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汉英对照

二刻拍案惊奇

AMAZING TALES

Second Series

I



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Chinese-English

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凌濛初 著
李子亮 译

*Attributed to Ling Mengchu
Translated by Li Ziliang*



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总 序

杨牧之

《大中华文库》终于出版了。我们为之高兴，为之鼓舞，但也倍感压力。

当此之际，我们愿将郁积在我们心底的话，向读者倾诉。

—

中华民族有着悠久的历史 and 灿烂的文化，系统、准确地将中华民族的文化经典翻译成外文，编辑出版，介绍给全世界，是几代中国人的愿望。早在几十年前，西方一位学者翻译《红楼梦》，将书名译成《一个红楼上的梦》，将林黛玉译为“黑色的玉”。我们一方面对国外学者将中国的名著介绍到世界上去表示由衷的感谢，一方面为祖国的名著还不被完全认识，甚至受到曲解，而感到深深的遗憾。还有西方学者翻译《金瓶梅》，专门摘选其中自然主义描述最为突出的篇章加以译介。一时间，西方学者好像发现了奇迹，掀起了《金瓶梅》热，说中国是“性开放的源头”，公开地在报刊上鼓吹中国要“发扬开放之传统”。还有许多资深、友善的汉学家译介中国古代的哲学著作，在把中华民族文化介绍给全世界的工作方面作出了重大贡献，但或囿于理解有误，或缘于对中国文字认识的局限，质量上乘的并不多，常常是隔靴搔痒，说不到点子上。大哲学家黑格尔曾经说过：中国有



最完备的国史。但他认为中国古代没有真正意义上的哲学，还处在哲学史前状态。这么了不起的哲学家竟然作出这样大失水准的评论，何其不幸。正如任何哲学家都要受时间、地点、条件的制约一样，黑格尔也离不开这一规律。当时他也只能从上述水平的汉学家译过去的文字去分析、理解，所以，黑格尔先生对中国古代社会的认识水平是什么状态，也就不难想象了。

中国离不开世界，世界也缺少不了中国。中国文化摄取外域的新成分，丰富了自己，又以自己的新成就输送给别人，贡献于世界。从公元5世纪开始到公元15世纪，大约有一千年，中国走在世界的前列。在这一千多年的时间里，她的光辉照耀全世界。人类要前进，怎么能不全面认识中国，怎么能不认真研究中国的历史呢？

中华民族是伟大的，曾经辉煌过，蓝天、白云、阳光灿烂，和平而兴旺；也有过黑暗的、想起来就让人战栗的日子，但中华民族从来是充满理想，不断追求，不断学习，渴望和平与友谊的。

中国古代伟大的思想家孔子曾经说过：“三人行，必有我师焉。择其善者而从之，其不善者而改之。”孔子的话就是要人们向别人学习。这段话正是概括了整个中华民族与人交往的原则。人与人之间交往如此，在与周边的国家交往中也是如此。

秦始皇第一个统一了中国，可惜在位只有十几年，来不及做更多的事情。汉朝继秦而继续强大，便开始走出去，了



解自己周边的世界。公元前138年，汉武帝派张骞出使西域。他带着一万头牛羊，总值一万万钱的金帛货物，作为礼物，开始西行，最远到过“安息”（即波斯）。公元前36年，班超又率36人出使西域。36个人按今天的话说，也只有一个排，显然是为了拜访未曾见过面的邻居，是去交朋友。到了西域，班超派遣甘英作为使者继续西行，往更远处的大秦国（即罗马）去访问，“乃抵条支而历安息，临西海以望大秦”（《后汉书·西域传》）。“条支”在“安息”以西，即今天的伊拉克、叙利亚一带，“西海”应是今天的地中海。也就是说甘英已经到达地中海边上，与罗马帝国隔海相望，“临大海欲渡”，却被人劝阻而未成行，这在历史上留下了遗憾。可以想见班超、甘英沟通友谊的无比勇气和强烈愿望。接下来是唐代的玄奘，历经千难万险，到“西天”印度取经，带回了南亚国家的古老文化。归国后，他把带回的佛教经典组织人翻译，到后来很多经典印度失传了，但中国却保存完好，以至于今天，没有玄奘的《大唐西域记》，印度人很难编写印度古代史。明代郑和“七下西洋”，把中华文化传到东南亚一带。鸦片战争以后，一代又一代先进的中国人，为了振兴中华，又前赴后继，向西方国家学习先进的科学思想和文明成果。这中间有我们的领导人朱德、周恩来、邓小平；有许许多多大科学家、文学家、艺术家，如郭沫若、李四光、钱学森、冼星海、徐悲鸿等。他们的追求、奋斗，他们的博大胸怀，兼收并蓄的精神，为人类社会增添了光彩。

中国文化的形成和发展过程，就是一个以众为师、以各国人民为师，不断学习和创造的过程。中华民族曾经向周边国家和民族学习过许多东西，假如没有这些学习，中华民族绝不可能创造出昔日的辉煌。回顾历史，我们怎么能够不对



伟大的古埃及文明、古希腊文明、古印度文明满怀深深的感激？怎么能够不对伟大的欧洲文明、非洲文明、美洲文明、澳洲文明，以及中国周围的亚洲文明充满温情与敬意？

中华民族为人类社会曾作出过独特的贡献。在15世纪以前，中国的科学技术一直处于世界遥遥领先的地位。英国科学家李约瑟说：“中国在公元3世纪到13世纪之间，保持着一个西方所望尘莫及的科学知识水平。”美国耶鲁大学教授、《大国的兴衰》的作者保罗·肯尼迪坦言：“在近代以前时期的所有文明中，没有一个国家的文明比中国更发达，更先进。”

世界各国的有识之士千里迢迢来中国观光、学习。在这个过程中，中国唐朝的长安城渐渐发展成为国际大都市。西方的波斯、东罗马，东亚的高丽、新罗、百济、南天竺、北天竺，频繁前来。外国的王侯、留学生，在长安供职的外国官员，商贾、乐工和舞士，总有几十个国家，几万人之多。日本派出的“遣唐使”更是一批接一批。传为美谈日本人阿部仲麻吕（晁衡）在长安留学的故事，很能说明外国人与中国的交往。晁衡学成仕于唐朝，前后历时五十余年。晁衡与中国的知识分子结下了深厚的友情。他归国时，传说在海中遇难身亡。大诗人李白作诗哭悼：“日本晁卿辞帝都，征帆一片绕蓬壶。明月不归沉碧海，白云愁色满苍梧。”晁衡遇险是误传，但由此可见中外学者之间在中国长安交往的情谊。

后来，不断有外国人到中国来探寻秘密，所见所闻，常常让他们目瞪口呆。《希腊纪事》（希腊人波桑尼阿著）记载公元2世纪时，希腊人在中国的见闻。书中写道：“赛里斯人用小米和青芦喂一种类似蜘蛛的昆虫，喂到第五年，虫肚子胀裂开，便从里面取出丝来。”从这段对中国古代养蚕技术的



描述,可见当时欧洲人与中国人的差距。公元9世纪中叶,阿拉伯人来到中国。一位阿拉伯作家在他所著的《中国印度闻见录》中记载了曾旅居中国的阿拉伯商人的见闻:

——一天,一个外商去拜见驻守广州的中国官吏。会见时,外商总盯着官吏的胸部,官吏很奇怪,便问:“你好像总盯着我的胸,这是怎么回事?”那位外商回答说:“透过你穿的丝绸衣服,我隐约看到你胸口上长着一个黑痣,这是什么丝绸,我感到十分惊奇。”官吏听后,失声大笑,伸出胳膊,说:“请你数数吧,看我穿了几件衣服。”那商人数过,竟然穿了五件之多,黑痣正是透过这五层丝绸衣服显现出来的。外商惊得目瞪口呆,官吏说:“我穿的丝绸还不算是最好的,总督穿的要更精美。”

——书中关于茶(他们叫干草叶子)的记载,可见阿拉伯国家当时还没有喝茶的习惯。书中记述:“中国国王本人的收入主要靠盐税和泡开水喝的一种干草税。在各个城市里,这种干草叶售价都很高,中国人称这种草叶叫‘茶’,这种干草叶比苜蓿的叶子还多,也略比它香,稍有苦味,用开水冲喝,治百病。”

——他们对中国的医疗条件十分羡慕,书中记载道:“中国人医疗条件很好,穷人可以从国库中得到药费。”还说:“城市里,很多地方立一石碑,高10肘,上面刻有各种疾病和药物,写明某种病用某种药医治。”

——关于当时中国的京城,书中作了生动的描述:中国的京城很大,人口众多,一条宽阔的长街把全城分为两半,大街右边的东区,住着皇帝、宰相、禁军及皇家的总管、奴婢。在这个区域,沿街开凿了小河,流水潺潺;路旁,葱茏的树木整然有序,一幢幢宅邸鳞次栉比。大街左边的西区,



住着庶民和商人。这里有货栈和商店，每当清晨，人们可以看到，皇室的总管、宫廷的仆役，或骑马或步行，到这里来采购。

此后的史籍对西人来华的记载，渐渐多了起来。13世纪意大利旅行家马可·波罗，尽管有人对他是否真的到过中国持怀疑态度，但他留下一部记述元代事件的《马可·波罗游记》却是确凿无疑的。这部游记中的一些关于当时中国的描述使得西方人认为是“天方夜谭”。总之，从中西文化交流史来说，这以前的时期还是一个想象和臆测的时代，相互之间充满了好奇与幻想。

从16世纪末开始，由于航海技术的发展，东西方航路的开通，随着一批批传教士来华，中国与西方开始了直接的交流。沟通中西的使命在意大利传教士利玛窦那里有了充分的体现。利玛窦于1582年来华，1610年病逝于北京，在华二十余年。除了传教以外，做了两件具有历史象征意义的事，一是1594年前后在韶州用拉丁文翻译《四书》，并作了注释；二是与明代学者徐光启合作，用中文翻译了《几何原本》。

西方传教士对《四书》等中国经典的粗略翻译，以及杜赫德的《中华帝国志》等书对中国的介绍，在西方读者的眼前展现了一个异域文明，在当时及稍后一段时期引起了一场“中国热”，许多西方大思想家都曾注目于中国文化。有的推崇中华文明，如莱布尼兹、伏尔泰、魁奈等，有的对中华文明持批评态度，如孟德斯鸠、黑格尔等。莱布尼兹认识到中国文化的某些思想与他的观念相近，如周易的卦象与他发明的二进制相契合，对中国文化给予了热情的礼赞；黑格尔则从他整个哲学体系的推演出发，认为中国没有真正意义上的哲学，还处在哲学史前的状态。但是，不论是推崇还是批



评，是吸纳还是排斥，中西文化的交流产生了巨大的影响。随着先进的中国科学技术的西传，特别是中国的造纸、火药、印刷术和指南针四大发明的问世，大大改变了世界的面貌。马克思说：“中国的火药把骑士阶层炸得粉碎，指南针打开了世界市场并建立了殖民地，而印刷术则变成了新教的工具，变成对精神发展创造必要前提的最强大杠杆。”英国的哲学家培根说：中国的四大发明“改变了全世界的面貌和一切事物的状态。”

三

大千世界，潮起潮落。云散云聚，万象更新。中国古代产生了无数伟大的科学家：祖冲之、李时珍、孙思邈、张衡、沈括、毕昇……产生了无数科技成果：《齐民要术》、《九章算术》、《伤寒杂病论》、《本草纲目》……以及保存至今的世界奇迹：浑天仪、地动仪、都江堰、敦煌石窟、大运河、万里长城……但从15世纪下半叶起，风水似乎从东方转到了西方，落后的欧洲只经过400年便成为世界瞩目的文明中心。英国的牛顿、波兰的哥白尼、德国的伦琴、法国的居里、德国的爱因斯坦、意大利的伽利略、俄国的门捷列夫、美国的费米和爱迪生……光芒四射，令人敬仰。

中华民族开始思考了。潮起潮落究竟是什么原因？中国人发明的火药，传到欧洲，转眼之间反成为欧洲列强轰击中国大门的炮弹，又是因为什么？

鸦片战争终于催醒了中国人沉睡的迷梦，最先“睁眼看世界”的一代精英林则徐、魏源迈出了威武雄壮的一步。曾国藩、李鸿章搞起了洋务运动。中国的知识分子喊出“民主



与科学”的口号。中国是落后了，中国的志士仁人在苦苦探索。但落后中饱含着变革的动力，探索中孕育着崛起的希望。“向科学进军”，中华民族终于又迎来了科学的春天。

今天，世界毕竟来到 21 世纪的门槛。分散隔绝的世界，逐渐变成联系为一体的世界。现在，全球一体化趋势日益明显，人类历史也就在愈来愈大的程度上成为全世界的历史。当今，任何一种文化的发展都离不开对其它优秀文化的汲取，都以其它优秀文化的发展为前提。在近现代，西方文化汲取中国文化，不仅是中国文化的传播，更是西方文化自身的创新和发展；正如中国文化对西方文化的汲取一样，既是西方文化在中国的传播，同时也是中国文化在近代的转型和发展。地球上所有的人类文化，都是我们共同的宝贵遗产。既然我们生活的各个大陆，在地球史上曾经是连成一气的“泛大陆”，或者说是一个完整的“地球村”，那么，我们同样可以在这个以知识和学习为特征的网络时代，走上相互学习、共同发展的大路，建设和开拓我们人类崭新的“地球村”。

西学仍在东渐，中学也将西传。各国人民的优秀文化正日益迅速地为中国文化所汲取，而无论西方和东方，也都需要从中国文化中汲取养分。正是基于这一认识，我们组织出版汉英对照版《大中华文库》，全面系统地翻译介绍中国传统文化典籍。我们试图通过《大中华文库》，向全世界展示，中华民族五千年的追求，五千年的梦想，正在新的历史时期重放光芒。中国人民就像火后的凤凰，万众一心，迎接新世纪文明的太阳。

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PREFACE TO THE *LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS*

Yang Muzhi

The publication of the *Library of Chinese Classics* is a matter of great satisfaction to all of us who have been involved in the production of this monumental work. At the same time, we feel a weighty sense of responsibility, and take this opportunity to explain to our readers the motivation for undertaking this cross-century task.

1

The Chinese nation has a long history and a glorious culture, and it has been the aspiration of several generations of Chinese scholars to translate, edit and publish the whole corpus of the Chinese literary classics so that the nation's greatest cultural achievements can be introduced to people all over the world. There have been many translations of the Chinese classics done by foreign scholars. A few dozen years ago, a Western scholar translated the title of *A Dream of Red Mansions* into "A Dream of Red Chambers" and Lin Daiyu, the heroine in the novel, into "Black Jade." But while their endeavours have been laudable, the results of their labours have been less than satisfactory. Lack of knowledge of Chinese culture and an inadequate grasp of the Chinese written language have led the translators into many errors. As a consequence, not only are Chinese classical writings widely misunderstood in the rest of the world, in some cases their content has actually been distorted. At one time, there was a "*Jin Ping Mei* craze" among Western scholars, who thought that they had uncovered a miraculous phenomenon, and published theories claiming that China was the "fountainhead of eroticism," and that a Chinese "tradition of permissiveness" was about to be laid bare. This distorted view came about due to the translators of the *Jin Ping Mei* (*Plum in the Golden Vase*) putting one-sided stress on the



raw elements in that novel, to the neglect of its overall literary value. Meanwhile, there have been many distinguished and well-intentioned Sinologists who have attempted to make the culture of the Chinese nation more widely known by translating works of ancient Chinese philosophy. However, the quality of such work, in many cases, is unsatisfactory, often missing the point entirely. The great philosopher Hegel considered that ancient China had no philosophy in the real sense of the word, being stuck in philosophical “prehistory.” For such an eminent authority to make such a colossal error of judgment is truly regrettable. But, of course, Hegel was just as subject to the constraints of time, space and other objective conditions as anyone else, and since he had to rely for his knowledge of Chinese philosophy on inadequate translations it is not difficult to imagine why he went so far off the mark.

China cannot be separated from the rest of the world; and the rest of the world cannot ignore China. Throughout its history, Chinese civilization has enriched itself by absorbing new elements from the outside world, and in turn has contributed to the progress of world civilization as a whole by transmitting to other peoples its own cultural achievements. From the 5th to the 15th centuries, China marched in the front ranks of world civilization. If mankind wishes to advance, how can it afford to ignore China? How can it afford not to make a thoroughgoing study of its history?

2

Despite the ups and downs in their fortunes, the Chinese people have always been idealistic, and have never ceased to forge ahead and learn from others, eager to strengthen ties of peace and friendship.

The great ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius once said, “Whenever three persons come together, one of them will surely be able to teach me something. I will pick out his good points and emulate them; his bad points I will reform.” Confucius meant by this that we should always be ready to learn from others. This maxim encapsulates the principle the Chinese people have always followed in their dealings with other peoples, not only on an individual basis but also at the level of state-to-state relations.

After generations of internecine strife, China was unified by Emperor



Qin Shi Huang (the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty) in 221 B.C. The Han Dynasty, which succeeded that of the short-lived Qin, waxed powerful, and for the first time brought China into contact with the outside world. In 138 B.C., Emperor Wu dispatched Zhang Qian to the western regions, i.e. Central Asia. Zhang, who traveled as far as what is now Iran, took with him as presents for the rulers he visited on the way 10,000 head of sheep and cattle, as well as gold and silks worth a fabulous amount. In 36 B.C., Ban Chao headed a 36-man legation to the western regions. These were missions of friendship to visit neighbours the Chinese people had never met before and to learn from them. Ban Chao sent Gan Ying to explore further toward the west. According to the "Western Regions Section" in the *Book of Later Han*, Gan Ying traveled across the territories of present-day Iraq and Syria, and reached the Mediterranean Sea, an expedition which brought him within the confines of the Roman Empire. Later, during the Tang Dynasty, the monk Xuan Zang made a journey fraught with danger to reach India and seek the knowledge of that land. Upon his return, he organized a team of scholars to translate the Buddhist scriptures, which he had brought back with him. As a result, many of these scriptural classics which were later lost in India have been preserved in China. In fact, it would have been difficult for the people of India to reconstruct their own ancient history if it had not been for Xuan Zang's *A Record of a Journey to the West in the Time of the Great Tang Dynasty*. In the Ming Dynasty, Zheng He transmitted Chinese culture to Southeast Asia during his seven voyages. Following the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century, progressive Chinese, generation after generation, went to study the advanced scientific thought and cultural achievements of the Western countries. Their aim was to revive the fortunes of their own country. Among them were people who were later to become leaders of China, including Zhu De, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. In addition, there were people who were to become leading scientists, literary figures and artists, such as Guo Moruo, Li Siguang, Qian Xuesen, Xian Xinghai and Xu Beihong. Their spirit of ambition, their struggles and their breadth of vision were an inspiration not only to the Chinese people but to people all over the world.

Indeed, it is true that if the Chinese people had not learned many



things from the surrounding countries they would never have been able to produce the splendid achievements of former days. When we look back upon history, how can we not feel profoundly grateful for the legacies of the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Greece and India? How can we not feel fondness and respect for the cultures of Europe, Africa, America and Oceania?

The Chinese nation, in turn, has made unique contributions to the community of mankind. Prior to the 15th century, China led the world in science and technology. The British scientist Joseph Needham once said, "From the third century A.D. to the 13th century A.D. China was far ahead of the West in the level of its scientific knowledge." Paul Kennedy, of Yale University in the U.S., author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, said, "Of all the civilizations of the pre-modern period, none was as well-developed or as progressive as that of China."

Foreigners who came to China were often astonished at what they saw and heard. The Greek geographer Pausanias in the second century A.D. gave the first account in the West of the technique of silk production in China: "The Chinese feed a spider-like insect with millet and reeds. After five years the insect's stomach splits open, and silk is extracted therefrom." From this extract, we can see that the Europeans at that time did not know the art of silk manufacture. In the middle of the 9th century A.D., an Arabian writer includes the following anecdote in his *Account of China and India*:

"One day, an Arabian merchant called upon the military governor of Guangzhou. Throughout the meeting, the visitor could not keep his eyes off the governor's chest. Noticing this, the latter asked the Arab merchant what he was staring at. The merchant replied, 'Through the silk robe you are wearing, I can faintly see a black mole on your chest. Your robe must be made out of very fine silk indeed!' The governor burst out laughing, and holding out his sleeve invited the merchant to count how many garments he was wearing. The merchant did so, and discovered that the governor was actually wearing five silk robes, one on top of the other, and they were made of such fine material that a tiny mole could be seen through them all! Moreover, the governor explained that the robes he was wearing were not made of the finest silk at all; silk of the highest



grade was reserved for the garments worn by the provincial governor.”

The references to tea in this book (the author calls it “dried grass”) reveal that the custom of drinking tea was unknown in the Arab countries at that time: “The king of China’s revenue comes mainly from taxes on salt and the dry leaves of a kind of grass which is drunk after boiled water is poured on it. This dried grass is sold at a high price in every city in the country. The Chinese call it ‘cha.’ The bush is like alfalfa, except that it bears more leaves, which are also more fragrant than alfalfa. It has a slightly bitter taste, and when it is infused in boiling water it is said to have medicinal properties.”

Foreign visitors showed especial admiration for Chinese medicine. One wrote, “China has very good medical conditions. Poor people are given money to buy medicines by the government.”

In this period, when Chinese culture was in full bloom, scholars flocked from all over the world to China for sightseeing and for study. Chang’an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty was host to visitors from as far away as the Byzantine Empire, not to mention the neighboring countries of Asia. Chang’an, at that time the world’s greatest metropolis, was packed with thousands of foreign dignitaries, students, diplomats, merchants, artisans and entertainers. Japan especially sent contingent after contingent of envoys to the Tang court. Worthy of note are the accounts of life in Chang’an written by Abeno Nakamaro, a Japanese scholar who studied in China and had close friendships with ministers of the Tang court and many Chinese scholars in a period of over 50 years. The description throws light on the exchanges between Chinese and foreigners in this period. When Abeno was supposedly lost at sea on his way back home, the leading poet of the time, Li Bai, wrote a eulogy for him.

The following centuries saw a steady increase in the accounts of China written by Western visitors. The Italian Marco Polo described conditions in China during the Yuan Dynasty in his *Travels*. However, until advances in the science of navigation led to the opening of east-west shipping routes at the beginning of the 16th century Sino-Western cultural exchanges were coloured by fantasy and conjecture. Concrete progress was made when a contingent of religious missionaries, men well versed in Western science and technology, made their way to China, ushering in an era of



direct contacts between China and the West. The experience of this era was embodied in the career of the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci. Arriving in China in 1582, Ricci died in Beijing in 1610. Apart from his missionary work, Ricci accomplished two historically symbolic tasks — one was the translation into Latin of the “Four Books,” together with annotations, in 1594; the other was the translation into Chinese of Euclid’s *Elements*.

The rough translations of the “Four Books” and other Chinese classical works by Western missionaries, and the publication of Père du Halde’s *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l’Empire de la Chine* revealed an exotic culture to Western readers, and sparked a “China fever,” during which the eyes of many Western intellectuals were fixed on China. Some of these intellectuals, including Leibniz, held China in high esteem; others, such as Hegel, nursed a critical attitude toward Chinese culture. Leibniz considered that some aspects of Chinese thought were close to his own views, such as the philosophy of the *Book of Changes* and his own binary system. Hegel, on the other hand, as mentioned above, considered that China had developed no proper philosophy of its own. Nevertheless, no matter whether the reaction was one of admiration, criticism, acceptance or rejection, Sino-Western exchanges were of great significance. The transmission of advanced Chinese science and technology to the West, especially the Chinese inventions of paper-making, gunpowder, printing and the compass, greatly changed the face of the whole world. Karl Marx said, “Chinese gunpowder blew the feudal class of knights to smithereens; the compass opened up world markets and built colonies; and printing became an implement of Protestantism and the most powerful lever and necessary precondition for intellectual development and creation.” The English philosopher Roger Bacon said that China’s four great inventions had “changed the face of the whole world and the state of affairs of everything.”

3

Ancient China gave birth to a large number of eminent scientists, such as Zu Chongzhi, Li Shizhen, Sun Simiao, Zhang Heng, Shen Kuo and Bi



Sheng. They produced numerous treatises on scientific subjects, including *The Manual of Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, *Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art*, *A Treatise on Febrile Diseases* and *Compendium of Materia Medica*. Their accomplishments included ones whose influence has been felt right down to modern times, such as the armillary sphere, seismograph, Dujiangyan water conservancy project, Dunhuang Grottoes, Grand Canal and Great Wall. But from the latter part of the 15th century, and for the next 400 years, Europe gradually became the cultural centre upon which the world's eyes were fixed. The world's most outstanding scientists then were England's Isaac Newton, Poland's Copernicus, France's Marie Curie, Germany's Rontgen and Einstein, Italy's Galileo, Russia's Mendeleev and America's Edison.

The Chinese people then began to think: What is the cause of the rise and fall of nations? Moreover, how did it happen that gunpowder, invented in China and transmitted to the West, in no time at all made Europe powerful enough to batter down the gates of China herself?

It took the Opium War to wake China from its reverie. The first generation to make the bold step of "turning our eyes once again to the rest of the world" was represented by Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan. Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang started the Westernization Movement, and later intellectuals raised the slogan of "Democracy and Science." Noble-minded patriots, realizing that China had fallen behind in the race for modernization, set out on a painful quest. But in backwardness lay the motivation for change, and the quest produced the embryo of a towering hope, and the Chinese people finally gathered under a banner proclaiming a "March Toward Science."

On the threshold of the 21st century, the world is moving in the direction of becoming an integrated entity. This trend is becoming clearer by the day. In fact, the history of the various peoples of the world is also becoming the history of mankind as a whole. Today, it is impossible for any nation's culture to develop without absorbing the excellent aspects of the cultures of other peoples. When Western culture absorbs aspects of Chinese culture, this is not just because it has come into contact with Chinese culture, but also because of the active creativity and development of Western culture itself; and vice versa. The various cultures of



the world's peoples are a precious heritage which we all share. Mankind no longer lives on different continents, but on one big continent, or in a "global village." And so, in this era characterized by an all-encompassing network of knowledge and information we should learn from each other and march in step along the highway of development to construct a brand-new "global village."

Western learning is still being transmitted to the East, and vice versa. China is accelerating its pace of absorption of the best parts of the cultures of other countries, and there is no doubt that both the West and the East need the nourishment of Chinese culture. Based on this recognition, we have edited and published the *Library of Chinese Classics* in a Chinese-English format as an introduction to the corpus of traditional Chinese culture in a comprehensive and systematic translation. Through this collection, our aim is to reveal to the world the aspirations and dreams of the Chinese people over the past 5,000 years and the splendour of the new historical era in China. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the Chinese people in unison are welcoming the cultural sunrise of the new century.



前 言

《拍案惊奇》与《二刻拍案惊奇》是分别刊刻于晚明崇祯元年（1628）与五年（1632）的两部白话短篇小说集，人称“二拍”。

编撰者凌濛初（1580—1644），字玄房，号初成，别号即空观主人，乌程（今浙江吴兴）人。18岁补廪膳生，其后科场一直不利。55岁时，以优贡授上海县丞，后擢徐州通判并分署房村。崇祯十七年（1644），被李自成部所困，呕血而死。他一生著述与刊印的书籍甚多，而以“二拍”最有名。

“二拍”是继同时代冯梦龙所编写的“三言”（《喻世明言》、《警世通言》、《醒世恒言》）之后最负盛名的短篇小说集。“二拍”所反映的思想特征与“三言”大致相同，艺术水平也在伯仲间，故在文学史上一般都将两书并称。但它与以编集为主的“三言”有所不同，基本上都是个人创作，所谓“取古今来杂碎事可新听睹、佐谈谐者，演而畅之”（即空观主人《拍案惊奇序》）。所以，它实际上已经是一部个人的白话小说创作专集。它的问世，标志着中国短篇小说的创作进入了一个新的阶段。

“二拍”的主要篇幅和精彩部分，是写世俗的人情百态，所谓“极摹人情世态之歧，备写悲欢离合之致”。当时晚明的社会，由于商业和手工业的发展、都市的繁荣、城市



市民的急剧增长，所以，与以前的短篇小说相比，就有更多的商人、小贩、作坊主、工匠等成为作品的主角，特别是商人，作为当时商品经济中最活跃的分子和市民的主要代表，在“二拍”中作为正面的主人公而频频亮相，这在中国小说发展史上是一个值得注意的新气象。本来，在传统的观念中，“士、农、工、商”，商居其末。但在“二拍”中活跃的商人，多数已不是被写成贪得无厌之徒和为富不仁之辈，而往往是一些善良、正直、纯朴，而又能吃苦、讲义气、有道德的正面形象，如《韩侍郎婢作夫人，顾提控掾居郎署》入话中的徽商能舍银救命，又品性纯正；《程元玉店肆代偿钱，十一娘云冈纵谭侠》中的程元玉稟性端重，忠厚老成，不为女色所动，又能慷慨解囊。这样的商人在“二拍”中并不少见。作者在赞美商人的人品的同时，经商买卖已被视为正当的职业，其社会价值也得到了前所未有的肯定。《赠芝麻识破假形，擷草药巧偕真偶》中的马少卿，出身“仕宦之家”，当有人认为“经商之人，不习儒业，只恐有玷门风”之时，就理直气壮地说：“经商亦是善业，不是贱流！”特别是在《叠居奇程客得助，三救厄海神显灵》中写到“徽州风俗，以商贾为第一等生业，科第反在次着”，人生的价值就以得利的多少为轻重。

值得注意的是，这篇小说所写的主人公程宰与海神女结良缘、发大财的故事也意味深长。历来在文学作品中只是由文人雅士或在民间故事中勤劳诚实的农民能得到的仙女，如今却移情于一个“经商俗人”了。这充分说明，生气勃勃的商人正在取代读书士子而成为时代的宠儿。他们在拥有



大宗财富的同时，也能得到非凡的“艳遇”。他们趾高气扬，开始俯视社会上的各色人等，瞧不起穷酸的“衣冠宦族”和文人学士，纷纷表示不愿意与他们联姻结好。在光耀的金钱面前，门第与仕途已黯然失色。小说所描写的这种社会心理的微妙变化，正表现了晚明时代的鲜明特点，反映了一种新的价值取向。

在晚明公开宣扬“好货”、“好色”的思潮中，假如说赞美商人是“好货”意识反映的话，那么歌颂婚恋自主、张扬男女平等即与鼓吹“好色”是人的本性有关。描写这一部分内容的作品占有很大的比重，且也最脍炙人口。

值得注意的是，“二拍”中这种男女爱恋之情并非出于单纯的“好色”的自然本性，而是基于在社会生活中的相互平等、相互尊重和相互了解，像《通闺困坚心灯火，闹图圈捷报旗铃》中的罗惜惜与张幼谦、《李将军错认舅，刘氏女诡从夫》中的刘翠翠和金定，都是经过了青梅竹马、耳鬓厮磨、相互熟悉的过程后才萌发了生死不渝的坚贞爱情。他们的婚恋自主的精神，既突破了门当户对、婚姻包办的陋习，也突破了“一见钟情”、人欲本能的冲动，而是打上了新时代的烙印。

“二拍”在描写爱情故事的新潮之处，还表现在具有尊重女性的意识，流露了男女平等的思想。宋、明以来的封建婚姻关系中，贞节观念是社会单方面套在女性脖子上的—副沉重的精神枷锁。突破贞节观念是晚明人文思潮影响下尊重人性、妇女解放的一种表现。在“二拍”中，对于女性“失节”的问题，表现得相当宽容，像《姚滴珠避羞惹羞，



郑月娥将错就错》、《酒下酒赵尼媪迷花，机中机贾秀才报怨》、《赵司户千里遗音，苏小娟一诗正果》、《顾阿秀喜含檀那物，崔俊臣巧会芙蓉屏》、《李将军错认舅，刘氏女诡从夫》、《徐茶酒乘乱劫新人，郑蕊珠鸣冤完旧案》、《两错认莫大姐私奔，再成交杨二郎正本》等篇章，都在不同程度上用谅解、同情的笔触写到了丈夫与失节之妇重归于好，甚至“越相敬重”。显然，这种新的进步的妇女观的思想基础，就是对于女性的尊重。在《满少卿饥附饱颺，焦文姬生仇死报》中就两性间的关系问题曾有这样一段议论：

天下事有好些不平的所在。假如男人死了，女人再嫁，便道是失了节，玷了名，污了身子，是个行不得的事，万口訾议；及至男人家丧了妻子，却又凭他续弦再娶，置妾买婢，做出若干的勾当，把死的丢在脑后，不提起了，并没有人道他薄幸负心，做一场说话。就是生前房室之中，女人少有外情，便是老大的丑事，人世羞言；及至男人家撇了妻子，贪淫好色，宿娼养妓，无所不为，总有议论不是的，不为十分大害。所以女子愈加可怜，男子愈加放肆。这些也是伏不得女娘们心理的所在。

这段话公开抨击了封建社会中以男子为中心的传统观念，迫切地呼唤着两性关系上的平等，使人强烈地感受到晚明社会涌动的人性思潮。

在“二拍”中，还有为数不少的作品是旨在揭露官场的腐败和社会的黑暗。《恶船家计赚假尸银，狠仆人误投真命状》开头就指出：“如今做官做吏的人，贪爱的是钱财，奉



承的是富贵，把那‘正直公平’四字撇却东海大洋。”他们只知道“侵剥百姓”、“诈害乡民”、“将良善人家拆得烟飞星散”，这就无异于“盗贼”。像《进香客莽看金刚经，出狱僧巧完法会分》中的柳太守、《青楼市探人踪，红花场假鬼闹》中的杨企宪、《贾廉访贖行府牒，商功父阴摄江巡》中的贾廉访、《王渔翁舍镜崇三宝，白水僧盗物丧双生》中的浑耀等官僚，都是贪赃枉法、心狠手辣，乃至与盗同谋，甚或自己就是强盗。而反过来，那些真正的“盗贼”，“仗义疏财的倒也尽有”，因而“二拍”的作者禁不住发出了“每讶衣冠多盗贼，谁知盗贼有英豪”的感慨（《乌将军一饭必酬，陈大郎三人重会》）。“二拍”的作者在鞭挞奸臣、贪官、酷吏和种种社会恶势力时，也刻画了一些清官、好官。这主要是用一颗正直的知识分子的良心来观照的。这些清官，能主持正义，严惩罪犯，为民伸冤，在一定程度上反映了人民的意志与愿望。

“二拍”在艺术上追求的目标是“耳目前怪怪奇奇”，也即日常题材、平凡故事中显示出小说的传奇性。为此，小说的情节常常是曲折离奇、波澜起伏，但每篇的结构往往又是十分完整，写得有头有尾。在刻画人物个性方面，塑造了许多血肉饱满、个性鲜明的人物形象。在具体表现手法上，比之前的白话短篇小说显得更为细腻。写环境，写动作，写对话，写细节，时见精雕细刻的笔墨。特别是细致入微的心理描写，更受人们的重视。中国古代的小说，因受史传文学、话本小说等影响，往往只重外部言行的描写，不大习惯于直接描摹人物的心理活动。而“两拍”中的一些作品，如



《转运汉遇巧洞庭红，波斯胡指破鼃龙壳》、《丹客半黍九还，富翁千金一笑》等，都有细腻精致的心理描写。这在中国古代写心传神的艺术史上，是一种新的开拓。

“三言”、“二拍”确实呈现了不少新的气象，可称为晚明市民文学的代表作。但是也应该看到，它们中也有不少作品在艺术表现上比较粗糙，又常常散发着一些宣扬忠孝节义、因果报应等陈腐观念的气息。而更受人注目的是，它们在肯定情和欲时，比较强调人的自然本能，有过多直露的性描写，有的篇章几与当时的淫秽小说无多差别。因此，它们长期被列入禁书之列。到20世纪初，已在存亡之间。鲁迅开始写《中国小说史略》时，也未曾寓目。到20世纪20年代，自日本学者长泽规矩也等关注“二拍”与“三言”之后，逐渐被学界所重视，并陆续发现《拍案惊奇》的原刊四十卷尚友堂本藏在日本日光山轮王寺慈眼堂法库，三十九卷尚友堂刻本改名为《初刻拍案惊奇》，藏日本广岛大学图书馆；《二刻拍案惊奇》的尚友堂本藏在日本内阁文库、佐伯文库。另外，英国皇家亚洲学会、英国博物院与法国巴黎国家图书馆也分别藏有“二拍”的后印本。到50年代至80年代，王古鲁、李田意、章培恒诸先生，曾分别据在日本所得的材料加以整理后或排印、或影印出版。其中，1985、1986年，日本游万井书房影印《拍案惊奇》四十卷尚友堂原刊本与《二刻拍案惊奇》尚友堂本为最佳。1989年，陈迺冬、郭隽杰两先生在参考前人整理的基础上，即据此本加以校注，除了“较露骨的个别污秽文字”酌予删节外，基本上保持原状，于1991年由人民文学出版社出版。本书即据



此人民文学出版社本加以英译。

实际上，有关“二拍”的西文翻译早在19世纪已经开始，如1892年，巴黎梅松纳夫书局出版了德尔韦·圣·德尼（d'Hervey-Saint-Denys）编译的《揭开屏风的秘密》（Paravent révélateur），即是从《崔俊臣巧会芙蓉屏》而来。但长期以来，西方的译本主要是根据《今古奇观》（清代关于“三言”、“二拍”的一种选编本）选译的，选录“两拍”的作品数量极少。在日本，尽管早在江户时代就有《今古奇观》的和刻本，后来也有为数不少的《今古奇观》的全译本，但对“二拍”到现在尚无完整的全译本。至于对“二拍”的研究，到20世纪70年代以后才较成气候，如美国的德尔·R·黑尔斯（Dell R. Halcs）、韩南（Patrick Hanan）、沃尔夫·鲍斯（Wolf Baus）、苏联的华克生（Д·Воскресенский）及日本的小野四平、小川阳一等都有专门论著出版。1998年，中国文学出版社出版了温晋根翻译的《拍案惊奇》和马文谦翻译的《二刻拍案惊奇》，均为节译本。现在，将本书全部译为英文出版，必将对海外读者阅读与研究“二拍”有所帮助和推动。

黄霖

2005年2月9日



PREFACE

This collection of stories, first published in 1628 as *Amazing Tales* (拍案惊奇), was later renamed the *First Series of Amazing Tales* (初刻拍案惊奇) and the *Second Series of Amazing Tales* (二刻拍案惊奇), published in 1932. The author Ling Mengchu (1580 – 1644), bynamed Xuanfang, styled Chucheng and alternatively Jikongguan Zhuren (Master of the All-is-Empty Monastery) was a native of Wucheng (present-day Wuxing, Zhejiang Province). He became a subsidized student at a public school at age 18, but he repeatedly failed the imperial examinations. When he was 55 years old, he was appointed Assistant Magistrate of Shanghai County and later promoted to be the Assistant Prefect of Xuzhou, serving concurrently as magistrate of Fangcun. In 1644, the peasant insurgent army led by Li Zicheng besieged the city where he lived. In an abortive attempt to resist the armed peasants, he died spitting blood. He was a prolific author but the most famous of his works are the *Amazing Tales*.

The *Amazing Tales* enjoyed a lasting reputation, coming out as they did after the three short-story collections titled *Stories to Warn the World* (警世通言), *Stories to Awaken the World* (醒世恒言) and *Stories to Enlighten the World* (喻世明言) penned by Ling's contemporary, the writer Feng Menglong (1574 – 1646). Feng's and Ling's stories reflect



a similar view of the world, and their artistic achievements are more or less on par. They therefore have been considered works of comparable achievement by literary historians. Yet unlike Feng Menglong's works which gathered together existing tales, Ling Mengchu garnered both ancient and new recollections that he hoped would "broaden people's horizons, and elaborated on them to make them more readable" (Preface to *Amazing Tales* by "Jikongguan Zhuren"). Thus these tales are virtually of his own creation. The publication of Ling's tales marked a new stage in short-story creativity in China.

The better and most brilliant aspects of Ling's tales provide a kaleidoscopic portrayal of worldly life. Critics claim they "meticulously present the diverse ways of the world and penetratingly describe heartbreaking disunion and felicitous union." In the 17th century, the development of commerce and handicraft industries, along with thriving urban life, boosted population growth in the towns. Compared with earlier eras, stories now depicted more merchants, vendors, workshop owners and artisans as their heroes. Being the most active elements in the commodity economy and the dominant representatives of urban dwellers, merchants particularly appear again and again as positive characters in Ling's tales. This is a notable development in the history of Chinese short stories. In traditional Chinese ideology, merchants occupy a lower ranking in the social hierarchy consisting of "intellectuals, peasants, craftsmen and merchants." In Ling's tales, however, most merchants are no longer



avaricious, greedy and heartless, but are kind, upright, simple, hardworking, loyal to friends, and epitomes of morality.

In the prelude anecdote in “deputy Director Han’s Concubine Becomes a Madame with an Honorary Title; Chief Commissioner Gu Is Promoted as General Director of the Department of Rites,” a virtuous Huizhou merchant offers silver to save a life. In “Cheng Yuanyu Picks up the Tab in a Tavern; Eleventh Lady Comments on Swordsmanship on Cloud Mound,” the hero is a well-mannered, upright and honest person who keeps his own counsel in the company of beautiful women and generously offers money for other’s relief. Merchants like these are not uncommon in the Tales. Through this praising of merchants, the author was the first to affirm commerce as a decent vocation with social value. In “A Bag of Sesame Seeds Helps Jiang Discover the Original Shape of a Fox Spirit; Three Bundles of Medicinal Herbs Ingeniously Serve to Bring about a Happy Marriage,” Ma Shaoqing is from an official family. When people claim that a man “Who has spent little time in Confucian study, ... won’t make a worthy husband,” he confidently defends himself: “it is not a bad thing to be in business!” Also noteworthy is the tale “Cheng Zai Tides over Difficulties by Repeated Hoarding and Profiteering; The Sea-goddess Manifests Her Power by Rescuing Cheng Zai from Three Dangers,” which says “in Anhui Province, learning to be a merchant was considered the first preference, and pursuing officialdom through passing the imperial examinations came second.” The value of human life is measured by



material interests. The happy marriage between the hero Cheng Zai and the daughter of a sea god, along with Cheng's acquisition of a huge fortune, provide much food for thought. This goddess, who in traditional literature used to favor only men of letters, or honest or diligent peasants in folk literature, now falls in love with a common merchant.

This demonstrates that the flourishing merchant class was replacing the scholar and over time came into favor. As merchants now possessed enormous wealth, they too had the opportunity to engage with beautiful women. Those conceited types were beginning to proudly gaze upon people of other ranks, and look down on the miserable offspring of official families and scholars. They showed reluctance to claim ties with them by marriage. The glitter of gold overshadowed family influence and prospects for officialdom. This subtle shift in social psychology reveals the ethos of the times, reflecting a new value orientation.

With the trends of thought prevalent during the late 16th and early 17th centuries that openly advocated love of wealth and women, and if this eulogizing of merchants reflects love for wealth, then the tales that sing praise of self-chosen marriage and equality between men and women preach the idea that sexual love is human nature. Stories around the latter theme make up a large proportion of the *Tales* and have enjoyed great popularity.

Notably, the love between men and women described in Ling's *Tales* is not only about the natural human zest for sex, but of an attachment based



on mutual equality, respect and understanding. Luo Xixi and Zhang Youqian in “Loyal Lamplight to the Boudoir Guides Him; Glad News and Messengers Break into Prison” and Liu Cuicui and Jin Ding in “General Li Mistakenly Claims a Brother-in-law; Lady Liu Furtively Reunites with Dead Husband” were intimate playmates in childhood and developed constancy in love after getting to know each other better. Their marriage with a spouse of their own choice breaks with the morbid institution of marriage arranged by parents and based on the same social status of families. On the other hand, marriage that goes beyond “love at the first sight” and natural human instinct bears the distinct brand of a new time.

Ling Mengchu’s tales bring up to date romantic literature through his respect for women and ideology of equality between men and women. In feudal China after the 11th century, the concept of chastity allowed society to place heavy moral shackles only on women. The loosening of hypocritical chastity mirrored a respect for human nature and women’s liberation under the influence of the humanist tendencies of that time. Ling’s Tales show tolerance towards women who have lost their chastity. “Trying to Avoid Disgrace Yao Dizhu Invites Disgrace; Being Mistaken Zheng Yue’s Capitalizes on the Mistake,” “Nun Zhao Entraps Beauty with a Most Narcotic Wine; Scholar Jia Takes Revenge with a Most Ingenious Scheme,” “Zhao Buqi Sends a Letter Thousand Li from Home; Su Xiaojuan Secures a Marriage with a Poem,” “General Li Mistakenly



Claims a Brother-in-law; Lady Liu Furtively Reunites with Dead Husband,” “Gu Axiu Donates a Stolen Painting; Cui Junchen Comes across Hibiscus Screen,” “Tea-and-wine Master Xu Kidnaps the Bride Amid Wedding Festivities; Zheng Ruizhu Voices Grievances Ending an Unsettled Case” and other tales all, with supporting and sympathetic touches, describe the reunion of men with their wives who had once lost their chastity. In such tales some husbands and wives become even more respectful toward each other after reuniting. Clearly, this new progressive ideology around women is based on respect for women. In the tale “Lord Man Forsakes His Benefactor Spouse; Jiao Wenji Takes Revenge after Death,” there is the following comment on the relationship between men and women:

“It is true injustices do prevail in the world. If the wife remarries after her husband dies, people will say that she’s lost her integrity and brought disgrace to her family, which is absolutely forbidden. Thus the wife becomes the target of reproach of all. However, a man can remarry or even buy servant girls after the death of his wife and gives no thought at all to the deceased wife. When this happens, no one thinks he is being unfaithful to his wife. But once the wife has an affair outside her marriage, she will be regarded as having committed the most disgraceful offense and will be despised by all. On the contrary, it is permissible for the husband to go whoring. Though people may talk about his indecency, they do not think it a serious offense. All these result in the pitiable wretchedness of women and the bold willfulness of



men. At this point, all women remain unconvinced.”

This commentary lashes out at the male-centric tradition of feudal society, and calls for equality between men and women, evoking the prevailing humanist ideology of the author’s time.

Many of Ling’s tales expose corruptive officialdom and social malpractice. The tale “Evil Boater with Unknown Corpse Money Extorts; Vile Servant Lays a Charge of Murder False” begins with the following comment: “Nowadays those in power love riches and fawn on status. They have cast the words ‘justice and fairness’ into the distant eastern oceans.” They know only how to “bully and exploit the people,” “run roughshod over people,” “fabricate indictments and often tear good families apart,” and thus they are no different from “outlaws.” Officials like Prefect Liu in “Buddhist Pilgrims Rashly Expose the Vajracchedika-Sutra; A Freed Monk Guilelessly Restores the Long-estranged Treasure,” Patrol Inspector Yang in “A Missing Father Traced through Courtesans’ Quarters; Fanciful Wailing of Ghosts Reported in Safflower Fields,” Inspector Jia in “Imperial Inspector Jia Forges an Official Document; Shang Gongfu Acts as the Roving Minister of Hejiang in the Underworld” and Hun Yao in “Fisherman Wang Donates a Mirror in Worship of Buddha; Two Monks Lose Their Lives for Stealing Treasure” are all corrupt, law-bending, cruel and vicious men. Some of them collaborate with outlaws and others of them are outlaws themselves. On the contrary, among real “outlaws,” “generous ones do exist.” For this, the author of



the tales remarks, “We may wonder why gentry are mostly thieves/ Unknowing among thieves are noble men” (“General Woolly Repays a Dinner Debt; Chen Dalang Reunites with Missing Kin”). While castigating traitorous ministers, corrupt officials and cruel clerks and evil forces of the society, the *Tales* also portray certain upright and good officials. The author judges them mainly by an upright intellectual’s conscience. To a certain extent those upright officials who uphold justice, punish criminals and redress people’s wrongs reflect the will and hopes of the people.

Artistically, the Tales aim at presentation of “unusual happenings we hear and see,” namely, dramatic unfolding of everyday themes. Ling’s tales usually have complex plots with unpredictable twists and turns; but at the same time, each story is well constructed, with fine beginnings and endings. The author creates many characters that are true to life, each with a distinct personality. Compared with vernacular short stories of former times, Ling’s *Tales* employ more minute descriptions of the environment, people’s actions and speech, and other details. Particularly, his exquisite description of people’s mentality has been greatly appreciated. Ancient Chinese stories under influence of biographical literature and promptbook stories usually presented the speech and actions of the heroes, but rarely portrayed people’s inner world. Ling’s tales such as “Mr. Fortune Gets Lucky with Mount Dongting Red Fruit; A Persian Merchant Cracks the Drum Dragon Crust’s Secret,” “Elixir Refiner from Half Grain Produces Silver; Rich Man for a Beauty’s Smile a Fortune Squanders”



both have detailed descriptions of people's thinking. This is a breakthrough in the history of ancient Chinese literature.

While Ling's Tales do possess novelty and thus can be regarded as representative of the townsfolk literature of their time, a number of them are artistically crude and often preach the outdated, stale ideas of loyalty of subordinates to sovereigns and regarding karma. Above all, while affirming love between men and women, the *Tales* lay a great deal of emphasis on instinctive human desires. Overly explicit descriptions of sex render some of the stories to border on what was considered pornographic at that time. Because of this, the *Tales* were listed as banned books for a long time. By the early 20th century, they had nearly vanished. When Lu Xun wrote *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, he had not seen a complete edition of the Tales.

Since the 1920s, when the Japanese scholar Nagasawa Kikuya (长泽规矩也) and others showed their interest in the tales of Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu, those tales have been capturing more and more academic attention. Later, the original edition of the *Amazing Tales*, comprised of 40 tales printed by Shouyudou (尚友堂), was discovered in the collection of Japan's Nikkou sanrinnouji Jigendou Houko (日光山轮王寺慈眼堂法库); and an edition of 39 tales, renamed *Amazing Tales the "First Series,"* also printed by Shouyudou, was found in the library collection of Hiroshima Daigaku (广岛大学), in Japan. The "Second Series" of *Amazing Tales*, printed by Shouyudou, were found in the



collections of Uchikura Bunko (内库文库) and Saiki Bunko (佐伯文库), in Japan. Other later editions have been also discovered in the collections of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the British Museum, and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris. From the 1950s to 1980s Wang Gulu (王古鲁), Li Tianyi (李田意), Zhang Peiheng (章培恒) and other scholars put out typeset or photocopy editions based on what they had gathered in Japan. Of all those new editions, the best are the offset editions of the original first impression of *Amazing Tales* with 40 tales printed by Shouyudou, and the “Second Series,” printed by Shouyudou, and published by Yumai Shobou (游万井书房) in 1985 and 1986, in Japan. In 1989 Chen Erdong (陈迩冬) and Guo Juanjie (郭隽杰) finished their commentaries to the *Amazing Tales*, borrowing profusely from textual studies done by former scholars. This edition keeps the books original form except for deletion of a few more explicit, obscene descriptions. This edition, published by People’s Literature Press (人民文学出版社) in 1991, is the one on which the present English translation is based.

The translation of Ling’s tales in the West began in the 19th century. In 1892 the Maisonneuve (梅松纳夫) press in Paris published *Paravent Revdateur*, compiled and translated by d’ Hervey-Saint-Denys, which is based on “Gu Axiu Donates a Stolen Painting; Cui Junchen Comes across Hibiscus Screen.” For the longest time, translation of the Tales in the West have been chiefly based on *Strange Tales New and Old* (今古奇观,



a selection from Feng Menglong's and Ling Mengchu's tales), and those editions do not contain many stories from Ling's works. In Japan, the Japanese edition of *Strange Tales New and Old* was printed as early as in the Edo era (1603 – 1867), and a number of unabridged translations have been published. Despite this, thus far no complete translation of Ling's tales has been published. After the 1970s, research on Ling's tales began to produce noticeable achievements, with publication of the monographs of US scholars Dell R. Heles, Patrick Hanan, Wolf Baus, Soviet scholar D. Voskresensky, and Japanese scholars Ono Shihei (小野四平), Ogawa Youichi (小川阳一), and others. An abridged translation into English of Ling's tales (the "First Series" by Wen Jingen and the "Second Series" by Perry Ma) was published by the Chinese Literature Press, in China in 1998. This new unabridged English translation of the Tales will surely be very valuable to both Chinese and international readers as well as to researchers.

Huang Lin

9 February 2005

Translator's note

Translations

In 1998 Chinese Literature Press published my abridged translation of the *Amazing Tales* ("First Series"), which contained 18 tales of the



original 40. Apart from the translations listed in the “Preface” by Huang Lin, I have sporadically come across English translations of other tales. A translation of the first tale of the “First Series” by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang was published in the journal *Chinese Literature* in 1991, the Winter issue. In 2000 when I was in San Francisco I came across, in an anthology of Chinese literature, the translation of the sixth tale of the “First Series,” but now had no access to that book. In 2003 the Higher Education Press (高等教育出版社) commissioned my colleagues Chen Haiyan and Li Ziliang, along with myself, to produce a complete translation of the *Amazing Tales*. As far as I know, our translation may be the first complete, virtually unabridged (except for certain overly obscene descriptions) English version of Ling Mengchu’s masterpieces. For my colleagues this was their first time to translate the Tales, but for me it was the second time.

Ling Mengchu’s Tales have been favorite reading since my youth. Over the years I’ve read them again and again, and also browsed through research literature concerning the Tales. Having translated them twice, I feel obliged to explain to my readers my understanding of the *Tales* and some related issues. Of course, what has been said in the “Preface” will not be repeated.

Truthful Pictures of a Time

Researchers agree that the Tales are a kaleidoscope of daily life of all



social strata of Ling Mengchu's time. But if we look beyond the vivid descriptions of everyday life in the *Tales*, we also see candid pictures capturing an era. By the end of the 14th century, imperial China had reached its heyday. In 1405 Zheng He, of Muslim descent, started his grand voyage to Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East (recently, retired English admiral Gavin Menzies claimed his 15-year study has confirmed Zheng He's arrival in North America during the 15th century). The scale of Zheng He's fleet embarrassingly dwarfed Christopher Columbus's small ships that ventured onto the oceans 80 years later. Zheng He's voyages greatly accelerated cultural and commercial exchanges between Chinese and other peoples. Many merchants from the Middle East came and settled down in cities on the southeastern coast of China. Quanzhou became a bustling port city. This is the backdrop of the first tale of the "First Series," where a Persian merchant recognizes the treasure brought back from abroad by Wen Ruoxu, or Mr. Misfortune.

In feudal China, state functionaries were selected through imperial examinations, which provided opportunities to scions of commoners and those of noble families alike. This practice has been praised for its fairness compared with the hereditary hierarchies practiced in Europe through the Middle Ages. But over centuries this system deteriorated and malpractice during examinations was widespread. In Tale 22 of the "First Series," Guo Qilang bought an official prefect position with money earned from exploiting prostitutes. While seemingly telling incredible anecdotes about



civil examinations, the introductory anecdotes of Tale 40 of the “First Series” vividly portray the corruption of both the examiners and examinees.

During the Ming Dynasty, many people including emperors were obsessed with alchemy. They believed that crude metals like iron or copper could be refined into gold or silver by alchemists, and that the “elixir pills” refined by alchemists could make them immortal. The alchemists were swindlers and their so-called elixir pills, which contained mercury, were in fact poisonous. Tale 18 of the “First Series” and Tale 18 of the “Second Series” deride this absurd practice.

Religious perspectives in Ling Mengchu’s Tales

Throughout feudal society, lasting thousands of years in China, the Chinese people developed eclectic religious beliefs. Unlike many peoples in the world who exclusively believed in a single religion, Chinese people embraced, usually halfheartedly, different religions and doctrines. At the beginning of the Christian era, Buddhism was introduced into China from India. Roughly at the same time, the native Chinese religion Taoism came into being, profusely borrowing rituals and iconology from Buddhism. Confucianism, which contained mainly ethical codes and political doctrines, and is thus too secular to be called a religion, nevertheless, was considered one of the “three religions”(the other two being Buddhism and Taoism). On occasions Buddhism and Taoism struggled for supremacy as the imperial rulers favored one or the other.



This struggle is reflected in Tale 7 “Taoist-favoring Emperor Xuanzong Gathers Different Magicians; Buddhist-minded Imperial Concubine Wu Hui Flaunts Wonders,” from the “First Series.” By Ling’s time, this struggle had by and large ebbed, and the “unity of three religions,” Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, had become the predominant ideology. Among common people, the notion of karma in Buddhism was quite popular. People believed in the retribution that one receives in “hell” after death, according to one’s merits or demerits accumulated during one’s life. If a person commits slaughter, cheating or debauchery, he shall be punished in “hell” after death and will become a lower being, or an animal in the coming reincarnation. If one is charitable, righteous, loyal to one’s sovereign, one shall be rewarded after death. In Tale 20 of the “First Series,” the upright officials Li Kerang and Pei Anqing become gods after death.

Interestingly, different religions are interpreted in a fatalist light. In Tale 40 “Strange Lone Guest Encountered on Way to Huayin; Third Divine Letter Is Read in Prefecture of Jiangling,” of the “First Series,” every event in Mr. Li’s life has been foretold by an immortal. In Tale 1 of the “First Series,” even Mr. Misfortune after striking it rich says: “I used to be unfortunate and would lose my capital every time I engaged in any trade. By chance I have now gained an easy fortune. This shows that one’s lot is predestined and it is meaningless to make an effort toward any prospect.” Tale 35 illustrates this fatalist principle through the story of a



man who is destined to be poor yet still in vain looks after another man's wealth, finally to only return all the wealth to the ordained owner.

Confucianism attaches importance to moral self-cultivation and personal efforts toward justice. Confucius refuses to comment on affairs of ghosts, demons or gods. By Ling Mengchu's time, Chinese people had compromised fatalism with Confucian ideology. Ling Mengchu believed that, though one's fortunes may be predestined, one's merits or demerits could modify one's fate. Furthermore, if a wrongdoer were to mend his ways, his destined punishment in hell may be mitigated. In Tale 21 "Yuan's Physiognomy Wins a Noble's Trust; Zheng's Good Deed Bequeaths Him an Official Title," from the "First Series," young master Zheng, who is doomed to bring misfortune to his old master, becomes a high-ranking official simply because he returned to its owner the gold he had picked up in a toilet. In Tale 37 of the "First Series," Qutu Zhongren is pardoned for his crime of slaughter of animals by copying out Buddhist sutras using his own blood.

Ling Mengchu sometimes revealed his belief in magical arts, as illustrated by Tale 34 of the "Second Series." But on the whole, he appeared to condemn witchcraft (Tale 39 of the "First Series.")

Scholarship on Ling's Tales

Over the last few decades many scholars have made painstaking efforts and reached great achievements in the textual study of these Tales.



Wang Gulu spent almost his whole life on studying them. His research resulted in a fine edition of the Tales that was published by Shanghai Ancient Documents Press (上海古籍出版社) in 1957. Although the People's Literature Press edition incorporated large parts of Wang's study, I find Wang's edition has its own irreplaceable merits. When in doubt, given the misprints which exist in both Wang Gulu's and Chen Erdong's editions, the offset edition of the Shouyudou publication found in Japan provides invaluable guidance. Most importantly, Tan Zhengbi (谭正璧), the compiler of *Sources of Feng Menglong's and Ling Mengchu's Tales* (三言二拍资料), has perused many works of ancient fiction and identified almost all the sources of Ling's tales. Our translation benefits much from this scholarship. Most recently I saw the latest research result on the tales, *Linguistic Study on Feng Menglong's and Ling Mengchu's Tales* (三言二拍语言研究) by Tan Yaoju (谭耀炬) published in May 2005 by Ba-Shu Press (巴蜀书社). But it's too late for me to draw useful information from it.

Sources of Ling's Tales and Ling's innovations

While it is justifiable to say that Ling Mengchu was more creative in the writing of his tales than Feng Menglong, who mainly collected existing vernacular tales, we must take note of the fact that Ling's tales were not invented by the writer himself. He gleaned plots from different sources. In terms of his sources, it is important to first review certain aspects of



Chinese literary tradition. Chinese prose fiction has two main streams. One is literary sketches and stories written by men of letters in *wenyan* (“literary language”) or “classical” language, that is, a style patterned on writings produced before the 1st century and the language used for all formal and official literature over thousands of years in China. (This was a situation similar to that of Europe, where throughout the Middle Ages important documents were all written in Latin rather than in colloquial local languages.) Chinese literature abounds in witty, cursory anecdotes, tales in scholars’ jottings, philosophical parables, and other works. Such stories have matured since the 7th century. The other stream of fiction is stories in vernacular language (*baihua* — “plain speech”) developed from ballad-singing and oral storytelling. Understandably, since classical Chinese was not spoken in everyday life, vernacular literature captured the largest audience. By the 10th century, stories in the vernacular began to emerge in large numbers. In the 14th century, great novels such as the *Three Kingdoms* (三国演义), *Journey to the West* (西游记) and *Outlaws of the Marsh* (水浒传) appeared. In Ling Mengchu’s time, short stories in the vernacular had become quite popular among townsfolk. Works belonging to the two categories, however, often borrowed material from one another. Writers of vernacular stories often took their plots from literary sketches, which provided outlines for the stories, or from pithy stories written in classical language. Despite this, great writers like Ling Mengchu developed the borrowed plots with such originality and



imagination, and infused them with such strong passion, that one can hardly say the tales were not their creation (much as we would not doubt Shakespeare's creativity although he may have invented little). This can be exemplified by a comparison between Ling Mengchu's "Zhao the Sixth Slain by Pampered Son; Evil Resolutely Vanquished by Magistrate Zhang" (Tale 13 of the "First Series") and the two sketches from which he derived the content for this tale.

In the Zhejiang area there was a son who hit his seventy-year old father and knocked out his teeth. The father presented the teeth to the authorities as evidence against his son. The son in panic sought advice from a pettifogger, offering him a hundred liang of silver. The pettifogger shook his head, saying, "It's too difficult." But as the son offered a higher reward and pleaded for his help, the pettifogger promised to think the matter over for three days. The next day he said, "I've got it! Come to a place where nobody can listen to us and I'll tell you of my plan." When the son put his ear close to the pettifogger's mouth, the man gave it a sudden bite and tore half of it away causing the ear to bleed profusely. The son was shocked. The pettifogger said, "Don't cry! This is my plan to help you out. Keep the torn off portion of your ear and show it to the authorities when they question you." When the case was investigated in court, the son explained that his father's teeth had fallen out when he bit his ear. The magistrate realized that the ear could not have been bitten off by the son himself and believed that the old man's loose teeth



might have fallen out in the nipping. Thus the son was pardoned. (Zhi Nang Bu 智囊补, Vol. 2)

When Finance Minister Zhang Jin was on the Criminal Board, there was a man who lived separately from his father. The man was wealthy. One night the father cut a hole in the wall and entered his house to take some of the man's property. The son thought the person who had entered his home must be a robber and so he hit at him and killed him. After he lit a candle and looked at the body, he discovered it was his father. The clerks of the court discussed the matter and decided that the son should not be absolved of the crime, but as he had done it in an attempt to stop a thief, he should not be put to death. They hesitated for a time. Zhang Jin wielded his brush and commented, "To kill a thief is forgivable, but an unfilial son should be executed. The son has more than enough wealth but his father was driven to theft in poverty. His unfilialty is clear enough." So the man was executed. (Zhi Nang Bu, Vol. 7)

But derivative writing is not always the case. Some of Ling's tales are merely vernacular translations of their classical sources. Tales 9 and 29 in the "First Series" are almost straight translations of tales with the same themes from *A Sequel to New Anecdotes under the Lamplight* (剪灯余话) by Li Zhen (李楨 1376 – 1452). Since the tales and the sources are rather long, I will not quote them here. Interested readers may go



themselves to the sources to compare them. The sources of Tales 9 and 29, “Swing Games” and “The Lotus Song” (which I also translated into English), were published in the journal *Chinese Literature*, 1997, Summer issue, p.154 and p.140 (please note: the stylistic differences between vernacular and classical Chinese have disappeared in the English translation).

References to literary sources & liberties taken in translation

In Ling Mengchu’s time, most Chinese intellectuals focused their attention on literary masterpieces of earlier times. Quotations from Confucian classics were often to be found from any scholar’s lips. Works of brilliant poets were widely read. Anecdotes and stories of former times were known by the educated and uneducated alike. Ling’s Tales are studded with reference to literary tradition. Sometimes he would quote a poem and explicitly give the poet’s name, as the poem of Li She cited at the beginning of Tale 8, “First Series” (The evening rain falls on a riverside village...); but more often he used poems without any reference to the poet’s name, such as the following poem (also in Tale 8), written by Luo Yin (833 – 909), a Tang-dynasty poet:

The nation praises snowfall as a good sign.

From falling snow how much good is foretold?

In the capital city the many poor reside,



Snowbound, how are they to endure the cold?

Today's Chinese readers, not to speak of non-Chinese readers, know very little of those sources. If every allusion were to be literally rendered in English, the translation would become very cumbersome for English-speaking readers. But if the allusions were omitted, the translation would lose much of its cultural value. Furthermore, this is also problematic for a bilingual edition. It has not been easy for the translators to maintain a balance between faithfulness and readability. We have tried to keep all allusions that are explicitly mentioned in the original text. To help our readers to understand the references, we have attached notes to them. Sometimes if too many sources are referred to, we have put explanations in brackets, as in the prelude story of Tale 19 of the "First Series." But if a reference has become an accepted metaphor or a cliché, like "*Nanke yi meng* 南柯一梦" (which refers to an ancient story of a man who became the Prefect of Nanke in his dream and woke up to find himself lying under the south bough of a tree), we just treat it as a common phrase. Compare the following passage from the Chinese text of Tale 35 of the "First Series" and the English translation:

那马见了鞭影，飞也似的跑，把他一跤颠翻，大喊一声，却是南柯一梦，身子还睡在庙檐下。想一想道：……

Spurred forward, the horse dashed ahead and threw him down. He uttered a cry and woke up, only to find himself under the eaves. When he recalled his dream, he said to himself: ...

When a reference is made in a poem, and the referred person or place is important in the context of Ling's Tale, we provide a literal translation, as exemplified by the personal nickname "Timely Rain" in the poem at the beginning of Tale 8, "First Series." But if somebody or something is being used metaphorically, liberties are taken to give a less faithful but more readable rendition. An example is the poem at the end of Tale 10 of the "First Series":

Don't judge a man by his present conditions —

A hero has both trials and tribulations.

Praise to the prefect generous and wise

Who brings about such felicitous ties!

The original text and its straight translation would be:

蒙正当年也困穷，

休将肉眼看英雄。

堪夸仗义人难得，

太守廉明即古洪。





(Lü) Mengzheng too was in most dire straits.
 Look not on heroes with common mortal's eye.
 A worthy, righteous man is hard to come by.
 Upright and wise is prefect **Gu Hong**.

Here, two historical figures are referred to. Lü Mengzheng's story has been told in the Tale. "Gu Hong" refers to a gallant in the Tang-dynasty "Story of Wushuang (无双传)." He rescued a girl by name of Liu Wushuang and helped her marry her beloved.

From this comparison our readers will see what liberties we have taken in translating the many poems in the tales.

Translators' difficulties

While researchers' scholarship greatly facilitated our understanding of the themes and historical context of the tales, we as translators have certain distinctive difficulties. Namely, we have to digest every word and find its exact meaning. Ling Mengchu uses vernacular of the 17th century China, which is akin to today's colloquial Mandarin. It is not difficult for today's Chinese readers to understand Ling's *Tales*; but due to exactly this fact, few philologists have made annotations to the stories. While we can get a sense of the rough meaning of the *Tales*, we often come across words and phrases with unclear meanings. To discover the meanings of such



phrases, we have utilized the commentaries of Wang Gulu, Chen Erdong and Guo Juanjie. Furthermore, we consulted annotations to other vernacular stories and novels. Of the dictionaries, the *Dictionary of Modern Chinese Language* (近代汉语词典), by Xu Shaofeng (团结出版社, 1997), was a most helpful tool. Thanks must be also extended to Liu Liangming (刘良明) of Wuhan University and our colleague Wu Lijuan (武丽娟), who helped in searching out the meanings of some difficult words when I translated the *Tales* in 1997.

Terms peculiar to the Chinese language

For official titles, our translations are based on *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, by Charles O. Hucker (SMC Publishing, Taipei, 1985). But the terms of scholarly honors like *xiucai* and *juren* are simply transliterated from Chinese and printed in italics. We do not use Hucker's translations (e.g. "presented scholar" for *jinshi*) because we feel that his translations of ancient Chinese honorific terms for scholars do not always provide the general English-speaking reader with an understanding of the meaning of the titles. Terms of traditional Chinese measurements and special instruments, etc., are treated likewise. A glossary is added to assist the reader in ascertaining their meanings.

Editors' contribution to our translations

Since we the three translators are not native speakers of the English



language, to translate masterpieces such as Ling's *Tales* into English was in a sense beyond our powers. If our translations have in the end been rendered readable and our readers' literary tastes have not been overly offended, the credit should go partly to our English language editors May Yee and Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta, and I also must not forget Karen Smith and Foster Stockwell who earlier patiently polished my translations of Li Zhen's stories and the Chinese Literature Press edition of the *Amazing Tales*. A couple of teachers in Florida State University, USA, edited part of the "Second Series" .

Our translation may have filled a major gap in international scholarship on Ling Mengchu's *Tales*. But due to our limitations in terms of literary research as well as command of the English language, our translation ultimately can only be a transitional one. For a better translation, further scholarship is called for. Thus, I strongly encourage international students of Chinese literature to conduct comparative literature studies on these truly amazing *Tales*.

Wen Jingen

July 2005

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卷 之 一

进香客莽看金刚经 出狱僧巧完法会分

诗曰：

世间字纸藏经同，见者须当付火中。

或置长流清净处，自然福禄永无穷。

话说上古苍颉制字，有鬼夜哭，盖因造化秘密，从此发泄尽了。只这一哭，有好些个来因。假如孔子作《春秋》，把二百四十二年间乱臣贼子心事阐发，凛如斧钺，遂为万古纲常之鉴，那些奸邪的鬼岂能不哭！又如子产铸刑书，只是禁人犯法，流



Tale 1

Buddhist Pilgrim Rashly Exposes the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* A Freed Monk Guilelessly Restores the Long-estranged Treasure

A poem reads thus:

If you find papers with characters, set to flame,
For sutras they all contain.
Or set them by quiet forever flowing waters,
Then natural serenity and good fortune
Come what may, shall always be yours.

A long, long time ago, during the reign of Emperor Huangdi, when Cang Jie, the official in charge of the annals, was composing the characters which legend ascribes to be the beginnings of ancient Chinese script, ghosts everywhere wept bitterly throughout the night, for they thought, to put it plainly, that the mysteries of nature would be divulged in their entirety. What is more, there were to be many valid reasons for their woe. For example, Confucius penned *Spring and Autumn Annals*, in which he exposed with extraordinary acuity, the mentality and evil intent of treacherous officials and traitors spanning two hundred and forty-two years. From then on, *Spring and Autumn Annals* became the model for the “Three Cardinal Guides” — where the ruler guides the subject, the father guides the son, and the husband guides the wife — as well as for the “Five Constant Virtues”: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity, as specified in the feudal code of ethics. How could those cunning, evil ghosts not to weep?

To provide another instance, when Zichan, a famous politician from Zheng Kingdom during the Spring and Autumn period, cast a code of laws on the tripod, he simply meant to warn people against committing crimes. Unfortunately, as time passed, evil petty officials tampered with

到后来，奸胥舞文，酷吏锻罪，只这笔尖上边几个字，断送了多少人？那些屈陷的鬼岂能不哭？至于后世以诗文取士，凭着暗中朱衣神，不论好歹，只看点头。他肯点点的，便差池些，也会发高科、做高官；不肯点头的，遮莫你怎样高才，没处叫撞天的屈。那些呕心抽肠的鬼，更不知哭到几时，才是住手。可见这“字”的关系，非同小可。况且圣贤传经讲道，齐家治国平天下，多用着他个消说；即是道家青牛骑出去，佛家白马驮将来，也只是靠这几个字，致得三教流传，同于三光。那字是何等之物，岂可不贵重他？每见世间人，不以字纸为意，见有那残书废叶，便将来包长包短，以致因而揩台抹桌，弃掷在地，扫置灰尘污秽中。如此作践，真是罪业深重！假如偶然见了，便轻轻拾将起来，付之水火，有何重难的事？人不



those legal provisions to enable cruel and greedy officials to have the final say in court. Countless people lost their lives because of some characters produced by the tip of a brush! How could grieving ghosts not to cry?

As for those of later generations who attempted to attain official position by writing poems and prose, they had only to rely on the god in Red, to wait and see if he nodded or not, while caring naught for the quality of their composition. If the god in Red nodded his head while the candidate's examination paper was being read, even though the essay was poorly written, the candidate would obtain high scores in the imperial examinations, and hold high official posts. If the god in Red was unwilling to nod his head while the candidate's examination paper was being read, no matter how outstanding his writings were, the candidate would have nowhere to protest against the injustice. It became truly difficult to determine when these exhausted ghosts would cease their crying.

From these examples, we may glimpse the importance of these "characters," and indeed they are not to be trifled with. Moreover, the sages and people of virtue all used written characters to teach the Confucian canon, and the Taoist doctrines, in order to regulate the family, rule the state, and bring peace to the world. Need we say more about this? Even Laozi, the founder of Taoism, riding a black ox, went beyond Sanguan Pass and wrote *Dao De Jing* (*The I-Ching*), while Emperor Mingdi of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) sent an emissary to the Western Regions to bring the Buddhist scriptures to China on the back of a white horse. Ever since then, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have spread far and wide, also by means of these written characters, and illuminated every corner of the land like the sun, the moon and the stars. How invaluable these characters are!

However, most people do not take writing and paper seriously enough. Upon coming across damaged books or waste paper, they use them to wrap this or that, or to wipe tables, or even discard them on the ground to be swept up with the dirt. What sin! It should not be so difficult for people who come across waste paper to pick it up and then put it into clean water or have it burnt. Yet why are they unwilling to do so? It is not that people

肯做。这不是人不肯做，一来只为人不晓得关着祸福，二来不在心上的事，匆匆忽略了。只要能存心的人，但见字纸，便加爱惜，遇有遗弃，即行收拾，那个阴德可也不少哩！

宋时，王沂公之父爱惜字纸，见地上有遗弃的，就拾起焚烧，便是落在粪秽中的，他毕竟设法取将起来，用水洗净，或投之长流水中，或候烘晒干了，用火焚过。如此行之多年，不知收拾净了万万千千的字纸。一日，妻有娠将产，忽梦孔圣人来分付道：“汝家爱惜字纸，阴功甚大。我已奏过上帝，遣弟子曾参来生汝家，使汝家富贵非常。”梦后果生一儿。因感梦中之语，就取名为王曾。后来连中三元，官封沂国公。宋朝一代中三元的，止得三人，是宋庠、冯京与这王曾，可不是最希罕的科名了！谁知内中这一个，不过是惜字纸积来的福，岂非人人做得的事？如今世上人见了享受科名的，那个不称羨，道是“难得”？及至爱惜字纸这样容易事，却错过了不做，不知



are unwilling; rather, on the one hand, people are unaware that it is connected with fortune and misfortune, while on the other hand, people take no notice of things that have nothing to do with themselves. If one is observant and conscientious, and cherishes and tidies every piece of paper in sight, how much merit would one accumulate for good works?

During the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the father of Wang Zeng, the Grand Councilor, treasured paper and writing very much. When he saw waste paper, he would collect it and submit it to flames. He even managed to retrieve waste paper out of excrement and wash it clean with water, or place it into flowing water, and burn it after it had been dried in the sun. He kept on doing so for many years and cleaned thousands of pieces of paper thus. One day when his wife was about to give birth, he had a dream in which Confucius came up to him and said, “You have treasured writing and paper so highly and done so many good deeds. I’ve reported it to the Lord on High, to have my disciple Zeng Shen born into your family so that your family will become exceedingly rich and honorable.” After this dream, his wife did indeed give birth to a baby boy, and the boy was named Wang Zeng as foretold in the dream.

