But although she lay down her thoughts turned to the crab-apple trees. "He was born with that jade; it's no ordinary stone," she mused. "So its disappearance must have some significance. If the blossoming of the crab-apples was a good omen, he shouldn't have lost the jade. It looks as if the blossoming was an ill omen and he's in for a spell of bad luck." Her spirits sank again till she thought of her marriage, when it seemed right for the trees to have blossomed and for the jade to be lost. In this way, sad and happy by turns, she did not fall asleep till dawn.

Early the next day, Lady Wang sent to make inquiries at various pawnshops, and Xifeng also had a search made in secret. This went on for several days, but to no effect. Luckily the old lady and Jia Zheng did not know this. Xiren and the other maids were on tenterhooks every day, while Baoyu stayed away from school looking dazed and dejected, saying not a word. However, his mother did not take this to heart, attributing it to the loss of his jade.

She was brooding one day when, abruptly, Jia Lian came in to pay his respects.

Beaming, he announced, "I've just heard that Yucun has sent word to the Second Master that your honourable brother has been promoted to the post of Grand Secretary and summoned to the capital. His appointment is to be proclaimed on the twentieth of the first month next year, and a despatch has been sent to his post three hundred *li* away. I expect he's on his way now, travelling day and night, and will be here in little more than a fortnight. So I've come specially to report this to you, madam."

Lady Wang was overjoyed. She had been regretting that so few of her family were left and Aunt Xue's family had declined, while her brother serving in the provinces could not look after them. His return to the capital now as Grand Secretary would exalt the Wang family and give Baoyu someone to rely on in future. She stopped worrying so much about the loss of the jade, looking forward every day to her brother's arrival.

Then one day Jia Zheng burst in, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Quick!" he panted, "Go and ask the old lady to go at once to the Palace! You can escort her there — no need for too many people. Her



娘忽得暴病，现在太监在外立等。他说：‘太医院已经奏明痰厥，不能医治。’”王夫人听说，便大哭起来。贾政道：“这不是哭的时候，快快去请老太太。说得宽缓些，不要吓坏了老人家。”

贾政说着，出来吩咐家人伺候。王夫人收了泪，去请贾母，只说元妃有病，进去请安。贾母念佛道：“怎么又病了？前番吓的我了不得，后来又打听错了。这回情愿再错了也罢！”王夫人一面回答，一面催鸳鸯等開箱取衣饰穿戴起来。王夫人赶着回到自己房中，也穿戴好了，过来伺候。一时出厅，上轿进宫不提。

且说元春自选了凤藻宫后，圣眷隆重，身体发福，未免举动费力。每日起居劳乏，时发痰疾。因前日侍宴回宫，偶沾寒气，勾起旧病。不料此回甚属利害，竟至痰气壅塞，四肢厥冷。一面奏明，即召太医调治。岂知汤药不进，连用通关之剂，并不见效。内官忧虑，奏请预办后事，所以传旨命贾氏椒房进见。

贾母王夫人遵旨进宫，见元妃痰塞口涎，不能言语。见了贾母，只有悲泣之状，却没眼泪。贾母进前请安，奏些宽慰的话。少时贾政等职名递进，宫嫔传奏，元妃目不能顾，渐渐脸色改变。内官太监即要奏闻，恐派各妃看视，椒房姻





Highness has suddenly fallen ill. A eunuch is waiting outside. According to him, the Imperial physicians say she's had a stroke and there's no hope!"

Lady Wang at once gave way to a storm of weeping.

"This is no time for crying," he interposed. "Hurry up and fetch the old lady. But break it to her gently. Don't frighten the old soul." He then left to tell the servants to make preparations.

His wife, holding back her tears, went to tell the Lady Dowager that Yuanchun was ill and they were to call to pay their respects to her.

Invoking Buddha the old lady exclaimed, "Is she unwell again? Last time I had a bad fright till we heard it was just a rumour. Let's hope this proves to be a false report too."

Lady Wang concurred and urged Yuanyang and others to open the chests at once and get out the old lady's ceremonial costume. She then hurried back to her room to change herself before returning to wait on the old lady. Presently they went out and were carried by sedan-chairs to the Palace.

Now Yuanchun, highly favoured by the sagacious sovereign since her installation as Imperial Concubine in Phoenix Palace, had grown too plump to exert herself — the least fatigue made her liable to apoplexy. A few days before this, on her way back from waiting on the Emperor at a feast, she had caught a chill which had brought on her former trouble. And this time it was serious: phlegm blocked her wind-pipe, her limbs were numb and cold. This was reported to the Emperor, and Imperial physicians were summoned. However, she was unable to take any medicine, nor could they clear up the congestion. In their anxiety the Palace officials asked permission to prepare for her death, which was why the Lady Dowager had been sent for.

Entering the Palace in response to the Imperial summons, she and Lady Wang found Yuanchun unable to speak. At sight of her grandmother she showed signs of distress but had no tears to shed, while the old lady stepped forward to pay her respects and offer condolences. Soon the cards of Jia Zheng and the rest were sent in and presented by maids-in-waiting; but Yuanchun's sight had failed and the colour was slowly ebbing from her face. The Palace officials and eunuchs had to



戚未便久羈，请在外宫伺候。贾母王夫人怎忍便离，无奈国家制度，只得下来，又不敢啼哭，惟有心内悲感。

朝门内官员有信。不多时，只见太监出来，立传钦天监。贾母便知不好，尚未敢动。稍刻，小太监传谕出来，说：“贾娘娘薨逝。”是年甲寅年十二月十八日立春；元妃薨日，是十二月十九日，已交卯年寅月，存年四十三岁。贾母含悲起身，只得出宫上轿回家。贾政等亦已得信，一路悲戚。到家中，邢夫人、李纨、凤姐、宝玉等出厅，分东西迎着贾母，请了安，并贾政王夫人请安，大家哭泣不提。次日早起，凡有品级的，按贵妃丧礼进内请安哭临。贾政又是工部，虽按照仪注办理，未免堂上又要周旋他些，同事又要请教他，所以两头更忙，非比从前太后与周妃的丧事了。但元妃并无所出，惟谥曰贤淑贵妃。此是王家制度，不必多赘。

只讲贾府中男女，天天进宫，忙的了不得。幸喜凤姐儿近日身子好些，还得出来照应家事；又要预备王子腾进京，接风贺喜。凤姐胞兄王仁，知道叔叔入了内阁，仍带家眷来





report this to the Emperor and, anticipating that other Imperial concubines would be sent to see her, in which case it would not be fitting for her relatives to remain there, they asked them to wait outside. The old lady and Lady Wang could hardly bear to leave, but they had to conform to court etiquette and withdraw with aching hearts, not even daring to weep.

News was sent to the officials at the Palace gate, and presently a eunuch came out to summon the Imperial Astrologer. The old lady knew what this foreboded, but did not venture to move. Very soon a younger eunuch came out to announce:

“The Imperial Consort Jia has passed away.”

As the Beginning of Spring fell on the eighteenth of the twelfth lunar month that year, and Yuanchun had died on the nineteenth, it was already the first solar month of the next year and so her age was reckoned as forty-three.

Nursing her grief, the old lady rose to leave the Palace and go home by sedan-chair. Jia Zheng and the others, having also received the news, made their way sadly back. When they reached home, Lady Xing, Li Wan, Xifeng, Baoyu and the rest were ranged on both sides in front of the hall to meet them. After paying their respects to the Lady Dowager, then to Jia Zheng and Lady Wang, they all gave way to weeping.

Early the next day, those with official titles went to the Palace to mourn beside the coffin as etiquette prescribed. As Jia Zheng was a vice-minister of works, though there were rules concerning the construction of an Imperial consort's tomb, the minister had to consult him more specially regarding the building of this one, while his colleagues also called to ask for his instructions. This kept him doubly busy both at home and in the ministry, more so than after the deaths of the Empress Dowager and the Imperial Consort Zhou some time ago. Because Yuanchun had borne no son, her posthumous title was Virtuous and Noble Imperial Concubine, according to the rules of the Imperial House. But no more of this.

The whole Jia family, men and women alike, were kept very busy going each day to the Palace. It was fortunate that Xifeng's health had recently improved, as she now had to see to household affairs besides preparing to welcome and congratulate Wang Ziteng on his return. When her brother Wang Ren heard that their uncle was joining the Grand Sec-

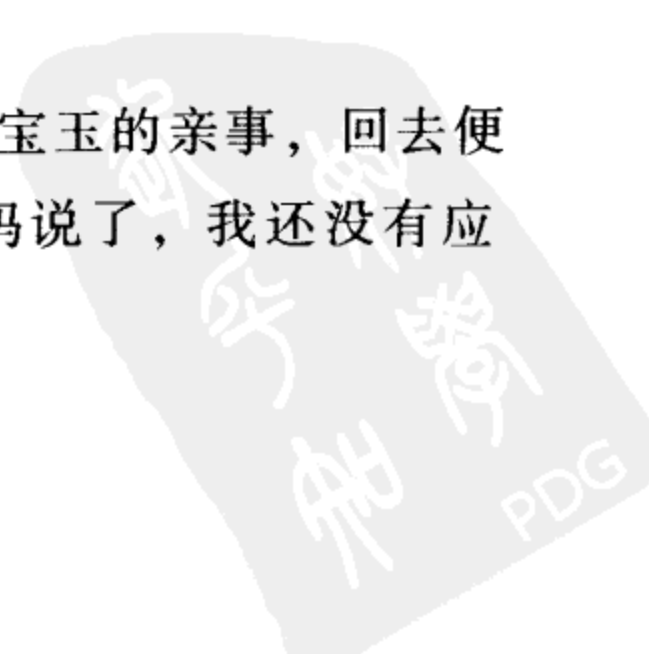


京。凤姐心里喜欢，便有些心病，有这些娘家的人，也便撂开，所以身子倒觉比先好了些。王夫人看见凤姐照旧办事，又把担子卸了一半；又眼见兄弟来京，诸事放心，倒觉安静些。

独有宝玉原是无职之人，又不念书，代儒学里知他家里有事，也不来管他；贾政正忙，自然没有空儿查他：想来宝玉趁此机会竟可与姊妹们天天畅乐。不料他自失了玉后，终日懒怠走动，说话也糊涂了。并贾母等出门回来，有人叫他去请安，便去；没人叫他，他也不动。袭人等怀着鬼胎，又不敢去招惹他，恐他生气。每天茶饭，端到面前便吃，不来也不要。

袭人看这光景，不像是有气，竟像是有病的。袭人偷着空儿到潇湘馆告诉紫鹃，说是：“二爷这么着，求姑娘给他开导开导。”紫鹃虽即告诉黛玉，只因黛玉想着亲事上头，一定是自己了，如今见了他，反觉不好意思，“若是他来呢，原是小时在一处的，也难不理他；若说我去找他，断断使不得。”所以黛玉不肯过来。袭人又背地里去告诉探春。那知探春心里明明知道海棠开得怪异，“宝玉”失的更奇，接连着元妃姐姐薨逝，谅家道不祥，日日愁闷，那有心肠去劝宝玉？况兄妹们男女有别，只好过来一两次，宝玉又终是懒懒的，所以也不大常来。

宝钗也知失玉。因薛姨妈那日应了宝玉的亲事，回去便告诉了宝钗。薛姨妈还说：“虽是你姨妈说了，我还没有应





retariat, he also came with his wife to the capital. Xifeng was delighted, these relatives' arrival allaying some of her anxieties and contributing to her further recovery. And now that she was running the household again, Lady Wang's burden was considerably lightened, while her brother's impending arrival helped to set her mind at rest too.

As Baoyu had no official duties and had given up studying, his tutor leaving him to his own devices in view of their family's trouble; and as Jia Zheng was too busy to check up on him, he would normally have taken this chance to amuse himself with his girl cousins every day. However, since the loss of his jade he had grown thoroughly listless and talked nonsense. When told that the old lady was back and he should go to pay his respects, he went: if not prompted, he made no move. Xiren and his other maids felt deep misgivings yet dared not take him to task for fear of his anger. When his meals were set before him he would eat; otherwise he never asked for anything. Xiren, suspecting that he was not sulking but ill, made time one day to slip over to Bamboo Lodge and describe his condition to Zijuan.

"Do ask your young lady to come and talk some sense into him," she begged.

However, when this message was passed on to Daiyu, she was reluctant to call on Baoyu in the belief that the two of them were to marry. "If he came here I couldn't ignore him," she thought, "as we were together as children. But it would be quite wrong for *me* to seek him out." She therefore refused to go.

Then Xiren confided in Tanchun. But the unseasonable blossoming of the crab-apples and even stranger disappearance of the precious jade, followed by the death of Yuanchun, had convinced Tanchun that their family was ill-fated. She had been worrying for days and was in no mood to go to admonish Baoyu. Besides, girls were supposed to keep a respectful distance from their brothers; and when once or twice she did call, his apathy discouraged her from paying him any more visits.

Baochai had also heard of the loss of the jade. However, the day that Aunt Xue went home having agreed to a match between her and Baoyu she told her daughter, "Though your aunt has proposed it I've not yet given my consent, telling her we'd decide after your brother's return.

准，说等你哥哥回来再定。你愿意不愿意？”宝钗反正色的对母亲道：“妈妈这话说错了。女孩儿家的事情是父母作主的。如今我父亲没了，妈妈应该作主的；再不然，问哥哥；怎么问起我来？”所以薛姨妈更爱惜他，说他虽是从小娇养惯的，却也生来的贞静。因此，在他面前，反不提起宝玉了。宝钗自从听此一说，把“宝玉”两字自然更不提起了。如今虽然听见失了玉，心里也甚惊疑，倒不好问，只得听旁人说去，竟像不与自己相干的。

只有薛姨妈打发丫头过来了好几次问信。因他自己的儿子薛蟠的事焦心，只等哥哥进京，便好为他出脱罪名；又知元妃已薨，虽然贾府忙乱，却得凤姐好了，出来理家；所以也不大过这边来。这里只苦了袭人，在宝玉跟前低声下气的伏侍劝慰，宝玉竟是不懂。袭人只有暗暗的着急而已。

过了几日，元妃停灵寝庙，贾母等送殡去了几天。岂知宝玉一日呆似一日，也不发烧，也不疼痛，只是吃不像吃，睡不像睡，甚至说话都无头绪。那袭人麝月等一发慌了，回过凤姐几次。凤姐不时过来，起先道是找不着玉生气，如今看他失魂落魄的样子，只有日日请医调治。煎药吃了好几剂，只有添病的，没有减病的。及至问他那里不舒服，宝玉也不说出来。

直至元妃事毕，贾母惦记宝玉，亲自到园看视，王夫人也随过来，袭人等叫宝玉接出去请安。宝玉虽说是病，每日原起来行动。今日叫他接贾母去，他依然仍是请安，惟是袭



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But are you willing or not?"

Baochai had answered gravely, "You shouldn't ask me that, mother. A girl's marriage is arranged by her parents. As father is dead the decision's up to you, or you can consult Brother Pan; but you shouldn't ask *me*."

This only increased her mother's regard for her, for Baochai although much indulged since childhood had always been a paragon of virtue. From then on Aunt Xue never mentioned Baoyu in her presence; and Baochai naturally made a point of never breathing his name. So now though shocked and disturbed by the loss of the jade she made no inquiries about it, simply listening to what others said on the subject as if this did not concern her.

Aunt Xue sent maids several times to ask for news. But worried as she was by the charge against her son Pan and eager for her brother's arrival to help clear him; knowing, too, that although Yuanchun's death had thrown the Jia family into confusion Xifeng was now well enough to run the household, she seldom went over herself. This left Xiren to bear the brunt. She waited assiduously on Baoyu and tried to advise and console him, but still his wits wandered. Yet she had to keep her anxiety to herself.

Shortly afterwards, Yuanchun's coffin was deposited in one of the rear temples in the Imperial Sepulchre, and while the old lady and others were away attending the funeral Baoyu grew more deranged from day to day. He had no fever or pain but could neither eat nor sleep properly and even grew incoherent in his speech. Xiren and Sheyue in their alarm reported this more than once to Xifeng, who came over from time to time. At first she thought he was sulking because the jade had not been found; then she realized that he was losing his mind and had doctors fetched to attend him every day. Although they prescribed various medicines, his condition only grew worse. Asked whether he felt any pain, he would not answer.

After Yuanchun's funeral was over, the old lady who had been concerned about Baoyu came to the Garden with Lady Wang to see him. Xiren and the others told him to go out to meet them and pay his respects, for though deranged he could still get about as usual. Now he paid his respects to his grandmother as before, except that Xiren was beside him



人在旁扶着指教。贾母见了，便道：“我的儿！我打量你怎么病着，故此过来瞧你。今你依旧的模样儿，我的心放了好些。”王夫人也自然是宽心的。但宝玉并不回答，只管嘻嘻的笑。贾母等进屋坐下，问他的话，袭人教一句，他说一句，大不似往常，直是一个傻子似的。贾母愈看愈疑，便说：“我才进来看时，不见有什么病；如今细细一瞧，这病果然不轻，竟是神魂失散的样子！到底因什么起的呢？”

王夫人知事难瞒，又瞧瞧袭人怪可怜的样子，只得便依着宝玉先前的话，将那往临安伯府里去听戏时丢了这块玉的话悄悄的告诉了一遍，心里也彷徨的很，生恐贾母着急。并说：“现在着人在四下里找寻。求签问卦，都说在当铺里找，少不得找着的。”

贾母听了，急得站起来，眼泪直流，说道：“这件玉，如何是丢得的！你们忒不懂事了！难道老爷也是撻开手的不成？”王夫人知贾母生气，叫袭人等跪下，自己敛容低首回说：“媳妇恐老太太着急，老爷生气，都没敢回。”贾母“咳”道：“这是宝玉的命根子，因丢了，所以他这么失魂丧魄的！还了得！这玉是满城里都知道的，谁检了去，肯叫你们找出来么？叫人快快请老爷，我与他说！”

那时吓得王夫人袭人等俱哀告道：“老太太这一生气，回来老爷更了不得了。现在宝玉病着，交给我们尽命的找来就是了。”贾母道：“你们怕老爷生气，有我呢！”便叫麝月传人去请。不一时，传话进来，说：“老爷谢客去了。”贾母道：“不用他也使得。你们便说我说的话，暂且也不用责罚下



to prompt him.

"I thought you were ill, child," the old lady exclaimed. "That's why I came to see you. How relieved I am to find you looking all right."