Years later, Wang Zeng successively came first in the examinations at the provincial capital, national capital and the palace, winning the titles of *Jieyuan*, *Huiyuan* and *Zhuangyuan*, and was honored with the official post of *Yiguogong*. Over the course of the Song Dynasty, only three men came out first successively in the imperial examinations at all three levels, namely Song Xiang, Feng Jing, along with the aforementioned Wang Zeng. What a rare honor! However, nobody knew that Wang Zeng had received this honor due to his father’s good deeds in taking care of written characters and paper. Taking care of written characters and paper is actually an easy job, isn’t it? Nowadays everyone admires official rank and agrees it is truly “hard to come by.” Yet they let things slide when it comes to such an easy task as taking care of paper. I have no idea why. Nevertheless, I have a few lines on this:

The creation of characters by Cang Jie is imbued with
a sense of mystery and wonder.

The sages of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism



为何。且听小子说几句：

仓颉制字，爰有妙理。

三教圣人，无不用此。

眼观秽弃，颡当有泚。

三元科名，惜字而已。

一唾手事，何不拾取？

小子因为奉劝世人惜字纸，偶然记起一件事来。一个只因惜字纸拾得一张故纸，合成一大段佛门中因缘，有好些的灵异在里头。有诗为证：

翰墨因缘法宝流，山门珍秘永传留。

从来神物多呵护，堪笑愚人欲强谋！

却说唐朝侍郎白乐天，号香山居士，他是个佛门中再来人，专一精心内典，勤修上乘。虽然顶冠束带，是个宰官身，却自念佛看经，做成居士相。当时因母病，发愿手写《金刚般若经》百卷，以祈冥佑，散施在各处寺宇中。后来五代、宋、元，兵戈扰乱，数百年间，古今名迹，海内亡失已尽，何况白



all used them.

On seeing waste paper with writing,
people's brows should sweat.

Three successive firsts in imperial examinations and official rank
all due to the love of characters!

So easy a thing to pick up, yet why do people not do it?

While advising people to treasure written characters and paper, a story comes to mind. A man who loved paper very much, happened to come across a piece of waste paper, resulting in his predestined relationship with Buddhism. Many mystical and magical repercussions are to be found in this story. A poem may serve to demonstrate this:

A Buddhist Sutra remains intact
due to an old man's love for waste paper,
Rare treasured copies in the temple
may now be handed down forever.
Through the ages, deities were treated by all
with profound love and care,
Fools' willful endeavors lay them open to ridicule.

As the story goes, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) Attendant Gentleman Bai Juyi (772-846), style name Letian, also known as Lay Buddhist Xiangshan, who was a reincarnated Buddhist, devoted himself to the Buddhist scriptures, of the Mahayana variety in particular. Though he could have achieved higher official rank, he wore the robes of a lay Buddhist, as well as dedicated himself to chanting the sutras, and praying to Buddha. Once when his mother had fallen ill, he determinedly toiled to make a hundred copies of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* (The Diamond Sutra) and distribute them to different temples to invoke the blessings of the Buddha on his mother. However, over the ensuing several hundred years that spanned the Five Dynasties (907-960), the Song (960-1279) and the Yuan (1206-1368) dynasties, life turned chaotic due to the scourge of war. After several hundred turbulent years, most of the original calligraphies and famous paintings, both ancient and contemporary, were lost, and Bai Xiangshan's calligraphy was not exempt.

Sadly enough, only one copy of Bai's writing was handed down to a

香山一家遗墨？不知多怎地消灭了。唯有吴中太湖内洞庭山一个寺中，流传得一卷，直至国朝嘉靖年间依然完好，首尾不缺。凡吴中贤士大夫、骚人墨客，曾经赏鉴过者，皆有题跋在上，不消说得。就是四方名公游客，也多曾有赞叹顶礼，请求拜观、留题姓名日月的，不计其数。算是千年来希奇古迹，极为难得的物事。山僧相传，至宝收藏，不在话下。

且说嘉靖四十三年，吴中大水，田禾淹尽，寸草不生，米价踊贵。各处禁棗闭籴，官府严示平价，越发米不入境了。元来大凡年荒米贵，官府只合静听民情，不去生事。少不得有一伙有本钱趋利的商人，贪那贵价，从外方贱处贩将米来。有一伙有家当囤米的财主，贪那贵价，从家里廩中发出米去。米既渐渐辐辏，价自渐渐平减，这个道理也是极容易明白的。最是那不识时务执拗的腐儒做了官府，专一遇荒就行禁棗、闭籴、平价等事。他认道是不使外方籴了本地米去，不知一行禁止，就有棍徒诈害，遇见本地交易，便自声扬犯禁，拿到公庭，立受枷责。那有身家的，怕惹事端，家中有米，只索闭仓高坐，又且官有定价，不许贵卖，无大利息，何苦出棗？那些贩米的



temple on Dongting Mountain in Taihu, Wuzhong.¹ Up until the Jiaping period (1522- 1566) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the copy still remained intact. All the officials and literati in Wuzhong who cherished it, wrote short commentaries on it. Countless eminent touring officials far and near also marveled at it and prostrated themselves in worship, while many asked to view it and sign their names and the date on it. It was presumed to be a rare relic, something extremely hard to come upon. Monks handed it down generation after generation, and no harm came to it.

Let us begin at the forty-third year of the Jiaping period, when Wuzhong was engulfed by tremendous floods and all the crops were inundated. Not even a blade of grass grew and the price of rice escalated. Everywhere rice was not allowed to be bought or sold, and local authorities strictly enforced the government-controlled price. As a result, rice became unavailable in Wuzhong. It turned out that in most cases the price of rice would rise in a year of crop failures, and the local authorities would rather lend an ear to appease the feelings of the public than create trouble. It was natural that some profit-minded merchants with a lot of capital would buy rice from other regions where the price was low, hoping to sell elsewhere at a higher price. Some rich men who had large stores of rice sold their rice at a profit. Accordingly, rice gradually amassed together and its price naturally lowered. This is easy enough to understand.

And yet those stubborn officials, too pedantic to interpret the changing realities, would issue orders to ban the sale and buying of rice, and decree a low rice price once a crop failure appeared, thinking the implementation of this policy would prevent their local rice from being traded out to the other regions. Yet they had no inkling that some miscreants would always emerge to make trouble by taking advantage of the ban. If they caught word about a local rice trader, they would charge him with breaking the ban and haul him before court to be punished. The rich, fearing trouble, would then prefer not to sell their rice even if they had an abundance at home. Moreover, the local authorities had fixed the price, forbidding higher prices. Since large profits were impossible, why bother to sell?

Seeing that the government-controlled price was not high, those who

客人，见官价不高，也无想头。就是小民私下愿增价暗余，俱怕败露受责受罚。有本钱的人，不肯担这样干系，干这样没要紧的事。所以越弄得市上无米，米价转高。愚民不知，上官不谙，只埋怨道：“如此禁闭，米只不多；如此抑价，米只不贱。”没得解说，只囫囵说一句“救荒无奇策”罢了。谁知多是要行荒政，反致越荒的。

闲话且不说。只因是年米贵，那寺中僧侣颇多，坐食烦难。平日檀越也为年荒米少，不来布施。又兼民穷财尽，饿殍盈途，盗贼充斥，募化无路。那洞庭山位在太湖中间，非舟楫不能往来。寺僧平时吃着十方，此际料没得有凌波出险、载米上门的了。真个是：

香积厨中无宿食，净明钵里少余粮。

寺僧无计奈何。内中有一僧，法名辨悟，开言对大众道：“寺中僧徒不少，非得四五十石米不能度此荒年。如今料无此大施主，难道抄了手坐看饿死不成？我想白侍郎《金刚经》真迹，是累朝相传至宝，何不将此件到城中寻个识古董人家，当他些米粮且度一岁。到来年有收，再图取赎，未为迟也。”住持道：





bought rice for resale also lost interest. Even though some peddlers ventured to privately offer a higher price, disregarding exposure and punishment, the rich were not willing to run any risk over such an unimportant matter. Accordingly, rice could hardly be found on the market, and the price of rice thus truly soared sky high. The common people and the authorities could not figure out why, except to complain, “So many regulations and bans, yet we’re still short of rice; despite the price of rice being fixed low, it’s still not cheap.” Though it was difficult to find a proper explanation, “There’s no best way out in a year of crop failure” was the vague phrase heard often enough. Though relief measures were instituted in years of famine, the rice shortage grew more and more grim. Enough of this digression.

Since the price of rice was high that year, food became a problem for the great number of monks at this Dongting temple. Benefactors had stopped coming to the temple to give alms at this time of famine. The common people lived in poverty and starvation stalked the countryside. Robbers arose like swarms of wasps. No means could be found to collect alms. Now, Dongting Mountain was surrounded by Taihu Lake, so transport was impossible without ferryboats. The monks had become accustomed to living on charity from all around, and had never dreamed that benefactors would stop crossing the waves to provide them with rice. Thus it was that:

No food to be found in the monks’ kitchen,

Only clean earthen bowls.

All the monks were at their wits’ end. One monk among them, named Bianwu, said, “We have too many monks in our temple to be able to tide over the famine without forty or fifty *dan* of rice. It’s impossible, I believe, to expect such a generous benefactor. Yet how can we stand idly by with arms folded, awaiting starvation? Attendant Gentleman Bai’s authentic calligraphy, the *Vajracchedika-Sutra*, is a priceless treasure handed down to us from dynasties past. Why don’t we take it into town, find a knowledgeable man who knows relics, and leave it in his home so as to pawn some rice for this famine year? If the harvest is good next year, it won’t be too late for us to redeem the pawned *Vajracchedika-Sutra*.”



“相传此经值价不少，徒然守着他，救不得饥饿，真是馊米囤饿杀了，把他去当米，诚是算计。但如此年时，那里撞得个人肯出这样闲钱，当这样冷货？只怕空费着说话罢了。”辨悟道：“此时要遇个识宝太师，委是不能勾。想起来只有山塘上王相国府当内严都管，他是本山人，乃是本房檀越，就中与我独厚。这卷白侍郎的经，他虽未必识得，却也多曾听得。凭着我一半面皮，挨当他几十挑米，敢是有的。”众僧齐声道：“既然如此，事不宜迟，只索就过湖去走走。”

住持走去房中，厢内捧出经来，外边是宋锦包袱包着，揭开里头看时，却是册叶一般装的，多年不经裱褙，糨气已无，周围镶纸，多泛浮了。住持道：“此是传名的古物，如此零落了，知他有甚好处？今将去与人家，藏放得好些，不要失脱了些便好。”众人道：“且未知当得来当不来，不必先自耽忧。”辨悟道：“依着我说，当便或者当得来。只是救一时之急，赎取时这项钱粮还不知出在那里！”众人道：“且到赎时再做计较，眼下只是米要紧，不必多疑了。”当下雇了船只，辨悟叫个道人随了，带了经包，一面过湖到山塘上来。



The Abbot said, "It is said this Sutra is extremely valuable. Yet it cannot be food for us when we are starving. We don't want to starve next to a granary. It's a rather good idea to use it to exchange for some rice. Yet how will we be able to come upon such a person, who is both so well off and willing to keep such dull and esoteric wares? I'm afraid we're simply engaging in idle talk."

Bianwu replied, "At present it is truly difficult to arrange meetings with high officials. Yet it occurred to me that Steward Yan of the pawnshop attached to Grand Councilor Wang's residence in Shantang may be the best choice. He's a native resident and has been our benefactor in the past. And we've always maintained good relations. He might not know what's what about Attendant Gentleman Bai's Sutra, but he must certainly have heard of it. With my face I think I can hopefully pawn it off for dozens of loads of rice."

The other monks spoke up all at once: "If this is the case, it must be done without delay. Go across the lake and do your best." The Abbot entered the room and brought out the Sutra in both hands. It was bound in sheets and wrapped in an imitation Song brocade tapestry. It had not been remounted for ages and the glue had come undone, with the edges becoming loose and tractable.

The Abbot said, "Such a rare heirloom has been left out in the cold, to come to this! You know not what a wonder it is! Let us hope it finds a good family for safekeeping and does not get lost."

The others said all in one voice, "Since it seems rather uncertain whether we can pawn it for rice or not, we should not worry about it too much in the first place." "In my opinion," added Bianwu, "it can help us meet a pressing need. But I'm worried how we will be able to get the money to redeem it!" The others said, "Leave that aside till the time comes. Rice is the most urgent need for the time being. No need to worry over other matters."

Taking the Sutra, Bianwu asked a monk to accompany him, and hired a boat. They crossed the lake and arrived at Shantang. Approaching the Grand Councilor's residence, they looked into the distance and discovered Steward Yan sitting on the ground in the courtyard. Bianwu stepped



行至相府门前，远远望去，只见严都管正在当中坐地。辨悟上前稽首，相见已毕，严都管便问道：“师父何事下顾？”辨悟道：“有一件事特来与都管商量，务要都管玉成则个。”都管道：“且说看何事。可以从命，无不应承。”辨悟道：“敝寺人众缺欠斋粮，目今年荒米贵，无计可施。寺中祖传《金刚经》，是唐朝白侍郎真笔，相传价值千金，想都管平日也晓得这话的。意欲将此卷当在府上铺中，得应付米百来石，度过荒年，救取合寺人众生命，实是无量功德。”严都管道：“是甚希罕东西，金银宝贝做的，值此价钱？我虽曾听见老爷与宾客们常说，真是千闻不如一见。师父且与我看看再商量。”辨悟在道人手里接过包来，打开看时，多是零零落落的旧纸。严都管道：“我只说是怎么样金碧辉煌的，元来是这等悔气色脸，倒不如外边这包还花碌碌好看，如何说得值多少东西？”都管强不知以为知的逐叶翻翻，一直翻到后面去，看见本府有许多大乡宦名字及图书在上面，连主人也有题跋手书印章，方喜动颜色道：“这等看起来，大略也值些东西，我家老爷才肯写名字在上面。除非为我家老爷这名字多值了百来两银子，也不见得。我与师父相处中，又是救济好事，虽是百石不能勾，我与师父五十石去罢。”辨悟道：“多当多赎，少当少赎。就是五十石也



forward and bowed, with his hands folded in front of him.

After this greeting, Steward Yan inquired, "What brings you here, Master?" Bianwu answered, "I've made this special journey to discuss a certain matter with you, and I do hope you would kindly help make a success of it." The Steward said, "Speak. I most certainly will if I can." Bianwu replied, "We have too many mouths to feed in our temple and we're short of food and rice. Rice is now too expensive because of this famine. We have reached our wits' end. We have the one copy of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra*, handed down by the temple from generation to generation. It is the authentic work of Attendant Gentleman Bai from the Tang Dynasty, and it is said to be invaluable. I believe you must have heard of it. I am thinking of placing it to your pawnshop for about one hundred *dans* of rice for the famine year. If this can be arranged, all the people in our temple will be saved, and you shall have rendered a boundless beneficence."

Steward Yan asked, "How rare an object is it? Is it made of gold or silver, to cost so dear? I often hear my master and visitors talk about it, but seeing is believing. Show it to me first, before we discuss it further." Bianwu took the bundle from the little monk. Opening the bundle, they found nothing but fragments of spoiled old paper. "I thought it would look splendid, in green and gold," said Steward Yan. "But it turns out to be quite pale and gloomy, foreboding ill. The tapestry wrapper looks much better, at least it's very brightly colored. How could it be worth so much?" Assuming a deceptively knowledgeable air, the Steward leafed over page by page to the end, until he was able to recognize the names and seals of many of the local gentry related to the Grand Councilor. He even found his master's own authentic comments and seal on it. He then said, eyes ablaze with joy: "It now appears to be worth something, otherwise my master would not have put his name to it. With my master's name on it, it's likely worth a hundred taels of silver or more. From our dealings, you know I'm always ready to provide relief and am rather fond of meddling in others' affairs. But I'm afraid I cannot promise you a hundred *dans* of rice, though I can guarantee you fifty." Bianwu replied, "Pawn more, redeem more; pawn less, redeem less. Fifty is acceptable, and then I won't



罢，省得担子重了，他日回赎难措处。”当下严都管将经包袱得好了，捧了进去。终久是相府门中手段，做事不小，当真出来写了一张当票，当米五十石。付与辨悟道：“人情当的，不要看容易了。”说罢，便叫开仓斛发。辨悟同道人雇了脚夫，将米一斛一斛的盘明下船。谢别了都管，千欢万喜，载回寺中不题。

且说这相国夫人，平时极是好善，尊重的是佛家弟子，敬奉的是佛家经卷。那年冬底，都管当中送进一年簿籍到夫人处查算，一向因过岁新正，忙忙未及简勘。此时已值二月中旬，偶然闲手揭开一叶看去，内一行写着“姜字五十九号，当洞庭山某寺《金刚经》一卷，本米五十石”。夫人道：“奇怪！是何经卷当了许多米去？”猛然想道：“常见相公说道洞庭山寺内有卷《金刚经》，是山门之宝，莫非即是此件？”随叫养娘们传出去，取进来看。不逾时取到。夫人盥手净了，解开包，揭起看时，是古老纸色，虽不甚晓得好处与来历出处，也知是旧人经卷，便念声佛道：“此必是寺中祖传之经，只为年荒将来当米吃了。这些穷寺里如何赎得去？留在此处褻渎，心中也不



have to carry too much when I come to redeem it some day.”

Then Steward Yan wrapped up the Sutra and carried into to the house in both hands. Despite everything, Steward Yan belonged to the Grand Councilor’s house and was a man of his word. He came out of the house and wrote out a redemption ticket for fifty *dans* of rice for Bianwu.

He handed it to Bianwu, and said, “You have obtained this as a result of our friendship and my sympathy. Do not think it was easy.” As he said this, he ordered the granary to open and deliver rice weighing one *hu* after another. Bianwu and the other monk hired a porter and checked the amount of rice. After it was loaded onto a boat, they bid farewell to the Steward and made their way back to the temple, wild with joy.

Let us begin with the Grand Councilor’s wife. She was a lady who was very generous in her charity, paying her respects to the Buddha’s disciples and piously worshipping the Buddhist scriptures. Near the end of that winter, the Steward brought in the account books of the pawnshop for the Grand Councilor’s wife to inspect. Having been busy with the Spring Festival and the first month of the new year, the wife did not inspect the books until the middle of the second month. She randomly opened to a page and found the line, “Account Number 59: Received one volume of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* from a temple on Dongting Mountain. Rice fifty *dans*.” “How strange!” the wife said to herself. “What kind of Sutra could be worth so much rice?” All of a sudden she thought, “I often hear our visitors mention a volume of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* in the temple on Dongting Mountain, saying it is a great treasure of Buddhism. Is it possible that this is that very treasure?” She then called her maids to instruct them to have it brought in.

The Sutra was presented to her in no time. After scrubbing her hands clean, the wife untied the wrapping and stared at the ages-old parchment. Although she was not quite clear about its origins and past history and how valuable it might be, she was certain it was handed down from the earliest times. She whispered to Amitabha: “This must be a Sutra handed down generation after generation, now being pawned for rice due to the famine. How will this poor temple be able to afford to redeem it? It would be a sacrilege, and I would feel uneasy if it is kept here. Better to just



安稳。譬如我斋了这寺中僧人一年，把此经还了他罢，省得佛天面上取利不好看。”分付当中都管说：“把此项五十石作做夫人斋僧之费，速唤寺中僧人，还他原经供养去。”

都管领了夫人的命，正要寻便捎信与那辨悟，教他来领此经。恰值十九日是观世音生日，辨悟过湖来观音山上进香。事毕，到当中来拜都管。都管见了道：“来得正好！我正要寻山上烧香的人捎信与你。”辨悟道：“都管有何分付？”都管道：“我无别事，便为你旧年所当之经。我家夫人知道了，就发心布施这五十石本米与你寺中，不要你取赎了，白还你原经，去替夫人供养着。故此要寻你来还你。”辨悟见说，喜之不胜，合掌道：“阿弥陀佛！难得有此善心的施主，使此经重还本寺，真是佛缘广大，不但你夫人千载流传，连老都管也种福不浅了。”都管道：“好说，好说。”随去禀知夫人，请了此经出来，奉还辨悟。夫人又分付都管：“可留来僧一斋。”都管遵依，设斋请了辨悟。辨悟笑嘻嘻捧着经包，千恩万谢而行。

到得下船埠头，正值山上烧香多人，坐满船上，却待开了。辨悟叫住，也搭将上去，坐好了开船。船中人你说张家长，我说李家短，不一时，行至湖中央。辨悟对众人道：“列位说来



account for it as alms I gave to the monks for one year and return the Sutra to the temple, so as to avoid thus profiting from the Buddha, which forebodes ill.”

She said to the Steward of the pawnshop, “Change this fifty *dans* of rice into my alms to the monks, and ask them to take the Sutra back to the temple for safekeeping at once.” With the lady’s instructions, the Steward tried to find someone to deliver a message to Bianwu, asking him to come retrieve the Sutra.

On the birthday of Guanyin (Bodhisattva), which happened to fall on 19th day of the 2nd month in the Chinese lunar calendar, Bianwu happened to come across the lake to Guanyin Mountain to worship the Bodhisattva. Having completed his worship, he came to the pawnshop to visit Steward Yan. Upon seeing him, Steward Yan said, “You’ve come just in time! I was thinking of finding a worshipper on the mountain to send word to you.” Bianwu asked, “What instructions do you have for me?”

The Steward answered, “Nothing more than the Sutra you pawned last year. Our lady learned of this matter and resolved to give those fifty *dans* of rice as alms to your temple, so you need not to redeem it any more. Our lady wants to return your Sutra, so that you may make offerings to the Sutra for the lady. That is why we’ve been looking for you.”

Hearing this, Bianwu was overjoyed and, placing both palms together, said, “Amitabha! What a kindhearted alms-giver! Now the Sutra is going to be returned to our temple. Buddha is indeed all-powerful. Not only will your lady be remembered forever, but you have also gained great merit!” The Steward replied, “That’s alright, that’s alright.” The Steward then left and reported this to the lady. He carried out the Sutra respectfully and gave it to Bianwu. The lady had commanded, “Ask the monk to stay for dinner.” As instructed, the Steward gave Bianwu a banquet.

Having expressed countless thanks, Bianwu was all smiles as he carried the bundle containing the Sutra and made his way back to the temple. When he arrived at the pier, he found the boat full of worshippers and ready to depart. Bianwu shouted at the boat to wait for him. As soon as he was onboard, the boat set out. The boat made it to the center of the lake in no time, as people gossiped and chatted about domestic matters.



说去，总不如小僧今日所遇施主，真是个善心喜舍、量大福大的了。”众人道：“是那一家？”辨悟道：“是王相国夫人。”众人内中有的道：“这是久闻好善的，今日却如何布施与师父？”辨悟指着经包道：“即此便是大布施。”众人道：“想是你募缘簿上开写得多了。”辨悟道：“若是有心施舍，多些也不为奇。专为是出于意外的，所以难得。”众人道：“怎生出于意外？”辨悟就把去年如何当米，今日如何白还的事说了一遍，道：“一个荒年，合寺僧众多是这夫人救了的。况且寺中传世之宝正苦没本利赎取，今得奉回，实出侥幸。”众人见说一本经当了五十石米，好生不信，有的道：“出家人惯说天话，那有这事！”有的道：“他又不化我们东西，何故掉谎？敢是真的。”又有的道：“既是值钱的佛经，我们也该看看。一缘一会，也是难得见的。”要与辨悟取出来看。辨悟见一伙多是些乡村父老，便道：“此是唐朝白侍郎真笔，列位未必识认，亵亵渎渎，看他则甚？”内中有一个教乡学假斯文的，姓黄号丹山，混名黄撮空，听得辨悟说话，便接口道：“师父出言太欺人！甚么白侍郎黑侍郎，便道我们不认得？那个白侍郎，名字叫得白乐天，



Bianwu interrupted, “What you’re talking of is no match for the almsgiver I met today. She is so kind and so generous. Great natural capacity and good fortune will be always with her.” “Who is it?” they asked. “Grand Councilor Wang’s wife,” replied Bianwu. One among the crowd said, “We’ve long heard of her generosity. What alms did she give you today?”

Pointing at the bundle holding the Sutra, Bianwu said, “This is the great alms.” All the people around him said, “It must be one of a long list in your alms records.” Bianwu answered, “If one wanted to give alms for a special purpose, it’s not so strange at all, no matter how long a list one makes. It came as a surprise. That’s why it’s amazing!” All the people asked, “How was it a surprise?”

Bianwu recounted the story of how he had pawned the Sutra for rice last year and how the Sutra was returned, adding at the end: “This lady saved the lives of all the monks of the temple in this famine year. What’s more, while we were worrying about principal and interest in redeeming this ages-old treasure handed down to us from earlier generations, it was returned. What luck!”

On hearing that a volume of a Sutra could be pawned for fifty *dans* of rice, most people thought it incredible. Some said, “Monks like to talk big.” Others said, “He is not pressing us to give alms, so there is no reason for him to tell a lie. It might be true.” Some suggested, “Since it’s so invaluable a Sutra, we should have a look. This is really a rare chance.” So they asked Bianwu to show them the Sutra.

Seeing that these people were all country folk, Bianwu replied, “It is Attendant Gentleman Bai’s authentic calligraphy from the Tang Dynasty. I’m afraid you won’t be able to understand it. You will only profane it. What is the use of your looking at it?”

Among these people was a private school tutor whose surname was Huang, styling himself as Danshan, and nicknamed Empty Talk Huang. On hearing what Bianwu said, Huang retorted, “You are being rude, Master! Official this, Official that, you think we do not know about him? That Attendant Gentleman Bai’s name was Bai Letian, and many of his poems were selected for *Poetry from a Thousand Poets*.” Huang continued,



《千家诗》上多有他的诗，怎欺负我不晓得？我们今日难得同船过湖，也是个缘分，便大家请出来看看古迹。”众人听得，尽拍手道：“黄先生说得有理。”一齐就去辨悟身边，讨取来看。辨悟四不拗六，抵当众人不住，只得解开包袱，摊在舱板上。揭开经来。那经叶叶不粘连的了，正揭到头一板，怎当得湖中风大，忽然一阵旋风，搅到经边一掀，急得辨悟忙将两手揪住，早把一叶吹到船头上。那时，辨悟只好按着，不能脱手去取，忙叫众人快快收着。众人也大家忙了手脚，你挨我挤，吆吆喝喝，磕磕撞撞，那里摔得着？说时迟，那时快，被风一卷，早卷起在空中。元来一年之中，惟有正二月的风是从地下起的，所以小儿们放纸鸢风筝，只在此时。那时是二月天气，正好随风上去，那有下来的风恰恰吹来还你船中？况且太湖中间汊汊漾漾的所在，没弄手脚处，只好共睁着眼，望空仰看。但见：



“What a browbeater you are to say we wouldn’t understand him! Fate has deemed it that today we take the same boat across the lake, and how gracious it would be if you showed us this relic.” On hearing this, all the others chimed in, “What Mr. Huang says is true!” So saying, they all moved over and huddled together around Bianwu with eager eyes.

The few are no match for the many. Unable to resist the crowd’s determination, Bianwu had to untie the bundle and place it on the deck of the boat, laying bare the Sutra. The pages of the Sutra were not well pasted together. While he was lifting the first page, suddenly a gust of whirlwind came up, lifting up the edges of the Sutra. One page was already blowing toward the stern of the boat before Bianwu could reach both hands out to anxiously press down the other pages. Prevented for the moment from going after the missing page, Bianwu had to keep both hands pressed on the Sutra as he asked the others to retrieve the page. The people around him all hurtled into chaos, pushing and shoving and shouting at each other. How could they get at it?

In the twinkling of an eye, it was blown up towards the sky. As it turned out, over the course of one year the winds in the first and second lunar calendar months alone originate from the ground. That is why children fly kites at this time. As it happened to be the second month then, the winds took that page up, way up into the sky. Now how was there to be a downward wind to blow it right back into the boat? What is more, they were at the center of the vast Lake Taihu, so any other means of rescue was completely impossible. They could do nothing but look up into the sky, with their eyes wide open watching it fly away. What a sight:

It soars into the sky like a wisp of smoke rising upward.
It floats in the clouds like a gossamer turning somersaults.
When kites pass by, it mistakes them for neighbors.
When falcons fly above, it mistakes them for companions.
On a small boat in the lake, the people below shout and jump.
Straight toward faraway foreign lands,
The leaf tosses about in the air above.
No one can get hold of it without a hand
Huge enough to mend the sky.



天际飞冲，似炊烟一道直上；云中荡漾，如游丝几个翻身。纸鸢到处好为邻，俊鹤飞来疑是伴。底下叫的叫，跳的跳，只在湖中一叶舟；上边往一往，来一来，直通海外三千国。不生得补青天的大手抓将住，没处借系白日的长绳缚转来。

辨悟手接着经卷，仰望着天际，无法施展，直看到望不见才住。眼见得这一纸在爪哇国里去了，只叫得苦。众人也多呆了，互相埋怨。一个道：“才在我手边，差一些儿不拿得住。”一个道：“在我身边飞过，只道你来拿，我住了手。”大家唧啾。一个老成的道：“师父再看看，敢是吹了没字的素纸还好。”辨悟道：“那里是素纸！刚是揭开头一张，看得明明白白的。”众人疑惑，辨悟放开双手看时，果然失了头一板。辨悟道：“千年古物，谁知今日却弄得不完全了！”忙把来叠好，将包包了，紫涨了面皮，只是怨怅。众人也多懊悔，不敢则声。黄撮空没做道理处，文诌诌强通句把不中款解劝的话。看见辨悟不喜欢，也再没人敢讨看了。船到山边，众人各自上岸散讫。

辨悟自到寺里来，说了相府白还经卷缘故，合寺无不欢喜赞叹，却把湖中失去一叶的话，瞒住不说。寺僧多是不在行的，也没有人翻来看看，交与住持收拾过罢了。

话分两头。却说河南卫辉府，有一个姓柳的官人，补了常州府太守，择日上任。家中亲眷设酒送行，内中有一个人，乃是博学好古的山人，曾到苏、杭四处游玩访友过来，席间对柳太守说道：“常州府与苏州府接壤。那苏州府所属太湖洞庭



No one can lasso it and pull it over
without a rope long enough to lasso the sun.

Looking way up into the sky, Bianwu could do nothing but press his hands on the Sutra while watching the one page disappear from sight. Seeing that the page had disappeared to Java,² he could only groan inwardly. Aghast, all the others started to grumble to each other. One said, "It was within my reach and I almost got it." Another said, "It flew past me and I thought you would get it, so I held back." Everybody started bickering. An experienced and cool-headed man said, "Have a look, Master. Maybe the missing page was blank."

Bianwu said, "How could it be blank? It was the very first page and I saw it clearly." All the others were skeptical. Bianwu removed his hands and found the first page gone indeed. "A relic of a thousand years. Now undone!" moaned Bianwu. He hurriedly put the pages in order and wrapped them up again, his face turning red, an expressive mask of indignation. Everyone was remorseful and dared not utter a word. At a loss to reason things out, Empty Talk Huang had to forcibly utter some useless and genteel exhortations. Seeing that Bianwu was in such low spirits, no one was interested any longer in examining the Sutra. As the boat arrived at the foot of the mountain, everybody disembarked and scattered.

Back at the temple, Bianwu told them how the Grand Councilor's wife had returned the Sutra for nothing, and the whole temple went wild with joy. He covered up the incident of the one page lost in the lake. Most of the monks were not familiar with the Sutra, and no one opened it up before Bianwu handed it to the Abbot.

The story now goes off in two branches. It so happened that an official whose surname was Liu, from Weihui Prefecture, Henan, took up the position of Prefect of Changzhou Prefecture and was now on his way to take office. His family and relatives were giving him a farewell banquet. Among them was a learned recluse who was a great antiquarian and had been to Suzhou and Hangzhou to tour about and visit friends. At the banquet he said to the Prefect, "Changzhou and Suzhou prefectures are close neighbors. In a temple on Dongting Mountain in Taihu of Suzhou



山某寺中，有一件希奇的物事，乃是白香山手书《金刚经》。这个古迹价值千金，今老亲丈就在邻邦，若是有个便处，不可不设法看一看。”那个人是柳太守平时极尊信的，他虽不好古董，却是个极贪的性子，见说了值千金，便也动了火，牢牢记在心上。

到任之后，也曾问起常州乡士大夫，多有晓得的，只是苏、松隔属，无因得看。他也不是本心要看，只因千金之说上心，希图频对人讲，或有奉承他的解意了，购求来送他未可知。谁知这些听说的人道是隔府的东西，他不过无心问及，不以为意。以后在任年余，渐渐放手长了。有几个富翁为事打通关节，他传出密示，要苏州这卷《金刚经》。诘知富翁要银子反易，要这经却难。虽曾打发人寻着寺僧求买，寺僧道是家传之物，并无卖意。及至问价，说了千金。买的多不在行，伸伸舌，摇摇头，恐怕做错了生意，折了重本，看不上眼，不是算了，宁可苦着百来两银子送进衙去，回说“《金刚经》乃本寺镇库之物，不肯卖的，情愿纳价”罢了。太守见了白物，收了顽涎，也不问起了。如此不止一次。这《金刚经》倒是那太守发科分、起



Prefecture there is a rare relic. It is Bai Xiangshan's authentic calligraphy, the *Vajracchedika-Sutra*. This relic is truly invaluable. Since you're going there, you must go take a look at it if you have the opportunity." Prefect Liu usually respected this recluse and took what he said as truth. Though not an admirer of antiques, he was a greedy man. On hearing the Sutra was invaluable, his interest in it was aroused and he kept this information in mind.

Upon taking office, Prefect Liu asked many country gentlemen and local officials in Changzhou about the Sutra. Most of them knew something about it. But none had actually seen it since it belonged to Suzhou Prefecture. He was actually not interested in viewing it. The reason he frequently asked people about it was to keep it in mind that it was priceless, and he believed that one day someone who wanted to curry favor with him would understand his craving and purchase it for him as a gift. Unfortunately these people only thought it belonged to another prefecture and their prefect was casually inquiring about it. So no one took it seriously. Several years passed, and he more vigilantly tried to seize any opportunity to get hold of the Sutra. Once a couple of rich men had to offer a bribe, to have him put in a good word about certain affairs. He dropped a veiled hint that he wanted to have this *Vajracchedika-Sutra* from Suzhou. Who would have thought that it would be easy for the rich men to take out their silver, but so hard to grab the Sutra? Though they had sent some people to discuss with the monks the buying of the Sutra, the monks said that it had been handed down to them from generations past and they were not going to sell it. When they eventually mentioned a price, the buyers being all laymen, mouths agape and tongues out, shook their heads at the thought of one thousand taels of silver, fearful of making a mistake and suffering great losses. So holding this offer in contempt, they all forgot about it. They preferred to take a hundred taels of silver to the Prefect and tell him that the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* was the guardian of the temple and the monks had insisted it was not for sale. After seeing the silver, the Prefect licked his chops and asked them no further questions about the matter. He still time and again kept making general inquiries, and thus his craving to possess the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* became a practice



发人的丹头了，因此明知这经好些难取，一发上心。

有一日，江阴县中解到一起劫盗，内中有一行脚头陀僧。太守暗喜道：“取《金刚经》之计，只在此僧身上了。”一面把盗犯下在死囚牢里，一面叫个禁子到衙来，悄悄分付他道：“你到监中，可与我密密叮嘱这行脚僧，我当堂再审时，叫他口里扳着苏州洞庭山某寺是他窝赃之所，我便不加刑罚了，你却不可泄漏讨死吃！”禁子道：“太爷分付，小的性命恁地不值钱？多在小的身上罢了。”禁子自去依言行事。

果然次日升堂，研问这起盗犯，用了刑具。这些强盗各自招出赃仗窝家，独有这个行脚僧不上刑具，就一口招道“赃在洞庭山某寺窝着，寺中住持叫甚名字”。元来行脚僧人做歹事的，一应荒庙野寺投斋投宿，无处不到，打听做眼。这寺中住持姓名，恰好他晓得的，正投太守心上机会。太守大喜，取了供状，叠成文卷，一面行文到苏州府捕盗厅来，要提这寺中住持，差人赍文坐守。

捕厅金了牌，另差了两个应捕，驾了快船，一直望太湖中洞庭山来。真个：



of habit, as a way of obtaining money by resorting to fraud. Therefore, the more he began to realize how truly difficult the Sutra would be to obtain, the more he was enticed by it.

One day a gang of burglars was sent under escort in Jiangyin County. Among the burglars was an itinerant monk. Secretly pleased, the Prefect thought to himself: "My plan for obtaining the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* could only be realized by this monk." After putting the burglars in the condemned cell, he ordered a prison guard to come to the *yamen*, and said to him secretly, "You go to the cell and privately exhort the itinerant monk that, when I bring him to court next time, tell him to confess that a certain temple on Dongting Mountain in Suzhou is their lair where they stash their plunder, and I will let him go unpunished. Do not divulge this secret or you will die!" The prison guard said, "I am humbly at my Master's service. How could my life be so utterly worthless? Just leave this to me." The prison guard left and did as he had been told to do.

As planned, the next day when the court session opened and the burglars were interrogated, none of the burglars confessed about their places for stashing loot until instruments of torture were used, except this itinerant monk who before torture confessed that: "A certain temple on Dongting Mountain is where stolen goods are secreted, and the Abbot of the temple is so-and-so." It turned out that itinerant monks who carried out evil deeds often frequented all sorts of temples for food, and spend the night as well, in order to assess the surrounding situation. It so happened that this monk knew the name of the Abbot of this temple, nicely fitting into the predilections of the Prefect. Overjoyed, the Prefect took down the written confession and recorded it in a file. Then he sent an official communication to the criminal court of Suzhou Prefecture, ordering the arrest of the Abbot, and assigned someone to deliver the order and investigate the matter.

The criminal court signed the order, and dispatched two more runners to arrest the Abbot, going by an express boat which sped on Taihu Lake to Dongting Mountain. What a scene it was:

The men like hungry eagles and the boat a flying tiger.
The eagles in the air ponder the snatching of food
And the tigers imagine gorging on their prey at once



人似饥鹰，船同蜚虎。鹰在空中息攫食，虎逢到处立吞生。静悄村墟，魑地神号鬼哭；安闲舍宇，登时犬走鸡飞。即此便是活无常，阴间不数真罗刹。

应捕到了寺门前，雄纠纠的走将入来，问道：“那一个是住持？”住持上前稽首道：“小僧就是。”应捕取出麻绳来便套，住持慌了手脚道：“有何事犯，便直得如此？”应捕道：“盗情事发，还问甚么事犯！”众僧见住持被缚，大家走将拢来，说道：“上下不必粗鲁！本寺是山塘王相府门徒，等闲也不受人欺侮！况且寺中并无歹人，又不曾招接甚么游客住宿，有何盗情干涉？”应捕见说是相府门徒，又略略软了些，说道：“官差吏差，来人不差。我们捕厅因常州府盗情事，扳出与你寺干连，行关守捉。有干无干，当官折辨，不关我等心上，只要打发我等起身。”一个应捕假做好人道：“且宽了缚，等他去周置，这里不怕他走了去。”住持脱了身，讨牌票看了，不知头由。一面商量收拾盘缠，去常州分辨，一面将差使钱送与应捕。应捕嫌多嫌少，诈得满足了才住手。

应捕带了住持下船，辨悟叫个道人跟着，一同随了住持，



Wherever they pounce.

Suddenly a once quiet village emits bloodcurdling cries and howls
And in every family even fowls and dogs are not left in peace.
More like living ghosts come to take people's souls away at death,
Than devils in hell.

Arriving at the entrance to the temple, the runners of the *yamen* defiantly broke in and demanded, "Who is the Abbot?" The Abbot stepped forward and replied courteously, "That would be me." The runners took out their hemp rope and trussed up the Abbot. Flustered and confused, the Abbot cried out, "What crimes have I committed? Why are you doing this to me?" The runners answered, "You're involved in a theft case. Still asking what crimes you committed?" Seeing the Abbot tied up, all the monks came over and said, "Don not be so disrespectful, sir. The Grand Councilor's family in Shantang is the chief almsgiver to our temple, and we are generally not to be bullied. What is more, we do not have evildoers in our temple and we never give accommodation to wayfarers here. How could there be thieves in our temple?"

On hearing the temple was connected to the Grand Councilor's family, the runners softened toward them and said, "We're just runners of the *yamen* and we don't know the ins and outs of the matter. Your temple is said to be implicated in a theft case in Changzhou Prefecture and our Criminal Court has no choice but to bring the criminal to the court according to the official order. Innocent or guilty, defend yourself in court, but that's not our business. You just prepare yourself to go with us." One of the runners pretended to be nice and said, "Untie him. We'll wait until he settles affairs here. We have no need to fear he'll disappear in this place."

After he was freed, the Abbot took a look at the arrest warrant and could not figure out what was behind it. He discussed the matter with the other monks and collected travel expenses for Changzhou. At the same time he also gave some money to the runners. The runners did not ease up on extorting money from the monks until they decided they had enough. The runners escorted the Abbot down to the boat. Accompanied by the monk, Bianwu followed behind the Abbot to assist in dealing with any



缓急救应。到了捕厅，点了名，办了文书，解将过去。免不得书房与来差多有了使费。住持与辨悟、道人共是三人，雇了一个船，一路盘缠了来差，到常州来。

说话的，你差了。隔府关提，尽好使用支吾，如何去得这样容易？看官有所不知，这是盗情事，不比别样闲讼，须得出身辨白，不然怎得许多使用？所以只得来了。

未见官时，辨悟先去府中细细打听劫盗与行脚僧名字、来踪去迹，与本寺没一毫影响，也没个仇人在内，正不知祸根是那里起的，真摸头路不着。说话间，太守升堂。来差投批，带住持到。太守不开言问甚事繇，即写监票发下监中去。住持不曾分说得一句话，竟自黑碌碌地吃监了。

太守监罢了住持，唤原差到案前来，低问道：“这和尚可有人同来么？”原差道：“有一个徒弟，一个道人。”太守道：“那徒弟可是了事的？”原差道：“也晓得事体的。”太守道：“你悄悄地对那徒弟说，可速回寺中去取那本《金刚经》来，救你师父，便得无事；若稍迟几日，就讨绝单了。”原差道：“小的去说。”

太守退了堂，原差跌跌脚道：“我只道真是盗情，元来又是甚么《金刚经》！”盖只为先前借此为题诈过了好几家，衙门人多是晓得的了。——走去一十一五对辨悟说了。辨悟道：



contingencies. After arriving at the Criminal Court, where the Abbot's name was verified, they went through official dispatches for him to be taken away under escort. A great deal of money was bound over to be distributed to the bailiffs. The Abbot, Bianwu and the other monk hired a boat and again gave more money to the runners and arrived in Changzhou.

Storyteller, you are wrong. This case involves two prefectures. How could they get to Changzhou so easily? You are being evasive. My readers, there are some things you do not know. A theft case is different from other petty crimes. One has to go defend oneself, or why should they spend so much money? So, here they are.

Before the Abbot was brought to the court, Bianwu first went to the *yamen* to inquire about the theft case, the name of the itinerant monk as well as any traces of his whereabouts. Bianwu found out that this itinerant monk had nothing to do with the temple, and had no enemies in the temple either. Greatly perplexed, Bianwu could not get down the root of the matter. Almost immediately the Prefect held a court session and the runners brought in the Abbot. Instead of making any inquiries about the case, the Prefect handed down an order for the Abbot to be placed in jail. So the Abbot was imprisoned for no reason at all, without even getting the chance to utter a word.

Then the Prefect told one of the runners to come over to his table, and asked in a low voice, "Did this monk have any companions?" The runner answered, "A disciple and a little monk." "Is his disciple wise on the ways of the world?" asked the Prefect. "He has good sense," replied the runner. "You go and secretly tell the disciple," said the Prefect, "to go back to the temple immediately and bring the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* to me in order to save his master. If this is done, then everything will be okay. If he delays several days, he'll have to come to the jail for the death report." The runner said, "I'll go tell him."

After the Prefect adjourned the court session, the runner stamped his foot and said, "I thought this was a burglary case. But it turns out to be the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* again!" The Prefect had likely practiced this sham too many times and deceived numerous people, so most of the runners in the *yamen* knew the charade. The runner went and gave Bianwu all the



“这是我上世之物，怪道日前有好几起常州人来寺中求买，说是府里要，我们不卖与他。直到今日，却生下这个计较，陷我师父，强来索取，如今怎么处？”原差道：“方才明明分付，稍迟几日就讨绝单。我老爷只为要此经，我这里好几家受了累。何况是你本寺有的，不送得他，他怎肯住手，却不枉送了性命？快去与你住持师父商量去！”

辨悟就央原差领了到监里，把这些话一一说了。住持道：“既是如此，快去取来送他，救我出去罢了。终不成为了大家门面的东西，断送了我一个人性命罢？”辨悟道：“不必二三，取了来就是。”对原差道：“有烦上下代禀一声，略求宽容几日，以便往回。师父在监，再求看觑。”原差道：“既去取了，这个不难，多在我身上，放心前去。”

辨悟留下盘缠与道人送饭，自己单身，不辞辛苦，星夜赶到寺中，取了经卷，复到常州。不上五日，来会原差道：“经已取来了，如何送进去？”原差道：“此是经卷，又不是甚么财物！待我在转桶边击梆，禀一声，递进去不妨。”果然原差递了进去。

太守在私衙，见说取得《金刚经》到，道是宝物到了，合衙人眷多来争看。打开包时，太守是个粗人，本不在行，只道千金之物，必是怎地庄严；看见零零落落，纸色晦黑，先不象



details as instructed by the Prefect. Bianwu said, "It has been handed down to the temple from past generations. No wonder several groups of people from Changzhou came to us some days ago asking to buy it, saying that the *yamen* wanted it. We refused them. Now they have worked out this scheme to frame my master and are attempting to obtain it by force. What should I do now?" The runner answered, "I've told you quite clearly that if there is a delay of several days, you shall have to come collect the death report. My lord has put quite a number of people to much trouble for this Sutra. Moreover, the Sutra is in your temple, so why should he release your master if you don't give it to him? Are you going to see your master die for nothing? Go and talk it over with your Abbot master."

Then Bianwu pleaded with the runner to take him to the jail, where he told the Abbot everything about the matter. The Abbot said, "That being the case, go and fetch it for him and get me out of here. Should we keep it as window dressing at the cost of my life?" Bianwu answered, "I'll hesitate no more. I'll go fetch it." Turning to the runner, he continued, "May I trouble you to request the Prefect to give us a few more days' grace for the journey? Please take care of my master while he's in jail." The runner replied, "Since you're going to fetch it, you may be rest assured about these matters. Leave it all to me, and go."

Bianwu gave the little monk some money to buy food for the Abbot, and he alone made his way back to the temple at night. Carrying the Sutra with him, he hurried back to Changzhou in five days. He came to the runner and said, "Here is the Sutra, how do I submit it?" The runner replied, "This is simply a Sutra, not gold and silver. I'll beat the revolving drum and I might as well present it to the Prefect." So the runner handed it over.

The Prefect was in his private quarters. Hearing that the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* had been brought in, his whole family flocked to take a look, thinking an invaluable treasure had arrived. The Prefect was an unlettered layman, who had thought that such a precious relic had to be magnificent and imposing. Opening the bundle, he found it in disorder and the paper dark and obscured. At first sight it was not at all to his liking. Then he opened it and looked at the writing, but found the first leaf missing. The Sutra



意。揭开细看字迹，见无个起首，没头没脑。看了一会，认有细字号数，仔细再看，却元来是第二叶起的。太守大笑道：“凡事不可虚慕名，虽是古迹，也须得完全才好。今是不全之书，头一板就无了，成得甚用？说甚么千金百金，多被这些酸子传闻误了，空费了许多心机。难为这个和尚坐了这几日监，岂不冤枉！”内眷们见这经卷既没甚么好看，又听得说和尚坐监，一齐撺掇，叫还了经卷，放了和尚。太守也想道没甚紧要，仍旧发与原差，给还本主。衙中传出去说：“少了头一张，用不着，故此发了出来。”辨悟只认还要补头张，怀着鬼胎道：“这却是死了！”正在心慌，只见连监的住持多放了出来。原差来讨赏，道：“已此没事了。”住持不知缘故。原差道：“老爷起心要你这经，故生这风波。今见经不完全，没有甚么头一张，不中他意，有些懊悔了。他原无怪你之心，经也还了，事也罢了。恭喜！恭喜！”

住持谢了原差，回到下处，与辨悟道：“那里说起，遭此一场横祸！今幸得无事，还算好了。只是适才听见说经上没了头张，不完全，故此肯还。我想此经怎的不完全？”辨悟才把前日太湖中众人索看，风卷去头张之事，说了一遍。住持道：



had no beginning. After a moment's examination, he discovered the page numbers in small-sized characters. A further perusal confirmed that it started at the second page.

The Prefect burst into laughter and said, "One should not be distracted by a false reputation upon encountering anything. Relic that it is, it should be intact. Without the first page, it is now incomplete. What good is it? The unfounded rumors saying that it's worth hundreds of thousands of pieces of gold all came from the mouths of impoverished pedants. It is truly a waste of my time and effort. And the monk had to have a difficult time in jail. Was it worthwhile for him to suffer so much?" Finding the Sutra to be nothing extraordinary and learning that the monk was still in jail, the women in his family all urged him to return the Sutra, and set the monk free. Thinking it no longer worthwhile, the Prefect handed it to the runner and told him to return it to its owner.

The word came out from the *yamen* that the Sutra was useless: the first page was missing. So it was returned. Bianwu understood this to mean that the first page was still needed and, getting nervous, he thought aloud, "This time I'm finished!" All in a flutter, he soon discovered that even the Abbot had been set free. The runner came over to him and asked for a reward, saying, "Everything is over." Greatly puzzled, the Abbot could not make head or tail of it. The runner added, "My lord craved after your Sutra, so he stirred up this commotion. Today he realized the Sutra was incomplete. The first page is missing and he's not very satisfied with it. Now he feels a little dejected over this matter. He never ever meant to harm you. So now the Sutra is back in your hands, and everything is over. Congratulations! Congratulations!"

Having thanked and rewarded the runner, the Abbot went back to his temporary dwelling and said to Bianwu, "Why must it be so? Suffering such sudden misfortune! Fortunately it is now over and I am fine. But I just heard that the first page of the Sutra is lost, so they returned it to us because it was incomplete. I'm wondering how could it be incomplete?" At this, Bianwu recounted how that fateful day his fellow passengers had begged to see the Sutra on the boat on Lake Taihu, and how the wind had blown away the first page.

“此天意也！若是风不吹去首张，此经今日必然被留，非复我山门所有了。如今虽是缺了一张，后边名迹还在，仍旧归吾寺宝藏。此皆佛天之力。”喜喜欢欢，算还了房钱饭钱，师徒与道人三众雇了一个船，同回苏州来。

过了浒墅关数里，将到枫桥，天已昏黑。忽然风雨大作，不辨路径，远远望去，一道火光烛天，叫船家对着亮处只管摇去。其时风雨也息了，看看至近，却是草舍内一盏灯火明亮，听得有木鱼声。船到岸边，叫船家缆好了。辨悟踱上去，叩门讨火。门还未关，推将进去，却是一个老者靠着桌子诵经。见是个僧家，忙起身叙了礼。辨悟求点灯，老者打个纸捻儿，蘸蘸油点着了，递与辨悟。辨悟接了纸捻，照得满屋明亮，偶然抬头，带眼见壁间一幅字纸粘着，无心一看，吃了一惊，大叫道：“怪哉！怪哉！”老者问道：“师父见此纸，为何大惊小怪？”辨悟道：“此话甚长。小舟中还有师父在内，待小僧拿火去照了，然后再来奉告，还有话讲。”老者道：“老汉是奉佛弟子，何不连尊师接了起来？”老者就叫小厮祖寿出来，同了辨悟，到舟中来接那一位师父。

辨悟未到船上，先叫住持道：“师父快起来！不但投着主人，且有奇事了！”住持道：“有何奇事？”辨悟道：“师父且



“This is the will of Buddha!” exclaimed the Abbot. “If the wind had not blown the first page away, the Sutra would have been confiscated today, and no longer belong to our temple. Though one page is missing now, the rest are still there and will still be preserved in our temple. We owe this to the power of the Buddha.” Having paid money for their accommodation and food, the Abbot, Bianwu and the little monk, all overjoyed, hired a boat and returned to Suzhou.

Dusk found them approaching Maple Bridge, which was several *li* beyond Hushu Guan Pass. Suddenly there arose a violent storm, causing everyone to lose their way. However, as they looked into the distance, they found the dark sky lit up with a flaring flame and told the boatman to row over in the direction of the light. The storm abated as they approached the light, which turned out to be a lamp in a thatched abode. The sound of beating wooden blocks could be heard coming from this house. As the boat reached the bank, they asked for the boat to be moored. Bianwu disembarked and went to knock on the door, hoping to ask for some light. The door was not locked, so Bianwu pushed it open.

An old man was sitting at the table chanting a sutra. Seeing it was a monk, the old man stood up hurriedly and greeted him. Bianwu asked for a light. The old man twisted a paper spill, soaked it in oil, lit it and handed it to Bianwu. Taking the paper spill in his hand, Bianwu found the entire room awash in light. He happened to raise his head and notice a piece of paper pasted on the wall. Looking at it casually, he suddenly received a great shock, and exclaimed, “How extraordinary! How extraordinary!”

The old man asked, “Why such a fuss over this piece of paper?” Bianwu answered, “It’s a long story. My master is still in the boat. I’ll take the light to him first. Then I’ll come back and tell you more.” The old man said, “I am a Buddhist disciple. Why not also bring your master inside?” So saying, the old man called out to his helper, and asked him to go with Bianwu to the boat and fetch the master.

Bianwu shouted loudly and excitedly to his master even before he reached the boat, “Come on out, Master. Not only have we found a host, there is also a miracle!” “What miracle?” the Abbot asked. “Come with us first, Master,” Bianwu answered. “Come meet the host and see

到里面，见了主人，请看一件物事。”住持同了辨悟走进门来，与主人相见了。辨悟拿了灯，拽了住持的手，走到壁间，指着那一幅字纸道：“师父可认认看。”住持抬眼一看，只见首一行是“金刚般若波罗密经”，第二行是“法会因由分第一”，正是白香山所书，乃经中之首叶，在湖中飘失的，拍手道：“好像是吾家经上的，何缘得在此处？”老者道：“贤师徒惊怪此纸，必有缘故。”辨悟道：“老丈肯把得此纸的根由一说，愚师徒也剖心相告。”老者摆着椅子道：“请坐了献茶，容老汉慢讲。”师徒领命，分次坐了。

奉茶已毕，老者道：“老汉姓姚，是此间渔人。幼年不曾读书，从不识字，只靠着鱼虾为生。后来中年，家事尽可度日了。听得长者们的说因果，自悔作业太多，有心修行，只为不识一字，难以念经，因此自恨。凡见字纸，必加爱惜，不敢作践，如此多年。前年某月某日晚间，忽然风飘甚么物件下来，到于门首。老汉望去，只看见一道火光落地，拾将起来，却是一张字纸。老汉惊异，料道多年宝惜字纸，今日见此光怪，必有奇处，不敢褻渎，将来粘在壁间，时常顶礼。后来有个道人到此，



something.” The Abbot and Bianwu entered and greeted the host. Holding the lamp in one hand, Bianwu dragged his master into the inner room. Pointing at the paper with characters, Bianwu said, “Take a look at it, Master.”

The Abbot looked up and saw that the first line read, “The Vajracchedika-Sutra,” and the second line: “Section One, Primary Cause and Secondary Cause.” It was none other than Bai Xiangshan’s handwriting, the first leaf of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra*, lost over the lake. Clapping his hands, the Abbot said, “It looks as if it’s from our Sutra. Why is it here?” The old man said, “As a worthy master and disciple you must have a reason to be so surprised at this piece of paper.” Bianwu said, “If you’re willing to tell us how you came upon this piece of paper, we will also open our hearts.” The old man exclaimed as he arranged two chairs, “Pleased be seated and have some tea. Be patient. I shall explain it in detail.” The master and disciple took up his invitation, and sat down in due order.

Having served them some tea, the old man said, “My family name is Yao and I’m a fisherman here. I had no schooling in my childhood and I am not a man of letters. I live on catching shrimp and fish. Later when I reached middle age, life became easier for me and I heard my seniors talking about karma. I was overwhelmed by regret for I had committed too many sins, and I set my mind to practicing Buddhism. Not knowing a single character, however, I could not read the sutras. So I was filled with remorse. Each time I came across any paper, I would cherish it with utmost care and dare not despoil it. I’ve been doing so for many years. On a certain night of a certain month, the year before last, something suddenly floated over with the wind to my door. I looked at it and saw a flaring flame of fire drop onto the ground. As I picked it up, it turned out to be a piece of paper. Very much amazed, I thought, since I had been taking good care of paper and written characters for so many years, there must be something unusual in my seeing such a strange phenomenon. Not daring to show disrespect, I placed it on the inner room wall and paid homage to it often.”

“Some time later, a monk came and saw it, and he said to me, ‘This is

见了，对老汉道：‘此《金刚经》首叶，若是要念全经，我当教汝。’遂手出一卷，教老汉念诵一遍。老汉随口念过，心中豁然，就把经中字一一认得。以后日渐增加，今颇能遍历诸经了。记得道人临别时，指着此纸道：‘善守此幅，必有后果。’老汉一发不敢怠慢，每念诵时，必先顶礼。今两位一见，共相惊异，必是晓得此纸的来历了。”住持与辨悟同声道：“适间迷路，忽见火光冲天，随亮到此，却只是灯火微明，正在怪异。方才见老丈见教，得此纸时，也见火光，乃知是此纸显灵，数当会合。老丈若肯见还，功德更大了。”老者道：“非师等之物，何云见还？”辨悟道：“好教老丈得知：此纸非凡笔，乃唐朝侍郎白香山手迹也。全经一卷，在吾寺中，海内知名。吾师为此近日被一个狠官人拿去，强逼要献，几丧性命。没奈何只得献出。还亏得前年某月某日湖中遇风，飘去首叶，那官人嫌他不全，方得重还。今日正奉归寺中供养，岂知却遇着所失首叶在老丈处，重得贍礼。前日若非此纸失去，此经已落他人之手；今日若非此纸重逢，此经遂成不全之文。一失一得，不先不后，



the first page of the *Vajracchedika-Sutra*. If you are interested in the whole Sutra, I am willing to teach you.’ Then he took out a book and taught me to read it. As I read, I felt thoroughly enlightened. At the same time, I learned all the characters in the Sutra one by one. Later on, I learned more characters each day, and now I am able to study all types of sutras. As I remember, the monk pointed at the paper before he took his leave, and said, ‘Take good care of this paper and you’ll surely have good fortune.’ Ever since then I dare not ignore it any more, and I pay homage to it each time I read it. Yet, the moment you two saw it, you all got excited. You must know the origin and past history of this piece of paper.”

The Abbot and Bianwu said simultaneously, “We lost our way a while ago. All of a sudden we saw a flaring flame and we followed the light to this place. But we discovered there was only a faint light. We were wondering why. As you told us just now, you too saw a flaring flame before you obtained this piece of paper. We have come to believe this piece of paper has been manifesting its powers, and that it was predestined that we were going to be reunited. If you are willing to return it to us, your kindness will be infinite.” The old man said, “I don’t know if it is yours, so why should I return it to you?”

Bianwu answered, “I shall explain in detail. This piece of paper is no common writing. It is the genuine calligraphy of Attendant Gentleman Bai Xiangshan from the Tang Dynasty. The whole Sutra is of one volume and was until now preserved in our temple. This is well known across the country. My master was taken into custody a few days ago by an evil official who forced him to hand over this Sutra, and my master almost lost his life for it. We had no option but to hand it over. Luckily the first leaf had been blown away by the wind on the lake on a certain date, in a certain month, the year before last. Thus that official returned the Sutra to us since he disliked it due to its incompleteness. Today we were just now taking it back to our temple. We never expected to find this lost page in this place, or in fact to ever see it again. If this page had not been lost the other day, this Sutra would have fallen into other hands. And if this page and the rest of the Sutra had not been reunited today, this Sutra would have remained incomplete. Lost and regained, two flaring flames, are

两番火光，岂非韦驮尊天有灵，显此护法手段出来么？”

老者似信不信的答应。辨悟走到船内，急取经包上来，解与老者看，乃是第二叶起的，将来对着壁间字法纸色，果然一样无差。老者叹异，念佛不已，将手去壁间揭下来，合在上面，长短阔狭无不相同。一卷经完完全全了，三人尽皆欢喜。

老者分付治斋相款，就留师徒两人同榻过夜。住持私对辨悟道：“起初我们恨柳太守，如今想起来，也是天意。你失去首叶，寺中无一人知道，珍藏到今。若非此一番跋涉，也无从遇着原纸来完全了。”辨悟道：“上天晓得柳太守起了不良之心，怕夺了全卷去，故先吹掉了一纸；今全卷重归，仍旧还了此一纸，实是天公之巧，此卷之灵！想此老亦是会中人。所云道人，安知不是白侍郎托化来的？”住持道：“有理，有理。”

是夜，姚老者梦见韦驮尊天来对他道：“汝幼年作业深重，亏得中年回首，爱惜字纸，已命香山居士启汝天聪。又加守护经文，完成全卷，阴功更大，罪业尽消。来生在文字中受报，福禄非凡。今生且赐延寿一纪，正果而终。”老者醒来，明明



they not the manifestations of the power of Skanda who came to protect the Sutra?" The old man responded, half believing, half doubting.

Bianwu hurried to the boat, took out the bundle wrapping the Sutra, untied it and showed it to the old man. It was true that it started from the second page. The old man took it into the inner room and found that the style of calligraphy and the quality of paper were exactly the same. Gasping in admiration, the old man kept muttering his prayers. He took the paper down off the wall, and placing it on the Sutra, found that they were the same size. With the Sutra made whole again, all three of them were pleased. Then the old man treated the master and the disciple to dinner, and lodged them for the night.

The Abbot said to Bianwu in private, "We've hated Prefect Liu from the beginning. I now think it was the will of heaven. No one in our temple knew that you had lost the first leaf, and the rest of the Sutra had been kept in our temple to this day. If there had not been all this trouble and torment, the rest of the Sutra would never have been reunited with the first page." Bianwu said, "Knowing Prefect Liu harbored ill intentions, the heavens blew one leaf off earlier, for fear of losing the whole Sutra. Now seeing the Sutra restored, the heavens have returned the first leaf. It indeed demonstrates the great sagacity of the heavens and the miraculous powers of this Sutra. I imagine this old man is a follower of the Buddha. As for the monk, could he not possibly be the reincarnation of Attendant Gentleman Bai?" The Abbot remarked, "That's reasonable, quite reasonable."

That night, the old man Yao dreamed of Skanda, who said to him, "You committed too many sins when you were young. Fortunately you turned away from your evil ways at middle age, and began to cherish and look after written characters and paper. I have ordered the lay Buddhist Xiangshan to come enlighten your intelligence and powers. And thanks to your efforts in protecting the missing page of the Sutra, the Sutra is finally made whole again. You have accumulated so much merit for your good deeds that your sins shall be erased. You will be rewarded in the realm of literati with great happiness and a high rank in your next life. You will be granted twelve more years of life, and attain nirvana, to become

记得。次日，对师徒二人道：“老汉爱护此纸经年，今见全经，无量欢喜。虽将此纸奉还，老汉不能忘情。愿随老师父同行，出钱请个裱匠，到寺中重新装好，使老汉展诵几遍，方为称怀。”师徒二人道：“难得檀越如此信心，实是美事。便请下船，同往敝寺随喜一番。”

老者分付了家里，带了盘缠，唤小厮祖寿跟着。又在城里接了一个高手的裱匠，买了作料，一同到寺里来。盘桓了几日，等裱匠完工，果然裱得焕然一新。便出衬钱请了数众，展念《金刚经》一昼夜，与师徒珍重而别。后来，每年逢诞日或佛生日，便到寺中瞻礼白香山手迹一遍，即行持念一日，岁以为常。年过八十，到寺中沐浴坐化而终。寺中宝藏此卷，闻说至今犹存。有诗为证：

一纸飞空大有缘，反因失去得周全。

拾来宝惜生多福，故纸何当浪弃捐？

小子不敢明说寺名，只怕有第二个像柳太守的寻踪问迹，又生出事头来。再有一诗笑那太守道：





a Buddha in this life.” The old man remembered this dream clearly when he woke up.

The next day, the old man said to the master and the disciple, “I have been taking good care of this piece of paper for years, and now I am most pleased to see the whole Sutra. I still feel sentimentally attached to this piece of paper, though I’m returning it to you. I would like to go with you to the temple and have an artisan remount it, and then feel gratified only if I can chant over it several times.” The master and the disciple said, “It is truly a great honor to witness such integrity. Please come down to our boat and let us go together to our temple.”

Having told his family about his plans, the old man took some money with him and asked his servant Zushou to follow him. Then he went to the town, picked up a master of mounting, bought some materials and headed towards the temple. He spent a few days in the temple and waited until the artisan finished mounting the Sutra. The Sutra truly acquired a new appearance. He gave the monks there some money for food and asked them to chant the *Vajracchedika-Sutra* with him for one whole day and night. Then he bade the master and the disciple farewell, as they mutually wished each other, “Go carefully.”

From then on, on the birthday of Sakyamuni,³ the old man would come to the temple every year to view and worship Attendant Gentleman Bai’s authentic calligraphy and chant the Sutra for a whole day, and he continued to do so every year. At the age of eighty, he came to the temple, had a bath and died sitting in lotus position. It is said that the precious Sutra is still kept in the temple. A poem serves to corroborate this:

It was predestined one page into the sky would blow.
Were that leaf not lost, the Sutra would not be whole.
Most blessed whosoever cherishes the lost leaf found.
Why turn a blind eye to waste paper on the ground?

I dare not name the temple, for fear a second Prefect Liu will fix his eyes on the Sutra and stir up more trouble. Here is a poem that ridicules

侗父何知风雅缘？贪看古迹只因钱。
若教一卷都将去，宁不冤他白乐天！



the Prefect:

Can a mean, shallow man esteem true finesse?
He who craves the relic, cash his only interest,
Had the whole Sutra fallen into his hands,
What a great injustice then, to Bai Letian!



卷之二

小道人一着饶天下 女棋童两局注终身

词云：

百年伉俪是前缘，天意巧周全。试看人世，禽鱼草木，各有蝉联。从来材艺称奇绝，必自种姻婭。文君琴思，仲姬画手，匹美双传。(词寄《眼儿媚》)

自古道：“物各有偶。”才子佳人，天生匹配，最是人世上的佳话。看官且听小子说：

山东兖州府巨野县有个秣芳亭，乃是地方居民秋收之时，祭赛田祖先农、公举社会聚饮的去处。向来亭上有一匾额，大书三字在上，相传是唐颜鲁公之笔，失去已久。众人无敢再写。一日正值社会之期，乡里父老相商道：“此亭徒有其名，不存其匾。只因向是木匾，所以损坏。今若立一通石碑在亭中，别



Tale 2

A Young Taoist Unrivalled at the Game of Go A Woman Thrust into Marriage after Two Go Matches

As the *ci* poem reads:

Marriage is predestined, ingenuously assisted,
Arranged by the will of the heavens.
See how this world's fowl, animal, fish, grasses and woods,
All vie to take the lead seeking wedded consort.

Yet from ancient times, all great talents chose their own spouses.
The love stories of musicians Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru,
And the artists Guan Zhongji and Zhao Mengfu
Are the two most beloved romances.
(To the tune of “Yan’ermei ”)

There is an old saying: Everyone has a mate. Many tales are often told of how fine scholars and beautiful women make for good love matches. Dear readers, be therefore patient, for the following is my story. There once was a Luxuriant Fragrance Pavilion in Juye County, Yanzhou Prefecture, Shandong. It was here the local people held their village festivals, drinking and making offerings of gratitude to the gods in the spring and in the autumn. In this pavilion there used to be a board with three big characters inscribed on it. It was said that the three characters were inscribed by Yan Zhenqing, also named Yan Lugong,¹ The board had been taken down quite some time ago, and no one dared to redo it. Once at the village festival, the elders of the village talked the matter over, saying: “This pavilion’s reputation is undeserved without that inscription. The original board was made of wood and was therefore



请当今名笔写此三字在内，可垂永久。”此时只有一个秀才，姓王名维翰，是晋时王羲之一派子孙，惯写颜字，书名大盛。父老具礼相求，道其本意。维翰欣然相从，约定社会之日就来赴会，即当举笔。父老苍石端正。

到于是日，合乡村男妇儿童，无不毕赴，同观社火。你道如何叫得社火？凡一应吹箫、打鼓、踢球、放弹、勾栏、傀儡、五花爨弄、诸般戏具，尽皆施呈，却像献来与神道观玩的意思，其实只是人扶人兴，大家笑耍取乐而已。所以王孙公子尽有携酒挟伎特来观看的。直待诸戏尽完，赛神礼毕，大众齐散，止留下主会几个父老，亭中同分神福，享其祭馀，尽醉方休。此是历年故事。

此日只为邀请王维翰秀才书石，特接着上厅行首谢天香，在会上相陪饮酒。不想王秀才别被朋友留住，一时未至。父老虽是设着酒席，未敢自饮，呆呆等待。谢天香便问道：“礼事已毕，为何迟留不饮？”众父老道：“专等王秀才来。”谢天香道：“那个王秀才？”父老道：“便是有名会写字的王维翰秀才。”谢天香道：“我也久闻其名，可惜不曾会面。今日社酒却等他做甚？”父老道：“他许下在石碑上写‘秣芳亭’三字，今



damaged. If we have a stone tablet placed in the pavilion and ask the best calligrapher available today to inscribe the three characters on it, the tablet will remain here forever.”

This locale had only one *xiucaï*,² named Wang Weihan. Wang Weihan, a descendant of Wang Xizhi, the great calligrapher of the East Jin Dynasty (317-420), was the most famous calligrapher writing in the Yan Zhenqing style. Elders turned to him for assistance and, bringing him many gifts, told him of their wishes. Weihan readily agreed to inscribe the characters on the day of the village festival. On hearing this, the elders in the village prepared and started to polish the tablet. When the day arrived, all the villagers, women and men, old and young, joined in the village festivities. Readers, have you the faintest notion about village festivals? They include flute performances, drum competition, ball games, fire works, puppet shows, and all other sorts of theatrical displays. Though it is true all of these things were dedicated to deities, people in reality were just hoping to invoke propitious tidings while amusing themselves. All the descendants of noble families especially attended the festival, bringing wine, as well as singing and dancing damsels to keep them company. When the performances and the ritual ceremonies were over, everyone would leave except for a few of the elderly hosts of the festival, who remained behind to enjoy the offerings to the deities, until all of them were drunk. Such is an old custom.

On that day, the elders extended a special invitation for the party to the distinguished courtesan Xie Tianxiang, so as to add to the merriment of Wang Weihan’s inscribing of the tablet. They had not expected that Wang XiUCAI would be delayed by other friends and not arrive on time. Though the banquet was ready, the village elders all sat there waiting. Xie Tianxiang asked, “Now the rites are completed, why are you not drinking?” The elders replied, “We are awaiting Wang XiUCAI.” Xie Tianxiang asked, “Which Wang XiUCAI?” They replied, “The XiUCAI named Wang Weihan who has a good reputation in calligraphy.” Xie said, “I have long heard his name. It is a pity I have never had the opportunity to meet him. But why are we waiting for him today?” The elders answered, “He has agreed to inscribe ‘Luxuriant Fragrance Pavilion’ on the stone



已磨墨停当在此，只等他来动笔罢，然后饮酒。”谢天香道：“既是他还未来，等我学写个儿耍耍何如？”父老道：“大姐又能写染？”谢天香道：“不敢说能，粗学涂抹而已。请过大笔一用，取一回笑话，等王秀才来时，抹去了再写不妨。”父老道：“俺们那里有大笔？凭着王秀才带来用的。”谢天香看见瓦盒里墨浓，不觉动了挥洒之兴，却恨没有大笔应手。心生一计，伸手在袖中摸出一条软纱汗巾来，将角儿团簇得如法，拿到瓦盒边蘸了浓墨，向石上一挥，早写就了“秣芳”二字。正待写“亭”字起，听得鸾铃响，一人指道：“兀的不是王秀才来也！”谢天香就住手不写，抬眼看时，果然王秀才骑了高头骏马，瞬息来到亭前，从容下马到亭中来。众父老迎着，以次相见。谢天香末后见礼。王秀才看了谢天香容貌，谢天香看了王秀才仪表，两相企羨，自不必说。

王秀才看见碑上已有“秣芳”二大字，墨尚未干，称赞道：“此二字笔势非凡，有恁样高手在此，何待小生操笔？却为何不写完了？”父老道：“久等秀才不到，此间谢大姐先试写一番看看。刚写到两字，恰好秀才来了，所以住手。”谢天香道：“妾身不揣，闲在此间作耍取笑，有污秀才尊目。”王秀才道：“此书颜骨柳筋，无一笔不合法，不可再易，就请写完罢了。”父老不肯道：“专仰秀才大名，是必要烦妙笔一番！”谢天香



tablet. We have prepared the ink and are waiting for him to come inscribe the three characters. Then we will start drinking.” Xie suggested, “Since he’s not here yet, can I try my hand at it just for fun?” The elders asked, “Are you good at calligraphy and painting?” Xie answered, “I dare not claim to be good at it. I am just a beginner and I can scribble, that is all. May I use your writing brush and we shall amuse ourselves? We could then erase it and ask Wang Xiucui to write it again when he appears.” The elders said, “Why would we have writing brushes? We were expecting Wang Xiucui to bring one with him.”

Upon seeing the thick ink in the earthen basin, Xie Tianxiang was instinctively transported by an impulse to write. But she had no brush. An idea suddenly occurred to her. She took a soft gauze handkerchief out from inside her sleeve and rolled one corner into a fine twist. Taking it to the earthen basin, she dipped it in the thick ink and started writing on the stone tablet. The two characters “Luxuriant Fragrance” soon appeared on the tablet. Just as she was about to write the character “Pavilion,” there abruptly came the tinkling of a horse’s bell. A man shouted, “Here is Wang Xiucui!” Xie Tianxiang stopped writing. She looked up and found Wang Xiucui heading towards the pavilion on a big strong horse. After getting off the horse, Wang entered the pavilion. The elders greeted him one by one, and Xie Tianxiang also greeted him at the end. Wang Xiucui and Xie Tianxiang looked at each other and both found themselves deeply attracted to the other. There’s no need to go on about this at this point.

Seeing the two large characters “Luxuriant Fragrance” — the ink still wet—on the tablet, Wang Xiucui exclaimed, “The flourish of these two characters is exceptionally magnificent. Why were you waiting for me when you had such a talented expert here? Why not finish it?” The elders explained, “While we were waiting for you, Sister Xie tried her hand. The instant she finished these two characters, you arrived. So she stopped.” Xie Tianxiang said modestly, “I attempted some scribbling just for fun. I’m sorry it has smudged your eyes.” Wang Xiucui said, “This writing combines the style of both Yan Zhenqing and Liu Gongquan at the same time and every stroke is perfect. Go ahead, finish it!” The elders disagreed and said, “It is your reputation we especially admire and we now wish to



也谦逊道：“贱妾偶尔戏耍，岂可当真！”王秀才道：“若要抹去二字，真是可惜！倘若小生写来，未必有如此妙绝，悔之何及？恐怕难为父老每盛心推许，容小生续成罢了。只问适间大姐所用何笔，就请借用一用，若另换一管，锋端不同了。”谢天香道：“适间无笔，乃贱妾用汗巾角蘸墨写的。”王秀才道：“也好，也好，就借来试一试。”谢天香把汗巾递与王秀才，王秀才接在手中，向瓦盒中一蘸，写个“亭”字续上去。看来笔法俨如一手写成，毫无二样。父老内中也有斯文在行的，大加叹赏道：“怎的两人写来恰似出于一手？真是才子佳人，可称双绝！”王秀才与谢天香俱各心里喜欢，两下留意。父老一面就命勒石匠把三字刻将起来，一面就请王秀才坐了首席，谢天香陪坐，大家尽欢吃酒。席间，王秀才与谢天香讲论字法，两人多是青春美貌，自然投机。父老每多是有年纪，历过多少事体过的，有甚么不解意处？见两人情投意合，就撺掇两下成其夫妇，后来竟偕老终身。这是两个会写字的成了一对的话。

看来，天下有一种绝技，必有一个同声同气的在那里凑得。在夫妻里面，更为希罕。自古书画琴棋，谓之文房四艺。只这王、谢两人，便是书家一对夫妻了。若论画家，只有元时



appreciate your exquisite writing.” Xie Tianxiang added too, “I scribbled this only for fun. How could you take it seriously?”

Wang said, “It would be really too bad if these two characters are erased. My writing might not be as flawless as this. And it will be too late for regrets if this were erased. Yet I am afraid it would be ungracious of me not to accept your kind offer. So please allow me to finish it. What kind of writing brush did you use, Sister? May I also use it? I am afraid the strokes will be different if I were to switch to a new brush.” Xie said, “I had no brush available at the time. So I dipped the corner of my handkerchief in the ink and wrote these two characters.” Wang said, “Fine, fine. Let me try my hand at it.” Xie Tianxiang handed her handkerchief to Wang Xiucui. Wang dipped it into the ink in the earthen basin and added the character “Pavilion,” which appeared just like the other two in style. There were a few learned men who were skilled at calligraphy among these senior villagers. They all marveled at the writing, saying, “How is it that both your styles seem to stem from one hand? Such a gifted scholar and a lovely lady!” Wang Xiucui and Xie Tianxiang were both delighted, and their eyes never left each other.

While the senior villagers asked the stone engraver to inscribe these three characters on the tablet, they invited Wang Xiucui to the table. Xie Tianxiang accompanied Wang at the table to entertain him. Everybody at the table enjoyed themselves heartily with the wine. The handsome Wang and the beautiful Xie discussed calligraphy at the table with great accord. The elders at the table were all aged people and had all gone through this. How could they not understand them? Seeing how the couple suited each other perfectly, the elders pushed them into marriage. Amazingly, they lived the rest of their life out happily.

That was a story about two people who were gifted at calligraphy and finally became husband and wife. It seems an exceptional talent must have a match awaiting him somewhere, especially for marriage. From ancient times, calligraphy, painting, music and chess have been considered the four skilled arts for study. The aforementioned Wang and Xie became husband and wife through calligraphy. As for painting, Zhao Zi’ang, the duke of the Wei kingdom during the Yuan Dynasty, and his wife Guan



魏国公赵子昂与夫人管氏仲姬两个多会画。至今湖州天圣禅寺东西两壁，每人各画一壁，一边山水，一边竹石，并垂不朽。若论琴家，是那司马相如与卓文君，只为琴心相通，临邛夜奔，这是人人晓得的，小子不必再来敷衍。

如今说一个棋家在棋盘上赢了一个妻子，千里姻缘，天生一对，也是一段希奇的故事，说与看官每听一听。有诗为证：

世上输赢一局棋，谁知局内有夫妻。

坡翁当日曾遗语，胜固欣然败亦宜！

话说围棋一种，乃是先天河图之数：三百六十一着，合着周天三百六十五度四分度之一，黑白分阴阳以象两仪，立四角以按四象。其中有千变万化、神鬼莫测之机。仙家每每好此，所以有王质烂柯之说。相传是帝尧所置，以教其子丹朱。此亦荒唐之谈，难道唐虞以前连神仙也不下棋？况且这家技艺不是寻常教得会的。若是天性相近，一下手晓得走道儿便有非常仙着，着出来一日高似一日，直到绝顶方休。也有品格所限，只差得一子两子地步，再上进不得了。至于本质下劣，就是奢遮的国手师父指教他秘密几多年，只到得自家本等，高也高不多



Zhongji were both master painters in their time. Their paintings on the east and west walls of present-day Tiansheng Temple in Huzhou, one a landscape by Zhao, and the other of bamboo and rock done by Guan, have been preserved to the present day. As for music, Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun were the most popular on account of their romance. As you all know, they eloped from Linqiong because they both had a profound love for music. No need for me to retell the story.

* * *

Nevertheless, let me tell you a story about a go player who won over a wife by playing this game. This marriage across a thousand *li* was predestined and you will find their story exceptionally unusual. Dear readers, this poem may serve as validation:

Unpredictable as it is who wins or loses in go,
The result may influence a marriage.
The great poet Su Shi said in earlier times,
To win is bliss, to lose gives heart.

Legend has it that the game of go well conforms to the *Hetu*, the three hundred and sixty-one counters of stone correspond to the number of days in one year; the black and white colors of the counters correspond to *yin* and *yang*, and heaven and earth; while the four corners of the go board correspond to the four seasons. The game itself is subject to many and sometimes surprising shifts. The celestials love this game very much. During the Jin Dynasty, Wang Zhi went to the mountains to fetch wood; and when he saw two boys playing a game of go, he put aside his axe and started to watch. Instantly his axe handle turned rotten, and he found his contemporaries had all vanished when he returned home.

It is said that Emperor Yao invented this game to teach his son Danzhu. This saying is actually absurd. For how could it be possible that celestial beings did not play go before the time of Yao and Shun? What is more, it is truly very difficult to learn this game. If one has a natural instinct for it, he or she will know the ways of go and make unusual moves. Consequently one's tactics become more and more honed, and even close to flawless, with each passing day. Due to the limitations of their innate talent, some players are always a notch below others. As for those mediocre



些儿。真所谓棋力酒量恰像个前生分定，非人力所能增减也。

宋时，蔡州大吕村有个村童，姓周名国能，从幼便好下棋。父母送他在村学堂读书，得空就与同伴每画个盘儿，拾取两色砖瓦块做子赌胜。出学堂来，见村中老人家每动手下棋，即袖着手儿站在旁边，呆呆地厮看。或时看到闹处，不觉心痒，口里漏出着把来，指手画脚教人，定是寻常想不到的妙着。自此日着日高，是村中有名会下棋的高手，先前曾饶过国能儿子的，后来多反受国能饶了，还下不得两平。遍村走将来，并无一个对手。此时年才十五六岁，棋名已著一乡。乡人见国能小小年纪，手段高得嶙峋，尽传他在田畔拾枣，遇着两个道士打扮的在草地上对坐，安枰下棋，他在旁边蹲着观看，道士觑着笑道：“此子亦好棋乎？可教以人间常势。”遂就枰上指示他攻守杀夺、救应防拒之法。也是他天缘所到，说来就解，一一领略不忘。道士说：“自此可无敌于天下矣！”笑别而去。此后果然下出来的迥出人上，必定所遇是仙长，得了仙诀过来的。有的说是这小伙子调喉，无过是他天性近这一家，又且耽在里



players, they will only reach a certain level even if a master player in the country were to teach them for many years. As people often say, a person's talent for go or a person's capacity for drinking is predestined and beyond human control.

There once was in Dalu village, Caizhou prefecture during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), a boy named Zhou Guoneng who loved to play go from his early childhood. His parents sent him to the village school, and whenever he had any free time he would draw a go board on the ground with his schoolmates and collect fragments of bricks or tiles of two different colors to play the game. When he was out of school and found village elders playing go, he would stop and watch the game silently. In the heat of the game, he would become excited and give advice to the players, and his advice without fail always turned out to make for unusual, extraordinarily good moves. With the passing of time, his go skills only got better and better as he grew up. He gradually became one of the best players in the village. Those who had conceded him a couple of stones in the past finally had to be conceded several stones by Guoneng. Even then, they always failed to beat him. Guoneng could not find a single rival in the village. He was then about fifteen or sixteen years old, and his fame spread far and wide throughout the township.

Astonished by his superb skill at such a young age, the villagers started to spread the story that, once when he was picking dates in the fields, he had come across two Taoists sitting on the grass, playing go. He squatted and watched. The Taoists asked him with a smile, "Are you interested in go too? We will teach you the standard moves commonly practiced in the human world." So they showed him the tactics of how to be on the offensive, how to be defensive, and how to corner and beat the opponent. With his natural talents he understood everything he was taught and harbored everything in his mind. Then the Taoists said, "From now on, you'll be unmatched anywhere in the world!" Having said this, they bade him farewell and left, laughing. From that point on, Guoneng always turned out a cut above all the other players. After all, he had witnessed expert hands and learned their magical flair. Some people even remarked that he was hoodwinking people. With an innate character at one with the



头，所以转造转高，极穷了秘妙，却又撰出见神见鬼的天话哄着愚人。这也是强口人不肯信伏的常态，总来不必辨其有无，却是棋高无敌是个实的了。

因为棋名既出，又兼年小希罕，便有官员士夫、王孙公子与他往来。又有那不伏气甘折本的小二哥与他赌赛，十两五两输与他的。国能渐渐手头饶裕，礼度熟闲，性格高傲，变尽了村童气质，弄做个斯文模样。父母见他年长，要替他娶妻。国能就心里望头大了，对父母说道：“我家门户低微，目下取得妻来不过是农家之女，村妆陋质不是我的对头。儿既有此绝艺，便当挟此出游江湖间，料不须带着盘费走。或者不拘那里，天缘有在，等待依心像意寻个对得我来的好女儿为妻，方了平生之愿！”父母见他说得话大，便就住了手。

过不多几日，只见国能另换了一身衣服，来别了父母出游。父母一眼看去，险些不认得了。你道他怎生打扮：

头戴包巾，脚蹬方履。身上穿浅地深缘的蓝服，腰间系一坠两股的黄绦。若非葛稚川侍炼药的丹童，便是董双成同思凡的道侣。



game of go, he devoted himself to the study of it and mastered the secrets of success. So he was always invincible. The funny yarns of seeing deities and ghosts the villagers had concocted were perhaps mere humbug. It is natural for those unwilling to be outshone suspect the stories about him. Anyway there is no need for us to go to the trouble of verifying their truth or falsity. The fact remains that he was truly unmatched and always victorious in the game of go.

Because of his great reputation at such a young age, many high officials and the descendants of noble families started to befriend him. Certain youth who could not concede defeat always bet against him at the board, and were of course always the losers, losing either ten taels or five taels of silver. Gradually, Guoneng began to make a comfortable living, and became most refined. At the same time he grew more and more self-aggrandizing. As a young country boy he gave full play, transforming himself into an elegant and learned person. Realizing he was old enough, his parents decided they should obtain a wife for him. Guoneng held onto his aspirations, and said to his parents, "Our family status is low and the wife you could get me now would be no more than a low-taste cloddish country girl. She will be no match to me. Since I have this unique skill, I should go out and make a living wandering from place to place. I do not believe I need to bring any traveling expenses with me. It might also be possible that heaven knows my will, and will bestow on me a good wife when I arrive at a certain place. Only then would I be able to fulfill my wishes." Realizing their son's aspirations, Guoneng's parents said no more about finding him a wife. A few days passed, and Guoneng, wearing a totally different suit, came to bid farewell to his parents. At first glance, his parents almost failed to recognize him. Can you imagine how he was dressed?

A towel on his head, a pair of square shoes on his feet,
A navy-green suit with pastel background.
Around his waist a yellow cloth belt in two strands
If not the young priest who waited upon Ge Hong³
while making pills of immortality,
He must be the Taoist accomplice of Dong Shuangcheng.



说这国能葛巾野服，扮做了道童模样。父母吃了一惊，问道：“儿如此打扮，意欲何为？”国能笑道：“儿欲从此云游四方，遍寻一个好妻子来做一对耳。”父母道：“这是你的志气，也难阻你。只是得手便回，莫贪了别处欢乐，忘了故乡。”国能道：“这个怎敢？”是日是个黄道吉日，拜别了父母，即便登程。从此自称小道人。

一路行去，晓得汴梁是帝王之都，定多名手，先向汴京进发。到得京中，但是对局，无有不输与小道人的，棋名大震。往来多是朝中贵人，东家也来接，西家也来迎，或是行教，或是赌胜，好不热闹过日。却并不见一个对手，也无可意的女佳人撞着眼里的。混过了多时，自想姻缘未必在此，遂离了京师，又到太原、真定等处游荡。一路行棋，眼见得无出其右，奋然道：“吾闻燕山乃辽国郎主在彼称帝，雄丽过于汴京，此中必有高人国手天下无敌的在内，今我在中国既称绝技，料然到那里不到得输与人了，何不往彼一游，寻个出头的国手较一较高低，也与中国吐一吐气，博他一个远乡异域的高名，传之不朽？况且，自古道：‘燕赵多佳人’。或者借此技艺，在王公贵人家里出入，图得一个好配头也不见得。”遂决意往北路进发，风餐水宿，夜住晓行，不多几日，已到了燕山地面。



Guoneng had dressed himself up as a Taoist. Much taken aback, his parents asked, “Why dress this way?” Guoneng smiled and answered, “I shall wander from place to place, and earn myself a worthy wife.” His parents replied, “You have your own dreams. We won’t stop you. But remember to return once you find a wife. Don’t pursue pleasure in far-off places, and forget your native place.” Guoneng answered, “How would I dare?”

It was an auspicious day. After bidding his parents farewell, Guoneng set off. From then on, he styled himself as the “Young Taoist.” He first of all headed for Bianliang, the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), for he expected to find many good players there. Once in Bianliang, he started to play. But nobody was his match. He garnered great renown. The people who came to see him were mostly nobility, and the high officials of the court. Moreover, he was often invited to teach go or to gamble at go. What a rollicking good time! However, it depressed him that he could not find an equal in go, nor could he find a match with a pretty girl.

After muddling along for a period of time, he thought he would not be able to find marriage in such a place. Consequently he left the capital for Taiyuan and Zhending. As he traveled, he played go along the way, and again no one could beat him. He said to himself, animatedly, “I hear people say Liao Kingdom (907-1125) has proclaimed himself Emperor in Yanshan (present-day Beijing), which is more majestic and beautiful than Bianliang. There must be unbeaten expert go players there. Invincible as I am in central China, maybe I can meet a natural rival there. Why not go and compete with the go champion of Liao? By doing so, I can also win honor for Central China and my good name will spread far and wide. Besides, as the old saying has it, ‘Yanzhao (present-day northern Hebei Province) is rich in talented beauties.’ With my skill, I can probably obtain a well-paid job with a noble family.” So he decided to head north. Eating in the wind and sleeping in the rain, he rested at night and marched onward by day, reaching Yanshan within a few days.

Let’s begin with the terrain of Yanshan:

The sea to the left of Yanshan, Taihang Mountains to the right,

且说燕山形胜，左环沧海，右拥太行，北枕居庸，南襟河济。向称天府之国，暂为夷主所都。此时燕山正是耶律部落称尊之所，宋时呼之为北朝，相与为兄弟之国。盖自石晋以来，以燕云一十六州让与彼国了，从此渐染中原教化，百有馀年，所以夷狄名号向来只是单于、可汗、赞普、郎主等类。到得辽人，一般称帝称宗，以至官员职名大半与中国相参，衣冠文物，百工技艺，竟与中华无二。

辽国最好的是弈棋。若有第一等高棋，称为国手，便要遣进到南朝，请人比试。曾有一个王子最高，进到南朝。这边棋院待诏顾思让也是第一手，假称第三手，与他对局，以一着解





Juyong Pass to the north, the Yellow and Ji Rivers south.
It is a land of abundance, and now
The capital of Liao.

Yanshan was the place where the Chief of the Qidan Tribe, an ancient tribe in northern China, proclaimed himself Emperor and during the Song Dynasty the Kingdom was called the Northern Regime (also called Liao Kingdom). Both the Song Dynasty and the Northern Regime coexisted peacefully with each other like brother-neighbor states. After the post-Jin period (936-946) of the Five Dynasties (907-960), the States of Yanshan, Yun and fourteen other states were ceded to the Liao. Consequently, it had been over one hundred years since the Qidan people had started becoming gradually influenced by the culture of Central China. So the titles of the heads of these nationalities were only Chanyu (King of the Xiongnu in ancient China), Khan (King of the Mongolians in ancient China), Zanpu (King of the Tibetans in ancient China) and Langzhu (King of the Qidans). After the founding of the Liao Regime, they followed the common custom of Central China and used the title 'Emperor.' In addition, most of the official titles in Liao made reference to those in Central China, and their dress and artistry bore no difference to those of Central China.

Liao was very fond of the game of go and boasted many outstanding go players, the best of whom were ranked the highest in the country and would be dispatched to the State of Song (Central China) to take part in go competitions there. Once a prince was sent to the State of Song. Gu Sirang, an Expectant Court Official in the Institute of go of the State of Song, though the best player of the time, pretended to be the third best and played a game with the prince. Gu won the game with one famous move that rescued two groups of his endangered counters, and this go manual has been handed down to the present day. Unable to beat the ambitious Official Gu, the prince turned to the interpreter to ask about Gu. The interpreter told him that Gu was their third best player. The prince said he would like to engage in a match with the best player. The reply was, "Only after you beat the third best would you have the chance to play with the second best, and only after you beat the second best would you have the chance to play with the best. Now that you have failed to



两征，至今棋谱中传下镇神头势。王子赢不得顾待诏，问通事说是第三手，王子愿见第一，这边回他道：“赢得第三，方见第二；赢得第二，方见第一。今既赢不得第三，尚不得见第二，怎能勾见得第一？”王子只道是真，叹口气道：“我北朝第一手赢不得南朝第三手，再下棋何干？”摔碎棋枰，伏输而去，却不知被中国人瞒过了。此是已往的话。

只说那时辽国围棋第一称国手的乃是一个女子，名为妙观。有亲王保举，受过朝廷册封为女棋童。设个棋肆，教授门徒。你道如何教授？盖围棋三十二法，皆有定名：有“冲”、有“干”，有“绰”、有“约”，有“飞”、有“关”，有“札”、有“粘”，有“顶”、有“尖”，有“觑”、有“门”，有“打”、有“断”，有“行”、有“立”，有“捺”、有“点”，有“聚”、有“跷”，有“挟”、有“拶”，有“薛”、有“刺”，有“勒”、有“扑”，有“征”、有“劫”，有“持”、有“杀”，有“松”、有“盘”。

妙观以此等法传授于人。多有王侯府中送将男女来学棋，以及大家小户少年好戏欲学此道的，尽来拜他门下，不记其数。多呼妙观为师。妙观亦以师道自尊，妆模做样，尽自矜持，言笑不苟。也要等待对手，等闲未肯嫁人。却是棋声传播，慕他才色的咽干了涎唾，只是不能胜他，也没人敢启齿求配。空传下个美名，受下许多门徒，晚间师父娘只是独宿而已。有一首词单道着妙观好处：

丽质本来无偶，神机早已通玄。枰中举国莫争先，女将驰名善战。玉手无惭国手，秋波合唤秋仙。高居师席把棋传，石作门生也眩。(右词寄《西江月》)

话说国能自称小道人，游到燕山，在饭店中歇下，已知妙



beat the third best, you should not even be able to play with the second best, let alone the best.” Accepting this as truth, the prince sighed, “I, the number one player of the Northern Regime, could not even beat the third best of State of Song. What’s the use of continuing to play?” Acknowledging defeat, he smashed to pieces his go board and left. He did not realize he had been tricked. This is an old story.

It just so happened that the reigning go champion in Liao was a woman named Miaoguan. Strongly recommended by the princes, she was conferred the title, “Woman Go Prodigy.” She set up a go academy and began to teach her disciples how to play the game. Many boys and girls from aristocratic families were sent to the academy to learn the game, and countless youths who were interested in the game from both wealthy and common families all acknowledged her as a master. Miaoguan very much enjoyed the honor of the teaching profession, and while putting on airs, was reserved amidst her disciples. Thus, she remained single, cherishing a hope of meeting an equal match. Her superb skill in go, however, spread far and wide. Those who had a fancy for her talent and beauty could not help drooling over her, for none could beat her in the game. What is more, none were courageous enough to court her. So, although she had such a fine reputation, with so many disciples around her, she had to spend her nights all by herself. This *ci* poem is a eulogy to Miaoguan:

With beauty absolutely unrivalled, she is infinitely resourceful
 knowing all the tricks of the game of go
 Second to none throughout the country
 a young lady though she be
 Her jade hands well deserve her good name and her bright eyes
 exactly like autumn crocuses.
 As a teacher of go, she makes all disciples, even those of stone,
 dazzle with admiration.
 (To the tune of “Xijiangyue”)

Now Guoneng, or the “Young Taoist” as he called himself, arrived in Yanshan and lodged at an inn. Before long he learned that Miaoguan was the best go player and ascertained her whereabouts. He arrived at the go



观是国手的话，留心探访。只见来到肆前，果然一个少年美貌的女子在那里点指划脚，教人下棋。小道人见了，先已飞去了三魂，走掉了七魄，恨不得双手抱住了他，做一点两点的事。心里道：“且未可露机，看他着法如何。”呆呆地袖着手，在旁冷眼厮觑。见他着法还有不到之处，小道人也不说破。一连几日本，有些耐不得了，不觉口中嗫嚅，逗露出一两着来。妙观出于不意，见指点出来的多是神着，抬眼看时，却是一个小伙儿，又是道家妆扮的，情知有些诧异，心里疑道：“那里来此异样的人？”忍着只做不睬，只是大刺刺教徒弟们对局。妙观偶然指点一着，小道人忽攘臂争道：“此一着未是胜着，至第几路必然受亏。”果然下到其间，一如小道人所说。妙观心惊道：“奇哉此童！不知自何处而来。若再使他在此观看，形出我的短处，枉为人师，却不受人笑话？”大声喝道：“此系教棋之所，是何闲人乱入厮混？”便叫两个徒弟，把小道人掬了出来，不容观看。小道人冷笑道：“自家棋低，反要怪人指教，看你躲得过我么？”反了手踱了出来，私下想道：“好个美貌女子！棋虽非我比，女人中有此也不易得。只在这几个黑白子上，定要赚他到手。倘不如意，誓不还乡！”

走到对门，问个老者道：“此间店房可赁与人否？”老者道：“赁来何用？”小道人道：“因来看棋，意欲赁个房儿住着，



School and, just as he hoped, did indeed find a pretty young woman there teaching go with the most exuberant gestures. The Young Taoist was already overcome with joy at the sight of Miaoguan, and wished he could hold her in his arms and do that kind of thing with her. "Better keep silent and concentrate on her moves," the Young Taoist said to himself. So he stood there and looked on indifferently with a cold eye, giving no comment even if he noticed a few flawed moves by her. After several days of silence, he exhibited some impatience and at one point mumbled out a couple of moves unawares. To her surprise, Miaoguan discovered all these moves to be exceedingly astute. As she looked up, she saw a young man dressed as a Taoist. Greatly taken aback, she wondered to herself, "Who is this strange man?" Restraining herself, she did not acknowledge his presence and continued with her teaching as if nothing had occurred.

When Miaoguan inadvertently gave her disciples certain openings, the Young Taoist raised his arm and argued, "This move is by no means the best. You are sure to suffer great losses when you reach the line..." Sure enough, what the Young Taoist said transpired after a number of moves. Miaoguan was astonished and thought to herself, "How strange! Where does he come from? If I allow him to stay here any longer, he will certainly show up my shortcomings. If so, how would I be able to continue teaching? Moreover, people will laugh at me." With this in mind, she exclaimed loudly, "Here, I am the teacher. Who is this filthy intruder?" Consequently, she let two of her disciples push the Young Taoist out the door. The Young Taoist retorted with a cold smile, "You're a poor player. Am I to blame for my advice? Wait and see if you can get away with this!" Putting his hands behind his back, he ambled away. "What a beauty!" he thought to himself. "Less expert as she is than I, it still cannot be easy for a woman to attain such heights at go. I will have to use these black and white counters to win her over to me. If this wish of mine cannot be fulfilled, I shall never return to my native place."

Crossing the street, Guoneng went to a house directly opposite and asked an old man, "May I rent a room here?" The old man asked, "What for?" "I am here to watch the young lady play go. I am thinking of renting a room here so I may learn some new moves from her secretly," replied



早晚偷学他两着。”老者道：“好好！对门女棋师是我国中第一手，说道天下无敌的。小师父小小年纪，要在江湖上云游，正该学他些着法。老汉无儿女，止有个老嬷缝纫度日，也与女棋师往来得好。此门面房空着，专一与远来看棋的人闲坐，趁几文茶钱的。小师父要赁，就打长赁了也好。”小道人就在袖里摸出包来，拣一块大些的银子，与他做了定钱，抽身到饭店中，搬取行囊，到这对门店中安下。

铺设已定，见店中有见成歪就的木牌在那里，他就与店主人说，要借来写个招牌。老者道：“要招牌何用？莫非有别样高术否？”小人道：“也要在此教教下棋，与对门棋师赛一赛。”老者道：“不当人子，那里还讨个对手么！”小人道：“你不要管，只借我牌便是。”老者道：“牌自空着，但凭取用，只不要惹出事来，做了话靶。”小人道：“不妨，不妨。”就取出文房四宝来，磨得墨浓，蘸得笔饱，挥出一张牌来，竖在店面门口。只因此牌一出，有分交：绝技佳人，望枰而纳款；远来游客，出手以成婚。你道牌上写的是甚话来？他写道：

汝南小道人手谈，奉饶天下最高手一先。

老者看见了，道：“天下最高手你还要饶他先哩！好大话！好大话，只怕见我女棋师不得。”小人道：“正要饶得你女棋师，



the Young Taoist. The old man said, "Very interesting. That woman player across the street is the best in our country and is said to be peerless. You are too young, and you will have to learn something from her if you are going to make a living wandering from place to place. My wife and I have no sons and daughters, and we live by our sewing. Moreover, that woman player is on good terms with us. This room facing the street is unoccupied. It is specially set up for people who come to watch go, and I can earn a little extra money by selling tea. It is okay by me for you to rent it as long as you like." The Young Taoist took a small parcel out of his sleeve, picked out a larger ingot of silver and gave it to the old man as a deposit. Then he went back to the inn and brought his luggage to this room.

After he made the bed, he noticed a whitewashed wooden board in the room. He went to the old man and told him that he would like to borrow it and make a signboard. "What's your signboard for? Do you have any special skills?" the old man asked. "I too want to teach people go in this room and I would like to challenge the teacher of go across the street," replied the Young Taoist. The old man said, "You braggart! How could you be her match?" The Young Taoist responded, "Don't worry about me. Just lend me the board, please." The old man said, "The board is right there. Go and take it. But don't get yourself into trouble and make yourself a laughing stock." The Young Taoist said, "No problem, no problem." So saying the Young Taoist took out the four treasures of scholarship: the writing brush, ink stick, ink slab, and paper — and started writing on the signboard with vigorous strokes. Soon the signboard was installed right in front of the old man's house.

The advent of this signboard is really the beginning of our story, "A beauty with unique skill is betrothed by playing go, and a visiting go player from afar weds due to his outstanding talent." Readers, do you have any idea what was written on the signboard? It read: "The Young Taoist go player from Runan County is here to beat the best player under the sun, even if he or she makes the first move." At the sight of this signboard, the old man said, "You even claim you will allow the best player under the sun to make the first move? What big talk! What big



才为高手。”老者似信不信，走进里面去，把这些话告诉老嫫。老嫫道：“远方来的人敢开大口，或者有些手段也不见得。”老者道：“点点年纪，那里便有什么手段？”老嫫道：“有智不在年高，我们女棋师又是有年纪的么？”老者道：“我们下着这样一个人与对门作敌，也是一场笑话。且看他做出便见。”

不说他老口儿两下唧啷，且说这边立出牌来，早已有人报与妙观得知。妙观见说写的是“饶天下最高手”，明是与他放对的了。情知是昨日看棋的小伙，心中好生忿忿不平，想道：“我在此擅名已久，那里来这个小冤家来寻我们的错处？”发个狠，要就与他决个胜负。又转一个念头道：“他昨日看棋时，偶然指点的着数多在我意想之外。假若与他决一局，幸而我胜，劈破他招牌，赶他走路不难；万一输与他了，此名一出，那里还显得有我？此事不可造次，须着一个先探一探消息，再作计较。”妙观有个弟子张生，是他门下最得意的高手，也是除了师父再无敌手的。妙观唤他来，说道：“对门汝南小道人口说大话，未卜手段虚实。我欲与决输赢，未可造次。据汝力量，已与我争不多些儿了，汝可先往一试，看汝与彼优劣，便可以定彼棋品。”



talk! I bet you dare not face our woman go master.” The Young Taoist said, “I cannot be the go master unless I beat her.”

Half-believing, half-doubting, the old man went into his room and told his wife about this. The old lady said, “This man from afar is really boastful. But he might have some special skills. Who knows?” The old man continued, “How could he possess special skills at such a young age?” The old lady replied, “Talent is not always advanced in years. Is our woman master go player that aged?” The old man said, “Now that we have taken in such a young man, and he has issued a challenge to the young lady living opposite, we’ll certainly have a jolly good time to watch the fun. Let us wait and see what follows.”

Now let us put aside the old couple for the moment, and continue with what happened after the signboard was put up. Immediately after the appearance of this signboard, someone quickly informed Miaoguan of it. When she learned of the message on the signboard, she knew at once it was aimed at her, and she was sure it was written by the young man who had watched her teach go the day before. At this she grew highly exasperated, thinking, “I’ve enjoyed a great reputation for quite some time in this place. How is it that an opponent and foe now suddenly appears to torment me today? I must face him and ensure victory.” Yet she changed her mind after second thoughts: “All the moves he casually suggested while watching us playing yesterday took me by surprise. If I accept his challenge and, with any luck, beat him, it will not be difficult for me to splinter his signboard and drive him from this place. But if by any chance I lose, everyone will know I’m no longer the best player. What would I do then? I must be careful. I need to send someone there to fish for some information before I decide on what to do about him.”

Miaoguan had a disciple named Zhang Sheng who was both her protégé and the next best player to Miaoguan herself. Miaoguan asked him to come over, and said, “The Young Taoist from Runan County lodging across the street is a braggart. But I am not sure of his true strength. I’m thinking of playing a game with him, but I must be careful. Now since you and I are almost equal in strength, you go first and gauge his true ability.”



张生领命而出，走到小道人店中，就枰求教。张生让小道人是客，小道人道：“小牌上有言在前，遮末是高手也要饶他一先，决不自家下起。若输与足下时，受让未迟。”张生只得占先下了。张生穷思极想方才下得一着，小道人只随手应去，不到得完局，张生已败。张生拱手伏输道：“客艺果高，非某敌手。增饶一子，方可再请教。”果然摆下二子，然后请小道人下。张生又输了一盘。张生心服，道：“还饶不住，再增一子。”增至三子，然后张生觉得松些，恰恰下个两平。看官听说：凡棋有敌手，有饶先，有先两；受饶三子，厥品中中，未能通幽，可称用智。受得国手三子饶的，也算是高强了。只为张生也是妙观门下出色弟子，故此还挣得来，若是别一个，须动手不得，看来只是小道人高得紧了。小道人三局后对张生道：“足下之棋，也算高强，可见上国一斑矣。不知可有堪与小道对敌的，请出一个来，小道情愿领教。”张生晓得此言是搦他师父出马，不敢应答，作别而去。来到妙观跟前密告道：“此小道人技艺甚高，怕吾师也要让他一步。”妙观摇手，戒他



Zhang Sheng left on his mission to the Young Taoist's lodgings and soon started a game with him. Zhang Sheng considered the Young Taoist to be a guest, and asked him to make the first move. The Young Taoist insisted, "I've made it clear beforehand on this signboard that, even if I allow the best player to make the first move, I will still beat him or her. So I won't make the first move. It won't be too late for me to move first if I lose." With this, Zhang Sheng took the first move and had to rack his brains before each of his moves, while as the Young Taoist immediately responded to his moves with great airiness and ease. Zhang Sheng lost the game before they came to the end. Folding his hands as he bowed and admitting defeat, Zhang Sheng said, "I am no match for you. Please allow me to place one more stone on the board before I can consult your guide in the second game." So saying, he placed two counters on the board and asked the Young Taoist to play. Again Zhang Sheng lost. Genuinely convinced, he said, "Allow me to place one more stone." With three stones placed on the board, Zhang Sheng felt a bit lighter and this game ended in a draw.

Readers, the game of go is both far ranging and profound in wisdom, and it demands a very high level of intelligence from its players. Those who are allowed to first place one or two or three stones on the board to achieve parity with the topnotch of the country can be also regarded as top players. As the most outstanding disciple of Miaoguan, Zhang Sheng had the strength, while other ordinary players were no match. The conclusion we can draw from this is that the Young Taoist was no ordinary player.

After these three games, the Young Taoist said to Zhang Sheng, "You are a good player and from you I can get a rough idea of your country's top players. But I wonder if you can introduce me to someone who would be my match?" Zhang Sheng knew that the Young Taoist's words were directed at his master. Unable to give an answer, Zhang Sheng said goodbye and left.

Meeting Miaoguan, secretly he told her, "This young man is highly skilled and I am afraid he is one hard nut to crack." Miaoguan gesticulated to stop him, fearing he might let the cat out of the bag, and that people



不可说破，惹人耻笑。自此之后，妙观不敢公然开肆教棋。

旁人见了标牌，已自惊骇，又见妙观收敛起来。那张生受饶三子之说，渐渐有人传将开去，正不知这小道人与妙观果是高下如何。自有这些好事的人三三两两议论，有的道：“我们棋师不与较胜负，想是不放他在眼里的了。”有的道：“他牌上明说饶天下最高手一先，我们棋师难道忍得这话起，不与争雄？必是个有些本领的，棋师不敢造次出头。”有的道：“我们棋师现是本国第一手，并无一个男人赢得他的，难道别处来这个小小道人便恁地高强不成？是必等他两个对一对局，定个输赢来我们看一看，也是着实有趣的事。”又一个道：“妙是妙，他们岂肯轻放对？是必众人出些利物与他们赌胜，才弄得成。”内中有个胡大郎道：“妙！妙！我情愿助钱五十千。”支公子道：“你出五十千，难道我又少得不成？也是五十千！”其余的也有认出十千、五千的，一时凑来，有了二百千之数。众人就推胡大郎做个收掌之人，敛出钱来多交付与他，就等他约期对局，临时看输赢对付发利物，名为“保局”，此也是赌胜的旧规。其时众人议论已定，胡大郎等利物齐了，便去两边约日比试手段。果然两边多应允了，约在第三日午时在大相国寺方丈内对局。众人散去，到期再会。

女棋童妙观得了此信，虽然应允，心下有些虚怯，道：“利物是小事，不争与他赌胜，一下子输了，枉送了日前之名！此



might sneer at her. From then on, she dared not teach her disciples in public. People who had seen the signboard were all perplexed, as they also noticed that Miaoguan was displaying a certain restraint. As the news of Zhang Sheng's defeat gradually spread and became public, everyone became very curious about who was the more powerful, the Young Taoist or Miaoguan. Certain busybodies discussed this in small groups.

Someone commented, "Our master ignores him because she thinks nothing of his challenge." Another argued, "He makes it clear on the signboard that he will beat the best player under the sun even though he allows him or her to make the first move. How could our master tolerate such an insult? This young man must be a master with some skill and our master dares not act impetuously." Someone suggested, "Our master is the champion in our country and no man can beat her. Could this Young Taoist from afar be powerful enough to defeat her? Why not arrange a set for them, and see who wins? It would be exciting!" Yet another one added, "It's really a great idea, but can they play for nothing? We need to offer them some reward for the game." Among them was a man named Hu Dalang,⁴ who applauded, "Great! Great! I'd like to offer fifty thousand coins." A young man from a notable family whose surname was Zhi joined in, "You offer fifty, how can I offer less than you? Put me down for fifty too."

Amongst the others, some offered ten, some five, until the total sum raised amounted to some two hundred thousand coins. The crowd of people all agreed Hu Dalang should collect the money, which they then brought to him. With this, they all left in anticipation of the game and waited for Hu to set the exact date. Hu acted as the intermediary. This was an old rule of gambling. When all the prize money had been collected, Hu went to both sides and made clear what he had come for. As expected, both sides agreed and the time and the place of the competition were also decided, to fall on the third afternoon at the Abbot's residence of the Grand Chancellor's Temple.

Though she had accepted the proposal, Miaoguan did feel a bit nervous, thinking, "I don't care for the prize money. But if I lose, my present good standing will be ruined. This visitor from afar must be interested in gain



子远来作客，必然好利，不如私下买嘱他，求他让我些儿，我明收了利物，暗地加添些与他，他料无不肯的。怎得个人来与我通此信息便好？”又怕弟子们见笑，不好商量得。思量对门店主老嫗常来此缝衣补裳的，小道人正下在他家，何不央他来做个引头，说合这话也好。算计定了，魅地着个女使招他来说话。老嫗听得，便三脚两步走过对门来，见了妙观，道：“棋师娘子，有何分付？”妙观直引他到自己卧房里头坐下了。妙观开口道：“有件事要与嫗嫗商量则个。”老嫗道：“何事？”妙观道：“汝南小道人正在嫗嫗家里下着，奴有句话要嫗嫗说与他。嫗嫗好说得么？”老嫗道：“他自恃棋高，正好来与娘子放对。我见老儿说道：‘众人出了利物，约看后日对局。’娘子却又要与他说甚么话？”妙观道：“正为对局的事要与嫗嫗商量。奴在此行教已久，那个王侯府中不唤奴是棋师？寻遍一国没有奴的对手，眼见得手下收着许多徒弟哩。今远来的小道人却说饶尽天下的大话，奴曾教最高手的弟子张生去试他两局，回来说他手段颇高。众人要看我每两下本事，约定后日放对，万一输与他了，一则丧了本朝体面，二则失了日前名声，不是耍处。意欲央嫗嫗私下与他说说，做个人情，让我些个。”嫗



and rewards. Why not buy him off in secret and ask him to lose the game? Outwardly I will receive the reward, but secretly I will return it to him adding something more. Surely he will have no objections. But who is going to pass the word on for me?" She found it impossible to consult her disciples about this matter, for fear that they would laugh at her. It suddenly occurred to her that the old hostess living in the house across the street was a frequent visitor to her home for sewing and mending work, and the Young Taoist was now boarding at that lady's house. Why not ask her to help? With this plan in mind, Miaoguan sent a maid on the sly to fetch the old hostess.

The old lady came hurriedly across the street and asked Miaoguan, "What may I do for you, go Master?" Miaoguan shepherded her into her bedroom, asked her to take a seat, and said, "I have something to discuss with you." The old lady asked, "What is it?" Miaoguan answered, "The Young Taoist from Runan County is now boarding at your house and I would like you to pass a message to him. Could you do me this favor?" The old lady remarked, "He thinks highly of his go ability and has come here to especially challenge you. I heard my old man say, many people have offered prize money for your contest with him to be held the day after tomorrow. What do you wish me to tell him?"

Miaoguan answered, "It is all about this competition, and I was considering asking your advice. As you know I've been playing and teaching go for quite some time in this place. I am honored as a master player by all the members of the notable and wealthy families. No rivals may be found throughout the country, and I am now tutoring plenty of disciples in my school! This Young Taoist from a distant place now comes here and brags that he will beat all the top players in our country. I sent my top disciple Zhang Sheng to test his ability, and Zhang Sheng played a few games with him. Zhang Sheng returned and told me that he has extraordinary powers. Yet everyone is anxious to know which of us is superior, and have arranged a game for me the day after tomorrow. If I lose, first of all, I shall bring disgrace down on our country. On top of that I will lose all my present honors. I really don't want such a thing to happen to me. So I would like you to go have a talk with him, and beg him to do

嬷道：“娘子只是放出日前的本事来赢他方好，怎么折了志气反去求他？况且见赌看利物哩，他如何肯让？”妙观道：“利物是小事，他若肯让奴赢了，奴一毫不取，私下仍旧还他。”嬷道：“他赢了你棋，利物怕不是他的？又讨个大家喝声采不好？却明输与你了，私下受这些说不响的钱，他也不肯。”妙观道：“奴再于利物之外私下赠他五十千。他与奴无仇，且又不是本国人，声名不关什么干系。得了若干利物，又得了奴这些私赠，也勾了他了。只要嬷嬷替奴致意于他，说奴已甘伏，不必在人前赢奴，出奴之丑便是。”嬷嬷道：“说便去说，肯不肯只凭得他。”妙观道：“全仗嬷嬷说得好些，肯时奴自另谢嬷嬷。”老嬷道：“对门对户，日前相处面上，甚么大事说起谢来！”嘻嘻的笑了出去。

走到家里，见了小道人，把妙观邀去的说话，一十一五对他说了。小道人见说罢，便满肚子痒起来，道：“好！好！天送个老婆来与我了。”回言道：“小子虽然年幼远游，靠着些小技艺，不到得少了用度，那钱财颇不希罕。只是旅邸孤单。小娘子若要我相让时，须依得我一件事，无不从命。”老嬷道：“可要怎生？”小道人喜着脸道：“妈妈是会事的，定要说出来？”老嬷道：“说得明白，咱好去说。”小道人道：“日里人面前对局，我便让让他；晚间要他来被窝里对局，他须让让我。”老



me a favor.”

The old lady said, “You should give full play to your present ability and do your best to beat him. How can you lose confidence in yourself and instead be asking him for favors? What’s more, there is such a large amount of prize money in this contest. How could it be possible for him to agree?” Miaoguan said, “The prize money is a mere trifle. If he is willing to give ground, I will not keep a single coin of the prize but give it all to him on the side.” The old lady persisted, “Will the prize not naturally belong to him anyway if he wins the game? He would also love the acclaim, would he not? Would he lose the game in public and take the tainted prize in secret? I do not think he will agree.”

Miaoguan continued, “Apart from the prize, I will add fifty thousand coins more for him. He is not my enemy and, moreover, he’s from another country. Reputation and honor here are not important to him. The prize along with my additional money would be a large sum for him. I am hoping you will tell him that I have conceded defeat, and ask him not to embarrass me and make a fool of myself before others.” The old lady said, “I shall go talk to him, but it is up to him to agree or disagree.” Miaoguan said, “It is all up to you, in how you talk to him. If he agrees, I shall surely reward you for your help.” The old lady replied, “We’ve been good neighbors. How could you mention reward for such trifles?” The old lady left, grinning with delight.

When she got back home, the old lady told the Young Taoist in detail what Miaoguan had said to him. The Young Taoist burst out in high spirits: “Terrific! Terrific! Heaven has sent me a wife!” He continued, “Young wanderer as I am, I make a living through a minor bit of talent, and I am not short of expenses. I do not care about money and reward. I just very often feel lonely. However, she must comply with a request of mine if she wants me to make this concession.” The old lady asked, “What is that?” Grinning, the Young Taoist replied, “Auntie, you are a discerning person. Must I hit the nail on the head?” The old lady said, “You must disclose it to me so that I can go and let her know.”

The Young Taoist said, “I can yield some ground myself when both of us play in public, but she needs to make some concessions if I ask her to



嬷嬷道：“不当人子！后生家讨便宜的话莫说！”小道人道：“不是讨便宜。小子原非贪财帛而来，所以住此许久，专慕女棋师之颜色耳！嬷嬷为我多多致意，若肯容我半晌之欢，小子甘心诈输，一文不取；若不见许，便当尽着本事对局，不敢容情。”老嬷嬷道：“言重，言重！老身怎好出口？”小道人道：“你是妇道家，对女人讲话有甚害羞？这是他喉急之事，便依我说了，料不怪你。”说罢，便深深一诺道：“事成另谢媒人。”老嬷嬷笑道：“小小年纪，倒好老脸皮。说便去说，万一讨得骂时，须要你赔礼。”小道人道：“包你不骂的。”老嬷嬷只得又走将过对门去。

妙观正在心下虚怯，专望回音。见了老嬷嬷，脸上堆下笑来道：“有烦嬷嬷尊步，所说的事可听依么？”老嬷嬷道：“老身磨了半截舌头，依倒也依得，只要娘子也依他一件事。”妙观道：“遮莫是甚么事？且说将来，奴依他便了。”老嬷嬷道：“若是娘子肯依，倒也不费本钱。”妙观道：“果是甚么事？”老嬷嬷道：“这件事，易则至易，难则至难。娘子恕老身不知进退的罪，方好开口。”妙观道：“奴有事相央，嬷嬷尽着有话便说，岂敢有嫌？”老嬷嬷又假意推让了一回，方才带笑说道：“小道人只身在此，所慕娘子才色兼全。他阴沟洞里想天鹅肉吃哩！”妙观



come frolic with me under my quilt at night.” The old lady scolded, “You sinner! Do not talk nonsense!” The Young Taoist said, “I’m not talking nonsense. I am serious. I am not here to seek a fortune. The reason I’ve stayed here so long is because I admire her beauty. With your assistance, I am willing to feign defeat, and will not take a single coin if she agrees to enjoy herself with me for a couple of hours. If she disagrees, I shall do my utmost to trounce her in the competition without showing her any mercy.”

The old lady said, “You speak so seriously and resolutely. I feel embarrassed. How would I be able to open my mouth?” The Young Taoist said, “You are a woman. You should have nothing to be ashamed of by telling her of this. It is she who is in trouble. Just tell her it as being exactly what I have told you, and I am sure she will not blame you for it.” So saying, the Young Taoist bowed with his hands folded in front, and continued, “I shall reward you if you would do me this favor!” The old lady said, “You are so young yet so shameless. I can go and say this, but if I get a scolding, you must apologize to me!” The Young Taoist assured her, “She will not scold you.”

The old lady had to go across the street again, where Miaoguan was anxiously awaiting what she has to say. On seeing the old lady, Miaoguan was all smiles and said, “Sorry to trouble you. Has he agreed to comply?” The old lady answered, “It took me a great deal of talking. He is willing to agree but you must meet his requirements too.” Miaoguan said, “Whatever his requirements are, just tell me and I shall simply comply.” The old lady said, “If you consent to his offer, you would not need to invest any capital.” Miaoguan questioned her closely, “What on earth could it be then?” The old lady replied, “It could be either the easiest or the most difficult thing for you to do. It all depends on your attitude towards it. You must first of all excuse me for my candor before I say it out loud.” Miaoguan said, “I troubled you to do me a favor, so you may speak frankly. Why should I mind?” The old lady paused for a moment artfully, before she opened her mouth, all smiles: “The Young Taoist is here all by himself, and has become enamored with both your beauty and talent. He is merely a toad lusting after the swan’s flesh.” On hearing this, Miaoguan blushed



通红了脸，半晌不语。老嫫道：“娘子不必见怪，这个原是他妄想，不是老身撰造出来的话。娘子怎生算计，回他便了。”妙观道：“我起初原说利物之外再赠五十千，也不为轻鲜，只可如此求他了。肯让不肯让，好歹回我便了，怎胡说到这个所在？羞人答答的。”老嫫道：“老身也把娘子的话一一说了。他说道，原不希罕钱财，只要娘子允此一事，甘心相让，利物可以分文不取。叫老身就没法回他了，所以只得来与娘子直说。老身也晓得不该说的，却是既要他相让，他有话不敢隐瞒。”妙观道：“嫫嫫，他分明把此话挟制着我，我也不好回得。”嫫嫫道：“若不回他，他对局之时决不容情。娘子也要自家算计。”妙观见说到对局，肚子里又怯将起来，想着说到这话，又有些气不分，思量道：“叵耐这没廉耻的小弟子孩儿！我且将计就计哄他则个。”对老嫫道：“此话羞人，不好直说。嫫嫫见他，只含糊说道若肯相让，自然感德非浅，必当重报就是了。”

嫫嫫得了此言，想道：“如此说话，便已是应承的了。我且在里头撮合了他两口，必有好处到我。”千欢万喜，就转身到店中来，把前言回了小道人。小道人少年心性，见说有些口风儿，便一团高兴，皮风骚痒起来，道：“虽然如此，传言送语不足为凭，直待当面对相亲口许下了，方无翻悔。”老嫫只得又去与妙观说了。妙观有心求他，无言可辞，只得约他黄昏时候灯前一揖为定。

是晚，老嫫领了小道人径到妙观肆中客坐里坐了。妙观出



and refused to utter a word for a long time. The old lady added, "Do not take any offense at my words. It is only his wishful thinking, and not my fabrication. Tell me what you think of it and I will go tell him."

Miaoguan said, "I made it clear to you at the beginning that apart from the prize I would give him fifty thousand coins more, which is not a small sum for him. I did this because of my own need. Whatever it is, just tell me. How should I proceed in this? It is terribly embarrassing." The old lady said, "I did tell him what you said. He told me he did not care for the money, but he was sure to concede if you nodded your consent on this matter. He also said he would not take one single coin. At that moment I had no idea what to say to him, so I had to come back and inform you of it frankly. I know it was improper to speak thus, but I did not dare hold back what he said since you had first asked him to yield ground." Miaoguan said, "It is evident he is trying to corner me with this demand. I guess it will be hard for me to give a reply." The old lady said, "If he does not receive an answer, he is certain to show no mercy at the competition. You must think it over for your own sake."

As the talk shifted to the competition, Miaoguan became both nervous and indignant again. She thought to herself, "What a detestable shameless son of a bitch! See how I shall beat him at his own game and trick him." With this, Miaoguan said to the old lady, "It is a bit embarrassing for me to give a straightforward reply. When you see him, just mutter some vague assent, that if he is willing to concede I would be greatly indebted to him and definitely reward him for his kindness." Upon hearing this, the old lady mused, "It sounds like she has consented. I shall certainly benefit from all this if I help them satisfy their desires."

Most excited, she went back home and informed the Young Taoist of Miaoguan's response. On learning that it might work, the Young Taoist, trembled with great delight like an immature boy, "Since words alone are no proof, I suppose we might as well meet and promise each other personally, in case we change our minds." Again the old lady set out in Miaoguan's direction. Having no alternative, Miaoguan had to comply, and agreed to meet him at dusk and seal the deal with a bow.

Dusk found the old lady with the Young Taoist in the sitting room of



来相见，拜罢，小道人开口道：“小子云游到此，见得小娘子芳容，十分侥幸。”妙观道：“奴家偶以小艺擅名国中，不想遇着高手下临。奴家本不敢相敌，争奈众心欲较胜负，不得不在班门弄斧。所有奉求心事已托店主嬷嬷说过，万望包容则个。”小道人道：“小娘子分付，小子岂敢有违？只是小子仰慕小娘子已久，所以在对寓栖迟，不忍舍去。今客馆孤单，若蒙小娘子有见怜之心，对局之时，小子岂敢不揣自逞？定当周全娘子美名。”妙观道：“若得周全，自当报德，决不有负足下。”小道人笑容满面，作揖而谢道：“多感娘子美情，小子谨记不忘。”妙观道：“多蒙相许，一言已定。夜晚之间，不敢亲送，有烦店主嬷嬷伴送过去罢。”叫丫鬟另点个灯，转进房里来了。小道人自同老嬷到了店里，自想：适间亲口应承，这是探囊取物，不在话下的了。只等对局后图成好事，不题。

到了第三日，胡大郎早来两边邀请对局，两人多应允了。各自打扮停当，到相国寺方丈里来。胡大郎同支公子早把利物摆在上面一张桌儿上，中间一张桌儿放着一个白铜镶边的湘妃竹棋枰，两个紫檀筒儿，贮着黑白两般云南窑棋子。两张椅东



Miaoguan's Go School. Miaoguan came out and greeted them. When the greetings were done, the Young Taoist said, "It is truly a pleasure to meet you." Miaoguan replied, "I am lucky to be known throughout the country with such minor skill. It was beyond my expectations to come across a master player like yourself and it is clear I dare not face you at the match. However, other people are itching to see which of us is more powerful. I would expose my meager skill by playing with you. I guess this old lady told you my intended course of action. I really hope you shall be magnanimous." The Young Taoist stated, "How would dare I disobey your command? I have held you in high esteem for a long while now. This is why I set myself up in that house across from you and cannot bear to leave. So I am now staying in this small room all by myself. If you would only have pity on me, I dare not to flaunt my superiority at this match and shall definitely preserve your reputation." Miaoguan claimed, "I will reward your kindness and will not let you down if you help me save face." His face all smiles, the Young Taoist expressed his gratitude with his hands folded in front, "Thank you very much, and I shall keep that in mind." Miaoguan assured him, saying, "Thank you, and that is settled then. Now that it's dark, I cannot see you off in person. May I trouble you, Grandma, to see him off?" Then she told her maid to light another lamp and went back to her chambers.

After arriving at his boarding place with the old lady, the Young Taoist reflected over the mutual agreement between Miaoguan and himself, and confidently assumed everything had been settled, as simple as taking something out of his own pocket. His mind had room for nothing but thoughts anticipating the moment of frolicking with her after the competition, which we shall not go into much detail about here.

On the third day, Hu Dalang invited both sides for the match, and both readily agreed. Having dressed up for the occasion, both of them arrived at the Abbot's residence of the Grand Chancellor's Temple. Hu Dalang and the young man Zhi had already placed the prize on a table nearby. On the table at the center was a bamboo go board inlaid with copper-nickel alloy on four sides, along with two padauk containers filled with black and white counters made at a Yunnan kiln. On the east and west sides of



西对面放着，请两位棋师坐着交手。看的人只在两横长凳上坐。妙观让小道人是客，坐了东首，用着白棋。妙观请小道人先下子，小道人道：“小子有言在前，这一着先要饶天下最高手，决不先下的。直待赢得过这局，小子才占起。”妙观只得拱一拱道：“恕有罪，应该低者先下了。”果然妙观手起一子，小道人随手而应。正是：

花下手闲敲，出楸枰，两下交。争先布摆妆圈套，单敲这着，双关那着，声迟思入风云巧。笑山樵，从交柯烂，谁识这根苗。（右调《黄莺儿》）

小道人虽然与妙观下棋，一眼偷觑着他容貌，心内十分动火。想着他有言相许，有意让他一分，不尽情攻杀，只下得个两平。算来白子一百八十着，小道人认输了半子。这一番却是小道人先下起了，少时完局。他两人手下明白，已知是妙观输了。旁边看的嚷道：“果然是两个敌手，你先我输，我先你输，大家各得一局。而今只看这一局以定输赢。”妙观见第二番这局，觉得力量拮据，心里有些着忙，下第三局时，频频以目送



the table were two chairs on which the two players took their seats one after the other. The viewers sat down on the two benches beside the table.

Miaoguan had requested the Young Taoist to take the seat on the east side, and to take the white counters and make the first move, since she considered him a guest. "I have already made it clear," said the Young Taoist, "that I would beat the best player under the sun even after allowing him or her to make the first move. I shall definitely not make the first move. It will not be late for me to make the first move when you beat me." With both hands folded in front of her, Miaoguan said, "If so, excuse my impudence. It ought to be the lesser who should make the first move." So saying, Miaoguan picked up a stone, and the Young Taoist followed.

At the Chinese catalpa board shaded by trees and flowers
two players are poised to play go
Positioning with verve in tactical opening moves,
both rack their brains to entrap the other.
Each move serves many a purpose. The crisp reports
of black and white counters placed pensive on the board
seem to portend great clouds and rain.
None have been so engaged in this game.
For go lovers sure to evoke the scene
of ancient woodman Wang Zhi whose axe-handle crumbled
while playing go with an immortal chanced upon a mountain.

(To the tune of "Huangying'er")

Engaged as he was in the game, the Young Taoist still stole occasional glances at Miaoguan, which only spurred him on to greater gains against her. But on remembering her earlier promises, he spared her stones on purpose and the game ended almost in a draw, the total number of the white stones being a hundred and eighty. The Young Taoist lost by half one stone. The second game started with the Young Taoist making the first move. Before long the second game also ended with results clear to both of them. This time Miaoguan was the loser. The viewers shouted: "What a great match! It's a draw now. The third game will be the decider." A sense of restlessness overcame Miaoguan after the second game, for she could barely keep up despite her efforts. Over the course of the third



情。小道人会意，仍旧东支西吾，让他过去。临了收拾了官着，又是小道人少了半子。大家齐声喝采道：“还是本国棋师高强，赢了两局也！”小道人只不则声，呆呆看着妙观。胡大郎便对小道人道：“只差半子，却算是小师父输了。小师父莫怪。”忙忙收起了利物，一同众人哄了女棋师妙观到肆中，将利物交付，各自散去。

小道人自和一二个相识，尾着众人闲话而归。有的问他道：“那里不争出了这半子？却算做输了一局，失了这些利物。”小道人只是冷笑不答。众人恐怕小道人没趣，多把话来安慰他，小道人全然不以为意。到了店中，看的送的多已散去，店中老嫗便出来问道：“今日赌胜的事却怎么了？”小道人道：“应承过了说话，还舍得放本事赢他？让他一局过去，帮衬他在众人面前生光采，只好是这样凑趣了。”老嫗笑道：“这等却好。他不忘你的美情，必有好处到你，带挈老身也兴头则个。”小道人口里与老嫗说话，一心想着佳音，一眼对着对门，盼望动静。

此时天色将晚，小道人恨不得一霎时黑下来。直到点灯时候，只见对面肆里扑地把门关上了。小道人着了急，对老嫗道：“莫不这小妮子负了心？有烦嫗往彼处探一探消息。”老嫗



game, Miaoguan made frequent covert gestures to the Young Taoist who appeared to ignore them, though he acknowledged their purpose, and would give in a little. When the game came to an end, the Young Taoist had lost by half one stone again.

Everybody applauded with one voice, "Our master is far superior. She scored two victories!" The Young Taoist set his eyes blankly on Miaoguan in silence. Turning to the Young Taoist, Hu Dalang remarked, "It is only half one stone, even though you lost. Do not be disheartened." So saying, he took the reward and told Miaoguan to depart for the Go School accompanied by the spectators. Upon arriving at the Go School, he handed the prize to Miaoguan, and then the audience left. Tailing behind the audience, the Young Taoist chatted with a few spectators as he headed for his boardinghouse. Someone questioned him, "You could have taken that half one stone, could you not? But the fact is that you lost the game, and so much prize money as well." The Young Taoist just smiled coldly and did not give any response. Fearing he might be feeling dejected, the spectators extended their sympathy to the Young Taoist. However, the Young Taoist did not seem to be the least bothered. When he arrived at his boardinghouse, all the spectators who had accompanied him departed.

The old lady came up to him and inquired, "How did the competition go today?" The Young Taoist answered, "How could I bring my true powers into full play and beat her at the game after I had promised to let her off? I kept my word and she was fully honored by the entire audience present. I complied, and now everyone is pleased." The old lady smiled and said, "That's good. She will not forget your kindness and will definitely reward you. I am also glad you did so." While talking with the old lady, the Young Taoist got carried away with fanciful thoughts, and anxiously looked over with high hopes at the house across the street. It was almost dusk. The Young Taoist was swooning for the early arrival of the night. When it was the time to light the lamp, he suddenly noticed the door of the Go School banging shut. Struck with panic, he muttered to the old lady, "Could it be possible that she has changed her mind? May I bother you to go over and see if there is anything wrong?" The old lady assured him, "Don't worry. She did this so she could divert attention. Don't be

道：“不必心慌，他要瞒生人眼哩！再等一会，待人静后没消息，老身去敲开门来问他就是。”小道人道：“全仗嬷嬷作成好事。”正说之间，只听得对过门环挡的一响，走出一个丫鬟来，径望店里走进。小道人犹如接着一纸九重恩赦，心里好不侥幸，只听他说甚么好话出来。丫鬟向嬷嬷道了万福，说道：“侍长棋师小娘子多多致意嬷嬷，请嬷嬷过来说话则个。”老嬷就此同行，起身便走。小道人赶着附耳道：“嬷嬷精细着。”老嬷道：“不劳分付。”带着笑脸，同丫鬟去了。小道人就像热地上蚰蜒，好生打熬不过，禁架不定。正是：

眼盼捷旌旗，耳听好消息。

若得遂心怀，愿彼观音力。

却说老嬷随了丫鬟走过对门，进了肆中，只见妙观早已在灯下笑脸相迎，直请至卧房中坐地。开口谢道：“多承嬷嬷周全之力，日间对局，侥幸不失体面。今要酬谢小道人相让之德，原有言在先的，特请嬷嬷过来，交付利物并谢礼与他。”老嬷道：“娘子花朵儿般后生，恁地会忘事？小道人原说不希罕财物的，如何又说利物谢礼的话？”妙观假意失惊道：“除了利物谢礼，还有甚么？”老嬷道：“前日说过的，他一心想慕娘子，诸物不爱，只求圆成好事，娘子当面许下了他。方才叮嘱



impatient. I will go and knock at her door and ask her about it, if nothing happens after everything calms down.” The Young Taoist remarked, “I have to rely on you to help me finish this affair.” Just as their discussion ended, they heard the sudden clank of door handles across the street, and out came a maid heading directly for the small inn.

The Young Taoist was seized with an extreme ardor as if he had received a pardon from the emperor. He waited impatiently, eager to know what encouraging message she would want to pass on to him. Having made a curtsy, the maid said to the old lady, “My mistress asked me to extend her thanks to you and would like to have a word with you in person.” The moment the old lady arose and was about to go, the Young Taoist jumped up towards her and muttered at her ear, “Do put in a word, please.” The old lady replied, “No need to worry.” Having finished saying this, the old lady disappeared with the maid, both wearing smiles on their faces. Left alone in the room, the Young Taoist grew desperately restless and as distressed as an ant in a hot pan. What a scene:

Eyes wide open, he yearns for the flags
And banners heralding triumph.
Ears pricked up, he envisions glad tidings.
If not for the power of Guanyin
None may grant his wishes.

The old lady followed the maid into the school across the street. Miaoguan was all smiles standing by the lamp, awaiting her arrival. After she invited the old lady into her chambers, Miaoguan expressed her thanks, saying, “I was lucky, and I did not lose face at match. I am really grateful to your assistance. I am now considering the recompense of the Young Taoist’s kind cooperation, as I promised earlier. That is why I invited you here. I hope I may trouble you to take the prize and my gift of thanks to him.” Taken by surprise, the old lady looked baffled, “You are a young woman, yet you have a short memory. The Young Taoist repeatedly insisted that he is not interested in wealth. Why mention prizes and a gift of thanks?” Making a show of astonishment, Miaoguan pressed her, “Apart from the prize and the gratuity, what else did I promise?” The old lady answered, “You agreed to this just the day before yesterday. He stressed



了又叮嘱，在家盼望，真似渴龙思水哩！娘子如何把话说远了？”妙观变起脸来道：“休得如此胡说！奴是清清白白之人，从来没半点邪处，所以受得朝廷册封，王亲贵戚供养，偌多门生弟子尊奉。那里来的野种，敢说此等污言！教他快些息了妄想，收此利物及谢礼过去，便宜他多了。”说罢，就指点丫鬟将日间收来的二百贯文利物一盘托出，又是小匣一个，放着五十贯的谢礼，交付与老嫫道：“有烦嫫嫫，将去交付明白。”分外又是三两一小封，送与老嫫做辛苦钱，说道：“有劳嫫嫫两下周全，些小微物，勿嫌轻鲜则个。”

那老嫫是个经纪人家，眼孔小的人，见了偌多东西，心里先自软了，又加自己有些油水，想道：“许多利物，又添上谢礼，真个不为少了。那个小伙儿也该心满意足，难道只痴心要那话不成？且等我回他去看。”便对妙观道：“多蒙娘子赏赐，老身只得且把东西与他再处。只怕他要说娘子失了信，老身如何回他？”妙观道：“奴家何曾失甚么信？原只说自当重报，而今也好道不轻了。”随唤两个丫鬟捧着这些钱物，跟了老嫫送在对门去，分付：“放下便来，不要停留！”两个丫鬟领命，同老嫫三人共拿了礼物，径往对门来。果然丫鬟放下了物件，转身便走。

小道人正在盼望之际，只见老嫫在前，丫鬟在后，一齐进



he was interested in nothing except for your charms. His sole wish was to share a good time with you. You promised him in person. Even now, before I came here, he urged me again and again to do him this favor. He is now expecting to meet you in my house. Why have you gone back on your word?"

Face clouding instantly, Miaoguan exclaimed in a fury, "No more of this nonsense! I am a person of virtuous reputation. I possess a title conferred by the imperial court, and am remunerated by the nobility. I also have so many pupils. How dare this scoundrel utter such depraved words? Tell him to quickly abandon his flights of fancy and accept this prize and my gratuity. A handsome reward for him!" So saying, she motioned for her maid to bring the plate on which were placed the prize of two hundred thousand coins received earlier that day, as well as a small box containing a gratuity of fifty thousand coins, and handed them to the old lady, saying, "Please take this to him and tell him what I have said." Then Miaoguan took out some more money and gave it to the old lady as a reward for her assistance, saying, "Thanks for your help. Hope you do not mind it is such a paltry sum."

Experienced in business and eager for petty gain, the old lady instantly relented at the sight of so much money. Moreover, she had gained some profit from Miaoguan. So she muttered to herself, "The prize and the gratuity are quite a fortune. He should be perfectly content with this. Should he cling to this affair? I will go back and talk to him." Turning to Miaoguan, she said, "Thank you for your recompense. I will take this to him, but what shall I say if he says you have gone back on your word?" "What word have I gone back on?" Miaoguan defended herself. "I only said I would reward his kindness, and that I am now doing." As she said this, she summoned two maids to follow the old lady to carry this wealth to the opposite house. She also told her maids to return without delay, as soon as they had delivered the prize there. Taking the prize money in their hands, the two maids accompanied the old lady across the street. Then as soon as the prize had been delivered they walked out of the house without any delay as they had been told.

The Young Taoist was waiting anxiously, when the old lady, followed



门，料到必有好事到手。不想放下手中东西，登时去了，正不知是甚么意思，忙问老嫫道：“怎的说了？”老嫫指着桌上物件道：“谢礼已多在此了，收明便是，何必再问？”小道人道：“那个希罕谢礼？原说的话要紧！”老嫫道：“要紧要紧，你要紧，他不要紧，叫老娘怎处？”小道人道：“说过的话怎好赖得？”老嫫道：“他说道原只说自当重报，并不曾应承甚的来。叫我也不好替你讨得嘴。”小道人道：“如此混赖，是白白哄我让他了。”老嫫道：“见放着许多东西，白也不算白了。只是那话，且消停消停，抹干了嘴边这些顽涎，再做计较。”小道人道：“嫫嫫休如此说！前日是与小子靛面讲的话，今日他要赖将起来。嫫嫫再去说一说，只等小子今夜见他一见，看他当面前怎生悔得？”老嫫道：“方才为你磨了好一会牙，他只推着谢礼，并无些子口风。而今去说也没干，他怎肯再见你？”小道人道：“前日如何去一说，就肯相见？”老嫫道：“须知前日是求你的时节，作不得难。今事体已过，自然不同了。”小道人叹口气道：“可见人情如此！我枉为男子，反被这小妮子所赚。毕竟在此守他个破绽出来，出这口气！”老嫫道：“且收拾起了利物，慢慢再看机会商量。”当下小道人把钱物并叠过了，闷闷过了一夜。有诗为证：



by two maids, came into sight, and at once entered his room. Just as the Young Taoist was thinking that he had it made, the two maids had put down the things and walked out of the room. Very much puzzled, he asked the old lady urgently, "What did she say?"

Pointing to the plate on the table, the old lady replied, "Here are all the gifts. Just take them. There is no need to ask for more!" The Young Taoist said, "I do not care about these gifts. It is her words that matter." The old lady uttered, "Words that matter! Words that matter! You think words matter, but she does not. What can I do about that?" The Young Taoist grew angry: "How could she go back on her word?" The old lady said, "She said she had only offered to repay your kindness, and she had not promised you anything. I could not argue over it for you." The Young Taoist exclaimed, "She is a cheat. She cheated me and I let her off, and got nothing." The old lady consoled him, "You have received a lot of money in return. You cannot say you let her off for nothing. You might as well put this affair aside for the time and wipe that naughty and wicked saliva from the corners of your mouth before you carefully consider your next move."

The Young Taoist insisted, "You cannot speak as you do, Grandma. She promised me in person the day before yesterday. How could she go back on her word? May I trouble you to go and talk to her again? I must see her tonight. I want to see with my own eyes how she will back out, right in front of me!" The old lady explained, "I already wasted my breath on her. She only mentioned again the gifts, and I realized she was not about to give anything else away. No use going to talk to her now. Why should she see you?" The Young Taoist questioned, "Why did she so easily agree to see me the day before yesterday?" The old lady answered, "You should be aware she was at your command the day before yesterday and she had no choice. Now since the event is over, naturally the circumstances have also changed." The Young Taoist sighed, "What a hypocrite! Man though I am, I was taken in even by this slip of a girl. I will stay in this place and find a chance to avenge myself." The old lady said, "Now put the reward in order and await another opportunity." Putting the reward in order, the Young Taoist passed a night of frustration. The



亲口应承总是风，两家黑白未和同。

当时未见一着错，今日满盘还是空。

一连几日，没些动静。一日，小道人在店中闲坐，只见街上一个番汉牵着一匹高头骏马，一个虞候骑着，到了门前。虞候跳下马来，对小道人声喏道：“罕察王府中请师父下棋，备马到门，快请骑坐了就去。”小道人应允，上了马，虞候步行随着。瞬息之间，已到王府门首。小道人下了马，随着虞候进去，只见诸王贵人正在堂上饮宴。见了小道人，尽皆起身道：“我辈酒酣，正思手谈几局，特来奉请。今得到来，恰好！”即命当直的掇过棋桌来。

诸王之中先有两个下了两局，赌了几大觥酒，就推过高手与小道人对局，以后轮换请教。也有饶六七子的，也有饶四五子的，最少的也饶三子两子，并无一个对下的。诸王你争我嚷，各出意见，要逞手段。怎当得小道人随手应去，尽是神机莫测。诸王尽皆叹服，把酒称庆。因问道：“小师父棋品与吾国棋师妙观果是那个为高？”小道人想着妙观失信之事，心里有些怀恨，不肯替他隐瞒，便道：“此女棋本下劣，枉得其名，不足



following poem may serve as a proof:

Uttered promises are nothing but wind,
If inscribed not in black and white.
Though not one move wrong at the time,
Now the whole game is lost.

For several days running, nothing happened. One day as he was whiling the time away sitting in the small boardinghouse, the Young Taoist suddenly caught sight of a barbaric man leading a tall strong horse along, on which sat an attendant of a high official. The attendant dismounted from the horse at the door to the inn and shouted at the Young Taoist, “Our Prince Hancha wants to play go with you. Climb on the horse and let us depart.” The Young Taoist had to agree, and mounted the horse, the attendant following behind. Soon they arrived at the entrance to the Prince’s residence. Entering the Prince’s palace with the attendant, the Young Taoist found many princes and other nobility sitting down for a feast in the hall. All of them stood up at the sight of the Young Taoist, and said, “We are all getting tipsy and dying to play go. So you were specially sent for. You came just in time.” So saying, they ordered a servant to put the go board in place.

Firstly, two of the princes had already played a couple of games, using several gongs of wine as the stake, before they proposed that the winner play with the Young Taoist. Later on, the princes played with him in turn, but none made it to the winning side, despite some of them being allowed six or seven stones, some four or five, some two or three—the minimum allowed—placed on the board prior to the start of the game. At each game, the princes made a fuss over each move, everyone airing his own view in an attempt to outdo the others. However, the Young Taoist had no trouble responding to their tactics with keen foresight. Each prince marveled at such superb skill and drank a toast to him. One prince asked, “Who is actually superior, you or our woman master Miaoguan?”

Thinking of her failure to keep her word, the Young Taoist still felt most resentful and was unwilling to cover up for her any longer. “Her skills are really contemptible,” asserted the Young Taoist, “and she does not deserve her reputation.” “But it is said she defeated you the other day

为道！”诸王道：“前日闻得你两人比试，是妙观赢了，今日何反如此说？”小道人道：“前日他叫人私下央求了小子，小子是外来的人，不敢不让本国的体面，所以故意输与他，岂是棋力不敌？若放出手段来，管取他输便了！”诸王道：“口说无凭，做出便见。去唤妙观来，当面试看。”罕察立命从人控马去，即时取将女棋童妙观到来。

妙观向诸王行礼毕，见了小道人，心下有好些忸怩，不敢撑眼看他，勉强也见了一礼。诸王俱赐坐了，说道：“你每两人多是国手，未定高下。今日在咱们面前比试一比试，咱们出一百千利物为赌，何如？”妙观未及答应，小道人站起来道：“小子不愿各殿下破钞，小子自有利物与小娘子决赌。”说罢，袖中取出一包黄金来，道：“此金重五两，就请赌了这些。”妙观回言道：“奴家却不曾带些甚么来，无可相对。”小道人向诸王拱手道：“小娘子无物相赌，小子有一句话说来，请问各殿下看，可行则行。”诸王道：“有何话说？”小道人道：“小娘子身畔无金，何不即以身躯出注？如小娘子得胜，就拿了小子的黄金去；若小子胜了，赢小娘子做个妻房。可中也不中？”诸王见说，俱各拍手跌足，大笑起来道：“妙，妙，妙！咱们多做个保亲，正是风流佳话！”妙观此时欲待应承，情知小道人手段高，输了难处；欲待推却，明明是惧怕赌胜，不交手算



at the match. Why say so now?" asked the princes. "She secretly had someone tell me to do her a favor, to forfeit the game to her," answered the Young Taoist, "and since I am not native to this place, I dared not make her lose face in her own country. The defeat was a setup. How could I possibly be incapable of beating her? If I were to really demonstrate my skill, she is sure to lose." "Words alone are no proof," announced the princes, "Seeing is believing. Send for Miaoguan and let us thrash this out face to face."

Prince Hancha immediately sent an attendant on the task of fetching Miaoguan on horseback. Before long Miaoguan arrived. Having bowed to the princes, she then caught sight of the Young Taoist, whose presence made her feel ill at ease and perturbed. Not daring to look him squarely in the eye, she greeted him, though reluctantly. "Since you both are master players and it has not been truly decided which of you is superior," the princes announced, after asking them both to be seated, "we would like to ask you to compete in our presence. We will offer one hundred thousand coins of reward as a stake. How about that?" The Young Taoist stood up and replied before Miaoguan could respond: "I am afraid I do not find any reason for you to spend your money. I have the prize money for the match." So saying, he took out a piece of gold from his sleeve, and added, "This is my stake, five taels of gold." Miaoguan said, "But I have nothing on me as a stake."

"Since she has nothing to stake," the Young Taoist said to the princes, his hands folded in front of him, "I have a proposal and I would like to ask Your Highnesses if it is acceptable." "What is that?" questioned the princes. "Since she has no gold, why not stake her person? If she wins, she takes my gold. If I win, I make her my wife. Is that acceptable?" The princes clapped and cheered, "Wonderful! Wonderful! Wonderful! We shall serve as witnesses. How romantic! What a fairy tale!"

Just as she was on the verge of accepting the challenge, it occurred to Miaoguan that the Young Taoist was indeed more powerful than her, and she felt it would be most embarrassing if she were defeated. Then another thought arose, that if she declined, the others would think she was afraid of losing the game. She was entrapped in an awkward predicament. But,



输了，真是在左右两难。怎当得许多贵人在前力赞，不由得你躲闪。亦且小道人兴高气傲，催请对局。妙观没个是处，羞惭窘迫，心里先自慌乱了，勉强就局，没一子下去是得手的，觉是触着便碍。正所谓“棋高一着，缚手缚脚”，况兼是心意不安的，把平日的力量一发减了，连败了两局。小道人起身出局，对着诸王叩一头道：“小子告赢了，多谢各殿下赐婚。”诸王抚掌称快道：“两个国手，原是天生一对。妙观虽然输了局，嫁得此丈夫，可谓得人矣！待有吉日了，咱们各助花烛之费就是了。”急得个妙观羞惭满面，通红了脸皮，无言可答，只低着头不做声。罕察每人与了赏赐。分付从人，各送了回家。

小道人扬扬自得，来对店主人与老嫫道：“一个老婆，被小子棋盘上赢了来，今番须没处躲了。”店主、老嫫问其缘故，小道人将王府中与妙观对局赌胜的事说了一遍。老嫫笑道：“这番却赖不得了。”店主人道：“也须使个媒行个礼才稳。”小道人笑道：“我的媒人大哩！各位殿下多是保亲。”店主人道：“虽然如此，也要个人通话。”小道人道：“前日他央嫫嫫求小子，往来了两番，如今这个媒自然是嫫嫫做了。”嫫嫫道：“这是带挈老身吃喜酒的事，当得效劳。”小道人道：“小子如今即将昨日赌胜的黄金五两，再加白银五十两为聘仪，择一吉日烦嫫嫫替我送去，订约成亲则个。”店主人即去房中，取出一本



with so many nobles strongly pressing for it, she found it difficult to retreat. Meanwhile, the Young Taoist, elated and overconfident, was urgently pressuring her to accept the match. At a loss over what to do, Miaoguan became overcome by shame, distress and utter bewilderment. Against her will, she sat down to the match, but it turned out that none of her moves were satisfactory, which perfectly proved the saying "One is always at the receiving end when confronted by a superior opponent." Her usual style was even more diminished due to her uneasiness, resulting in two successive defeats. Standing up and walking over to the princes with a bow, the Young Taoist said, "I am the winner and thank you all for bestowing upon me this marriage."