Lady Wang felt reassured too. However, Baoyu made no answer apart from tittering. Once seated inside, they questioned him and Xiren had to prompt him each time with an answer. He seemed completely changed too, behaving like a moron. The old lady's misgivings increased.

"At first sight I saw nothing wrong," she said. "But now that I look at him carefully, this illness seems serious — the boy's lost his mind! How ever did this happen?"

Realizing that the truth could no longer be concealed and pitying Xiren in this predicament, Lady Wang whispered to her Baoyu's story about losing the jade when he went to hear the opera in the duke's mansion.

"We've sent to search for it everywhere," she added distractedly, hoping to stop the old lady from worrying. "We've consulted oracles too, and they all say we shall find it in a pawnshop. So we shall get it back."

At this the Lady Dowager rose frantically to her feet, tears streaming down her face.

"How could you lose that jade!" she exclaimed. "You really are too careless! Does the master also leave it at that?"

Seeing how angry she was, Lady Wang told the maids to kneel down. Then, her head bowed, she answered humbly, "For fear of worrying you, madam, and making the master angry, I dared not report it."

"This jade is the root of Baoyu's life," sighed the old lady. "It's because he's lost it that he's out of his mind. This will never do! The whole city knows of this jade, so if someone picked it up do you expect him to let you have it back? Send for the master at once and I'll tell him this."

Lady Wang and the maids pleaded in consternation, "If you are so angry, madam, think what a rage the master will be in! Now that Baoyu's ill, just leave it to us to do our very best to find it."

"Don't be afraid of the master. I'll handle him." The old lady ordered Sheyue to send to fetch him. Presently it was reported that he was out paying a call.

"We can do without him then," she said. "Say these are *my* instruc-



人。我便叫璉儿来，写出赏格，悬在前日经过的地方，便说：‘有人检得送来者，情愿送银一万两；如有知人检得，送信找得者，送银五千两。’如真有了，不可吝惜银子。这么一找，少不得就找出来了。若是靠着咱们家几个人找，就找一辈子，也不能得！”王夫人也不敢直言。贾母传话，告诉贾璉，叫他速办去了。

贾母便叫人：“将宝玉动用之物，都搬到我那里去。只派袭人秋纹跟过来，余者仍留园内看屋子。”宝玉听了，总不言语，只是傻笑。贾母便携了宝玉起身，——袭人等搀扶出园，——回到自己房中，叫王夫人坐下，看人收拾里间屋内安置，便对王夫人道：“你知道我的意思么？我为的是园里人少，怡红院的花树，忽萎忽开，有些奇怪。头里仗着那块玉能除邪祟；如今玉丢了，只怕邪气易侵：所以我带过他来一块儿住着。这几天也不用叫他出去。大夫来，就在这里瞧。”王夫人听说，便接口道：“老太太想的自然是。如今宝玉同着老太太住了，老太太的福气大，不论什么都压住了。”贾母道：“什么福气！不过我屋里干净些，经卷也多，都可以念念，定定心神。你问宝玉好不好？”

那宝玉见问，只是笑。袭人叫他说好，宝玉也就说好。王夫人见了这般光景，未免落泪，在贾母这里，不敢出声。贾母知王夫人着急，便说道：“你回去罢，这里有我调停他。





tions. For the time being there's no need to punish the maids. I'll get Jia Lian to write an announcement to hang up by the road Baoyu took that day, offering a reward of ten thousand taels to anyone who picked up the jade and returns it, and five thousand to anyone who tells us who has it so that we can get it back. Provided it can be found, we won't stint our silver. In this way we're sure to recover it. If we leave it to a few of our household to search, they could search their whole lives long without finding it."

Lady Wang dared raise no objection. The old lady had these directions sent to Jia Lian with instructions to see to this quickly.

Next she ordered, "Move all the things Baoyu uses every day to my apartments. Xiren and Qiuwen are to come over with him, leaving the other maids there in the Garden to keep an eye on his rooms."

All this time Baoyu had said nothing, just grinning foolishly. The Lady Dowager rose then, taking his hand, and Xiren and others helped them out of the Garden. Back in her own quarters, the old lady made Lady Wang sit down to supervise the rooms' arrangement.

"Do you know what I have in mind?" she asked. "It seems to me there are too few people in the Garden, and those trees in Happy Red Court have withered and blossomed suddenly in a strange way. He used to have this jade to ward off evil spirits; now that he's lost it I'm afraid he may succumb to some evil influence. That's why I've brought him here to stay with me. We won't let him out for a few days. The doctors can come here to see him."

"Of course you're right, madam," answered Lady Wang. "Living with you, such a favourite of fortune, he can't come to any harm."

"Who's a favourite of fortune? But my rooms are cleaner, and we've plenty of Buddhist scriptures which we can read to calm him. Ask Baoyu if he likes being here or not."

But Baoyu only grinned. Not until prompted by Xiren did he say "Yes."

Seeing this Lady Wang shed tears but could not sob aloud before the old lady.

Understanding her anxiety the latter said, "You go back now. I'll take care of him. When the master gets back this evening tell him he needn't come here. Just be sure not to complain about this."



晚上老爷回来，告诉他不必来见我，不许言语就是了。”王夫人去后，贾母叫鸳鸯找些安神定魄的药，按方吃了，不提。

且说贾政当晚回家，在车内听见道儿上人说道：“人要发财，也容易的很！”那个问道：“怎么见得？”这个人又道：“今日听见荣府里丢了什么哥儿的玉了，贴着招帖儿，上头写着玉的大小式样颜色，说：有人检了送去，就给一万两银子；送信的还给五千呢！”

贾政虽未听得如此真切，心里诧异，急忙赶回，便叫门上的人，问起那事来。门上的人禀道：“奴才头里也不知道；今儿晌午，琏二爷传出老太太的话，叫人去贴帖儿，才知道的。”贾政便叹气道：“家道该衰！偏生养这么一个孽障！才养他的时候，满街的谣言，隔了十几年，略好了些。这会子又大张晓谕的找玉，成何道理！”说着，忙走进里头去问王夫人。王夫人便一五一十的告诉。贾政知是老太太的主意，又不敢违拗，又抱怨王夫人几句。又走出来，叫瞒着老太太，背地里揭了这个帖儿下来。岂知早有那些游手好闲的人揭了去了。

过了些时，竟有人到荣府门上，口称送玉来的。家人们听见，喜欢的了不得，便说：“拿来，我给你回去。”那人便怀内掏出赏格来，指给门上的人瞧，说：“这不是你们府上的帖子？写明送玉的给银一万两。二太爷，你们这会子瞧我



After Lady Wang had gone, the old lady made Yuanyang get out some tranquillizing medicines and give them to Baoyu according to the prescription. But no more of this.

That evening Jia Zheng was coming home by carriage when he heard some passers-by talking.

“If anyone wants to make a pile, it’s easy!” said one.

“How?” his companion asked.

“I heard today that some young master in the Rong Mansion has lost a piece of jade, and a notice has been posted up describing its size, shape and colour. Ten thousand taels reward has been offered for its return, and five thousand for news of its whereabouts.”

Though Jia Zheng had not caught every word distinctly, he had heard enough to hurry home in amazement.

The gateman when questioned reported, “The first I heard of this, sir, was at noon today when Master Lian passed on the old lady’s order and sent people to post up a notice.”

“Our family must be on the decline!” Jia Zheng sighed. “For our sins we’ve been saddled with this degenerate. At the time of his birth he was the talk of the town, but after ten years and more the gossip died down. Now we’re raising this hue and cry again to find his jade — preposterous!”

He hurried inside to question Lady Wang, who told him the whole story. As this had been done on his mother’s instructions, Jia Zheng could not oppose it. He just vented his anger briefly on his wife before going out again to order the notice to be taken down without the old lady’s knowledge. However, some idlers had already made off with it.

A few days later, a man came to the Rong Mansion claiming to have brought back the jade.

In great jubilation the servants at the gate said, “Hand it over and we’ll go and report it for you.”

The fellow reached in his pocket for the notice, pointing at it for them to see.

“Wasn’t this put up by your house?” he asked. “It says clearly here that whoever returns the jade will get a reward of ten thousand silver

穷，回来我得了银子，就是财主了，别这么待理不理的！”门上人听他的话头儿硬，便说道：“你到底略给我瞧瞧，我好给你回。”那人初倒不肯，后来听人说得有理，便掏出那玉，托在掌中一扬，说：“这是不是？”众家人原是在外服役，只知有玉，也不常见；今日才看见这玉的模样儿了，急忙跑到里头抢头报的似的。

那日贾政贾赦出门，只有贾琏在家。众人回明，贾琏还问：“真不真？”门上人口称：“亲眼见过，只是不给奴才，要见主子，一手交银，一手交玉。”贾琏却也喜欢，忙去禀知王夫人，即便回明贾母，把个袭人乐的合掌念佛。贾母并不改口，一叠连声：“快叫琏儿请那人到书房里坐着，将玉取来一看，即便给银。”贾琏依言，请那人进来，当客待他，用好言道谢：“要借这玉送到里头本人见了，谢银分厘不短。”

那人只得将一个红绸子包儿送过去。贾琏打开一看，可不是那一块晶莹美玉吗？贾琏素昔原不理论，今日倒要看看。看了半日，上面的字也仿佛认得出来，什么“除邪祟”等字。贾琏看了，喜之不胜，便叫家人伺候，忙忙的送与贾母王夫人认去。

这会子惊动了合家的人，都等着争看。凤姐见贾琏进来，便劈手夺去，不敢先看，送到贾母手里，贾琏笑道：“你这么一点儿事，还不叫我献功呢！”贾母打开看时，只见那



taels. I may look poor now to you gentlemen, but once I have that silver I shall be rich; so don't be so high-handed!"

He spoke with such confidence that the gateman answered, "Well then, just show me the jade so that I can report this for you."

At first the man was unwilling, but on second thoughts he produced the jade and displayed it in the palm of one hand.

"Isn't this it?" he demanded.

These servants on duty at the gate all knew of the jade, but this was their first close look at it. They hurried in, eager to be the first with this good news. That day Jia Zheng and Jia She were out. Only Jia Lian was at home.

Hearing this report, he asked, "Is it genuine?"

"We've seen it for ourselves," the servants answered. "But he won't give it to us underlings. He wants to see one of the masters, to hand over the jade to him in exchange for the money."

Jia Lian hastened in happily to report this to Lady Wang who then told the old lady, so delighting Xiren that she clasped her hands together, invoking Buddha. And the Lady Dowager was as good as her word.

"Tell Lian to ask that man to wait in the study while he brings the jade here," she said. "Once we've seen it we'll give him the silver."

Jia Lian accordingly invited the fellow in, treating him as a guest and thanking him profusely.

"I would like to take this jade in to show the young master himself," he said. "Then we'll give you your full reward."

The man handed him a red silk wrapper. Jia Lian opened it and saw indeed a fine translucent jade. He had paid scant attention to Baoyu's jade before and now took a good look, a careful scrutiny disclosing the inscription "warding off evil." Overjoyed, he ordered servants to wait on the visitor, then hurried in to let the old lady and Lady Wang identify the stone.

By now everyone was agog to see the jade. As soon as Jia Lian came in Xifeng snatched it from him and, not venturing to examine it herself, presented it to the old lady.

Jia Lian chuckled, "So even over a trifle like this, you won't let me take the credit!"

玉比先前昏暗了好些，一面用手擦摸，鸳鸯拿上眼镜儿来，戴着一瞧，说：“奇怪！这块玉倒是的！怎么把头里的宝色都没了呢？”王夫人看了一会子，也认不出，便叫凤姐过来看。凤姐看了道：“像倒像，只是颜色不大对，不如叫宝兄弟自己一看，就知道了。”袭人在旁，也看着未必是那一块，只是盼得的心盛，也不敢说出不像来。

凤姐于是从贾母手中接过来，同着袭人，拿来给宝玉瞧。这时宝玉正睡着才醒。凤姐告诉道：“你的玉有了。”宝玉睡眼蒙眬，接在手里也没瞧，便往地下一撂，道：“你们又来哄我了！”说着，只是冷笑。凤姐连忙拾起来道：“这也就奇了。怎么你没瞧，就知道呢？”宝玉也不答言，只管笑。王夫人也进屋里来了，见他这样，便说：“这不用说了。他那玉原是胎里带来的一宗古怪东西，自然他有道理。想来这个必是人家见了帖儿，照样儿做的。”大家此时恍然大悟。

贾琏在外间屋里听见这个话，便说道：“既不是，快拿来给我问问他去。人家这样事，他还敢来鬼混！”贾母喝住道：“琏儿，拿了去给他，叫他去罢。那也是穷极了的人，没法儿了，所以见我们家有这样事，他就想着赚几个钱，也是有的。如今白白的花了钱，弄了这个东西，又叫咱们认出来了。依着我，倒别难为他，把这块玉还他，说不是我们的，赏给他几两银子。外头的人知道了，才肯有信儿就送来呢。



When the Lady Dowager unwrapped the jade, it struck her as much more opaque than before. She rubbed it with her fingers while Yuanyang fetched her spectacles and, putting them on, she scrutinized the stone.

“That’s odd!” she exclaimed. “This is the jade all right, but how is it that it’s lost all its former lustre?”

Lady Wang examined it for some time but could not give a positive opinion. She told Xifeng to have a look.

“It resembles it, but the colour’s not quite right,” Xifeng observed. “Better let Baoyu look at it himself, then we shall know.”

Xiren beside her also had her doubts, but in her eagerness to have the stone prove authentic she did not express them. Xifeng took the jade from the old lady and went in with Xiren to show it to Baoyu, who had just woken from a nap.

“Here’s your jade,” Xifeng told him.

Baoyu, his eyes still blurred from sleep, took the jade and without so much as looking at it threw it on the ground.

“You’re trying to fool me again,” he said with a cynical smile.

Xifeng hastily picked up the jade, protesting, “Strange! How can you tell without even looking at it?”

Baoyu said nothing, just smiled.

Lady Wang had come in too and seeing this she said, “It goes without saying he must know, as that strange jade came from the womb with him. This one must be a counterfeit made from the description in the notice.”

Then the truth dawned on everyone.

“If it’s a fake, give it to me and I’ll ask him how he dare play such tricks,” cried Jia Lian, who had overheard this from the outer room.

But the old lady remonstrated, “Just return it to him, Lian, and let him go. The poor devil must have been trying to capitalize on this trouble in our family; but now he’s spent money on making this for nothing and we’ve seen through his trick. In my view we shouldn’t make things hard for him. Just return him the jade saying that it isn’t ours and give him a few taels. Then when outsiders hear of it, if they pick up some clues they’ll be willing to let us know; whereas if we punish this fellow, then

要是难为了这一个人，就有真的，人家也不敢拿了来了。”

贾琏答应出去。那人还等着呢，半日不见人来，正在那里心里发虚，只见贾琏气忿忿走出来了。未知如何，下回分解。





even if the genuine jade is found no one will dare bring it to us.”

Jia Lian agreed to this and withdrew. The man after his long wait was already somewhat apprehensive, and now he saw Jia Lian come out in a towering rage. But to know what happened next, read the following chapter.



第九十六回

瞒消息凤姐设奇谋 泄机关颦儿迷本性

话说贾琏拿了那块假玉忿忿走出，到了书房。那个人看见贾琏的气色不好，心里先发了虚了，连忙站起来迎着。刚要说话，只见贾琏冷笑道：“好大胆！我把你这个混账东西！这里是什么地方儿，你敢来掉鬼！”回头便问：“小厮们呢？”外头轰雷一般，几个小厮齐声答应。贾琏道：“取绳子去捆起他来！等老爷回来回明了，把他送到衙门里去！”众小厮又一齐答应：“预备着呢！”嘴里虽如此，却不动身。

那人先自唬的手足无措，见这般势派，知道难逃公道，只得跪下给贾琏磕头，口口声声只叫：“老太爷！别生气！是我一时穷极无奈，才想出这个没脸的营生来。那玉是我借钱做的，我也不敢要了，只得孝敬府里的哥儿玩罢。”说毕，又连连磕头。贾琏啐道：“你这个不知死活的东西！这府里希罕你的那扔不了的浪东西！”

正闹着，只见赖大进来，陪着笑，向贾琏道：“二爷别生气了。靠他算个什么东西！饶了他，叫他滚出去罢。”贾琏道：“实在可恶！”赖大贾琏作好作歹，众人在外头都说道：“糊涂狗彘的！还不给爷和赖大爷磕头呢！快快的滚罢，还等窝心脚呢！”那人赶忙磕了两个头，抱头鼠窜而去。从此，



Chapter 96

Xifeng Withholds Information and Lays a Cunning Plan Disclosure of a Secret Deranges Daiyu

Jia Lian stormed to the study with the counterfeit jade, and when the man there saw how angry he looked his heart misgave him. He hastily rose to greet him, but before he could speak Jia Lian laughed scornfully.

“Of all the gall!” he swore. “You scoundrel! What place is this that you dare play such devilish tricks here?”

He called for servants. Those outside answered his summons with a shout like thunder.

“Get ropes and tie him up,” ordered Jia Lian. “We’ll report this to the master on his return and send this rogue to the yamen.”

“Very good, sir!” chorused the servants, but made no move.

Nearly paralysed with fright by this show of power, the fellow knew that there was no escape and dropping to his knees kowtowed to Jia Lian.

“Don’t be angry, Your Lordship!” he begged. “It’s because I was driven to it by poverty that I thought up this shameless scheme. I borrowed money to get that jade made, but I won’t venture to ask for it back — I’ll give it as a plaything to your young masters.” He kowtowed again and again.

“You stupid fool!” Jia Lian spat out. “Who in this mansion wants your trash?”

At this point Lai Da came in. With a smile he urged Jia Lian, “Don’t be angry, sir. This wretch isn’t worth it. Let him off and send him packing.”

“It’s disgraceful!” Jia Lian fumed.

So Lai Da took a soft line, Jia Lian a hard one, until the servants outside called, “You stupid cur! Hurry up and kowtow to the master and Mr. Lai, then clear off. Are you waiting to be kicked out?”