Clapping their hands and expressing their praise, the princes exclaimed cheerfully, "These two masters are truly a born couple. Miaoguan has won a husband, though she lost the game. We will send you our gifts once the happy day is decided." Blushing with shame and modesty, Miaoguan hung her head in silence. Prince Hancha bestowed some prize money on each of them, and asked his attendants to see each of them off. Looking immensely self-satisfied, the Young Taoist remarked to the old innkeeper and his wife, "I have won a wife in a contest. This time she will have no way out." When asked to explain the matter, the Young Taoist told them about his match with Miaoguan at the princes' palace. "Now she will have no escape," the old lady said with a smile. "You need a matchmaker to ensure the formality of the matter," suggested the innkeeper. "The royal princes were my matchmakers," claimed the Young Taoist. "Despite this," the innkeeper added, "someone is needed to go and talk to her." "Since she requested Grandma to meet me a couple of times the other day," the Young Taoist said to the old lady, "it is natural you serve as my matchmaker." "With pleasure," the old lady agreed. "And you have to invite me to your wedding feast."

"I shall offer the five taels of gold I staked yesterday," announced the Young Taoist, "and another extra fifty taels of silver as my betrothal gift, as well as select an auspicious day. Then I may trouble you to go to her and get the marriage to proceed." Hearing this, the old innkeeper went into his room and brought out a calendar. Looking into the calendar, he



择日的星书来，翻一翻道：“明日正是黄道日，师父只管行聘便了。”一夜无词。

次日，小道人整顿了礼物，托老嬷送过对门去。连这老嬷也装扮得齐整起来：

白皙皙脸搽胡粉，红霏霏头戴绒花。胭脂浓抹露黄牙，
鬃髻浑如斗大。没把臂一双窄袖，忒狼狽一对宽鞋。

世间何处去寻他？除是金刚脚下。

说这店家老嬷装得花簇簇地，将个盒盘盛了礼物，双手捧着，一径到妙观肆中来。妙观接着，看见老嬷这般打扮，手中又拿着东西，也有些瞧科，忙问其来意。老嬷嘻着脸道：“小店里小师父多多拜上棋师小娘子，道是昨日王府中席间娘子亲口许下了亲事，今日是个黄道吉日，特着老身来作伐行礼。这个盒儿里的，就是他下的聘财，请娘子收下则个。”妙观呆了一晌，才回言道：“这话虽有个来因，却怎么成得这事？”老嬷道：“既有来因，为何又成不得？”妙观道：“那日王府中对局，果然是奴家输与他了。这话虽然有的，止不过一时戏言，难道奴家终身之事，只在两局棋上结果了不成？”老嬷道：“别样话戏得，这个话他怎肯认做戏言？娘子前日央求他时节，他兀自妄想，今日又添出这一番赌赛体，他怎由得你反悔？娘子休怪老身说，看这小道人人物聪俊，年纪不多，你两家同道中又是对手，正好做一对儿夫妻。娘子不如许下这段姻缘，又完了终



claimed, "Tomorrow is an auspicious date. You can do it tomorrow." Nothing more need be said of that night.

The next day, the Young Taoist prepared the gifts and asked the old lady to take them to Miaoguan across the street. The old lady also dressed herself up:

Her face made fair with ground white powder
Her hair jeweled red with velvet flowers.
Her thickly painted mouth betrays her yellowed teeth,
Her hair bun poised unusually large,
Her thin sleeves grip too closely her arms,
Her heavy clogs too big for her feet.
Only at the feet of Buddha's warrior guards
Could one ever encounter such a lady.

Thus splendidly dressed, the old lady placed the gifts in a box and carried it to Miaoguan's Go School. On seeing the strange display of the old lady's dress and the box in her hands, Miaoguan fathomed her intentions, and inquired hurriedly about her purpose. Smiling, the old lady said, "This is for you from the young man boarding at my inn. He said you accepted his offer of marriage personally yesterday at the princes' residence. Since it is an auspicious day today, he especially asked me to serve as his matchmaker and bring you these gifts of betrothal. In hopes that you shall keep them." After a long period of silence, Miaoguan uttered, "There is some truth in what he has said, but how could I accept?" "Why not," the old lady queried, "if what he said is true?"

"It is true I lost the game at the princes' palace," explained Miaoguan, "and I did agree to his terms for the match. But I thought it was just a joke. How could I decide on marriage on the basis of two matches?" "You may have played other jokes on him," said the old lady, "but how could it be possible for him to take this again for a joke? When you asked him to do you a favor and concede to you the other day, you said he was harboring fantasies. But again you decided to contest him. On what account would he now allow you to back out? Do not blame me for my honesty. This Young Taoist is young and handsome and you two are both master players. You truly would make a fine couple. You may as well accept his



身好事，又不失一时口信，带挈老身也喝一杯喜酒。未知娘子主见如何？”妙观叹口气道：“奴家自幼失了父母，寄养在妙果庵中。亏得老道姑提挈成人，教了这一家技艺。自来没一个对手，得受了朝廷册封，出入王宫内府，谁不钦敬？今日身子虽是自家做得主的，却是上无尊长之命，下无媒妁之言，一时间凭着两局赌赛，偶尔亏输，便要认起真来，草草送了终身大事，岂不可羞？这事断然不可！”老嫫道：“只是他说娘子失了口信，如何回他？”妙观道：“他原只把黄金五两出注的，奴家偶然不带得东西在身畔，以后输了。今日拼得赔还他这五两，天大事也完了。”老嫫道：“只怕说他不过！虽然如此，常言道事无三不成，这遭却是两遭了，老身只得替你再回他去，凭他怎么处！”妙观果然到房中箱里面秤了五两金子，把个封套封了，拿出来放在盒儿面上，道：“有烦嫫嫫还了他。重劳尊步，改日再谢。”老嫫道：“谢是不必说起。只怕回不倒时，还要老身聒絮哩！”

老嫫一头说，一头拿了原礼并这一封金子，别了妙观，转到店中来，对小道人笑道：“原礼不曾收，回敬到有了。”小道人问其缘故，老嫫将妙观所言一一说了。小道人大怒道：“这小妮子昧了心，说这等说话！既是自家做得主，还要甚尊长之命、媒妁之言？难道各位大王算不得尊长的么？就是嫫嫫，将



proposal. By doing so, you not only make a marriage but also fulfill your promise, and I, too, will have the chance of enjoying your nuptial wine. What are your thoughts on that?"

Miaoguan replied with a sigh, "I lost my parents as a child, and was brought up in the Miaoguo nunnery by an old, a nun who taught me this skill. With my unrivaled ability, I have met no peer, which won me a title from the imperial court. I can come and go to the imperial palaces and visit noble families freely, and am admired and respected by all. Free as I am to choose my future husband, I have neither the blessing of parents nor the good offices of a matchmaker. Would it not be a dishonor to take this seriously, and rush into a ceremony of lifelong import due to the chance losing of two games? It will not work." "If he holds you accountable for backing out," asked the old lady, "what should I say to him?" "He only staked five taels of gold," Miaoguan replied, "It so happened that I had nothing on me at the time and the result was I lost the game. This matter, however big it might be, will be settled if I manage to pay him five taels of gold today."

"I am afraid he will not agree," said the old lady. "I know we have an old saying, 'No one achieves anything unless he tries three times,' yet this has been my second attempt. I will go tell him what you have said, and see what he says." Miaoguan went into her bedroom and fumbled around for five taels of gold in her trunk. Wrapping them up, she placed them in the box and said, "Would you mind taking this to him? I will reward you for your efforts later." "No need to mention a reward. I'm afraid I'll have to come bother you again if he refuses to give up."

So saying, the old lady took the young Taoist's box of gifts as well as Miaoguan's gold, and said goodbye to Miaoguan. Soon she was back at her boardinghouse. Smiling, she said to the Young Taoist, "Your gifts were rejected, but you have obtained something in return." When asked what happened, the old lady told him in detail what Miaoguan had said. "How dare this girl speak so, against her conscience?" the Young Taoist denounced her indignantly. "Since she has admitted she was free to choose a husband, why bother having the blessing of parents and the good offices of a matchmaker? Are not the princes' presence and their decision equal



礼物过去，便也是个媒妁了，怎说没有？总来他不甘伏，又生出这些话来混赖，却将金子搪塞。我不希罕他金子，且将他的做个告状本，告下他来，不怕他不是我的老婆！”老嫗道：“不要性急。此番老身去，他说的话比前番不同，也是软软的了。还等老身去再三劝他。”小道人道：“私下去说，未免是我求他了，他必然还要拿班，不如当官告了他，须赖不去！”当下写就了一纸告词，竟到幽州路总管府来。

那幽州路总管泰不华正升堂理事，小道人随牌进府，递将状子上去。泰不华总管接着，看见上面写道：

告状人周国能，为赖婚事：能本籍蔡州，流寓马足。因与本国棋手女子妙观赌赛，将金五两聘定，诸王殿下，尽为证见。讵料事过心变，悔悖前盟。夫妻一世伦常，被赖死不甘伏！恳究原情，追断完聚，异乡沾化。上告。总管看了状词，说道：“元来为婚姻事的。凡户婚田土之事，须



to the blessings of parents? As you took my gifts to her, you were the matchmaker. How could she say she has not had the good offices of a matchmaker? When it comes right down to it, she is just not willing to admit defeat and she made up such remarks to deny the facts. She hopes to put me off with gold. I could not care less about her gold. I shall bring a lawsuit against her. I certainly would not have to worry about her not being my wife.”

“Do not be impatient,” said the old lady. “What she said this time is different from what she said the first time. She was not so resolute about it this time. Just be patient and allow me to go talk to her for a third time.” “If I allow you to go talk to her in private one more time, it would plainly seem as if I was begging her, and she will certainly assume even more airs. I would rather bring her to court, so that she will not be able to repudiate her promise.”

The Young Taoist wrote down a complaint, and made a visit to the Governor’s residence in Youzhou Prefecture. Tai Buhua, the Youzhou Governor, was administering affairs in his office. The Young Taoist entered and handed in his complaint. On receiving the letter, Governor Tai Buhua found the contents to be as follows:

“I, the plaintiff Zhou Guoneng, sue for a breach of promise with regard to marriage. I am from Caizhou, and I lead an itinerant life in this prefecture. I took part in a go match, staking five taels of gold, against the defendant Miaoguan, the woman go player of your country, who promised to marry me if she lost the game. The princes were present at this incident. She has inexplicably gone back on her word, after she lost. The relationship of a husband and wife, of lifelong importance, has been violated, and I cannot allow this matter to rest here. Your investigation into this matter is earnestly requested, and it is strongly desired that you settle the case by pronouncing us husband and wife.

Yours truly

Zhou Guoneng”

Having read the indictment, the Governor said, “This is a case involving marital ties. Civil cases concerning household, marriage and social affairs are presumably delivered to and handled in the counties of Xijin and



到析津、宛平两县去，如何到这里来告？”周国能道：“这女子是册封棋童的，况干连着诸王殿下，非天台这里不能主婚。”总管准了状词，一面差人行拘妙观对理。

差人到了妙观肆中，将官票与妙观看了。妙观吃了一惊道：“这个小弟子孩儿怎便如此恶取笑！”一边叫弟子张生将酒饭陪待了公差，将赏钱出来打发了，自行打点出官。公差知是册封的棋师，不敢罗唣，约在衙门前相会，先自去了。

妙观叫乘轿，抬到府前，进去见了总管。总管问道：“周国能告你赖婚一事，这怎么说？”妙观道：“一时赌赛亏输，实非情愿。”总管道：“既已输了，说不得情愿不情愿。”妙观道：“偶尔戏言，并无甚么文书约契，怎算得真？”周国能道：“诸王殿下多在面上作证，大家认做保亲，还要甚文书约契？”总管道：“这话有的么？”妙观一时语塞，无言可答。总管道：“岂不闻，一言既出，驷马难追？况且婚姻大事，主合不主离。你们两人既是棋中国手，也不错了配头。我做主与你成其好事罢。”妙观道：“天台张主，岂敢不从？只是此人不是本国之人，



Wanping . Why have you come here?” “This woman has been conferred the master title of ‘Go Genius’ by the imperial court,” answered Zhou Guoneng, “and this case involves the princes. No one can have the final say, except Your Excellency the Governor.” The Governor then approved the indictment, and sent runners to bring Miaoguan to court.

The runners showed Miaoguan the official charges when they got to the Go School. Miaoguan was greatly startled, murmuring to herself, “Son of a bitch... How dare he play such an insolent trick?” Then she asked her disciple Zhang Sheng to treat the runners to wine and food and give them gratuities. After that, she prepared herself to go see the Governor. On learning that Miaoguan was a go master with an imperial title, the runners, not daring to annoy her any further, departed before her, saying they would meet her at the entrance to the *yamen*.

Miaoguan summoned a palanquin and was carried to the Governor’s residence. When she arrived, the Governor met her and asked, “Zhou Guoneng accuses you of a breach of promise. What have you to say about that?” “It is true I was on the losing side of the match,” replied Miaoguan, “but the marriage is not really of my free will.” “Since you lost the game,” the Governor said, “it is useless to argue if it was or was not of your free will.” “I thought it to be nothing more than a casual joke,” insisted Miaoguan, “and, with no written contractual evidence, how could it be taken seriously?” “The presence of Their Highnesses, the princes, may serve as the evidence,” retorted Zhou Guoneng, the Young Taoist, “and they have agreed to act as witnesses on this matter. Is a written contract really necessary?” “Is what he said true?” asked the Governor. At a loss for words, Miaoguan had nothing to say in response.

Then the Governor said, “Are you not aware of the saying, ‘A word once spoken cannot be overtaken even by a team of four horses?’ Besides, the common practice concerning important matters such as marriage favors union rather than separation. Since both of you are master players of go, your marriage would not be a bad match. I therefore rule that you must marry him.” “How dare I disobey Your Excellency the Governor’s decision?” Miaoguan exclaimed, before adding, “But he is not from our country, and drifts from one place to another without a fixed abode. If I



萍踪浪迹，嫁了他，须随着他走。小妇人是个官身，有许多不便处。”周国能道：“小人虽在湖海飘零，自信有此绝艺，不甘轻配凡女。就是妙观，女中国手，也岂容轻配凡夫？若得天台做主成婚，小人情愿超籍在此，两下里相帮行教，不回故乡去了。”总管道：“这个却好。”妙观无可推辞，只得凭总管断合。

周国能与妙观各回下处。周国能就再央店家老嫗，重下聘礼，约定日期成亲。又到各王府说知，各王府俱各助花红灯烛之费。胡大郎、支公子一干好事的，才晓得前日暗地相嘱许下佳期之说，大家笑耍，各来帮兴。成亲之日，好不热闹。过了几时，两情和洽，自不必说。

周国能又指点妙观神妙之着，两个都造到绝顶，竟成对手。诸王贵人以为佳话，又替周国能提请官职，封为棋学博士，御前供奉。后来周国能差人到蔡州，密地接了爹娘，到燕山同享荣华。周老夫妻见了媳妇一表人物，两心快乐，方信国能起初不肯娶妻，毕竟寻出好姻缘来，所谓有志者事竟成也。有诗



marry him, I would have to follow his trail. I have a title conferred on me by the imperial court, due to which I am very much restricted in my movements.”

“Though I have roamed freely all over the world,” Zhou Guoneng admitted, “I am fully convinced of my outstanding talent, and I am not willing to resign myself to marrying an ordinary girl. As for Miaoguan, as the best woman master player, there is no reason for her to resign herself to an ordinary man. If Your Excellency the Governor grants us our marriage, I am ready to change my nationality and stay in this place forever so that we can help each other.” “That is a good idea,” confirmed the Governor. Unable to refuse, Miaoguan had to accept the Governor’s judgment.

Zhou Guoneng and Miaoguan returned home one after the other. Once more Zhou asked the old lady to go see Miaoguan with many betrothal gifts and fix the date of the wedding. At the same time, Zhou informed all the princes of the news and every prince presented him with wedding gifts. It was not until their wedding day that Hu Dalang, Young Man Zhi and the other busybodies discovered that the two had been secretly engaged earlier. Laughing heartily at this, they added much merriment to the wedding celebration. What a joyous scene it was!

Time passed and the two were very happy. It would be superfluous to dwell on the matter any further. Zhou Guoneng instructed Miaoguan in many magical moves and both reached the pinnacle of perfection, in possession of equal strength. Thinking it a fine story, the princes and nobility jointly tried to assign Zhou an official position. It turned out later that he was conferred the title “Go Specialist,” allowing all the doors of the imperial palaces to be open to him.

Later Zhou sent people on duty to Caizhou, and had his parents brought to Yanshan. From that point on the whole family enjoyed a happy life together. Deeply impressed with the beautiful deportment of their daughter-in-law, the old couple were most contented. It was not until then that they understood why their son Guoneng had earlier refused to marry. After all, he had attained a marriage made in heaven, which splendidly validated the saying “Where there is a will, there is a way.”

为证：

国手惟争一着先，个中藏着好姻缘。
绿窗相对无馀事，演谱推敲思入玄。





The poem below may serve as a conclusion:

The champion player is always on the offensive,
For a marriage made in heaven is hidden therein.
They sit by the window in a green-tree's shade, carefree
But for reveling in the mysteries of the game of go.



卷之三

权学士权认远乡姑 白孺人白嫁亲生女

词云：

世间奇物缘多巧，不怕风波颠倒。遮莫一时开了，到底还完好。 丰城剑气冲天表，雷焕张华分宝。他日然齐到，津底双龙袅。

此词名《桃源忆故人》，说着世间物事有些好处的，虽然一时拆开，后来必定遇巧得合。那丰城剑气是怎么说？晋时大臣张华，字茂先，善识天文，能辨古物。一日，看见天上斗牛分野之间，宝气烛天，晓得豫章丰城县中当有奇物出世。有个朋友雷焕，也是博物的人，遂选他做了丰城县令。托他到彼，专一为访寻发光动天的宝物。分付他道：“光中带有杀气，此



Tale 3

Scholar Quan Claims Relation to a Distant Aunt Lady Bai Is Beguiled into Marrying off Her Daughter

As the *ci* poem goes:

Coincidences on this earth are all foretold,
Whatever happens alters their attainment never.
Though for now far off the course original,
The grand finale shall as ordained appear.

Above Fengcheng County the spirit of the sword ascends,
Lei Huan and Zhang Hua each their own sword obtains.
When one day these two blades the other confronts
In Yanpingjin waters shall arise two great dragons.

Entitled “In Memory of an Old Friend at Taoyuan,” this *ci* poem tells us that all worldly affairs are predestined, and though divergent for a certain period of time, shall surely lead to happy endings. What may we learn about the spirit of the sword above Fengcheng County? In the Jin Dynasty (265-460), there was a minister named Zhang Hua, style name Maoxian, who specialized in astrology and the identification of relics. One day, looking up into the sky he noticed the glittering flash of treasure at an earthly location contiguous with the Big Dipper and the Cowherd constellations. He knew immediately that some rare treasures were to be found in Fengcheng County in Yuzhang Prefecture. Zhang Hua had a friend named Lei Huan who was also a learned person. Zhang Hua appointed Lei Huan as Magistrate of Fengcheng County and asked him to travel there promptly, to search for the treasure that had produced that earthshaking flash of light. Zhang said to Lei: “There is a murderous-



必宝剑无疑。”那雷焕领命，到了县间，看那宝气却在县间狱中。雷焕领了从人，到狱中尽头去处，果然掘出一对宝剑来。雄曰纯钩，雌曰湛卢。雷焕自佩其一，将其一献与张华，各自宝藏，自不必说。后来，张华带了此剑，行到延平津口，那剑忽在匣中跃出，到了水边，化成一龙。津水之中也钻出一条龙来，凑成一双，飞舞升天而去。张华一时惊异，分明晓得宝剑通神，只水中这个出来凑成双的不知何物。因遣人到雷焕处问前剑所在。雷焕回言道：“先曾渡延平津口，失手落于水中了。”方知两剑分而复合，以此变化而去也。至今人说因缘凑巧，多用延津剑合故事。所以这词中说的正是这话。

而今说一段因缘，隔着万千里路，也只为一件物事凑合成了，深为奇巧。有诗为证：

温峤曾输玉镜台，圆成钿合更奇哉。

可中宿世红丝系，自有媒人月下来。

话说国朝有一位官人，姓权，名次卿，表字文长，乃是南直隶宁国府人氏。少年登第，官拜翰林编修之职。那翰林生得



looking in that flash of light. It must undoubtedly emanate from swords.”

With this order, Lei Huan arrived at the county seat and found that the specter of the treasure originated from the county prison. Accompanied by a small entourage, Lei Huan arrived at the farthest end of the prison and did indeed unearth a pair of swords, the male titled “Chungou,” the female titled “Zhanlu.” Lei Hua kept one for himself and presented the other to Zhang Hua. Each kept his own sword, about which I shall have nothing further to say. Later however, while Zhang Hua was passing Yanpingjin one day with this sword, the sword suddenly sprung out of its box, jumped near the water, and turned into a dragon. Just at this instant another dragon leapt out of the water as well. The two dragons moved closer and soared up into the sky. Though he had been convinced the sword had magical power, Zhang Hua was greatly awestruck at this spectacle, wondering what this dragon from the water could have been. Then he sent a man to Lei Huan’s home to inquire about the whereabouts of Lei’s sword. “While crossing Yanpingjin at the ferry,” Lei Huan replied, “I accidentally lost hold of my sword and it dropped into the water.” On hearing this, Zhang Hua understood that this pair of swords had consummated a reunion after a period of separation, by transforming themselves into dragons and flying away together. People today often associate fate or coincidence with the tale of the swords of Yanjin. This is what this *ci* poem is about:

* * *

I am about to tell you a story about destiny, Something truly amazing.
It is about how two people, despite between them several thousand *li*,
finally became wed, due to a single cause.

The following poem serves as evidence:

Having offered a jade dressing table, his betrothal gift,
Astounded Wen Qiao¹ was, at his joyous marriage.
True! Old Man on the Moon, marriage god, works wonders,
Once he binds with red sash the feet of young lovers.

During our Ming Dynasty there once lived an official surnamed Quan, given name Ciqing, with style name Wenchang, who was from Ningguo Prefecture of southern Zhili. When still young, he succeeded in passing



仪容俊雅，性格风流，所事在行，诸般得趣，真乃是天上谪仙，人中玉树。他自登甲第，在京师为官一载有馀。京师有个风俗，每遇初一、十五、二十五日，谓之庙市，凡百般货物俱赶在城隍庙前，直摆到刑部街上来卖，挨挤不开，人山人海的做生意。那官员每清闲好事的，换了便巾便衣，带了一两个管家长班出来，步走游看，收买好东西旧物事。朝中惟有翰林衙门最是清闲，不过读书下棋，饮酒拜客，别无他事相干。权翰林况且少年心性，下处闲坐不过，每遇做市热闹时，就便出来行走。

一日，在市上看见一个老人家，一张桌儿上摆着许多零碎物件，多是人家动用家伙，无非是些灯台、铜杓、壶瓶、碗碟之类，看不得在文墨眼里的。权翰林偶然一眼瞟去，见就中有一个色样奇异些的盒儿，用手去取来一看，乃是个旧紫金钿盒儿，却只是盒盖。翰林认得是件古物，可惜不全，问那老儿道：“这件东西须还有个底儿，在那里？”老儿道：“只有这个盖，没有见甚么底。”翰林道：“岂有没底的理？你且说这盖是那里来的，便好再寻着那底了。”老儿道：“老汉有几间空房在东直



the imperial examinations and attained the position of a clerk of the chronicles at the Imperial Academy. He was handsome and graceful, gallant and adept at all the tasks he set himself to. As a dashing youth, he was often likened to a divine bard banished from Heaven to lead an earthly life, and was considered an exceptional talent. It was now over a year since he had become a palace graduate, and taken up an official position in the capital city.

At that time in the capital city it was popular practice to hold a fair on the 1st, 15th and 25th days of each month. On such occasions, thousands of wares were lined up for sale all the way from the Temple of the Town God up to the street on which the Ministry of Punishments was located. Such fairs attracted large crowds of people to the area, for both browsing and business. The officials who were curious and not too busy would come out in casual dress with one or two servants from their households, and make a few purchases of their favorite things or of some antiques. The Imperial Academy attached to the Imperial Court was the least busy, so members of the Academy usually spent their time doing nothing but reading, playing games of go, drinking, and visiting friends.

Scholar Quan was young and inclined to enjoy himself. He could be found strolling along the street whenever the occasion availed itself. One day he caught sight of an elderly man at a vending stall which had a full display of various small odds and ends, most of them being household wares such as candlesticks, copper ladles, teapots, bowls, plates, and the like. There was nothing in particular that would draw the attention of a cultured man. However, after a casual glance, Scholar Quan noticed a special item of a peculiar color. Picking it up he realized it was a lid that had come off an antique gold in-lay box. He knew it was a precious antique but felt sorry it was incomplete. Then he asked the elderly man: "It is only one part. Where is the rest of the box?" The elderly man answered: "I just have this lid. I have never seen the rest." Scholar Quan insisted: "How could that be? Tell me where you acquired the lid, so that we can go and find the other part of it."

The elderly man replied, "I have several rooms at Dongzhimen Gate, and I had rented them to a family of five. Some time later this family



门，赁与人住。有个赁房的，一家四五十口，害了天行症候，先死了一两个后生。那家子慌了，带病搬去，还欠下些房钱，遗下这些东西作退帐。老汉收拾得，所以将来货卖度日。这盒儿也是那人家的，外边还有一个纸篋儿藏着，有几张故字纸包着。咱也不晓得那半扇盒儿要做甚用，所以摆在桌儿上，或者遇个主儿买去也不见得。”翰林道：“我到要买你的，可惜是个不全之物。你且将你那纸篋儿来看。”老儿用手去桌底下摸将出来，却是一个破碎零落的纸糊头篋儿。翰林道：“多是无用之物，不多几个钱卖与我罢。”老儿道：“些小之物，凭爷赏赐罢。”翰林叫随从管家权忠与他一百个钱，当下成交。老儿又在篋中取出旧包的纸儿来包了，放在篋中，双手递与翰林。翰林叫权忠拿了，又在市上去买了好几件文房古物。回到下处来，放在一张水磨天然几上，逐件细看，多觉买得得意。落后看到那纸篋儿，扯开盖，取出纸包来。开了纸包，又细看那钿盒，金色灿烂，果是件好东西。颠倒相来，到底只是一个盖。想道：“这半扇落在那里？且把来藏着，或者凑巧有遇着的时节也未可知。”随取原包的纸儿包他。只见纸破处，里头露出一些些红的出来。翰林把外边纸儿揭开来看，里头却衬着一张红字纸。翰林取出，定睛一看，道：“元来如此！”你道写的甚么？上写道：



contracted an infectious disease and two of the young people died one after the other. The rest were so afraid that, even before they had recovered, they moved out of my house in a hurry, without paying the rent, only leaving me these articles as payment. So I accepted them. I have now brought the things here for sale, to help make a living. This lid is one of the articles they left behind. There was also a bamboo case with it, which is wrapped in a few pieces of paper. I could not figure out what this lid was for, so I put it on this table for sale. Maybe I would get a buyer. Who knows?" Scholar Quan said, "I am considering buying it, but it is a shame it is incomplete. Can you show me the case?" The elderly man reached under the table and took out the paper-wrapped, worn bamboo case. Scholar Quan remarked, "It is all mere trash, utterly worthless. Can you sell them to me at a low price?"

The elderly man said, "Since they are not worth much, it is up to you, sir, what you want to pay for them." Scholar Quan told his housekeeper, Quan Zhong, to pay him one hundred coins. The elderly man then took its original paper wrapping out from the bamboo container, wrapped the lid and placed it inside the bamboo container again. He handed this to Scholar Quan, who asked his servant to carry it for him, as they strolled along the street and bought a few more antique items used for calligraphy. After returning home, he arrayed all his purchases on a small marble table and studied them one by one, feeling very much pleased with what he had bought. Finally his eyes rested on the bamboo container. Removing the cover of the container, he took out the package wrapped in paper. He then removed the wrapping and carefully examined the box lid, which glistened with a golden light. It was indeed a treasure. After a careful study of it, he felt a bit dismayed that it was only the lid, with the body of it missing. He wondered, "Where could the body be? I shall put it away for now. I may get the chance to acquire the missing part later. Who knows?" While wrapping it again in the original paper, he noticed something red sticking out. Pulling apart the wrapping, he discovered a red slip of paper inside. He picked it up and gazed fixedly at it. He exclaimed in amazement, "Here's the answer!" What could it be, dear reader? The paper stated:



大时雍坊住人徐门白氏，有女徐丹桂，年方二岁。有兄白大，子曰留哥，亦系同年生。缘氏夫徐方，原籍苏州，恐他年隔别无凭，有紫金钿盒，各分一半，执此相寻为照。后写着年月，下面着个押字。翰林看了道：“元来是人家婚姻照验之物，是个要紧的，如何却将来遗下，又被人卖了？也是个没搭煞的人了。”又想到：“这写文书的妇人既有丈夫，如何却不是丈夫出名？”又把年月迭起指头算一算看，笑道：“立议之时，到今一十八年。此女已是一十九岁，正当妙龄，不知成亲与未成亲。”又笑道：“妄想他则甚？且收起着。”因而把几件东西一同收拾过了。

到了下市，又踱出街上来行走，看见那老儿仍旧在那里卖东西。问道：“你前日卖的盒儿，说是那一家掉下的。这家人搬在那里去了，你可晓得？”老儿道：“谁晓得他？他一家人，先从小的死起，死得来慌了，连夜逃去，而今敢是死绝了，也不见得。”翰林道：“他住在你家时，有甚么亲戚往来？”老儿道：“他有个妹子，嫁与下路人，住在前门。以后不知那里去了，多年不见往来了。”权翰林自想道：“问得着时，还了他那件东西，也是一桩方便的好事。而今不知头绪，也只索由他罢了。”



My family name is Bai and I live on Dashiyong Street. I have a two-year-old daughter whose name is Xu Dangui. I have a brother named Bai Da, who has a son, the same age as my daughter. The boy's name is Liuge. My husband, Xu Fang, is from Suzhou. In order that in the future my daughter and nephew, even after years of separation, may identify each other, this gold in-lay moneybox has been divided between the two families as a token of evidence for later corroboration. I have written this down on paper.

At the end of the note were the month, year, and a signature. Scholar Quan murmured to himself, "It appears to be some kind of authentication for a marriage. Being so important, why was it abandoned? The old man sold it to me! She must be a careless woman indeed." He then thought, "And since she had a husband, why not have her husband write the note?" Counting the years on his fingers, he said with a smile: "It has been eighteen years since the note was written. The girl should be nineteen now, in the prime of her youth. I wonder whether this sweet young girl has been married off or not..." Then he laughed at his thoughts, and said, "Why should I care about this? I will keep the lid for now." So saying, he arranged the antiques he had purchased and put them away.

On the following fair day, Scholar Quan strolled along the street and again came across the elderly man at his vending stall. He said to the elderly man, "You sold the lid of a moneybox to me the other day and said it had been left behind by a certain family. Do you have any idea where the family went to?" The elderly man replied, "I have no idea. This family suffered a string of deaths starting from the youngest. They became so frightened that they fled by night. They could have all died by now. Who knows?" Scholar Quan asked, "Did they have any relatives who regularly came to visit them when they were boarding in your house?" The elderly man answered, "The man in this family had a younger sister who had married a man from the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and this sister's family lived in Qianmen Gate. It has been years since I last saw them. I have no idea where they have gone." Scholar Quan thought to himself, "If I get the chance to locate their whereabouts, I can return the lid to them and it will be something worthy of merit. Since I cannot get any news about the family at present, I shall leave the matter as it is."



回还寓所，只见家间有书信来，夫人在家中亡过了。翰林痛哭了一场，没情没绪，打点回家，就上个告病的本。奉圣旨：“权某准回籍调理，病痊赴京听用。钦此。”权翰林从此就离了京师，回到家中来了。

话分两头，且说钿盒的来历。苏州有个旧家子弟，姓徐名方，别号西泉，是太学中监生。为干办前程，留寓京师多年。在下处岑寂，央媒娶下本京白家之女为妾。生下一个女儿，是八月中得的，取名丹桂。同时，白氏之兄白大郎也生一子，唤做留哥。白氏女人家性子，只护着自家人。况且京师中人不知外方头路，不喜欢攀扯外方亲戚，一心要把这丹桂许与侄儿去。徐太学自是寄居的人，早晚思量回家，要留着结下路亲眷，十分不肯。一日，太学得选了闽中二尹，打点回家赴任，就带了白氏出京。白氏不得遂愿，恋恋骨肉之情，瞒着徐二尹，私下写个文书。不敢就说许他为婚，只把一个钿盒儿分做两处，留与侄儿做执照，指望他年重到京师，或是天涯海角，做个表



Returning to his residence, he found a letter from home, informing him that his wife had passed away. Feeling most deeply grieved, he shed tears. In low spirits, he packed up for a trip back home. Then he presented a memorial to the emperor, requesting leave due to illness. The imperial decree stated, “Quan is granted leave to return home, and must come back immediately upon recovery. The above is an imperial decree.” With this, Scholar Quan left the capital city for his home.

Now let us for a short while leave him on his journey, and turn to the story of the unidentified moneybox. In Suzhou lived a man named Xu Fang, styled Xi Quan, from an ancient noble family, who used to be a student at the Imperial College. He had stayed in the capital city for years, hoping to obtain a promotion. Unable to withstand the loneliness, he managed, with the aid of a matchmaker, to obtain the daughter of a local family surnamed Bai as a concubine. Later a baby girl was born to them in the eighth month of the lunar calendar, hence the baby girl was named Danguì. In the same year, the concubine’s brother, Bai Da, had a son, whose given name was Liuge. Narrow-minded as she was, the concubine had no thoughts for those outside her own clan. Besides, the officials and their families living in the capital city had very few connections outside their homes, and did not trust marriage outside the boundaries of kinship. She therefore made her mind up to marry her daughter to her nephew. Scholar Xu had not been planning to stay in the capital city for too long, for he was clear that sooner or later he would leave for his hometown. He had hoped to marry his daughter to a man from his hometown. So he was rather displeased with his concubine’s marriage plans.

One day Supervisor Xu was appointed the Assistant Prefect of a central Fujian Prefecture. He therefore began preparations to go there with his concubine and take up office. Feeling disappointment at leaving her kinfolk, the concubine wrote down a note unbeknownst to her husband. In that note, although she did not directly mention the marriage of her daughter to her nephew, she merely stated that the moneybox was to be divided between the girl and the boy so that, if they met each other in the future, it would be verification of identification. The two parts of the box would be sufficient identification either when her daughter had the



证。白氏随了二尹到了吴门。元来二尹久无正室，白氏就填了孺人之缺，一同赴任。又得了一子，是九月生的，名唤糕儿。二尹做了两任官回家，已此把丹桂许下同府陈家了。白孺人心下之事，地远时乖，只得丢在脑后。虽然如此，中怀歉然，时常在佛菩萨面前默祷，思想还乡，寻钿盒的下落。已后，二尹亡逝，守了儿女，做了孤孀，才把京师念头息了。想那出京时节，好歹已是十五六个年头。丹桂长得美丽非凡。所许陈家儿子，年纪长大，正要纳礼成婚，不想害了色痨，一病而亡。眼见得丹桂命硬，做了望门寡妇，一时未好许人，且随着母亲、兄弟，穿些淡素衣服，挨着过日。正是：

孤辰寡宿无缘分，空向天边盼女牛。

不说徐丹桂凄凉，且说权翰林自从断了弦，告病回家，一年有余，尚未续娶。心绪无聊，且到吴门闲耍，意图寻访美妾。因怕上司府县知道，车马迎送，酒礼往来，拘束得不耐烦；揣料自己年纪不多，面庞娇嫩，身材琐小，傍人看不出他是官，



opportunity to go to the capital city or if they ran into one another in any part of the country. The concubine arrived at Suzhou with Xu. Since Xu Fang's wife was dead over such a long time, Bai was made his formal wife. Later they had a son, who was born in the 9th month and was named Gao'er. Having finished two terms of office, Xu returned home. He then had his daughter betrothed to a local family by the name of Chen.

His wife, Lady Bai, due to the distance and the lapse of time, had to forsake her idea of marriage between her daughter and nephew. Despite this, she felt extremely despondent. She periodically prayed in front of a figure of the *Bodhisattva*, hoping she might one day return to the capital city and find the other part of the moneybox. Later Xu died, leaving behind his widow with a daughter and a son. It was only then that she absolutely gave up her idea of returning to the capital city. She realized it was fifteen or sixteen years since they had left there. Dangui had grown up to be an extremely beautiful young woman. The son of the Chen's had also grown up, but just when he was about to send betrothal gifts and marry her, he suffered from strain of his internal organs due to having excessive sex and passed away. Dangui's horoscope was inauspicious and was bound to bring ill luck to any kin. Consequently, she came to be known as a "widow-to-be" instead of "wife-to-be." Since it was so difficult to find another proper match, Dangui, dressing plainly, led a meager life with her mother and brother. She was:

Like a single star in the vast sky,
Yearning for a beau, yet to no avail.

Let us now put aside for the moment the solitary life of Xu Dangui, and return to Scholar Quan, who was at this time at home on leave due to illness after his wife's death. He had remained single for over a year. One day, tired of being bored, he wandered about Suzhou, hoping to meet a beautiful concubine. He feared that if the local prefecture and county government officials learned of his arrival, they would offer him horses or chariots to honor his arrival, and involve him in welcome and farewell banquets, which would make him extremely ill at ease. Thinking him to be a young man with a boyish face and short stature, no one took him to be an official. So he shrouded his true status, disguised himself as a



假说是个游学秀才，借寓在城外月波庵隔壁静室中。那庵乃是尼僧。有个老尼唤做妙通师父，年有六十已上，专在各大家往来，礼度熟闲，世情透彻。看见权翰林一表人物，虽然不晓得是埋名贵人，只认做青年秀士，也道他不是落后的人，不敢怠慢，时常叫香公送茶来，或者请过庵中清话。权翰林也略把访妾之意问及妙通，妙通说是：“出家之人不管闲事。”权翰林也就住口，不好说得。

是时正是七月七日，权翰林身居客邸，孤形吊影，想着牛女银河之事，好生无聊。乃咏宋人汪彦章《秋闱》词，改其末句一字，云：

高柳蝉嘶，采菱歌断，秋风起。晚云如髻，湖上山横翠。帘卷西楼，过雨凉生袂。天如水。画楼十二，少个人同倚。（词寄《点绛唇》）

权翰林高声歌咏，趁步走出静室外来。新月之下，只见一个素衣的女子走入庵中。翰林急忙尾在背后，在黑影中闪着身子，



traveling *xiuca* and rented a room next door to the Moonbeam Nunnery outside town.

In the nunnery resided a nun named Abbess Miantong, who was over sixty. She was accomplished in rituals, formalities as well as worldly affairs. Moreover, she associated exclusively with influential families. Impressed by Scholar Quan's appearance and good manners, Miaotong knew he was no ordinary person, though she was unaware of his true identity. She knew that she should not cold-shoulder him. So she kept sending an incense attendant to take tea to his room or to beckon him over to the nunnery for conversation. One day, Scholar Quan took the chance to reveal to Miaotong his yearning for a concubine. She replied, "I am a nun and must renounce mundane affairs." Hearing this, Quan had to abandon the subject for the time being.

It was the 7th day of the 7th month. Scholar Quan, far away from home, was feeling extremely bored and lonely. This solitude reminded him of the legendary love story of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid. Then he chanted a *ci* poem "Autumn Examination," by the Song-dynasty poet Wang Yanzhang, altering one word in the last line:

Cicadas' shrill screams, rain's gathering song ceased.
Harsh blasts of chilly autumn gusts
The evening clouds like curled tresses,
O'er the lake, deep green cloaked mountains.

Scrolling up the curtain of the western chambers,
I feel cold, my dress lightly damp with drizzle.
The sky spans like endless waters.
Twelve buildings adorned so elegantly,
Yet as I stand here, I fathom not, alas,
Why my love comes not to join me.
(To the tune of "Dianjiangchun")

As he was chanting, Scholar Quan strolled out of his room. In the moonlight he caught sight of a woman dressed in white entering the nunnery. He hastened to follow behind her, stealing glimpses of her in the darkness. Abbess Miaotong came out to meet the woman. Uttering no

看那女子。只见妙通师父出来接着。女子未叙寒温，且把一炷香在佛前烧起。那女子生得如何？

闻道双衔凤带，不妨单着鲛绡。夜香知与阿谁烧？怅望水沉烟袅。云鬓风前丝卷，玉颜醉里红潮。莫教空度可怜宵，月与佳人共僚。（词寄《西江月》）

那女子拈着香，跪在佛前，对着上面，口里喃喃呐呐，低低微微，不知说着许多说话，没听得一个字。那妙通老尼便来收科道：“小娘子，你的心事说不能尽，不如我替你说一句简便的罢。”那女子立起身来道：“师父，怎的简便？”妙通道：“佛天保佑，早嫁个得意的丈夫。可好么？”女子道：“休得取笑！奴家只为生来命苦，父亡母老，一身无靠，所以拜祷佛天，专求福庇。”妙通笑道：“大意相去不远。”女子也笑将起来。妙通摆上茶食，女子吃了两盏茶，起身作别而行。

权翰林在暗中看得明白，险些儿眼里放出火来，恨不得走上前一把抱住。见他去了，心痒难熬。正在禁架不定，恰值妙通送了女子回身转来，见了道：“相公还不曾睡？几时来在此间？”翰林道：“小生见白衣大士出现，特来瞻礼！”妙通道：“此邻人徐氏之女，丹桂小娘子。果然生得一貌倾城，目中罕



greeting, the woman lit a stick of incense in front of the statue of the *Bodhisattva*. What did the woman look like?

Phoenix-like her braids float gracefully
The wispy gauze dress enhances her beauty.
Oh, for whom is she at night burning incense?
Why so sad, like the mist-veiled waters?

Hair over her brow ripples in the breeze,
As lovely as roses her fair cheeks.
Why should such a charming night be passed idly —
A night enchanted both by moon and by beauty?
(To the tune of “Xijiangyue”)

Clutching a stick of incense, the woman knelt in front of the figure of the Buddha. She gazed up and murmured in a soft voice, though nothing reached Scholar Quan’s ears. Then Miaotong came up to her and said, drawing an end to her prayers, “Young lady, you shall never be able to pour out all your worries. Let me put your wishes into words.” The woman stood up and asked, “Abbess, what could that be?” Miantong replied, “May the Buddha bless you! Marry a good man soon. How about that ?” The girl said, “Do not delude me. I was born under an inauspicious star. My father is gone and my mother is now old. I am alone, and have no one to turn to for a living. So I have come to pray to the Buddha for his blessing.”

Laughing, Miaotong said, “Broadly speaking you have just expressed the same idea I had summarized.” The woman laughed too. Miaotong brought tea and food, and the woman drank two cups of tea and then left. Scholar Quan, as he stood watching, had begun to grow more excited. He could scarcely hold himself back from leaping out to embrace her. Seeing her depart, he grew even more agitated. He was wildly carried away by his whimsical thoughts, when Miaotong returned from seeing the woman off, and noticed him. Miaotong remarked, “You are not in bed yet? How long have you been here?” Quan answered, “I just witnessed a lady dressed in white arrive here, so I too came to especially show my reverence.”

Miaotong said, “She is the daughter of the Xu’s, one of my neighbors.



见。”翰林道：“曾嫁人未？”妙通道：“说不得。他父亲在时，曾许下在城陈家小官人。比及将次成亲，那小官人没福死了，担阁了这小娘子做了个望门寡，一时未有人家来求他的。”翰林道：“怪道穿着淡素。如何夜晚间到此？”妙通道：“今晚是七夕牛女佳期，他遭着如此不偶之事，心愿不足，故此对母亲说了，来烧炷夜香。”翰林道：“他母亲是甚么样人？”妙通道：“他母亲姓白，是个京师人，当初徐家老爷在京中选官娶了来家的。且是直性子，好相与。对我说还有个亲兄在京。他出京时节，有个侄儿方两岁，与他女儿同庚的。自出京之后，杳不相闻，差不多将二十年来了，不知生死存亡。时常托我在佛前保佑。”翰林听着，呆了一会，想道：“我前日买了半扇钿盒，那包的纸上分明写是徐门白氏，女丹桂；兄白大，子白留哥。今这个女子姓徐名丹桂，母亲姓白，眼见得就是这家了。那卖盒儿的老儿说那家死了两个后生，老人家连忙逃去，把信物多掉下了。想必死的后生就是他侄儿留哥，不消说得。谁想此女如此妙丽，在此另许了人家，可又断了。那信物却落在我手中，



Her name is Dangui. She is really a beauty, the rarest beauty I have ever seen." Quan then asked, "Is she married?" Miaotong answered, "It is difficult to say. She was betrothed by her father, when he was alive, to a young master of the Chen family. Unfortunately, close to the time of their wedding, the young master had bad luck and died, leaving his young lady a widow-to-be. No one has ventured to propose to her yet." Quan said, "No wonder she was dressed in plain clothing. But how was it that she came to be here at such an hour?" Miaotong replied, "Tonight is the time for the meeting of the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid. Having suffered much adversity due to her engagement, she is rather downcast about her future. So she received permission from her mother to come burn a nightly stick of incense here."

Quan asked, "Who is her mother?" Miantong said, "Her mother is a member of the Bai family, originally from the capital city. While Dangui's father was in the capital city long ago awaiting appointment to a post, he married her mother and then brought her here. Dangui's mother is outspoken and easy to get along with. She once told me she has a brother in the capital city, who had a two-year-old son the same age as her daughter when she and her husband left the capital city. But they lost track of her brother's family over the past twenty years. She is most worried about the fate of her brother's family. For this reason, she often asks me to pray for them in front of the Buddha."

Having heard this, Scholar Quan thought to himself, "I bought that lid of a moneybox one year ago. It said on the paper, 'My family name is Bai. I have a daughter whose name is Xu Dangui. I have a brother named Bai Da, who has a son the same age as my daughter. The boy's name is Liuge.' Since this woman is Xu Dangui and her mother is Bai, this note must be from this family. The elderly man told me that the family lost two youngsters, and then the master of the family took hasty leave with the rest of his family, leaving the note and the lid behind in their rush. I think it may be possible that one of the youngsters who died was her nephew Bai Liuge. Now this woman turns out to be so attractive. She had a betrothal again in this place, but her fiancé passed away. Now I am in possession of the lid and the note. And by chance I have come upon her.



却又在此相遇，有如此凑巧之事！或者到是我的姻缘也未可知。”以心问心，跌足道：“一二十年的事，三四千里的路，有甚查帐处？只须如此如此。”

算计已定，对妙通道：“适才所言白老孺人，多少年纪了？”妙通道：“有四十多岁了。”翰林道：“他京中亲兄可是白大？侄儿子可叫做留哥？”妙通道：“正是，正是。相公如何晓得？”翰林道：“那孺人正是家姑，小生就是白留哥，是孺人的侄儿。”妙通道：“相公好取笑。相公自姓权，如何姓白？”翰林道：“小生幼年离了京师，在江湖上游学。一来慕南方风景，二来专为寻取这头亲眷，所以移名改姓，游到此地。今偶然见师父说着端的，也是一缘一会，天使其然。不然，小生怎地晓得他家姓名？”妙通道：“元来有这等巧事！相公，你明日去认了令姑，小尼再来奉贺便了。”

翰林当下别了老尼，到静室中游思妄想，过了一夜。天明起来，叫管家权忠，叮嘱停当了说话。结束整齐，一直问到徐家来。到了门首，看见门上有一个老儿在那里闲坐。翰林叫权忠对他说：“可进去通报一声，有个白大官打从京中出来的。”老儿说道：“我家老主人没了，小官儿又小。你要见那个的？”翰林道：“你家老孺人可是京中人姓白么？”老儿道：“正是姓白。”权忠道：“我主人是白大官，正是孺人的侄儿。”老儿道：“这等，你随我进去通报便是。”老儿领了权忠，竟到孺人面前。



What a coincidence! It will probably make for a happy marriage for me.” He checked his motives with his conscience and made up his mind, thinking, “It is a matter of a gap of almost twenty years and a distance of almost four thousand *li*. How can the matter be clearer? I ought to act as I desire!”

With this idea in his head, Scholar Quan said to Miaotong, “Could you tell me the age of the lady whom you spoke of just now?” Miaotong replied, “Over forty.” Quan asked, “Does she have a brother in the capital city named Bai Da, with a son named Liuge?” Miaotong shouted, “Exactly! How did you know that, sir?” Quan replied, “The lady is none other than my aunt. I am Bai Liuge, her nephew.” Miaotong said, “You must be jesting! Your family name is Quan. How come you now say it is Bai?” Quan said, “I left the capital city when I was very young and roamed about the south for the purpose of studying, at the same time hoping to enjoy the southern scenery, as well as seek out my relatives. That is why I later changed my name and arrived at this place. Today I am most fortunate since you brought up this story. It is truly a match made in heaven. Otherwise, how would I know the names of her brother and nephew?” Miaotong exclaimed, “What a coincidence! Please go to them tomorrow, sir, and claim your kinship. I will come see you with my blessings.” Parting from the old nun, Scholar Quan went back to his room. He was lost in fantasizing throughout the whole night. The next morning he told Quan Zhong about the matter and asked him to be careful in his talk.

After dressing up, Quan headed for the Xu residence, along with Quan Zhong. They saw an old man sitting by gate. Quan asked Quan Zhong to tell the old man, “Please report to your master the arrival of Master Bai from the capital city.” The old man responded, “Our master is dead. The young master is still young. Who exactly do you want to see?” Quan said, “Is the lady from a family named Bai from the capital city?” The old man said, “Yes, precisely.” Quan Zhong interrupted, “This is my lord, Master Bai, her nephew.” The old man said, “Really? Come with me and I will announce your presence.”

The old man guided Quan Zhong to Lady Bai. Quan Zhong being



权忠是惯事的人，磕了一头，道：“主人白大官在京中出来，已在门首了。”白孺人道：“可是留哥？”权忠道：“这是主人乳名。”孺人喜动颜色，道：“如此喜事。”即忙唤自家儿子道：“糕儿，你哥哥到了，快去接了进来。”那小孩子嬉嬉颠颠，摇摇摆摆，出来接了翰林进去。翰林腼腼腆腆、冒冒失失进去，见那孺人起来，翰林叫了“姑娘”一声，唱了一喏，待拜下去。孺人一把扯住道：“行路辛苦，不必大礼。”孺人含着眼泪看那翰林，只见眉清目秀，一表非俗，不胜之喜，说道：“想老身出京之时，你只有两岁，如今长成得这般好了。你父亲如今还健么？”翰林假意掩泪道：“弃世久矣。小侄只为眼底没个亲人，见父亲在时，曾说有个姑娘嫁在下路，所以小侄到南方来游学，专欲寻访。昨日偶见月波庵妙通师父说起端的，方知姑娘在此，特来拜见。”孺人道：“如何声口不像北边？”翰林道：“小侄在江湖上已久，爱学南言，所以变却乡音也。”翰林叫权忠送上礼物。孺人欢喜收了，谢道：“至亲骨肉，只来相会便是，何必多礼？”翰林道：“客途乏物孝敬姑娘，不必说起，且喜姑娘康健。昨日见妙通说过，已知姑夫不在了。适间这位是表弟，还有一位表妹与小侄同庚的，在么？”孺人道：“你姑夫在时已许了人家，姻缘不偶，未过门就断了，而今还是个没



experienced in worldly affairs, kowtowed before her and then said, "My Master Bai, who has come all the way from the capital city, is waiting outside." Lady Bai asked, "Is it really my brother's son Liuge?" Quan Zhong answered, "Yes, that is his pet name." Overjoyed, Lady Bai exclaimed, "That's wonderful!" Immediately she called her son and declared, "Your cousin is here, Gao'er. Go show him in." The boy ran out, trembling with happiness, and escorted Quan inside. Nervous, Quan walked inside. At the sight of Lady Bai, he bowed and called out, "Auntie!" He was about to kowtow before she stopped him, saying, "You have had a long exhausting journey. You may forego the formalities." With tears welling up in her eyes, Lady Bai fixed her eyes on Scholar Quan, deeply impressed by his exceptionally fine demeanor. She said joyfully, "You were only two when I left the capital city. Now you are a handsome young man! How is your father doing?"

Pretending to weep sadly, Quan shield his face with his hand and replied, "He died a long time ago. I am alone now. But I remember my father once told me when he was alive that my aunt had married a southerner. This is why I came south, to study, and to look for you. Yesterday while talking with the Abbess Miaotong of the Moonbeam Nunnery, by chance I learned from her that you were here. So that is how I came to see you." Bai asked, "But why do you not speak with a northern accent?" Quan answered, "I have been in the south a long time, and I truly appreciate the southern dialect. Perhaps that is why you find me with a changed accent."

Then Scholar Quan had Quan Zhong present some gifts. Lady Bai accepted them with pleasure, saying, "We are close kin. I am so happy you have come to see me. Why trouble yourself with presenting gifts?" Quan replied, "It was difficult finding suitable gifts for my aunt along the journey. Do not mention it. I am happy to see that you are in good health. Miantong told me yesterday that my uncle had passed away. A minute ago I saw my male cousin. As I recall, should I not also have a girl-cousin the same age as me? Is she still close by?" Lady Bai told him, "When your uncle was alive, she was betrothed to a young man. But it was predestined to be a bad match. The young man died before the wedding.



吃茶的女儿。”翰林道：“也要请相见。”孺人道：“昨日去烧香，感了些风寒，今日还没起来梳洗。总是你在此还要久住，兄妹之间时常可以相见。且到西堂安下了行李再处。”一边分付排饭，一手拽着翰林到西堂来。打从一个小院门边经过，孺人用手指道：“这里头就是你妹子的卧房。”翰林鼻边悄闻得一阵兰麝之香，心中好生侥幸。那孺人陪翰林吃了饭，着落他行李在书房中，是件安顿停当了，方才进去。权翰林到了书房中，想道：“特地冒认了侄儿，要来见这女子，谁想尚未得见。幸喜已认做是真，留在此居住，早晚必然生出机会来。不必性急，且待明日相见过了，再作道理。”

且说徐氏丹桂，年正当时，误了佳期，心中常怀不足。自那七夕烧香，想着牛女之事，未免感伤情绪，兼冒了些风寒，一时懒起。见说有个表兄自京中远来。他曾见母亲说，小时有许他为婚之意，又闻得他容貌魁梧，心里也有些暗动，思量会他一面。虽然身子懒怯，只得强起梳妆，对镜长叹道：“如此好容颜，到底付之何人也？”有《绵搭絮》一首为证：

瘦来难任，宝镜怕初临。鬼病侵寻，闷对秋光冷透襟，
最伤心静夜闻砧。慵拈绣纈，懒抚瑶琴。终宵里有梦
难成，待晓起翻嫌晓思沉。



My daughter has not been betrothed since.”

Scholar Quan asked, “May I meet her?” The Lady answered, “She caught a cold yesterday when she went to the nunnery to burn incense. She is not up and about yet. Anyway, you are to stay here for some time. You will have chances aplenty to see her. First of all, please take your baggage to the western chambers.” As she ordered dinner to be prepared, she led Quan by the hand to the western chambers. Passing a small courtyard gate, Lady Bai, pointed at it, saying, “Your girl-cousin’s bedroom is over there.” A scent of fragrant musk assailed Scholar Quan and made him feel flustered. After dinner Lady Bai saw to the transfer of his baggage into the study, before returning to her own room. When left alone in the study, Quan thought to himself, “I posed as her nephew, wishing to meet the girl. But I did not get the chance. Fortunately, the Lady was charmed. I will stay here, and I believe, sooner or later, I shall have the opportunity to be with the girl. No need to worry about it. I hope to see her tomorrow.”

Now let us turn to Xu Danguì. Being in the prime of her youth, she was rather haunted by the failure of her proposed marriage. That night when she had gone to the nunnery to burn incense, she was most dispirited, on thinking of the traditional meeting of Cowherd and Weaving Maiden, and had caught a cold. Consequently she was in no mood to rise with the morning. Hearing that her cousin had arrived from the capital city, she remembered her mother had told her before that she had been intended, in childhood, to marry him. She also heard that her cousin was tall and handsome. Though feeling poorly, the thought of seizing the chance to meet him tickled her fancy, and she forced herself to rise and dress. Looking into the mirror, she sighed, “I wonder to whom I shall present my beauty?” The following *ci* poem may well attest to her mood:

The mirror fearful, sighting a beauty so delicate and wan
Experiencing the bitter cold of yearning, of the lovelorn.
Most sad to hear in deep night her heart’s pounding.
No interest her embroidery in touching.
In no mood for the zither to be played.
Dreams of the night most ardently awaited.
Yet to no avail, dawn finds her overcast



梳妆完了，正待出来见表兄。只见兄弟糕儿急急忙忙走将来道：“母亲害起急心疼来，一时晕去。我要到街上去取药，姐姐可快去看母亲去！”桂娘听得，疾忙抽身便走了出房，减妆也不及收，房门也不及锁，竟到孺人那里去了。

叔翰林在书房中梳洗已毕，正要打点精神，今日求见表妹，只听得人传出来道：“老孺人一时急心疼，晕倒了。”他想到：“此病惟有前门棋盘街定神丹一服立效，恰好拜匣中带得在此。我且以子侄之礼入堂问病，就把这药送他丸。医好了他，也是一个讨好的机会。”就去开出来，袖在袖里，一径望内里来问病。路经东边小院，他昨日见孺人说，已晓得是桂娘的卧房，却见门开在那里，想到：“桂娘一定在里头，只作三不知闯将进去，见他时再作道理。”翰林捏着一把汗走进卧房。只见：

香奁尚启，宝镜未收。剩粉残脂，还在盆中荡漾；花钿翠黛，依然几上铺张。想他纤手理妆时，少个画眉人凑巧。

翰林如痴似醉，把桌上东西这件闻闻，那件嗅嗅，好不伎痒。又闻得扑鼻馨香，回首看时，那绣帐牙床，锦衾角枕，且是整齐精洁。想到：“我且在他床里眠他一眠，也沾他些香气，只



In reveries of deep ache and remorse.

Having finished dressing, she was about to meet her cousin when suddenly her brother Gao'er ran swiftly to her and cried out, "Mother was suffering from chest pains and fainted. I am going out to buy some medicine. Please go take care of Mother immediately, Sister." On hearing this, Dangui rushed out to see her mother, leaving her cosmetic box behind and the door open.

That morning, as soon he had dressed and was about to request a meeting with his cousin, Scholar Quan too heard someone shouting, "The Lady was suffering from chest pains, and fainted." He deliberated: "Nothing can cure this ailment except the 'Composite Pill' which is available only in an apothecary on Chessboard Street in Qianmen Gate in the capital city. I happen to have this medicine with me in my gift case. I will go, as her nephew, and inquire about her health, then offer her the medicine. By restoring her health, I shall gain her favor." He took the medicine out of the case and tucked it into his sleeve. Then he headed for the Lady's room.

While crossing the small courtyard on the east side, he caught sight of the room where Dangui stayed, as had been shown to him the day before. To his surprise he found the door open. He thought, "She must be inside. I'll just enter her room, pretending to know nothing, and see what happens." Nervously, the Scholar Quan tiptoed into her bedroom and found:

A charming dressing case left open, a precious mirror untended.

Face powder, eyebrow pigment strewn about on a tray.

Flowery ornaments, brilliant jewels clutter the dressing table.

Such slender fingers, she truly needs a man about to paint her eyebrows.

Deeply overcome and intoxicated, Scholar Quan took whiffs of the articles on the table one after another, and could hardly control his yearning. Right at that moment, an overwhelming sweet fragrance wafted over to him from another direction. He turned around and found it was from her exquisitely ornamented bed with embroidered curtains, and a silk quilt with a pillow decorated with animal horns, all clean and neat.

Quan thought to himself, "Why not take a rest on her bed, breathing in



当亲挨着他皮肉一般。”一躺躺下去，眠在枕头上，呆呆地想了一回。等待几时，不见动静，没些意智，慢慢走了出来。将到孺人房前，摸摸袖里，早不见了那丸药，正不知失落在那里了。定性想一想，只得打原来路上，一路寻到书房里去了。

桂娘在母亲跟前，守得疼痛少定，思量房门未锁，妆台未收，跑到自房里来。收拾已完，身子困倦，揭开罗帐，待要歇息一歇息，忽见席间一个纸包，拾起来打开看时，却是一丸药。纸包上有字，乃是“定神丹，专治心疼，神效”几个字。桂娘道：“此自何来？若是兄弟取至，怎不送到母亲那里去，却放在我的席上？除了兄弟，此处何人来到？却又恰恰是治心疼的药，果是跷蹊！且拿到母亲那里去问个端的。”取了药，掩了房门，走到孺人处来，问道：“母亲，兄弟取药回来未曾？”孺人道：“望得眼穿。这孩子不知在那里顽耍，再不来了。”桂娘道：“好教母亲得知，适间转到房中，只见床上一颗丸药，纸上写着‘定神丹，专治心疼，神效’。我疑心是兄弟取来的，怎不送到母亲这里，却放在我的房中？今兄弟兀自未回，正不知这药在那里来的。”孺人道：“我儿，这‘定神丹’只有京中前门街上有得卖，此处那讨？这分明是你孝心所感，神仙所赐。快拿来我吃。”桂娘取汤来递与孺人，咽了下去。一会，果然心疼立止，母子欢喜不尽。



some of the sweet fragrance as though I were next to her skin?” He lay down on the bed, his head on the pillow, and savored a momentary daydream. After nothing else turned up, he got up and hesitated for a moment before strolling out. The instant he reached Lady Bai’s room, he fumbled in his sleeve but found the pill missing. He paused and tried to recall where he may have dropped it. He made his way back to his study. Meanwhile Dangui was attending on her mother. When her mother’s pain had subsided, Dangui suddenly remembered that she had left her door open and her cosmetics untended. She ran back to her room and put them back in proper order. Feeling a little tired, she lifted the bed curtain and was about to lie down briefly, when she saw a paper package on the bed. She picked it up and opened it. It was a medicinal pill with paper wrapping that carried the words: “Composite Pill, effective for chest pains. A most potent medicine.” Dangui wondered, “Where did this pill come from? If my brother had bought it, why did he not take it to Mother’s room? Why did he put it here on my bed? But if it was not my brother, who else could have come and put it here? And it is the very medicine to cure chest pains! How strange! Anyway I shall take it to my mother and ask her about it.” She took the pill, shut the door, and then went into her mother’s room.

She asked her mother “Has my brother come back with the medicine yet, Mother?” Lady Bai replied, “I’m running out of patience waiting for him. I guess that boy must be playing somewhere and who knows when he’ll be back.” Dangui said, “Listen, Mother. When I went back in my bedroom, I found a medicinal pill on my bed. The paper wrapping reads, ‘Composite Pill. Effective for chest pains. A most potent medicine.’ I presumed it must be my brother who put it there, but why did he not bring it to you instead? Since my brother has not yet returned, it is a mystery where this medicine came from.” Lady Bai said, “This Composite Pill is only available, Daughter, from an apothecary on a street in Qianmen Gate in the capital city. How could this medicine be found in here in this place? It is obvious that Buddha was so moved by your filial attitude toward me that it was bestowed on me. Come, let me take it.” Dangui brought water and handed the pill to her mother, who gulped it down. Soon her pain



孺人疼痛既止，精神疲倦，朦朦的睡了去。桂娘守在帐前，不敢移动。恰好权翰林寻药不见，空手走来问安。正撞着桂娘在那里，不及回避。桂娘认做是白家表兄，少不得要相见的，也不躲闪。这里权翰林正要亲傍，堆下笑来，买将上去，唱个肥喏道：“妹子，拜揖了。”桂娘连忙还礼道：“哥哥万福。”翰林道：“姑娘病体若何？”桂娘道：“觉道好些，方才睡去。”翰林道：“昨日到宅，渴想妹子芳容一见。见说玉体欠安，不敢惊动。”桂娘道：“小妹听说哥哥到来，心下急欲迎侍，梳洗不及，不敢草率。今日正要请哥哥厮见，怕遇母亲病急，脱身不得。不想哥哥又进来问病，幸瞻丰范。”翰林道：“小兄不远千里而来，得见妹子玉貌，真个是不枉奔波走这遭了。”桂娘道：“哥哥与母亲姑侄至亲，自然割不断的。小妹薄命之人，何足挂齿！”翰林道：“妹子芳年美质，后禄正长，佳期可待，何出此言？”此时两人对话，一递一来。桂娘年大知味，看见翰林丰姿俊雅，早已动火了八九分，亦且认是自家中表兄妹一脉，甜言软语，更不羞缩，对翰林道：“哥哥初来舍下，书房中有甚不周到处，可对你妹子说，你妹子好来照瞭一二。”翰林道：“有甚么不周到？”桂娘道：“难道不缺长少短？”翰林道：“虽有缺少，不好对妹子说得。”桂娘道：“但说何妨？”翰林道：“所少的，只怕妹子不好照管。然不是妹子，也不能照



disappeared, leaving both mother and daughter delighted.

With the pain gone, yet feeling exhausted, Lady Bai fell asleep. Dangui sat by her bed in watchful attendance. Scholar Quan, unable to recover the lost pill, came to see Bai about her health. He ran into Dangui, who assumed he must be none other than her cousin whom she was to meet. She did not move. Quan, intending to initiate intimacies with her, smiled widely and approached her with a great bow. Claspng her hands, he said, "Cousin, please accept my greetings." Responding with a curtsy, Dangui welcomed him, "May good fortune be yours, Cousin." Scholar Quan inquired, "How is my aunt?" Dangui answered, "She is feeling better. She fell asleep a moment ago."

Quan continued, "I arrived here yesterday and hoped to see you and admire your charm. I was told that you were not feeling well, so I did not intrude upon you." Dangui said, "I heard about your arrival and longed to meet you too. Not wanting to appear untidy, I had to dress carefully. But this morning as I was about to come meet you, my mother suddenly took ill, and I had to attend to her. It is really a surprise to meet you here at this moment. I am glad to see you are looking so fine." Quan replied, "I had to travel several thousand *li* to find this place. It is indeed well worth the journey just for a glimpse of your beauty." Dangui said, "My mother and yourself are closely related as aunt and nephew. My fate ordains that I be unfortunate. How can I, worthless as I am, be somebody who befits your attention?" Quan responded, "Why say such a thing? You are young and beautiful. You shall have abundant happiness later in life." The conversation carried on earnestly. Dangui was a mature young lady, and was immediately attracted by Quan's fine looks and refined manners. Furthermore, their kinship gave her the courage to be on easy terms with him. So she chatted pleasantly.

She told him, "You are new here. If you are not comfortable in your room for any reason, just feel free to tell me. I am ready to help." Quan replied, "Why should I feel uncomfortable?" Dangui said, "Do you not think you may need something?" Quan said, "Well, I do need something, but I feel uneasy expressing it in front of you." Dangui said, "Tell me, please." Quan said, "What I need, I think, is something you may not be



管。”桂娘道：“少甚东西？”翰林笑道：“晚间少个人作伴耳。”桂娘通红了面皮，也不回答，转身就走。翰林赶上去，一把扯住道：“携带小兄到绣房中，拜望妹子一拜望，何如？”桂娘见他动手动脚，正难分解，只听得帐里老孺人开声道：“那个在此说话响？”翰林只得放了手，回首转来道：“是小侄问安。”其时桂娘已脱了身，跑进房里去了。

孺人揭开帐来，看见了翰林，道：“元来是侄儿到此。小兄弟街上未回，妹子怎不来接待？你方才却和那个说话？”翰林心怀鬼胎，假说道：“只是小侄，并没有那个。”孺人道：“这等是老人家听差了。”翰林心不在焉，一两句话，连忙告退。孺人看见他有些慌速，失张失志的光景，心里疑惑道：“起初我服的定神丹出于京中，想必是侄儿带来的，如何却在女儿房内？适才睡梦之中，分明听得与我女儿说话，却又说道没有。他两人不要晓得前因，辄便私自往来，日后做出勾当。他男长女大，况我原有心配合他的。只是侄儿初到，未见怎的，又不知他曾有妻未，不好就启齿。且再过几时，看相机会圆成罢了。”

踌躇之间，只见糕儿拿了一贴药走将来，道：“医生入娘贼出去了！等了多时才取这药来。”孺人嗔他来迟，说道：“等你药到，娘死多时了。今天幸不疼，不吃这药了。你自陪你哥哥去。”糕儿道：“那哥哥也不是老实人。方才走进来撞着他，却在姐姐卧房门首东张西张，见了我，方出去了。”孺人道：“不



willing to offer. Yet you are the only person who can do so.” Dangui asked, “What is it?” Smiling, Quan said, “I need some companionship in my bed at night.” Blushing yet saying nothing, Dangui turned around and was about to leave. Quan rushed over and clutched her, saying, “Would you please allow me into your chamber so I may show my respect for you?” Dangui realized he was getting rather presumptuous with her.

While they were in this awkward situation, they heard the mother say, “Who is that talking?” Quan had to release his grip on Dangui and say to Lady Bai, “I am here to greet you, Aunt.” Dangui seized the opportunity to flee to her own room. Lady Bai pulled up the bed-curtain and saw the scholar. She said, “It is you. My son is not back with the medicine yet. Why is your cousin not here? Who were you talking to just now?”

Feeling guilty, Scholar Quan lied, “There is nobody else here but me.” Lady Bai said, “Well, I am getting advanced in years, perhaps I cannot hear clearly.” Quan was still feeling uneasy, and after a brief detached chat, rose to his feet and left. Feeling puzzled at his anxiety and flurry, Lady Bai thought to herself, “The Composite Pill I took must be from the capital city, and I am sure it was my nephew who brought it here. But how did it happen to get into my daughter’s room? I did indeed just now vaguely hear in my sleep my daughter talking. But he denied it! I am worried they may get to know of our earlier marriage plans and start to fool around with each other. It is possible this may develop into an affair later. Yet, they are grownups, and I did mean to bring them together originally. The reason I have not broached the subject is that he is a newcomer, and I have no idea if he is married or not. I shall wait for a bit, and then find the opportunity to get them married.” Right at this moment Gao’er stepped into the room with the medical plasters he had bought, saying, “The damned doctor was not in, so I had to wait a long, long time just to get this medicine.”

Thoroughly annoyed at her son for being late, Lady Bai chastised him, “If I had to depend upon this medicine you bought, I’d have died long ago. I am now fine and don’t need your medicine anymore. Go and see your cousin!” Gao’er replied, “I don’t think my cousin is virtuous. I saw him a moment ago hanging around my sister’s room. When he spotted



要多嘴！”糕儿道：“我看这哥哥也标致，我姐姐又没了姐夫，何不配与他了，也完了一件事，省得他做出许多馋劳喉急出相。”孺人道：“孩子家恁地轻出口！我自有主意。”孺人虽喝住了儿子，却也道是有理的事，放在心中打点，只是未便说出来。

那叔翰林自遇桂娘两下交口之后，时常相遇，便眉来眼去，彼此有情。翰林终日如痴似狂，拿着一管笔写来写去，茶饭懒吃。桂娘也日日无情无绪，恹恹欲睡，针线慵拈。多被孺人看在眼里。然两个只是各自有心，碍人耳目，不曾做甚手脚。

一日，翰林到孺人处去，却好遇着桂娘梳妆已毕，正待出房。翰林阑门迎着，相唤了一礼。翰林道：“久闻妹子房闼精致，未曾得造一观，今日幸得在此相遇，必要进去一看。”不由分说，望门里一钻，桂娘只得也走了进来。翰林看见无人，一把抱住道：“妹子慈悲，救你哥哥客中一命则个！”桂娘不敢声张，低低道：“哥哥尊重。哥哥不弃小妹，何不央人向母亲处求亲？必然见允。如何做那轻薄模样！”翰林道：“多蒙妹子指教，足见厚情。只是远水救不得近火，小兄其实等不得那从容的事了。”桂娘正色道：“若要苟合，妹子断然不从。他日得做夫妻，岂不为兄所贱？”捞脱了身子，望门外便走，早



me, he left immediately.” Lady Bai said, “Mind your own business!” Gao’er replied, “In my opinion, my cousin is handsome, and my sister has lost her intended. Why not let her marry my cousin so as to accomplish this matter of lifelong import? Meanwhile, that will also keep him from becoming impatient and doing something preposterous.”

The mother responded, “You are young and talking nonsense! I know what should be done.” Though she reproached her son, she saw there was some sense in what he said. She kept her thoughts to herself and said no more about it. After their first conversation, Scholar Quan and Dangui often exchanged amorous looks. Deeply infatuated with her, Quan kept writing day and night on sheets of paper with his brush, reluctant to take his meals, while Dangui also did not have the energy to doing anything either. She felt tired and sleepy and neglected her needlework. Lady Bai noticed the change in their behavior. Despite being very much attracted to each other, they had to constrain themselves from any rash actions, for there was always someone around.

One day Scholar Quan was on his way to Lady Bai’s room when he ran into Dangui, who had just finished dressing and was leaving her own room. He stopped and greeted her, “I have long heard of your beautifully decorated room, but have never had a chance to take a look. Now I have a chance and you must let me in.” Without awaiting a reply, he slipped inside. Dangui had to follow him in. Seeing there was no one around, he clasped her in his arms and pleaded, “Have mercy on me, Cousin. I am dying for you, please do save me!” Dangui, fearing to make a disturbance, said in a low voice, “Please behave yourself, Cousin. I am most glad you value me so much, but why not have someone go to my mother and make a proposal? She will give her approval. Why act secretly and so recklessly?” Quan replied, “I appreciate your advice, Cousin, and the way you treat me with warmth and sincerity. I know the value of decent conduct, but it does not meet my current needs. I just cannot wait any longer.” Dangui made a face and pronounced indignantly, “I will most definitely not comply with your indiscreet request. If I did, you would despise me after our marriage.” She wrenched herself free from his embrace, and walked out the door, her hairpins askew and her hair



把个云髻扭歪，两鬓都乱了。急急走到孺人处，喘气尚是未息。孺人见了，觉得有些异样，问道：“为何如此模样？”桂娘道：“正出房来，撞见哥哥后边走来，连忙先跑，走得急了些个。”孺人道：“自家兄妹，何必如此躲避？”孺人也只道侄儿就在后边来，却又不见到。元来没些意思，反走出去了。

孺人自此又是一番疑心，性急要配合他两个了，只是少个中间撮合的人。猛然想道：“侄儿初到时，说道见妙通师父说了，才寻到我家来的。何不就叫妙通来与他说知其事，岂不为妙？”当下就分付儿子糕儿，叫他去庵中接那妙通。不在话下。

却说权翰林走到书房中，想起适才之事，心中怏怏。又思量桂娘有心于他，虽是未肯相从，其言有理。却不知我是假批子，教我央谁的是？自又忖道：“他母子俱认我是白大，自然是钿盒上的根瓣了。我只将钿盒为证，怕这事不成！”又转想一想道：“不好，不好！万一名姓偶然相同，钿盒不是他家的，却不弄真成假？且不要打破网儿，只是做些工夫，俛得亲热，自然到手。”正胡思乱想，走出堂前闲步。忽然妙通师父走进门来，见了翰林，打个问讯道：“相公，你投亲眷，好处安身许久了，再不到小庵走走！”权翰林还了一礼，笑道：“不敢



disheveled. Then she ran to her mother's room, out of breath.

Her mother was shocked at the sight of her daughter and asked, "What has happened to you?" Dangui replied, "I ran into my cousin while leaving my room. So I started to run, a little too fast." Her mother said, "You are cousins. Why do you have to avoid meeting him?" Lady Bai expected her nephew to appear immediately, but he did not turn up. It turned out Scholar Quan, disappointed at Dangui's response, had vanished.

After that, Lady Bai became even more skeptical and suspicious. She realized it was imperative to get them married off as early as possible, but a matchmaker was wanting. All of a sudden, it occurred to her, "My nephew told me when he first saw me that he had come to our home after he had heard of us from the Abbess Miaotong. It might be a good idea to send for Miaotong and tell her about the matter." Once she had decided, she sent Gao'er to go and fetch Miaotong. Let us now leave her for the moment.

Back in his study, Scholar Quan was rather disheartened as he mulled over what had happened a short while ago. But on thinking it over, he recognized that Dangui would indeed accept his love and that what she had said was actually reasonable, though she had turned down his advances. "She does not know I am an imposter. But who can I talk with about this?" he wondered. Then he mused, "She and her mother do not question that I am the son of the Bai family. Sooner or later they will ask about the moneybox. If I show them the box, what reason will I have for worrying about my chances of marrying her?" But on thinking again, he told himself, "It is not a good idea. If someone else happens to have the identical name and the moneybox is not from Dangui's family, the whole matter will be a mess, and I will lose the trust the mother and daughter now have in me, and thus ruin a good marriage. Better keep the box lid hidden and try to become intimate with Dangui. I shall manage to get a hold of her eventually." While Scholar Quan was strolling in the courtyard, immersed in his schemes, Abbess Miaotong entered.

Miaotong greeted him, "You have been staying at your relatives' house a few days now. It must be so comfortable, sir, that you do not even stop by our nunnery!" Smiling, Quan said in return, "To be frank, my aunt



瞞师父说，一来家姑相留，二来小生的形孤影只，岑寂不过，贪着骨肉相傍，懒向外边去了。”妙通道：“相公既苦孤单，老身替你做个媒罢！”翰林道：“小生久欲买妾，师父前日说不管闲事，所以不敢相央。若得替我做个媒人，十分好了。”妙通道：“亲事到有一头在我心里。适才白老孺人相请说话，待我见过了他，再来和相公细讲。”翰林道：“我也有个人在肚里，正少个说合的，师父来得正好。见过了家姑，是必到书房中来走走，有话相商则个。”妙通道：“晓得了。”

说罢话，望内里就走进去。见了孺人。孺人道：“多时不来走走。”妙通道：“见说孺人有些贵恙，正要来看，恰好小哥来唤我，故此就来了。”孺人道：“前日我侄初到，心中一喜一悲，又兼辛苦了些儿，生出病来。而今小恙已好，不劳费心。只有一句话儿要与师父说说。”妙通道：“甚么话？”孺人道：“我只为女儿未有人家，日夜忧愁。”妙通道：“一时也难得像意的。”孺人道：“有到有一个在这里，正要与师父商量。”妙通道：“是那个？到要与我出家人商量。”孺人道：“且莫说出那个，只问师父一句话，我京中来的侄儿说道先认得你的，可晓得么？”妙通道：“在我那里作寓好些时，见我说起孺人，才来认亲的。怎不晓得？且是好一个俊雅人物！”孺人道：“我这侄儿，与我女儿同年所生，先前也曾告诉师父过的。当时在京就要把女儿许他为妻，是我家当先老爹不肯。我出京之时，



would not let me go out. Besides, I hated being alone and wanted to stay with kinfolk. So I have not gone out at all.” Miaotong said, “Since you’re bored with being alone, let me be your matchmaker.” Scholar Quan replied, “I have been thinking of acquiring a concubine for quite some time, but you told me you did not want to trouble yourself with worldly affairs when I mentioned it earlier. So that is why I did not bring it up again. It would be great if you would now be my matchmaker.” Miaotong said, “I have someone in mind as a match, but Lady Bai has just sent for me. I will talk to you in detail after I meet with her.” Quan said, “I also have a sweetheart in mind, and I am most worried not to have a matchmaker. You have come just in time. Please do come to my rooms after you see my aunt. I do need to talk with you.” “I shall try,” Miaotong assured him. Miaotong entered Lady Bai’s room. Lady Bai said to her, “It has been a long time since your last visit.” Miaotong replied, “It was said that you were not feeling well. I was about to come see you when your son visited me. So I have arrived.” Bai told her, “A couple of days ago my nephew came to see me. I was both happy and sad, and I was also a little tired. So I became ill. But I have now recovered. Please do not worry about me. I do, however, have one thing to talk over with you, Abbess.”

Miaotong asked, “What is it?” Lady Bai replied, “I worry day and night about the fact my daughter is not married.” Miaotong said, “It is no easy task finding a suitable match in a short time.” Bai said, “But I have got someone in mind now and I was thinking of talking the matter over with you.” Miaotong asked, “Who is it? Why consult me, a nun, about it?” Lady Bai replied, “Do not worry who he is. First let me ask you something. My nephew, who has come to see me from the capital city, said he first got to know you. Do you remember him?” Miaotong replied, “Of course. He stayed at our nunnery for some time. It is after he heard me talking about you, that he went to see you, claiming kinship. How could I not remember him? And he is really quite a handsome young man.”

Lady Bai continued, “My nephew and my daughter were born in the same year. This I have told you before. Years ago while I was still in the capital city, I had tried to engage my daughter to him. But my husband



私下把一个钿盒分开两扇，各藏一扇以为后验，写下文书一纸。当时侄儿还小，经今年远，这钿盒、文书虽不知还在不在，人却是了。眼见得女儿别家无缘，也似有个天意在那里。我意欲完前日之约，不好自家启齿，抑且不知他京中曾娶过妻否。要烦你到西堂与我侄儿说此事，如若未娶，待与他圆成了可好么？”妙通道：“这个当得，管取一说就成。且拿了这半扇钿盒去，好做个话柄。”孺人道：“说得是。”走进房里去，取出来交与妙通。

妙通袋在袖里了，一径到西堂书房中来。翰林接着，道：“师父见过家姑了？”妙通道：“是见过了。”翰林道：“有甚说话？”妙通道：“多时不见，闲叙而已。”翰林道：“可见我妹子么？”妙通道：“方才不曾见，再过会到他房里去。”翰林道：“好个精致房，只可惜独自孤守！”妙通道：“目下也要说一个人与他了。”翰林道：“起先师父说有头亲事要与小生为媒，是那一家？”妙通道：“是有一家，是老身的檀越。小娘子模样尽好，正与相公厮称。只是相公要娶妾，必定有个正夫人了，他家却是不肯做妾的。”翰林道：“小生曾有正妻，亡过一年多



was against it. As I was leaving the capital city, I secretly divided a moneybox in two halves as verification of identity. I left one half with my nephew's family and kept the other half with me. I also wrote a note. At that time my nephew was just a baby. So many years have passed and we were worlds apart; I did not know if they still have the other half of the moneybox and the note. But then my nephew arrives here. At present, since my daughter is still not successfully betrothed, it seems to me that it was divine intervention that made him come here. I wish to fulfill my earlier promise made years ago. But it would be improper for me to disclose the matter to my nephew. What is more, I am in the dark as to whether he has married or not in the capital city. I would most appreciate it if you could go to the western chambers and talk to him. If fortunately he is not married, I will arrange for their marriage. Would you please do me this favor?"

Miaotong replied, "It is my pleasure. I am sure he shall happily agree to it. May I take the half of the moneybox with me to help in prompting the conversation?" "Certainly," Lady Bai agreed readily. She went to look for it, and, after finding the lower part of the box, handed it to Miaotong. Tucking the lower part of the moneybox into her sleeve, Miaotong headed straight for the western chambers.

Upon meeting, Scholar Quan asked her, "Did you see my aunt, Abbess?" Miaotong replied, "Yes I did." Scholar Quan asked, "What did you talk about?" Miaotong answered, "We had not seen each other in a long time. Nothing in particular." Scholar Quan asked, "Did you see my cousin while you were there?" Miaotong replied, "No, I didn't, but I will go to her room and meet her in a moment." Scholar Quan continued, "Her room is really nice. It is too bad she has to stay alone." Miaotong said, "Right now I am considering a match for her." Scholar Quan continued, "A short time ago you mentioned you had someone in mind as a match for me. Who is it?" Miaotong replied, "She is one of my patrons, very attractive, and a perfect match for you. But you told me you wanted a concubine. Which means you must already have a wife at home. The girl I have in mind would not wish to be a concubine." Quan explained in reply, "I did have a wife but she passed away a year ago. I thought it

了。恐怕一时难得门当户对的佳配，所以且说个取妾。若果有好人家像得吾意，自然聘为正室了。”妙通道：“你要怎么样的才像得你意？”翰林把手指着里面道：“不瞒老师父说，得像这里表妹方妙。”妙通笑道：“容貌到也差不多儿。”翰林道：“要多少聘财？”妙通袖里摸出钿盒来，道：“不须别样聘财，却倒是个难题目。他家有半扇金盒儿，配得上的就嫁他。”翰林接上手一看，明知是那半扇的底儿，不胜欢喜。故意问道：“他家要配此盒，必有缘故。师父可晓得备细？”妙通道：“当初这家子原是京中住的，有个中表曾结姻盟，各分钿盒一扇为证。若有那扇，便是前缘了。”翰林道：“若论钿盒，我也有半扇，只不知可配得着否？”急在拜匣中取出来，一配，却好是一个盒儿。妙通道：“果然是一个，亏你还留得在。”翰林道：“你且说那半扇，是那一家的？”妙通道：“再有那家？怎佯不知，到来哄我！是你的亲亲表妹桂娘子的，难道你到不晓得？”翰林道：“我见师父藏头露尾不肯直说出来，所以也做哑妆呆，取笑一回。却又是一件，这是家姑从幼许我的，何必今日又要师父多这些宛转？”妙通道：“令姑也曾道来，年深月



would not be easy to find a suitable match from a family with similar social status, so that is why I told you I wanted a concubine. If this girl is from a good family and is acceptable, naturally I would make her my formal wife." Miantong said, "What kind of girl would please you?" Pointing to Dangui's room, he said, "To tell you the truth, someone like her would be most pleasing." Miaotong smiled and said, "Well, her features would certainly meet your requirements." Scholar Quan asked, "How many gifts would her family require for the betrothal?" Miaotong took the lower part of the moneybox out of her sleeve, and replied, "They do not want any gifts. But their requirement is rather exacting. They have this section of a moneybox and the one who owns the other part can marry her."

Taking it in his hand, Scholar Quan took a look and saw that it was indeed the lower part of the same moneybox. He was thoroughly elated, yet concealing his true feelings, asked, "Since they want the match for this box, there must be a story behind it. I wonder whether you would know anything about it." Miaotong replied, "This family used to live in the capital city. A promise of marriage was agreed upon for the girl and the lady's brother's son. The two families divided the moneybox between them, each keeping one part as a verification of identity for the future. The one who possesses the other part of the box shall be the destined match." On hearing this, Scholar Quan said, "As for this moneybox, I do have a part for it, but I am not quite sure if it is the correct match." He quickly took the lid of the box out of his gift case. The two parts made a perfect whole. Miaotong exclaimed, "They do indeed go together! It is truly amazing that you should possess it." Scholar Quan asked, "Could you tell me who is the owner of the other part?" Miaotong cried out, "Who else could it be?! Why pretend ignorance and make a fool of me? It is your cousin Dangui. Did you not already know that?" Scholar Quan replied, "I found earlier you were beating about the bush, which is why I also did not directly bring it up but just played along. But there is one thing I do not understand. Since my aunt had planned this marriage in our childhood, why does she need you to act as the matchmaker?" Miaotong explained, "Your aunt told me that a long time has passed since then, and



久，只怕相公已曾别娶，就不好意思，所以要老身探问个明白。今相公弦断未续，钿盒现配成双，待老身回复孺人，只须成亲罢了。”翰林道：“多谢撮合大恩！只不知几时可以成亲？早得一日也好。”妙通道：“你这馋样的新郎！明日是中秋佳节，我撺掇孺人就完成了罢，等甚么日子？”翰林道：“多感！多感！”

妙通袖里怀了这两扇完全的钿盒，欣然而去，回复孺人。孺人道是骨肉重完，旧物再见，喜欢无尽，只待明日成亲吃喜酒了。此时胸中十万分，那有半分道不是他的侄儿？正是：

只认盒为真，岂知人是假？

奇事颠倒颠，一似塞翁马。

权翰林喜之如狂，一夜不睡。绝早起来，叫权忠到当铺里去赁了一顶儒巾，一套儒衣，整备拜堂。孺人也绝早起来，料理酒席，催促女儿梳妆。少不得一对参拜行礼。权翰林穿着儒衣，正似白龙鱼服，掩着口只是笑，连权忠也笑。傍人看的无非道是他喜欢之故，那知其情？但见花烛辉煌，恍作游仙一



she was worried you already might be married. Therefore, she thought it inappropriate to bring up the matter. She asked me to approach you and find out. Since you have lost your wife and have not remarried, and your part of the moneybox goes together with hers, I will go tell her about it. Your marriage shall immediately become a reality.” Scholar Quan said, “I appreciate very much your kindness in doing me this great favor. But I wonder when we could get married. The earliest date is truly desirable.” Miaotong declared, “What an impatient bridegroom you are! Tomorrow is the Mid-autumn Festival. I shall persuade Bai to hold your wedding ceremony tomorrow. No need to wait for any other date.” “A thousand thanks, a thousand thanks,” Scholar Quan said.

With the two parts of the moneybox in her sleeve, Miaotong left in high spirits for Lady Bai’s room, and recounted the story to the lady. Believing that, now the other part of the box having been found, the long-planned marriage would finally come true, Lady Bai was extraordinarily overjoyed. She thought of nothing except the wedding party to be held the next day. In such a moment of delirium, how would it be possible for her to figure out that her nephew was a fraud? The following lines portray the truth:

The box is bona fide,
Yet the man’s a fake.
So blessings may hide
In a chance mistake.

Scholar Quan, in a state of extreme bliss, stayed up the whole night. Getting up unusually early the next day, he dispatched Quan Zhong on an errand to hire a scholar’s hat and dress for him. Then he prepared for the rituals of the wedding ceremony. The mother was up early, too, seeing to the wedding arrangements and urging her daughter to dress quickly and properly. The bride and bridegroom bowed as they performed the rites of worshipping heaven and earth during the ceremony. Dressed in scholar’s robes, Scholar Quan appeared at his best. However, he had to keep trying to conceal his ecstatic smiles. Quan Zhong, too, kept smiling. Others thought it was merely Scholar Quan immersed in marital bliss. Who would be suspicious? The house, like a fairyland, was awash in the splendor of

梦。有词为证：

银烛灿芙渠，瑞鸭微喷麝烟浮。喜红丝初绾，宝合曾输。何郎俊才调凌云，谢女艳容华濯露。月轮正值团圆暮，雅称锦堂欢聚。（右调《画眉序》）

酒罢，送入洞房，就是东边小院桂娘的卧房，乃前日偷眠妄想、强进挨光的所在，今日停眠整宿，你道快活不快活！权翰林真如入蓬莱仙岛了。入得罗帏，男贪女爱，两情欢畅，自不必说。云雨既阑，翰林抚着桂娘道：“我和你千里姻缘，今朝美满，可谓三生有幸。”桂娘道：“我和你自幼相许，今日完聚，不足为奇。所喜者，隔着多年，又如此远路，到底团圆，乃像是天意周全耳。只有一件，你须不是这里人，今入赘我家，不知到底萍踪浪迹，归于何处？抑且不知你为儒为商，作何生业。我嫁鸡逐鸡，也要商量个终身之策。一时欢爱不足恋也。”翰林道：“你不须多虑。只怕你不嫁得我，既嫁了我，包你有



the nuptial candlelight. The following *ci* poem is a vivid description of this occasion:

In the radiance of the candlelight
Shines the lotus face of the bride,
Wisps of musk slowly waft upward
From the duck-shaped incense burner.

Elated the gifted elegant groom, amazed is he
At marriage divined, unrivaled the bride's beauty
As this Moon Festival's orb full overhead
Bears witness to this pair's bliss to be wed.
(To the tune of "Huameixu")

When the wedding party was over, the bride and bridegroom were led into the nuptial chamber, which turned out to be Danguì's bedroom on the east side. Scholar Quan had long fantasized about being together with her in this chamber, into which he had even intruded the other day to take liberties with her. Now he would be with her for the whole night. Can you imagine how happy he was? He felt as if he had entered the wonderland of the immortals. The newlyweds fell together into bed and made love with immeasurable rhapsody.

After it was over, Scholar Quan said as he caressed Danguì, "Our conjugal bonds across great distance have now finally been realized. I am blessed for my past, present and future lives." Danguì said, "Our marriage was arranged in our childhood, and we are now wed. I do not think there is anything exceptional in it. What makes me happy is that, despite the lapse of all these years and the great distance between us, we have finally managed to be married. Indeed, it is fate. But I have something to talk about with you. You are not native to this place and have married into my family. I have no idea where you wish to settle in the future. Besides, I do not know if you wish to make a career as a scholar or a businessman. Now that I am your wife, I will be with you whatever you do in the future, but we need to make plans for our future. Momentary pleasure is not all what life is about."

Scholar Quan responded, "Do not worry. You would have to fret about



好处。”桂娘道：“有甚好处？料没有五花官诰夫人之分！”翰林笑道：“别件或者烦难，若只要五花官诰，包管箱笼里就取得出。”桂娘啐了一啐道：“亏你不羞！”桂娘只道是一句夸大的说话，不以为意。翰林却也含笑，不就明言，且只软款温柔，轻怜痛惜，如鱼似水，过了一夜。

明晨起来，各各梳洗已毕，一对儿穿着大衣，来拜见尊姑，并谢妙通为媒之功。正行礼之时，忽听得堂前一片价筛锣，像有十来个人喧嚷将起来，慌得小舅糕儿没钻处。翰林走出堂前来，问道：“谁人在此罗唳？”说声未了，只见老家人权孝，同了一班京报人，一见了就磕头道：“京中报人特来报爷高升的！小人们那里不寻得到？方才街上遇见权忠，才知爷寄迹在此。却如何这般打扮？快请换了衣服。”权翰林连忙摇手，叫他不要说破，禁得那一个住？你也“权爷”，我也“权爷”，不住的叫。拿出一张报单来，已升了学士之职，只管嚷着求赏。翰林着实叫他们“不要说我姓权”，京报人那管甚么头由，早把一张报喜的红纸高高贴起在中间。上写：



such things only if it had not been me you had married. Since you are married to me, I can guarantee that you shall gain a great deal from your marriage to me.” Dangui asked, “What could I gain from it? I do not think you can bring me the honor and wealth of the wife of a senior official.” Laughing, Scholar Quan responded, “Some other things may be harder to come by, but if you desire the honor of being the wife of a senior official, I could give that to you very easily, like taking something off my chest.” With a “pooh,” Dangui said, “Shame on you!” Dangui did not take what he had said to heart, while Scholar Quan only smiled in silence, not giving away the secret. He passed the whole night with her in intimacy and tenderness.

Having finished washing, and dressed in long robes the next morning, they went together to greet Lady Bai and to express thanks to Miaotong for her matchmaking efforts. While they were paying their respects, there suddenly came the sounds of gongs from the courtyard. In no time about a dozen insistent people entered. Frightened at the spectacle, Gao’er could not find anywhere to hide. Scholar Quan came out and asked, “Who is making such a clamor?” Hardly had he uttered the question when Quan Xiao, one of his old housekeepers, came forward with a team of messengers from the capital city. He kowtowed to Scholar Quan and said, “The messengers have come from the capital city to notify you of your promotion. We have been looking for you everywhere. Just now I saw Quan Zhong on the street and learned you were here. But why are you in such robes? Please be quick and change them.” Scholar Quan hurriedly made gestures to silence him, for fear that he might disclose his true identity. However, he was besieged by one shout after another of “Master Quan.” The messengers produced a scroll of the announcement, saying he had been conferred a fellowship at the Imperial Academy. They all loudly requested gratuities from him. Scholar Quan kept on urging them not to address him by his family name “Quan.” The messengers would not listen to him and had already placed high on the wall the good news, written on red paper, which read:

For Immediate Proclamation:

Lord Quan, of your honorable household, has been granted promotion



飞报：贵府老爷权，高升翰林学士，命下。

这里跟随管家权忠拿出冠带，对学士道：“料想瞒不过了，不如老实行事罢！”学士带笑脱了儒巾儒衣，换了冠带，讨香案来，谢了圣恩。分付京报人出去门外候赏。转身进来，重请岳母拜见。

那孺人出于不意，心慌撩乱，没个是处，好像青天里一个霹雳，不知是那里起的。只见学士拜下去，孺人连声道：“折杀老身也。老身不知贤婿姓权，乃是朝廷贵臣，真是有眼不识泰山。望高抬贵手，恕家下简慢之罪。”学士道：“而今总是一家人，不必如此说了。”孺人道：“不敢动问贤婿，贤婿既非姓白，为何假称舍侄光降寒门？其间必有因由。”学士道：“小婿寄迹禅林，晚间闲步月下，看见令爱芳姿，心中仰慕无已。问起妙通师父，说着姓名居址，家中长短备细，故此托名前来，假意认亲。不想岳母不疑，欣然招纳，也是三生有缘。”妙通道：“学士初到庵中，原说姓权，后来说着孺人家事，就转口说了姓白。小尼也曾问来，学士回说道：‘因为访亲，所以改换名姓。’岂知贵人游戏，我们多被瞒得不通风，也是一场天大笑话。”孺人道：“却又是一件，那半扇钿盒却自何来？难道贤婿是通神的？”学士笑道：“侄儿是假，钿盒却真。说起来实



as a Fellow of the Imperial Academy.

Taking out the official hat and girdle for scholars, Quan Zhong said, “I imagine you will not be able to conceal your identity any longer. Better to let them know.” Smiling, Scholar Quan took off his scholar’s hat and robes and changed into official uniform. Then he had the incense table place in front and kowtowed before it to express his gratitude to the emperor. He told the messengers to wait outside for their rewards, before going back to greet his mother-in-law once more. The unexpected news, like a thunderbolt out of the skies, was a great shock to the lady and she was at a loss over what to do.

As the scholar kowtowed to her, she said, “No, please, no need for this. I did not know your family name was Quan and that you were a high official from the imperial court. It is a shame that, I entertained an angel unawares. Please do forgive me for any slights I may have offended you with.” Scholar Quan said, “Now that we are one family, there is no need to mention it.” Lady Bai asked, “Could you tell me why you disguised yourself as my nephew and came to my humble home, since you are not from Bai family? There must be a reason for it.” Scholar Quan replied, “While I was taking a stroll one night during my stay in the nunnery, I caught a glimpse of your daughter. I admired her beauty very much. Then I asked Abbess Miaotong about her. Abbess Miaotong told me the details about your family. So I fabricated this story and came over as your nephew. Fortunately you believed what I said and agreed to marry your daughter to me. It is truly my great fortune.” Miaotong added, “When the scholar first put himself up at my place, he said his family name was Quan. Later when we talked about the family of Lady Bai, he changed and said he was from the family of Bai. I asked him why he called himself Quan, and he then told me that he had changed his name when searching for his relatives. How could I know he was not telling the truth? We were all deceived and what fools we made of ourselves.” Lady Bai said, “But I have another question. How did you get that half of the moneybox? Is it possible that you, my worthy son-in-law, have magical powers?” Scholar Quan, smiling, told her, “It is true that I am not your real nephew. But that part of the moneybox is definitely not something I falsified. The whole



有天缘，非可强也。”孺人与妙通多惊异道：“愿闻其详。”学士道：“小婿在长安市上，偶然买得此盒一扇。那包盒的却是文字一纸，正是岳母写与令侄留哥的，上有令爱名字。今此纸见在小婿处，所以小婿一发有胆冒认了。求岳母饶恕欺诳之罪！”孺人道：“此话不必提起了。只是舍侄家为何把此盒出卖？卖的是甚么样人？贤婿必然明白。”学士道：“卖的是一个老儿，说是令兄旧房主。他说令兄全家遭疫，少者先亡，止遗老口，一时逃去。所以把物件遗下拿出来卖的。”孺人道：“这等说起来，我兄与侄皆不可保，真个是物在人亡了！”不觉掉下泪来。妙通便收科道：“老孺人，姻缘分定，而今还管甚侄儿不侄儿，是姓权是姓白？招得个翰林学士做女婿，须不辱莫了你的女儿！”孺人道：“老师父说得有理。”大家称喜不尽。

此时桂娘子在旁，逐句逐句听着，口虽不说出来，才晓得昨夜许他五花官诰做夫人，是有来历的，不是过头说话。亦且钿盒天缘，实为凑巧，心下得意，不言可知。权学士既喜着桂娘美貌，又见钿盒之遇，以为奇异，两下恩爱非常。重谢了妙



thing seems to have been predestined, and it is truly beyond human reason.” Both surprised, Lady Bai and Miaotong chimed in one voice, “Could you please tell us more in detail?”

“One day long ago,” Scholar Quan said, “while I was strolling along a street in the capital city, I bought the lid of a moneybox in the market. It was wrapped in a piece of paper that bore the characters you wrote to your nephew Liuge, and on this paper was also your daughter’s name. Since then I have kept with me this note you had written. That is why I was so bold as to claim relation to you as your nephew. Please forgive me, mother-in-law, for my crime of deception.” Lady Bai replied, “Do not mention it. But I do not understand why my nephew’s family sold this part of the moneybox, or to whom they sold it. You must know something about this, son-in-law.” Scholar Quan told her, “The seller was an elderly man. He told me that he was the owner of the house in which your brother’s family used to live. He said that the family had contracted an infectious illness. The young members died and the elders fled, leaving some of their belongings behind. So the elderly man had brought them to sell at the fair.” Lady Bai said, “In that case, my nephew is probably dead. My brother might possibly by now have died, too. They only left behind this memento.” Tears ran down her face. Miaotong consoled her by saying, “Old Lady, marriage is destiny. Do not worry about whether he is or is not your nephew, and whether he is from the Bai family or the Quan family. Now, with a fellow of the Imperial Academy as your son-in-law, your daughter shall not be the least disgraced.” Lady Bai replied, “What you say is true.”

Thus everyone was gladdened. Having listened clearly to everything in silence, Dangui remembered that the night before Scholar Quan had promised to make her the wife of a high official, and she now understood that it was something already in his mind at the time, and he had not been boasting. The moneybox had worked its magic in bringing them together, and her joy knew no bounds. Scholar Quan loved Dangui’s beauty and marveled as well at the miracle of the moneybox. Dangui and he were deeply in love. He showed his gratitude to the Abbess Miaotong with generous gifts. Then he left with the whole family, his wife, mother-in-

通师父，连岳母、小舅都带了赴任。后来秩满，桂娘封为宜人，夫妻偕老。

世间百物总凭缘，大海浮萍有偶然。
不向长安买钿盒，何从千里配婵娟？



law and brother-in-law, for the capital city, to assume office. Later on, when his tenure of office expired, the title of “Yiren” was conferred on Dangui. The husband and wife lived together happily into their old age.

Everything in this world is predestined,

Every meeting is ordained by fate.

If not for the adventures of this box lid,

How the scholar came this far to his mate?





卷 之 四

青楼市探人踪 红花场假鬼闹

昔宋时三衢守宋彦瞻，以书答状元留梦炎，其略云：

尝闻前辈之言：吾乡昔有第奉常而归，旗者、鼓者、馈者、迓者、往来而观者，阡陌如堵墙。既而闺门贺焉，宗族贺焉，姻者、友者、客者交贺焉。至于仇者，亦蒙耻含羞而贺且谢焉。独邻居一室，扁镳远引若避寇然。予因怪而问之。愀然曰：“所贵乎衣锦之荣者，谓其得时行道也，将有以庇吾乡里也。今也，或窃一名，得一官，即起朝贵暮富之想。名愈高，官愈穹，而用心愈谬。武断者有之，庇奸慝、持州县者有之。是一身之荣，一乡之害也。其居日以广，邻居日以蹙。吾将入山林深密之地以避之。是可吊，何以贺为？”



Tale 4

A Missing Father Traced through Courtesans' Quarters Fanciful Wailing of Ghosts Reported in Safflower Fields

During the last years of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), Song Yanzhan, the Prefect of Sanqu Prefecture, wrote a letter to Liu Mengyan, which read:

"I once heard our elders speak of a man from this district of ours, who passed the highest imperial examination a long time ago. Upon his return home, multitudes—some holding flags, others beating drums, some carrying gifts, others gathering to meet him, as well as onlookers who happened to be passing by—lined up like walls of people along the roads and streets. Consequently, congratulations also came to him from families with eligible young ladies, from his own clan, from in-laws, from friends and from visitors. Even rivals came to him with compliments and gifts, despite feeling humiliated and ashamed.

Strangely, only one of his neighbors locked up his doors, windows and possessions, and fled far way, as though fleeing from bandits. The elders thought it strange and asked him why. 'Those who highly value his official rank, and glory in his silken robes,' answered the neighbor, looking solemn and stern, and 'take it for granted that he is fortunate, and will implement heaven's bidding as well as protect the local people under his care. Nowadays there are also many cases where some covet high official position, and plot to become rich and powerful as quickly as possible. The higher the official positions attained, the more evil the intentions they harbor. Some become local tyrants, some have scheming evil characters at their command, and hold county magistrates in thrall, so as to advance their own power, and bring calamity down on the whole region. The longer they remain in power, the more their neighbors suffer. This is why I intend to lay low, deep in the

此一段话，载在《齐东野语》中。皆因世上官宦，起初未经发际变泰，身居贫贱时节，亲戚、朋友、宗族、乡邻，那一个不望他得了一日，大家增光？及至后边风云际会，超出泥涂，终日在仕宦途中、冠裳里面，驰逐富贵，奔趋利名，将自家困穷光景尽多抹过，把当时贫交看不在眼里，放不在心上，全无一毫照顾周恤之意，淡淡相看，用不着他一分气力。真叫得官情纸薄。不知向时盼望他这些意思，竟归何用！虽然如此，这样人虽是恶薄，也只是没用罢了。撞着有志气肩巴硬的，拚得个不奉承他，不求告他，也无奈我何，不为大害。更有一等狠心肠的人，偏要从家门首打墙脚起，诈害亲戚，侵占乡里，受投献，窝盗贼，无风起浪，没屋架梁。把一个地方搅得荠菜不生，鸡犬不宁，人人惧惮，个个收敛，怕生出衅端，撞在他网里了。他还要疑心别人仗他势力，得了甚么便宜，心下不放松的昼夜算计。似此之人，乡里有了他怎如没有的安静。所以



mountains and forests. This is a cause for lament. Why should there be so much sycophancy?”

This passage is recorded in *Anecdotes of the Southern Song Dynasty*.¹ At a time when all officials in the world were poor and obscure before they rose to fame and status, none of their relatives, friends, clansmen or neighbors ever believed the day would soon dawn when everybody would benefit from their status. By the time their day did come later on, their standing in life would experience a sudden change. For after having overcome their lowly origins and entered official circles, to pursue fame and fortune all day long, these officials would efface the impoverished experiences of their pasts as much as was possible, and start to look down upon the friends of humble station they had cultivated when they were poor — with no notion of giving sympathy and assistance, or of taking care of former companions. It is indeed true that the feelings of officials are as thin as a sheet of paper.

It is quite difficult to understand why relatives and friends troubled themselves to lay so many hopes upon them in the first place! Evil as these types of officials were, they were also simply never helpful. People of integrity and of unyielding character by nature would neither curry favor nor solicit aid from them. There was nothing particularly harmful in most such officials. But there also existed a type of extremely villainous and heartless official, who would start to undermine their own foundations, harming their own relatives, extorting the local residents, taking bribes, sheltering thieves and burglars, and creating trouble out of nothing, such that the entire region would be flung into chaos. Not a single shepherd's purse became larger. Even fowls and dogs were not left in peace. Everybody tread carefully, for fear of causing trouble and getting caught in the officials' snares. Such officials were also often suspicious that others would accrue benefit from themselves by taking advantage of their power. Therefore, they would always occupy themselves day and night with scheming against others.

If there was such an official in the locality, how was it possible for the region to remain peaceful and quiet as before? It was in the light of this that Song Yanzhan, upon hearing that Liu Mengyan had been conferred



宋彦瞻见留梦炎中状元之后，把此书规讽他，要他做好人的意思。其间说话虽是愤激，却句句透切着今时病痛。看官每不信，小子而今单表一个作恶的宦，做着没天理的勾当，后来遇着清正严明的宪司做对头，方得明正其罪，说来与世上人劝戒一番。有诗为证：

恶人心性自天生，慢道多因习染成。
用尽凶谋如翹虎，岂知有日贯为盈！

这段话文，乃是四川新都县有一乡宦，姓杨，是本朝甲科。后来没收煞，不好说得他名讳。其人家富心贪，凶暴残忍，居家为一乡之害，自不必说。曾在云南做兵备僉事，其时属下有个学霸廩生，姓张名寅，父亲是个巨万财主，有妻有妾，妻所生一子，就是张廩生。妾所生一子，名唤张宾，年纪尚幼。张廩生母亲先年已死，父亲就把家事尽托长子经营。那廩生学业尽通，考试每列高等，一时称为名士，颇与郡县官长往来。只是赋性阴险，存心不善。父亲见他每事苛刻取利，常劝他道：



the title of Number One Scholar, wrote him that letter to caution him, expressing the hope that he would remain an honest man of integrity. Dripping with fury and resentment as the letter was, every comment hit at the social evils of our current age. If you, dear reader, do not believe me, I shall now relate you a story about an evil official who had committed crimes forbidden by heaven. Later when he encountered an honest, upright and just senior official assigned to the Prefecture by the emperor, he was pronounced guilty. This tale is meant to caution such people in the world. The following poem well serves as a demonstration:

The wickedness of evil people be innate,
Aver not that it is ill demeanor's fate.
Infused with horror rapacious as winged tigers,
Gross depravities one day bring retribution to evildoers.

* * *

The following tale is about a member of the rural gentry, surnamed Yang, who was once an official. He had earned the title of *jinshi* during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) before he began his career in office, and then came to live in Xindu county of Sichuan upon his retirement. He later came to a violent end, so his given name need not be mentioned here. Extremely wealthy as he was, he was by nature avaricious, cruel, brutal and vicious — a tyrant in his hometown. While holding office in Yunnan, with the post of Patrol Inspector, in charge of military affairs, he had a thuggish subordinate named Zhang Yin, a bursary-student. Zhang Yin's father was a man of immense wealth, who had a wife and a concubine. The wife gave birth to a son who grew up to be bursary-student Zhang; while the concubine gave birth to a son named Zhang Bin, still a young boy. Bursary-student Zhang's mother had died years earlier, and his father had entrusted the management of the household to Zhang Yin. Zhang Yin was quite adept at schoolwork and never failed to top the list in the examinations, which soon made him a local celebrity. This granted him the opportunity to have frequent contact and connections with prefecture and county officials.

Nevertheless, his father was most distressed by his son's treacherous and vile attributes, as well as his continuous scheming. Each time his



“我家道尽裕，勾你几世受用不了。况你学业日进，发达有时，何苦锱铢较量，讨人便宜怎的？”张廩生不以为好言，反疑道：“父亲必竟身有私藏，故此把财物轻易，嫌道我苛刻。况我母已死，见前父亲有爱妾幼子，到底他们得便宜。我只有得眼面前东西，还有他一股之分，我能有得多少？”为此日夕算计，结交官府，只要父亲一倒头，便思量摆布这庶母幼弟，占他家业。已后父亲死了，张廩生恐怕分家，反向父妾要索取私藏。父妾回说没有。张廩生罄将房中箱笼搜过，并无踪迹。又道他埋在地下，或是藏在人家，胡猜乱嚷，没个休息。及至父妾要他分家与弟，却又分毫不吐，只推道：“你也不拿出来，我也没得与你儿子。”族人各有公私厚薄：也有为着哥子的，也有为着兄弟的，没个定论。未免两下搬斗，构出讼事。那张廩生有两子，俱已入泮，有财有势，官府情熟。眼见得庶弟孤儿寡



father saw him making gains at other people's expense, he would try to counsel his son, "Our family has enough wealth to meet all your needs as well as those of your descendants. Besides, since you are making rapid progress in your studies, you will certainly have a bright future. Why bother to bicker over trifles and one-up others?"

Zhang Yin did not take his father's words as any expression of altruism. On the contrary, he became suspicious, "My father must have hoarded away his riches. That is why he takes wealth and such things lightly, and dislikes my exacting ways. Apart from this, my mother is dead, while he has his concubine and a son by her. The greater part of his wealth will in the end fall into their hands. I possess only what I have in my house, and half of that as well will go to my brother. How much would I then have left?" Keeping this in mind he began to scheme day and night. He started to ingratiate himself with local government officials in order to use their power after his father's death, so as to put the concubine and her young son at his mercy and seize his father's entire legacy in the days to come. Some time later, the father died. Zhang Yin, fearing the younger brother would insist on dividing the family fortunes between them, immediately asked the concubine for the private savings the old man had left behind. The concubine's reply was, "No!" Bursary-student Zhang rummaged through the chests and cupboards but could find nothing. Reluctant to concede, he began to suspect his father's wealth had been buried somewhere underground or had been moved to someone else's dwelling. Eventually, when the concubine demanded a division of the family property between the two brothers, Zhang Yin refused to present one copper of his belongings. "Since you have kept my father's hoard for yourself," he said, "I am entitled to the possessions in my house, and will give nothing to your son." Relatives of the household had different opinions regarding the dispute, with some siding with the elder brother, and others with the younger one.

The heated dispute eventually led to a lawsuit. By this time, bursary-student Zhang Yin's two sons had become students in official institutions. Both his sons were well established financially and socially and were on friendly terms with local government officials. The widow and her young



妇，下边没申诉处，只得在杨巡道手里告下一纸状来。

张廩生见杨巡道准了状，也老大吃惊。你道为何吃惊？盖因这巡道又贪又酷，又不让体面，恼着他性子，眼里不认得人。不拘甚么事由，匾打侧卓，一味倒边。还亏一件好处，是要银子；除了银子再无药医的。有名叫做杨疯子，是惹不得的意思。张廩生忖道：“家财官司，只凭府县主张。府县自然为我斯文一脉，料不有亏。只是这疯子手里的状，不先停当得他，万一拗髻起来，依着理断个平分，可不去了我一半家事？这是老大的干系！”张廩生世事熟透，便寻个巡道梯己过龙之人，与他暗地打个关节，许下他五百两买心红的公价。巡道依允，只要现过采，包管停当；若有不妥，不动分文。张廩生只得将出三百两现银，嵌宝金壶一把，缕丝金首饰一副，精工巧丽，价值颇多，权当二百两，他日备银取赎。要过龙的写了议单，又讨个许赎的执照。只要府县申文上来，批个像意批语，永杜断



son, however, having no one to turn to in the local court, handed their indictment against Zhang Yin to Patrol Inspector Yang.

On hearing Patrol Inspector Yang had accepted the indictment; bursary-student Zhang was greatly surprised. Do you know why? Yang was known to be greedy, ruthless and never compassionate. If offended and annoyed, he would show no mercy. He would use any pretext he could to settle a matter in favor of one party and against another. He had just one distinctive characteristic, which turned out to be a devotion to silver. There was no cure for him except silver. Notoriously known as “Madman Yang,” he behaved as a tyrant and did whatever he pleased, defying the law and anybody against him, such that nobody dared to offend him.

Bursary-student Zhang reasoned thus, “Lawsuits over family property are eventually settled by the Prefecture or county authorities. There is no way for me to lose the case since I have connections in the county and prefecture. Yet my present concern is that Madman Yang has a written complaint against me. If I do not buy him off first and if he appears to be at odds with me, he is sure to decide the case in accordance with the facts, equally dividing my father’s legacy between my half-brother and me. I would lose half of the entire family property, would I not? This is a grave situation.”

Capable and shrewd, student Zhang went to a trusted aide of the Patrol Inspector Yang for help, asking him to strike a private deal with Yang. Zhang promised to pay Patrol Inspector Yang an unconditional five hundred taels of silver to have the lawsuit decided in Zhang’s favor. Patrol Inspector Yang agreed to the terms and said that he would settle the case in Zhang’s favor if he would deliver the silver. If Zhang was not satisfied with the verdict, Yang would return the silver to Zhang in perfect condition. Consequently, bursary-student Zhang scraped up the three hundred taels of silver, along with a valuable teapot inlaid with gold and a gleaming and a skillfully designed set of gold jewelry priced at around two hundred taels of silver, which he hoped to redeem with silver in the days to come. Then he asked the go-between to write a receipt and a redemption certificate, granting him the right to take his valuables back with two hundred taels of silver. An agreement was reached so that, when the report



与兄弟之患，目下先准一诉词为信。若不应验，原物尽还。要廩生又换了小服，随着过龙的到私衙门首，当面交割。四目相视，各自心照。张廩生自道算无遗策，只费得五百金，巨万家事一人独享，岂不是九牛去得一毛，老大的便宜了？喜之不胜。

看官，你道人心不平。假如张廩生是个克己之人，不要说平分家事，就是把这一宗五百两东西让与小兄弟了，也是与了自家骨肉，那小兄弟自然是母子感激的。何故苦苦贪私，思量独吃自屙，反把家里东西送与没些相干之人？不知驴心狗肺怎样生的！有诗曰：

私心只欲蔑天亲，反把家财送别人。

何不家庭略相让，自然忿怒变欢欣？

张廩生如此算计，若是后来依心像意，真是天没眼睛了。岂知世事浮云，倏易不定？杨巡道受了财物，准了诉状下去，问官未及审详。时值万寿圣节将近，两司里头例该一人赍表进京朝



on the dispute was delivered by the county or prefecture authorities, Patrol Inspector Yang would write a comment in favor of bursary-student Zhang, so that he would dismiss for ever any trouble posed by his half-brother. To assure Zhang Yin, a counter-complaint was accepted first that Zhang had the right to claim back all deposits if his terms were not satisfactorily met. Zhang changed into plain clothes and the go-between showed him to a side entrance leading to Yang's office. The two parties conducted the exchange with a tacit understanding.

Bursary-student Zhang reckoned he could rest perfectly assured; with this trifling payment of five hundred taels of silver, he would gain hold of the entire wealth of the great household. Compared to the vast family fortune, this small amount of money was but a single hair out of nine oxen hides. He thought to himself, what a deal I have made! He could not suppress his joy. Dear readers, there are always some heartless people! If bursary-student Zhang had exercised a little reserve, with the minimal expectation of dividing the household equally with his half brother, and had presented the five hundred taels of silver to his half-brother, this silver would still be within the household, and the widow and her son would feel greatly indebted to him. What a heartless man he was to rack his brains over how to gouge his stepbrother and to give his own money to someone else! What a cruel and unscrupulous a man he was! As the poem reads:

Against kith and kin he rails, impelled by greed,
The family fortune he bestows on those wholly unrelated.
If to his own had he been but a trifle gracious,
In frenzied hatred's stead be delight and bliss.

If things turn out as bursary-student Zhang wishes, heaven is blind and the world in disarray. However, the future is always unpredictable, given the vicissitudes of life. Having received the silver and the valuables, Patrol Inspector Yang passed down Zhang's counterclaim to be processed by the relevant officials.

However, prior to the case being handed over to the court for trial and reported to senior authorities, it so happened that the emperor's birthday celebrations were approaching, prior to the case going to trial. In



贺。恰好轮着该是杨巡道去，没得推故，杨巡道只得收拾起身。张廩生着急，又寻那过龙的去讨口气。杨巡道回说：“此行不出一年可回。府县且未要申文，待我回任，定行了落。”张廩生只得使用衙门，停阁了词状，呆呆守这杨仝宪回道。

争奈天不从人愿，杨仝宪赍表进京，拜过万寿，赴部考察。他贪声大著，已注了“不谨”项头，冠带闲住。杨仝宪闷闷出了京城，一面打发人到任所接了家眷，自回籍去了。

家眷动身时，张廩生又寻了过龙的，去要倒出这一宗东西。衙里回言道：“此是老爷自做的事。若是该还，须到我家里来自与老爷取讨，我们不知就里。”张廩生没计奈何，只得住手，眼见得这一项银子抛在东洋大海里了。这是张廩生心劳术拙，也不为奇。若只便是这样没讨处罢了，也还算做便宜。张廩生是个贪私的人，怎舍得五百两东西平白丢去了？自思：“身有执照，不干得事，理该还我。他如今是个乡官，须管我



accordance with common practice, the provincial departments of administration and justice were being relied upon to send representatives with memorials to the capital, to present acclamations to the emperor. This year's mission was assigned to Patrol Inspector Yang. Unable to turn down the honor, he had to pack and make preparations to leave. The news sent Zhang Yin into a whirlpool of anxiety. He went to the go-between to inquire about his case, and a reply arrived from Yang, "This trip should not take me more than a year. In addition, the proceedings on your lawsuit are at an early stage, since the county's department of justice has not called for the complaint to be submitted yet. It should not be too late for me to handle the matter after I come back." Having no alternative, Zhang Yin had to bribe the county and prefecture courts to ask them to delay his case, and wait for Patrol Inspector Yang's return.

But heaven seemed to go against Zhang's wishes, and things did not turn out as expected. After arriving in Beijing and attending the imperial ceremonies, Patrol Inspector Yang was called up before the Board of Civil Personnel for assessment. Infamous for his avarice, he was labeled an "indiscreet" official, and forced to remain idle with no official rank, although he had been nominally demoted. Patrol Inspector Yang left the capital city, frustrated, and sent word for his wife and children to join him in his hometown. As Patrol Inspector Yang's household was making their preparations to depart, bursary-student Zhang voiced his concerns for his silver through the go-between, only to receive this response from the family members, "These are our master's affairs, not ours. You had better talk to the master in person if you have a right to claim the money. We know nothing about it." Zhang could push the matter no further and had to disregard the response, helplessly standing by as if this sum of silver had dropped into the eastern seas never to be recovered.

It was only natural that Zhang Yin's foolish schemes would incur these consequences, and he would have been better off to have just accepted his own ineptitude, and completely forgotten the matter. But it was not in Zhang Yin to be so generous. How could he afford to let five hundred taels of silver be snatched away so easily from him? He pondered, "I have the redemption certificate with me. There is no reason for Yang to



不着，我到 he 家里讨去。说我不过，好歹还我些；就不还得银子，还我那两件金东西也好。况且四川是进京必由之路，由成都省下到新都只有五十里之远，往返甚易。我今年正贡，须赴京廷试，待过成都时，恰好到彼讨此一项做路上盘缠，有何不可？”算计得停当，怕人晓得了暗笑，把此话藏在心中，连妻子多不曾与他说破。

此时家中官事未决，恰值宗师考贡，张廩生已自贡出了学门。一时兴匆匆地回家受贺，饮酒作乐了几时。一面打点长行，把争家官事且放在一边了。带了四个家人，免不得是张龙、张虎、张兴、张富，早晚上道，水宿风餐，早到了成都地方。在饭店里宿了一晚，张贡生想道：“我在此间还要迂道往新都取讨前件，长行行李留在饭店里不便。我路上几日心绪郁闷，何不往此间妓馆一游，拣个得意的宿他两晚，遣遣客兴？就把行囊下在他家，待取了债回来带去，有何不可？”就唤四个家人，说了这些意思。那家人是出路的，见说家主要嫖，是有些油水的事，那一个不愿随鞭镫？簇拥着这个老贡生竟往青楼市上去了。



refuse to return my silver and valuables. Now that he is a retired official, I will no longer be subject to his control. I will go to his hometown in Xindu county and try to get it all back. I will talk to him about it. It is possible he might return part of my deposit. And even if I cannot get the silver back, I should at least get those pieces of gold jewelry. Besides, I have to go through Sichuan if I want to get to the capital city. Xindu is just fifty *li* away from the city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. This year, I will receive recommendation to enter the school for tribute students and I will sit for the examinations in Beijing. When I arrive in Chengdu, I shall take a detour down to Xindu and claim my deposits back from Yang's family, to cover part of my traveling expenses."

He kept his plan to himself, not even disclosing it to his wife, for fear that others might secretly sneer at him for his greed. Meanwhile, Zhang Yin's lawsuit still remained unsettled. He sat for the selective examinations for students to be recommended to enter the school for tribute students, and passed the exams. He hurried back home excitedly to await congratulations. Laying aside his unsettled lawsuit, he indulged himself for several days in liquor before he packing for the long journey. As usual, he picked Zhang Long, Zhang Hu, Zhang Xing and Zhang Fu as his traveling companions. They made their way day and night, and sometimes having to pass their nights by the water's edge, and take their dinner in the open air. Before long, they were in Chengdu.

After they put up for the first night in an inn, Zhang Yin thought to himself, "During our stay here, I must make the trip to Xindu to retrieve my silver and valuables. It is not safe to leave our heavy baggage here at the inn. Since I'm feeling rather bored after days of traveling, why not distract myself a little by visiting one of the local brothels and staying there for a couple of nights? I may as well leave my baggage there while I go to Xindu, and pick it up upon my return." He called upon his four companions and told them of his plan. These servants were all used to traveling about. Hearing their master was about to go whoring, they realized they would also benefit. Who, after all, would want to miss such a chance? Delighted, they escorted bursary-student Zhang in the direction of the downtown brothels.



老生何意入青楼，岂是风情未肯休？

只为业冤当显露，埋根此处做关头。

却说张贡生走到青楼市上，走来走去，但见：

艳抹浓妆，倚市门而献笑；穿红着绿，拏帘箔以迎欢。或联袖，或凭肩，多是些凑将来的姊妹；或用嘲，或共语，总不过造作出的风情。心中无事自惊惶，日日恐遭他假母怒；眼里有人难撮合，时时任换□□生来。

张贡生见了这些油头粉面行径，虽然眼花撩乱，没有一个同来的人，一时间不知走那一家的是，未便入马。只见前面一个人摇摆将来，见张贡生带了一伙家人东张西觑，料他是个要嫖的勤儿，没个帮的人，所以迟疑。便上前问道：“老先生定是贵足，如何踹此贱地？”张贡生拱手道：“学生客邸无聊，闲步适兴。”那人笑道：“只是眼嫖，怕适不得甚么兴。”张贡生也笑道：“怎便晓得学生不倒身？”那人笑容可掬道：“若果有兴，小子当为引路。”张贡生正投着机，问道：“老兄高姓贵表？”那人道：“小子姓游，名守，号好闲，此间路数最熟。敢问老先生仙乡上姓？”张贡生道：“学生是滇中。”游好闲道：“是云南了。”后边张兴撵出来道：“我相公是今年贡元，上京廷试的。”游好闲道：“失敬，失敬，小子幸会。奉陪乐地一游，吃个尽兴，作做主人之礼何如？”张贡生道：“最好。不知此间那个妓者为



What drives Bursary-student to courtesans' quarters?
Why must it be that love has not yet run its course?
Nothing but karma and adversaries' bait,
This move foreshadows his eventual fate.

As he cruised the streets of parlor houses, bursary-student Zhang Yin noticed many girls, all richly attired and heavily made-up, leaning against their door posts in flirtatious poses. He was electrified, but none in particular held his attention, for most of them looked artificial, and were affected in manner, always seemingly tense over nothing, worried in case the madam burst out at any moment. Dazed by such an array, bursary-student Zhang failed to engage a girl, and was at a loss as to which parlor to enter. As Zhang was hesitating, a man ambled towards him. That man had been watching Zhang Yin and his companions look about in all directions with a whoring air. He realized they were in need of a pimp.

So he came up and asked, "I bet you are no commoner, but why loiter around in this sleazy place?" Cupping his hands to make a salute, Zhang Yin replied, "As a traveling student, I have just put up at an inn, and I strolled out here to dissipate my boredom." The man remarked with a smile, "I'm afraid you won't be rid of your boredom if you only whore with your eyes." With a grin, Zhang Yin asked, "Why are you so certain I will not jump into bed with one of these girls?" The man laughed heartily and said, "If you are really in the mood for some fun, I would like to show you the way." Finding the man's remarks in precise accord with his wishes, Zhang Yin seized the opportunity and inquired, "May I ask your name?"

"My name is Slouch, with the nickname, Do-nothing," replied the man, "and I'm quite familiar with these parlors and its denizens. Could you tell me where you are from?" Zhang Yin answered, "I am from Dianzhong." "Then you are from central Yunnan," remarked the man. "Our master," interrupted Zhang Xing, "is a tribute student and is currently on his way to Beijing for the imperial examinations." "My apologies, I did not distinguish you," responded Slouch Do-nothing immediately. "I am most honored to meet you. It would be a pleasure to be your host to show you around here. What do you think?" "Terrific," replied Zhang



最？”游好闲把手指一掐二掐的道：“刘金、张赛、郭师师、王丢儿，都是少年行时的姊妹。”张贡生道：“谁在行些？”游好闲道：“若是在行，论这些雏儿多不及一个汤兴哥，最是帮衬软款，有情亲热。也是行时过来的人，只是年纪多了两年，将及三十岁边了，却是着实有趣的。”张贡生道：“我每自家年纪不小，倒不喜欢那孩子心性的，是老成些的好。”游好闲道：“这等不消说，竟到那里去就是。”于是陪着张贡生一直望汤家进来。

兴哥出来接见，果然老成丰韵，是个作家体段，张贡生一见心欢。告茶毕，叙过姓名，游好闲一一代答明白，晓得张贡生中意了，便指点张家人将出银子来，送他办乐道。是夜游好闲就陪着饮酒，张贡生原是洪饮的，况且客中高兴，放怀取乐。那游好闲去了头便是个酒坛。兴哥老在行，一发是行令不犯，连觥不醉的。三人你强我赛，吃过三更方住。游好闲自在寓中去了。张贡生遂与兴哥同宿，兴哥放出手段，温存了一夜，张贡生甚是得意。次日，叫家人把店中行李尽情搬了来，顿放在兴哥家里了。

一连住了几日，破费了好几两银子，贪慕着兴哥才色，甚觉恋恋不舍。想道：“我身畔盘费有限，不能如意。何不暂往



Yin, "Could you tell me who the best hostess is here?"

Counting on his fingers, Slouch Do-nothing mentioned a few names, "Liu Jin, Zhang Sai, Guo Shishi and Wang Diu'er are all the young rising stars." "But who is the most professional at her trade then?" questioned Zhang Yin. "As to who is the best in the business," commented Slouch Do-nothing, "these young girls are all inexperienced, far inferior to Tang Xingge, who is tender, warm and affectionate. She used to be quite popular too. But she is unfortunately nearing thirty, and is a few years past her prime. I'm sure you will find her a great source of enjoyment." Zhang Yin remarked, "I am no longer a youngster myself, and I'm through with childish stuff. I prefer mature girls who know more about the ways of pleasure." "Alright," said Slouch Do-nothing, "I shall show you Xingge's place right away."

So saying, the man ushered his client into Tang Xingge's house. Xingge came out and greeted him. She looked most graceful and charming, displaying the air of a connoisseur. Zhang Yin was most delighted. When tea-time was over and the hostess and guest had introduced themselves, Slouch Do-nothing provided certain information required by both parties. After noticing that bursary-student Zhang was fully satisfied, Slouch Do-nothing gestured to Zhang's followers to bring him some silver so he could act the host for the dinner. That night, Slouch Do-nothing stayed to enjoy drinks in their company. Bursary-student Zhang had always been a good drinker. Now resorting to all the amusements of a traveler, he drank his fill. The Slouch too was particularly capable of holding an enormous amount of liquor without losing his head. Xingge was no less mature at drinking, and many drinks down her throat still left her steady and sober. The three vied with each other in consuming food and wine far into the deep of night. Slouch Do-nothing then left for home. Zhang Yin shared a bed with Xingge, who, employing all her arts, entertained her visitor throughout the night. The following day, Zhang Yin had all his baggage brought to Xingge's house.

A few days passed that cost Zhang Yin quite a pretty sum of silver. Exceedingly bewitched by Xingge's charms, he hated to part from her. "I have not much money left on me and I will no longer be able to enjoy



新都讨取此项到手？便多用些在他身上也好。”出来与这四个家人商议，装束了鞍马往新都去。他心里道指日可以回来的，对兴哥道：“我有一宗银子在新都，此去只有半日路程。我去讨了来，再到你这里顽耍几时。”兴哥道：“何不你留住在此，只教管家们去取讨了来？”张贡生道：“此项东西必要亲身往取的，叫人去，他那边不肯发。”兴哥道：“有多少东西？”张贡生道：“有五百多两。”兴哥道：“这关系重大，不好阻碍你。只是你去了，万一不到我这里来了，教我家枉自盼望。”张贡生道：“我一应行囊都不带去，留在你家，只带了随身铺盖并几件礼物去，好歹一两日随即回来了。看你家造化，若多讨得到手，是必多送你些。”兴哥笑道：“只要你早去早来，那在乎此？”两下珍重而别。

看官，你道此时若有一个见机的人对那张贡生道：“这项银子，是你自己欺心不是处，黑暗里葬送了，还怨怅兀谁？那官员每手里东西，有进无出，老虎喉中讨脆骨，大象口里拔生牙，都不是好惹的，不要思想到手了。况且取得来送与衙衙人家，又是个填不满底雪井。何苦枉用心机，走这道路？不如认个悔气，歇了帐罢！”若是张贡生闻得此言转了念头，还是老大的造化。可惜当时没人说破，就有人说，料没人听。只因此



myself here if I run out of silver,” he thought. “Why not go to Xindu and get back my silver so that I will have more money to spend on Xingge?” Thinking thus, he proceeded to discuss the matter with his four aides. Having placed saddles on the horses, they made ready for the trip.

Since he thought he would get the affair settled and return in a few days, bursary-student Zhang told Xingge, “I have a sum of silver in Xindu. It will be a half-day’s journey. I need to go there to settle this debt. I shall be back soon to indulge in more pleasure with you.” “Why not send your men to get the money while you stay here with me?” asked Xingge. “This is a special debt,” replied Zhang Yin. “I have to go there in person. They won’t give the money to anyone except me.” “How much is it?” asked Xingge. “Five hundred taels of silver,” answered Zhang Yin. “In that case, I had better not stop you,” said Xingge, “as this matter is rather important. But if you do not come back to me, I shall be waiting for you in vain.” “Here is our baggage,” said Zhang Yin, “I will leave it with you. We don’t need to take it with us, except for the bedding and a couple of gifts. No matter what happens, I will be back in a few days. If I am lucky, I might bring back more money than expected and I will definitely give you a larger share.” “I don’t care about that,” laughed Xingge, “but you should make haste and come back to me as soon as possible.” So saying, they bade farewell to each other.

Dear readers, now let us suppose a sage had appeared at this moment and chastised him thus, “It was you who first harbored evil designs. Therefore it was natural that you would drop that amount of silver into the bottomless pit never to be retrieved. There is no one to blame but yourself. Government officials only take, and never give. Better forget about recovering your silver. It will be as difficult to regain as snatching a chunk of tender meat from a tiger’s jaws, or pulling a tusk off an elephant’s cheek. Even though you may get the money back, you will toss it into the brothels which, like deep wells, are never ever filled. Why are you scheming to no avail? Why not accept your cursed luck and just forget about it?” If Zhang Yin had been fortunate enough to hear such advice and change his mind, he would have had good fortune. However, the fact is there was no one around at that time able to give him such



一去，有分交：半老书生，狼籍作红花之鬼；穷凶乡宦，拘挛为黑狱之囚。正是：

猪羊入屠户之家，一步步来寻死路。

这里不题。

且说杨金宪自从考察断根回家，自道日暮穷途，所为愈横。家事已饶，贪心未足，终身在家设谋运局，为非作歹。他只有一个兄弟，排行第二，家道原自殷富，并不干预外事，到是个守本分的。见哥子作恶，每每会间微词劝谏。金宪道：“你仗我势做二爷，挣家私勾了，还要管我？”话不投机。杨二晓得他存心克毒，后来未必不火并自家屋里。家中也养几个了得的家人，时时防备他。近新一病不起，所生一子，止得八岁。临终之时，唤过妻子在面前，分付众家人道：“我一生只存此骨血。那边大房做官的虎视眈眈，须要小心祇对他，不可落他圈套之内，我死不瞑目！”泪如雨下，长叹而逝。死后，妻子与同家人辈牢守门户，自过日子，再不去叨忝金宪家一分势利。



advice. And even if there were, the warning would undoubtedly have fallen on deaf ears. The climax of this trip turned out to thus: an elder scholar went to his early grave in a field of safflowers, while a vicious local official became a prisoner. The following two lines give a vivid description:

Hogs and sheep straying into the house of the butcher,
Step by step head toward the moment of slaughter.

Let us leave Zhang Yin and his men for a while, and return to Patrol Inspector Yang, who had by now left office and returned to his hometown. Realizing his official career had come to an end, he rode roughshod over the local people even more extremely than before, since his family wealth could never satiate his lust for more money. He stayed at home all day long, occupying himself in plotting one scheme after another, and thus committed countless crimes. He also had a younger brother. The second son of the family was rich and law-abiding, and never interfered in others' affairs. The younger brother would occasionally warn his elder brother not to engage in evil. But Patrol Inspector Yang would only rebuke him, "You have taken advantage of my influence to bully others and amass wealth for your own family. Now are you trying to teach me a lesson?" Their unpleasant discussions never went beyond that.

It was clear to the younger brother that Patrol Inspector Yang was evil by nature, and would sooner or later plot against his own household; thus the younger brother also hired a few able servants to prepare for all contingencies. But before long he fell seriously ill and took to his bed, never to rise again. He had only one son aged eight. Before his death, he called his wife and family servants to his deathbed and told them, "My son is my only flesh and blood. That retired official, my elder brother, with his power and high-ranking position, has been coveting our property like a tiger stalking its prey. You must take precautions and not let my son fall into his snares. This heavy load on my mind will not allow me to rest in peace even after my death." Tears streamed down his cheeks as he heaved a final sigh and died. After his death, his wife and the family servants led an independent life, watching closely over their own household, refusing to make any use of Patrol Inspector Yang's influence.



金宪无隙可入，心里思量：“二房好一分家当，不过留得这一个黄毛小厮。若断送了他，这家当怕不是我一个的？”欲待暗地下手，怎当得这家母子关门闭户，轻易不来他家里走动。想道：“我若用毒药之类暗算了他，外人必竟知道是我，须瞒不过，亦且急忙不得其便。若纠合强盗劫了他家，害了性命，我还好瞒生人眼，说假公道话，只把失盗做推头，谁人好说得是我？总是不害得他性命，劫得家私一空，也只当是了。”他一向私下养着剧盗三十余人，在外庄听用。但是掳掠得来的，与他平分。若有一二处做将出来，他就出身包揽遮护。官府晓得他刁，公人怕他的势，没个敢正眼觑他。但有心上不像意或是眼里动了火的人家，公然叫这些人去搬了来庄里分了。弄得久惯，不在心上。他只待也如此劫了小侄儿子家里，趁便害了他性命。争奈他家家人昼夜巡逻，还养着狼也似的守门犬数只，提防甚紧。也是天有眼睛，到别处去摔了就来，到杨二房去几番，但去便有阻碍，下不得手。

金宪正在时刻挂心，算计必克，忽然门上传进一个手本来，



Seeing that he could do nothing about his late brother's family, Patrol Inspector Yang thought to himself: "What a legacy my younger brother must have left behind! Unfortunately it will fall to that bastard of a boy. If I get rid of this boy, who will that wealth belong to except me?" But he had no chance to carry out this plan, because the widow and her son shut themselves within the surrounding walls of their house and scarcely ever paid a visit to his house. Again he thought to himself, "If I have them done in with poison, everyone will definitely know the truth that I am the murderer. Thus, I will have very little chance of success in such a plan. If I have a gang of bandits kill them while robbing their home, the eyes of the public will be diverted away from me. Then I shall pose as a sympathizer and make a show of being fair. The blame will certainly fall on the robbers. Who would suspect me in this matter! Even if the two of them were fortunate enough to survive the robbery, I could still achieve my aim of seizing all their wealth and property. As for me, either outcome would suit me well."

He maintained a retinue of over thirty hardened criminals who resided in a neighboring village. These bandits would share their booty with him after every robbery. When the bandits occasionally ran into trouble, he would emerge to cover up the matter and protect his men. The local governments were aware of his cunning, and the public feared his power. Consequently there was no one bold enough to even look him in the face on the street. If he happened to dislike anyone, he would send out his men to seize their property and bring it to him. He had grown accustomed to such evil deeds and cared nothing for consequences. He was now looking forward to the opportunity of grabbing his nephew's wealth and property as well as his life. However, the servants of the widow's family patrolled the house day and night, and a host of dogs as fierce as wolves kept close and vigilant watch over the entrance. It seemed likely that heaven had eyes. Though Yang's bandits had never let him down in any other locations, their attempts to rob the house of the second brother's widow turned out to be completely futile.

One day Patrol Inspector Yang was racking his brain for a solution, when a note suddenly came to him which read, "Bursary-student Zhang



乃是“旧治下云南贡生张寅稟见”。心中吃了一惊道：“我前番曾受他五百两贿赂，不曾替他完得事，就坏官回家了。我心里也道此宗银两必有后虑，不想他果然直寻到此。这事元不曾做得，说他不过，理该还他，终不成咽了下去又吐出来？若不还他时，他须是个贡生，酸子智量必不干休。倘然当官告理，且不顾他声名不妙，谁奈烦与他调唇弄舌？我且把个体面见见他，说话之间，或者识时务不提也不见得。若是这等，好好送他盘缠，打发他去罢了；若是提起要还，又作道理。”金宪以口问心，计较已定，踱将出厅来，叫请贡生相见。张贡生整肃衣冠，照着旧上司体统行个大礼，送了些土物为候敬。金宪收了，设坐告茶。金宪道：“老夫承乏贵乡，罪过多端。后来罢职家居，不得重到贵地。今见了贵乡朋友，还觉无颜。”张贡生道：“公祖大人直道不容，以致忤时。敝乡士民迄今廑想明德。”金宪道：“惶恐，惶恐！”又拱手道：“恭喜贤契岁荐了！”张贡生道：“挨次幸及，殊为叨冒。”金宪道：“今将何往，得停玉趾？”张贡生道：“赴京廷试，假途贵省，特来一



Yin from Yunnan, a subordinate of yours when you held office there, requests a meeting with your honor.” Very much startled, Yang thought to himself, “I took a bribe of five hundred taels of silver from him. I didn’t help him win his lawsuit before I was dismissed from office and sent home. I had a feeling this sum of silver would cause me trouble in the future. Now he has come for it. Just because I was unable to help him in the lawsuit, however, does not mean I should return the money to him. For how would it be possible for me to spit out willingly what I have already guzzled down? Still, this petty bursary-student will not let me off so easily if I refuse him. If he brings the matter up with the authorities, not only would my reputation suffer, I would also have to waste a lot of breath in arguing. Maybe I should show him some courtesy, and give him an audience. He may yet turn out to be sensible enough not to mention the matter. In that case, I shall give him some money for his journey and see him off. If he does bring this matter up, I will have to try other means.” After careful consideration of the matter, Yang walked out into the reception room and asked his visitor to come in. Adjusting his hat and clothes, Zhang Yin entered. He bowed formally, in the way a subordinate greeted a superior, and presented Yang some products from his native place as gifts. Having accepted the presents, Yang asked him to take a seat and had tea brought in, saying, “I used to work in your hometown and committed many errors. After I was dismissed from office, I have been staying home and it is truly a pity I have not had the chance to visit your hometown again. I do feel uneasy, even today, whenever I see a friend from your hometown.”

“Your Excellency was upright and outspoken,” said bursary-student Zhang, “and thus offended certain people. However, most of our officials and common folk have always thought highly of your virtue and righteousness.” “I am flattered,” replied Yang, adding with one hand cupped inside the other, “Congratulations on your being selected as a bursary-student.” “It does not rate mention. Nothing but luck,” replied Zhang Yin. “Where are you heading toward by way of my humble place?” asked Yang. “I just stopped by here to pay you a visit. I am on my way to the capital city for the imperial examinations,” answered Zhang Yin.



覲台光。”金宪道：“此去成都五十里之遥，特烦枉驾，足见不忘老朽。”张贡生见他说话不招揽，只得自说出来道：“前日贡生家下有些琐事，曾处一付礼物面奉公祖大人处收贮，以求周全。后来未经结局，公祖已行，此后就回贵乡。今本不敢造次，只因贡生赴京缺费，意欲求公祖大人发还此一项，以助贡生利往。故此特来叩拜。”金宪作色道：“老夫在贵处只吃得贵乡一口水，何曾有此赃污之事？出口诬蔑，敢是贤契被别个光棍哄了？”张贡生见他昧了心，改了口不认帐，若是个知机的，就该罢了，怎当得张贡生原不是良善之人，心里着了急，就狠狠的道：“是贡生亲手在私衙门前交付的，议单执照具在，岂可昧得？”金宪见有议单执照，回嗔作喜道：“是老夫忘事。得罪，得罪！前日有个妻弟在衙起身，需索老夫馈送。老夫宦囊萧然，不得已故此借宅上这一项打发了他。不匡日后多阻，不曾与宅上出得力，此项该还，只是妻弟已将此一项用去了，须要老夫赔偿，且从容两日，必当处补。”张贡生见说肯还，心下放了二分松，又见说用去，心中不舍得那两件金物，又对金



“Chengdu is fifty *li* away from here,” said Yang, “and I do feel grateful that you have made such a special trip to visit me.”

Seeing that Yang was purposely avoiding the matter of the silver, Zhang Yin had to come to the point, “I left a payment at your residence some time earlier, towards your efforts at solving our family dispute over property. Later you left on an official tour and eventually returned to your hometown, leaving my problem unsettled. Originally I did not mean to bother you, but now my money for the journey to the capital is running out. I thought you might return this sum of money to me so I may continue with my journey. This is what I have especially come here for.” Turning hostile, Patrol Inspector Yang seethed, “During my term of office in your hometown, I only drank a touch of water for my survival there. How could I have performed such a vile deed? This is an absolutely false charge! I wonder if you have perhaps been taken in by some racketeer?”

Zhang Yin now realized that Yang was going back on his word and was denying his debt. If Zhang had been wise, he would have given up. But the fact is, Zhang Yin was neither good nor kind by nature. Becoming irritated, Zhang Yin replied forcefully, “I personally handed the silver to you at the entrance to your office. I have kept the statement and the redemption certificate. How can you deny this against your conscience?” On hearing Zhang Yin had kept the statement and redemption certificate, Yang put on an air of delight and corrected himself, “I am so sorry. I am getting on years, and I have a hard time remembering things. I now recall one of my wife’s brothers once asked me to give him some money as he was about to leave for home. At that time I was short of cash, so I sent him away with your silver. I then unexpectedly ran into some trouble. I am sorry I have not been able to do you the favor. I should return to you this sum of money, but I have given it to my wife’s brother. Would you allow me a couple of days to scrape the money together and pay you back?” Zhang Yin let out a sigh of relief the moment he heard Yang agree to return the money. But when he learned his sum of money had been gifted to another person, he worried that he would lose the two valuable pieces of gold as well.

He said to Patrol Inspector Yang, “Those two gold sets were handed



宪道：“内中两件金器，是家下传世之物，还求保全原件则个。”
金宪冷笑了一声道：“既是传世之物，谁教轻易拿出来？且放心，请过了洗尘的薄款再处。”就起身请张贡生书房中慢坐，一面分付整治酒席。张贡生自到书房中去了。

金宪独自算了一回。他起初打白赖之时，只说张贡生会意，是必凑他的趣，他却重重送他个回敬做盘缠，也倒两全了。岂知张贡生算小，不还他体面，搜根剔齿一直说出来。然也还思量还他一半现物，解了他馋涎。只有那金壶与金首饰是他心上得意的东西，时刻把玩的，已曾几度将出来夸耀亲戚过了，你道他舍得也不舍得？张贡生恰恰把这两件口内要紧。金宪左思右思，便一时不怀好意了，喂地一声道：“一不做，二不休。他是个云南人，家里出来中途到此间的，断送了他，谁人晓得！须不到得尸亲知道。”就叫几个干仆约会了庄上一伙强人，到晚间酒散听候使用。

分付停当，请出张贡生来赴席。席间说些闲话，评论些朝事，且是殷勤，又叫俊俏的安童频频奉酒。张贡生见是公祖的好意，不好推辞。又料道是如此美情，前物必不留难。放下心怀，只顾吃酒，早已吃得醺醺地醉了。又叫安童奉了又奉，只等待不省人事方住。又问：“张家管家们可曾吃酒了未？”却也被几个干仆轮番更换陪伴饮酒。那些奴才们见好酒好饭，道



down to me from my ancestors, and I hope you will return them to me in perfect condition." Yang answered with a grim smile, "If that is so, why did you use them as collateral? But please rest assured, I shall take care of this after I treat you to a welcome dinner." So saying, he rose to his feet and had his guest led away into his study. Then he issued an order that dinner be prepared.

Patrol Inspector Yang mulled the matter over in his mind while the dinner was being prepared. When he had first decided to dispute the debt, he had expected Zhang Yin to take the hint, and immediately drop the issue. Then in turn he would have given him ample gifts to cover his traveling expenses, thus making both sides happy. But this narrow-minded bursary-student Zhang had not allowed him to save face, and instead had brought everything out into the open. Yang had even thought about returning half the money to him so as to satisfy his claim. But the gold pot and jewelry Zhang Yin had given him were articles he truly cherished, things he fondled whenever he had the chance. He even occasionally showed them to his relatives. How would it be possible for him to just let them go? Moreover, Zhang Yin was making a pointed request for these two articles. After a moment of hard reflection, a wicked idea came to Yang's mind.

Yang reasoned, "I will have to settle this regardless of the consequences. He is a native of Yunnan, and is now far from home. Who would unearth the truth if I have him killed and his body buried? With this in mind, he ordered several able servants to go gather those bandits he kept on retainer, telling them to await his orders after dinner. When everything was ready, he invited Zhang Yin to the dinner table, and entertained him by invoking some idle topics and national affairs, while having a few handsome boys repeatedly pour wine into his cup during the meal. Zhang Yin found it hard to refuse Yang's warmth and kindness, thinking to himself that Yang, exuding so much hospitality, would undoubtedly keep his word and return what was his. Feeling totally at ease, Zhang Yin focused his attention on the wine and before long was dead drunk. Yang then turned to his servants and asked, "Are Zhang's followers being attended to?" The servants toasted Zhang Yin's followers in turn, one cup after another. At the sight



是投着好处，那里管三七二十一，只顾贪婪无厌，四个人一个个吃得瞪眉瞪眼，连人多不认得了。禀知了金宪，金宪分付道：“多送在红花场结果去！”

元来这杨金宪有所红花场庄子，满地种着红花，广衍有一千余亩。每年卖那红花有八九百两出息。这庄上造着许多房子，专一歇着客人，兼亦藏着强盗。当时只说送张贡生主仆到那里歇宿。到得庄上，五个人多是醉的，看着被卧，倒头便睡，鼾声如雷，也不管天南地北了。那空阔之处，一声锣响，几个飞狼的庄客走将拢来，多是有手段的强盗头，一刀一个。遮莫有三头六臂的，也只多费得半刻工夫；何况这一个酸子与几个呆奴，每人只生得一颗头，消得几时，早已罄净。当时就在红花稀疏之处，掘个坎儿，做一堆儿埋下了。可怜张贡生痴心指望讨债，还要成都去见心上人，怎知遇着狠主，弄得如此死于非命。正是：

不道逡巡命，还贪顷刻花。

黄泉无妓馆，今夜宿谁家？

过了一年有馀，张贡生两个秀才儿子在家，自从父亲入京以后，并不曾见一纸家书、一个便信回来。问着个把京中归来的人，多道不曾会面，并不晓得。心中疑惑，商量道：“滇中



of such good wine and delicious food, this stingy entourage of Zhang's thought they had arrived at a most fascinating haven of delights. They ate and drank extravagantly, disregarding of the consequences, until they too were dead drunk and no longer able to recognize anybody.

When Yang learned of the condition of his guests, he ordered, "Take them all to the field of safflower and finish them off." Patrol Inspector Yang was the owner of fields covering more than a thousand *mu*. He obtained a yearly income of eight hundred to nine hundred taels of silver from his safflower fields. Midst these fields of safflower were many houses accommodating guests as well as providing shelter for the bandits.

Yang had told his men to make arrangements for the bandits for the night. Zhang Yin and his men were carried away to their dwellings in the safflower fields. Completely drunk and fast asleep, they snored thunderously with not a care in their heads. Then a gong echoed in the field, signaling the group of bandits. With one flourish of a sword after another, the bandits chopped off the heads of all the drunkards. Even if these pitiful drunkards had each possessed three heads and six arms, it would not have taken the murderers but a few minutes to complete their mission, let alone a student and a few foolish servants. In almost no time, they were all dead. The murderers then dug a pit in one part of the field where plants grew sparsely, tossed the bodies into the pit in a pile, and buried them. Poor bursary-student Zhang! Such was the end of his dream of regaining his silver and wealth and taking it all back to Chengdu for a rendezvous with his lover. Still, he was never to be aware he had met such a miserable end. The following lines make pithy comment on him:

Before his life span expires,
Fated to seek fleeting pleasures.
With no courtesan quarters in hell's sight,
None knew where he was to pass the night.