街上闹动了：“贾宝玉弄出‘假宝玉’来。”

且说贾政那日拜客回来，众人因为灯节底下，恐怕贾政生气，已过去的事了，便也都不肯回。只因元妃的事，忙碌了好些时，近日宝玉又病着，虽有旧例家宴，大家无兴，也无有可记之事。

到了正月十七日，王夫人正盼王子腾来京，只见凤姐进来说：“今日二爷在外听得有人传说：我们家大老爷赶着进京，离城只有二百多里地，在路上没了。太太听见了没有？”王夫人吃惊道：“我没有听见，老爷昨晚也没有说起。到底在那里听见的？”凤姐道：“说是在枢密张老爷家听见的。”王夫人怔了半天，那眼泪早流下来了，因拭泪说道：“回来再叫琏儿索性打听明白了来告诉我。”凤姐答应去了。

王夫人不免暗里落泪，悲女哭弟，又为宝玉耽忧，如此连三接二，都是不随意的事，那里搁得住？便有些心口疼痛起来。又加贾琏打听明白了，来说道：“舅太爷是赶路劳乏，偶然感冒风寒。到了十里屯地方，延医调治；无奈这个地方没有名医，误用了药，一剂就死了。但不知家眷可到了那里没有。”王夫人听了，一阵心酸，便心口疼得坐不住，叫彩云等扶了上炕，还挣扎着叫贾琏去回了贾政。“即速收拾行





Then he hastily knowtowed twice and slunk away. But this counterfeiting of Baoyu's jade became the talk of the town.

When Jia Zheng returned that day from his round of calls, as the matter was done with and they were afraid to enrage him during the Lantern Festival, no one reported it to him. Yuanchun's funeral had kept them busy for some time and now, with Baoyu ill, although there were the usual family feasts the whole household was in low spirits and nothing noteworthy happened.

By the seventeenth of the first month Lady Wang was looking forward to her brother Wang Ziteng's arrival when Xifeng came in with bad news.

"Today the Second Master heard outside that uncle was travelling here posthaste, and was only two hundred *li* or so away when he died on the road!" she cried. "Did you here this, madam?"

"Not I!" exclaimed Lady Wang in consternation. "The master said nothing about it last night either. Where did this news come from?"

"The house of Chancellor Zhang."

Lady Wang was speechless, in tears.

Presently, wiping her eyes, she said, "Get Lian to check up on it and let me know."

Xifeng went off to do this.

Lady Wang had been reduced to weeping in secret as she mourned her daughter and worried over Baoyu, and now this third misfortune in swift succession was more than she could bear — she came down with colic. Moreover, Jia Lian confirmed that the news was true.

"Uncle was worn out by travelling so fast and he caught a chill," he told her. "When he reached Shilitun a doctor was sent for, but unfortunately that place has no good doctors. The wrong medicine was prescribed and one dose killed him. We don't know whether his family has arrived there or not."

Lady Wang's heart ached at this news, aggravating her pains. Unable to remain seated, she made Caiyun and others help her on to the *kang*, then speaking with an effort told Jia Lian to report this to Jia Zheng.

"Make ready to go there at once to help see to things," she said.



装，迎到那里，帮着料理完毕，即刻回来告诉我们，好叫你媳妇儿放心。”贾琏不敢违拗，只得辞了贾政起身。

贾政早已知道，心里很不受用：又知宝玉失玉以后，神志悒愤，医药无效；又值王夫人心疼。那年正值京察，工部将贾政保列一等，二月，吏部带领引见。皇上念贾政勤俭谨慎，即放了江西粮道。即日谢恩，已奏明起程日期。虽有众亲朋贺喜，贾政也无心应酬，只念家中人口不宁，又不敢耽延在家。

正在无计可施，只听见贾母那边叫：“请老爷。”贾政即忙进去。看见王夫人带着病也在那里，便向贾母请了安。贾母叫他坐下，便说：“你不日就要赴任，我有多少话与你说，不知你听不听？”说着，掉下泪来。贾政忙站起来，说道：“老太太有话，只管吩咐，儿子怎敢不遵命呢？”贾母哽咽着说道：“我今年八十一岁的人了，你又要做外任去。偏有你大哥在家，你又不能告亲老。你这一去了，我所疼的只有宝玉，偏偏的又病得糊涂，还不知道怎么样呢！我昨日叫赖升媳妇出去，叫人给宝玉算算命，这先生算得好灵，说：‘要娶了金命的人帮扶他，必要冲冲喜才好；不然，只怕保不住。’我知道你不信那些话，所以叫你来商量。你的媳妇也在这里，你们两个也商量商量：还是要宝玉好呢？还是随他





“Then come straight back to let us know about it, to set your wife’s mind at rest.”

Unable to refuse, Jia Lian had to take his leave of Jia Zheng and set off.

Jia Zheng, who had heard the news earlier, was thoroughly disconcerted, knowing also that Baoyu since losing his jade had grown feeble-minded and no medicine would cure him, while now Lady Wang was ill too.

That year the records of officials in the capital were examined, and the Ministry of Works ranked Jia Zheng as first class. In the second month, the Minister of Civil Affairs took him to an audience at court and the Emperor, in recognition of his frugality and circumspection, appointed him Grain Commissioner of Jiangxi. That same day, giving thanks for this favour, he reported to the throne the date of his departure. Kinsmen and friends came to offer congratulations, but disturbed as he was by his domestic problems Jia Zheng was in no mood to entertain them. Still he dared not postpone his journey.

He was in a quandary when he received a summons from the old lady and, hastening to her room, found his wife there too in spite of her illness. He paid his respects to his mother, who told him to take a seat.

“You will soon be going to your new post,” she said tearfully. “There is much I want to say to you, but will you listen?”

Jia Zheng promptly rose to his feet.

“Just give me your orders, madam. How dare your son disobey them?”

“I’m eighty-one this year, yet you’re going to post in the provinces,” she sobbed. “You can’t ask for compassionate leave either, as you have an elder brother at home to take care of me. Once you’re gone, there’ll be only Baoyu here that I care for, but the poor boy’s losing his mind and we don’t know what will become of him! Yesterday I sent Lai Sheng’s wife to get someone to tell Baoyu’s fortune. She found a very clever fortune-teller who said, ‘He must marry a bride with gold in her stars to help counteract his bad luck; otherwise there’ll probably be no saving him.’ I know you don’t believe in such things, so I’ve asked you here to consult you. Your wife is here too, so the two of you can talk it over. Should we try to save Baoyu? Or let things take their course?”



去呢？”贾政陪笑说道：“老太太当初疼儿子这么疼的，难道做儿子的就不疼自己的儿子不成么？只为宝玉不上进，所以时常恨他，也不过是‘恨铁不成钢’的意思。老太太既要给他成家，这也是该当的，岂有逆着老太太不疼他的理？如今宝玉病着，儿子也是不放心。因老太太不叫他见我，所以儿子也不敢言语。我到底瞧瞧宝玉是个什么病？”

王夫人见贾政说着也有些眼圈儿红，知道心里是疼的，便叫袭人扶了宝玉来。宝玉见了他父亲，袭人叫他请安，他便请了个安。贾政见他脸面很瘦，目光无神，大有疯傻之状，便叫人扶了进去，便想到：“自己也是望六的人了，如今又放外任，不知道几年回来。倘或这孩子果然不好，一则年老无嗣，虽说有孙子，到底隔了一层；二则老太太最疼的是宝玉，若有差错，可不是我的罪名更重了？”瞧瞧王夫人一包眼泪，又想到他身上，复站起来说：“老太太这么大年纪，想法儿疼孙子，做儿子的还敢违拗？老太太主意该怎么便怎么就是了。但只姨太太那边，不知说明白了没有？”王夫人便道：“姨太太是早应了的；只为蟠儿的事没有结案，所以这些时总没提起。”贾政又道：“这就是第一层的难处。他哥哥在监里，妹子怎么出嫁？况且贵妃的事虽不禁婚嫁，宝玉应照已出嫁的姐姐，有九个月的功服，此时也难娶亲。再者，我的起身日期已经奏明，不敢耽搁，这几天怎么办呢？”

贾母想了一想：“说的果然不错。若是等这几件事过去，他父亲又走了，倘或这病一天重似一天，怎么办？只好越些



Jia Zheng answered submissively, "You were so good to your son, madam, do you think I don't love my son too? It's only because Baoyu made so little progress that I was often exasperated with him — just a case of wanting to 'turn iron into steel.' If you wish him to take a wife, as is right and proper, how could I disobey you and show no concern for him? I am worried too by his illness. Since you kept him away from me I dared not object; but can I not see for myself just how ill he is?"

Lady Wang saw that the rims of his eyes had reddened and knew how distressed he was. She therefore told Xiren to bring Baoyu in. When the boy saw his father, prompted by Xiren he paid his respects; but with his emaciated face and his lack-lustre eyes he looked like a moron. Jia Zheng told them to take him back.

He reflected, "I'm nearing sixty, and now I'm posted to the provinces with no knowing when I shall come back. If this child really doesn't recover, I shall be left heirless in my old age; for my grandson, after all, is another generation removed. Besides, Baoyu is the old lady's favourite: if anything happens to him, I shall be guilty of a greater crime." He saw from his wife's tears how this must affect her too.

Rising to his feet he said, "Old as you are, madam, you show such concern for your grandson, how can I, your son, disobey you? I shall fall in with whatever you think best. But will Aunt Xue agree to this, I wonder?"

"She gave her consent some time ago," Lady Wang told him. "We haven't spoken of it yet simply because Pan's business still isn't settled."

"This is the first problem," he answered. "With her brother in jail, how can his sister get married? In the second place, although an Imperial Consort's death does not preclude marriages, Baoyu should mourn for nine months for a married sister, and this is hardly the time for him to take a wife. Furthermore, the date of my departure has already been reported to the throne, and I cannot postpone it. How are we to arrange a wedding in these few days?"

The old lady thought, "He's right. But if we wait till these are no longer problems, Baoyu's father will be gone, and what shall we do if his illness gets steadily worse? We shall just have to disregard certain rules of etiquette."



礼办了才好。”想定主意，便说道：“你若给他办呢，我自然有个道理，包管都碍不着：姨太太那边，我和你媳妇亲自过去求他。蟠儿那里，我央蝌儿去告诉他，说是要救宝玉的命，诸事将就，自然应的。若说服里娶亲，当真使不得；况且宝玉病着，也不可叫他成亲，不过是冲冲喜。我们两家愿意，孩子们又有‘金玉’的道理，婚是不用合的了，即挑了好日子，按着咱们家分儿过了礼。趁着挑个娶亲日子，一概鼓乐不用，倒按宫里的样子，用十二对提灯，一乘八人轿子抬了来，照南边规矩拜了堂，一样坐床撒帐，可不是算娶了亲了么？宝丫头心地明白，是不用虑的。内中又有袭人，也还是个妥妥当当的孩子，再有个明白人常劝他，更好。他又和宝丫头合的来。再者，姨太太曾说：‘宝丫头的金锁也有个和尚说过，只等有玉的便是婚姻。’焉知宝丫头过来，不因金锁倒招出他那块玉来，也定不得。从此一天好似一天，岂不是大家的造化？这会子只要立刻收拾屋子，铺排起来，——这屋子是要你派的；一概亲友不请，也不排筵席；待宝玉好了，过了功服，然后再摆席请人：这么着，都赶的上；你也看见了他们小两口儿的事，也好放心着去。”

贾政听了，原不愿意，只是贾母做主，不敢违命，勉强陪笑说道：“老太太想得极是，也很妥当。只是要吩咐家下众人，不许吵嚷得里外皆知，这要耽不是的。姨太太那边，只怕不肯；若是果真应了，也只好按着老太太的主意办去。”贾母道：“姨太太那里有我呢，你去罢。”

贾政答应出来，心中好不自在。因赴任事多，部里领



Her mind made up she said, "If you're willing, I know of a way to get round these obstacles. I shall go myself with your wife to ask Aunt Xue's consent. As for Pan, I'll get Ke to tell him that we have to do this to save Baoyu's life, and then he's bound to agree. Of course it wouldn't do to have a real marriage while in mourning, and Baoyu is too ill for that anyway — we just want a happy event to ward off evil. As both our families agree and there was that prediction about the young people's 'gold' and 'jade,' there's no need to compare their horoscopes; we'll just select a good date to exchange gifts according to our family status. Then we'll choose a day for the wedding, not engaging musicians but following the example of the Palace, fetching the bride over in a sedan-chair with eight bearers and twelve pairs of lanterns. They can bow to each other as is done in the south, then sit down on the bed and let down the curtains, and won't that count as a wedding?"

"Baochai's so intelligent, we don't have to worry. Besides, he has Xiren in his chambers as well, and so much the better, as she's another reliable, sensible girl who knows how to reason with him. She and Baochai get on well too.

"Another thing. Aunt Xue once told me, 'A monk said that Baochai with her golden locket is destined to marry someone with jade.' So for all we know, once she marries into our household her gold locket may bring the jade back. Then he should get steadily better, and wouldn't that be a blessing for us all?"

"All that needs to be done straight away is to get their rooms ready and furnished — it's for you to assign them a place. We won't give any feasts, but wait till Baoyu's better and out of mourning before inviting relatives and friends. In this way we can manage everything in time, and you can leave with an easy mind, having seen the young couple settled."

Jia Zheng though averse to this could not gainsay his mother. Forcing a smile he said, "You have thought it out well and that would be most fitting, madam. We must order the servants, though, not to noise this abroad or we should be censured for it. I'm only afraid Aunt Xue's family may not agree. If they really do, we must manage it your way."

"Just leave Aunt Xue to me," she said, then dismissed him.

Jia Zheng withdrew feeling thoroughly uneasy. He had so much to do



凭，亲友们荐人，种种应酬不绝，竟把宝玉的事听凭贾母交与王夫人凤姐儿了。惟将荣禧堂后身王夫人内屋旁边一大跨所二十余间房屋指与宝玉，余者一概不管。贾母定了主意，叫人告诉他去，贾政只说“很好”。——此是后话。

且说宝玉见过贾政，袭人扶回里间炕上。因贾政在外，无人敢与宝玉说话，宝玉便昏昏沉沉的睡去。贾母与贾政所说的话，宝玉一句也没有听见。袭人等却静静儿的听得明白，头里虽也听得些风声，到底影响，只不见宝钗过来，却也有些信真。今日听了这些话，心里方才水落归槽，倒也喜欢。心里想道：“果然上头的眼力不错！这才配的是。我也造化！若他来了，我可以卸了好些担子。但是这一位的心里只有一个林姑娘，幸亏他没有听见，若知道了，又不知要闹到什么分儿了！”袭人想到这里，转喜为悲，心想：“这件事怎么好？老太太、太太那里知道他们心里的事？一时高兴，说给他知道，原想要他病好。若是他还像头里的心，初见林姑娘，便要摔玉砸玉；况且那年夏天在园里，把我当作林姑娘，说了好些私心话；后来因为紫鹃说了句玩话儿，便哭得死去活来。若是如今和他说要娶宝姑娘，竟把林姑娘撻开，除非是他人事不知还可，倘或明白些，只怕不但不能冲喜，竟是催命了！我再不把话说明，那不是一害三个人了么？”

袭人想定主意，待等贾政出去，叫秋纹照看着宝玉，便从里间出来，走到王夫人身旁，悄悄的请了王夫人到贾母后



before going to his post, what with fetching credentials from the ministry, receiving relatives and friends who came with recommendations and entertaining a host of other people, that he left the arrangements for Baoyu's wedding to his mother, wife and Xifeng. All he did was to assign his son a side-court with more than twenty rooms in it, adjacent to Lady Wang's house behind the Hall of Glorious Felicity. When the old lady sent him word of some decision, he simply replied, "Very good." But this is anticipating.

After Baoyu had seen his father, Xiren helped him back to the *kang* in the inner room. Since Jia Zheng was outside, no one ventured to speak to Baoyu, who dozed off and thus heard nothing of the conversation in the outer room. However, Xiren, keeping quiet, heard it clearly. Talk of this had reached her before, though only as hearsay, yet she tended to believe it in view of the fact that Baochai's visits had stopped. This confirmation today delighted her.

"The mistresses certainly have good judgement," she thought. "This is just the match for him. And what luck for me too! If she comes, my load will be ever so much lighter. But he's set his heart on Miss Lin, so it's a blessing that he didn't hear this. If he had, Heaven knows how wildly he'd carry on!" This set her worrying.

"What shall I do?" she wondered. "Their Ladyships have no idea of their feelings for each other. They may be so pleased that they tell him, in the hope of curing him. Then suppose he acts the way he did when he first met Miss Lin and tried to smash his jade; or that summer in the Garden, when he mistook me for her and poured out his love; or when Zijuan teased him later, and he nearly cried himself to death? If they tell him now that he's to have not Miss Lin but Miss Baochai, it may not matter if his wits are wandering; but if he's fairly lucid, far from curing his madness it may hasten his death. Unless I explain this to them I may ruin three lives!"

Having reached this resolve she waited till Jia Zheng had gone, then leaving Baoyu in the care of Qiuwen she slipped out and quietly asked Lady Wang to go with her to the back room. The Lady Dowager paid little attention, assuming that there was something Baoyu wanted, and



身屋里去说话。贾母只道是宝玉有话，也不理会，还在那里打算怎么过礼，怎么娶亲。

那袭人同了王夫人到了后间，便跪下哭了。王夫人不知何意，把手拉着他说：“好端端的，这是怎么说？有什么委屈，起来说。”袭人道：“这话奴才是不该说的，这会子因为没有法儿了！”王夫人道：“你慢慢的说。”袭人道：“宝玉的亲事，老太太、太太已定了宝姑娘了，自然是极好的一件事。只是奴才想着，太太看去，宝玉和宝姑娘好，还是和林姑娘好呢？”王夫人道：“他两个因从小儿在一处，所以宝玉和林姑娘又好些。”袭人道：“不是‘好些’。”便将宝玉素与黛玉这些光景一一的说了，还说：“这些事都是太太亲眼见的，独是夏天的话，我从没敢和别人说。”王夫人拉着袭人道：“我看外面儿已瞧出几分来了，你今儿一说，更加是了。但是刚才老爷说的话，想必都听见了，你看他的神情儿怎么样？”袭人道：“如今宝玉若有人和他说话他就笑，没人和他说话他就睡，所以头里的话却倒都没听见。”王夫人道：“倒是这件事叫人怎么样呢？”袭人道：“奴才说是说了，还得太太告诉老太太，想个万全的主意才好。”王夫人便道：“既这么着，你去干你的。这时候满屋子的人，暂且不用提起。等我瞅空儿回明老太太，再作道理。”说着，仍到贾母跟前。

贾母正在那里和凤姐儿商议，见王夫人进来，便问道：“袭人丫头说什么，这么鬼鬼祟祟的？”王夫人趁问，便将宝玉的心事细细回明贾母。贾母听了，半日没言语。王夫人和

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went on considering the gifts and arrangements for the wedding.