One year later, the two *xiucai* sons of Zhang Yin who remained back at home had become profoundly worried, since their father had not sent a single letter back after he had left for the capital. They occasionally encountered someone returning from Beijing, and the usual reply to inquiries about their father would be, "I never met your father, and have



处在天末，怎能勾京中信至，还往川中省下打听，彼处不时有在北京还往的。”于是两个凑些盘缠在身边了，一径到成都，寻个下处宿了。在街市上行来走去闲撞，并无遇巧熟人。两兄弟住过十来日，心内无聊，商量道：“此处尽多名妓，我每各寻一个消遣则个。”两个小伙子也不用帮闲，我陪你，你陪我，各寻一个雏儿：一个童小五，一个顾阿都，接在下处，大家那乐。混了几日，闹烘烘热腾腾的，早把探父亲信息的事撇在脑后了。

一日，那大些的有跳槽之意。两个雏儿晓得他是云南人，戏他道：“闻得你云南人只要嫖老的，我每敢此不中你每的意？不多几日，只要跳槽。”两个秀才道：“怎见得我云南人只要嫖老的？”童小五便道：“前日见游伯伯说，去年有个云南朋友到这里来，要他寻婊子，不要兴头的，只要老成的。后来引他到汤家兴哥那里去了。这兴哥是我们母亲一辈中人，他且是与他过得火热，也费了好些银子。约他再来，还要使一主大钱，以后不知怎的了。这不是云南人要老的样子？”两个秀才道：“那云南人姓个甚么？怎生模样？”童小五、顾阿都大家



no idea as to his whereabouts.” Filled with doubts, the two sons said to each other, “Yunnan is one of the country’s frontiers, far away from the capital city. How are we to get information from the capital if we remain here? We had better go to Sichuan for more information. That is where people usually stop over on their way to and from Beijing.” The two young men gathered some money for the journey and made their way to Chengdu. After arriving in Chengdu, they lodged at a small inn.

As they walked through the streets, they encountered no one who could provide them with any news regarding their father. Ten days soon passed and they began to feel restless. The two brothers commented to each other, “There are many well-known courtesans about here, so we should each choose one and entertain ourselves.” They each found two young courtesans, one named Tong Xiaowu, the other Gu Adu. Leading the women to their respective chambers, the two brothers made merry for several days and completely forgot about their duty to look for their father. One day, the elder brother suggested looking for yet another woman.

The two young courtesans, knowing he was from Yunnan, teased him, saying, “We understand you men from Yunnan are only interested in middle-aged women. Is it because we youth are not up to your tastes? Why in such a hurry to leave, especially since we’ve only been here a few days?” “Why do you say us men from Yunnan prefer middle-aged women?” the two brothers queried. Tong Xiaowu replied, “Uncle Slouch Do-nothing told us the other day that a friend from Yunnan came here last year and requested he find a prostitute for him. That man had a particular liking for more mature women. Later he was guided to Xingge at the House of Tang. This Xingge belongs to my mother’s generation. But this gentleman had a good time with her and, of course, he spent a lot of money on her too. When he left, he promised he would come back and spend more money on her. But we don’t know what transpired later and what happened to him. Would you not say this is an example of men from Yunnan being fond of mature women?”

“What was the family name of the man from Yunnan?” asked the two brothers earnestly, “and what did he look like?” “Are you joking? Who cares!” replied Tong Xiaowu and Gu Adu, clapping their hands and



拍手笑道：“又来起了！不在我每肝上的事，管他姓张姓李！那曾见他模样来？只是游伯伯如此说，故把来取笑。”两个秀才道：“游伯伯是甚么人？住在那里？这却是你每晓得的。”童小五、顾阿都又拍手道：“游伯伯也不认得，还要嫖！”两个秀才必竟要问个来历。童小五道：“游伯伯千头万脑的人，撞来就见，要寻他却一世也难。你要问你们贵乡里，竟到汤兴哥家问不是？”两个秀才道：“说得有理！”留小的秀才窝伴着两个雏儿，大的秀才独自个问到汤家来。

那个汤兴哥自从张贡生一去，只说五十里的远近，早晚便到。不想去了一年有多，绝无消息。留下衣囊行李，也不见有人来取。门户人家不把来放在心上，已此放下肚肠了。那日无客，在家闭门昼寝，忽然得一梦，梦见张贡生到来，说道取银回来。至要叙寒温，却被扣门声急，一时惊醒。醒来想道：“又不曾念着他，如何魑地有此梦？敢是有人递信息取衣装，也未可知。”正在疑似间，听得又扣门响。兴哥整整衣裳，叫丫鬟在前，开门出来。丫鬟叫一声：“客来了。”张大秀才才那得脚进，兴哥抬眼看时，吃了一惊道：“分明像张贡生一般模样，如何后生了许多？”请在客座里坐了，问起地方姓名，却正是云南姓张。兴哥心下老大稀罕，未敢遽然说破。张大秀才先问道：



laughing. "It's none of our business, and we couldn't care less whether his family name was Zhang or Li. We never set eyes on him. We just heard about it from Uncle Slouch Do-nothing and found it rather peculiar and amusing." The two brothers questioned them more closely, "Who is this Slouch Do-nothing and where does he live? You must know the answers to these questions!" Again clapping their hands, the two girls said, "How can one go whoring without knowing Uncle Slouch Do-nothing?" The two young men asked why, and Tong Xianwu explained, "Uncle Slouch Do-nothing is a busy man. He often appears unexpectedly but is rather difficult to get a hold of when really needed. If you insist on finding your fellow provincial, go talk to Tang Xingge." "That is a good idea," exclaimed the two brothers. Consequently the elder brother made his way to the House of Tang, while the younger brother remained in the company of the two girls.

It had been more than a year since bursary-student Zhang had left Tang Xingge. She had received no news of Zhang ever since, though he had promised her he would come back in a day or two, since it was only fifty *li* away. Xingge still held on to his baggage, though nobody had come to pick it up. As a courtesan, she was accustomed to visitors coming and going, so she had not worried too much about it. One day she had no business, so she closed the door and went to sleep. She then dreamed she saw Zhang Yin arrive with his silver. The moment she tried to greet him she was awakened by a rapid knocking on the door. In her languor, she thought to herself, "I never missed him, but why did he appear in a dream? I wonder whether someone's sending word to collect his clothes for him." As she was thinking thus, there came more knocking. She adjusted her attire and sent a servant girl out first to answer the door. "A visitor has come!" reported the servant girl as she ushered in the elder Xiucai Zhang. Looking up, Xingge was astounded at what she saw.

"This gentleman looks exactly like bursary-student Zhang," she wondered, "But how come he appears so much younger?" After she asked the visitor to take a seat, Xingge inquired after his name and from where he had come. To her surprise, she found the man was from Yunnan, with the family name Zhang. Xingge was most puzzled about this, but did not



“请问大姐，小生闻得这里去年有个云南朋友往来，可是甚么样人？姓甚名谁？”兴哥道：“有一位老成朋友姓张，说是个贡行，要往京廷试，在此经过的。盘桓了数日，前往新都取债去了。说半日路程，去了就来，不知为何一去不来了。”张大秀才道：“随行有几人？”兴哥道：“有四位管家。”张大秀才心里晓得是了，问道：“此去不来，敢是竟自长行了？”兴哥道：“那里是！衣囊行李还留在我家里，转来取了才起身的。”张大秀才道：“这等，为何不来？难道不想进京，还留在彼处？”兴哥道：“多分是取债不来，担阁在彼。就是如此，好歹也该有个信，或是叫位管家来。影响无踪，竟不知甚么缘故。”张大秀才道：“见说新都取什么债？”兴哥道：“只听得说有一宗五百两东西，不知是甚么债。”张大秀才跌脚道：“是了，是了，这等，我每须在新都寻去了。”兴哥道：“他是客官甚么瓜葛，要去寻他？”张大秀才道：“不敢欺大姐，就是小生的家父。”兴哥道：“失敬，失敬。怪道模样恁地厮像，这等，是一家人了。”笑欣欣的去叫小二整起饭来，留张大官人坐一坐。张大秀才回说道：“这倒不消，小生还有个兄弟在那厢等候，只是适间的话，可是确的么？”兴哥道：“怎的不确？见



reveal her thoughts. Elder Xiucan Zhang started to ask, "I learned a man from Yunnan stayed here at your house last year. Could you tell me, Madame, what he looked like and what his name was?" "Yes, a somewhat older man stopped in here last year," responded Xingge. "He told me his family name was Zhang, and that he was a bursary-student on his way to the capital city for examinations at the imperial court. He stayed here for a couple of days before he left for Xindu to clear a debt. He said it was only a half-day's trip and promised me he would return quickly. But he didn't make an appearance, though I have no idea why." "How many attendants were traveling with him?" questioned the elder Xiucan Zhang. "He had four servants with him," was Xingge's reply.

Having established the man as his father, Elder Xiucan Zhang went on asking questions, "Is it possible he did not return because he had to continue on his long journey to the capital?" Xingge replied, "I don't think so, since he left his baggage in my care and told me he would come back for his belongings before he departed for Beijing." The elder Xiucan Zhang continued, "Why did he not return then? Could it be possible he is still in Xindu, and gave up on his earlier plan of going to Beijing?" Xingge answered, "I think maybe he got into some trouble retrieving the debt, and was held up there. But even if that were true, he should have sent word, or even a servant, to let me know. It is strange that I've heard nothing from him all this time." "What type of debt was he trying to clear up?" asked the elder Xiucan Zhang. "I was told it involved five hundred taels of silver," Xingge said, "but I have no other details." Stamping the floor, the elder Xiucan Zhang exclaimed, "That's it! I shall go to Xindu to find him." "Does he have something to do with you that you need to make that trip?" inquired Xingge. "To be frank," replied Elder Xiucan Zhang, "he is my father." "Excuse my impertinence," said Xingge. "Now I see why you and he look so much alike, since you are father and son." Smiling, she sent for the cook to prepare dinner and asked her visitor to tarry a moment.

The elder Xiucan Zhang said, "It is very kind of you, but my younger brother is awaiting me on the other side of town. I just want to establish that you are serious about what you have just said." "Of course I am,"



有衣囊行李在此，可认一认，看是不是？”随引张大秀才到里边房里来，把留下物件与他看了。张大秀才认得是实，忙别了兴哥道：“这等，事不宜迟，星夜同兄弟往新都寻去。寻着了，再来相会。”兴哥假亲热的留了一会，顺水推船送出了门。

张大秀才急急走到下处，对兄弟道：“问倒问着了，果然去年在汤家嫖的正是。只是依他家说起来，竟自不曾往京哩！”小秀才道：“这等，在那里？”大秀才道：“还在这里新都。我们须到那里问去。”小秀才道：“为何住在新都许久？”大秀才道：“他家说是听得往新都取五百金的债，定是到杨疯子家去了。”小秀才道：“取得取不得，好歹走路，怎么还在那里？”大秀才道：“行囊还在汤家，方才见过的。岂有不带去了，径自跑路的理？毕竟是担阁在新都不来，不消说了。此去那里苦不多远，我每收拾起来，一同去走遭，访问下落则个。”

两人计议停当，将出些银两，谢了两个妓者，送了家去。

一径到新都来，下在饭店里。店主人见是远来的，问道：“两位客官贵处？”两个秀才道：“是云南，到此寻人的。”店主人道：“云南来是寻人的，不是倒赃的么？”两个秀才吃惊道：“怎说此话？”店主人道：“偶然这般说笑。”两个秀才坐定，问店主人道：“此间有个杨僉事，住在何处？”店主人伸



responded Xingge quickly. "I have his baggage and clothing here with me. You may take a look and see whether they are his or not." So saying, she led him into an inner room and showed him his father's belongings. Having verified everything, he hurriedly bade her farewell, saying, "This is urgent business. I must hurry and set out tonight with my younger brother for Xindu. After we find him, we will come back to meet you." Xingge, putting on a false display of affection, insisted he stay a little longer before she saw him off at the entrance.

Elder Xiucan Zhang hurried off to his lodgings and told his younger brother, "I have learned of Father's whereabouts. He had been here to visit the House of Tang last year. But the courtesan said he did not go to Beijing at all." "Where did he go then?" asked the younger brother. "He should still be in Xindu," replied Elder Xiucan Zhang, "and we must go there and find him." "What has kept him in Xindu for so long?" the younger brother asked, feeling puzzled. "The courtesan told me," answered Elder Xiucan Zhang, "that he went there to clear a debt of five hundred taels of silver. I am sure he must have gone to Yang the Madman!" "He still should not have delayed his trip to the capital city regardless of whether he was successful in clearing the debt or not. How is it possible he is still in Xindu?" "I saw his baggage in Tang's house a moment ago. I don't think he would have made a trip to the capital city without his baggage. There is no doubt he has been held up in Xindu. Since it is not a long way from here, let us pack and set out for Xindu to find him." Thus decided, the two young men paid the two courtesans some silver and saw them home before they set off for Xindu.

They lodged at an inn in Xindu. Realizing they were not locals, the owner of the inn asked, "Where are you two gentlemen from?" The two brothers said they were from Yunnan, and were looking for someone. "From Yunnan? Looking for someone?" queried the owner of the inn. "You are not here to reclaim a former bribe, are you?" This question surprised the brothers, "What were you talking about?" "I was just teasing," replied the owner of the inn. After taking their seats, the brothers asked, "A certain Patrol Inspector Yang lives around here. Could you tell me his exact address?"



伸舌头：“这人不是好惹的。你远来的人，有甚要紧，没事问他怎么？”两个秀才道：“问声何妨？怎便这样怕他？”店主人道：“他轻则官司害你，重则强盗劫你。若是远来的人冲撞了他，好歹就结果了性命！”两个秀才道：“清平世界，难道杀了人不要偿命的？”店主人道：“他偿谁的命？去年也是一个云南人，一主四仆投奔他家，闻得是替他讨什么任上过手脏的，一夜里多杀了，至今冤屈无伸，那见得要偿命来？方才见两位说是云南，所以取笑。”两个秀才见说了，吓得魂不附体，你看我，我看你，一时做不得声。呆了一会，战抖抖的问道：“那个人姓甚名谁，老丈可知得明白否？”店主人道：“我那里明白？他家有一个管家，叫做老三，常在小店吃酒。这个人还有些天理的，时常饮酒中间，把家主做的歹事一一告诉我，心中不服。去年云南这五个被害，忒煞乖张了。外人纷纷扬扬，也多晓得。小可每还疑心，不敢轻信。老三说是果然真有的，煞是不平，所以小可每才信。可惜这五个人死得苦恼，没个亲人得知。小可见客官方才问及杨家，偶然如此闲讲。客官，各人自扫门前雪，不要闲管罢了！”两个秀才情知是他父亲被害了，不敢声张，暗暗地叫苦，一夜无眠。次日到街上往来察听，



Sticking out his tongue, the owner of the inn said, "He is a character not to be trifled with. You are from a faraway place. Why inquire after him? You are not looking for trouble, are you?" The brothers answered, "Why can't we inquire of him? Why are you afraid to even mention his name?" The owner of the inn replied, "If this man is even slightly piqued, he will make you suffer through a lawsuit. If gravely offended, he will call on his bandits to rob you. If a stranger from a distant place offends him, he will have him killed in one way or another!" The brothers went on, "How does he openly remain at large if he commits such crimes against the public order?" The owner of the inn answered, "Who is going to play with his own life? Last year, a gentleman, also from Yunnan, arrived with four servants to reclaim a bribe Yang had once taken when in office. But they were simply killed in one night, and that wrong has so far not been atoned. Has he been punished in any way? That is why, when I heard you two are also from Yunnan, I joked with you just now."

On hearing this, the two brothers became exceedingly fearful. They stared at each other for a moment, not daring to utter a word. After a moment's silence, they trembled, "I wonder if you know the gentleman's name?" The owner of the inn replied, "Sorry, I do not know. But Yang has a housekeeper named Third Brother who often comes to my inn for some wine. This man still retains some integrity. While having a few drinks in my inn, he often reveals the atrocities his master commits, and each time he talks about them he is always filled with indignation. After the distressing murder of the five Yunnan folk last year, a rumor about it circulated and many people came to know of it. I was skeptical about it in the beginning and did not immediately believe the story, until Third Brother convinced me. It is a pity these five men died such a terrible death and that their family members do not even know about their deaths yet. I brought it up because you mentioned Yang. But, gentlemen, just sweep away the snow in front of your own house, for you are better off not meddling."

Accepting the fact their father was dead, the two brothers were profoundly grieved, although they exercised restraint and remained silent. They passed sleepless night. On the next day, they wandering on the streets

三三两两几处说来，一般无二。两人背地里痛哭了一场。思量要在彼发觉，恐怕反遭网罗。亦且乡宦势头，小可衙门奈何不得他。含酸忍苦，原还到成都来。

见了汤兴哥，说了所闻详细，兴哥也赔了几点眼泪。兴哥道：“两位官人何不告了他讨命？”两个秀才道：“正要如此。”此时四川巡按察院石公正在省下，两个秀才问汤兴哥取了行囊，简出贡生赴京文书放在身边了，写了一状，抱牌进告。状上写道：

告状生员张珍、张琼，为冤杀五命事：有父贡生张寅，前往新都恶宦杨某家取债，一去无踪。珍等亲投彼处寻访，探得当彼恶宦谋财害命，并仆四人，同时杀死。道路惊传，人人可证。尸骨无踪。滔天大变，万古奇冤，亲剿告。 告状生员张珍，系云南人。

石察院看罢状词，他一向原晓得新都杨佥事的恶迹著闻，体访已久，要为地方除害。只因是个甲科，又无人敢来告他，





and again inquired high and low about their father, and what they overheard on the streets all converged on the story of their father's murder. The two brothers wailed in private, heartbroken. First they considered avenging their father then and there, but after second thoughts, they realized they also could fall into Yang's hands if they stayed put. Moreover, the Yang family was so powerful in those parts, the local government could do nothing about him. Grief-stricken and frightened, they made their way back to Chengdu.

They recounted the story to Tang Xingge, who also shed tears. "Why not haul the man before the court and have him pay with his life?" suggested Xingge furiously. "We intend doing just that, immediately!" replied the two brothers. It so happened that an investigative inspector surnamed Shi was in Chengdu. The two young men took their father's baggage from Xingge, and sorted out the official dispatch regarding the title of their father to be kept in a safe place. They then filed an indictment and forwarded it to the court. The indictment read as follows:

An Indictment by Zhang Zhen and Zhang Qiong regarding the Murder of Five Innocent Men

Our father Zhang Yin, a bursary-student, went last year to the home of Yang, a local tyrant in Xindu, in an effort to collect payment on a debt. He then vanished. We hunted around Xindu for clues and discovered that this Yang had our father, along with his four followers, murdered for the purpose of appropriating our father's assets. The story of this crime has been widely disseminated, and universally acknowledged in the locale. Up to now no traces of their bodies have been found. Yang's crime is monumental, and this injustice is unprecedented. We are presenting this indictment and plead for your permission to arrest the murderer.

—Indictor Zhang Zhen, a native of Yunnan

Having read this bill of indictment, Investigative Inspector Shi recalled that Yang of Xindu County had long had a bad reputation for cruelty and tyranny. Determined to rid the local people of such evil, Shi had been personally attempting to gather evidence against him. Because this tyrant was a *jinshi* and no man had been bold enough to bring a suit against him, Shi had not yet found a means to punish him by law. Now, with this



没有把柄，未好动手。今见了两生告词，虽然明知其事必实，却是词中没个实证实据，乱行不得。石察院赶开左右，直唤两生到案前来，轻轻地分付道：“二生所告，本院久知此人罪恶贯盈。但彼奸谋叵测，二生可速回家去，毋得留此！倘为所知，必受其害。待本院廉访得实，当有移文至彼知会，关取尔等到此明冤，万万不可泄漏！”随将状词折了，收在袖中。两生叩头谢教而出，果然依了察院之言，一面收拾，竟回家中静听消息去了。

这边石察院待两司作揖之日，独留宪长谢公叙话。袖出此状，与他看着，道：“天地间有如此人否？本院留之心中久矣。今日恰有人来告此事，贵司刑法衙门可为一访。”谢廉使道：“此人枭獍为心，豺狼成性，诚然王法所不容。”石察院道：“旧闻此家有家僮数千，阴养死士数十。若不得其实迹，轻易举动，吾辈反为所乘，不可不慎！”谢廉使道：“事在下官。”袖了状词，一揖而出。

这谢廉使是极有才能的人，况兼按台嘱咐，敢不在心？他司中有两个承差，一个叫做史应，一个叫做魏能，乃是点头会意的人，谢廉使一向得用的。是日叫他两个进私衙来，分付道：



indictment before him, he knew the suit was no spurious charge. But he was, indeed, in need of witnesses to the crime before he could undertake this case. A rash action would only result in grave consequences. Shi told his subordinates to leave the room and asked the two plaintiffs to approach his desk.

Shi said to them, "I have already learned a great deal about the atrocities this criminal has committed and now your suit may serve as another charge against him. I think you should hurry home without delay, in case this treacherous man learns of your intentions and lays his murderous hands on you. I shall look into this matter and gather evidence. When everything is ready, I will summon you so that you shall see him convicted. Please tell nobody anything about this." This said, he slipped the indictment away into his sleeve. The two young men kowtowed, thanked him for his advice, packed their belongings and made their way home, where they patiently awaited the good news.

One day, after a routine conference with officials of the two administrative departments of the provincial government, Investigative Inspector Shi asked Master Xie, head of the Department of Punishments, to remain behind for a discussion. Then he took the indictment out of his sleeve and showed it to Master Xie, saying, "Have you ever encountered such a villain in this world? I have been paying close attention to this man's crimes. Now someone has brought a lawsuit against him. Could you investigate this case?" "This man is too cruel and crafty, and a government of law and order cannot tolerate his evil," replied Master Xie. Investigative Inspector Shi exhorted him, saying, "It is said this man has thousands of servants, and dozens of assassins. If we act rashly without solid evidence against him, we may be outclassed. So be very careful." Master Xie said, "Leave it to me and you can rest assured." Putting the indictment into his sleeve, Xie took leave from Shi with a bow.

Master Xie was a competent and clever official. With Investigative Inspector Shi's warnings, he made a careful plan. He had two capable runners in his department, one named Shi Ying and the other Wei Neng, who could always read their master's mind, and were particularly reliable. That same day Master Xie immediately called for them and said, "I have



“我有件机密事要你每两个做去。”两个承差叩头道：“凭爷分付，那厢使用，水火不辞。”廉使袖中取出状词来与他两个看，把手指着杨某名字道：“按院老爷要根究他家这事。不得那五个人尸首实迹，拿不倒他。必要体访的实，晓得了他埋藏去处，才好行事。却是这人凶狡非常，只怕容易打听不出。若是泄漏了事机，不惟无益，反致有害，是这些难处。”两承差道：“此宦之恶，播满一乡。若是晓得上司寻他不是，他必竟先去下手，非同小可。就是小的每往彼体访，若认得是衙门人役，惹起疑心，祸不可测。今蒙差委，除非改换打扮，只做无意游到彼地，乘机缉探，方得真实备细。”廉使道：“此言甚是有理。你们快怎么计较了去。”两承差自相商议了一回，道：除非如此如此。随禀廉使道：“小的们有一计在此，不知中也不中？”廉使道：“且说来。”承差道：“新都专产红花，小的们晓得杨宦家中有个红花场，利息千金。小的们两个打扮做买红花客人，到彼市买，必竟与他家管事家人交易往来，等走得路数多，人眼熟了，他每没些疑心，然后看机会空便，留心体访，必知端的。须拘不得时日。”廉使道：“此计颇好。你们小心在意，访着了此宗



a secret assignment for both of you.” Kowtowing, the two runners answered, “We humbly await your instructions and will overcome all difficulty and danger to accomplish the mission.” Master Xie took the indictment out of his sleeve and showed it to them. Pointing to Yang’s name, he remarked, “The Investigative Inspector wants to probe the murder he has committed. But we won’t be able to arrest him without finding the bodies of the five men killed. You must carefully look into this matter and find the exact site where these bodies are buried, before we can take action against him. This tyrant is noted for his evil and treacherous character, so it will be no easy task. On the contrary, any sort of disclosure of your mission may ruin the whole affair, and result in a disastrous failure. This is where your difficulty lies.”

The two runners responded, “This villain’s crimes have reached every part of his native place. If he happens to find out he is being investigated about his evil deeds, he will certainly take the initiative and gain the upper hand, which will be most unfavorable to us. Even our presence in his hometown will easily give us away as *yamen* runners and arouse suspicions that might lead to some unpredictable consequences. The only way to accomplish the task you entrust to us is to disguise ourselves as casual visitors and try to seize any possible opportunity to seek out details of the affair.” “What you have said is quite right,” said Master Xie, “and you had better hurry and get to work.”

The two runners discussed the problem and came up with a stratagem. They then reported to Master Xie, “We have a ploy, but we are not sure whether it is workable or not.” “Tell me about it,” said Master Xie. One of the runners replied, “Xindu is rich in safflower, and we have learned the Yang family possesses enormous fields of it, which brings him a large profit every year. We can go there disguised as buyers of safflower and thus eventually get in touch with the steward of his family. As we gradually become more familiar with the place and the local people, they will let down their guard. At that point we will have the chance to make inquiries into the matter. We are confident we will get to the bottom of the case. But it will take time to complete the task and you cannot set us a deadline.” “That is a really good idea,” commended Master Xie. “Take care, and if

公事，我另眼看你不打紧，还要对按院老爷说了，分别抬举你。”两承差道：“蒙老爷提挈，敢不用心！”叩头而出。

元来这史应、魏能多是有身家的人，在衙门里图出身的。受了这个差委，日夜在心。各自收拾了百来两银子，放在身边了，打扮做客人模样，一同到新都来。只说买红花，问了街上人，晓得红花之事，多是他三管家姓纪的掌管。此人生性梗直，交易公道，故此客人来多投他，买卖做得去。每年与家主挣下千来金利息，全亏他一个，若论家主这样贪暴，鬼也不敢来上门了。当下史应、魏能一径来到他家，拜望了，各述来买红花之意，送过了土宜。纪老三满面春风，一团和气，就置酒相待。这两个承差是衙门老溜，好不乖觉。晓得这人有用他处，便有心结识了他。放出虔婆手段，甜言美语，说得入港。魏能便开口道：“史大哥，我们新来这里做买卖，人面上不熟。自古道人来投主，鸟来投林。难得这样贤主人，我们序了年庚，结为兄弟何如？”史应道：“此意最好。只是我们初相会，况未经交易，只道是我们先讨好了，不便论量。待成了交易，再议未



you do a good job, I will not only treat you with special due consideration, but I will put in a good word for you with the investigative inspector for promotions.” “Thank you for your kindness. We shall do our utmost,” said the two runners. They then kowtowed and left.

Shi Ying and Wei Neng each had their own families. They worked hard in the yamen, hoping for a better life and a brighter future. After being entrusted with the task, they devoted themselves wholeheartedly into the investigation of the case. Each carrying about one hundred taels of silver with them, they disguised themselves as purchasers of safflower and headed for Xindu. Upon arrival, they inquired about the safflower business on the street and learned that it was Yang’s third manager surnamed Ji who was in charge of safflower trading for the Yang family. Third Manager Ji was universally acknowledged as being honest by nature and fair in business, thus bringing about rather brisk safflower sales and earning a yearly income of about one thousand taels of silver for his master. If it had not been for him, few purchasers would have stepped into the fields of such an avaricious and brutish master.

The two disguised officials went to the home of Third Manager Ji. After exchanging greetings, they presented him with some local products as gifts and then expressed their intention to buy safflower. Most delighted, Third Manager Ji treated them to dinner and wine. As the two officials were adept at their profession, they immediately realized their host was a conscientious person who could be depended on, and would help fulfill their task. Accordingly they heaped praise on their host, which the latter readily accepted, and soon the three were on friendly terms.

Wei Neng then said to his partner, “Brother Shi, we are strangers here on business. As the old saying goes, ‘A man seeks his master while a bird flies into the woods.’ We are lucky to have met such a good host. How about the three of us become sworn brothers today in accordance with the sequence of our dates of birth?” “That is great!” responded Shi Ying. “But this is our first meeting and we have not completed our business transactions. I am afraid it would be improper for us to ply our trade if we first make ourselves sworn brothers. I think we should finish our purchases before performing such a ceremony for brotherhood.” Third Manager Ji

迟。”纪老三道：“多承两位不弃，足感盛情。待明日看了货，完了正事，另治个薄设，从容请教，就此结义何如？”两个同声应道：“妙！妙！”当夜纪老三送他在客房歇宿，正是红花场庄上房。

次日起来，看了红花，讲倒了价钱。两人各取银子出来，兑足了，两下各各相让有馀，彼此情投意合。是日，纪老三果然宰鸡买肉，办起东道来。史、魏两人市上去买了些纸马香烛之类，回到庄上摆设了，先献了神，各写出年月日时来。史应最长，纪老三小六岁，魏能又小一岁，挨次序立，拜了神，各述了结拜之意，道：“自此之后，彼此无欺，有无相济，患难相救，久远不忘；若有违盟，神明殛之！”设誓已毕，从此两人称纪老三为二哥，纪老三称两人为大哥、三哥，彼此喜乐。当晚吃个尽欢而散。

元来蜀中传下刘、关、张三人之风，最重的是结义，故此史、魏二人先下此工夫，以结其心。却是未敢说什么正经心肠话，只收了红花停当，且还成都。发在铺中兑客，也原有两分利息。收起银子，又走此路。数月之中，如此往来了五六次。去便与纪老三绸缪，我请你，你请我，日日欢饮，真个如兄弟，形迹俱忘。





said, "It is very kind of you to pay me such high respect. Let us conclude the deal on the safflower tomorrow. Then I will throw another small party and we will go through the rites of becoming sworn brothers as you proposed. Do you agree?" "Terrific!" replied the two runners in one voice. Then Third Manager Ji took his visitors to a guestroom for the night, located amidst the fields of safflower. The following day, the two purchasers examined the safflower and discussed prices. Both took out their silver and offered to pay a higher price, while the host insisted on coming down for them. The deal was done to the satisfaction of both sides. Later that day, Third Manager acted the host, slaughtering hens and buying food for the dinner, while the two official runners went into the town and bought paper and candles for the ceremony. Setting up an altar, they first paid tribute to the gods and then put down their dates of birth in sequence on a sheet of paper. It turned out that Shi Ying was the eldest, Third Manager Ji was six years younger, and Wei Neng one year younger still. Standing in order of age, they prostrated themselves before the deities and expressed their willingness to become sworn brothers, vowing in chorus, "From now on, we shall be faithful to each other, help each other and rush to the rescue of anyone of us at times of plight. This we will bear in mind forever. Anyone who violates this code of conduct will be punished by the deities." From then on, the two official runners began to address Ji as Second Brother. Ji, in turn, addressed them as Eldest and Third Brother. Overjoyed, they ate and drank their fill that night.

This practice of becoming sworn brothers had been handed down from the era of the Three Kingdoms (220-280) when the three heroes from Shu Kingdom — Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei — had become sworn brothers, valuing the importance of the code of fraternity over everything else. Shi Ying and Wei Neng went through this ritual in order to make Ji their confidant. But they still carefully evaded the subject of the murder. They simply took their purchases back to Chengdu and resold them via a local warehouse, garnering a small profit. Thus, with the silver earned, they journeyed to and fro between Chengdu and Xindu five or six times over the next few months. Whenever they got together with Ji, they would have a dinner hosted by one side or the other, and the three of them became



一日酒酣，史应便伸伸腰道：“快活，快活。我们遇得好兄弟，到此一番，尽兴一番。”魏能接口道：“纪二哥待我们弟兄只好这等了。我心上还嫌他一件未到处。”纪老三道：“小弟何事得罪？但说出来，自家弟兄不要避忌。”魏能道：“我们晚间贪得一觉好睡。相好弟兄，只该着落我们在安静去处便好。今在此间，每夜听得鬼叫，梦寐多是不安的，有这件不像意，这是二哥欠检点处。小弟心性怕鬼的，只得直说了。”纪老三道：“果然鬼叫么？”史应道：“是有些诧异，小弟也听得，不只是魏三哥。”魏能道：“不叫，难道小弟掉谎？”纪老三点点头道：“这也怪他叫不得。”对着斟酒的一个伙计道：“你道叫的是兀谁？毕竟是云南那人了。”史应、魏能见说出真话来，只做原晓得的一般，不加惊异，趁口道：“云南那人之死，我们也闻得久了。只是既死之后，二哥也该积些阴鹭，与你家老爷说个方便，与他一堆土埋藏了尸骸也好。为何抛弃他在那里了，使他每夜这等叫苦连天？”纪老三道：“死便死得苦了，尸骸原是埋藏的。不要听外边人胡猜乱说！”两人道：“外人多



as close as blood brothers.

One day after some drinks, stretching, Shi Ying declared, “Wonderful! It is wonderful indeed to meet such a fine brother here. Every time we are here, we have such a good time.” Picking up the thread of his partner’s remarks, Wei Neng added, “Second Brother Ji, you have treated us so superbly. However, I still feel you have committed a small impropriety against us in terms of brotherhood.” “In what way have I offended you, Brother?” inquired Ji. “Please tell me what it could be. Since we are brothers, you need not turn away from telling me about it.” “We need a sound sleep at night,” said Wei Neng, “so you should have settled us in a quiet place. But the fact is we have been disturbed every night at our dwelling by the howling of ghosts. Because I am by nature afraid of ghosts, I have to be frank with you, Second Brother, which is why I brought this up as your only shortcoming.”

“Did you really hear the howls of ghosts?” asked Third Manager Ji. “That is strange,” Shi Ying cut in. “It was not only Third Brother Wei who has heard howling, I heard them too.” “If it was not real,” Wei Neng added, “could it be that I was dreaming?” “It is possible that ghosts may have indeed howled,” Third Manager Ji answered, nodding his head. Turning to a servant who was waiting upon them pouring wine, Ji continued, “You know who was howling? I am sure it must be those men from Yunnan.” On hearing Ji get to the point, Shi Ying and Wei Neng did not become startled at Ji’s remark; instead they pretended as if they had long known about it.

Taking this opportunity, the two officials commented, “We also heard about the death of these men from Yunnan a long time ago. But we think, Second Brother, you should perform one good deed after their death, towards your merit in the next world. You should show some mercy towards them and ask your master to find them a plot of land in which to bury those bodies. How can their bodies just be abandoned there, totally exposed, making their souls howl miserably each night?” “It is true they died a tragic death,” Third Manager Ji admitted, “but I can assure you their bodies were buried. Do not believe the rumors and gossip you hear.” The two officials replied, “Yet most people here say their bodies were



说是当时抛弃了，二哥又说是埋藏了。若是埋藏了，他怎如此叫苦？”纪老三道：“两个兄弟不信，我领你去看。煞也古怪，但是埋他这一块地上，一些红花也不生哩！”史应道：“我每趁着酒兴，斟杯热酒儿，到他那堆里浇他一浇，叫他晚间不要这等怪叫。就在空旷去处，再吃两大杯尽尽兴。”两个一齐起身，走出红花场上来。

纪老三只道是散酒之意，那道是有心的？也起了身，叫小的带了酒盒，随了他们同步，引他们到一个所在来看。但见：

弥漫怨气结成堆，凛冽凄风团作阵。

若还不遇有心人，沉埋数载谁相问？

纪老三把手指道：“那一块一根草也不生的底下，就是他五个的尸骸，怎说得不曾埋藏？”史应就斟下个大杯，向空里作个揖道：“云南的老兄，请一杯儿酒，晚间不要来惊吓我们。”魏能道：“我也奠他一杯，凑成双杯。”纪老三道：“一饮一啄，莫非前定。若不是大哥、三哥来，这两滴酒，几时能勾到他泉下？”史应道：“也是他的缘分。”大家笑了一场，又将盒来摆



strewn all over the place after their death. Now you say they were buried. If they had been buried, how come they still howl?"

Third Manager Ji replied, "If you two brothers do not believe me, I will show you the place. It is really strange, but safflower does not grow where their bodies were buried." Then Shi Ying suggested, "Let us take advantage of the spirit evoked by the wine and take a stroll over there right now. Once there we could pour a cup of warm wine over their graves so as to cease their terrible howling at night. In addition, we could also enjoy a few cups of wine outdoors, which would be enjoyable." Getting up, the two official runners left for the field of safflower. How could Third Manager Ji have realized it was a plot? Beguiled into thinking the two men were just out for some fresh air after some wine, he went along with them, ordering a servant to accompany them with a jug of wine. Thus he guided them to the place. The following lines are descriptive of what they saw and felt:

Where amassed grief and woe doth wail,
Trill aghast do desolate chill gales.
Who to appear to salve their souls,
Entombed 'neath this earth for years,
If such folk did not come to light,
Resolute an injustice to right?

Pointing his fingers at a certain tract of land, Third Manager Ji said, "Right beneath that barren surface of earth lie the bodies of the five men who were killed. How could you claim they were not buried?"

After pouring some wine into a large cup, Shi Ying bowed towards the sky, with one hand cupping the other, while praying, "Brothers from Yunnan, please receive this cup of wine. We would be thankful if you do not frighten and disturb us any more at night." Wei Neng stepped forward and said, "This cup of wine, my sacrificial libation to them, so now they may have two cups of wine." Third Manager Ji commented, "Every mouthful of food and every drop of drink in one's life is fated. If you brothers had not honored them with your presence here, they would never have had a taste of this wine." "It is their luck," said Shi Ying. The three of them all laughed. Then, placing the jug of wine and the cup on the



在红花地上，席地而坐。豁了几拳，各各连饮几个大觥。看看日色曛黑，方才住手。两人早已把埋尸的所在周围暗记认定了，仍到庄房里宿歇。

次日对纪老三道：“昨夜果然安静些，想是这两杯酒吃得快活了。”大家笑了一回。是日别了纪老三要回，就问道：“二哥几时也到省下来走走，我们也好做个东道，尽个薄意，回敬一回敬。不然，我们只是叨扰，再无回答，也觉面皮忒厚了。”纪老三道：“弟兄家何出此言！小弟没事不到省下，除非冬底要买过年物事，是必要到你们那里走走，专意来拜大哥、三哥的宅上便是。”三人分手，各自散了。

史应、魏能此番揣知了实地，是长是短，来禀明了谢廉使。廉使道：“你们果是能干。既是这等了，外边不可走漏一毫风信，但等那姓纪的来到省城，即忙密报我知道，自有道理。”两人禀了出来，自在外边等候纪老三来省。

看看残年将尽，纪老三果然来买年货，特到史家、魏家拜望。两人住处差不多远，接着纪老三，欢天喜地道：“好风吹得贵客到此。”史应叫魏能偈伴了他，道：“魏三哥且陪着纪二哥坐一坐，小弟市上走一走，看中吃的东西，寻些来家请二哥。”魏能道：“是，是。快来则个。”史应就叫了一个小厮，拿了个篮儿，带着几百钱往市上去了。一面买了些鱼肉果品之类，先打发小厮归家整治；一面走进按察司衙门里头去，密禀



ground, they sat down on the ground and started to drink as they played finger games. They did not stop drinking until after dark. By that time the two officials had taken careful note of the location. They then departed to their rooms for the night.

The following day, the two said to Third Manager Ji, "Last night was a peaceful night, so they must have been mollified by the drinks we offered them." They all laughed. That same day the two officials bade farewell to Ji, saying: "Second Brother, when do you hope to come down to Chengdu some day in the future to see us? We will act as hosts so that we can extend our gratitude in return for your hospitality. Otherwise, we should always feel indebted to you for your kindness, since we have troubled you so much." Third Manager Ji replied, "Do not mention it. We are brothers. I do not go down there unless I have to do business. But I will surely make the trip to Chengdu by the end of the year to do some shopping for the Spring Festival. I will then call at your house to pay a special visit to the both of you." This said, they parted.

Back in Chengdu, Shi Ying and Wei Neng reported to Master Xie in detail what they had discovered. Xie commended them, "You are indeed talented. Do not breathe a word about this for now. The moment Ji arrives here in the capital city of the province, let me know at once, and I will take care of the matter." Then the two officials left and awaited the arrival of Third Manager Ji. As the year drew to an end, as promised Third Manager Ji arrived in Chengdu to do his shopping for the Spring Festival. He especially called at the Shi and Wei houses, which were not far apart. Very much delighted at the sight of Third Manager Ji, the two officials greeted him warmly, "You are a distinguished guest come here through good fortune!" Then Shi Ying said to Wei Neng, "Third Brother Wei, would you please stay here with Brother Ji for a moment while I go downtown to buy some food for dinner." "Certainly, but please hurry," answered Wei Neng.

Taking several hundred coppers and a shopping basket, Shi Ying went out with a young servant. He bought some meat and fruit, and sent the young servant back home first to prepare the dinner, while he hastened to the *yamen* to inform Master Xie about the arrival of Ji. Master Xie told



与廉使知道。廉使分付史应先回家去伴住他，不可放走了。随即差两个公人，写个朱笔票与他道：“立拘新都杨宦家人纪三面审，毋迟时刻。”公人赍了小票，一径到史应家里来。

史应先到家里整治酒肴，正与纪老三接风。吃到兴头上，听得外边敲门响。史应叫小厮开了门，只见两个公人跑将进来，对史、魏两人唱了喏，却不认得纪老三，问道：“这位可是杨管家么？”史、魏两人会了意，说道：“正是杨家纪大叔。”公人也拱一拱手说道：“敝司主要请管家相见。”纪老三吃一惊道：“有何事要见我，莫非错了？”公人道：“不错，见有小票在此。”便拿出朱笔的小票来看。史应、魏能假意吃惊道：“古怪！这是怎么起的？”公人道：“老爷要问杨乡宦家中事体，一向分付道：‘但有管家到省，即忙缉报。’方才见史官人市上买东西，说道请杨家的纪管家。不知那个多嘴的禀知了老爷，故此特着我每到来相请。”纪老三呆了一晌道：“没事唤我怎的？我须不曾犯事！”公人道：“谁知犯不犯，见了老爷便知端的。”史、魏两人道：“二哥自身没甚事，便去见见不妨。”纪老三道：“决然为我们家里的老头儿，再无别事。”史、魏两人道：“倘若问着家中事体，只是从直说了，料不吃亏的。既然两位牌头



Shi Ying to return home immediately and keep Ji where he was, making it clear he was not to let him go. Then, after writing a summons in cinnabar, he commanded two other officials, "Take this with you and bring Ji of the Yang family in Xindu here for interrogation!" The two runners took the summons and rushed directly to Shi Ying's house. Shi Ying had already returned and was preparing the wine and food for the welcoming dinner for Third Manager Ji. While they were enjoying the dinner, they heard a knock at the door. Shi Ying asked a young boy to open the door, and in came the two runners.

After greeting Shi Ying and Wei Neng, the two runners, seeing a stranger at the table, turned to Ji and asked, "Is this man Mr. Ji, a manager for the Yang family?" "Yes, he is Uncle Ji, manager for the Yang Family," answered Shi Ying and Wei Neng, aware of the situation. Then the two runners, cupping one hand over the other as a salute, said, "The head of our *yamen* requests an audience with you." Astonished, Ji asked, "Why does he want to see me? Is this some mistake?" "No mistake at all," replied the runners. "Here is the summons." As they said this, they showed him the summons in cinnabar. Shi Ying and Wei Neng, making a show of surprise and pretending to know nothing of the matter, inquired, "How strange! What is going on?" The runners answered, "Our chief has been investigating a matter related to the Yang family and has told us to report to him immediately if ever a manager of the Yang family came to the provincial capital city. Mr. Shi was spotted on the street a moment ago buying food and fruit, talking about preparing a dinner for Manager Ji. Some gossip or busybody, we have no idea who it was, reported it to our chief, and so we have been sent here to request your presence."

Third Manager Ji remained silent for some time, and then murmured, "Why am I wanted? I have not committed any crime." The two runners responded, "We have no idea if you committed a crime or not. You shall know what you are wanted for when you meet our department chief." Shi and Wei told Ji, "Second Brother, you have a clean record. It will not do you any harm to go see him." Third Manager Ji said, "I guess it must be about my master, nobody else." Then Shi Ying and Wei Neng said: "If you are questioned about affairs concerning the Yang family, just tell the



到此，且请便席略坐一坐，吃三杯了去，何如？”公人道：“多谢厚情。只是老爷立等回话的公事，从容不得。”史、应不由他分说，拿起大觥，每人灌了几觥，吃了些案酒。公人又催起身，史应道：“我便陪着二哥到衙门里去去，魏三哥在家再收拾好了东西，烫热了酒，等见见官来尽兴。”纪老三道：“小弟衙门里不熟，史大哥肯同走走，足见帮衬。”纪老三没处躲闪，只得跟了两个公人到按察司里来。

传梆禀知谢廉使，廉使不升堂，竟叫进私衙里来。廉使问道：“你是新都杨佥事的家人么？”纪老三道：“小的是。”廉使道：“你家主做的歹事，你可知道详细么？”纪老三道：“小的家主果然有一两件不守本分勾当，只是小的主仆之分，不敢明言。”廉使道：“你从直说了，我饶你打。若有一毫隐蔽，我就用夹棍了！”纪老三道：“老爷要问那一件？小的好说。家主所做的事非一，叫小的何处说起？”廉使冷笑道：“这也说的是。”案上翻那状词，再看一看，便问道：“你只说那云南张贡生主仆五命，今在何处？”纪老三道：“这个不该是小的说的，家主这件事其实有些亏天理。”廉使道：“你且慢慢说来。”纪老三便把从头如何来讨银，如何留他吃酒，如何杀死了埋在红



truth. We are sure you will come to no harm. Now that you two officials are here, why not sit down and join us for some drinks?"

"Thank you for your kindness," replied the two other runners, "but we are on business and our chief is awaiting our return. We cannot delay." Allowing for no excuses, Shi Ying grabbed a big bronze vessel, and made both of them take a few drinks from it too. After this, the two runners again urged them to leave. Then Shi Ying said, "I will go with Second Brother Ji to the *yamen*. Third Brother Wei, would you mind staying home and putting things in order? Please keep the wine warm so we can continue with our merrymaking when we get back from the *yamen*." Third Manager Ji said to Shi, "I have no connections at the *yamen*. It is most kind of you to go with me." Having no other alternative, Third Brother Ji had to follow the two official runners to the *yamen* in the provincial capital.

The official runners at the entrance of the *yamen* informed Master Xie of Ji's arrival. Master Xie met him at his private office instead of bringing him into the court. Xie questioned him, "Are you a manager at the Yang household?" "Yes, sir, I am," Ji answered. "Are you aware of the evil deeds and atrocities your master has committed?" asked Master Xie. "Yes," Ji answered. "My master has done a few evil deeds. Still, I am an employee, so I do not think I would be bold enough to go public." "If you make a clean breast of his evil deeds," Master Xie said, "I will spare you a flogging. But if you conceal any of his wrongdoings, I shall put you on the rack." Ji asked, "Which one of his crimes do you wish to know about? I will tell you what I know. But my master has committed more than one offence. Where do you want me to start?" With a smirk, Master Xie said, "Indeed, he has committed too many crimes."

Picking up the indictment and scanning it quickly, Master Xie then said, "Just tell me about the death of bursary-student Zhang and his four aides from Yunnan. Where are their bodies?" Third Brother Ji answered, "I am afraid I cannot speak about that, sir, but to be honest, what my master did was truly an act of gross injustice." "Tell me about it in detail," commanded Master Xie. Third Manager Ji then gave a thorough account of how at the beginning Zhang Yin had come to Yang's house for his silver, how he and his men were asked to stay for dinner, and how they



花地里，说了个备细。谢廉使写了口词道：“你这人倒老实，我不难为你。权发监中，待提到了正犯就放。”当下把纪老三发下监中。史应、魏能到也为日前相处分上，照管他一应事体，叫监中不要难为他，不在话下。

谢廉使审得真情，即发宪牌一张，就差史应、魏能两人赍到新都县，着落知县身上，要命事杨某正身，系连杀五命公事，如不擒获，即以知县代解。又发牌捕衙，在红花场起尸。

两人领命，到得县里，已是除夜那一日了。新都知县接了来文，又见两承差口禀紧急，吓得两手无措。忖道：“今日是年晚，此老必定在家，须乘此时调兵围住，出其不意，方无走失。”即忙唤兵房令牌出去，调取一卫兵来，有三百余人。知县自领了，把杨家围得铁桶也似。

其时杨命事正在家饮团年酒，日色未晚，早把大门重重关闭了，自与群妾内宴，歌的歌，舞的舞。内中一妾唱一只《黄莺儿》道：

秋雨酿春寒，见繁花树树残。泥涂满眼登临倦，江流



were killed and buried in the safflower field. Master Xie took down what Ji said. Then Master Xie told him, "You are an honest man. Therefore, I will not treat you harshly. But I shall have to hold you behind bars until the criminal is captured." After this, Ji was immediately put in jail. Considering their recent good relations with Ji, Shi Ying and Wei Neng made due effort to ask the jail guards not to make things difficult for him, the details of which are not worth mentioning here.

Having learned of the ins and outs regarding the murder, Master Xie issued a warrant as a token of authority ordering Shi Ying and Wei Neng to go to Xindu and have the county magistrate there arrest Yang on the charge of murdering five men. If the county magistrate failed to take Yang into custody, he should be arrested instead. After that, Master Xie gave another token of authority to the yamen runners, ordering that the remains of the five men be exhumed from the safflower field. It was the eve of the Spring Festival when the two official runners took the warrant with them and arrived at Xindu. The county magistrate of Xindu accepted the warrant and, despite being urgently pressed by the two official runners, was too frightened at first to work out what to do. Then he calculated, "Today is the last day of the year, so I figure the old man must be home. I shall take this opportunity to send my troops right away to surround his house and launch a surprise attack. Only in this way do I have every chance of success." He at once issued an order to the garrison troops to muster three hundred soldiers.

The country magistrate, leading the troops in person, surrounded the Yang's house so tightly it seemed as if the household was enclosed in an iron barrel. At that very moment Yang was home holding a Spring Festival Eve wine party. The gates of the yard had already been closed well before the fall of the night. Yang was enjoying the dinner and wine with his concubines, having songs and dances performed for him. One of the concubines sang a song entitled "Yellow Oriole," which went thus:

Spring chill seeps in with raindrops
 Blossoms fall from all the treetops.
 Languid I ascend, see the paths soaked
 Winding rivers, mountains in clouds cloaked



几湾，云山几盘，天涯极目空肠断。寄书难，无情征雁，飞不到滇南。

杨佥事见唱出“滇南”两字，一个撞心拳，变了脸色道：“要你们提起甚么滇南不滇南！”心下有些不快活起来。

不想知县已在外边，看见大门关上，两个承差是认得他家路径的，从侧边梯墙而入。先把大门开了，请知县到正厅上坐下。叫人到里边传报道：“邑主在外有请！”杨佥事正因“滇南”二字触着隐衷，有些动心，忽听得知县来到正厅上，想道：“这时候到此何干？必有跷蹊，莫非前事有人告发了？”心下惊惶。一时无计，道：“且躲过了他再处。”急往厨下灶前去躲。知县见报了许久不出，恐防有失，忙入中堂，自求搜寻。家中妻妾一时藏避不及，知县分付：“唤一个上前来说话！”此时无奈，只得走一个妇女出来答应。知县问道：“你家爷那里去了？”这个妇人回道：“出外去了，不在家里。”知县道：“胡说！今日是年晚，难道不在家过年的？”叫从人将拶子拶将起



Oh, all that in the wide world looms
Casts over me such gloom!
The wild goose, the messenger bird
Cannot reach faraway Yunnan
To deliver my love my word.

The moment he heard the word “Yunnan” coming out of her mouth, Yang caught his heart missing a beat. His face clouded instantly, and he roared, “Do not mention that cursed word ‘Yunnan’!” He then turned disconsolate.

Seeing the gate of the yard was closed, the county magistrate stationed his troops outside. As they knew the way into Yang’s house, Shi Ying and Wei Neng climbed over a flanking wall into the yard and opened the gate to let the troops in. The county magistrate entered the house and took a seat in the main hall. Then he told one of the Yang family’s servants to send for his master, saying, “The county magistrate is here to see him.” While Yang was still in great anguish at the mention of the word “Yunnan,” posing as it did a subconscious dread, he suddenly learned the county magistrate had arrived in his main hall. He wondered, “Why has this man come to my house at this time of night? This is something unusual. Could it be possible someone has squealed to him about my former crimes?” Panic-stricken, he could not figure out what to do. Finally he thought to himself, “I had better avoid seeing him for now, and I shall try to work it out later.”

So he dashed into the kitchen and hid himself behind the cooking range. Seeing that his orders had brought no sign of Yang, the county magistrate became anxious about the accomplishment of his task. He personally walked into the inner rooms of the house to search for Yang. He ran into Yang’s wife and concubines, who had not yet had the chance to seek refuge. The county magistrate ordered, “Bring one of them before me for questioning.” One of the ladies therefore had to walk over to him so as to answer his questions.

“Where is your master?” asked the county magistrate. “He is out, he is not at home,” replied the lady. “Nonsense!” refuted the county magistrate. “It is the last day of the year today. Is he staying away from his family?”



来。这妇人着了忙，喊道：“在，在。”就把手指着厨下。知县率领从人竟往厨下来搜。仵事无计可施，只得走出来道：“今日年夜，老父母何事直入人内室？”知县道：“非干晚生之事，乃是按台老大人、宪长大人相请，问甚么连杀五命的公事，要老先生星夜到司对理。如老先生不去，要晚生代解，不得不如此唐突。”仵事道：“随你甚么事，也须让过年节。”知县道：“上司紧急，两个承差坐提，等不得过年。只得要烦老先生一行，晚生奉陪同往就是。”知县就叫承差守定，不放宽展。仵事无奈，只得随了知县出门。知县登时仵了解批，连夜解赴会城。两个承差又指点捕官，一面到庄上掘了尸首，一同赶来。那些在庄上的强盗，见主人被拿，风声不好，一哄的走了。

谢廉使特为这事岁朝升堂。知县已将仵事解进。仵事换了小服，跪在厅下，口里还强道：“不知犯官有何事故，钧牌拘



He told his followers to get the finger-clamps ready to torture her. Terribly frightened, the lady screamed, "Alright, alright! He's at home." As she admitted this, she pointed in the direction of the kitchen. Then the county magistrate led his men to the kitchen to search for him. Unable to remain there any longer, Yang had to emerge.

"What important business brings you into my inner chambers on the eve of the Spring Festival?" Yang asked. "Well, it is none of my business," said the county magistrate. "It is His Excellency the Investigative Inspector and His Excellency the Chief of the Provincial Department of Punishments who want to see you with regard to a certain murder of five men. You are required to set out this very night and report to them immediately. If you refuse to go, I shall have to appear in court in your stead. So I had no alternative but to break in abruptly and intrude on you." "Whatever the business, you should allow me to remain home for the Festival first," countered Yang. The county magistrate persisted, "But my superiors insisted it was urgent and the two official runners sent here are following close at my heels, waiting for me to carry out the mission. I am afraid we cannot wait till after the Festival. You must take the trouble to go with us, and I would be happy to accompany you."

Then he told the two runners not to make any concessions on this matter. Unable to alter the situation, Yang had to follow the county magistrate out of his house. The county magistrate then signed a statement to send to his superiors about his accomplishing the capture of Yang. The criminal was sent under escort directly to the provincial capital that same night. Shi Ying and Wei Neng carefully lead some of the troops to the site in the safflower field where they unearthed the five corpses. They then hurried to catch up with the county magistrate. Seeing their master taken into custody, Yang's bandits, realizing the situation had turned ill for them, abruptly dispersed.

On the first day of the Lunar New Year, Master Xie convened the court to address this case. The county magistrate brought in Yang, who had changed into informal dress. Kneeling down on the ground, Yang reasonably articulated, "I have no idea what manner of wrongdoing I have committed to be brought here in this way as if an outlaw." Master



提，如捕反寇。”廉使将按院所准状词，读与他听。金事道：“有何凭据？”廉使道：“还你个凭据。”即将纪老三放将出来，道：“这可是你家人么？他所供口词的确，还有何言？”金事道：“这是家人怀挟私恨诬首的，怎么听得？”廉使道：“诬与不诬，少顷便见。”说话未完，只见新都巡捕、县丞已将红花场五个尸首，在衙门外着落地方收贮，进司禀知。廉使道：“你说无凭据，这五个尸首，如何在你地上？”廉使又问捕官：“相得尸首怎么的？”捕官道：“县丞当时相来，俱是生前被人杀死，身首各离的。”廉使道：“如何？可正与纪三所供不异，再推得么？”金事俯首无辞，只得认了道：“一时酒醉触怒，做了这事。乞看缙绅体面，遮盖些则个。”廉使道：“缙绅中有此，不但衣冠中禽兽，乃禽兽中豺狼也。石按台早知此事，密访已久，如何轻贷得？”即将杨金事收下监候，待行关取到原告再问。重赏了两个承差，纪三释放宁家去了。关文行到云南，两个秀才知道杨金事已在狱中，星夜赴成都来执命，晓得事在按察司，



Xie then read to him the indictment, approved by the Provincial Department of Punishments. Yang asked, "What evidence do you have?" "Here is the evidence!" replied Master Xie. He sent for Third Manager Ji, and then turned to Yang, "Can you deny the fact this man has worked for you? His confession is clear and detailed. Do you have anything more to say about this?" "I think this employee of mine is simply giving vent to personal grievances by making false charges against me," Yang defended himself. "Why should you believe him?" Master Xie said, "Whether it is a false charge or not will be made clear immediately."

Hardly had he finished his words when the *yamen* officers and the magistrate's assistants from Xindu came in to report that they had placed on the ground outside the court the five bodies unearthed from the safflower field. "How are you going to explain the fact," asked Master Xie, "that these five bodies were unearthed on your estate?" Then turning to the *yamen* officers, Master Xie asked, "Have you examined the bodies?" The *yamen* officers answered, "The magistrate has had the bodies examined and discovered that these five men were all beheaded, the heads and the trunks separated." Master Xie said to Yang, "Are you going to deny this? The autopsies of the corpses tally with Brother Ji's account of things." Tongue-tied, Yang was at a loss for words and lowered his head. Acknowledging his crime, he claimed, "I did this deed after flying into a rage after drinking. I beg you to take into consideration that I was a government official, to show me some mercy." Master Xie denounced him, "It is a shame our government has officials such as you. You are nothing but a beast in human clothing and a wolf in the animal kingdom! Investigative Inspector Shi has long known about this case and conducted many clandestine investigations. How can we let you off so easily?" Then Master Xie gave an order that Yang be immediately put into jail, to await further interrogation after the two plaintiffs had been summoned to court. After that, Master Xie rewarded Shi Ying and Wei Neng lavishly and sent Third Manager Ji home.

When the summons reached Yunnan, the two brothers learned that Yang had been imprisoned. They set off for Chengdu the same night without delay, hoping to confront the murderer and have him pay with

竟来投到。廉使叫押到尸场上，认领父亲尸首。取出金事对质一番，两子将金事拳打脚踢。廉使喝住道：“既在官了，自有应得罪名，不必如此。”将金事依一人杀死三命者律，今更多二命，拟凌迟处死，决不待时。下手诸盗以为从定罪，候擒获发落。金事系是职官，申院奏请定夺。

不等得旨意转来，杨金事是受用的人，在狱中受苦不过，又见张贡生率领四仆日日来打他，不多几时，毙于狱底。金事原不曾有子，家中竟无主持，诸妾各自散去。只有杨二房八岁的儿子杨清是他亲侄，应得承受，泼天家业多归于他。杨金事枉自生前要算计并侄儿子的，岂知身后连自己的倒与他了！这便是天理不泯处。

那张贡生只为要欺心小兄弟的人家，弄得身子冤死他乡，幸得官府清正有风力，才报得仇。却是行关本处，又经题请，把这件行贿上司、图占家产之事各处播扬开了。张宾此时同了



his life for their father's death. Knowing this case was being handled at the Provincial Department of Investigations, they made their way directly there. Master Xie let them in to the mortuary to identify their father's body. Then Master Xie had Yang brought into the court to be confronted by his accusers. The two young men immediately threw themselves on him and began to strike and kick him. Master Xie stopped them, shouting, "Stop! Now that he has been brought to justice, he will naturally receive whatever punishment he deserves."

According to the penal code, a criminal deserved the death penalty by corporal dismemberment² if he committed three homicides. Since Yang was the murderer of five men, Master Xie ordered that Yang be put to death without delay. He also issued an order to round up for trial Yang's bandit followers who had been involved in the crime. As Yang had been an official, the sentence was delivered to a higher authority to be reviewed for the final decision. However, as a person who had been used to comfort and pleasure, Yang could not stand the mental torment while in jail awaiting the final decision. He also saw the ghosts of Zhang Yin and his four followers appearing to beat him and torture him every day. In no time, he expired in the jail.

It seems Yang did not have any offspring. There was no one in his family able to take charge of the family affairs. All of his concubines dispersed. His nephew Yang Qing, the eight-year-old only son of his younger brother, became the sole heir to his huge estate and fortune. When, at the beginning Yang had cultivated the sinister intention of grabbing his nephew's property, he could not have foreseen how all of his own property would fall into the hands of his nephew after his death. This proves that the edicts of heaven are eventually achieved. Bursary-student Zhang Yin had also died a violent death on alien soil because of his evil designs and wrongdoing in bullying his younger brother. Thanks to the just and upright official authorities, his wrongs were finally redressed.

Nevertheless, with the settling of the case and an official summons being delivered to the government of his hometown, the story of Zhang Yin bribing a superior in an effort to grab the whole family property was made known to the public. Zhang Bin, the younger brother of Zhang Yin,

母亲禀告县官道：“若是家事不该平分，哥子为何行贿？眼见得欺心，所以丧身。今两姓执命既已明白，家事就好公断了。此系成都成案，奏疏分明，须不是撰造得出的。”县官理上说他不过，只得把张家一应产业两下平分。张宾得了一半，两个侄儿得了一半，两个侄儿也无可争论。张贡生早知道到底如此，何苦将钱去买憔悴，白折了五百两银子，又送了五条性命？真所谓“无梁不成，反输一帖”也！奉劝世人，还是存些天理、守些本分的好。

钱财有分苦争多，反自将身入网罗。

看取两家归束处，心机用尽竟如何？



together with his mother, went to the county magistrate and said, “If it had not been right to divide my father’s legacy equally between us brothers, why should my elder brother have resorted to bribery? He lost his life because of his wickedness and evil deeds. Since the murder case has now been officially cleared up and justice has been done, our dispute over the family property has become easier to settle. The case has been processed in Chengdu and the relevant documents have made everything clear. These documents cannot be fabrications.”

Unable to counter them, the county magistrate had to divide the property of the Zhang family into two halves: one half went to Zhang Bin, and the other half went to his two nephews. The two nephews could no longer argue over the matter, and accepted the outcome. If Zhang Yin had known the result, would he have spent his money on such an ill-starred venture? He lost five hundred taels of silver for nothing, which led to the death of five men. His tragedy effectively proves the old saying, “Go after wool and come back shorn.” From this tale, people should be well advised to observe the edicts of heaven, and be honest and decent in their conduct of themselves.

Once set on grabbing more riches than is yours,
Inevitably fall into a snare prepared long before.
One look at these two men’s most tragic ending,
What more to gain, despite such craft and cunning?

卷 之 五

襄敏公元宵失子 十三郎五岁朝天

词云：

瑞烟浮禁苑。正绛阙春回，新正方半。冰轮桂华满。溢花衢歌市，芙蓉开遍。龙楼两观。见银烛、星球有烂。卷珠帘，尽日笙歌，盛集宝钗金钏。堪羨。绮罗丛里，兰麝香中，正宜游玩。风柔夜暖。花影乱，笑声喧。闹蛾儿满路，成团打块，簇着冠儿斗转。喜皇都、旧日风光，太平再见。（词寄《瑞鹤仙》）



Tale 5

Minister Wang Xiangmin's Son Disappears at Lantern Festival Five-year-old Thirteenth Boy Reveres the Son of Heaven

A *ci* poem reads:

Swathed in golden rays, auspicious ambience
The imperial garden majestic stands,
Spring is here at the royal purple palace
This fifteenth day of the first lunar month,
Full moon in the sky hangs luminous
Vivid flowers fill the streets lustrous,
Dazzling scenes of beauty displayed,
Maidens alluring as hibiscus arrayed.
Imperial palace twin towers reveal two vistas:
Way high in the skies the gleaming moon and stars
Pulling up bead curtains, hear unending song and melody,
See belles swirling everywhere.

What splendid scenery!
Midst fragrance of rustling silk robes, the scent
Of musk, the perfect time for delight.
Tender the breeze, warm is the night.
The shadows of flowers quiver, pealing laughter.
Ladies' butterfly tiaras the streets crown,
Spirited and lively youth crowd round.
Oh, how fine to see our past grandeur retained
Our capital's peace and prosperity regained!
(To the tune of "Ruihexian")

这一首词乃是宋绍兴年间词人康伯可所作。伯可元是北人，随驾南渡，有名是个会做乐府的才子。秦申王荐于高宗皇帝。这词单道着上元佳景，高宗皇帝极其称赏，御赐金帛甚多。词中为何说“旧日风光，太平再见”？盖因靖康之乱，徽、钦被虏，中原尽属金夷，侥幸康王南渡，即了帝位，偏安一隅，偷闲取乐，还要模拟盛时光景，故词人歌咏如此。也是自解自乐而已。怎如得当初柳耆卿另有一首词云：

禁漏花深，绣工日永，熏风布暖。变韶景、都门十二，元宵三五，银蟾光满。连云复道凌飞观。耸皇居丽，佳气瑞烟葱蒨。翠华宵幸，是处层城阆苑。 龙凤烛、交光





The author of this *ci* poem, Kang Boke, was a contemporary of Shaoxing, living during the reign of Song Gaozong (1127-1162) of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). Though originally a northerner, Boke came south with the emperor. Having heard of his talent in writing poems in the Yuefu style, Qin Hui, prime minister during Gaozong's reign, recommended him to Emperor Gaozong. This *ci* poem, with Kang extolling the beautiful sights on the occasion of the Lantern Festival, was highly appreciated by Emperor Gaozong, who bestowed immense wealth on the poet. Why would the writer sigh with such emotion: "Oh, how fine to see the grandeur of our past retained /our capital's peace and prosperity regained!?" The answer probably lies in the "Jingkang Incident." Qinzong and Huizong were captured by the jin forces. Central China was occupied by the invading forces of the Jin. Fortunately, Prince Kang was able to flee southward and ascend to the throne, who was quite content to reign over only a small territory, and to seize every opportunity to indulge himself in pleasure-seeking. He tried as well to mimic the spectacular festivals of peace and prosperity popular in the preceding dynasties. This is perhaps why the poet, in the last lines, appears so inspired by the charming and prosperous scenes. It may be also inferred, that the writer was consoling and distracting himself. Nevertheless, this *ci* poem by Kang Boke cannot rival the ode celebrating the same occasion by Liu Yong, a famous *ci* poet of the Northern Song Dynasty:

Deluged in flowers the imperial palace.
Embroiderers enjoy their work all day long.
Fragrant winds rise, effusing warmth's aroma.
This joyous occasion of the Lantern Festival,
On this first lunar month's fifteenth day,
Panoramic splendor swaths the twelve capital gates,
Like rows of colored clouds ascending to the sky,
Gilded silver by the moon full and bright a-high.

Cloaked in fresh green, the floating imperial gardens,
'Neath purple rays of a most auspicious ambience
Imposing and lofty, awash in glory and grandeur.

星汉，对咫尺鳌山开雉扇。会乐府两籍神仙，梨园四部弦管。向晓色、都人未散。盈万井、山呼鳌抃。愿岁岁、天仗里常瞻凤辇。（词寄《倾杯乐》）

这首词多说着盛时宫禁说话。只因宋时极作兴是个元宵，大张灯火，御驾亲临，君民同乐，所以说道“金吾不禁夜，玉漏莫相催”。

然因是倾城士女通宵出游，没些禁忌，其间就有私期密约，鼠窃狗偷，弄出许多话柄来。当时李汉老又有一首词云：

帝城三五，灯光花市盈路。天街游处。此时方信，凤阙都民，奢华豪富。纱笼才过处，喝道转身，一壁小来且住。见许多才子艳质，携手并肩低语。东来西往谁家





On such a night emerges the emperor
 Out of the palace seeking pleasure.
 All the capital is home to immortals.
 Bright full moon and stars radiate over
 Throngs gathered round knolls of lanterns
 Like fabulous giant amassed turtles,
 Some improvise in Yuefu lyric styles,
 Others play all manner of musical devices.
 Day dawns, the capital's residents still not home
 Thousands of families bathed in cheer
 By the turtle-shaped hills of lanterns.
 Oh, how I wish I could see every year
 The imperial carriage in the guard of honor!
 (To the tune of "Qingbeile")

This *ci* poem describes the celebration of the Lantern Festival — the most popular festival during the Song Dynasty — at the heyday of the imperial palace. At the height of the Song's power and prestige, myriad lanterns were made and displayed for the Lantern Festival celebration, and his Majesty would personally mingle with the residents of the capital city. It was said on this occasion, "no imperial guards are assigned to patrol the streets, and everybody is free to stay out the entire night." Since the ladies of the capital were all out on the streets enjoying themselves the whole night long and there were no prohibitions of any kind, it was unavoidable for people to use it as an excuse to engage in secret rendezvous or commit petty thefts. Li Bing, a senior official and also a *ci* poet of the time, also wrote a *ci* poem on this very subject:

On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month in the capital,
 Countless lanterns and flowers quilt the streets to the full,
 Akin to an aspect of heaven. Only now do I believe
 The capital's residents indeed are wealthy and elegant.
 When a gauze-hatted official comes to a sudden stop,
 Attendants shout 'halt', all passersby make way at once.
 Many gifted scholars and beautiful noblewomen
 Whisper, shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand.

女？买玉梅争戴，缓步香风度。北观南顾。见画烛影里，神仙无数。引人魂似醉，不如趁早，步月归去。这一双情眼，怎生禁得，许多胡觑？（词寄《女冠子》）

细看此一词，可见元宵之夜，趁着喧闹丛中干那不三不四勾当的，不一而足，不消说起。而今在下说一件元宵的事体，直教：

闹动公侯府，分开帝主颜。

猾徒入地去，稚子见天还。

话说宋神宗朝有个大臣王襄敏公，单讳着一个韶字，全家住在京师。真是潭潭相府，富贵奢华，自不必说。那年正月十五元宵佳节，其时王安石未用，新法未行，四境无侵，万民乐业，正是太平时候。家家户户，点放花灯。自从十三日为始，十街九市，欢呼达旦。这夜十五日是正夜，年年规矩，官家亲



Who are these young ladies moving around?
They stroll at leisure, buy plum blossoms for crowns,
Wafting sweet scents through the air. Glance round,
Untold lovely fairies parade before the rainbow
Gleam of lovely lanterns! Many transported by beauty.
Young ladies, better to retire in the moonlight now
Than later. Youthful beauties, how do your
Enchanted eyes endure so many a lecherous leer?
(To the tune of “Nüguanzi”)

Reading between the lines above, it may be seen that it was common practice for people to take advantage of the pandemonium of the night of the Lantern Festival to indulge in outrageous behavior. Now I will tell you another story that took place at the Lantern Festival. It is an unusual story:

It not only stuns a ministerial family,
Yet also makes the emperor smile.
Outlaws receive their dues,
A young lad returns with
Blessings from the Son of Heaven.

During the reign of Emperor Shenzong (1068-1086) of the Song Dynasty, there once lived a minister whose family name was Wang. He had the given name Shao, and was posthumously styled Xiangmin. He lived with his family in a large luxurious mansion in the capital city of Kaifeng, enjoying immense wealth, as well as great power and prestige. The arrival of the Lantern Festival that year was a time of peace and prosperity, and everyone was resting content after their labors. Wang Anshi, the famed statesman, had yet to be either appointed the prime minister or set out on his reforms. Beginning with the thirteenth day of the first lunar month, all the townsfolk started to light the lanterns for the festive celebrations, enjoying themselves throughout the night.

The night of the fifteenth day of the first lunar month was the time for formal celebrations, as was the custom each year. Even his Majesty emerged from his palace to join the festivities and observe the splendid



自出来，赏玩通宵。倾城士女，专待天颜一看。且是此日难得一轮明月当空，照耀如同白昼，映着各色奇巧花灯，从来叫做灯月交辉，极为美景。襄敏公家内眷，自夫人以下，老老幼幼，没一个不打扮齐整了，只候人牵着帷幕，出来街上看灯游耍。看官，你道如何用着帷幕？盖因官宦人家女眷，恐防街市人挨挨擦擦，不成体面，所以或用绢段，或用布匹等类，扯作长圈围着，只要隔绝外边人，他在里头走的人，原自四边看得见的。晋时叫他做步障，故有紫丝步障、锦步障之称。这是大人家规范如此。

闲话且过，却说襄敏公有个小衙内，是他末堂最小的儿子，排行第十三，小名叫做南陔。年方五岁，聪明乖觉，容貌不凡，合家内外大小都是喜欢他的，公与夫人自不必说。其时也要到街上看灯。大宅门中衙内，穿着齐整还是等闲，只头上一顶帽子，多是黄豆来大不打眼的洋珠，穿成双凤穿牡丹花样，当面前一粒猫儿眼宝石，睛光闪烁，四围又是五色宝石镶着，乃是鸦青、祖母绿之类，只这顶帽也值千来贯钱。襄敏公分付一个家人王吉，驮在背上，随着内眷一起看灯。



spectacle right through the night. Men and women throughout the town all stayed out on the streets the entire night, awaiting the chance to behold the graceful bearing of the Son of Heaven. An exceptionally bright full moon added to the beauty of the lovely night. Illuminated by the radiance of the full moon, the night almost seemed as if broad daylight. A variety of exquisite lanterns were lit and hung up on display, making for an extraordinarily beautiful sight under the soft radiance of the moon. Joining in the amusement, all the family members of Wang Xiangmin's household, both young and old excepting for the master himself, in immaculate and festive attire went onto the streets, with their attendants holding up heavy screens.

Dear readers, you might ask why they carried such large heavy screens. It was widely held propriety of the time that it was considered scandalous and outrageous for ladies of a high-ranking official's family to walk among the common people. Therefore a screen made of silk or cloth was used to veil the lady walking within it. This way, she was separated from strangers yet able to have a good view of what was happening outside. Handed down as a convention from the Jin Dynasty (265-420), such curtains were called "walking-blinds" or "brocade blinds." But enough of this digression, let us return to our story.

The minister, Wang Xiangmin, had a son named Nangai who was the youngest among his children. This boy was the thirteenth among his brothers. He was five years old, handsome, bright, well behaved, and well liked both inside and outside the family. Naturally, the master and his wife loved him the dearest. This boy was now all ready to go out with his fellow revelers to see the lanterns. Sons of wealthy and influential families no doubt all wear fine clothing, but Nangai's dress was particularly distinctive, for the cap on his head was decorated with a string of western-made beads, the size of soybeans, in the shape of twin phoenixes perched on a peony plant, with a glittering gem called a Cats' Eye fixed in front, encircled with more colorful gems, mostly sapphires and emeralds. This cap alone must have been worth at least one thousand strings of copper coins. The master had a servant named Wang Ji, who carried the boy on his back to view the lanterns with the other family members. As a male

那王吉是个晓法度的人，自道身是男人，不敢在帷中走，只相傍帷外而行。行到宣德门前，恰好神宗皇帝正御宣德门楼。圣旨许令万目仰观，金吾卫不得拦阻。楼上设着鳌山，灯光灿烂，香烟馥郁；奏动御乐，箫鼓喧阗。楼下施呈百戏，供奉御览。看的真是人山人海，挤得缝地都没有了。有翰林承旨王禹玉《上元应制诗》为证：

雪清华月满仙台，万烛当楼宝扇开。

双凤云中扶辇下，六鳌海上驾山来。

镐京春酒沾周宴，汾水秋风陋汉才。

一曲升平人尽乐，君王又进紫霞杯。

此时王吉拥在人丛之中，因为肩上负了小衙内，好生不便，观看得不甚像意。忽然觉得背上轻松了些，一时看得浑了，忘其所以。伸伸腰，抬起头，且是自在，呆呆里向上看着。猛



servant, Wang Ji was familiar with the etiquette that he should walk alongside the walking-blinds instead of walking within them.