Once in the back room with Lady Wang, Xiren threw herself on her knees and burst into tears.

Lady Wang pulled her up and asked in surprise, "What's come over you? What's the trouble? Get up and tell me."

"This is something a slave shouldn't say, but I see no other way out!"

"Well, take your time and tell me."

"Your Ladyships have decided to marry Miss Baochai to Baoyu, and of course nothing could be better. All I'm wondering, madam, is this: which of the two, Miss Baochai and Miss Lin, do you think Baoyu prefers?"

"As he and Miss Lin were together as children, he's slightly fonder of her."

"Not just 'slightly fonder,'" Xiren demurred, going on to cite examples of their behaviour. "Except for the avowal he made that summer, which I've never dared tell anyone, you saw the other instances yourself, madam," she concluded.

Holding Xiren's hand Lady Wang answered, "I did have some inkling from what I saw. Now you've clinched it. But he must have heard what the master said just now. Did you notice his reaction?"

"Nowadays when people talk to him he smiles; if no one talks to him he goes to sleep. So he didn't hear what was said."

"Then what's to be done?"

"I've made bold to tell you this, madam. It's for you to tell the old lady and think of some really safe plan."

"In that case, get back to your work. I won't mention it now — there are too many people there. I'll wait for a chance to tell her later on, and then we shall see."

She rejoined the Lady Dowager who was discussing Baoyu's marriage with Xifeng.

"What did Xiren want that she looked so secretive?" the old lady asked.

Lady Wang took this opening to give her a detailed account of Baoyu's feeling for Daiyu. For a while the old lady said nothing, and Lady Wang and Xifeng kept silent too.

凤姐也都不再说了。只见贾母叹道：“别的事都好说。林丫头倒没有什么。若宝玉真是这样，这可叫人作了难了！”

只见凤姐想了一想，因说道：“难倒不难。只是我想了个主意，不知姑妈肯不肯。”王夫人道：“你有主意，只管说给老太太听，大家娘儿们商量着办罢了。”凤姐道：“依我想，这件事，只有一个‘掉包儿’的法子。”贾母道：“怎么‘掉包儿’？”凤姐道：“如今不管宝兄弟明白不明白，大家吵嚷起来，说是老爷做主，将林姑娘配了他了，瞧他的神情儿怎么样。要是他全不管，这个包儿也就不用了；若是他有些喜欢的意思，这事却要大费周折呢！”王夫人道：“就算他喜欢，你怎么样办法呢？”

凤姐走到王夫人耳边，如此这般的说了一遍。王夫人点了几点头儿，笑了一笑，说道：“也罢了。”贾母便问道：“你们娘儿两个捣鬼，到底告诉我是怎么着呀。”凤姐恐贾母不懂，露泄机关，便也向耳边轻轻告诉了一遍。贾母果真一时不懂。凤姐笑着又说了几句。贾母笑道：“这么着也好，可就只忒苦了宝丫头了。倘或吵嚷出来，林丫头又怎么样呢？”凤姐道：“这个话，原只说给宝玉听，外头一概不许提起，有谁知道呢？”

正说间，丫头传进话来，说：“琏二爷回来了。”王夫人恐贾母问及，使个眼色与凤姐。凤姐便出来迎着贾琏，撅了个嘴儿，同到王夫人屋里等着去了。一会儿，王夫人进来，已见凤姐哭的两眼通红。贾琏请了安，将到十里屯料理王子腾的丧事的话说了一遍，便说：“有恩旨赏了内阁的职衔，谥了文勤公，命本家扶柩回籍，着沿途地方官员照料。昨日起



"Nothing else really matters," the old lady sighed at last. "We needn't worry about Daiyu. But if Baoyu is really so infatuated, it's going to be difficult!"

"Not too difficult," said Xifeng after some thought. "I've an idea, but don't know whether Aunt Xue will agree to it or not."

"If you have a plan, tell the old lady," said Lady Wang. "We can discuss it together."

"To my mind," said Xifeng, "the only way is to 'palm off a dummy' on him."

"Palm off what dummy?" the old lady asked.

"Never mind whether Baoyu is in his right mind or not, we must all drum it into his head that on the master's orders he is to marry Miss Lin, and see how he takes it. If he doesn't care either way, we needn't trick him. If he's pleased, we'll have to do things more deviously."

"Well, assuming he's pleased, what then?" asked Lady Wang.

Xifeng went over to whisper something into her ear, at which she nodded and smiled.

"That should work," she said.

"Tell me what you two are plotting," urged the old lady.

In order not to give away the secret, Xifeng whispered in her ear too. As she had anticipated, the old lady did not understand at first and Xifeng, smiling, had to explain more fully.

"That's all right," agreed the old lady. "Rather hard on Baochai, though. And if word gets out, what about Daiyu?"

"We'll just tell Baoyu and forbid any mention of this outside, then how could she hear?"

At this point a maid announced Jia Lian's return. Not wanting the old lady to question him, Lady Wang signalled to Xifeng who went out to meet him, signing to him to go with her to Lady Wang's place. By the time they were joined by Lady Wang, Xifeng's eyes were red from weeping. Jia Lian, when he had paid his respects, described his trip to Shilitun to help arrange for Wang Ziteng's funeral.

"An Imperial decree has conferred on him the rank of Grand Secretary and the posthumous title of Duke Wenqin," he announced. "The family has been ordered to take the coffin back to his native district, and



身，连家眷回南去了。舅太太叫我回来请安问好，说：‘如今想不到不能进京，有多少话不能说。’听见我大舅子要进京，若是路上遇见了，便叫他来到咱们这里细细的说。”王夫人听毕，其悲痛自不必言。凤姐劝慰了一番，“请太太略歇一歇，晚上来，再商量宝玉的事罢。”说毕，同了贾琏回到自己房中，告诉了贾琏，叫他派人收拾新房不提。

一日，黛玉早饭后，带着紫鹃到贾母这边来，一则请安，二则也为自己散散闷。出了潇湘馆，走了几步，忽然想起忘了手绢子来，因叫紫鹃回去取来，自己却慢慢的走着等他。刚走到沁芳桥那边山石背后当日同宝玉葬花之处，忽听一个人呜呜咽咽在那里哭。黛玉煞住脚听时，又听不出是谁的声音，也听不出哭的叨叨的是些什么话，心里甚是疑惑；便慢慢的走去。及到了跟前，却见一个浓眉大眼的丫头在那里哭呢。

黛玉未见他时，还只疑府里这些大丫头有什么说不出的心事，所以来这里发泄发泄；及至见了这个丫头，却又好笑，因想到：“这种蠢货，有什么情种！自然是那屋里作粗活的丫头，受了大女孩子的气了。”细瞧了一瞧，却不认得。

那丫头见黛玉来了，便也不敢再哭，站起来拭眼泪。黛玉问道：“你好好的为什么在这里伤心？”那丫头听了这话，又流泪道：“林姑娘，你评评这个理：他们说话，我又不知道，我就说错了一句话，我姐姐也不犯就打我呀！”黛玉听了，不懂他说的是些什么，因笑问道：“你姐姐是那一个？”那



officials along the way are to render assistance. They set off on the journey back south yesterday. My aunt told me to convey her respects and say how sorry she is to have been unable to come to the capital — there was so much she wanted to tell you. When she heard that Xifeng's brother was on his way to the capital too, she promised if she met him on the road to send him here to give us all her news."

Lady Wang was naturally so upset by this account that Xifeng had to comfort her.

"Please have a rest now, madam," she urged. "This evening we'll come back to discuss Baoyu's business."

Going home with Jia Lian she told him what had happened, and asked him to send servants to prepare the bridal chambers.

One morning after breakfast, Daiyu set off to call on her grandmother to pay her respects and also by way of diversion. They had not gone far from Bamboo Lodge when she found that she had forgotten her handkerchief. She told Zijuan to go back for one then catch her up — she would be walking on slowly. She had passed Seeping Fragrance Bridge and reached the rocks behind which she and Baoyu had buried blossom, when she suddenly heard sobbing. She stopped to listen, but could not tell who was lamenting there or hear what she was saying. Very puzzled, she strolled over and found that the one crying there was an under-maid with thick eyebrows and big eyes.

Daiyu had expected to see one of the upper-maids come here to vent some grief which she could not confide to others. But when she saw this girl she thought with amusement, "A stupid creature like this can't have been crossed in love. She's one of those doing rough work who must have got scolded by the senior maids." She looked hard at the girl but could not recognize her.

When Daiyu appeared, the maid dared not go on crying but stood up and wiped her eyes.

"Why are you weeping here? What's come over you?" Daiyu asked.

That set the maid off again. "Judge for yourself, Miss Lin!" she sobbed. "They knew something, but I wasn't in on it; so even if I made a slip of the tongue, sister had no call to slap me."

Daiyu could not make head or tail of this.



丫头道：“就是珍珠姐姐。”黛玉听了，才知他是贾母屋里的。因又问：“你叫什么？”那丫头道：“我叫傻大姐儿。”黛玉笑了一笑，又问：“你姐姐为什么打你？你说错了什么话了？”那丫头道：“为什么呢！就是为我们宝二爷娶宝姑娘的事情！”

黛玉听了这句话，如同一个疾雷，心头乱跳，略定了定神，便叫这丫头：“你跟了我这里来。”那丫头跟着黛玉到那畸角儿上葬桃花的去处，那里背静，黛玉因问道：“宝二爷娶宝姑娘，他为什么打你呢？”傻大姐道：“我们老太太和太太、二奶奶商量了，因为我们老爷要起身，说：就赶着往姨太太商量，把宝姑娘娶过来罢。头一宗，给宝二爷冲什么喜；第二宗——”说到这里，又瞅着黛玉笑了一笑，才说道：“赶着办了，还要给林姑娘说婆婆家呢。”

黛玉已经听呆了。这丫头只管说道：“我又不知道他们怎么商量的，不叫人吵嚷，怕宝姑娘听见害臊。我白和宝二爷屋里的袭人姐姐说了一句：‘咱们明儿更热闹了，又是宝姑娘，又是宝二奶奶，这可怎么叫呢？’林姑娘，你说我这话害着珍珠姐姐什么了吗？他走过来就打了我一个嘴巴，说我混说，不遵上头的话，要撵出我去！——我知道上头为什么不叫言语呢？你们又没告诉我，就打我！”说着，又哭起来。

那黛玉此时心里，竟是油儿、酱儿、糖儿、醋儿倒在一处的一般，甜、苦、酸、咸，竟说不上什么味儿来了。停了一会儿，颤巍巍的说道：“你别混说了。你再混说，叫人听见，又要打你了。你去罢。”说着，自己转身要回潇湘馆



"Which sister do you mean?" she asked with a smile.

"Sister Zhenzhu."

Knowing from this that she worked for the old lady, Daiyu asked again, "What's your name?"

"They call me Numskull."

"Why did she slap you? What did you say wrong?"

"Why? Just because of the marriage of our Master Bao to Miss Baochai."

Daiyu felt thunderstruck. Her heart beat wildly. Composing herself a little she said, "Come with me."

Numskull accompanied her to the quiet spot where she had buried the peach-blossom. Then Daiyu asked, "Why should she slap you because Master Bao is marrying Miss Baochai?"

"Their Ladyships have settled it with Madam Lian. Because His Lordship's going to leave so soon, they're fixing up hurriedly with Aunt Xue to have Miss Baochai brought over before he goes. This will counter Master Bao's bad luck with good. And after that..." — she beamed at Daiyu — "after his wedding they'll fix up a match for *you*, miss."

Daiyu listened, half stupefied, as the maid rattled on, "I don't know how they settled this, but they won't let anybody talk about it for fear of embarrassing Miss Baochai if she heard. All I did was to remark to sister Xiren — the one who works for Master Bao, 'Things are going to be livelier here with Miss Baochai becoming Second Mistress Bao — how ought we to address her?' Tell me, Miss Lin, why should that annoy Sister Zhenzhu? Yet she marched over and slapped my face, saying I was talking nonsense and should be thrown out for not obeying orders! How was I to know the mistresses didn't want this talked about? They never tell me anything, yet slap me!" She started sobbing again.

Daiyu felt as if her heart were filled with a mixture of oil, soy, sugar and vinegar — so sweet, bitter, painful and sharp that she could not put her sensations into words.

After a pause, in a trembling voice she said, "Don't talk such nonsense. If they heard, they'd give you another slapping. Be off with you now."

She turned to go back to Bamboo Lodge. But there seemed to be a



去。那身子竟有千百斤重的，两只脚却象踏着棉花一般，早已软了。只得一步一步慢慢的走将来。走了半天，还没到沁芳桥畔。原来脚下软了，走的慢，且又迷迷痴痴，信着脚儿从那边绕过来，更添了两箭地的路。这时刚到沁芳桥畔，却又不知不觉的顺着堤往回里走起来。

紫鹃取了绢子来，不见黛玉。正在那里看时，只见黛玉颜色雪白，身子恍恍荡荡的，眼睛也直直的，在那里东转西转。又见一个丫头往前头走了，离的远，也看不出是那一个来。心中惊疑不定，只得赶过来，轻轻的问道：“姑娘，怎么又回去？是要往那里去？”黛玉也只模糊听见，随口应道：“我问问宝玉去。”紫鹃听了，摸不着头脑，只得搀着他到贾母这边来。

黛玉走到贾母门口，心里似觉明晰，回头看见紫鹃搀着自己，便站住了，问道：“你作什么来的？”紫鹃陪笑道：“我找了绢子来了。头里见姑娘在桥那边呢，我赶着过去问姑娘，姑娘没理会。”黛玉笑道：“我打量你来瞧宝二爷来了呢，不然，怎么往这里走呢？”

紫鹃见他心里迷惑，便知黛玉必是听见那丫头什么话来，惟有点头微笑而已。只是心里怕他见了宝玉，那一个已经是疯疯傻傻，这一个又这样恍恍惚惚，一时说出些不大体统的话来，那时如何是好？心里虽如此想，却也不敢违拗，只得搀他进去。

那黛玉却又奇怪，这时不是先前那样软了，也不用紫鹃打帘子，自己掀起帘子进来。却是寂然无声：因贾母在屋里歇中觉，丫头们也有脱滑儿玩去的，也有打盹的，也有在那里伺候老太太的。倒是袭人听见帘子响，从屋里出来一看，



mill-stone round her neck and her legs were as limp, her steps as faltering, as if treading on cotton-wool. It seemed a long way to Seeping Fragrance Bridge, she was walking so slowly and so shakily; and moreover she added two bowshots to the distance by wandering about at random in a daze. When at last she reached the bridge, she inadvertently started back along the dyke.

When Zijuan brought the handkerchief Daiyu had gone. Looking round for her, she saw her white-faced, her eyes fixed in a vacant stare, wandering unsteadily this way and that. She also glimpsed a maid walking off in front, but too far away to make out which it was. In shocked surprise she ran over.

“Why are you going back, miss?” she asked gently. “Where do you want to go?”

Hearing her as if in a dream, Daiyu answered without thinking, “To ask Baoyu what this means.”

Zijuan, nonplussed as she was, had to help her to the Lady Dowager’s quarters. When Daiyu reached the door, her mind seemed to clear. Turning to her maid who was supporting her, she stopped to ask:

“Why have *you* come?”

“To bring your handkerchief,” was the smiling answer. “Just now I saw you by the bridge, but when I accosted you you paid no attention.”

“I thought you’d come to see Master Bao,” Daiyu laughed. “Why else should you come this way?”

Zijuan saw that her wits were wandering, and knew that she must have heard something from that maid. She could only nod and smile. However, this visit to Baoyu unnerved her, for he was already demented and now Daiyu was bemused too — what if they said something improper?

But for all this, she had to do as she was told and help her young mistress inside.

Strange to say, Daiyu was no longer as limp as before. Lifting the portiere herself instead of waiting for Zijuan, she stepped in. All was quiet, for the old lady was having a nap, and her maids had either slipped out to play or were nodding drowsily or attending her. The clack of the portiere alerted Xiren, who came out from the inner room.

见是黛玉，便让道：“姑娘，屋里坐罢。”黛玉笑着道：“宝二爷在家么？”袭人不知底里，刚要答言，只见紫鹃在黛玉身后和他拗嘴儿，指着黛玉，又摇摇手儿。袭人不解何意，也不敢言语。黛玉却也不理会，自己走进房来。看见宝玉在那里坐着，也不起来让坐，只瞅着嘻嘻的傻笑。黛玉自己坐下，却也瞅着宝玉笑。两个人也不问好，也不说话，也无推让，只管对着脸傻笑起来。

袭人看见这番光景，心里大不得主意，只是没法儿。忽然听着黛玉说道：“宝玉，你为什么病了？”宝玉笑道：“我为林姑娘病了！”袭人紫鹃两个吓得面目改色，连忙用言语来岔。两个却又不答言，仍旧傻笑起来。袭人见了这样，知道黛玉此时心中迷惑，和宝玉一样。因悄和紫鹃说道：“姑娘才好了，我叫秋纹妹妹同着你搀回姑娘，歇歇去罢。”因回头向秋纹道：“你和紫鹃姐姐送林姑娘去罢。你可别混说话。”

秋纹笑着，也不言语，便来同着紫鹃搀起黛玉。那黛玉也就站起来，瞅着宝玉只管笑，只管点头儿。紫鹃又催道：“姑娘，回家去歇歇罢。”黛玉道：“可不是！我这就是回去的时候儿了。”说着，便回身笑着出来了，仍旧不用丫头们搀扶，自己却走得比往常飞快。紫鹃秋纹后面赶忙跟着走。

黛玉出了贾母院门，只管一直走去，紫鹃连忙搀住，叫道：“姑娘，往这么来。”黛玉仍是笑着，随了往潇湘馆来。离门口不远，紫鹃道：“阿弥陀佛！可到了家了！”只这一句话没说完，只见黛玉身子往前一栽，“哇”的一声，一口血直吐出来。未知性命如何，且听下回分解。



"Please come in and take a seat, miss," she invited when she saw who it was.

"Is Master Bao in?" Daiyu asked with a smile.

Xiren, being in the dark, was about to answer when Zijuan signalled to her from behind Daiyu and, pointing at her young mistress, waved her hand warningly. Xiren was too puzzled by this to say any more. Daiyu, disregarding her, went on into the inner room where Baoyu was sitting. Instead of rising to offer her a seat, he simply stared at her with a foolish grin. Daiyu sat down and gazed back at him with a smile. They exchanged neither greetings nor civilities, just simpered at each other without a word.

Xiren, at a complete loss, did not know what to do.

"Baoyu," said Daiyu abruptly. "Why are you ill?"

"Because of Miss Lin," he answered with a smirk.

Xiren and Zijuan turned pale with fright and at once tried to change the subject; but the other two ignored them, still smiling foolishly. It dawned on Xiren that Daiyu was now deranged too, exactly like Baoyu.

She whispered to Zijuan, "Your young lady's just over her illness. I'll get Sister Qiuwen to help you take her back to rest." She turned to tell Qiuwen, "Go with Sister Zijuan to see Miss Lin back. Mind you don't say anything foolish."

Qiuwen complied readily. In silence she and Zijuan helped Daiyu to her feet. She kept her eyes on Baoyu, smiling and nodding.

"Go home and rest, miss," Zijuan urged her.

"Of course!" said Daiyu. "It's time for me to go now."

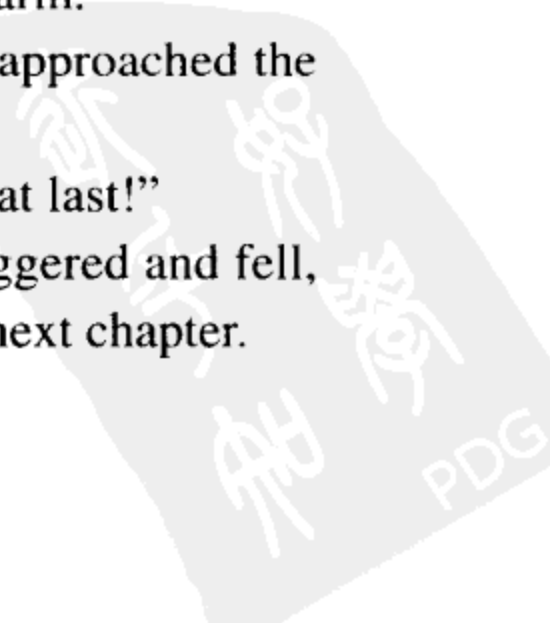
She turned and went out, still smiling, without their assistance and walking much faster than usual. The two maids hurried after her as once out of her grandmother's compound she forged straight ahead.

"This way, miss!" cried Zijuan, catching hold of her arm.

Daiyu allowed herself to be led back and soon they approached the gate of Bamboo Lodge.

"Gracious Buddha!" sighed Zijuan in relief. "Home at last!"

But the words were still on her lips when Daiyu staggered and fell, vomiting blood. To know what became of her, read the next chapter.





林黛玉
焚稿
斷癡情



第九十七回

林黛玉焚稿断痴情 薛宝钗出闺成大礼

话说黛玉到潇湘馆门口，紫鹃说了一句话，更动了心，一时吐出血来，几乎晕倒，亏了紫鹃还同着秋纹，两个人搀扶着黛玉到屋里来。那时秋纹去后，紫鹃雪雁守着，见他渐渐苏醒过来，问紫鹃道：“你们守着哭什么？”紫鹃见他说话明白，倒放了心了，因说：“姑娘刚才打老太太那边回来，身上觉着不大好，唬的我们没了主意，所以哭了。”黛玉笑道：“我那里就能够死呢！”这一句话没完，又喘成一处。

原来黛玉因今日听得宝玉宝钗的事情，这本是他数年的心病，一时急怒，所以迷惑了本性。及至回来吐了这一口血，心中却渐渐的明白过来，把头里的事一字也不记得。这会子见紫鹃哭了，方模糊想起傻大姐的话来。此时反不伤心，惟求速死，以完此债。这里紫鹃雪雁只得守着，想要告诉人去，怕又象上回招的凤姐说他们失惊打怪。那知秋纹回去神色慌张，正值贾母睡起中觉来，看见这般光景，便问：“怎么了？”秋纹吓的连忙把刚才的事回了一遍。贾母大惊，说：“这还了得！”连忙着人叫了王夫人凤姐过来，告诉了他婆媳两个。凤姐道：“我都嘱咐了，这是什么人走了风了呢？这不更是一件难事了吗！”贾母道：“且别管那些，先瞧瞧去





Chapter 97

Daiyu Burns Her Poems to End Her Infatuation Baochai Goes Through Her Wedding Ceremony

As Daiyu reached the gate of Bamboo Lodge, Zijuan's cry of relief startled her. She vomited blood. The two maids were just able to catch her as she was collapsing and carry her inside; then Qiuwen left Zijuan and Xueyan to attend to her.

After a while, Daiyu regained consciousness and saw that her maids were crying. She asked them the reason.

In relief Zijuan answered, "You seemed unwell just now, miss, when you left the old lady's place, and we didn't know what to do — we cried for fright."

"Oh, I'm not going to die as easily as all that," retorted Daiyu, panting as she spoke.

The news of Baoyu's impending wedding to Baochai, a prospect which Daiyu had dreaded for years, had so enraged her that she had lost her senses. After the hemorrhage her mind gradually cleared, but she had completely forgotten what Numskull had said. Zijuan's tears brought it back to her vaguely. Instead of grieving, however, she just longed to die quickly and be done with it. Her maids felt constrained to stay with her although they wanted to go and report her condition, for they were afraid Xifeng would scold them again for raising a false alarm.

However, Qiuwen had gone back panic-stricken. The old lady, just up from her nap, saw her agitation and asked her what had happened. Qiuwen's fearful description of what she had seen made the Lady Dowager exclaim in horror and send at once for Lady Wang and Xifeng to communicate this bad news.

"I ordered all the maids to keep quiet," said Xifeng. "Who could have blabbed? This makes things more difficult."

"Never mind about that now," said the old lady. "Let's go and see

是怎么样了。”说着，便起身带着王夫人凤姐等过来看视。见黛玉颜色如雪，并无一点血色，神气昏沉，气息微细，半日又咳嗽了一阵，丫头递了痰盂，吐出都是痰中带血的。大家都慌了。只见黛玉微微睁眼，看见贾母在他旁边，便喘吁吁的说道：“老太太！你白疼了我了！”

贾母一闻此言，十分难受，便道：“好孩子，你养着罢！不怕的！”黛玉微微一笑，把眼又闭上了。外面丫头进来回凤姐道：“大夫来了。”于是大家略避。王大夫同着贾琏进来，诊了脉，说道：“尚不妨事。这是郁气伤肝，肝不藏血，所以神气不定。如今要用敛阴止血的药，方可望好。”王大夫说完，同着贾琏出去开方取药去了。

贾母看黛玉神气不好，便出来告诉凤姐等道：“我看这孩子的病，不是我咒他，只怕难好！你们也该替他预备预备，冲一冲，或者好了，岂不是大家省心？就是怎么样，也不至临时忙乱。咱们家里这两天正有事呢。”凤姐儿答应了。贾母又问了紫鹃一回，到底不知是哪个说的。贾母心里只是纳闷，因说：“孩子们从小儿在一处儿玩，好些是有的。如今大了，懂的人事，就该要分别些，才是做女孩儿的本分，我才心里疼他。若是他心里有别的想头，成了什么人了呢！我可是白疼了他了！你们说了，我倒有些不放心。”因回到房中，又叫袭人来问。

袭人仍将前日回王夫人的话并方才黛玉的光景述了一





how she is.”

The three of them went to Bamboo Lodge and found Daiyu deathly pale. She seemed comatose and her breathing was very weak. Presently she had another fit of coughing. Her maids brought over the spittoon and to their consternation her sputum was streaked with blood. Her eyelids fluttered then, and she saw the old lady by her.

“Madam,” she gasped, “your love for me has been wasted.”

Her heart aching, her grandmother said, “Don’t be afraid, dear child. You must rest well.”

Daiyu smiled faintly, closing her eyes again as a maid came in to report the doctor’s arrival to Xifeng. Thereupon the ladies withdrew, and Doctor Wang was led in by Jia Lian to feel the patient’s pulse.

“She will be all right,” he observed. “Pent-up anger has drained her liver of blood, resulting in nervous disorders. Some medicine to regulate the blood will set her right again.”

This said, he went out with Jia Lian to write out his prescription and fetch medicine.

The Lady Dowager had seen that Daiyu’s state was critical. After leaving her she said to Xifeng, “It’s not that I want to put a jinx on her but it doesn’t look to me, I’m afraid, as if the child will recover. You must get ready after-life things to counter her bad luck. If she gets over this illness, that’ll be a great weight off our minds. And if it comes to the worst, you won’t be caught unprepared at the last minute. We’ve that other business to attend to these days.”

When Xifeng had acquiesced, the old lady questioned Zijuan; but the maid did not know who had told Daiyu the news.

Dubiously, the old lady went on, “It’s natural for young people who’ve played together as children to be partial to each other; but now that they’re big enough to know the facts of life they should keep at a distance. That’s how a girl should behave if she wants me to love her. To get other ideas into her head would be most improper, and all my love for her would be thrown away. I’m quite upset by what you’ve been telling me.”

On her return to her own quarters, she called in Xiren to interrogate her. Xiren repeated what she had told Lady Wang, then described Daiyu’s behaviour earlier that day.

遍。贾母道：“我方才看他却还不至糊涂。这个理我就不明白了！咱们这种人家，别的事自然没有的，这心病也是断断有不得的！林丫头若不是这个病呢，我凭着花多少钱都使得；就是这个病，不但治不好，我也没心肠了！”凤姐道：“林妹妹的事，老太太倒不必张罗，横竖有他二哥哥天天同着大夫瞧瞧；倒是姑妈那边的事要紧。今儿早起，听见说，房子不差什么就妥当了。竟是老太太、太太到姑妈那边去，我也跟了去商量商量。就只一件：姑妈家里有宝妹妹在那里，难以说话，不如索性请姑妈晚上过来，咱们一夜都说结了，就好办了。”贾母王夫人都道：“你说的是。今儿晚了，明儿饭后，咱们娘儿们就过去。”说着，贾母用了晚饭，凤姐同王夫人各自归房不提。

且说次日凤姐吃了早饭过来，便要试试宝玉，走进屋里说道：“宝兄弟大喜！老爷已择了吉日，要给你娶亲了！你喜欢不喜欢？”宝玉听了，只管瞅着凤姐笑，微微的点点头儿。凤姐笑道：“给你娶林妹妹过来，好不好？”宝玉却大笑起来。凤姐看着，也断不透他是明白，是糊涂，因又问道：“老爷说：你好了就给你娶林妹妹呢；若还是这么傻，就不给你娶了。”宝玉忽然正色道：“我不傻，你才傻呢！”说着，便站起来说：“我去瞧瞧林妹妹，叫他放心。”凤姐忙扶住了，说：“林妹妹早知道了。他如今要做新媳妇了，自然害羞，不肯见你的。”宝玉道：“娶过来，他到底是见我不见？”凤姐又好笑，又着忙，心里想：“袭人的话不差。提到林妹妹，虽说仍旧说些疯话，却觉得明白些。若真明白了，将来不是林姑娘，打破了这个灯虎儿，那饥荒才难打呢！”便忍笑说道：



"She didn't look deranged when I saw her just now," commented the old lady. "I simply can't understand this. In a family like ours, of course there can't be any carryings-on, but even *thinking* such thoughts is taboo! If that's not the root of her illness, I'm willing to spend any sum to cure her. If it is, I doubt if it can be cured and I don't care!"

Xifeng put in, "Don't worry about Cousin Lin, madam. Lian will take the doctor to see her every day anyway. It's the other business that matters. I heard this morning that the rooms are practically ready. Why don't you and Her Ladyship call on Aunt Xue to discuss it with her? I'll go with you. The only snag is that with Cousin Baochai there it will be difficult to talk. Suppose we ask Aunt Xue over for a consultation here this evening? Then we can settle everything tonight."

"You're right," Their Ladyships agreed. "But it's too late today. We'll go over there tomorrow after breakfast."

As the old lady had finished her supper by now, Xifeng and Lady Wang went back to their own apartments.

The next day, Xifeng came over after breakfast and went in to sound out Baoyu.

"Congratulations, Cousin Bao!" she greeted him gaily. "The master has chosen a lucky day for your wedding. Doesn't that make you happy?"

Baoyu just grinned at her and nodded imperceptibly.

"Your bride will be Cousin Lin. Are you glad?"

He simply burst out laughing, and she was unclear about his mental state.

"The master says you can marry her if you're better, not if you go on acting the fool," she warned.

"If anyone's a fool, it's you — not me!" he retorted seriously, then stood up and announced, "I'm going to see Cousin Lin to reassure her."

Xifeng promptly barred his way.

"She knows it already," she said. "As she's to marry you, she'll naturally feel too shy to see you."

"Will she see me after the wedding?"

Amused and perturbed Xifeng thought, "Xiren was right. At the mention of Daiyu, though he still raves his mind seems clearer. If he really



“你好好儿的便见你；若是疯疯癫癫的，他就不见你了。”宝玉说道：“我有一个心，前儿已交给林妹妹了。他要过来，横竖给我带来，还放在我肚子里头。”

凤姐听着竟是疯话，便出来看着贾母笑。贾母听了又是笑，又是疼，说道：“我早听见了。如今且不用理他，叫袭人好好的安慰他，咱们走罢。”说着，王夫人也来。大家到了薛姨妈那里，只说：“惦记着这边的事，来瞧瞧。”薛姨妈感激不尽，说些薛蟠的话。喝了茶，薛姨妈要叫人告诉宝钗，凤姐连忙拦住，说：“姑妈不必告诉宝妹妹。”又向薛姨妈陪笑说道：“老太太此来，一则为瞧姑妈，二则也有句要紧的话，特请姑妈到那边商议。”薛姨妈听了，点点头儿说：“是了。”于是大家又说些闲话，便回来了。

当晚，薛姨妈果然过来，见过了贾母，到王夫人屋里来，不免说起王子腾来，大家落了一回泪。薛姨妈便问道：“刚才我到老太太那里，宝哥儿出来请安，还好好儿的，不过略瘦些，怎么你们说得很利害？”凤姐便道：“其实也不怎么，这只是老太太悬心。目今老爷又要起身外任去，不知几年才来。老太太的意思：头一件叫老爷看着宝兄弟成了家，也放心；二则也给宝兄弟冲冲喜，借大妹妹的金锁压压邪气，只怕就好了。”

薛姨妈心里也愿意，只虑着宝钗委屈，说道：“也使得，只是大家还要从长计较计较才好。”王夫人便按着凤姐的话



comes to his senses and finds out that it isn't Daiyu but we've played a trick on him, then the fat will be in the fire!"

Suppressing a smile she said, "If you're better she'll see you, not if you act crazily."

"I've given her my heart. When she comes, she's bound to bring it and put it back in my breast."

As he was raving, Xifeng came out and smiled at the old lady, who had been both amused and upset by their conversation.

"I heard," she said. "We can ignore him for now and leave Xiren to calm him down. Let's go."

For by then Lady Wang had come too, and together they called on Aunt Xue, ostensibly to see how her family was faring. Aunt Xue was most grateful and gave them news of Xue Pan. When tea had been served she wanted to send for Baochai, but Xifeng stopped her.

"You needn't summon her, aunty," she said with a smile. "The old lady came partly to see how you are and partly because there's some important business which she'd like to discuss with you in our place."

Aunt Xue nodded and agreed to this, and after a little more idle talk they left.

That evening Aunt Xue came over. Having paid her respects to the old lady she called on Lady Wang, and speaking of Wang Ziteng's death they all shed tears.

"Just now in the old lady's place, Baoyu came out to pay his respects," remarked Aunt Xue. "He looked all right, simply a little thinner. Why do you speak as if it were so serious?"

"Actually it's nothing much," replied Xifeng. "But the old lady is worried. Now the master is going to a provincial post and may not be back for some years. Her idea is to have Baoyu's wedding while he's still here. Firstly, to set his father's mind at rest; and secondly, in the hope that Cousin Baochai's golden locket will bring Baoyu good luck, overcoming the evil influence so that he recovers."

Aunt Xue wanted the match but feared Baochai might feel herself wronged. "That's all right," she replied, "but we must think it out more carefully."

Lady Wang told her Xifeng's plan, adding, "As your son is away

和薛姨妈说，只说：“姨太太这会子家里没人，不如把妆奁一概蠲免，明日就打发蝌儿告诉蟠儿，一面这里过门，一面给他变法儿撕掇官事。”并不提宝玉的心事。又说：“姨太太既作了亲，娶过来，早好一天，大家早放一天心。”

正说着，只见贾母差鸳鸯过来候信。薛姨妈虽恐宝钗委屈，然也没法儿，又见这般光景，只得满口应承。鸳鸯回去回了贾母，贾母也甚喜欢，又叫鸳鸯过来求薛姨妈和宝钗说明原故，不叫他受委屈。薛姨妈也答应了。便议定凤姐夫妇作媒人。大家散了，王夫人姊妹不免又叙了半夜的话儿。

次日，薛姨妈回家，将这边的话细细的告诉了宝钗，还说：“我已经应承了。”宝钗始则低头不语，后来便自垂泪。薛姨妈用好言劝慰，解释了好些话。宝钗自回房内，宝琴随去解闷。薛姨妈又告诉了薛蝌，叫他：“明日起身，一则打听审详的事，一则告诉你哥哥一个信儿。你即便回来。”

薛蝌去了四日，便回来回复薛姨妈道：“哥哥的事，上司已经准了误杀，一过堂就要题本了，叫咱们预备赎罪的银子。妹妹的事，说：‘妈妈做主很好的。赶着办又省了好些银子。叫妈妈不用等我。该怎么着就怎么办罢。’”

薛姨妈听了，一则薛蟠可以回家，二则完了宝钗的事，心里安顿了好些，便是看着宝钗心里好像不愿意似的，“虽是这样，他是女儿家，素来也孝顺守礼的人，知我应了，他也没得说的。”便叫薛蝌：“办泥金庚帖，填上八字，即叫人送到琏二爷那边去，还问了过礼的日子来，你好预备。本来



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from home now, you need not give any dowry. Tomorrow send Ke to tell Pan that while we have the wedding here we'll find some way to settle his lawsuit for him." Omitting to mention that Baoyu had lost his heart to Daiyu, she concluded, "Since you agree to it, the sooner the bride comes the better — the sooner we'll all feel easier in our minds."