At the same moment the family entourage was proceeding to the front of the Xuande Gate, the emperor arrived at the gate tower and began ascending it. His Majesty then decreed that visitors were permitted to look up at him, and the imperial guards were ordered not to hinder the people. Undulating lanterns of all colors, arranged in the shape of turtles set on the gate towers, glittered brilliantly, while clouds of incense smoke curled up and palace music played accompanied by drums and reed pipes. At the foot of the gate, plays and acrobats performing for his Majesty were tightly encircled by large audiences. Wang Yuyu, a noted scholar from the Imperial Academy, vividly recorded the jubilation at the emperor's decree in a poem entitled, "Lines Composed at the Lantern Festival":

With the snow melting and the moonbeams diffusing
O'er the immortals' towers, thousands of lanterns illumining
The wide-open fan gate. The emperor emerges from carriage
Of the twin-phoenix, as if descending from the clouds.
Six lantern hills shaped as turtles rise as if from the seas.
As vintage wine for Spring's arrival is served in celebration,
— From the ancient dynasty of Zhou a widespread tradition —
The most gifted scholar at so thrilling a sight must bewilder,
As music plays on, everyone drunk on the serenity of life,
After draining one cup of wine, the emperor picks up another.

At this moment, Wang Ji and the young master were among the throngs of people. Wang Ji found it hard to catch an adequate glimpse of the excitement because of the young master sitting on his shoulders. For a brief instant, he suddenly felt slightly eased of the load on his back. However, so fascinated was he by the lively spectacle he failed to notice what had happened. Stretching himself and raising his head, he was feeling very comfortable and relaxed. So he looked upward and watched on attentively. All of a sudden it dawned on him, "Where has my young master gone?" Turning his head around, he found the boy was no longer on his shoulders. He turned around only to see crowds of strangers, with

然想道：“小衙内呢？”急回头看时，眼见得不在背上，四下一望，多是面生之人，竟不见了小衙内踪影。欲要找寻，又被挤住了脚，行走不得。王吉心慌撩乱，将身子尽力挨出，挨得骨软筋麻，才到得稀松之处。遇见府中一伙人，问道：“你们见小衙内么？”府中人道：“小衙内是你负着，怎到来问我们？”王吉道：“正是闹嚷之际，不知那个伸手来我背上接了去。想必是府中弟兄们见我费力，替我抱了，放松我些，也不见得。我一时贪个松快，人闹里不看得仔细，及至寻时已不见了。你们难道不曾撞见？”府中人见说，大家慌张起来，道：“你来作怪了，这是作耍的事？好如此不小心！你在人千人万处失去了，却在此问张问李，岂不误事！还是分头再到闹头里寻去。”

一伙十来个人同了王吉挨出挨入，高呼大叫，怎当得人多得紧了，茫茫里向那个问是？落得眼睛也看花了，喉咙也叫哑了，并无一些影响。寻了一回，走将拢来，我问你，你问我，多一般不见，慌做了一团。有的道：“或者那个抱了家去了？”有的道：“你我都在，又是那一个抱去！”王吉道：“且到家问问看又处。”一个老家人道：“决不在家里，头上东西耀人眼目，



the young master nowhere in sight. He tried to pull away from the crowd, but to no avail, too tightly hemmed in as he was. Desperately he pushed through the crush and finally found his way to a less crowded spot, exhausted.

He then caught sight of some fellow servants and asked, “Did you see our young master?” One of them answered, “You had him on your shoulders. Why ask us?” Wang Ji said, “While I was concentrating on the performance at a moment of clamor and confusion, I suddenly came to realize some supernatural hands had grabbed him off my back. I took it to be that perhaps one of you, concerned about my load, had taken him off my back so as to be of help to me. I was relieved on being so unburdened, at first I didn’t search for him carefully among the crowd. Yet when I did look for the boy, he was gone. Are you sure you have no idea who might have taken him away?” Hearing his words, the other servants grew flustered. They scolded him, “You have been derelict in your duty! This is no trifle. How careless of you! You lost the young master in the crush of people, but you are now here inquiring of us about him. How could you be so remiss as to delay the search? Let us go back into the crowd and look for him in different directions.”

The group of about a dozen servants, along with Wang Ji, began to push their way in and out of the mass of people, shouting the name of the young master at the top of their voices. But their efforts were of no avail, for there were so many people crowded on the street. They shouted and searched until their eyes were blurred and their voices hoarse. But the young master was nowhere to be found. After a stretch of searching, they gathered together and inquired of each other about the results of their attempts. As the answers were all “Nothing,” they all became frightened out of their wits. One of them said, “Maybe one of the other servants carried the boy back home.” Another answered, “How could that be, since all of us are here?” Wang Ji suggested, “Let us go back and see if he is at home.”

An elderly servant said, “I am sure the little master is not at home. Those eye-catching gems on his cap were rather inviting. I imagine some villain must have swept him up with those valuables. We need to go home



被歹人连人盗拐去了。我们且不要惊动夫人，先到家禀知了相公，差人及早缉捕为是。”王吉见说要禀知相公，先自怯了一半，道：“如何回得相公的话？且从容计较打听，不要性急便好！”府中人多是着了忙的，那由得王吉主张，一齐奔了家来。私下问问，那得个小衙内在里头？只得来见襄敏公。却也嘎嘎嚅嚅，未敢一直说失去小衙内的事。

襄敏公见众人急急之状，倒问道：“你等去未多时，如何一齐跑了回来？且多有些慌张失智光景，必有缘故。”众家人才把王吉在人丛中失去小衙内之事说了一遍。王吉跪下，只是叩头请死。襄敏公毫不在意，笑道：“去了自然回来，何必如此着急？”众家人道：“此必是歹人拐了去，怎能勾回来？相公还是着落开封府及早追捕，方得无失。”襄敏公摇头道：“也不必。”众人道是一番天样大、火样急的事，怎知襄敏公看得等闲，声色不动，化做一杯雪水。众人不解其意，只得到帷中禀知夫人。

夫人惊慌，抽身急回，噙着一把眼泪来与相公商量。襄敏公道：“若是别个儿子失去，便当急急寻访。今是吾十三郎，必



first and let the master know about it so that he may send word to capture the villain as soon as possible. But we should not frighten Madam with the news." At the mention of informing the master about this incident Wang Ji went into a panic. He said to the other servants, "Is it a good idea to report to the master, at this moment? I think we should make more inquiries and search for him. We need not be impatient."

Overwhelmed with anxiety, the other servants simply turned a deaf ear to what Wang Ji said, and raced back home. After making furtive inquiries about the little master, they soon realized he was nowhere to be found at home. So they gathered in front of Wang Xianmin, just whispering to one another, none courageous enough to tell him directly the young master was missing. The master, puzzled by the strange behavior of his servants, asked, "You were not out very long. Why did you all return so soon? Besides, you are all in such a tizzy. There must be some reason for this." The servants then had to tell him how Wang Ji had lost the young master in the crowd. Wang Ji knelt down and kowtowed, requesting the penalty of death. However, Wang Xiangmin was not at all perturbed at the bad news.

With a smile, Wang Xiangmin said, "He shall be back. Do not worry about it." The servants asked, "The young master must have been abducted by some scoundrel. How could it be possible for him to come back? We suggest Your Highness report the matter as soon as possible to the court of justice in Kaifeng, and see about dispatching troops to capture the criminal." Shaking his head, the master answered, "Unnecessary." The servants thought it a matter of extreme urgency, as if a fire were licking at their eyebrows, while the master did not turn a hair, as if nothing were amiss.

Then the servants went to their mistress, who was within the walking-blinds, and told her about the matter. The master's wife became quite perturbed at the news and returned home instantly. With tears welling up in her eyes, she consulted the master. The master said, "If one of my other sons had been lost, I would have certainly done my utmost to search for him. But since it is my thirteenth son who is lost, I am sure he shall be back soon. Do not worry yourself over it." Madam said, "I know he is

然自会归来，不必忧虑。”夫人道：“此子虽然伶俐，点点年纪，奢遮煞也只是四五岁的孩子。万众之中挤掉了，怎能勾自会归来？”养娘每道：“闻得歹人拐人家小厮去，有擦瞎眼的，有斫掉脚的，千方百计摆布坏了，装做叫化的化钱。若不急急追寻，必然衙内遭了毒手。”各各啼哭不住。家人每道：“相公便不着落府里缉捕，招帖也写几张，或是大张告示。有人贪图赏钱，便有访得下落的来报了。”一时间你出一说，我出一见，纷纷乱讲。只有襄敏公怡然不以为意，道：“随你议论百出，总是多的。过几日自然来家。”夫人道：“魔合罗般一个孩子，怎生舍得失去了，不在心上？说这样懈话！”襄敏公道：“包在我身上，还你个旧孩子便了。不要性急！”夫人那里放心？就是家人每、养娘每也不肯信相公的话。夫人自分付家人各处找寻去了，不题。

却说那晚南陔在王吉背上，正在挨挤喧嚷之际，忽然有个人趁近到王吉身畔，轻轻伸手过来接去，仍旧一般驮着。南陔贪着观看，正在眼花撩乱，一时不觉。只见那一个人负得在背，便在人丛里乱挤将过去。南陔才喝声道：“王吉，如何如此乱走！”定睛一看，那里是个王吉？衣帽装束多另是一样了。南





smart. But he is only a boy of four or five. If he gets lost among a sea of people, how would he be able to find his way home?" The young master's nurses also cut in, "It is said that villains often kidnap little children. They either make those children blind by stabbing at their eyes, or chop off their feet or deform their bodies through all manner of abuse so as to put them onto the streets as beggars. We plead with you to take urgent steps immediately. Otherwise the boy may be subject to torture." The nurses all burst into tears of distress. Then the servants said, "Master, if you do not want to report the matter to the court of justice, we suggest you put up some posters or a big notice offering a reward for some clue as to his whereabouts. We are sure this will help."

Consequently opinions and ideas varied, and the household worked itself into an uproarious panic. Nevertheless, Wang Xiangmin alone remained calm and collected, remarking, "You may argue whatever you like. It is not necessary to do anything now. He shall definitely return home in a few days." Madam said, "How could we be deprived of our lovely baby doll of a son! You should not take it so lightly and make bizarre comments in such a way!" The master assured her, saying, "I shall take full responsibility for everything. I promise you I will bring him back in perfect condition. Please rest assured." Madam did not believe him, nor did other family members or the nurses. Madam sent out servants to search for him in all directions.

Now let us flashback to earlier that night. It turned out that, while Nangai was on Wang Ji's back watching the festivities, one man had pushed his way through the crowd and suddenly reached out to snatch the boy away. Soon the young master was sitting on the shoulders of a stranger who was not Wang Ji. However, the young boy, being utterly fascinated by the ongoing performances, did not realize what had taken place in a twinkling. After a while, noticing he was being carried aggressively through the crush of people, Nangai shouted, "Where are you heading, Wang Ji?" He was then struck with surprise when he took a closer look and found the man carrying him was not Wang Ji at all. The unfamiliar dress of the man told the astute little child that he had fallen into the hands of a rascal. Nangai wanted to scream for help, yet, on



孩年纪虽小，心里煞是聪明，便晓得是个歹人，被他闹里来拐了。欲待声张，左右一看，并无一个认得的熟人。他心里思量道：“此必贪我头上珠帽，若被他掠去，须难寻讨，我且藏过帽子，我身子不怕他怎地。”遂将手去头上除下帽子来，揣在袖中。也不言语，也不慌张，任他驮着前走，却像不晓得甚么的。

将近东华门，看见轿子四五乘叠联而来。南陔心里忖量道：轿中必有官员贵人在内，此时不声张求救，更待何时？南陔觑轿子来得较近，伸手去攀着轿檐，大呼道：“有贼！有贼！救人！救人！”那负南陔的贼出于不意，骤听得背上如此呼叫，吃了一惊，恐怕被人拿住，连忙把南陔撩下背来，脱身便走，在人丛里混过了。轿中人在轿内闻得孩子声唤，推开帘子一看，见是个青头白脸、魔合罗般一个小孩子，心里喜欢。叫住了轿，抱将过来。问道：“你是何处来的？”南陔道：“是贼拐了来的。”轿中人道：“贼在何处？”南陔道：“方才叫喊起来，在人丛中走了。”轿中人见他说话明白，摩他头道：“乖乖，你不要心慌，且随我去再处。”便双手抱来，放在膝上。一直进了东华门，竟入大内去了。

你道轿中是何等人？元来是穿宫的高品近侍中大人。因圣驾御楼观灯已毕，先同着一般的中贵四五人前去宫中排宴。不想遇着南陔叫喊，抱在轿中，进了大内。中大人分付从人，领



looking around, he found no familiar faces within sight.

He thought to himself, "This rascal must be aiming to grab the gems on my cap. If he makes away with these precious stones, it would be hard to recover them. I will take my cap off and hide it somewhere. I don't think he will do anything to harm me." Thinking thus, he slipped his cap into his sleeve, remaining calm and quiet as he was carried forward, as if he knew nothing about what was happening to him. As they were getting closer to Donghuamen Gate, four or five sedan-chairs came towards them in single file. Nangai thought to himself, "I am sure some high-ranking officials or dignitaries may be riding in those sedan-chairs. This is the right time to shout for help." So just as one sedan-chair passed them, the boy stuck his hand out to lift the curtain, and screamed, "Stop thief! Stop thief! Help! Help!" The rascal carrying Nangai on his shoulders was taken aback at the young boy's shouting. Fearing he might be apprehended at any moment, he placed the boy down and took to his heels through the sea of people.

Upon hearing the cries of a boy, the man sitting inside the sedan-chair raised the blind and noticed in front of him a doll-like lovely little child with jet-black hair and fair complexion. Immensely delighted, he called to his carriers to set down the sedan-chair. He then took the boy in his arms and asked, "Where are you from?" Nangai answered, "I was kidnapped by a villain." The man in the sedan-chair asked, "Where is the villain?" Nangai replied, "As I was shouting for help just now, he ran away into the crowd." Impressed by the boy's ease and eloquence, the gentleman said, while stroking the boy's head, "Oh, little boy, do not worry. Come with me now." So saying, he placed Nangai on his lap and continued his tour through the Donghuamen Gate to enter the imperial palace.

You might wonder who the gentleman in the sedan-chair was. He was the head eunuch, a favorite of the emperor. Since the emperor had finished enjoying the lanterns, the head eunuch and four or five of his fellows were on their way back to the imperial palace to prepare for the emperor's banquet. He took Nangai into his room in the palace, gave him some fruit to eat, and set him under a quilt so as to keep him warm. He urged the boy

他到自己入直的房内，与他果品吃着，被卧温着，恐防惊吓了他，叮嘱又叮嘱。内监心性喜欢小的，自然如此。

次早，中大人四五人直到神宗御前，叩头跪禀道：“好教万岁爷爷得知，奴婢等昨晚随侍赏灯回来，在东华门外拾得一个失落的孩子，领进宫来。此乃万岁爷爷得子之兆，奴婢等不胜喜欢。未知是谁家之子，未请圣旨，不敢擅自，特此启奏。”神宗此时前星未耀，正急的是生子一事。见说拾得一个孩子，也道是宜男之祥。喜动天颜，叫快宣来见。

中大人领旨，急到入直房内抱了南陔，先对他说：“圣旨宣召，如今要见驾哩，你不要惊怕！”南陔见说见驾，晓得是见皇帝了，不慌不忙，在袖中取出珠帽来，一似昨日带了，随了中大人竟来见神宗皇帝。娃子家虽不曾习着什么嵩呼拜舞之礼，却也擎拳曲腿，一拜两拜的叩头稽首，喜得个神宗跌脚欢忭，御口问道：“小孩子，你是谁人之子？可晓得姓什么？”南陔竦然起答道：“儿姓王，乃臣韶之幼子也。”神宗见他说出话来，声音清朗，且语言有体，大加惊异。又问道：“你缘何得到此处？”南陔道：“只因昨夜元宵举家观灯，瞻仰圣容，嚷



again and again to feel at home, in case the boy might be frightened. Eunuchs had an innate fancy for little children, and unquestionably looked after them very well.

The following morning, the head eunuch, along with his associates, came to the imperial court, knelt down, and reported the matter to the emperor: "Your Majesty, last night on our way back to the palace after the lantern viewing, we found a lost boy and brought him into the palace. We were profoundly delighted, thinking it a good omen prophetic of Your Majesty's fortune in obtaining a son. We have no idea where the boy is from, and we do not know what to do next without Your Majesty's instructions. We are now presenting this issue for Your Majesty's decision." The emperor was still without a son, and was urgently in need of an heir to be his successor. Overwhelmed with joy at the news of the finding of a lost child, particularly a boy, he ordered, "Bring him here."

Immediately returning to his room with the emperor's decree, the head eunuch took Nangai into his arms and said, "At imperial behest, you are now to meet His Majesty. Do not panic." Knowing he was being asked to see the emperor, the boy, not at all nervous, calmly took his gem-covered cap out of his sleeve and adjusted it upon his head, just as he had worn it the day before. He followed the head eunuch and entered Emperor Shenzong's chambers. As a child, it was natural for him not to know the imperial etiquette of fully prostrating oneself on the ground and chanting "longevity." However, his movement of cupping his hands and bending his legs, as if he were performing the required code of conduct at court, overwhelmed the emperor with delight. "Little boy," asked the emperor, "Whose son are you? What is your family name?"

Nangai answered most solemnly, "My family name is Wang. I am the youngest son of Wang Shao, one of Your Majesty's ministers." The emperor was greatly surprised to hear the boy had such a clear voice and logical eloquence of speech. The emperor then asked him further, "How is it you came to be found?" The boy replied, "Last night one of our family servants carried me out, along with my family, to see the lanterns and the graceful bearing of Your Majesty. Later amidst the bustle, I was kidnapped by a scoundrel and carried away on his back. When I saw a



乱之中，被贼人偷驮背上前走。偶见内家车乘，只得叫呼求救。贼人走脱，臣随中贵大人一同到此。得见天颜，实出万幸！”神宗道：“你今年几岁了？”南陔道：“臣五岁了。”神宗道：“小小年纪，便能如此应对，王韶可谓有子矣。昨夜失去，不知举家何等惊惶。朕今即要送还汝父，只可惜没查处那个贼人。”南陔对道：“陛下要查此贼，一发不难。”神宗惊喜道：“你有什么见可以得贼？”南陔道：“臣被贼人驮走，已晓得不是家里人了，便把头带的珠帽除下藏好。那珠帽之顶，有臣母将绣针彩线插戴其上，以厌不祥。臣比时在他背上，想贼人无可记认，就于除帽之时将针线取下，密把他衣领缝线一道，插针在衣内，以为暗号。今陛下令人密查，若衣领有此针线者，即是昨夜之贼，有何难见？”神宗大惊道：“奇哉此儿！一点年纪，有如此大见识！朕若不得贼，孩子不如矣。待朕擒治了此贼，方送汝回去。”又对近侍夸称道：“如此奇异儿子，不可令宫闱中人不见一见。”传旨急宣钦圣皇后见驾。

穿宫人传将旨意进宫，宣得钦圣皇后到来。山呼行礼已毕，神宗对钦圣道：“外厢有个好儿子，卿可暂留宫中，替朕看养



sedan-chair coming toward me, I shouted for help. The scoundrel put me down and fled. So I came here with your honorable attendants. It is truly a great honor for me to meet Your Majesty.” The emperor asked, “How old are you?” Nangai answered, “I am five years old.” The emperor then declared, “At such a young age you have such fine manners. What a promising son Wang Shao has! I imagine your family must be very worried about you after you were lost last night. I am going to send you back home at once. But it is a pity this criminal is still at large and there is no idea how to catch him.”

Nangai replied, “It would not be difficult to find him if Your Majesty wants to.” Surprised, the emperor asked, “Why do you say so?” Nangai said, “After I was kidnapped, and realized I was no longer on my servant’s back, I took off my cap with the gems and hid it in my sleeve. My mother had once pinned an embroidery needle with a silk thread atop my gem cap so as to ward off ill luck. It occurred to me in a flash it would later be difficult to bring this villain to justice, for he bore no mark of identification. So, after removing my cap, I sewed a line of thread as a sign along his collar and pinned the embroidery needle onto his coat. Now, Your Majesty may launch a hunt for the villain. Anyone who possesses this embroidery needle and silk thread on his collar must be the kidnapper. What difficulty is there in it?” Astounded, the emperor exclaimed, “What a child! You are still in your infancy, but you are so bright! If I am able to capture the kidnapper, I shall still be no match for a child like you. Now you may stay here in my palace, and I will send you back home after I have had that villain captured.” Turning around to all the officials by his side, the emperor praised the boy, saying, “What a brilliant child! I should definitely show him to my wife.”

Empress Qingsheng was instantly summoned, through the eunuchs going to the Empress’ quarters with the decree requesting her to go and meet the emperor. When Her Excellency arrived at the court and performed her formal greeting, the emperor said to her, “I have a boy here with me, the son of one of my ministers. I would like you to look after him for me in the palace for a few days. I hope, by doing so, we could make his stay here a good omen toward the birth of our own first son.” The empress



他几日，做个得子的讖兆。”钦圣虽然遵旨谢恩，不知甚么事由，心中有些犹豫不决。神宗道：“要知详细，领此儿到宫中问他，他自会说明白。”钦圣得旨，领了南孩，自往宫中去了。神宗一面写下密旨，差个中大人赍到开封府，是长是短的从头分付了大尹，立限捕贼以闻。

开封府大尹奉得密旨，非比寻常，访贼的事怎敢时刻怠缓？即唤过当日缉捕使臣何观察，分付道：“今日奉到密旨，限你三日内要拿元宵夜做不是的一伙人。”观察禀道：“无赃无证，从何缉捕？”大尹叫何观察上来，附耳低言，把中大人所传衣领针线为号之说说了一遍。何观察道：“恁地时，三日之内管取完这头公事，只是不可声扬。”大尹道：“你好干这事，此是奉旨的，非比别项盗贼，小心在意！”观察声喏而出，到得使臣房，集齐一班眼明手快的公人来商量道：“元宵夜趁着热闹做歹事的，不止一人，失事的也不止一家。偶然这一家小的儿不曾捞得去，别家得手处必多。日子不远，此辈不过在花街柳陌、酒楼饭店中，庆松取乐，料必未散。虽是不知姓名地



naturally obeyed the imperial decree and thanked the emperor for his favor, before accepting the assignment. However, she felt somewhat bewildered by it. Noticing her hesitation, the emperor said, "Take the boy to your quarters, and he will tell you the details of his story if you ask him about it." The empress then led Nangai into the palace. The emperor issued a secret imperial edict for the immediate capture of the outlaw and ordered a eunuch to deliver it to the Prefect of Kaifeng.

The eunuch gave the prefect a full account of the story and demanded that he capture the criminal and report to him within a given period of time. Knowing the significance of this mission, a far cry from his usual responsibilities in catching petty thieves, the prefect did not waste a moment. He immediately called in He, the head arrest-runner, saying, "I allow you three days to bring to justice these rogues who perpetrated a crime on the night of the Lantern Festival." The head arrest-runner asked, "With no spoils or evidence, how am I to arrest them?" The prefect asked He to move closer to him and, bending down, whispered in his ear the story how the boy had created an indicator with an embroidery needle and silk thread on the criminal's coat. Then the head arrest-runner said, "I promise I will complete this mission in three days. It should not be necessary to rouse all the local people." The prefect reiterated, "Do a good job. This is a task assigned by His Majesty, and completely different from your regular duties in rounding up thieves. You must be most careful and attentive!"

Returning to his patrol station, the head arrest-runner gathered several clever and capable arrest-runners and said to them, "I do not believe this rogue was the only one who took advantage of the Lantern Festival to commit evil deeds. And I am sure that this boy's family was not the only one who suffered that night. Moreover, though this rogue failed to kidnap this boy this time, he will not give up and might succeed elsewhere. The time elapsed has not been that long, and such rogues must now be drinking, and having fun in either a brothel or a tavern. I am certain they couldn't have gone very far. Though we have no knowledge of this criminal's name and address, there should not be any problem for us to get hold of him because of the indicator on his person. We must capture them by any



方，有此暗记，还怕什么？遮莫没踪影的也要寻出来。我每几十个做公的分头体访，自然有个下落。”当下派定张三往东，李四往西。各人认路，茶坊酒肆，凡有众人团聚面生可疑之处，即便留心，挨身体看，各自去讫。

元来那晚这个贼人，有名的叫做“雕儿手”，一起有十来个，专一趁着闹热时节，人丛里做那不本分的勾当。有诗为证：

昏夜贪他唾手财，全凭手快眼儿乖。

世人莫笑胡行事，譬似求人更可哀。

那一个贼人当时在王家门首，窥探踪迹，见个小衙内齐整打扮背将出来，便自上了心，一路尾着走，不离左右。到了宣德门楼下，正在挨挤喧哄之处，觑个空，便双手溜将过来，背了就走。欺他是小孩子，纵有知觉，不过惊怕啼哭之类，料无妨碍，不在心上。不提防到官轿旁边，却会叫喊“有贼”起来。一时着了忙，想道：“利害！”卸着便走。更不知背上头，暗地里又被他做工夫，留下记认了。此是神仙也不猜到之事。后来脱去，见了同伙，团聚拢来，各出所获之物，如簪钗、金宝、珠玉、貂鼠暖耳、狐尾护颈之类，无所不有；只有此人却是空手。述



means, even if we have no other clues on these criminals as we have captured other criminals without any leads. There are about ten of us professional runners. Let us fan out in different directions and conduct individual searches. I am most confident we will find them soon.” They then set out independently searching in every direction, probing teahouses, taverns and other places where people gather, and carefully looking for anyone who appeared suspicious.

The kidnapper turned out to be the renowned rogue nicknamed, “Vulture Talon,” one of a gang of about ten criminals who always seized any opportunity to commit crimes at any public gathering. The following lines are a profile of this group of outlaws:

Quick of eye, deft of hand, they specialize in theft
Of the precious within the nightshades’ easy reach.
True, in the eyes of the public their conduct rates infamy,
Whereas they think it better than resorting to beggary.

This “Vulture Talon,” on the night of the Lantern Festival, had been hiding outside the mansion of Wang Xiangmin when he spotted the neatly dressed young master being carried out on the back of a servant. His heart set on kidnapping the boy, he shadowed them very closely. Arriving at the foot of the tower of the Xuandemen Gate, they found themselves in the crush of the clamoring crowds. Seizing the opportunity, the rascal grabbed the boy, placed him on his own shoulders and slipped away. He had assumed the young boy was no more than an infant who would do nothing but cry out in fright. But the rogue’s heedlessness quickly turned to panic when the boy started to shout, “Stop thief!” as a sedan-chair passed by. “What a tough brat!” thought the rogue. He quickly put the boy down on the ground and fled. Never would he have dreamed that the boy would have made a marker on his coat. Indeed, no man or spirit could have expected a boy to do such a thing.

Later that night, this rogue returned and joined his associates, who produced the various spoils they had plundered, such as emerald hairpins, gold jewelry, jade beads, marten-fur ear-muffs and fox-tail stoles. This rogue was the only one who had come back empty-handed. After learning of the incident, his fellow rogues asked, “Why didn’t you just grab the



其缘故，众贼道：“何不单雕了珠帽来？”此人道：“他一身衣服多有宝珠钮箴，手足上各有钏镯。就是四五岁一个小孩子好歹也值两贯钱，怎舍得轻放了他？”众贼道：“而今孩子何在？正是贪多嚼不烂了。”此人道：“正在内家轿边叫喊起来，随从的虞候虎狼也似，好不多人在那里，不兜住身子便算天大侥幸，还望财物哩！”众贼道：“果是利害！而今幸得无事，弟兄们且打平伙，吃酒压惊去。”于是一日轮一个做主人，只拣隐僻酒务，便去畅饮。

是日，正在玉津园旁边一个酒务里头欢呼畅饮。一个做公的，叫做李云，偶然在外经过，听得猜拳豁指、呼红喝六之声。他是有心的，便趑进门来一看，见这些人举止气象，心下有十分瞧科。走去坐了一个独副座头，叫声：“买酒饭吃。”店小二先将盞箸安顿去了。他便站将起来，背着手踱来踱去，侧眼把那些人逐个个觑将去，内中一个果然衣领上挂着一寸来长短彩线头。李云晓得着手了，叫店家：“且慢烫酒，我去街上邀着个客人一同来吃。”忙走出门，口中打个胡哨，便有七八个做公的走将拢来，问道：“李大，有影响么？”李云把手指着店内道：“正在这里头，已看的实了。我们几个守着这里，把一个走去，再叫集十来个弟兄一同下手。”内中一个会走的飞也



boy's cap of gems?" The man retorted, "This boy was well dressed all over. His clothing was laden with gems and precious beads. He even had bracelets on all his wrists and ankles. As a child of four or five, he himself could have been sold for at least two strings of copper coins. Why should I have let go of him so easily?" "So where is the boy now?" asked the others. "It is obvious you bit off more than you could chew!" The kidnapper said, "The boy shouted for help when he saw a senior official going by in his sedan-chair. There was a large group of sturdy imperial guards around at that moment. It was only my good luck that kept me from getting caught. How could I have thought about taking those precious things?" His cohorts responded, "It was a close shave. Lucky you're back safe and sound. Let's first divide what we got, and then go for a drink to get over the scare you had." Each of them took turns treating as the host each day, and they would find an out-of-the-way tavern and drink to their hearts' content.

That same day, while they were drinking at a tavern close to Yujin Gardens, an arrest-runner called Li Yun happened to pass by and hear the racket over drinking and finger-guessing games coming from inside. Being observant and conscientious, he entered stealthily to take a look. From their distinctive bearing and manner he got an inkling as to who this particular group of customers were. Then he took a seat at a table for one and called out, "Bring me some food and wine, please." The waiter came over and set a cup and a pair of chopsticks at his table. The runner stood up and paced up and down the tavern, casting sidelong glances one by one at the people drinking. Before long he actually detected one of them sporting an inch-long colored thread on his collar. Li Yun knew he had his target. Then he called out to the waiter, "Please stop warming the wine for the moment. I am going to invite some friends in to join me here."

He hurried out, and with a whistle immediately mustered seven or eight runners around him. "What is it, Brother Li?" they asked. Pointing to the tavern, Li Yun told them, "They are inside. I saw it clearly and there is no mistake. Let us keep a watch on the door and send someone else to bring ten more of our men here. Then we can take action." One of them, the quickest runner, sprinted away and brought ten more arrest-



似去，又叫了十来个做公的来了。发声喊，望酒务里打进去，叫道：“奉圣旨拿元宵夜贼人一伙！店家协力，不得放走了人！”店家听得“圣旨”二字，晓得利害，急集小二、火工、后生人等，执了器械出来帮助。十来个贼，不曾走了一个，多被捆倒。正是：

日间不做亏心事，夜半敲门不吃惊。

大凡做贼的见了做公的，就是老鼠遇了猫儿，见形便伏；做公的见了做贼的，就是仙鹤遇了蛇洞，闻气即知。所以这两项人每每私自相通，时常要些孝顺，叫做“打业钱”。若是捉破了贼，不是什么要紧公事，得些利市便放松了。而今是钦限要人的事，衣领上针线斗着海底眼，如何容得宽展？当下捆住，先剥了这一个的衣服。众贼虽是口里还强，却个个肉颤身摇，面如土色。身畔一搜，各有零赃。一直里押到开封府来，报知大尹。

大尹升堂，验着衣领针线是实，明知无枉，喝教：“用起刑来！”令招实情。棚扒吊拷，备受苦楚，这些顽皮赖肉只不



runners back as reinforcements. They dashed together into the tavern, declaring, "We are here to carry out the imperial edict to arrest felons who performed criminal acts on the night of the Lantern Festival. Tavern owner, assist us. Do not allow anyone to leave the room!" Upon hearing it was an imperial edict, the tavern-keeper realized that this was no trifling matter. He at once called out to his waiters, cooks and cook-helpers to grab kitchen implements and provide assistance. In an instant, all the outlaws, without exception, were tied up. Indeed, as the old saying goes: if one performs no misdemeanors by day, one need not panic upon hearing a knock at one's door at night.

In general, thieves become terrified whenever they encounter a government arrest-runner, as if they were rats facing a cat. Meanwhile, government arrest-runners can usually identify at first glance whoever the suspect might be who they run into, just as a red-crowned crane, with its keen sense of smell, never fails to locate the hollow lair of its snake prey. Therefore these two parties, the thieves and government runners, usually have a tacit agreement: an arrest-runner usually demands some money, called "an indemnity tax," from the captured thief, and then lets him go. It was common practice, particularly in petty matters, for government runners to earn an extra income from the thieves.

But this mission to capture the thief had been assigned by the emperor, and the thief carrying the very indicator of the needle and thread on his collar was in front of them. The government runners could not allow themselves any laxity. First they stripped the marked coat off the wanted thief. The rest of the gang, though muttering protests, shuddered with the blood drained from their faces. A body search yielded some stolen goods on each of them. They were then escorted to Kaifeng *yamen* and the government runners reported the capture of the criminals to the prefect.

The prefect soon convened the court and had the needle and thread examined to verify the identity of the villain. Then he ordered loudly to have him tortured until he confessed the truth. Despite suffering a great deal of pain, this hardened criminal yielded nothing. The prefect then showed him the needle and the thread, and asked, "How did you come by these things?" Not knowing the wherewithal of this evidence, the villain



肯招。大尹即将衣领针线问他道：“你身上何得有此？”贼人不知事端，信口支吾。大尹笑道：“如此剧贼，却被小孩子算破了，岂非天理昭彰？你可记得元宵夜内家轿边叫救人的孩子么？你身上已有了暗记，还要抵赖到那里去？”贼人方知被孩子暗算了，对口无言，只得招出实话来。乃是积年累岁，遇着节令盛时，即便四出剽窃，以及平时略贩子女，伤害性命，罪状山积，难以枚举，从不败露。岂知今年元宵行事之后，卒然被擒，却被小子暗算，惊动天听，以致有此。莫非天数该败，一死难逃！

大尹责了口词，叠成文卷。大尹却记起旧年元宵真珠姬一案，现捕未获的那一件事来。你道又是甚事？看官且放下这头，听小子说那一头。

也只因宣德门张灯，王侯贵戚女眷多设帷幕在门外两庑，日间先在那里等候观看。其时有一个宗王家在东首，有个女儿名唤真珠，因赵姓天潢之族，人都称他真珠族姬。年十七岁，未曾许嫁人家。颜色明艳，服饰鲜丽，耀人眼目。宗王的夫人姨妹族中却在西首。姨娘晓得外甥真珠姬在帷中观灯，叫个丫



was baffled and faltered. Laughing, the prefect declared, “It is a shame a professional thief like you was outwitted by a young boy this time. Does it not attest that Heaven’s edicts are effective? Do you remember the boy who shouted for help when some imperial sedan-chairs passed by during the night of the Lantern Festival? By that time the boy had already placed a marker on you. Are you going to deny this fact?” Now the villain realized his little victim had gotten the better of him. He could think of nothing to say in rebuttal, but had to make a clean breast of all the crimes he had committed.

It turned out this man and his fellow outlaws had been committing robbery for years on the occasion of each festival, and were involved in year-round traffic and torture of young girls and children. Innumerable indeed though their crimes were, they had never before been brought to justice. Never would this villain have dreamed he would be outwitted by the little boy he had tried to kidnap at this year’s Lantern Festival, and that his offense would be brought to the attention of the emperor, causing his downfall. To him, it just seemed he had been doomed for capture and execution. The prefect had his confession taken down and filed. At the same time this case recalled to the prefect yet another unsettled crime of the year before.

What was that case, our dear readers may ask? Please allow me now to leave this story of the young boy aside for the time being, and recount to you the story of the unsettled case. This also took place during the Lantern Festival of the previous year, when women of the imperial and noble families were sitting behind curtains set up on either side of the main entrance to their mansions so they could enjoy the view of the lanterns at night. At the east end of the city lived a prince. He had a daughter named Zhenzhu who was seventeen years old, and still unwed. Zhenzhu was truly a beauty and always appeared in dazzling, beautiful attire. Since she came from the same clan as the emperor, she was also called Royal Lady Zhenzhu. The prince’s sister-in-law, Zhenzhu’s aunt, lived in the west end of the capital. That aunt, knowing her niece would be there enjoying the view of the lanterns at the eastern end of the capital, had sent a servant-girl deliver an invitation to Zhenzhu, saying, “If you’re



鬟走来相邀一会，上复道：“若肯来，当差兜轿来迎。”真珠姬听罢，不胜之喜，便对母亲道：“儿正要见见姨娘，恰好他来相请，是必要去。”夫人亦欣然许允。打发丫鬟先去回话，专候轿来相迎。过不多时，只见一乘兜轿打从西边来到帷前。真珠姬孩子心性，巴不得就到那边顽耍，叫养娘们问得是来接的，分付从人随后来，自己不耐烦等待，慌忙先自上轿去了。

才去得一会，先前来的丫鬟又领了一乘兜轿来到，说道：“立等真珠姬相会，快请上轿。”王府里家人道：“真珠姬方才先随轿去了，如何又来迎接？”丫鬟道：“只是我同这乘轿来，那里又有什么轿先到？”家人们晓得有些跷蹊了，大家忙乱起来。闻之，宗王着人到西边去看，眼见得决不在那里的了。急急分付虞候祇从人等四下找寻，并无影响。急具事状，告到开封府。府中晓得是王府里事，不敢怠慢，散遣缉捕使臣挨查踪迹。王府里自出赏揭，报信者二千贯。竟无下落，不题。

且说真珠姬自上了轿后，但见轿夫四足齐举，其行如飞。真珠姬心里道：“是顷刻就到的路，何须得如此慌走？”却也



interested in joining me, I will send sedan-chairs to bring you here.” Zhenzhu was very delighted at the invitation, and said to her mother, “I was thinking of going over to see my aunt. Now that my aunt has sent me an invitation, I think I must go visit her soon.” Her mother approved with pleasure her request and sent a maidservant over in advance with a response, while Zhenzhu awaited the arrival of the sedan-chair to come to take her. After a few moments, a curtained sedan-chair came from the west end of the capital.

Zhenzhu was a childish girl and was anxious to leave immediately and enjoy herself. Hearing from her nurses the sedan-chair had arrived to pick her up, she told her attendants to come later while she herself impatiently slipped into it and was carried away. Not long after Zhenzhu had left, the maidservant who had delivered the invitation earlier came again with a sedan-chair, saying, “I am waiting to bring Zhenzhu. Please get in the sedan-chair.” The people of the prince’s house said, “Zhenzhu left in a sedan-chair a moment ago. Why have you come to take her again?” The maidservant said, “I am the only one sent here with this sedan-chair. Whose sedan-chair came before us?” Realizing something unexpected had taken place, the prince’s family became agitated.

They reported it to the prince, who immediately sent some servants to the west end of the city to inquire after Zhenzhu. Of course, she was not to be found there at all. The prince hurriedly dispatched his guards and attendants everywhere in search of the girl, but no clue was found. Consequently he at once prepared a report and submitted it to the prefect of Kaifeng. The prefect, knowing it was a matter of concern to the prince, dared not delay a minute in sending out government runners to search for traces of the young lady. The prince, of course, also offered a reward of two thousand strings of copper coins for anybody who could provide any clues. Despite all these efforts, no news was to be heard of the lost girl.

As for Zhenzhu, as soon as she had climbed inside the sedan-chair, the carriers had started to run. Zhenzhu was puzzled. She thought to herself, “It’s only a short distance. Why are they in such a hurry?” On thinking again, she thought it probable these carriers were normally used to running apace. So she did not think too much about it. A short time later, she



道是轿夫脚步惯了的，不以为意。及至抬眼看时，倏忽转弯，不是正路，渐渐走到狭巷里来，轿夫们脚高步低，越走越黑。心里正有些疑惑，忽然轿住了，轿夫多走了去。不见有人相接，只得自己掀帘走出轿来，定睛一看，只叫得苦。元来是一所古庙。旁边鬼卒十余个各持兵杖夹立，中间坐着一位神道，面阔尺余，须髯满颊，目光如炬，肩臂摆动，像个活的一般。真珠姬心慌，不免下拜。神道开口大言道：“你休得惊怕！我与汝有夙缘，故使神力摄你至此。”真珠姬见神道说出话来，愈加惊怕，放声啼哭起来。旁边两个鬼卒走来扶着，神道说：“快取压惊酒来。”旁边又一鬼卒斟着一杯热酒，向真珠姬口边奉来。真珠姬欲待推拒，又怀惧怕，勉强将口接着，被他一灌而尽。真珠姬早已天旋地转，不知人事，倒在地下。神道走下座来，笑道：“着了手也！”旁边鬼卒多攒将拢来，同神道各卸了装束，除下面具。元来个个多是活人，乃一伙剧贼装成的。将蒙汗药灌倒了真珠姬，抬到后面去。后面走将一个婆子出来，扶去放在床上眠着。众贼汉乘他昏迷，次第奸淫。可怜金枝玉叶之人，零落在狗党狐群之手。奸淫已毕，分付婆子看好。各



looked up and found the sedan-chair making a turn into a strange narrow alley. The carriers then began to grope their way with uncertain steps in the darkness. While the young lady was considering her situation, the sedan-chair came to a standstill and the carriers scattered. When no one came up to meet her, she had to lift the curtain and step out of the sedan-chair. She was terrified at what she saw in front of her.

Before her eyes was an ancient temple, in which she saw the figure of a god sitting there in the center, with about ten demon guards standing on either side of him, holding different weapons in their hands. The figure of the god had a large face about a foot wide, with a thick beard on its chin and two torch-like flashing eyes. Occasional movements of its arms and shoulders made the figure appear as a grotesque human being. Quite frightened, Zhenzhu knelt down before the figure in salutation. The figure opened its mouth, declaring loudly, "Do not panic. You and I were predestined to meet in this life. So I have brought you here with divine power." Seeing the figure open its mouth, Zhenzhu became even more terrified, and broke into wailing. Two of the demon guards stepped over to support her arms. The figure continued, "Bring her a cup of wine and calm her down!" Soon a demon guard brought a cup of warm wine over toward her lips.

Zhenzhu would have declined the wine, but overwhelmed with fright, she reluctantly let the cup touch her mouth. At this instant, the demon guard poured the cup of wine down her throat in one gulp. Immediately after the wine, Zhenzhu spun with dizziness and, slipping into unconsciousness, fell to the ground.

Getting down from the seat, the figure of the god said, grinning, "We've done it!" The demon guards all came closer. They then stripped off their disguises and masks. It turned out that they were humans, a gang who committed undercover crimes. The wine they had just given Zhenzhu contained a sleeping potion. They carried her into an inner room of the temple where an old woman emerged to put her into a bed. The men then began to ravish her in turn. It was outrageous that a young lady of noble lineage could be so victimized by a pack of villains. Later they scattered to conduct a new round of evil deeds, leaving the old woman to attend to



自散去，别做歹事了。

真珠姬睡至天明，看看苏醒。睁眼看时，不知是那里，但见一个婆子在旁边坐着。真珠姬自觉阴户疼痛，把手摸时，周围虚肿，明知着了人手。问婆子道：“此是何处，将我送在这里？”婆子道：“夜间众好汉每送将小娘子来的。不必心焦，管取你就落好处便了。”真珠姬道：“我是宗王府中闺女，你每歹人怎如此胡行乱做？”婆子道：“而今说不得王府不王府了。老身见你是金枝玉叶，须不把你作贱。”真珠姬也不晓得他的说话因由，侮着眼只是啼哭。元来这婆子是个牙婆，专一走大人家雇卖人口的。这伙剧贼掠得人口，便来投他家下，留下几晚，就有头主来成了去的。那时留了真珠姬，好言温慰得熟分。刚两三日，只见一日一乘轿来抬了去，已将他卖与城外一个富家为妾了。

主翁成婚后，云雨之时，心里晓得不是处子，却见他美色，甚是喜欢，不以为意，更不曾提起问他来历。真珠姬也深怀羞愤，不敢轻易自言。怎当得那家姬妾颇多，见一人专宠，尽生嫉妒之心，说他来历不明，多管是在家犯奸被逐出来的奴婢，



the young lady.

Zhenzhu did not wake up until the next morning. She could not tell where she was. But she found an old woman sitting beside her. A pain came over her from her private parts, and she touched them to find them swollen. She realized she had been raped. Turning to the old woman, she asked, "Where am I? Who has brought me here?" The old woman answered, "Those heroes brought you here last night. Don't worry. I'll find you to a suitable place." Zhenzhu said, "I am the daughter of a prince. How dare you defy the law by committing atrocities like this?" The old woman told her, "It's no use now talking about you being the daughter of a prince. I could tell you are from the nobility. So I will not treat you badly." Zhenzhu could not understand what the old woman was talking about. She could only succumb to sobbing wretchedly, her hands covering her eyes.

It so happened that this old woman was a trafficker in girls and children, and most of her patrons were from rich and influential families. This gang of villains would often leave persons they had seized with the old woman, and she would watch over the victims for a few nights before certain patrons came and took their purchases away. That day the old woman made an effort to console Zhenzhu. Two or three days later, a sedan-chair turned up and carried her away. She had been sold to a rich family outside of town as a concubine.

After the wedding, the bridegroom who had bought her started to make love to Zhenzhu, and discovered that his new mate was no longer a virgin. However, her beauty enraptured him and he was not too troubled by it. Moreover, he never even broached the subject of her background. Zhenzhu herself did not mention it either due to her sense of shame. However, the old man had many a concubine who became jealous of the favor the master was bestowing on the newcomer. All the concubines were convinced the master's newly obtained concubine had a murky background and was possibly a maidservant driven out of a family for the offense of having committed adultery.

Their gossip began to reach the ears of the old master. The endless gossip eventually drove the master to the limits of his patience. So he



日日在主翁耳根边激聒。主翁听得不耐烦，偶然问其来处。真珠姬揆着心中事，大声啼泣，诉出事由来，方知是宗王之女被人掠卖至此。主翁多曾看见榜文赏帖的，老大吃惊，恐怕事发连累。急忙叫人寻取原媒牙婆，已自不知去向了。

主翁寻思道：“此等奸徒，此处不败，别处必露。到得根究起来，现赃在我家，须藏不过，可不是天大利害？况且王府女眷，不是取笑，必有寻着根底的日子。别人做了歹事，把个愁布袋丢在这里，替他顶死不成？”心生一计，叫两个家人家里抬出一顶破竹轿来装好了，请出真珠姬来。主翁纳头便拜道：“一向有眼不识贵人，多有唐突，却是辱莫了贵人，多是歹人做的事，小可并不知道。今情愿折了身价，白送贵人还府，只望高抬贵手，凡事遮盖，不要牵累小可则个。”真珠姬见说送他还家，就如听得一封九重恩赦到来。又原是受主翁厚待的，见他小心陪礼，好生过意不去，回言道：“只要见了我父母，决不题起你姓名罢了。”

主翁请真珠姬上了轿，两个家人抬了飞走，真珠姬也不及分别一声。慌忙走了五七里路，一抬抬至荒野之中。抬轿的放下竹轿，抽身便走，一道烟去了。真珠姬在轿中探头出看，只



asked Zhenzhu casually about her past. His question struck a right note. The young lady started to wail and told him of her noble birth, and the trauma she had suffered. Having learned her story, the master was dumbstruck, for he had noticed several times posters in many places offering a reward for information about this very lady. Fearing he would get entangled in this matter, he immediately sent for the old woman who had sold him the girl. It turned out she had disappeared a long while before.

The master weighed the matter over in his mind, "The crimes of these villains will be certainly be brought to light sooner or later. At that point, would I be able to keep from the public the facts about this girl who is now in my home, and to escape the accusations of my collusion in their evil deed? In addition, this young lady is from a family with imperial kinship, and will be eventually located. Should I be so stupid as to be a scapegoat for a wrong done by someone else?" After further deliberation, he called for two servants and told them to obtain a worn-out bamboo sedan-chair. Then he sent for Zhenzhu.

The master kowtowed before her and said, "I apologize to you for my failure to recognize you as a member of a noble family and my insolence toward you. I had no idea those villains had imposed such afflictions upon you. Today I am willing to suffer financial loss and send you back home. I only beg that you do your utmost to absolve me of the responsibility for this evil deed when you relate the details to your family." On hearing she was to be sent home, Zhenzhu was overjoyed, as if an amnesty had been granted. She felt indebted to her master for treating her kindly and expressing his regret. She said to him, "I will not mention your name to my parents when I return home."

After the master had led Zhenzhu into the sedan-chair, the two carriers set off at once before she even had a chance to bid farewell to the master. Having covered a distance of six or seven *li*, the two carriers took her into an area of wilderness. Then the sedan-chair was set down on the ground, and the carriers ran away at the blink of an eye. Stretching her head out of the sedan-chair, Zhenzhu spotted not a soul around. She got off the sedan-chair and looked around, and was astonished to find the carriers gone.

见静悄无人。走出轿来，前后一看，连两个抬轿的影踪不见。慌张起来道：“我直如此命蹇！如何不明不白抛我在此？万一又遇歹人，如何是好？”没做理会处，只得仍旧进轿坐了，放声大哭起来，乱喊乱叫。将身子在轿内擗擗不已，头发多擗得蓬松。

此时正是春三月天道，时常有郊外踏青的。有人看见空旷之中，一乘竹轿内有人大哭，不胜骇异，渐渐走将拢来。起初止是一两个人，后来簌簌般围将转来，你诘我问，你喧我嚷。真珠姬慌慌张张，没口得分诉，一发说不出一句明白话来。内中有老成人，摇手叫四旁人莫嚷，朗声问道：“娘子是何家宅眷？因甚独自歇轿在此？”真珠姬方才噙了眼泪，说得话出来道：“奴是王府中族姬，被歹人拐来在此的。有人报知府中，定当重赏。”当时王府中赏帖、开封府榜文，谁不知道？真珠姬话才出口，早已有请功的飞也似去报了。

须臾之间，王府中干办、虞候，走了偌多人来认看。果然破轿之内坐着的是真珠族姬。慌忙打轿来换了，抬归府中。父母与合家人等看见头髻鬓乱，满面泪痕，抱着大哭。真珠姬一发乱擗乱擗，哭得一佛出世，二佛生天，直等哭得尽情了，方才把前时失去、今日归来的事端，一五一十告诉了一遍。宗王



Dread overcame her. "How terrible is my fate!" she said aloud. "Why have they left me alone in this place? What shall I do if a criminal shows up?" Without any other choice, she climbed back into the chair and burst into mournful wailing, her body trembling violently in the sedan-chair and her hair disheveled.

It was then the third month, the regular season for spring outings in the wilderness. A sightseer, noticing someone was crying in a sedan-chair in the wilderness, was shocked at the scene and came closer to take a look. At the beginning only one or two sightseers noticed Zhenzhu in the sedan-chair. Later on, a large crowd of people gradually gathered around her, bombarding her with one question after another. Zhenzhu was so upset and distressed that she would not utter a word about her misfortune. An elderly person stepped up at this point and silenced the noisy crowd with a wave of his hand. He then asked her loudly, "Young lady, where are you from, and why are you sitting in a sedan-chair alone in the wild?" With tears in her eyes, Zhenzhu stopped crying and replied, "I am the daughter of a prince. I was kidnapped and later dumped here by some rogues. If anyone of you could do me the favor of reporting this to my family, I will make sure you get an ample reward." During the time Zhenzhu was lost, the notice of a reward from the prince's family and the posters of the local government of Kaifeng had been on everybody's lips. No sooner she made herself clear, one of the onlookers darted away to report the matter to her family. Before long, many people from the prince's family, including some assistants and guards, came to the scene. They at once identified the girl in the sedan-chair as the lost Zhenzhu. Within an instant, a sedan-chair was brought over from her family. Thus Zhenzhu was carried back home.

The sight of her, so wretched with unkempt hair and tear-stained cheeks, gave rise to much grief and crying on the part of her parents and other family members. Zhenzhu wailed even more inconsolably and bitterly. After they had all given vent to their feelings, the family settled down to hear a full account of how she had been kidnapped and how she had been sent back. Her father asked her, "Could you tell me the name of the person who purchased you so that I could have this situation investigated through



道：“可晓得那讨你的是那一家？便好挨查。”真珠姬心里还护着那主翁，回言道：“人家便认得，却是不晓得姓名，也不晓得地方，又来得路远了，不记起在那一边。抑且那人家原不知情，多是歹人所为。”宗王心里道是家丑不可外扬，恐女儿许不得人家，只得含忍过了，不去声张，下老实根究。只暗地嘱咐开封府，留心访贼罢了。

隔了一年，又是元宵之夜，弄出王家这件案来。其时大尹拿倒王家做歹事的贼，记得王府中的事，也把来问问看，果然即是这伙人。大尹咬牙切齿，拍案大骂道：“这些贼男女，死有余辜！”喝交加力行杖，各打了六十讯棍，押下死囚牢中，奏请明断发落。奏内大略云：

群盗元夕所为，止于胥篋；居恒所犯，尽属椎埋。似此梟獍之徒，岂容鞶鞶之下！合行骈戮，以靖邦畿。

神宗皇帝见奏，晓得开封府尽获盗犯，笑道：“果然不出小孩子所算。”龙颜大喜，批准奏章，着会官即时处决，又命



him?”

Remembering her promise not to involve the master who had bought her in the crime, Zhenzhu replied, “I would be able to recognize him. But I certainly have no idea of his name and cannot remember where he lives because it was so remote. Besides, I can assure you the purchaser was an absolute outsider to this affair. It is the villains who should be hunted down and punished.” The prince thought to himself that he could not make this family disgrace known to the public. Otherwise he would have difficulty in getting his daughter married. So he said nothing outside his home about the issue. Meanwhile he secretly sent a report to the court of justice in Kaifeng so that the officials would pursue the criminals.

On the night of the Lantern Festival precisely one year later, Wang Xiangmin’s youngest son became lost too. Now the prefect had in front of him the group of criminals responsible for the kidnapping in the Wang Xiangmin family on this Lantern Festival night. He remembered what had happened to the daughter of a prince the previous year, and wondered if it could be the same gang who had committed that other crime. His follow-up interrogation confirmed his suspicions.

Grinding his teeth, he struck the table and severely reprimanded them, “What a gang of despicable male and female hoodlums! Even capital punishment is too lenient for them!” He sternly ordered that they be punished, sixty cudgel blows each, and then cast into jail until a final decision could be made. To the emperor he sent a memorial, which briefly stated as follows:

This band of criminals committed theft and abduction on the night of the Lantern Festival this year. They are professional brigands who have so far committed many murders. Is it not outrageous to allow such heartless gangsters to roam the capital at large? I submit this request to Your Majesty to sentence them to severe punishment, so as to maintain law and order in our country.

The emperor read the memorial and learned that all the criminals had been arrested. He smiled and said, “The young boy truly did a fine job in helping capture these criminals!” Delighted, he granted the request and commanded that the officials in charge carry out the executions at once. He also demanded the prefect of Kaifeng submit a copy of the confessions



开封府再录狱词一通来看。开封府钦此钦遵，处斩众盗已毕，一面回奏，复将前后犯由狱词详细录上。神宗得奏，即将狱词笼在袍袖之中，含笑回宫。

且说正宫钦圣皇后，那日亲奉圣谕，赐与外厢小儿鞠养，以为得子之兆。当下谢恩领回宫中来。试问他来历备细，那小孩子应答如流，语言清朗。他在皇帝御前也曾经过，可知道不怕面生，就像自家屋里一般，嘻笑自若。喜得个钦圣心花也开了，将来抱在膝上，“宝器心肝”的不住的叫。命宫娥取过梳妆匣来，替他掠发整容，调脂画额，一发打扮得齐整。合宫妃嫔闻得钦圣宫中御赐一个小儿，尽皆来到宫中，一来称贺娘娘，二来观看小儿。盖因小儿是宫中所不曾有的，实觉稀罕。及至见了，又是一个眉清目秀，唇红齿白，魔合罗般一个能言能语，百问百答，你道有不快活的么？妃嫔每要奉承娘娘，亦且喜欢孩子，争先将出宝玩、金珠、钏镯等类来做见面钱，多塞在他小袖子里。袖子里盛满了着不得，钦圣命一个老内人逐一替他收好了，又叫领了他到各宫朝见顽耍。各宫以为盛事，你强我赛，又多各有赏赐，宫中好不喜欢热闹。



made by the criminals. Later, the court of justice in Kaifeng carried out the emperor's order and executed the criminals and sent the report to the emperor along with a copy of the record of the jail confessions made by the individual criminals. The emperor slipped the record of the jail confessions into his sleeve and, smiling, returned to his palace.

Now let us return to Empress Qinsheng, who had graciously taken the imperial command to take care of the child and had returned to the palace with Nangai, believing her careful watch over the boy would augur a good omen for her becoming pregnant with a baby son. When asked about his background, the boy answered clearly and fluently as if he were in his own home, as he had done in front of the emperor, filling the empress with joy. The empress held him on her lap and kept saying, "My darling boy!" She then told a maidservant to fetch a box of cosmetics, and started to comb his hair and apply makeup on his face so he could be presented at his best.

Hearing the emperor had entrusted a young boy to the empress, all the imperial concubines and female servants of the whole palace gathered at the empress' room to present their congratulations, as well as to take a look at this boy. Since such young boys were seldom seen in the imperial palace, they were all very excited to see Nangai. On seeing Nangai, they found him to be a boy with wonderfully strong features, red lips and snowy teeth, a lovely, doll-like child who was capable of expressing himself clearly and answering each question addressed to him. How could one not be delighted at seeing such a bright boy? Eager to curry favor with the empress as well as being fond of little boys, these ladies vied with one another in slipping into Nangai's sleeves many toys, such as gold beads and jade bracelets, as tokens of kindness at their first meeting. Quickly, his sleeves became too full to hold all those toys. So the empress told an old woman servant to keep the toys for him. They then showed the boy around every room of the palace in order to delight him. A flurry of excitement prevailed among the concubines and female servants, who saw the occasion as a time of celebration, competing for the boy's attention and giving him gifts. What a lively scene inside the palace!

Such hustle and bustle did not die down until about ten days later,



如是十来日，正在喧哄之际，忽然驾幸钦圣宫，宣召前日孩子。钦圣当下率领南陔朝见已毕，神宗问钦圣道：“小孩子莫惊怕否？”钦圣道：“蒙圣恩敕令暂鞠此儿，此儿聪慧非凡，虽居禁地，毫不改度，老成人不过如此。实乃陛下洪福齐天，国家有此等神童出世，臣妾不胜欣幸！”神宗道：“好教卿等知道，只那夜做歹事的人，尽被开封府所获，则为衣领上针线暗记，不到得走了一个。此儿可谓有智极矣。今贼人尽行斩讫，怕他家里不知道，在家忙乱，今日好好送还他去。”钦圣与南陔各叩首谢恩。当下传旨：敕令前日抱进宫的那个中大人护送归第，御赐金犀一籠，与他压惊。

中大人得旨，就御前抱了南陔，辞了钦圣，一路出宫。钦圣尚兀自好些不割舍他，梯己自有赏赐，与同前日各宫所赠之物，总贮一筐，令人一同交付与中大人收好，送到他家。中大人出了宫门，传命起辆犊车，赍了圣旨，就抱南陔坐在怀里了，径望王家而来。

去时蓦地偷将去，来日从天降下来。

孩抱何缘亲见帝？恍疑鬼使与神差。



when the emperor suddenly arrived at the palace of the empress one day and demanded the boy to be brought before him. Then the empress led him to greet the emperor. After this, the emperor asked the empress, "Was the boy restive?" The empress answered, "Many thanks for the kindness of Your Majesty in granting me the duty of taking care of this boy. This boy is very intelligent. Though he stayed in the forbidden quarters, he behaved naturally, in his usual manner. He has the bearing expected of an adult. And it is indeed a revelation of Your Majesty's lofty blessings. I am most pleased the emergence of such a wonder child has been bestowed upon our country."

The emperor replied, "Good news! Those evildoers were all ensnared by the court of justice in Kaifeng because of the evidence of the embroidery needle and the silk thread on the villain's collar. None of them escaped. This boy's intelligence is truly amazing! Now all the criminals have been executed. Undoubtedly, the boy's parents must be worrying about him. He should be sent back home today." Both the empress and Nangai kowtowed to express their gratitude towards the emperor. Upon imperial edict, the boy was to be taken home by the head eunuch who had brought him into the palace a few days before. The emperor bestowed a small basket of gold trinkets on the boy so as to help him get over his shock. Receiving the emperor's edict, the head eunuch stepped forward in front of the emperor, picked up the boy and left with him in his arms. To part with the boy was admittedly the last thing the empress wanted. She presented more gifts to the boy, and had someone collect all the gifts in a small chest, which was handed to the head eunuch. Outside the imperial palace, the head eunuch arranged for a young-ox-drawn carriage. With the imperial edict in his sleeve and Nangai on his lap, he headed for the house of Minister Wang.

Ill luck it was that the boy to kidnappers fell victim,

Heavenly good fortune eventually to save him.

What conferred upon him the emperor's blessings?

Most likely, everything ordained by heavenly beings.

Ever since the disappearance of the young master on the night of the Lantern Festival, the whole family of Wang Xiangmin had been most



话说王襄敏家中，自那晚失去了小衙内，合家里外大小没有一个不忧愁思虑，哭哭啼啼。只有襄敏毫不在意，竟不令人追寻。虽然夫人与同管家的分付众家人各处探访，却也并无一些影响。人人懊恼，没个是处。忽然此日朝门上飞报将来，有中大人亲赍圣旨到第开读。襄敏不知事端，分付忙排香案迎接，自己冠绅袍笏，俯伏听旨。只见中大人抱了个小孩子下辇车来，家人上前来争看，认得是小衙内，到吃了一惊。不觉大家手舞足蹈，禁不得喜欢。中大人喝道：“且听宣圣旨！”高声宣道：

卿元宵失子，乃朕获之，今却还乡。特赐压惊物一簏，
奖其幼志。钦哉！

中大人宣毕，襄敏拜舞谢恩已了，请过圣旨，与中大人叙礼，分宾主坐定。中大人笑道：“老先儿，好个乖令郎！”襄敏正要问起根由，中大人笑嘻嘻的袖中取出一卷文书出来，说道：“老先儿要知令郎去来事端，只看此一卷便明白了。”襄敏接过头来一看，乃开封府获盗狱词也。襄敏从头看去，见是密诏开



anxious about the fate of the boy. Tears of distress could be seen in everyone's eyes, young and old, family members and servants alike. Only the master himself did not take the matter to heart in the slightest. Instead, he refused to send anyone to search for the boy. Though search teams had been dispatched to different places by Madam and the manager of the household, all returned empty-handed.

Thoroughly distraught, everybody was at a loss over what to do, when a message suddenly arrived reporting that the head eunuch had arrived at the Wang house with an imperial edict. Unable to determine what it was about, Wang Xiangmin immediately instructed the servants to set up the incense-burner table to meet the eunuch, while he dressed himself with a formal hat on his head, a girdle around his waist, and a tablet held before his breast. He knelt down on the ground and prepared for the announcement of the imperial edict. The head eunuch, holding the young boy in his arms, came out of the carriage. The family members rushed over to the entrance and were stunned to see it was none other than the lost young master. They were overcome with excitement and joy. The head eunuch said solemnly, "Prepare to listen to my presentation of the edict from His Majesty." He then began to read in a loud voice:

You lost one of your sons at the Lantern Festival this year. I have found him and am now returning him to you. In addition, I am granting him a small basket of gold trinkets as a token of commendation for his extraordinary talent.

—Imperial edict issued by the emperor.

Wang Xiangmin kowtowed and expressed his indebtedness as he received the imperial edict. Then the head eunuch and he took seats as host and guest. The head eunuch smiled and remarked, "My dear friend, what a clever son you have!" As Wang Xiangmin was about to ask him how the boy had come under the emperor's care, the head eunuch took out a scroll and said, grinning, "This file will tell you everything you want to know." Taking it in his hands, Wang Xiangmin started to read it. The text was an account of criminal prison-confessions recorded by the court of justice in Kaifeng, acting under the auspices of the emperor.

Then Wang Xiangmin exclaimed, "My son is quite young, and even



封捕获，便道：“乳臭小儿，如此惊动天听，又烦圣虑获贼，直教老臣粉身碎骨，难报圣恩万一。”中大人笑道：“这贼多是令郎自家拿倒的，不烦一毫圣虑，所以为妙。”南陔当时就口里说那夜怎的长怎的短，怎的见皇帝，怎的拜皇后，明明朗朗，诉个不住口。

先前合家人听见圣旨到时，已攒在中门口观看，及见南陔出车来，大家惊喜，只是不知头脑。直待听见南陔备细述此一遍，心下方才明白，尽多赞叹他乖巧之极。方信襄敏不在心上，不肯追求，道是他自家会归来的，真有先见之明也。

襄敏分付治酒款待中大人，中大人就将圣上钦赏压惊金犀，及钦圣与各宫所赐之物，陈设起来。真是珠宝盈庭，光采夺目，所直不啻巨万。中大人摩着南陔的头道：“哥，勾你买果儿吃了。”襄敏又叩首对阙谢恩。立命馆客写下谢表，先附中大人陈奏，等来日早朝面圣，再行率领小子谢恩。中大人道：“令郎哥儿是咱家遇着携见圣人的，咱家也有个薄礼儿，做个



His Majesty was so concerned over how he had become lost, he made a personal effort to have the criminals brought to justice. What a debt of gratitude I owe to His Majesty! I will not be able to repay even a tiny bit of this should I live and die a thousand times!” With a smile, the head eunuch said, “As a matter of fact, it was your son who made the major contribution to the capture of these criminals. His Majesty did not have to trouble himself to make the slightest effort in this regard. This is why the emperor was pleased.” Then Nangai started to provide a full account of what had happened to him that night, how he had been kidnapped, brought to meet his Majesty, and stayed with her Excellency. It was a most detailed and eloquent narration.

Family members and servants had gathered at the main entrance of the mansion when they heard that an imperial edict was to be announced. All were overcome with excitement and bewilderment as they saw Nangai get off the carriage. Now the young master’s detailed and eloquent account of his adventure had cleared up their bewilderment. So they all praised the young boy for his intelligence and talent. It was only then everyone became convinced Wang Xiangmin had truly demonstrated foresight at the beginning by refusing to search for the lost boy, having faith he would return home soon.

Wang Xiangmin then ordered dinner prepared in honor of the head eunuch. At this time the head eunuch displayed the gold trinkets bestowed by his Majesty and the presents given by the empress, concubines and attendants. Those gold trinkets and jewels of immeasurable value glittered brilliantly in the room. The head eunuch said to Nangai, stroking his head, “Young boy, this should be enough for you to buy some fruit!” Wang Xiangmin kowtowed in the direction of the imperial palace to express his debt to the emperor. He then had the children’s tutor compose a memorial of gratitude. He asked the head eunuch to carry it to the emperor, expressing in advance his wish to bring his son to express his thanks to his Majesty in person. He hoped one day he would be granted a morning audience with the emperor. The head eunuch said to Wang Xiangmin, “It was I who happened to run into your boy and take him to the presence of His Majesty. I also have a humble gift for your son as a souvenir.” So

记念。”将出元宝二个、彩段八表里来。襄敏再三推辞不得，只得收了。另各厚礼答谢过中大人，中大人上车回覆圣旨去了。

襄敏送了回来，合家欢庆。襄敏公道：“我说你们不要忙，我十三必能自归。今非但归来，且得了许多恩赐，又已拿了贼人，多是十三自己的主张来。可见我不着急的是么？”合家各各称服。

后来南陔取名王寀，政和年间大有文声，功名显达。只看他小时举动如此，已占大就矣。

小时了了大时佳，五岁孩童已足夸。

计缚剧徒如反掌，直教天子送还家。

saying he presented the boy with two gold ingots as well as colorful satin enough for eight suits of clothes. Unable to turn down the gifts, Wang Xiangmin accepted them and presented the head eunuch many gifts in return. The head eunuch then left to report to the emperor.

After returning from seeing off the guest, Wang Xiangmin and his family celebrated the reuniting of the family. Wang Xiangmin said, "I told you not to worry, that my thirteenth son would definitely come back by himself. Now he has not only returned home safe and sound but also brought back many gifts. What is more important, he has contributed to the capture of villains by using his wisdom. Do you see that how I originally acted was absolutely correct?" The entire family assented. In the years that followed Nangai took the name Wang Cai. He turned out to be very successful in both his literary and official careers during the reign of Zhenghe (1111-1117). The remarkable intelligence he displayed as a young boy had revealed his potential and set the stage for his future triumphs.

A prodigy as a child, a boy when older surely gains success.

This five-year-old has drawn from all around praise boundless.

As easy as a flick of his hand, he schemes the capture of villains,

Charmed by his ingenuity, the Son of Heaven decrees him home.



卷之六

李将军错认舅 刘氏女诡从夫

诗云：

在天愿为比翼鸟，在地愿为连理枝。

天长地久有时尽，此恨绵绵无绝期。

这四句乃是白乐天《长恨歌》中之语。当日只为唐明皇与杨贵妃七月七日之夜，在长生殿前对天发了私愿：愿生生世世得为夫妇。后来马嵬之难，杨贵妃自缢，明皇心中不舍，命鸿都道士求其魂魄。道士凝神御气，见之玉真仙宫。道是因为长生殿前私愿，还要复降人间，与明皇做来生的夫妇。所以白乐天述其事，做一篇《长恨歌》，有此四句。盖谓世间惟有愿得成双的，随你天荒地老，此情到底不泯也。

小子而今先说一个不愿成双的古怪事，做个得胜头回。





Tale 6

General Li Mistakenly Claims a Brother-in-law Lady Liu Furtively Reunites with Dead Husband

As the poem goes:

Up high, we'd be two birds flying wing to wing;
On earth, two trees' branches twined Spring to Spring.
Sky boundless, earth endless may soon part their ways,
Yet this vow undone would mean regret all my days.

These four lines are from "Everlasting Regret," by the famous Tang-dynasty (618-907) poet Bai Letian. On the night of the 7th day of the 7th month, Emperor Tang Minghuang, and his concubine Yang Yuhuan made a secret vow in the Long-Life Hall that they would remain husband and wife through generation to generation. Later, An Lushan rose in armed rebellion (775), aiming to topple the Tang Dynasty, and Tang Minghuang was forced to allow Lady Yang to hang herself at Mawei .

Being loath in his heart to part with his beloved, Minghuang ordered the Taoist Hongdu to summon up the spirit of the dead. The Taoist sat quietly and began to meditate, and met her in the beautiful palace of the immortals. She told him that she would come down to the earth to be Minghuang's wife in her next life, because they had had made a secret vow in the Long Life Hall. Based on this historical anecdote, Bai Letian wrote the poem "Everlasting Regret," from which the four lines quoted above were adopted. Generally speaking, those who are predestined to be couples will eventually fulfill their desire to remain together as husbands and wives as long as heaven and earth may last.

Now, first of all, as a prefatory story before my main tale, I would like to tell you a strange story of a couple who were unwilling to be a couple.

Once upon a time during the Song Dynasty, there lived a rich man



宋时唐州比阳，有个富人王八郎，在江淮做大商，与一个娼伎往来得密。相与日久，胜似夫妻。每要取他回家，家中先已有妻子，甚是不得意。既有了娶娼之意，归家见了旧妻时，一发觉得厌憎，只管寻是寻非，要赶逐妻子出去。那妻子是个乖巧的，见不是头，也就怀着二心，无心恋着夫家。欲待要去，只可惜先前不曾留心积趱得些私房，未好便轻易走动。其时身畔有一女儿，年止数岁，把他做了由头，婉辞哄那丈夫道：“我嫁你已多年了，女儿又小，你赶我出去，叫我那里去好？我决不走路的。”口里如此说，却日日打点出去的计较。

后来王生竟到淮上，带了娼妇回来。且未到家，在近巷另赁一所房子，与他一同住下。妻子知道，一发坚意要去了，把家中细软尽情藏过，狼狽家伙什物多将来卖掉。等得王生归来家里，椅桌多不完全。箸长碗短，全不似人家模样。访知尽是妻子败坏了，一时发怒道：“我此番决留你不得了，今日定要决绝。”妻子也奋然攘臂道：“我晓得到底容不得我，只是要我



named Wang Balang in Biyang of Tangzhou Prefecture. He developed an intimate affair with a local singsong girl while he was doing business in Southern China along the Yangtze and Huaihe rivers. After living together with the girl for an extended period of time, Wang Balang's affection for her grew deeper than that for his wife. Thus he got the idea of taking her back to his hometown and marrying her. Although he already had a wife in his hometown, he was not very pleased with her. Since he had a new sweetheart now, he grew more and more revolted with his wife whenever he returned home and met her. Intentionally he seized every chance to stir up trouble with his wife, with the aim of kicking her out of the house and being rid of her.

His wife was a clever woman and soon realized that her husband was trying to abandon her. Suspecting her husband was being unfaithful, she was also in no mood to continue staying on in her husband's home. But just as she was about to leave, she found she hadn't taken care to save private money in the past. At that time, she had a daughter of several years of age who lived with her. Using her daughter as a pretext, she coaxed her husband graciously, saying, "We have been married so many years, and our daughter is still so young. Where could I go if you kick me out? I will not leave you." Though saying this, she also began her daily preparations to leave.

Later Wang went south and brought the singsong girl back to his hometown. Unable to bring her to his house, he rented a house in a lane close to his home and settled down. Before long his wife learned about this, which intensified her determination to leave her husband. She hid away all the valuables like the family jewelry and sold most of the things in the house. Upon returning back to his house, Wang found his home beyond recognition, with many things missing such as tables, chairs, chopsticks, bowls, and the like. After inquiring into the matter, he learned it was his wife who had brought his home into such a terrible condition. Flying into a rage, he shouted at his wife, "Look at what you've done! I will definitely part with you today!" Raising her arms in agitation, his wife retorted, "I knew from the very beginning you wouldn't at all put up with my remaining in this house! Even if you demand that I leave, I must



去，我也要去得明白。我与你当官休去！”当下扭住了王生双袖，一直嚷到县堂上来。

知县问着备细，乃是夫妻两人彼此愿离，各无系恋。取了口词，画了手模，依他断离了。家事对半分开，各自度日。妻若再嫁，追产还夫。所生一女，两下争要。妻子诉道：“丈夫薄幸，宠娼弃妻，若留女儿与他，日后也要流落为娼了。”知县道他说得是，把女儿断与妻子领去。各无词说，出了县门。自此两人各自分手。

王生自去接了娼妇，到家同住。妻子与女儿另在别村去买一所房子住了，买些瓶罐之类，摆在门前，做些小经纪。他手里本自有钱，恐怕丈夫他日还有别是非，故意装这个模样。

一日，王生偶从那里经过，恰好妻子在那里搬运这些瓶罐。王生还有些旧情不忍，好言对他道：“这些东西能进得多少利息，何不别做些甚么生意？”其妻大怒，赶着骂道：“我与你决绝过了，便同路人。要你管我怎的！来调甚么喉嗓？”王生老大没趣，走了回来，自此再不相问了。

过了几时，其女及笄，嫁了方城田家。其妻方将囊中蓄积



make my departure open and honorably. Let us go to the court to obtain a divorce." As she yelled, she grabbed Wang's sleeves and dragged him to the county magistrate.

The county magistrate learned the details of their dispute and understood that both the husband and the wife were willing to divorce, for they had worn out their affection for each other. He recorded their confessions and asked them to put their fingerprints to the paper. Then he granted them a divorce, each of them obtaining one half of the family property and living a life on their own respectively; though if the wife were to remarry, the husband would have the right to recover her property. As for their daughter, both husband and wife entered into a rivalry and contended for her. The wife stated to the county magistrate, "My husband is a fickle man. He abandoned his wife and fell in love with a singsong girl. My daughter will be forced into the profession of prostitution if she is to live with him." The county magistrate thought what she said was reasonable and passed judgment that the wife should have the daughter. Thus the divorce case was settled, and the former couple parted with each other from that point on.

Wang brought the singsong girl to his home, while his former wife and the daughter bought a house in a neighboring village and settled down. The wife also bought some bottles and jars of odds and ends and placed them for sale in front of her house, from which she could make a living. As a matter of fact, she was not short of money. She was only putting up such a show out of fear that her former husband might come to her to stir up trouble one day and extort money from her.

One day while on his way from a neighboring village, Wang happened to come across his former wife moving the bottles and jars in front of the gate. Unable to restrain his old-time feelings for her, Wang asked her with well-meaning words, "How much profit can you make in this small business? Why don't you try some other profitable business?" His former wife flared up, "You and I have long parted forever. We are strangers! I don't need your advice! How annoying!" Feeling left out in the cold, Wang slunk off and never again talked with her.