At this point Yuanyang arrived, sent by the old lady to hear what they had decided. Though this was treating Baochai shabbily, Aunt Xue could hardly refuse as they were so pressing. She consented with a show of readiness. Yuanyang went back to report this to the old lady, who in elation sent her back to urge Aunt Xue to explain the situation to Baochai so that she would not feel unfairly treated. Aunt Xue agreed to this. Having decided that Xifeng and her husband should act as go-betweens, the others left. Then Lady Wang and her sister sat up half the night talking.

The next day Aunt Xue went home and told Baochai in detail all these arrangements to which she had agreed. Baochai lowered her head in silence, and presently shed tears. Her mother did her best to comfort her, explaining the matter at length; and when Baochai went back to her room. Baoqin went with her to try to cheer her up. Aunt Xue also told Xue Ke, urging him to leave the following day to find out what sentence had been passed and to give Xue Pan this news, then to come back immediately.

Four days later Xue Ke returned.

"Regarding Cousin Pan's business," he reported, "the judge has approved a verdict of accidental manslaughter, which will be pronounced at the next session; and we must have silver ready by way of compensation. As for his sister's wedding, Pan says your decision was a good one, and rushing it through will save a good deal of money. He says you shouldn't wait for his return but do as you think fit."

This news reassured Aunt Xue that her son would be released and her daughter's wedding could be carried through, although she could see that Baochai looked rather unwilling. "Still," she thought, "she's a girl who's always been submissive and a model of propriety. Knowing that I've agreed, she won't raise any objections."

She told Xue Ke, "Get a gilded card and write her horoscope on it, then have it sent at once to Second Master Lian and ask the date for the



咱们不惊动亲友。哥哥的朋友，是你说的，都是混账人；亲戚呢，就是贾王两家。如今贾家是男家，王家无人在京里。史姑娘放定的事，他家没有来请咱们，咱们也不用通知。倒是把张德辉请了来，托他照料些，他上几岁年纪的人，到底懂事。”薛蝌领命，叫人送帖过去。

次日，贾琏过来见了薛姨妈，请了安，便说：“明日就是上好的日子。今日过来回姨太太，就是明日过礼罢。只求姨太太不要挑饬就是了。”说着，捧过通书来。薛姨妈也谦逊了几句，点头应允。贾琏赶着回去，回明贾政。贾政便道：“你回老太太说：既不叫亲友们知道，诸事宁可简便些。若是东西上，请老太太瞧了就是了，不必告诉我。”贾琏答应，进内将话回明贾母。

这里王夫人叫了凤姐命人将过礼的物件都送与贾母过目，并叫袭人告诉宝玉。那宝玉又嘻嘻的笑道：“这里送到园里，回来园里又送到这里，咱们的人送，咱们的人收，何苦来呢？”贾母王夫人听了，都喜欢道：“说他糊涂，他今日怎么这么明白呢？”鸳鸯等忍不住好笑，只得上来一件一件的点明给贾母瞧，说：“这是金项圈，这是金珠首饰，共八十件。这是妆蟒四十匹。这是各色绸缎一百二十匹。这是四季的衣服，共一百二十件。外面也没有预备羊酒，这是折羊酒的银子。”

贾母看了，都说好，轻轻的与凤姐说道：“你去告诉姨太





exchange of gifts, so that you can make preparations. We don't mean to notify relatives and friends because, as you've said, all Pan's friends are a bad lot and our only relatives are the Jia and Wang families. Now the Jias are the bridegroom's family and the Wangs have no one in the capital. When Miss Shi was engaged her family didn't invite us, so we needn't put them out either. But we must ask Zhang Dehui here to help see to things as he's elderly and experienced."

Xue Ke, acting on her instructions, had a card sent to the Jia family. And the next day Jia Lian called to pay his respects to Aunt Xue.

"Tomorrow is a very auspicious day," he said. "So I've come to propose that we exchange gifts tomorrow. We only hope you won't think us too niggardly, aunt. He handed her the card on which was written the date of the wedding, and when she had made a polite rejoinder and nodded her consent he hurried back to report this to Jia Zheng.

"Let the old lady know," said Jia Zheng. "Suggest that as we're not notifying friends and relatives, we may as well keep everything rather simple. Regarding the gifts, just ask her to approve them; no need to refer to me."

Jia Lian assented and went off on this errand. Lady Wang told Xifeng to take all the gifts to the old lady for her inspection, and to get Xiren to let Baoyu know as well.

"Why go to all this bother?" Baoyu chuckled. "We send things to the Garden, then they send them back here again — our own people doing the sending and the accepting!"

Their Ladyships hearing this remarked cheerfully, "We say he's weak in the head, but today he's talking sense."

Yuanyang and the other maids could not suppress smiles either as they showed the gifts one by one to the old lady.

"This is a gold necklet," they said. "Here are gold and pearl trinkets, eighty of them in all. There are forty rolls of serpent-patterned brocade, a hundred and twenty rolls of coloured silk and satin and a hundred and twenty garments for all four seasons. As no sheep and wine have been prepared, here is the equivalent in silver."

When the old lady had approved these gifts she quietly instructed Xifeng, "Go and tell Aunt Xue not to stand on ceremony. Ask her to wait



太，说：不是虚礼，求姨太太等蟠儿出来，慢慢的叫人给他妹妹做来就是了。那好日子的被褥，还是咱们这里代办了罢。”凤姐答应出来，叫贾琏先过去。又叫周瑞来旺等，吩咐他们：“不必走大门，只从园里从前开的便门内送去。我也就过去。这门离潇湘馆还远，倘别处的人见了，嘱咐他们不用在潇湘馆里提起。”众人答应着，送礼而去。

宝玉认以为真，心里大乐，精神便觉的好些，只是语言总有些疯傻。那过礼的回来，都不提名说姓，因此上下人等虽都知道，只因凤姐吩咐，都不敢走漏风声。

且说黛玉虽然服药，这病日重一日。紫鹃等在旁苦劝，说道：“事情到了这个分儿，不得不说了。姑娘的心事，我们也都知道。至于意外之事，是再没有的。姑娘不信，只拿宝玉的身子说起，这样大病，怎么做得亲呢？姑娘别听瞎话，自己安心保重才好。”黛玉微笑一笑，也不答言，又咳嗽数声，吐出好些血来。紫鹃等看去，只有一息奄奄，明知劝不过来，惟有守着流泪。天天三四趟去告诉贾母，鸳鸯测度贾母近日比前疼黛玉的心差了些，所以不常去回。况贾母这几日的心都在宝钗宝玉身上，不见黛玉的信儿，也不大提起，只请太医调治罢了。

黛玉向来病着，自贾母起直到姊妹们的下人，常来问候；今见贾府中上下人等都不过来，连一个问的人都没有，睁开眼，只有紫鹃一人，自料万无生理，因挣扎着向紫鹃说



till Pan is released to return gifts for his sister in his own good time. We here will prepare the bedding for the happy occasion.”

Xifeng assented and left to send Jia Lian to Aunt Xue's place. She then instructed Zhou Rui and Lai Wang, “Don't take the presents through the main gate but by that old side-gate in the Garden. I'll be coming over myself presently. That gate is a good distance from Bamboo Lodge. If people from other households notice you, warn them not to mention this to anyone there.”

The stewards went off to carry out these orders.

In the happy belief that he was to marry Daiyu, Baoyu's health improved, though he still talked foolishly. The stewards sending the presents named no names when they came back; and though most of the household knew where they had been, in view of Xifeng's instructions they dared not disclose it.

Now Daiyu, although taking medicine, was sinking steadily. Zijuan and her other maids pleaded hard with her.

“Things have come to such a pass, miss, we must speak out,” they said. “We know what's in your heart. But nothing unforeseen can possibly happen. If you don't believe us, just think of Baoyu's health — he's so ill, how could he get married? Don't listen to silly rumours, miss, but rest quietly till you're better.”

Daiyu smiled faintly without a word, then started coughing again and brought up more and more blood. Her maids saw that she was dying, and nothing they could say would save her. They remained at her bedside weeping, though sending three or four times a day to report to the old lady. But as Yuanyang had noticed that recently Daiyu had lost favour in her grandmother's eyes, she often neglected to pass on their messages. And as the old lady was occupied with preparations for the approaching wedding, when she had no news of Daiyu she asked no questions. All her maids could do was send for the doctor to see her.

During Daiyu's previous illnesses, everyone from the old lady herself down to the maids of her cousins had come to ask after her health. But now not one relative or servant came, not even sending inquiries, and when she opened her eyes there was nobody but Zijuan in the room. She knew there was not the least reason for her to live on.



道：“妹妹！你是我最知心的！虽是老太太派你伏侍我，这几年，我拿你就当作我的亲妹妹——”说到这里，气又接不上来。紫鹃听了，一阵心酸，早哭得说不出话来。

迟了半日，黛玉又一面喘，一面说道：“紫鹃妹妹！我躺着不受用，你扶起我来靠着坐坐才好。”紫鹃道：“姑娘的身上不大好，起来又要抖搂着了。”黛玉听了，闭上眼不言语了。一时，又要起来，紫鹃没法，只得同雪雁把他扶起，两边用软枕靠住，自己却倚在旁边。黛玉那里坐得住，下身自觉硌的疼，狠命的掌着。叫过雪雁来道：“我的诗本子……”说着，又喘。

雪雁料是要他前日所理的诗稿，因找来送到黛玉跟前。黛玉点点头儿，又抬眼看那箱子。雪雁不解，只是发怔。黛玉气的两眼直瞪，又咳嗽起来，又吐了一口血。雪雁连忙回身取了水来，黛玉漱了，吐在盂内。紫鹃用绢子给他试了嘴，黛玉便拿那绢子指着箱子，又喘成一处，说不上来，闭了眼。紫鹃道：“姑娘歪歪儿罢。”黛玉又摇摇头儿。

紫鹃料是要绢子，便叫雪雁開箱，拿出一块白绫绢子来。黛玉眇了，撂在一边，使劲说道：“有字的！”紫鹃这才明白过来要那块题诗的旧帕，只得叫雪雁拿出来，递给黛玉。紫鹃劝道：“姑娘歇歇儿罢，何苦又劳神？等好了再瞧罢。”只见黛玉接到手里也不瞧，挣扎着伸出那手来，狠命的撕那绢子，却是只有打颤的分儿，那里撕得动。紫鹃早已知他是恨宝玉，却也不敢说破，只说：“姑娘，何苦自己又



“Sister, you’re the one closest to me,” she murmured with an effort. “Ever since you were assigned to me by the old lady, I’ve always looked on you as my own sister....” Here she had to stop for breath.

Zijuan’s heart ached. She was sobbing too much to speak.

“Sister Zijuan!” panted Daiyu after a while. “I feel uncomfortable lying down. Please help me to sit up.”

“But you’re not well, miss. If you sit up you may catch cold.”

Daiyu closed her eyes without a word but presently struggled to sit up and Zijuan and Xueyan had to help her, propping her up with soft pillows on either side while Zijuan sat by her supporting her. Though she was so weak that she felt the bed beneath her painfully hard, she stuck it out.

“My poems....” she gasped to Xueyan.

Xueyan guessed that she wanted her manuscript book which she had been going through a few days ago. She found it and gave it to her. Daiyu nodded, then glanced up at the case on a shelf; but this time the maid could not read her thoughts. Daiyu’s eyes dilated with exasperation till a fresh fit of coughing made her bring up more blood. Xueyan hastily fetched her water to rinse out her mouth over the spittoon, then Zijuan wiped her lips with a handkerchief. Taking it, Daiyu pointed at the case, gasping for breath again so that she could not speak. Her eyes had closed.

“Better lie down, miss,” urged Zijuan.

When Daiyu shook her head, Zijuan realized that she must want a handkerchief and told Xueyan to fetch a white silk one from the case. But at sight of it, Daiyu put it aside.

“The one with writing...,” she managed to whisper.

Then it dawned on Zijuan that she wanted Baoyu’s old handkerchief on which she had written verses. She made Xueyan get it out and passed it to her.

“For pity’s sake, rest, miss!” she begged her. “Why tire yourself out? You can look at it when you’re better.”

But not even glancing at the poems, Daiyu tried with all her might to tear up the handkerchief. However, her trembling fingers lacked the strength. Although Zijuan knew how incensed she was by Baoyu, she dared not disclose this.

“Don’t wear yourself out again, miss, being angry!” she pleaded.

生气!”黛玉微微的点头，便掖在袖里。说叫：“点灯。”

雪雁答应，连忙点上灯来。黛玉瞧瞧，又闭上眼坐着，喘了一会子，又道：“笼上火盆。”紫鹃打量他冷，因说道：“姑娘躺下，多盖一件罢。那炭气只怕耽不住。”黛玉又摇头儿。雪雁只得笼上，搁在地下火盆架上。黛玉点头，意思叫挪到炕上来。雪雁只得端上来，出去拿那张火盆炕桌。

那黛玉却又把身子欠起，紫鹃只得两只手来扶着他。黛玉这才将方才的绢子拿在手中，瞅着那火，点点头儿，往上一撂。紫鹃唬了一跳，欲要抢时，两只手却不敢动。雪雁又出去拿火盆桌子，此时那绢子已经烧着了。紫鹃劝道：“姑娘!这是怎么说呢!”

黛玉只作不闻，回手又把那诗稿拿起来，瞄了瞄，又撂下了。紫鹃怕他也要烧，连忙将身倚住黛玉，腾出手来拿时，黛玉又早拾起，撂在火上。此时紫鹃却彀不着，干急。雪雁正拿进桌子来，看见黛玉一撂，不知何物，赶忙抢时，那纸沾火就着，如何能够少待，早已烘烘的着了。雪雁也顾不得烧手，从火里抓起来，撂在地下乱晒，却已烧得所余无几了。

那黛玉把眼一闭，往后一仰，几乎不曾把紫鹃压倒。紫鹃连忙叫雪雁上来，将黛玉扶着放倒，心里突突的乱跳。欲要叫人时，天又晚了；欲不叫人时，自己同着雪雁和鹦哥等几个小丫头，又怕一时有什么原故。好容易熬了一夜，到了次日早起，觉黛玉又缓过一点儿来。饭后，忽然又嗽又吐，又紧起来。

紫鹃看着不好了，连忙将雪雁等都叫进来看守，自己却来回贾母。那知到了贾母上房，静悄悄的，只有两三个老妈





Daiyu nodded weakly and stuffed the handkerchief up her sleeve. "Light the lamp," she ordered.

Xueyan hastily complied. After glancing at the lamp Daiyu closed her eyes again and sat there breathing hard.

"Bring the brazier," she murmured presently.

Thinking she was cold Zijuan urged, "You'd better lie down, miss and put on more bedding. Charcoal fumes might be bad for you."

As Daiyu shook her head, Xueyan had to light the brazier and put it on its stand on the floor. At a sign that Daiyu wanted it on the *kang*, she moved it there, then went out to fetch a low table.

Daiyu bent forward, supported by Zijuan's two hands. She pulled out the handkerchief, looked at the fire and nodded, then dropped the handkerchief on it. This shocked Zijuan, who wanted to snatch it off but could not let go of her mistress, as Xueyan was still outside fetching the low table. By now the handkerchief was burning.

"Miss!" protested Zijuan. "Why do such a thing?"

Turning a deaf ear, Daiyu picked up her manuscript book and after glancing at it put it down. For fear she might burn this too, Zijuan hastily leaned against her to support her, thereby freeing one of her own hands. But Daiyu forestalled her by dropping the book on the fire out of her reach.

Xueyan coming in with the table saw Daiyu toss something on the fire and made a grab for it; but the inflammable paper was already smouldering. Not caring whether she burned her hands or not, Xueyan snatched the book from the fire, threw it on the ground and trampled it with her feet. Too late — there was nothing but a charred remnant left.

Daiyu closed her eyes and sank back, nearly knocking over Zijuan who, her heart palpitating, hastily asked Xueyan to help lay her down. It was too late to fetch help; yet what if they called no-one and their young mistress should die during the night with only herself, Xueyan, Yingge and a few young maids in attendance? They sat up apprehensively till dawn, when Daiyu seemed a little better. But after breakfast she had a sudden relapse, coughing and retching again.

Fearing the worst, Zijuan left Xueyan and the others in charge while she hurried to report this to the old lady. However, she found the place

妈和几个做粗活的丫头在那里看屋子呢。紫鹃因问道：“老太太呢？”那些人都说：“不知道。”紫鹃听这话诧异，遂到宝玉屋里去看，竟也无人。遂问屋里的丫头，也说不知。

紫鹃已知八九，“但这些人怎么竟这样狠毒冷淡！”又想到黛玉这几天竟连一个人问的也没有，越想越悲，索性激起一腔闷气来，一扭身，便出来了。自己想了一想：“今日倒要看看宝玉是何形状。看他见了我怎么样过的去！那一年我说了一句慌话，他就急病了，今日竟公然做出这件事来！可知天下男子之心真真是冰寒雪冷，令人切齿的！”一面走，一面想，早已来到怡红院。只见院门虚掩，里面却又寂静的很，紫鹃忽然想到：“他要娶亲，自然是有新屋子的，但不知他这新屋子在何处？”

正在那里徘徊瞻顾，看见墨雨飞跑，紫鹃便叫住他。墨雨过来笑嘻嘻的道：“姐姐到这里做什么？”紫鹃道：“我听见宝二爷娶亲，我要来看看热闹儿，谁知不在这里。也不知是几儿？”墨雨悄悄的道：“我这话，只告诉姐姐，你可别告诉雪雁。他们上头吩咐了，连你们都不叫知道呢。就是今日夜里娶。那里是在这里？老爷派璉二爷另收拾了房子了。”说着，又问：“姐姐有什么事么？”紫鹃道：“没什么事，你去罢。”墨雨仍旧飞跑去了。

紫鹃自己发了一回呆，忽然想起黛玉来，这时候还不知是死是活，因两泪汪汪，咬着牙，发狠道：“宝玉！你看他明儿死了，你算是躲的过，不见了！你过了你那如心如意的事儿，拿什么脸来见我！”一面哭一面走，呜呜咽咽的，自回



quiet and deserted, except for a few old nurses and some young maids of all work left there to mind the house. Asked where the old lady was, they returned evasive answers. In surprise, Zijuan went into Baoyu's room and found it empty too. The young maids there also denied any knowledge of his whereabouts.

By then Zijuan had a good inkling of the truth. "How cruel these people are!" she thought to herself, remembering that not a soul had called on Daiyu during the last few days. The more she dwelt on it, the more bitter she felt. In her indignation she turned and left abruptly.

"I'd like to see how Baoyu looks today," she fumed. "Wouldn't the sight of me shame him? That year when I told him a fib he fell ill, he was so frantic; but today he blatantly does a thing like this. It shows that all men's hearts are as cold as ice — they really make you gnash your teeth!"

As she walked on brooding over this, she soon reached Happy Red Court. The gate was closed and all inside was quiet. It occurred to her then, "If he is getting married, he must have new bridal chambers. I wonder where they are?"

She was looking around when Moyu came flying along and she called to him to stop. The page walked over, grinning broadly.

"What brings you here, sister?" he asked.

"I heard Master Bao's getting married so I came to watch the fun, but apparently the wedding's not here. When exactly is it to be?"

"I'll tell you in strict confidence, sister," he whispered. "But don't let Xueyan know. Our orders are not even to let *you* know. The wedding will take place this evening. Of course it won't be here. His Lordship made Second Master Lian fix up new quarters for them. Well, is there anything you want me to do?"

"No, nothing. Off you go."

Moyu darted off.

Zijuan remained lost in thought until she remembered Daiyu — was she still alive?

"Baoyu!" she swore through clenched teeth, her eyes swimming with tears. "If she dies tomorrow, you'll get out of seeing her. But after you've had your pleasure, how are you going to brazen it out with *me*?"



去了。还未到潇湘馆，只见两个小丫头在门里往外探头探脑的，一眼看见紫鹃，那一个便嚷道：“那不是紫鹃姐姐来了吗！”紫鹃知道不好了，连忙摆手儿不叫嚷，赶忙进来看时，只见黛玉肝火上炎，两颧红赤。紫鹃觉得不妥，叫了黛玉的奶妈王奶奶来，一看，他便大哭起来。

这紫鹃因王奶奶有些年纪，可以仗个胆儿，谁知竟是个没主意的人，反倒把紫鹃弄的心里七上八下。忽然想起一个人来，便命小丫头急忙去请。你道是谁？原来紫鹃想起李宫裁是个孀居，今日宝玉结亲，他自然回避；况且园中诸事，向系李纨料理，所以打发人去请他。

李纨正在那里给贾兰改诗，冒冒失失的见一个丫头进来回说：“大奶奶！只怕林姑娘不好了！那里都哭呢。”李纨听了，吓了一跳，也不及问了，连忙站起身来便走。素云碧月跟着。一头走着，一头落泪，想着：“姐妹在一处一场，更兼他那容貌才情，真是寡二少双，惟有青女素娥可以仿佛一二，竟这样小小的年纪就作了北邙乡女！偏偏凤姐想出一条偷梁换柱之计，自己也不好过潇湘馆来，竟未能少尽姊妹之情，真真可怜可叹！”一头想着，已走到潇湘馆的门口。里面却又寂然无声，李纨倒着起忙来：“想来必是已死，都哭过了，那衣衾装裹未知妥当了没有？”连忙三步两步走进屋子来。里间门口一个小丫头已经看见，便说：“大奶奶来了！”紫鹃忙往外走，和李纨走了个对面。李纨忙问：“怎么样？”紫鹃欲说话时，惟有喉中哽咽的分儿，却一字说不出，那眼泪一似断线珍珠一般，只将一只手回过去指着黛玉。

李纨看了紫鹃这般光景，更觉心酸，也不再问，连忙走



She walked on in tears towards Bamboo Lodge and saw two young maids at the gate looking out for her.

At sight of her one cried, "Here comes Sister Zijuan!"

With a sinking heart she signalled to them to keep quiet: Hurrying to Daiyu's bedside, she found her feverish, her cheeks hectically flushed. Knowing that this was a bad sign, Zijuan called for Daiyu's old nurse Nanny Wang, who took one look then started sobbing and wailing.

Zijuan had hoped that old Nanny Wang with her experience would lend her courage; but the nurse's reaction threw her into a tizzy till she bethought herself of someone else and sent a young maid quickly in search of her. Do you know who this was? Li Wan. As a widow, it was out of the question for her to attend Baoyu's wedding; besides, she was the one in charge in the Garden. So Zijuan sent to ask her over.

Li Wan was correcting a poem for Lan when a young maid burst in.

"Madam!" she cried. "It looks as if Miss Lin's done for! They're all weeping and wailing there."

Li Wan was horrified. Not stopping to ask any questions she sprang up and hurried out, followed by Suyun and Biyue. And on the way she reflected tearfully, "We've been as close as sisters here. Her looks and talents are truly so outstanding, one can only compare her to some goddess in heaven. But poor girl, fated to die so young and be buried far from home! I didn't like to visit her all because of Xifeng's underhand plan to fob off a different bride on Baoyu — so I've let my cousin down. How tragic this is!"

Now, reaching the gate of Bamboo Lodge, she was unnerved not to hear a sound inside. "Perhaps she's already dead and they've finished lamenting her," she thought as she hurried inside. "I wonder if they had clothes, bedding and shroud ready."

A young maid by the door of the inner room at sight of her announced, "Here's Madam Zhu!"

Zijuan hastily came out as Li Wan walked in.

"How is she?" she asked urgently.

Zijuan choked with sobs and could not get a word out. Her tears falling like pearls from a broken string, she could only point at Daiyu.

The maid's grief distressed Li Wan even more. Asking no further

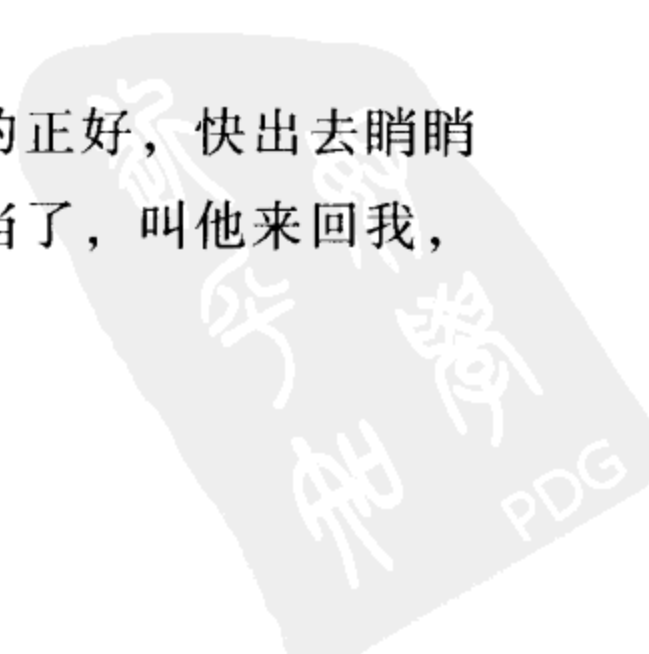


过来看时，那黛玉已不能言。李纨轻轻叫了两声。黛玉却还微微的开眼，似有知识之状，但只眼皮嘴唇微有动意，口内尚有出入之息，却要一句话、一点泪，也没有了。

李纨回身，见紫鹃不在跟前，便问雪雁。雪雁道：“他在外头屋里呢。”李纨连忙出来，只见紫鹃在外间空床上躺着，颜色青黄，闭了眼，只管流泪，那鼻涕眼泪把一个砌花锦边的褥子已湿了碗大的一片。李纨连忙唤他，那紫鹃才慢慢的睁开眼，欠起身来。李纨道：“傻丫头！这是什么时候，且只顾哭你的！林姑娘的衣衾，还不拿出来给他换上，还等多早晚呢？难道他个女孩儿家，你还叫他失身露体，精着来，光着去吗？”紫鹃听了这句话，一发止不住痛哭起来。李纨一面也哭，一面着急，一面拭泪，一面拍着紫鹃的肩膀说：“好孩子！你把我的心都哭乱了！快着收拾他的东西罢，再迟一会子就了不得了！”

正闹着，外边一个人慌慌张张跑进来，倒把李纨唬了一跳。看时，却是平儿，跑进来，看见这样，只是呆磕磕的发怔。李纨道：“你这会子不在那边，做什么来了？”说着，林之孝家的也进来了。平儿道：“奶奶不放心，叫来瞧瞧。既有大奶奶在这里，我们奶奶就只顾那一头儿了。”李纨点点头儿。平儿道：“我也见见林姑娘。”说着，一面往里走，一面早已流下泪来。

这里李纨因和林之孝家的道：“你来的正好，快出去瞧瞧去，告诉管事的预备林姑娘的后事。妥当了，叫他来回我，





questions she went over to look at the dying girl, already past speaking. She called her softly twice. Daiyu opened her eyes slowly and seemed to recognize her. She was still breathing faintly, but though her eyelids fluttered and her lips quivered, she could not utter a single word or shed a single tear.

Turning away, Li Wan saw that Zijuan had vanished and asked Xueyan where she was.

"In the outer room," was the answer.

Li Wan hurried out and found her lying on the divan there, her face pale, tears flowing so fast from her closed eyes that a big patch of the silk-bordered flowered mattress was wet with tears and mucus. At Li Wan's call she opened her eyes slowly and got up.

"Silly creature!" scolded Li Wan. "This is no time for weeping. Hurry up and get Miss Lin's clothes ready. How long will you wait to change her? Are you going to expose an unmarried girl to set out naked to the other world?"

At this, Zijuan broke down and sobbed bitterly. Li Wan though weeping too was impatient as well. Wiping her own eyes, she patted the maid on the shoulder.

"Good child, your crying is driving me distracted! Prepare her things quickly before it's too late," she urged.

She was startled just then by someone rushing in. It was Pinger. Bursting in on this scene she stood rooted to the spot, speechless.

"Why aren't you over there now? What brings you here?" asked Li Wan as Lin Zhixiao's wife also joined them.

Pinger said, "Our mistress was worried and sent me to have a look. But as *you're* here, madam, I shall tell her that she need only attend to affairs over there."

Li Wan nodded.

"I'll go in to see Miss Lin too," added Pinger, already in tears as she entered the inner room.

"You've come in the nick of time," Li Wan told Mrs. Lin. "Go out quickly and get some steward to prepare Miss Lin's after-life things. When everything's ready he's to report to me — there's no need to go over there."



不用到那边去。”林之孝家的答应了，还站着。李纨道：“还有什么话呢？”林之孝家的道：“刚才二奶奶和老太太商量了，那边用紫鹃姑娘使唤使唤呢。”李纨还未答言，只见紫鹃道：“林奶奶，你先请罢！等着人死了，我们自然是出去的，那里用这么——”说到这里，却又不好说了，因又改说道：“况且我们在这里守着病人，身上也不洁净。林姑娘还有气儿呢，不时的叫我。”李纨在旁解说道：“当真的，林姑娘和这丫头也是前世的缘法儿！倒是雪雁是他南边带来的，他倒不理睬；惟有紫鹃，我看他两个一时也离不开。”

林之孝家的头里听了紫鹃的话，未免不受用；被李纨这一番话，却也没有说的了。又见紫鹃哭的泪人一般，只好瞅着他微微的笑，说道：“紫鹃姑娘这些闲话倒不要紧，只是你却说得，我可怎么回老太太呢？况且这话是告诉得二奶奶的吗？”正说着，平儿擦着眼泪出来道：“告诉二奶奶什么事？”林之孝家的将方才的话说了一遍。平儿低了一回头，说：“这么着罢，就叫雪姑娘去罢。”李纨道：“他使得吗？”平儿走到李纨耳边说了几句。李纨点点头儿道：“既是这么着，就叫雪雁过去也是一样的。”林之孝家的因问平儿道：“雪姑娘使得吗？”平儿道：“使得，都是一样。”林家的道：“那么着，姑娘就快叫雪姑娘跟了我去。我先回了老太太和二奶奶。这可是大奶奶和姑娘的主意，回来姑娘再各自回二奶奶去。”李纨道：“是了，你这么大年纪，连这么点子事还不耽呢！”林家



Mrs. Lin assented but made no move.

"Do you have other business?" Li Wan asked.

"Just now Madam Lian consulted the old lady and they want to have Miss Zijuan to help out there."

Before Li Wan could answer, Zijuan interposed, "Please don't wait for me, Mrs. Lin. When she's dead, of course we'll leave her. They needn't be in such a hurry...." Embarrassed by this outburst she went on more mildly, "Besides, nursing an invalid here I'm not clean. Miss Lin is still breathing and wants me from time to time."

Li Wan helped her out by explaining, "It's true. The affinity between Miss Lin and this girl must have been predestined. Though Xueyan's the one she brought with her from the south, she doesn't care for her much. I can see that Zijuan is the only one who can't leave her for a second."

Mrs. Lin had been put out by Zijuan's reply, but she was unable to rebut Li Wan. Seeing Zijuan dissolved in tears, she smiled at her faintly.

"It's all very well for Miss Zijuan to talk like that," she rejoined. "But what am I to say to the old lady? And how can I repeat this to Madam Lian?"

At these words, Pinger came out wiping her eyes.

"Repeat what to Madam Lian?" she wanted to know.

Mrs. Lin explained the situation, and Pinger lowered her head to think it over.

"In that case," she suggested, "let Xueyan go instead."

"Will she be suitable?" Li Wan inquired.

Pinger stepped closer to whisper something to her, at which she nodded.

"Very well, then. Sending Xueyan will do just as well."

Mrs. Lin asked Pinger if she agreed, and the answer was:

"Yes, it's the same."

"Then please tell her to come with me immediately. I'll report to the old lady and Madam Lian that this was your idea, madam, and Miss Pinger's too. Later you can explain to Madam Lian yourself, miss."

"All right," said Li Wan. "But why should someone of your seniority be scared to answer for such a little thing?"

"It's not that." Mrs. Lin smiled. "But we can't be sure what plan the

的笑道：“不是不耽：头一宗，这件事，老太太和二奶奶办事，我们都不能很明白；再者，又有大奶奶和平姑娘呢。”

说着，平儿已叫了雪雁出来。原来雪雁因这几日黛玉嫌他小孩子家懂得什么，便也把心冷淡了；况且听是老太太和二奶奶叫，也不敢不去，连忙收拾了头。平儿叫他换了新鲜衣服，跟着林家的去了。随后平儿又和李纨说了几句话。李纨又嘱咐平儿打那么催着林家的叫他男人快办了来。

平儿答应着出来，转了个弯子，看见林家的带着雪雁在前头走呢，赶忙叫住道：“我带了他去罢。你先告诉林大爷办林姑娘的东西去罢。奶奶那里我替回就是了。”那林家的答应着去了。这里平儿带了雪雁到了新房子里回明了，自去办事。

却说雪雁看见这个光景，想起他家姑娘，也未免伤心，只是在贾母凤姐跟前不敢露出，因又想道：“也不知用我作什么？我且瞧瞧。宝玉一日家和我们姑娘好的蜜里调油，这时候总不见面了，也不知是真病假病。只怕是怕我们姑娘恼，假说丢了玉，装出傻子样儿来，叫那一位寒了心，他好娶宝姑娘的意思。我索性看看他，看他见了我傻不傻。难道今儿还装傻么？”一面想着，已溜到里间屋子门口，偷偷儿的瞧。

这时宝玉虽因失玉昏愤，但只听见娶了黛玉为妻，真乃是从古至今、天上人间、第一件畅心满意的事了，那身子顿觉健旺起来，只不过不似从前那般灵透，所以凤姐的妙计，百发百中，巴不得就见黛玉。盼到今日完姻，真乐的手舞足蹈，虽有几句傻话，却与病时光景大相悬绝了。雪雁看了，又是生气，又是伤心，他那里晓得宝玉的心事，便各自走开。





old lady and Madam Lian have; and besides you and Miss Pinger are here, madam.”

Pinger had already called out Xueyan, who had been holding aloof these last few days as the others had been taunting her as a careless child; and in any case she would never dream of ignoring a summons from the Lady Dowager and Madam Lian. She hastily smoothed her hair and on Pinger's instructions changed into colourful clothes, then went off with Mrs. Lin. Li Wan, after a brief discussion with Pinger, sent her to tell Mrs. Lin to urge her husband to get a coffin ready without delay.

Pinger left to attend to this and, rounding a bend, saw Mrs. Lin walking ahead of her with Xueyan. She called to them to stop.

“I'll take her there,” she said. “You go first to tell your husband to get Miss Lin's things ready. I'll report this for you to my mistress.”

Mrs. Lin agreed and went off, while Pinger took Xueyan to the bridal chambers and, having made her report, left to see to her own business.

Now that things had come to such a pass, Xueyan could not but grieve for Daiyu, though she dared not show her feelings to the old lady and Xifeng. “What do they want me for?” she wondered. “I'll wait and see. Baoyu used to be so devoted to our young lady, why doesn't he come out? Is he really ill or just shamming? He may be trying to put her off by pretending to have lost his jade and to be out of his mind, so that she'll lose interest in him and he can marry Miss Baochai. I'll slip in and see whether he's really crazy or not. He can hardly be shamming today.”

She tiptoed to the door of the inner room and peeped in.

Now though the loss of his jade had deranged Baoyu, the news that he was to marry Daiyu seemed to him the most wonderful thing that had ever happened, and at once his health had improved, though he seemed less quick in the uptake than before. So Xifeng's cunning scheme had succeeded completely. He could hardly wait to see Daiyu and go through with his wedding today. Beside himself with joy, although he sometimes talked nonsense he behaved quite differently from when he was demented. Xueyan saw this with indignation and distress, not knowing what was in his heart, then she slipped away.



这里宝玉便叫袭人快快给他装新，坐在王夫人屋里，看见凤姐尤氏忙忙碌碌，再盼不到吉时，只管问袭人道：“林妹妹打园里来，为什么这么费事，还不来？”袭人忍着笑道：“等好时辰呢。”又听见凤姐和王夫人说道：“虽然有服，外头不用鼓乐，咱们家的规矩要拜堂的，冷清清的使不的。我传了家里学过音乐管过戏的那些女人来，吹打着热闹些。”王夫人点头说：“使得。”

一时，大轿从大门进来，家里细乐迎出去，十二对宫灯排着进来，倒也新鲜雅致。宾相请了新人出轿，宝玉见喜娘披着红，扶着新人，蒙着盖头。下首扶新人的，你道是谁？原来就是雪雁。宝玉看见雪雁，犹想：“因何紫鹃不来，倒是他呢？”又想到：“是了，雪雁原是他南边家里带来的；紫鹃是我们家的，自然不必带来。”因此，见了雪雁竟如见了黛玉的一般欢喜。宾相喝礼，拜了天地，请出贾母受了四拜，后请贾政夫妇等，登堂行礼毕，送入洞房。还有坐帐等事，俱是按本府旧例，不必细说。贾政原为贾母作主，不敢违拗，不信冲喜之说。那知今日宝玉居然像个好人，贾政见了，倒也喜欢。

那新人坐了帐就要揭盖头的。凤姐早已防备，请了贾母





Baoyu, seated in Lady Wang's room, was pressing Xiren to help him into his wedding clothes and watching busy Xifeng and Madam You as he longed for the auspicious hour to arrive.

"Cousin Lin's only coming from the Garden," he said to Xiren. "Why should it take so long?"

Suppressing a smile she answered, "She has to wait for the appointed hour."

Then he heard Xifeng say to Lady Wang, "Although we're in mourning and won't have musicians outside, according to us southerners' rule they must bow to each other and utter silence won't do. So I've ordered our troupe of house musicians to play some tunes and liven things up a little."

"Very well," said Lady Wang, nodding.

Presently a big sedan-chair entered the courtyard and the family musicians went out to meet the bride, while in filed twelve pairs of maids in two rows with Palace lanterns — a novel and distinctive sight. The Master of Ceremonies invited the bride to alight from the chair, and Baoyu saw a maid with a red sash help her out — her face was veiled. And who do you think the other maid assisting the bride was? No other than Xueyan!

"Why Xueyan and not Zijuan?" he wondered, then told himself, "Of course. She brought Xueyan with her from her home down south. Zijuan is one of our household; so naturally she needn't bring her." Reasoning like this, he felt as jubilant as if seeing Daiyu herself.

The Master of Ceremonies announced the procedure. Bride and bridegroom paid their respects to Heaven and Earth, then invited the old lady to come out and receive four bows from them, after which they bowed to Jia Zheng and Lady Wang. Next they ascended the hall and paid their respects to each other before being ushered into the bridal chamber where they went through other ceremonies such as "sitting on the bed" and "letting down the bed curtains," in accordance with the old rules of Jinling.

Jia Zheng had never believed that this wedding could cure Baoyu, but he had to go along with his mother's decision. Today, however, he was pleased because Baoyu looked as if he had really recovered.

After the bride sat down on the bridal bed, she had to be unveiled. To

王夫人等进去照应。宝玉此时到底有些傻气，便走到新人跟前说道：“妹妹，身上好了？好些天不见了。盖着这劳什子做什么？”欲待要揭去，反把贾母急出一身冷汗来。宝玉又转念一想道：“林妹妹是爱生气的，不可造次了。”又歇了一歇，仍是按捺不住，只得上前揭了盖头；喜娘接去。雪雁走开，莺儿上来伺候。宝玉睁眼一看，好像是宝钗，心中不信，自己一手持灯，一手擦眼一看，可不是宝钗么！只见他盛妆艳服，丰肩愜体，鬟低鬓髻，眼瞬息微。论雅淡，似荷粉露垂；看娇羞，真是杏花烟润了。

宝玉发了一回怔，又见莺儿立在傍边，不见了雪雁。此时心无主意，自己反以为是梦中了，呆呆的只管站着。众人接过灯去，扶着坐下，两眼直视，半语全无。贾母恐他病发，亲自过来招呼着。凤姐尤氏请了宝钗进入里间坐下。宝钗此时自然是低头不语。

宝玉定了一回神，见贾母王夫人坐在那边，便轻轻的叫袭人道：“我是在那里呢？这不是做梦么？”袭人道：“你今日好日子，什么梦不梦的混说！老爷可在外头呢！”宝玉悄悄的拿手指着道：“坐在那里的这一位美人儿是谁？”袭人握了自己的嘴，笑的说不出话来，半日才说道：“那是新娶的二奶奶。”众人也都回过头去，忍不住的笑。宝玉又道：“好糊涂！你说‘二奶奶’，到底是谁？”袭人道：“宝姑娘。”宝玉道：



be on the safe side, Xifeng had asked the old lady and Lady Wang there to keep an eye on things. Baoyu fatuously stepped over to the bride.

“Are you better, Cousin Lin?” he asked. “It’s so long since I’ve seen you! Why keep your face covered with that rag?”

He reached out to take off the veil, making the old lady break out in a cold sweat. But then Baoyu reflected, “Cousin Lin’s very sensitive; I mustn’t offend her.” So he waited till he felt he could wait no longer, then stepped forward and removed the veil, which the bridesmaid whisked away. At the same time Xueyan withdrew, and Yinger came in to wait upon her young mistress.

Baoyu looked at his bride and could not believe his eyes — she seemed to be Baochai. He shone the lamp on her face and rubbed his eyes. There was no doubt about it — it was Baochai! Splendidly dressed, soft and plump, her hair slightly dishevelled, fluttering her eyelashes and holding her breath she looked as alluring as lotus dripping with dew, as bashful as apricot blossom moistened by mist.

Baoyu was stupefied by the realization that Xueyan had disappeared and Yinger had taken her place. At a loss, he thought he must be dreaming and stood there in a daze till they took the lamp from his hand and made him sit down. Staring vacantly, he uttered not a word. The old lady, afraid he had lost his senses again, took charge of him herself while Xifeng and Madam You led Baochai to the inner room to rest. She, of course, remained silent too, lowering her head.

Soon Baoyu calmed down sufficiently to notice the presence of his grandmother and mother.

“Where am I?” he whispered to Xiren. “Is this a dream?”

“This is your wedding day,” she answered. “Don’t let the master hear you talking such nonsense. He’s just outside.”

“Who’s that beautiful girl sitting there?” he asked pointing inside.

Xiren put a hand to her mouth to hide her laughter, so amused that she could not speak.

“That’s the new Second Young Mistress,” she finally told him.

The others also turned their heads away, unable to keep from smiling.

“Don’t be silly!” cried Baoyu. “What Second Young Mistress do you mean?”



“林姑娘呢？”袭人道：“老爷作主娶的是宝姑娘，怎么混说起林姑娘来？”宝玉道：“我才刚看见林姑娘了么，还有雪雁呢。怎么说没有？——你们这都是做什么玩呢？”凤姐便走上前来，轻轻的说道：“宝姑娘在屋里坐着呢，别混说。回来得罪了他，老太太不依的。”

宝玉听了，这会子糊涂的更利害了。本来原有昏愤的病，加以今夜神出鬼没，更叫他不得主意，便也不顾别的，口口声声只要找林妹妹去。贾母等上前安慰，无奈他只是不懂。又有宝钗在内，又不好明说。知宝玉旧病复发，也不讲明，只得满屋里点起安息香来，定住他的神魂，扶他睡下。众人鸦雀无闻。停了片时，宝玉便昏沉睡去，贾母等才得略略放心，只好坐以待旦，叫凤姐去请宝钗安歇。宝钗置若罔闻，也便和衣在内暂歇。贾政在外，未知内里原由，只就方才眼见的光景想来，心下倒放宽了。恰是明日就是起程的吉日，略歇了一歇，众人贺喜送行。贾母见宝玉睡着，也回房去暂歇。

次早，贾政辞了宗祠，过来拜别贾母，禀称：“不孝远离，惟愿老太太顺时颐养。儿子一到任所，即修禀请安，不必挂念。宝玉的事，已经依了老太太完结，只求老太太训诲。”贾母恐贾政在路不放心，并不将宝玉复病的话说起，只说：“我有一句话：宝玉昨夜完姻，并不是同房，今日你起





“Miss Baochai.”

“Then where is Miss Lin?”

“It was the master’s decision that you should marry Miss Baochai, so why ask in that foolish way about Miss Lin?”

“But I saw her just now, and Xueyan too. How can you say they’re not here? What game are you all playing?”

Xifeng stepped forward to whisper, “Miss Baochai is sitting in the inner room; so don’t talk foolishly. If you annoy her, the old lady won’t like it.”

This bewildered Baoyu still more. Already deranged, after the mysterious apparitions and vanishings of this evening he knew even less what to think. Ignoring all else he just clamoured to go and find Cousin Lin. The ladies did their best to pacify him, but he would not listen to reason; and as Baochai was inside they could not speak out plainly. Indeed, they knew that explanations were useless now that his wits were wandering again. They lit benzoin incense to calm him and made him lie down. No one made a sound and presently, to the old lady’s relief, he fell into a lethargic sleep. She decided to sit up with him till dawn and sent Xifeng to urge Baochai to rest too. Baochai, behaving as if she had heard nothing, lay down then fully dressed in the inner room. As for Jia Zheng, being outside he had no knowledge of these happenings and, in fact, felt relieved by what he had seen. Since the next day was the auspicious date to start his journey, he too rested for a while before receiving the congratulations of those who had come to bid him farewell. And when Baoyu was sound asleep, the old lady also returned to her room to sleep.

The next morning Jia Zheng bowed farewell in the ancestral temple, then came over to take his leave of his mother.

“Your unfilial son is going far away,” he said. “My one wish, madam, is that you will take care of your health at different seasons. As soon as I reach my post, I shall write to pay my respects. Please don’t worry about me. And Baoyu’s wedding has been carried out in accordance with your wishes. I beg you, madam, to admonish him from time to time.”

In order not to worry him on his journey, she did not tell him of Baoyu’s relapse.

“All I have to say is this,” she answered. “Though Baoyu was mar-



身，必该叫他远送才是。但他因病冲喜，如今才好些，又是昨日一天劳乏，出来恐怕着了风。故此问你：你叫他送呢，即刻去叫他；你若疼他，就叫人带了他来你见见，叫他给你磕个头就算了。”贾政道：“叫他送什么？只要他从此以后认真念书，比送我还喜欢呢。”贾母听了，又放了一条心。便叫贾政坐着，叫鸳鸯去，如此如此，带了宝玉，叫袭人跟着来。

鸳鸯去了不多一会，果然宝玉来了，仍是叫他行礼他便行礼。只可喜此时宝玉见了父亲，神志略敛些，片时清楚，也没什么大差。贾政吩咐了几句，宝玉答应了。贾政叫人扶他回去了，自己回到王夫人房中，又切实的叫王夫人管教儿子，“断不可如前骄纵。明年乡试，务必叫他下场。”王夫人一一的听了，也没提起别的，即忙命人搀扶着宝钗过来，行了新妇送行之礼，也不出房。其余内眷俱送至二门而回。贾珍等也受了一番训饬。大家举酒送行，一班子弟及晚辈亲友直送至十里长亭而别。

不言贾政起程赴任。且说宝玉回来，旧病陡发，更加昏愤，连饮食也不能进了。未知性命如何，且看下回分解。





ried last night he didn't share the same room with his bride, so today we should make him see you some way on your journey. But as his wedding was to cure his illness and he's only just slightly better, and as yesterday was a tiring day for him. I'm afraid he might catch cold if he went out. So I'd like to know your opinion. If you want him to see you off, I'll send for him at once; but if you're concerned for him, I'll just have him fetched here to kowtow to you by way of farewell."

"Why should he see me off? Provided he studies hard from now on that will please me more than having him escort me."

In relief, the old lady told him to sit down while she sent Yuanyang to fetch Baoyu and Xiren.

Presently Baoyu came. Told to pay his respects, he complied. Luckily his mind cleared for a while at sight of his father, and he made no gaffes, assenting to Jia Zheng's instructions. Then his father dismissed him and went to his wife's room to stress the need to discipline their son.

"You must on no account go on spoiling him," he warned her. "Next year he must sit for the provincial examination."

Lady Wang heard him out without mentioning what had passed and had Baochai fetched to wish her father-in-law a good journey. The other female members of the family saw him off at the inner gate, but she as a new bride could not leave the house. Jia Zhen and the other young men listened respectfully to his admonitions. Then having drunk a parting goblet with him, the younger male relatives and his old friends accompanied him ten *li* beyond the capital, then bid him farewell.

We shall now leave Jia Zheng travelling to his new post and return to Baoyu. After coming back he had a sudden relapse, becoming so deranged that he could not even take any nourishment. To know whether he lived or died, read the next chapter.





NOTES

Chapter 78

¹ The region around Yidu in present-day Shandong.

² The Yellow Turbans rose in 184 A.D., the Red Brows early in the first century.

³ A descriptive poem in a florid style.

⁴ About the Tang Emperor Xuan Zong and Lady Yang. See Note 9 in Chapter 51.

⁵ Jia Yi (200-168 B.C.).

⁶ A legendary figure, said to have been killed by the Heavenly Emperor for failing to curb floods.

⁷ A Chinese legend said this belonged to the immortals and sailed in the Sky River, the Milky Way.

⁸ See Note 8 in Chapter 76.

⁹ Where Shi Chong's Golden Dell Garden had been. For Shi Chong, see Note 4 in Chapter 64.

¹⁰ A magician said to have summoned the spirit of Li Yong, Tang poet and calligrapher, to write an epitaph for his grandfather.

¹¹ A great Tang poet who died young, reputedly because he was summoned to heaven to write an inscription.

¹² Known as Princess Fu, daughter of the legendary Emperor Fu Xi, she was drowned in the River Luo.

¹³ The daughter of Duke Mu of Qin in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), she was a good flutist, said to have become a goddess.

¹⁴ A serving-maid and a musician in the moon according to Chinese mythology.

¹⁵ Both were immortals.

¹⁶ It is said that when the Divine Tortoise showed its back with a magic sign on it, there was peace and prosperity in the world; and when the Xianchi melody composed by the Yellow Emperor was played, all the wild beasts danced to it.

¹⁷ Where the Cardinal God of Heaven of Taoism was believed to live.

¹⁸ A fairy mountain said to be in the Kunlun Range.

Chapter 79

¹ Of Eastern Han who jumped into the river where her father was drowned and surfaced five days later with his body in her arms.

² Zhao Kuangyin (927-976).

³ Southern Tang (937-975).

⁴ See Note 7 in Chapter 76.

Chapter 80

¹ *Jin* in "gluten" is used as a pun here to mean *jing*, a "spirit."





Chapter 81

¹ Jiang Shang of the eleventh century B.C. was said to fish by the Weishui River (present-day Shaanxi) holding a line, with no hook or bait, three feet above the water, and saying at the same time: "Whoever is ordained, come and take the bait."

Chapter 83

¹ According to the *Yellow Emperor's Manual of Medicine*, in each wrist there are three pulses, the *cun*, the *guan* and the *chi*, which show the state of the internal organs.

² Zhou Bo was a Han general who assisted Liu Bang (247-195 B.C.) to found the Han Dynasty. Knowing that his wife, Empress Lu, and her nephews schemed to usurp the throne after his death, Liu Bang predicted that "Zhou Bo will be the man who'll stabilize the Liu's dynasty."

Chapter 84

¹ Here he is twisting a line from *The Great Learning*: "There is an old saying: No man recognizes his son's shortcomings."

² The first two quotations are from *The Analects*, the third is from *Mencius*.

³ This is a quotation from *Mencius*: "To have no fixed estate and yet remain steadfast — only a true knight is capable of this."

Chapter 85

¹ Meng Guang and Liang Hong of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) were a loving couple. They were described as showing each other respect as to a guest.

² The playwright is unknown.

³ By Gao Zecheng of the Ming Dynasty.

Chapter 86

¹ The phrase "playing a lute to an ox" has the same meaning as "casting pearls before swine."

² Confucius while on his travels through different states was often reviled. He was said to have played this tune to assert his integrity.

Chapter 87

¹ 937-975.

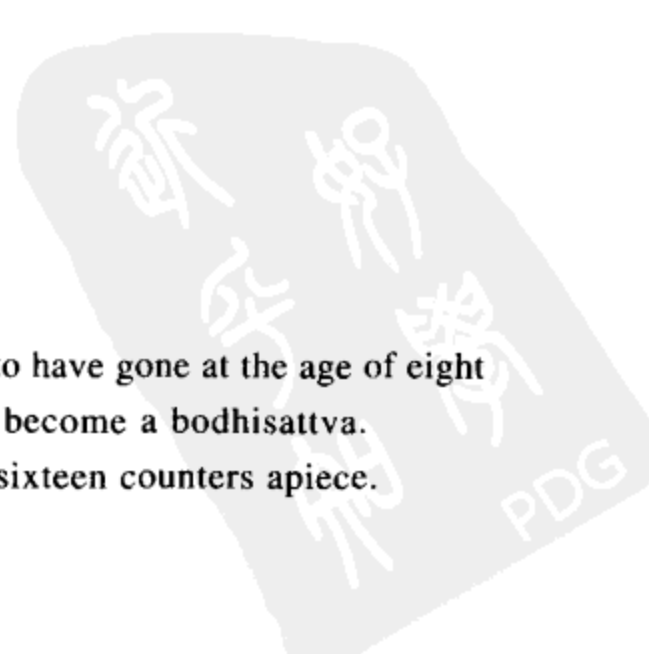
² 153-208.

³ Of the Tang Dynasty.

Chapter 88

¹ The daughter of a legendary Dragon King. She was said to have gone at the age of eight to pay her respects to Sakyamuni Buddha, and then to have become a bodhisattva.

² A dice game for two players using a special board and sixteen counters apiece.





Chapter 89

¹ Legend had it that Emperor Wu of Han, after the death of his favourite Lady Li, kept longing to see her again. Dongfang Shuo presented him with a magic herb; and when he wore this at night, Lady Li appeared to him in his dreams.

² 1049-1106, an eminent Song painter.

³ From *Frosty Moon* by the Tang poet Li Shangyin.

⁴ Chinese characters have four tones: One level and three oblique ones. Since the Tang Dynasty most poems have used level tone rhymes.

Chapter 90

¹ It was believed that it was the King of Hell who decided the next life of a dead person.

Chapter 92

¹ All these were celebrated beauties.

Chapter 93

¹ Different kinds of operas from the provinces.

Chapter 94

¹ In north China both begonias and crab-apple trees are called *haitang*.

² The Chinese characters listed here are: *shang* 赏; *xiao* 小; *kou* 口; *jian* 见; *dang* 当; *ren* 人; and *chang* 偿.