Years later, the wife's daughter grew up and married into the Tian

搬将出来，尽数与了女婿，约有十来万贯，皆在王家时瞒了丈夫所藏下之物也。可见王生固然薄幸有外好，其妻元也不是同心的了。

后来王生客死淮南，其妻在女家亦死。既已殒殁，将要埋葬，女儿道：“生前与父不合，而今既同死了，该合做了一处，也是我女儿每孝心。”便叫人去淮南迎了丧柩归来。重复开棺，一同母尸，各加洗涤，换了衣服，两尸同卧在一榻之上，等天明时辰到了，下了棺同去安葬。安顿好了，过了一会，女儿走来看看，吃了一惊。两尸先前同是仰卧的，今却东西相背，各向了一边。叫聚合家人多来看着，尽都骇异。有的道：“眼见得生前不合，死后还如此相背。”有的道：“偶然那个移动了，那里有死尸会掉转来的？”女儿啼啼哭哭，叫爹叫娘，仍旧把来仰卧好了。到得明日下棺之时，动手起尸，两个尸骸仍旧多



family of Fangcheng County (in present-day Henan Province). The wife took out all her accumulated savings, which she had hid without her former husband's knowledge, totaling almost a hundred thousand strings of coins, and gave it to her son-in-law. It was true that Wang was a fickle and had acquired a new sweetheart while he was away from home, but it was also a fact that his wife had not been of one mind with him for quite a long time.

Later, Wang died in the south. Wang's former wife also passed away in their daughter's home not long after his death. Before the burial of her mother, the daughter declared, "Mother and Father were at loggerheads during their lifetimes. Since they have now passed away at almost the same time, I should express my indebtedness and do my filial duty to them by placing their bodies in one tomb." So she sent some people to the south to bring her father's coffin to Huainan. She had her father's coffin opened, and washed both her father's and mother's bodies before changing their apparel and finally placed them side by side on one bed. At daybreak, the two bodies were neatly placed in one coffin for the forthcoming burial. A moment later, the daughter approached to take a last look at them. She was taken aback at what she saw: both the bodies set down lying on their backs, were now lying back to back. She summoned all the family members to come take a look. All were shocked by the sight.

One among them said, "They were on bad terms while alive, so now they lie back to back after death." Another one commented, "Maybe someone has moved them. How could it be possible for dead bodies to move by themselves?" The daughter wept tearfully as she called out "Father" and "Mother," and readjusted them into supine positions. When it was time to take the coffin to the grave the following day, again they found the two bodies lying back to back. It was only then the people around realized that this situation had been truly caused by their mutual resentment during their lifetime. Filled with compassion, the daughter buried them in one coffin after all. It was possible they would not have a peaceful life in the netherworld.

This is an instance of a couple who did not want to be a couple any



是侧眠着，两背相向的，方晓得果然是生前怨恨之所致也。女儿不忍，毕竟将来同葬了。要知他们阴中也未必相安的。此是夫妇不愿成双的榜样，比似那生生世世愿为夫妇的差了多少！而今说一个做夫妻的被拆散了，死后精灵还归一处，到底不磨灭的话本。可见世间夫妇，原自有这般情种。有诗为证：

生前不得同衾枕，死后图他共穴藏。

信是世间情不泯，韩凭冢上有鸳鸯。

这个话本，在元顺帝至元年间，淮南有个民家姓刘，生有一女，名唤翠翠。生来聪明异常，见字便认，五六岁时便能诵读诗书。父母见他如此，商量索性送他到学堂去，等他多读些在肚里，做个不带冠的秀才。邻近有个义学，请着个老学究，有好些生童在里头从他读书。刘老也把女儿送去入学。

学堂中有个金家儿子，叫名金定，生来俊雅，又兼赋性聪明。与翠翠一男一女，算是这一堂中出色的了，况又是同年生的。学堂中诸生多取笑他道：“你们两个一般的聪明，又是一般的年纪，后来毕竟是一对夫妻。”金定与翠翠虽然口里不说，心里也暗地有些自认，两下相爱。金生曾做一首诗赠与翠翠，以见相慕之意。诗云：

十二栏杆七宝台，春风到处艳阳开。

东园桃树西园柳，何不移来一处栽？

翠翠也依韵和一首答他，诗云：



longer. How could they compare with those who desired to be couples generation after generation! Now I am going to tell you the tale of a couple who were separated by outside forces, but later their imperishable spirits were reunited after death. In light of this tale, we can come to the conclusion that love does exist between husbands and wives in our world. Here is a poem to lend support to my view:

To share one quilt and one pillow in their life unable,
Fulfil their wish of sharing one tomb eventually
'Tis true, true love shall never perish from this earth,
Why else at the Han Ping couple's tomb do mandarin ducks perch?

* * *

This story took place during the period of Zhiyuan's reign (1264-1274) of the Yuan Dynasty. In the region south of the Huaihe River, there once lived a family surnamed Liu. This family had a daughter by the name of Cuicui, who was exceptionally bright, quick to learn, and could read poetry and prose by the age of five. Realizing their daughter's talents, the parents thought they might as well send her to a private school, hoping she would acquire more knowledge and become a woman of letters, although women had no access to officialdom. Not far from their home was a free private school where the teacher was old and knowledgeable. Many school-age children attended this school, and hence Cuicui was also sent there.

Among her schoolmates was a boy from the Jin family named Jin Ding, who was bright and handsome. He and Cuicui stood out from the rest of the class in study. In addition, they were of the same age and so the others often teased them by saying, "You two are both intelligent and of the same age. You will eventually be a couple." Although Jin Ding and Cuicui said nothing in reply, they acquiesced to it in their hearts and quite fancied each other. Jin Ding presented his poem to Cuicui as an expression of affection. It went like this:

Twelve gemmed balustrades on seven terraces
Enjoy the sun and spring winds with zest.
Alas, why not graft the two to interlace—
Peach from east garden, willow from the west?

In reply, Cuicui also wrote a poem to him, which read:

平生有恨祝英台，怀抱何为不肯开？

我愿东君勤用意，早移花树向阳栽。

在学堂一年有馀，翠翠过目成诵，读过了好些书。已后年已渐长，不到学堂中来了。十六岁时，父母要将他许聘人家。翠翠但闻得有人议亲，便关了房门，只是啼哭，连粥饭多不肯吃了。父母初时不在心上，后来见每次如此，心中晓得有些尴尬。仔细问他，只不肯说。再三委曲盘问，许他说了出来必定依他，翠翠然后说道：“西家金定，与我同年。前日同学堂读书时，心里已许下了他。今若不依我，我只是死了，决不去嫁别人的！”父母听罢，想道：“金家儿子虽然聪明俊秀，却是家道贫穷，岂是我家当门对户？”然见女儿说话坚决，动不动哭个不住，又不肯饮食，恐怕违逆了他，万一做出事来，只得许他道：“你心里既然如此，却也不难。我着媒人替你说去。”



Long have I felt for Zhu Yingtai, a girl obsessed,
Why keep profound love unexpressed?
Oh, floral goddess, I beseech thee, be kind
Let peach and willow weave intertwined!

After more than one year in the school, Cuicui, being gifted with a photographic memory, read a great deal of books. Yet when she turned older, she had to leave school.

When she was sixteen, her parents thought it becoming to find her a husband. But each time a visitor came to discuss the issue of marriage; she would shut herself in her room and weep, and even refuse to eat. At first her parents did not pay much attention to her odd behavior, but later they found something strange in their daughter and began to notice that obstinacy had become her way of life. Perplexed by her distress, they talked to her. But they could obtain no explanation for her behavior. After repeated inquiries, along with a promise that her request would be granted once she told her parents the reason why she behaved so strangely, Cuicui said, "Jin Ding of the neighboring house to our west is the same age as I am. When we were at school years ago, I promised in my heart to marry him in the future. Now if you do not grant my request, I would rather die! I will not marry anybody else."

Upon hearing their daughter's remarks, the parents thought, "Intelligent and handsome as Jin's son is, his family is rather poverty-stricken. How could he be a match for our daughter?" But their daughter's resolute determination shocked them. One moment she was soaked with tears of melancholy, and at another she would refuse to take food. They started to fear she might act rashly if her resolution was overlooked. Consequently they had to change their minds and promise her, "Now that you have made up your mind, we will find a matchmaker to pass the word. It is going to be alright."

Cuicui's mother went to a woman matchmaker and told her that his daughter Cuicui wished to be betrothed to Jin Ding. The matchmaker said, "Jin Ding's family is quite poor. How can his family be a match for yours in social status?" Cuicui's mother said, "My daughter, Cuicui, and their son, Jin Ding, are of the same age and used to be classmates. Our



刘老寻将一个媒妈来，对他说女儿翠翠要许西边金家定哥的说话。媒妈道：“金家贫穷，怎对得宅上起？”刘妈道：“我家翠小娘与他家定哥同年，又曾同学，翠小娘不是他不肯出嫁，故此要许他。”媒妈道：“只怕宅上嫌贫不肯，既然肯许，却有何难？老媳妇一说便成。”

媒妈领命，竟到金家来说亲。金家父母见说了，惭愧不敢当，回复媒妈道：“我家甚么家当，敢去扳他？”媒妈道：“不是这等说！刘家翠翠小娘子心里一定要嫁小官人，几番啼哭不食，别家来说的，多回绝了。难得他父母见女儿立志如此，已许下他，肯与你家小官人了。今你家若把贫来推辞，不但失了此一段好姻缘，亦且辜负那小娘子这一片志诚好心。”金老夫妻道：“据着我家定哥才貌，也配得他翠小姐过，只是家下委实贫难，那里下得起聘定？所以容易应承不得。”媒妈道：“应承由不得不应承，只好把说话放婉曲些。”金老夫妻道：“怎的婉曲？”媒妈道：“而今我替你传去，只说道寒家有子，颇知诗书，贵宅见谕，万分盛情，敢不从命？但寒家起自蓬筚，一



Cuicui said she would marry no one but him. So we have to make the betrothal for her.” The matchmaker replied, “I was a bit worried that you would not be in favor of this match because of his straitened family background. Since you have no objection to the marriage, there should be no problem. I will go and talk to his parents about a betrothal.”

The matchmaker made straight for the Jin’s with the assignment, and talked about the matter with Jin Ding’s parents. The parents of Jin Ding felt they were too humble to accept such a proposal. “Look at our miserable family circumstance,” they said. “How can we aspire to such a match?” The matchmaker replied, “You have no idea about the situation. The young lady of the Lin’s has set her mind with strongest determination to marry your young master. Many times she has wept and refused to take food over this matter. Moreover, the family has turned down quite a few marriage proposals. It is very kind of her parents to have granted her request due to her unwavering position. Now if you deny her on the excuse of your poor financial circumstances, you will not only lose a chance for a good marriage, but you would be unworthy of the young lady’s pure passion.”

Jin Ding’s parents said, “In terms of appearance and talent, our son is a match for their daughter. But given our scanty family income, how are we going to afford the betrothal gifts? That is why we hesitate to accept the proposal.” The matchmaker suggested, “You should not decline the offer, but you must make use of mild wording in order to smooth away your difficulties.” The old Jin couple inquired, “What type of wording would you suggest?”

The matchmaker replied, “Let me pass them this message on your behalf, ‘Our son is well read but of a poor family origins. We greatly appreciate your kindness and warmth in deciding to choose him for marriage, and we would be most happy to accept it. But our family stems from a humble line of descent and has survived on a meager livelihood. The marriage expenses, including gifts and ceremonies, are far beyond our means, for we are indeed financially insufficient. We plead with you to show understanding and consideration, so we will be able to work out a way of handling this matter before accepting the marriage.’ — If you



向贫薄自甘，若要取必聘问婚娶诸仪，力不能办，是必见谅，毫不责备，方好应承。如此说去，他家晓得你每下礼不起的，却又违女儿意思不得，必然是件将就了。”金老夫妻大喜道：“多承指教，有劳周全则个。”

媒妈果然把这番话到刘家来复命，刘家父母爱女过甚，心下只要成事。见媒妈说了金家自揣家贫，不能下礼，便道：“自古道，婚姻论财，夷虏之道，我家只要许得女婿好，那在财礼？但是一件，他家既然不足，我女到他家里，只怕难过日子，除非招人我每家里做个赘婿，这才使得。”媒妈再把此意到金家去说。这是倒在金家怀里去做的事，金家有何推托？千欢万喜，应允不迭。遂凭着刘家拣个好日，把金定招将过去。凡是一应币帛羊酒之类，多是女家自备了过来。从来有这话的：入舍女婿只带着一张卵袋走。金家果然不费分毫，竟成了亲事。只因刘翠翠坚意看上了金定，父母拗他不得，只得曲意相从了。

当日过门交拜，夫妻相见，两下里各称心怀。是夜翠翠于枕上口占一词，赠与金生道：

曾向书斋同笔砚，故人今做新人。洞房花烛十分春。
汗沾蝴蝶粉，身惹麝香尘。 滯雨尤云浑未惯，枕边眉



give such a full account of your dilemma, they will understand that you are too poor to prepare the betrothal gifts. But at the same time, they are also clear that they cannot act against their daughter's wishes. So the final outcome of the matter will be that they will surely acquiesce to you." The old Jin couple was overjoyed and said, "Many thanks for your advice. We would appreciate it if you would take care of this matter."

So the matchmaker went to the Liu's and told the Liu couple her version of the Jin couple's concerns. The parents loved their daughter more than anything else and anticipated nothing but success in this marriage. Upon the matchmaker's recounting of the boy's family's lack of money to pay for betrothal gifts, the old Liu couple said, "As an old saying goes, 'It is the barbarian way of living to demand a huge sum of money for marital terms.' We value more our son-in-law's character than his betrothal gifts. But we do have some terms they will have to comply with; since they are not well off, our daughter will find it hard to adjust herself to a meager living in their home. Therefore, their son should come to live with our daughter in our home."

When the matchmaker passed these words on, the Jin family was quite pleased and readily accepted the terms. Happiness filled the house. A date for the marriage was chosen by the girl's family. On that day Jin Ding married into Cuicui's home. All the expenses, such as silks, brocades, meat and wine, were provided by the girl's family. As an old saying goes, "A son-in-law who marries into the girl's family brings nothing but his genitals along with him." Thus the Jin family concluded a marriage without spending a single coin. All this was because Cuicui's parents had no choice but to comply with their daughter's wishes in marriage.

On the chosen date, both the bride and groom met at the wedding ceremony, quite content. When they were together in bed that night, Cuicui chanted an improvised *ci* poem as a present to Jin Ding:

Once mates studying in classroom,
Now we lie as bride and groom.
Frolic in our nuptial rooms,
Suffused with musk perfumes.
I frown, strange to your forceful shoving.



黛羞颦。轻怜痛惜莫辞频。愿郎从此始，日近日相亲。（右调《临江仙》）

金生也依韵和一阕道：

记得书斋同笔砚，新人不是他人。扁舟来访武陵春。仙居邻紫府，人世隔红尘。誓海盟山心已许，几番浅笑深颦。向人犹自语频频。意中无别意，亲后有谁亲？（调同前）

两人相得之乐，真如翡翠之在丹青，鸳鸯之游碧沼，无以过也。

谁料乐极悲来，快活不上一年，撞着元政失纲，四方盗起。盐徒张士诚兄弟起兵高邮，沿海一带郡县尽为所陷。部下有个李将军，领兵为先锋，到处民间掳掠美色女子。兵至淮安，闻说刘翠翠之名，率领一队家丁打进门来，看得中意，劫了就走。此时合家只好自顾性命，抱头鼠窜，那个敢向前争得一句？眼睁睁看他拥着去了。金定哭得个死而复生，欲待跟着军兵踪迹寻访他去，争奈元将官兵，北来征讨，两下争持，干戈不息，路断行人。恐怕没来由走去，撞在乱兵之手，死了也没说处，只得忍酸含苦，过了日子。



Yet your billing and a-cooing
Kindle my ardent loving.
(To the tune of“ Linjiangxian”)

Her husband too improvised a *ci* poem in reply:

Recalling our days in the classroom.
No stranger is your new bridegroom.
Blessed we are in a fairyland to wander,
Enjoying in bloom mysterious flowers.
Our hearts bound by vows your eyes tell me enough.
Yet I repeat my oaths to you, my only love.
(To the tune of “ Linjiangxian”)

The two enjoyed each other's companionship as happily as if they were a pair of falcons freely soaring into the clouds or a pair of mandarin ducks joyously swimming on the bluest pond.

Unfortunately, joy at its height then engendered sorrow. Their marital joy lasted less than a year, before the country sank into turmoil and chaos due to instability in the Yuan government. Rebels and bandits rose up throughout the country. A salt-merchant, Zhang Shicheng, along with his brother, started an armed rebellion in Gaoyou. The coastal prefectures and counties all fell under his control. A general surnamed Li, a subordinate of Zhang Shicheng, fought in the vanguard, his troops abducting beautiful women wherever they went. When he arrived in Huai'an, the reputation of Liu Cuicui's beauty attracted his attention. He led a platoon of his guards to break into Cuicui's home. Seeing she was to his liking, he seized her and carried her off. The abduction frightened the whole family, and everyone ran for their lives. Who might have dared to step forward in order to reason with the captors? And thus the newlywed girl was taken away with the family watching on helplessly.

Jin Ding could only cry his heart out. He initially wanted to track the rebel troops in order to get back his wife. But then the government troops arriving from the north quickly engaged the rebels in prolonged confrontation and destruction. All roads were blocked and travel suspended. If he dared to roam those areas, he could be captured by the troops of either side, with the possible loss of his life. Jin Ding therefore,



至正末年，张士诚气概弄得大了，自江南江北、三吴两浙，直拓至两广益州，尽归掌握。元朝不能征剿，只得定义招抚。士诚原没有统一之志，只此局面已自满足，也要休兵。因遂通款元朝，奉其正朔。封为王爵，各守封疆。民间始得安静，道路方可通行。

金生思念翠翠，时刻不能去心。看见路上好走，便要出去寻访。收拾了几两盘缠，结束了一个包裹，来别了自家父母，对丈人、丈母道：“此行必要访着妻子踪迹，若不得见，誓不还家了。”痛哭而去。路由扬州过了长江，进了润州，风餐水宿，夜住晓行，来到平江。听得路上人说，李将军见在绍兴守御，急忙赶到临安，过了钱塘江，趁着西兴夜船到得绍兴。去问人时，李将军已调在安丰去屯兵了，又不辞辛苦，问到安丰。安丰人说：“早来两日，也还在此，而今回湖州驻扎，才起身去的。”金生道：“只怕到湖州时，又要到别处去。”安丰人道：“湖州是驻扎地方，不到别处去了。”金生道：“这等，便远在天边，也赶得着。”于是一路向湖州来。



remained at home and spent his days in anguish.

By the end of Zhizheng's reign (1341-1368), Zhang Shicheng had brought large territories under his control, including areas on both sides of the Yangtze River, ranging from Jiangsu to Zhejiang provinces. His territory now reached far into Guangdong and Guangxi provinces and Yizhou. Unable to suppress the rebellion, the Yuan government offered them amnesty and government posts. Zhang Shicheng was not so ambitious as to unify the whole country, so was wont to rest on his laurels with what he had already achieved. A cease-fire was then declared, and the terms of amnesty of the central government were accepted. He was granted the title of prince, with certain territories to govern. Only then was order restored and travel renewed.

Jin Ding desperately missed his wife and could not set his mind at ease. Seeing the roads reopened, he planned to travel around in order to find his wife. After scraping together a few taels of silver and packing his things into a bedroll, he bade his parents farewell, and then took leave of his in-laws, saying, "I've resolved to go seek my wife. I shall never come back if I do not come across her." Then he wept and departed.

First he made his way to Yangzhou, then crossed the Yangtze River and arrived at Ruizhou. Having gone through the rigors of an arduous journey, eating in the wind and sleeping in the dew, he eventually reached Pingjiang Lu. On the way he heard that General Li was guarding the town of Shaoxing. He hurried to Lin'an, crossed the Qiantang River, and took a boat from Xixing through the night, and reached Shaoxing. When he inquired about General Li, the local people told him that he had been transferred to Anfeng to guard that city. Then again he took great pains to journey to Anfeng. The people there told him, "If you had come here two days earlier, you would have met General Li. He has just left with his troops and returned to Huzhou." Utterly disappointed, Jin Ding grumbled, "I wonder if I can find him by the time I get there. He may have left by then." A local from Anfeng told him, "No. Huzhou is the station for his troops. He won't be moving on to other places after that." Hearing this, Jin Ding said, "If that is the case, I'll get there no matter how far away it is." Again he made his way to Huzhou.



算来金生东奔西走，脚下不知有万千里路跑过来。在路上也过了好两个年头，不能勾见妻子一见，却是此心再不放懈。于路没了盘缠，只得乞丐度日；没有房钱，只得草眠露宿。真正心坚铁石，万死不辞。

不则一日，到了湖州。去访问时，果然有个李将军开府在那里。那将军是张王得力之人，贵重用事，势焰赫奕。走到他门前去看时，好不威严。但见：

门墙新彩，棨戟森严。兽面铜环，并衔而宛转；彪形铁汉，对峙以巍峨。门阑上贴着两片不写字的桃符，坐墩边列着一双不吃食的狮子。虽非天上神仙府，自是人间宝贵家。

金生到了门首，站立了一回，不敢进去，又不好开言。只是舒头探脑，望里边一望，又退立了两步，踌躇不决。

正在没些起倒之际，只见一个管门的老苍头走出来，问道：“你这秀才有甚么事干？在这门前探头探脑的，莫不是奸细么？将军知道了，不是耍处。”金生对他唱个喏道：“老丈拜揖。”老苍头回了半揖道：“有甚么话？”金生道：“小生是淮安人氏，前日乱离时节，有一妹子失去，闻得在贵府中，所以不远千里寻访到这个所在，意欲求见一面。未知确信，要寻个人问一问，且喜得遇老丈。”苍头道：“你姓甚名谁？你妹子叫名甚么？多少年纪？说得明白，我好替你查将出来回覆你。”金生把自家真姓藏了，只说着妻子的姓道：“小生姓刘，名唤



From the time he left home to the time he reached Huzhou, he had traveled thousands of *li* and more than two years had passed. Still there was not a trace of his wife. However, he never slacked in his efforts though he could not locate his wife. This time, en route, he ran out of money and had to beg for food and sleep outdoors. Despite all these difficulties, he set his mind to his mission with unyielding determination.

At last, he reached Huzhou. Upon inquiring he learned that there was indeed a general with his quarters established there. General Li turned out to be a henchman of Zhang Shicheng, who had entrusted him with important missions and granted him a great degree of power. As Jin Ding approached General Li's residence, an imposing mansion came into sight:

The gate and walls were newly painted and guarded with axes and halberds.

The gargoyles on the gate were hung with copper hoops. Two burly yet dignified guards stood facing each other. On each gatepost hung an unadorned peach charm. On either side of the gate crouched a stone lion. Though not a heavenly abode, this mansion was surely the residence of a rich and noble family.

Jin Ding stood in front of the gate for a moment, daring neither to go in, nor even to open his mouth to ask. He stretched his head towards the inside of the big mansion for a peep and backed up two steps. As he hesitated, a senior manservant came out and asked, "What are you up to here, scholar? Why are you snooping around at the entrance? I wonder if you're a spy. If our General were to know you are here, you would be in trouble." Jin Ding greeted the old servant, saying, "Hello, old sir." The old servant made a half bow in reply, and asked, "What can I do for you?" Jin Ding answered, "I am from Huai'an. I have a younger sister who got lost in the chaos of the war some years ago. I heard she now stays in your house. I've traveled thousands of *li* to get here in order to see her. Just now I was not sure if I had come to the right place, and I was trying to find someone and make an inquiry. I am lucky I met you." The old servant asked, "What is your name? And what is your younger sister's name? How old is she? Tell me in detail, so that I can go check and then let you know." Concealing his own family name, Jin Ding only told him his wife's family name, saying, "My family name is Liu and my name is Jinding. My younger sister is called Cuicui. She also knows how to read and write.

金定。妹子叫名翠翠，识字通书，失去时节，年方十七岁，算到今年，该有二十四岁了。”老苍头点点头道：“是呀，是呀。我府中果有一个小娘子姓刘，是淮安人，今年二十四岁，识得字，做得诗，且是做人乖巧周全。我本官专房之宠，不比其他。你的说话，不差，不差。依说是你妹子，你是舅爷了。你且在门房里坐一坐，我去报与将军知道。”苍头急急忙忙奔了进去，金生在门房等着回话不题。

且说刘翠翠自那年掳去，初见李将军之时，先也哭哭啼啼，寻死觅活，不肯随顺。李将军吓他道：“随顺了，不去难为你合家老小；若不随顺，将他家寸草不留！”翠翠惟恐累及父母与丈夫家里，只能勉强依从。李将军见他聪明伶俐，知书晓事，爱得他如珠似玉一般，十分抬举，百顺千随。翠翠虽是支陪笑语，却是无刻不思念丈夫，没有快活的日子。心里痴想：“缘分不断，或者还有时节相会。”争奈日复一日，随着李将军东征西战，没个定踪，不觉已是六七年了。

此日李将军见老苍头来禀，说有他的哥哥刘金定在外边求见。李将军问翠翠道：“你家里有个哥哥么？”翠翠心里想道：



At the time we lost her, she was only seventeen. She should be twenty-four by now.”

The old servant nodded and said, “Yes, yes. We do have a young lady surnamed Liu, a native of Huai’an, and twenty-four this year. She reads and writes poems. Clever and thoughtful, she monopolizes the favor of our General more than others do. What you said just now is quite correct. Since she is your younger sister, you would be a brother-in-law to our General. Please come in and wait in the caretaker’s room for a minute. I will go at once and report to the General.” The old servant hurriedly rushed in and disappeared, while Jin Ding waited in the caretaker’s room for his reply. Let us leave him for the time being.

Now let us return to Cuicui. After she was taken away by General Li that year, she had wept day and night and refused to obey the General, threatening to commit suicide. But the General intimidated her by saying, “If you are obedient to me, I will not touch your family members. If you refuse me, I shall wipe out your whole family, young and old.” Fearing she might drag her parents into trouble and her husband’s family, she had to submit reluctantly, against her will. Seeing she was smart and intelligent, well read and knowledgeable, the General lavished affection on her, appreciating her thoroughly and complying with all of her wishes. Though Cuicui started to give him forced smiles, her husband was constantly in her thoughts and her days were still plagued with sadness. A faint gleam of hope lingered in her mind that she might have a chance to see him again if their husband-and-wife relationship had not come to an end. Yet as she followed General Li on successive military manoeuvres east and west, seven years were to pass before she could fulfill this hope.

Now, upon hearing the old servant’s report that Cuicui’s brother was at the gate waiting to see her, General Li turned to Cuicui and asked, “Do you have a brother?” Cuicui thought to herself, “I never had a brother. My guess is it must be my husband. Most probably he doesn’t want to reveal his identity, so he is posing as my brother.” So she promptly replied, “Yes, I do. But I have not heard from him for years and am not sure if it is him. Tell me what his name is and I shall see if he is my brother.” The General said, “The gatekeeper said it sounds something like Liu Jinding.”



“我那得有甚么哥哥来？多管是丈夫寻到此间，不好说破，故此托名。”遂转口道：“是有个哥哥，多年隔别了，不知是也不是，且问他甚么名字才晓得。”李将军道：“管门的说是甚么刘金定。”翠翠听得“金定”二字，心下痛如刀割，晓得是丈夫冒了刘姓来访问的了，说道：“这果然是我哥哥，我要见他。”李将军道：“待我先出去见过了，然后来唤你。”将军分付苍头：“去请那刘秀才进来。”

苍头承命出来，领了金生进去。李将军武夫出身，妄自尊大，走到厅上，居中坐下，金生只得向上再拜。将军受了礼，问道：“秀才何来？”金生道：“金定姓刘，淮安人氏，先年乱离之中，有个妹子失散，闻得在将军府中，特自本乡到此，叩求一见。”将军见他仪度斯文，出言有序，喜动颜色道：“舅舅请起，你令妹无恙，即当出来相见。”旁边站着一个小童儿，叫名小竖，就叫他进去传命道：“刘官人特自乡中远来，叫翠娘可快出来相见！”起初翠翠见说了，正在心痒难熬之际，听得外面有请，恨不得两步做一步移了，急趋出厅中来。抬头一看，果然是丈夫金定！碍着将军眼睁睁在上面，不好上前相认，只得将错就错，认了妹子，叫声“哥哥”，以兄妹之礼在厅前相见。

看官听说，若是此时说话的在傍边一把把那将军扯了开来，让他每讲一程话，叙一程阔，岂不是凑趣的事？争奈将军不做美，好像个监场的御史，一眼不煞坐在那里。金生与翠翠虽然夫妻相见，说不得一句私房话，只好问问父母安否？彼此



Hearing the name “Jinding,” Cuicui felt as if a knife were piercing her heart. She immediately realized her husband was here to see her under a false family name of Liu. She said, “That’s correct. My brother is indeed here. I wish to go see him now.” Then the General said, “Well, let me go out and see him first. Then I will call you.” So saying, General Li turned to the old servant and asked him to bring Liu Jinding in.

Jin Ding was led into the room. Having been a warrior for so long, General Li swaggered into the reception hall in an arrogant gait and took the seat in the middle. Jin Ding had to bow in greeting, which the General accepted. Then General Li asked, “Who are you and what are you here for, scholar?” Jin Ding replied, “My name is Jinding and my family name is Liu. I am from Huai’an. I have a younger sister who got lost during the war years ago. I learned she is living with your family and so I’ve come here all the way from my hometown and beg you to grant us a meeting.” Seeing he was refined in manner and speech, the General said with pleasure, “Please rise, Brother-in-law. Your younger sister is doing well here, and she will be out to see you in a minute.” While the General was saying this, he turned to a boy servant named Xiaoshu, who was standing nearby, and said, “Mr. Liu has made a special long journey here from his hometown. Tell Lady Cuicui to come out and see him at once.”

In the meantime, nervously awaiting news about her husband’s arrival, Cuicui heard she was being called to a meeting. She rushed into the hall, and looked up at the man and found it was indeed her husband. However, in the presence of the General, she had to restrain herself and assume her supposed blood relationship. She stepped forward and called her husband “Brother.” In this way they met on the terms of brother and sister.

My dear readers, if this storyteller were there, he would have dragged the General away and allowed the young couple to pour out their innermost thoughts and tell each other about their own experiences over the last few years. Would this not have been blessed for the couple? Unfortunately, the General was not sensible enough to offer such assistance. He sat there staring at them without blinking, like an imperial examiner.

Jin Ding and Cuicui, though husband and wife, had no chance to exchange any words of intimacy. They merely talked about their parents.

心照，眼泪从肚里落下罢了。

昔为同林鸟，今作分飞燕。

相见难为情，不如不相见。

又昔日乐昌公主在杨越公处见了徐德言，做一首诗道：

今日何迁次，新官对旧官。

笑啼俱不敢，方信做人难。

今日翠翠这个光景，颇有些相似。然乐昌与徐德言，杨越公晓得是夫妻的，此处金生与翠翠只认做兄妹，一发要遮遮饰饰，恐怕识破，意思更难堪也。还亏得李将军是武夫粗卤，看不出机关，毫没甚么疑心，只道是当真的哥子，便认做舅舅，亲情的念头重起来，对金生道：“舅舅既是远来，道途跋涉，心力劳困，可在我们门下安息几时，我还要替舅舅计较。”分付拿出一套新衣服来与舅舅穿了，换下身上尘污的旧衣。又令打扫西首一间小书房，安设床帐被席，是件整备，请金生在里头歇宿。金生巴不得要他留住，寻出机会与妻子相通。今见他如此认帐，正中心怀，欣然就书房里宿了。只是心里想着妻子就在里面，好生难过。



With tacit mutual understanding, they had to swallow their tears in their stomachs.

Two birds once both of the same tree,
Now parted, oh so forlornly.
Better they dared no meeting,
Having met, their hearts breaking.

In the past, when Princess Lechang¹ met Xu Deyan at Yang Su's place, Princess Lechang wrote a poem:

The god of destiny is a real teaser.
I've got to face my present spouse and first-marriage husband.
Feeling ill at ease, I dare neither cry nor laugh.
Now fully convinced I am nothing is easy in life.

The present circumstances Cuicui was in were quite similar to that of Princess Lechang except that Yang Su knew Xu Deyan and Princess Lechang were husband and wife. However, in this story Jin Ding and Cuicui met and talked with each other as brother and sister, covering up their true identities. They also feared that their deception might be seen through, which put them in an extremely awkward situation. Fortunately, General Li, being a rough military man, was not suspicious at all of their assumed relationship, finding nothing exceptional in their meeting. He simply took Jin Ding as Cuicui's brother, and thus naturally as his brother-in-law.

Taking Jin Ding as his relative, General Li said to him, "Brother-in-law, you have traveled such a long distance you must be extremely exhausted now. Stay with us for some time and have a good rest. I'll make arrangements for you later." Then he gave an order to bring on a new set of clothes, so that his brother-in-law might take off his old, dusty ones and don this new attire. Another order followed that a small study in the western chamber be tidied up and provided with bed curtains and a set of bedding and so on, in order to accommodate Jin Ding. This was exactly what Jin Ding had wished for, since he thought he might be able to find opportunities to meet his wife. So he gladly moved into the study for the night. But the thought of his separation from his wife, who was well within reach, made him most deeply grieved.



过了一夜，明早起来，小竖来报道：“将军请秀才厅上讲话。”将军相见已毕，问道：“令妹能识字，舅舅可通文墨么？”金生道：“小生在乡中以儒为业，那诗书是本等，就是经史百家，也多涉猎过的，有甚么不晓得的勾当？”将军喜道：“不瞒舅舅说，我自小失学，遭遇乱世，靠着长枪大戟挣到此地位。幸得吾王宠任，趋附我的尽多。日逐宾客盈门，没个人替我接待，往来书札堆满，没个人替我裁答，我好些不耐烦。今幸得舅舅到此，既然知书达礼，就在我门下做个记室，我也便当了好些。况关至亲，料舅舅必不弃嫌的。舅舅心下何如？”金生是要在里头的，答道：“只怕小生才能浅薄，不称将军任使，岂敢推辞？”将军见说大喜。连忙在里头去取出十来封书启来，交与金生道：“就烦舅舅替我看详里面意思，回他一回。我正为这些难处，而今却好了。”金生拿到书房里去，从头至尾，逐封逐封备审来意，一一回答停当，将稿来与将军看。将军就叫金生读一遍，就带些解说在里头。听罢，将军拍手道：“妙，妙！句句像我肚里要说的话。好舅舅，是天送来帮我的了！”从此一发看待得甚厚。



The next morning when Jin Ding got up, Xiaoshu came up to him and said, "Our General wants to talk to you, scholar. Please come to the hall." After an exchange of greetings, General Li asked, "Since your sister can read and write, I wonder if you are educated, too?" Ding replied, "Yes. I grew up as a Confucian scholar and have made a career of learning. Reading and writing poetry is my profession. I also have done a great deal of reading in historical and ancient literary works from various schools. Do you think I am qualified to be a scholar?" Overjoyed, General Li said, "To be honest, I left school when I was still young. Later I had a tough time during the war, and through my military exploits I have earned this position. Fortunately, my master had a lot of trust in me and many local lords have come to accede to my position. Every day I am busy with appointments to meet visitors and guests. Now I am greatly in need of an assistant to do reception work for me. Moreover, letters and reports coming to me pile up each day. I need a secretary to take care of them, since I've been greatly bothered for a long time with these problems. Now I am glad you, Brother-in-law, are here. Since you are learned and good at social affairs, why not work for me as a secretary. That will surely help me a great deal. Besides, we are relatives and I don't think you would turn me down. What do you think?"

Jin Ding really wanted to stay longer, and so he replied, "I'm afraid I am not qualified for the position because of my inadequacy in talent and learning, but how could I turn you down?" Hearing this, the General was very pleased and took out about ten letters and reports from his inner chambers. He handed them to Jin Ding and said, "Would you please go through them and prepare some replies? I have been rather worried about them. Now I can finally have them done." Jin Ding took them to his study, read them one by one, and wrote replies to each letter. Then he took them to General Li for his perusal. The General asked him to read the drafts. Jin Ding did as required, explaining various aspects when necessary. The General was pleased and said, "Wonderful! You've taken the words out of my mouth. A very capable brother-in-law! Heaven has sent you here to aid me." From that time on, General Li treated Jin Ding more graciously.



金生是个聪明的人，在他门下，知高识低，温和待人，自内至外没一个不喜欢他的。他又愈加谨慎，说话也不敢声高。将军面前只有说他好处的，将军得意自不必说。却是金生主意只要安得身牢，寻个空便，见见妻子，剖诉苦情。亦且妻子随着别人已经多年，不知他心腹怎么样了，也要与他说个倒断。谁想自厅前一见之后，再不能勾相会。欲要与将军说那要见的意义，又恐怕生出疑心来，反为不美。私下要用些计较，通个消息，怎当得闺阁深邃，内外隔绝，再不得一个便处。

日挨一日，不觉已是几个月了。时值交秋天气，西风夜起，白露为霜。独处空房，感叹伤悲，终夕不寐。思量妻子翠翠，这个时节，绣围锦帐，同人卧起，有甚不快活处？不知心里还记着我否？怎知我如此冷落孤栖，时刻难过？乃将心事做成一诗道：

好花移入玉栏干，春色无缘得再看。

乐处岂知愁处苦，别时虽易见时难。

何年塞上重归马，此夜庭中独舞鸾。

雾阁云窗深几许，可怜辜负月团团！

诗成，写在一张笺纸上了，要寄进去与翠翠看，等他知其



An intelligent and clever person, Jin Ding knew the ways of the world and treated others with warmth and courtesy. He was very popular among both his superiors and subordinates. In addition, he took care to use gentle words in public interaction. When talking to the General, he only heaped praises on him, making the General rather proud of himself. Jin Ding felt certain that once he settled down, he would find a chance to meet his wife and vent his grief. Beyond these thoughts, he had no idea as to what was in his wife's heart since she had been separated from him for so many years. He thought he would be able to talk to her about such matters in detail when he met her. However, after their first meeting in the main hall, there was no sign in sight of their next meeting. There were times when he was tempted to make his desire to see Cuicui clear to the General, but he always pulled back out of fear of giving rise to suspicion and ruining his plans. He intended to work out a way to secretly send word to his wife, but his wife's boudoir was cut off from the outside, and there was no opportunity for him to take advantage of. He watched for a chance day after day, but months flew by before he realized it.

It was late summer and early autumn. The west wind blew hard at night and a bitter cold frosted the land white. Jin Ding felt lonely and distressed in his isolated room and usually lay awake through the night. He would think to himself: By this time my wife Cuicui must be feeling quite comfortable with someone in a brocade-draped bed. Is she still missing me? Does she know that I'm lonely and sad? So thinking, he wrote a poem to express his state of mind:

Since fair flower moved to a yard enclosed,
To spring color it has never been exposed.
How can one blithely know the wanderer's pain?
'Tis easy to sever, yet not to meet again!
When shall the horse ranging strange earth return home?
Now a phoenix is prancing all alone.
Her beauteous chamber veiled in mist beyond my sight.
For whom does the moon shine on so lovely a night?

The poem was written on a sheet of paper. He thought of sending it to Cuicui so as to let her know his thoughts, but feared it might arouse



心事。但恐怕泄漏了风声，生出一个计较来，把一件布袍拆开了领线，将诗藏在领内了，外边仍旧缝好。叫那书房中伏侍的小竖来，说道：“天气冷了，我身上单薄，这件布袍垢秽不堪，你替我拿到里头去，交付我家妹子，叫他拆洗一拆洗，补一补，好拿来与我穿。”再把出百来个钱与他道：“我央你走走，与你这钱买果儿吃。”小竖见了钱，千欢万喜，有甚么推托？拿了布袍一径到里头去，交与翠翠道：“外边刘官人叫拿进来，付与翠娘整理的。”翠翠晓得是丈夫寄进来的，必有缘故。叫他放下了，过一日来拿。小竖自去了。

翠翠把布袍从头至尾看了一遍。想道：“是丈夫着身的衣服，我多时不与他缝纫了！”眼泪索珠也似的掉将下来。又想道：“丈夫到此多时，今日特地寄衣与我，决不是为要拆洗，必有甚么机关在里面。”掩了门，把来细细拆将开来。刚拆得领头，果然一张小小信纸缝在里面，却是一首诗。翠翠将来细读，一头读，一头哽哽咽咽，只是流泪。读罢，哭一声道：“我的亲夫呵！你怎知我心事来？”噙着眼泪，慢慢把布袍洗补好，也做一诗缝在衣领内了。仍叫小竖拿出来，付与金生。

金生接得，拆开衣领看时，果然有了回信，也是一首诗。金生拭泪读其诗道：



suspicion. Then he hit upon an idea. He ripped out the stitches along the seam of the collar of his cloth robe and put the piece of paper inside it, then sewed it up again. He called for the servant boy, Xiaoshu, and said to him, "It is getting cold. I need warmer clothing. This cloth robe is dirty with dust and grease. Please take it to my sister and ask her to wash it for me after removing the lining and sewing it up again. When this is done, bring it back to me." So saying, he took out a hundred or so coins and gave them to the boy and added, "This is an errand I am asking you to run for me. Take this money and buy yourself some fruit." The boy, gladdened at the sight of money, readily accepted the assignment. He took the robe and dashed inside Cuicui's room. He handed it to Cuicui, saying, "Master Liu out there needs your ladyship to fix this." Cuicui understood that there must be some special reason for her husband to send the robe to her. She told the boy to leave it with her and pick it up the next day. Xiaoshu then departed.

Tears ran down Cuicui's cheeks as she carefully examined the robe, thinking to herself, "This is my husband's clothing. It has been a long time since I last stitched for him!" After second thoughts, it suddenly dawned on her, "My husband has stayed here for quite some time. Now he is sending this robe to me. I don't think he simply means for me to take it and wash it. There must be some other motive behind it." She shut the door and carefully took out the stitches along the seams. As soon as she parted the seam of the collar, a sheet of paper jumped into view. She took it out and read the poem written on it. She sobbed as she read it, while tears kept trickling down her cheeks. Having finished reading the poem, she fell into weeping and said, "My dear husband, you simply cannot understand me!" With tears welling up in her eyes, she neatly washed and sewed up the robe. Meanwhile, she also wrote a poem and tucked it inside the collar. Then she called for the servant boy Xiaoshu to take the newly washed robe back to Jin Ding.

When Jin Ding received his robe, he was most happily surprised to find the note with Cuicui's poem inside the collar. He read the poem with bitter melancholy:

Since war plagued our hometown years ago,



一自乡关动战锋，旧愁新恨几重重。
肠虽已断情难断，生不相从死亦从。
长使德音藏破镜，终教子建赋游龙。
绿珠碧玉心中事，今日谁知也到依。

金生读罢其诗，才晓得翠翠出于不得已，其情已见。又见他把死来相许，料道今生无有完聚的指望了。感切伤心，终日郁闷涕泣，茶饭懒进，遂成痞膈之疾。

将军也着了急，屡请医生调治。又道是心病还须心上医，你道金生这病可是医生医得好的么？看看日重一日，只待不起。里头翠翠闻知此信，心如刀刺，只得对将军说了，要到书房中来看看哥哥的病症。将军看见病势已凶，不好阻他，当下依允，翠翠才到得书房中来。这是他夫妻第二番相见了，可怜金生在床上一丝两气，转动不得。翠翠见了十分伤情，噙着眼泪，将手去扶他的头起来，低低唤道：“哥哥挣扎着，你妹子翠翠在此看你！”说罢泪如泉涌。金生听得声音，撑开双眼，见是妻子翠翠扶他，长叹一声道：“妹妹，我不济事了，难得你出来见这一面！趁你在此，我死在你手里了，也得瞑目。”便叫翠翠坐在床边，自家强抬起头来，枕在翠翠膝上，奄然而逝。

翠翠哭得个发昏章第十一，报与将军知道，将军也着实可



Overwhelmed I've been by lingering woe.
My heart may be broken, but not my faith.
If now I can't stay with you, I shall after death.
I hope the shattered mirror will be mended again,
And you will sing a rhapsody for our reunion.
Many a girl martyr died with her mate.
Alas! This seems to be also my fate!

After reading Cuicui's poem, Jin Ding knew she had submitted to her fate against her will, since her faithfulness was so clearly expressed. His spirit sank at Cuicui's promise to meet him in another life, because he realized a reunion was impossible for the rest of their present lives. Deeply grieved, he wept day after day and took little food and water. Eventually his sadness and obsession developed into a sickness, gloomy pent up in his heart. General Li was worried about him and sent for several doctors. But as the old saying goes, "An illness spiritually procured can only be spiritually cured." How could doctors bring him back to health? As the days went by, he grew from bad to worse until he could not rise out of his bed.

At the news of his sickness, Cuicui's heart felt as if it were pierced. She plucked up her courage and asked the General for a leave to see her brother in his study. The General knew his brother-in-law was in critical condition and, feeling unable to stop her, approved her request. Cuicui hurried into Jin Ding's study. This was their second meeting in the General's house. Jin Ding was lying on his bed, breathing feebly. He could not get up. Cuicui was profoundly disheartened. With tears welling up in her eyes, she propped up his head and said in a low voice, "Brother, hold on. Here your sister Cuicui has come to see you." So saying, she burst into tears. Jin Ding woke up at her words and opened his eyes with some difficulty. He saw his wife at his side supporting him. Heaving a long sigh, he said, "Sister, I will not be able to recover! It is so kind of you to take the opportunity to come and see me. I will now die content at your side!" He asked Cuicui to sit at the side of his bed, as he struggled to raise his head and put it onto Cuicui's lap, and then breathed his last.

Cuicui cried until she fainted away. The General heard about it and



怜他。又恐怕苦坏了翠翠，分付从厚殡葬。替他在道场山脚下寻得一块好平坦地面，将棺木送去安葬。翠翠又对将军说了，自家亲去送殡。直看坟茔封闭了，恸哭得几番死去叫醒，然后回来。自此精神恍惚，坐卧不宁，染成一病。李将军多方医救，翠翠心里巴不得要死，并不肯服药。展转床席，将及两月。

一日，请将军进房来，带着眼泪对他说道：“妾自从十七岁上抛家相从，已得八载。流离他乡，眼前并无亲人，止有一个哥哥，今又死了。妾病若毕竟不起，切记我言，可将我尸骨埋在哥哥傍边，庶几黄泉之下，兄妹也得相依，免做了他乡孤鬼，便是将军不忘贱妾之大恩也。”言毕大哭。将军好生不忍，把好言安慰他，叫他休把闲事萦心，且自将息。说不多几时，昏沉上来，早已绝气。将军恸哭一番，念其临终叮嘱之言，不忍违他，果然将去葬在金生冢傍。可怜金生、翠翠二人，生前不能成双，亏得诡认兄妹，死后倒得做一处了。

已后国朝洪武初年，于时张士诚已灭，天下一统，路途平静。翠翠家里淮安刘氏有一旧仆，到湖州来贩丝绵，偶过道场



felt very sorry for her. Fearing that Cuicui would become sick due to her grief, he ordered that a grand funeral and burial be held for Jin Ding! He also selected a smooth plot of land for Jin Ding's burial place at the foot of Daochang Hill.. When Jin Ding's coffin was being carried to the burial place, Cuicui told the General she wanted to go and see Jin Ding off personally. She stayed there and watched until the burial was completed. She cried her heart out and fainted a couple of times, before she finally returned home. From that time on, a sickness seized her and, falling into a deep trance, she began to subsist in restlessness. General Li did his best to find doctors for her, but Cuicui intended to die and took no medicine.

Cuicui's sickness lingered on, and she lay on bed for almost two months. One day, she sent for the General and told him tearfully, "It has been eight years since I left my home at age seventeen and followed you all over. I have led a life in a strange land, far from my home. My brother was the only family member of mine who had come to see me. Unfortunately he died here. Now I am ill, and if I don't recover from this sickness, I beg you to remember my words: Please bury me at the side of my brother's grave. The two of us as brother and sister will be most content and not feel lonely if we can have each other's company after death. I would appreciate your kindness very much if you would do me this one favor." Having said this, she burst into tears. General Li felt quite sorry for her and consoled her sincerely, telling her to rest assured and take good rest. But before long Cuicui fell into a coma and breathed her last.

General Li wailed in grief. Considering it her final wish, he felt obliged to comply with it. So he had her body buried at the side of Jin Ding's grave. It was a pity Jin Ding and Cuicui failed to become united once again while they were alive. But, by posing as brother and sister, they eventually managed to be buried together after their death.

In the early years of the Hongwu reign (1368-1399) of the Ming Dynasty, the armed rebellion led by Zhang Shicheng was suppressed, and national unity was restored and travel became possible again.

One day a former servant of Cuicui's family in Huai'an arrived at Huzhou to trade in silk wadding. While he happened to be passing by the foot of the Daochang Mountain, he saw a large mansion there. The



山下，见有一所大房子，绿户朱门，槐柳掩映。门前有两个人，一男一女打扮，并肩坐着。仆人道大户人家眷，打点远避而过。忽听得两个声唤，走近前去看时，却是金生与翠翠。翠翠开口问父母存亡及乡里光景，仆人一一回答已毕。仆人问道：“娘子与郎君离了乡里多年，为何到在这里住家起来？”翠翠道：“起初兵乱时节，我被李将军掳到这里，后来郎君远来寻访，将军好意仍把我归还郎君，所以就侨居在此了。”仆人道：“小人而今就回淮安，娘子可修一封家书，带去报与老爹、安人知道，省得家中不知下落，终日悬望。”翠翠道：“如此最好。”就领了这仆人进去，留他吃了晚饭，歇了一夜。

明日将出一封书来，叫他多多拜上父母。仆人谢了，带了书来到淮安，递与刘老。此时刘、金两家久不见二人消耗，自然多道是兵戈死亡了。忽见有家书回来，问是湖州寄来的，道两人见住在湖州了，真个是喜从天降。叫齐了一家骨肉，尽来看这家书。元来是翠翠出名写的，乃是长篇四六之书。书上写道：



mansion, shaded by scholar trees and willows, had grand vermilion gates and was surrounded by green walls. A man and a woman were sitting in front of the gate, side by side. Thinking they were members of a noble household, the servant was about to make a detour so as to keep a respectful distance, when suddenly he heard the couple call out to him. As he walked over to them, he was most shocked to recognize them as none other than Jin Ding and Cuicui. Cuicui asked him about how her parents were doing and what changes had taken place in her hometown.

The servant answered her in detail. And then the servant asked them, "You have been away from home for many years. Why have you settled down in this place?" Cuicui answered, "When the war broke out that year, I was captured by General Li and brought here. Later my husband came all the way here to see me. General Li was very kind and returned me to my husband. Since then we have been living together here." The servant said, "I am thinking of returning to Huai'an. Would you please write a letter to your parents so that I might take it to them? Or they will worry about you." Cuicui replied, "That's a really good idea." Then they led the servant into their home and treated him to dinner and a room for the night.

The following day, Cuicui handed him a letter for her parents and asked him to pass on to them her warmest regards. The servant thanked them for their generous hospitality, and then made his way back to Huai'an. He handed the letter to Cuicui's father. At that time, the parents of Jin Ding and Cuicui had long lost track of their son and daughter and thought they must have been killed in the war. When Cuicui's letter suddenly reached her parents from Huzhou, her parents were overjoyed to learn that their daughter and son-in-law were living in Huzhou. They gathered all the family members and asked them to read the letter. The letter was written in Cuicui's name in the style of parallel prose. It went like this:

Dear Father and Mother,

I am deeply indebted for your infinite loving care, for which I feel terribly sorry, I have not been able to repay you. I have followed our traditional practice of being my husband's echo and of always being obedient to you before my marriage and to my husband after marriage. Unexpectedly, ill



伏以父生母育，难酬罔极之恩；夫唱妇随，夙著三从之义。在人伦而已定，何时事之多艰？曩者汉日将倾，楚氛甚恶，倒持太阿之柄，擅弄潢池之兵。封豕长蛇，互相吞并；雄蜂雌蝶，各自逃生。不能玉碎于乱离，乃至瓦全于仓卒。驱驰战马，随逐征鞍。望高天而八翼莫飞，思故国而三魂屡散。良辰易迈，伤青鸾之伴木鸡；怨耦为仇，惧乌鸦之打丹凤。虽应酬而为乐，终感激以生悲。夜月杜鹃之啼，春风蝴蝶之梦。时移事往，苦尽甘来。今则杨素览镜而归妻，王敦开阁而放妓。蓬岛践当时之约，潇湘有故人之逢。自怜赋命之屯，不恨寻春之晚。章台之柳，虽已折于他人；玄都之花，尚不改于前度。将谓瓶沉而簪折，岂期璧返而珠还？殆同玉箫女两世姻缘，难比红拂妓一时配合。天与其便，事非偶然。煎鸾胶而续断弦，重谐缱绻；托鱼腹而传尺素，谨致叮咛。未奉甘旨，先此申复。

读罢，大家欢喜。刘老问仆人道：“你记得那里住的去处否？”仆人道：“好大房子！我在里头歇了一夜，打发了家书来的，怎不记得？”刘老道：“既如此，我同你湖州去走一道，会一会他夫妻来。”

当下刘老收拾盘缠，别了家里，一同仆人径奔湖州。仆人



fate struck me due to troubled times soon after my happy marriage! During that time of social chaos caused by the villainous armed rebellion, all people suffered from the war. My husband and I, like all others, ran for our lives. Unable to die a heroic death, I was forced to live in humiliation with the General who snatched me away. I had to follow him wherever he went with his troops. Looking up into the skies, it was clear I could not fly away from his claws even if I had eight wings. Thinking of my native place and you, my father and mother, I was aware I was on the verge of madness. The best years of my life have gone by, and I have been extremely sad living with this man for the past few years. Though I tried all means to keep up my spirits, it always ended in feelings of deep grief and sorrow. I wept with unutterable passion in the stillness of the night and dreamed of being reunited with my beloved husband.

With the passing of time, bitterness ended and sweetness began. The general agreed to let go of me, so I could join my husband. Tragic misfortune as I have suffered, I do not feel sorry that my happiness has come so late. Although I was forced to leave my husband and submit myself to the tyranny of another, I have not changed in the least in my faithfulness to my husband. How could I have ever expected to return to my husband after I was captured? Compared with the devoted couples of ancient times, we are neither the most fortunate nor the most unfortunate. The principles of Heaven determine, and we can never change our fate. Now my husband and I live together in peace and harmony again, and we are extremely happy. I write this letter to tell you how we are, and I hope you will not worry about us. I am sorry I did not ask the letter holder to bring food and other delicacies for you to eat. I first simply wanted to tell you how I am.

After reading the letter, the whole family was quite pleased. Then Father Liu asked the servant, "Do you remember the place where they live?" The servant replied, "It is a large house and I stayed there for the night, and from there I brought the letter to you. How could I forget?" The father said, "Since you know where they live, I would like to make a trip with you to see them."

This decided, the father gathered together some traveling money, bade farewell to his family and set off with the servant on a journey to Huzhou.



领至道场山下前日留宿之处，只叫得声奇怪，连房屋影响多没有，那里说起高堂大厦？惟有些野草荒烟，狐踪兔迹。茂林之中，两个坟堆相连。刘老道：“莫不错了？”仆人道：“前日分明在此，与我吃的是湖州香稻米饭，苕溪中鲜鲫鱼，乌程的酒，明明白白住了一夜去的，怎会得错？”

正疑怪间，恰好有一个老僧杖锡而来。刘老与仆人问道：“老师父，前日此处有所大房子，有个金官人同一个刘娘子在里边居住，今如何不见了？”老僧道：“此乃李将军所葬刘生与翠翠兄妹两人之坟，那有什么房子来？敢是见鬼了！”刘老道：“见有写的家书寄来，故此相寻。今家书见在，岂有是鬼之理？”急在缠带里摸出家书来一看，乃是一副白纸，才晓得果然是鬼。这里正是他坟墓，因问老僧道：“适间所言李将军何在？我好去问他详细。”老僧道：“李将军是张士诚部下的，已为天朝诛灭，骨头不知落在哪里了，怎得有这样坟土堆埋呢？你到何处寻去？”

刘老见说，知是二人已死，不觉大恸，对着坟墓道：“我的儿！你把一封书赚我千里远来，本是要我见一面的意思。今我到此地了，你们却潜踪隐迹，没处追寻，叫我怎生过得？我



When the servant led the father to the Daochang Mountain, where he had just had stayed the other night, he could not help wondering, "How strange!" There was no sign of even a hut, not to mention any imposing residence. The only thing they saw was a wilderness of weeds and bushes, with foxes roaming and hares running about. In the woods were two tombs standing side by side. The father asked, "Is it that we have come to the wrong place?" The servant replied, "I am certain this is the right place. They treated me to a dinner of good Huzhou rice, fresh carp from the Tiaoxi River and wine from Wucheng County. I spent one night here. How could I be wrong?"

While they were puzzling over the matter, an old monk with a walking stick happened to pass them. The father and his servant approached him and asked, "Old master, there was a big house here days ago, with a gentleman Jin and a lady Liu living in it, but where has it gone now?" The old monk replied, "Here are the graves where General Li buried Master Liu and his younger sister Cuicui. There has never been such a thing as a big house here! I suspect you may have seen phantoms?" The father replied, "I received the letter they sent to me, and so I've come here to see them. I have the letter with me. How could I have seen phantoms?"

So saying he hurriedly fumbled through his bag until he pulled out the letter. It was blank. Immediately he realized what had appeared had been phantoms, and now in front of him here was nothing, only their graves. He then asked the old monk, "Do you have any idea where that General Li is now? I might inquire of him about my child." The old monk replied, "General Li had been a follower of Zhang Shicheng and their troops were wiped out by the imperial government. Nobody knows where they had been killed. How could General Li be so lucky as to be buried in the same way as Liu and Cuicui? How would you be able to locate him?"

Upon hearing this, the father knew his daughter and son-in-law had died and was struck with profound grief. Facing the graves, he spoke, "My daughter, you sent me a letter and I traveled a thousand *li* to come here. I knew that you wanted to see me. Now I am here, but you are beyond my sight. I have no idea where you are. How sad I am! Since we



与你父子之情，人鬼可以无间。你若有灵，千万见我一见，放下我的心罢！”老僧道：“老檀越不必伤悲！此二位官人、娘子，老僧定中时得相见。老僧禅舍去此不远，老檀越，今日已晚，此间露立不便，且到禅舍中一宿。待老僧定中与他讨个消息回你，何如？”刘老道：“如此，极感老师父指点。”遂同仆人随了老僧，行不上半里，到了禅舍中。老僧将素斋与他主仆食用，收拾房卧安顿好，老僧自入定去了。

刘老进得禅房，正要上床，忽听得门响处，一对少年的夫妻走到面前。仔细看来，正是翠翠与金生。一同拜跪下去，悲啼宛转，说不出话来。刘老也挥着眼泪，抚摩着翠翠道：“儿，你有说话只管说来。”翠翠道：“向者不幸，遭值乱兵。忍耻偷生，离乡背井，叫天无路，度日如年。幸得良人不弃，特来相访，托名兄妹，暂得相见。隔绝夫妇，彼此含冤。以致良人先亡，儿亦继没。犹喜许我附葬，今得魂魄相依。惟恐家中不知，故特托仆人寄此一信。儿与金郎生虽异处，死却同归。儿愿已毕，父母勿以为念！”刘老听罢，哭道：“我今来此，只道你



are father and daughter, I think we might talk, although we belong to the different realms of the living and the dead. If you can hear me, please be sure to appear and allow me to see you. Only then shall I be put at ease!" The old monk said to him, "Please do not grieve, patron. I often see the souls of this gentleman and lady in my meditations. I live not far from here in a Buddhist temple. It is late now and not good for you to stay in the wilds. Why not come with me to my temple and stay for the night? I will contact their souls in my meditation and see what they have to say. Then I can tell you. What do you think?" The father replied, "I appreciate your kindness very much." The father and his servant followed the old monk to the temple after walking half a *li*. The old monk hosted them to a vegetarian meal, and arranged beds to accommodate them for the night. He then left them to engage himself in his meditation.

Later that evening, the father entered his bedroom. As he was about to climb into bed, he heard the door creaking open. A young couple walked in. He took a close look at them and recognized them as Cuicui and Jin Ding. The two fell to their knees and wept, completely choked up. Tears gushed from the father's eyes as well. He stroked Cuicui's head and said, "My daughter, please tell me what is in your heart." Cuicui said, "It was our bad luck that the ravages of war befell us the other year, and I was abducted. I lived in estrangement, far away from home. I had no one to turn to for help. The days dragged on like years. Fortunately my husband kept me in his heart. He came to see me one day, posing as my brother. But our meeting was brief. After that we lived separately and could not meet each other. First, my husband died of profound grief and sorrow, and then my death followed. I was happy that the General granted my request to be buried beside my husband's grave so that our souls might keep one another company. I wanted to let you know what happened to us and tell you not to worry about us, so I sent you a letter with the help of the servant. Though my husband and I had been separated in life, we are together after death. Now my wishes have been fulfilled. Father and Mother, please do not worry about us."

At this the father sobbed and said, "I did not think that you were dead. I came over a long distance and expected to return home with you. But



夫妻还在，要与你们同回故乡。今却双双去世，我明日只得取汝骸骨归去，迁于先垄之下，也不辜负我来这一番。”翠翠道：“向者因顾念双亲，寄此一书。今承父亲远至，足见慈爱。故本避幽冥，敢与金郎同来相见。骨肉已逢，足慰相思之苦。若迁骨之命，断不敢从。”刘老道：“却是为何？”翠翠道：“儿生前不得侍奉亲闱，死后也该依傍祖垄。只是阴道尚静，不宜劳扰。况且在此溪山秀丽，草木荣华，又与金郎同栖一处。因近禅室，时闻妙理，不久就与金郎托生，重为夫妇。在此已安，再不必提起他说了。”抱住刘老，放声大哭。寺里钟鸣，忽然散去。

刘老哭将醒来，乃是南柯一梦。老僧走到面前道：“夜来有所见否？”刘老一一述其梦中之言。老僧道：“贤女辈精灵未泯，其言可信也。幽冥之事，老檀越既已见得如此明白，也不必伤悲了。”刘老再三谢别了老僧。一同仆人到城市中，办了些牲醴酒馔，重到墓间浇奠一番，哭了一场，返棹归淮安去了。



you are both dead! Tomorrow I shall take your remains back home and bury you by the side of our ancestors' graves. Therefore I will not have made this trip in vain." Cuicui said, "I was worried about you, my parents, which is why I wrote you that letter. I appreciate that out of fatherly love you have traveled all the way here to see us. That is why with my husband I have made a special journey out of the nether world in order to meet you. Now you see we are enjoying our family reunion and our wishes have been fulfilled. However, I would be very grateful if you would leave us here, rather than moving our remains back home." The father was puzzled and asked, "Why?"

Cuicui answered, "I understand that, although I failed to do my filial duty to attend to you, my parents, during my life, after death I should undoubtedly stay with our ancestors too. But the nether world is a quiet place and should not be disturbed. Besides, there is a beautiful landscape here with babbling brooks, rolling hills, and verdant bushes and forests. I am happy to be with my husband here day and night. Moreover, a Buddhist temple is also within reach and we can often hear Buddhist scriptures. We will soon be reborn and become husband and wife again. Since now we have grown quite used to this place, please let go the idea of moving us back home." Having finished her words, she threw herself on her father's shoulder and began to weep. Right at that moment a bell rang in the temple, and Cuicui and Jin Ding instantly disappeared. Father Liu woke up crying, and discovered he had been dreaming.

The old monk came in and asked, "Did you see anything last night?" The father told the monk what had happened in his dream. The old monk said, "Your daughter's spirit is alive. What she said is true and reliable. Now that you've known everything, you may set your mind at ease." The father expressed his gratitude and bade the monk farewell, and then went into town with his servant. They purchased some animal sacrifices, sweet wine, and food. They then returned to the graves of Cuicui and Jin Ding, performed a libation, and presented sacrificial offerings. The father wept again. Then the two of them left for Huai'an. Today, the graves of Jin Ding and Cuicui are still located at the same place at the foot of the hill. The story of the couple has become a favorite anecdote among passersby.



至今道场山有金翠之墓，行人多指为佳话。此乃生前离别，死后成双，犹自心愿满足，显出这许多灵异来，真乃是情之所钟也。有诗为证：

连理何须一处栽？多情只愿死同埋。

试看金翠当年辛，愤愤将军更可哀！



This is a tale of a husband and wife separated in life, who were brought together after death. Being content with their state, they often produced the most extraordinary feats. Indeed, love does work wonders.

Trees with branches destined to intertwine
Are not always planted side by side.
A couple's destiny is that they be wed
And be buried together 'neath earth even dead.
Now you know of Cuicui and Jin Ding's story,
Aren't you sorry for the General:
A fool's shameful stupidity?

卷之七

吕使君情媾宦家妻 吴太守义配儒门女

词曰：

疏眉秀盼，向春风、还是宣和装束。贵气盈盈姿态巧，举止况非凡俗。宋室宗姬，秦王幼女，曾嫁钦慈族。干戈横荡，事随天地翻覆。一笑邂逅相逢，劝人满饮，旋吹横竹。流落天涯俱是客，何必平生相熟？旧日荣华，如今憔悴，付与杯中醪。兴亡休问，为伊且尽船玉。

这一首词名唤《念奴娇》，乃是宋朝使臣张孝纯在粘罕席上有所见之作。当时靖康之变，徽、钦被掳，不知多少帝女王孙被犬羊之类群驱北去，正是“内人红袖泣，王子白衣行”的





Tale 7

Governor Lü Seduces the Wife of an Official Prefect Wu Fulfills the Marriage of a Girl of a Decent Origin

A *ci* poem reads thus:

Unlike others in bearing, she stands out in the spring breeze, elegant and graceful. Judging from her pretty thin eyebrows and her dress, she comes from the south, which was under the Xuanhe reign of the Song Dynasty. Brimming with refined manners of nobilities, she behaves free from vulgarity. Of the imperial lineage of the Song Dynasty, she is the grand daughter of the duke of Qin and the wife of the grandson of Dowager Qinci. Suddenly the state sinks into chaos of war, bringing the country upside down.

This is an unexpected encounter for both of us. Wearing forced smiles while playing the bamboo flute, you urge people to more drinks. Stranded, we lead a dog's life in a strange land far away from home. Fate has brought us together, it matters little that we have never met before. You look so haggard! Where has your past glory gone? Oh, woe on me, your glory has gone with the wine in their cups. I'd rather gulp down this cup of wine for you than inquire about the rise and fall!

This *ci* poem, entitled "Niannujiao", was written by Zhang Xiaochun, upon attending a banquet at the house of Zhanhan, a Jin General. Before that, Emperor Huizong and emperor Qinzong of the Song Dynasty had been taken into custody by the Jin forces from northern territory of the country. Numerous offspring of the imperial family and countless descendants of nobilities were also taken to the north by the beastlike northern Jin tribe. It was a time when the southern females were soaked in tears and members of the imperial family had to wear ordinary plain clothes. Once captured and taken to the northern territory, none could

时节。到得那里，谁管你是金枝玉叶？多被磨灭得可怜。有些颜色技艺的，才有豪门大家收做奴婢，又算是有下落的了。其余驱来逐去，如同犬彘一般。张孝纯奉使到彼云中府，在大将粘罕席上，见个吹笛劝酒的女子是南方声音，私下偷问他，乃是秦王的公主，粘罕取以为婢。说罢，呜咽流涕。孝纯不胜伤感，故赋此词。

后来金人将钦宗迁往大都燕京，在路行至平顺州地方，住宿在馆驿之中。时逢七夕佳节，金虏家规制，是日官府在驿中排设酒肆，任从人沽酒会饮。钦宗自在内室坐下，闲看外边喧闹。只见一个鞑婆领了几个少年美貌的女子，在这些饮酒的座头边，或歌或舞或吹笛，斟着酒劝着座客。座客吃罢，各赏些钱钞或是酒食之类，众女子得了，就去纳在鞑婆处。鞑婆又嫌多道少，打那讨得少的。这个鞑婆想就是中华老鸨儿一般。少间，驿官叫一个皂衣吏典赍了酒食来送钦宗。其时钦宗只是软巾长衣秀才打扮，那鞑婆也不晓得是前日中朝的皇帝，道是客人吃酒，差一个吹横笛的女子到室内来伏侍。女子看见是南边



escape the fate of being humiliated and tortured, be they gold branches and jade leaves. Those who were good-looking and possessed some skills could be adopted as servant maids by the rich and powerful families, and this was considered the best way out for them, for at least they got themselves settled down. As regards some others, however, they were ordered about by the northerners like hogs and dogs.

Once Zhang Xiaochun came as an envoy to Yunzhong Prefecture. At the Jin General Zhanhan's dinner table, Zhang Xiaochun noticed a bamboo flute girl who spoke with a southern accent when she urged the guests to drink more wine. Zhang Xiaochun inquired her in secret about her background and was told that she was the grand daughter of the duke of Qin, and General Zhanhan had taken her as his servant maid. Finishing these words, the girl got choked with sobs and tears rolled down her cheeks. Deeply touched by the fate of the girl, Zhang Xiaochun composed this *ci* poem.

Later, the Jin tribe started to move emperor Qinzong to Yanjing, the capital of the Jin tribe of the time. On the way, as they reached Pingshun Prefecture, they stopped at a post house. It was the 7th day of the 7th month. According to the local conventions of the Jin people, the Jin officials fixed a sumptuous dinner with wine for the followers to enjoy. Emperor Qinzong was in the inner room, awaiting his food and wine. Looking out of the window, he found it was a hubbub outside. Soon a barbarous old lady came into his sight, directing a group of pretty young girls, who were either singing, or dancing, or playing flutes, or serving wine at the table. The people at the table, in turn, awarded the girls with some money or some food and wine. Receiving the award, the girls went to the old lady and gave it to her. The old lady grumbled at their gains and started to thrash those who had got less. This old lady was just like a procuress.

Before long, the director of the post house asked a runner to take food and wine to emperor Qinzong. Dressed in ordinary attire, emperor Qinzong appeared to be like a *xiucai*. Not knowing he used to be an emperor of the Song Dynasty, the old lady took him as an ordinary guest who was awaiting his dinner, and sent a flute girl to the inner room to wait upon him. After

官人，心里先自凄惨，呜呜咽咽，吹不成曲。钦宗对女子道：“我是你的乡人，你东京是谁家女子？”那女子向外边看了又看，不敢一时就说，直等那鞑婆站得远了，方说道：“我乃百王宫魏王孙女，先嫁钦慈太后侄孙。京城既破，被贼人掳到此地，卖在粘罕府中做婢。后来主母嫉妒，终日打骂，转卖与这个胡妇。领了一同众多女子，在此日夜求讨酒钱食物，各有限数，讨来不勾，就要痛打。不知何时是了！官人也是东京人，想也是被掳来的了。”钦宗听罢，不好回言，只是暗暗泪落，目不忍视，好好打发了他出去。这个女子便是张孝纯席上所遇的那一个。词中说“秦王幼女”，秦王乃是廷美之后，徽宗时改封魏王，魏王即秦王也。真个是凤子龙孙。遭着不幸，流落到这个地位，岂不可怜！

然此乃是天地反常时节，连皇帝也顾不得自家身子。这样事体，不在话下。还有个清平世界世代为官的人家，所遭不幸，也堕落了。若不是几个好人相逢，怎能勾拔得个身子出来？



she realized that the man in the inner room was from the south, the girl sank into sadness and broke into weeping, unable to play a tune. Emperor Qinzong said to the girl, "We're town fellows, both from Bianliang. Which family are you from?"

The girl looked out of the window several times and did not dare utter a word in reply. She didn't open her mouth until she found the old lady was some distance away from them. "I'm the grand daughter of the duke of Qin and I married the grandson of Dowager Qinci," she said. "When our capital fell into enemy hands, I was captured and brought here. First I was sold to General Zhanhan's mansion to be a servant maid. Later the hostess bore grudge against me and beat me everyday. Then I was sold to this old lady. Along with a group of other girls like me, I beg money and food day and night from our guests for that old lady. Each of us is required to get a certain amount of money and food. If we fail to get that amount as required, we will be beaten up. I don't know when this situation will come to an end. You're from the capital too. I guess you must have been captured by them and taken to this place too."

Emperor Qinzong was at a loss for words. Shedding tears in secret, he couldn't look into the girl's eyes. Then he dismissed the girl nicely. This girl was the very girl Zhang Xiaochun had encountered at General Zhanhan's banquet. The offspring of the imperial family were plagued with misfortune and had come to such a wretched state. What a shame! However, such things happened when the world was out of joint. Even the emperor himself was not in a position to take care of himself. Let's put such happenings aside for the moment.

* * *

Here I'd like to relate you a story about a family who had held official positions for many generations running in a world of peace, but also fell because of the attack of ill fate. Had they not met a couple of good-natured people, how would it have been possible for them to rise again? The following lines can serve to describe it:

From time immemorial, beauties have suffered
from ill fate.

More pitiable it is to become prostitutes.



所以说：

红颜自古多薄命，若落娼流更可怜。

但使逢人提掇起，淤泥原会长青莲。

话说宋时饶州德兴县有个官人董宾卿，字仲臣，夫人是同县祝氏。绍兴初年，官拜四川汉州太守，全家赴任。不想仲臣做不得几时，死在官上了。一家老小人口又多，路程又远，宦囊又薄，算计一时间归来不得，只得就在那边寻了房子，权且驻下。仲臣长子元广，也是祝家女婿，他有祖荫在身，未及调官，今且守孝在汉州。三年服满，正要别了母亲兄弟，掣了家小，赴阙听调，待补官之后，看地方如何，再来商量搬取全家。不料未行之先，其妻祝氏又死，遗有一女。元广就在汉州娶了一个富家之女做了继室，带了妻女同到临安补官，得了房州竹山县令。地方窄小，又且路远，也不能勾去四川接家属，只同妻女在衙中。

过了三年，考满，又要进京，当时掣家东下。且喜竹山到



If they are fortunate to come across assistance
from the kindhearted,

They will escape from the house of bad repute.

During the Song Dynasty there was a man called Dong Binqing, with the style name Zhongchen, in Dexing County of Raozhou Prefecture. His wife, née Zhu, came from the same county. During the early years of the Shaoxing reign (1131-1163), Dong Binqing was assigned to the position of the prefect of Hanzhou Prefecture in Sichuan, and he brought his whole family to his official residence in Hanzhou. However, not long after he assumed office, Zhongchen died, leaving quite a large number of family members behind, most of whom being either old or young. It was a long distance from Hanzhou to Dexing County, and Zhongchen had not saved much money from his official career. So the family found it hard at the time to make a trip back to their native homeland in Dexing. Accordingly they had to rent a house and settle there for the time being. Dong Yuanguang, the eldest son of Zhongchen, also a son-in-law of the Zhu family, was supposed to inherit his father's official title. But at the moment he had not been assigned an official position. Therefore he had to stay at Hanzhou, observing mourning for his deceased father.

Three years passed and Yuanguang's mourning period for his father was over. He prepared to part from his mother and brothers and was about to leave for Lin'an to receive the title assigned to him. His plan was that he would consider of taking his whole family to his official residence if circumstances there permitted. Unfortunately his wife died before he took leave, leaving a daughter behind her. Yuanguang then got married with a woman from a rich family in Hanzhou. Together with his new wife and his daughter by his ex-wife Zhu, he made his way to Lin'an. After arriving there, he was appointed as the County Magistrate of Zhushan in Fangzhou Prefecture. He didn't make the trip to Sichuan to move the households to his office in Zhushan County, for it was not spacious enough. Furthermore, it was indeed a rather long distance too. Thus he lived in Zhushan for three years with his wife and daughter.

Along with his wife and daughter, he headed east for Lin'an to receive an assessment of his official duties by higher authorities. Though it was a



临安虽是路长，却自长江下了船，乃是一水之地。有同行驻泊一船，也是一个官人在内，是四川人，姓吕，人多称他为吕使君，也是到临安公干的。这个官人年少风流，模样俊俏。虽然是个官人，还像个子弟一般。栖泊相并，两边彼此动问。吕使君晓得董家之船是旧汉州太守的儿子在内，他正是往年治下旧民，过来相拜。董元广说起亲属尚在汉州居驻，又兼继室也是汉州人氏，正是通家之谊。大家道是在此联舟相遇，实为有缘，彼此欣幸。大凡出路之人，长途寂寞，巴不得寻些根绊，图个往来。况且同是衣冠中，体面相等，往来更便。因此两家不是你到我船中，就是我到你船中，或是饮酒，或是下棋，或是闲话，真个是无日不会，就是骨肉相与，不过如此。这也是官员每出外的常事。

不想董家船上却动火了一个人。你道是那个？正是那竹山知县的晚孺人。元来董元广这个继室不是头婚，先前曾嫁过一个武官。只因他丰姿妖艳，情性淫荡，武官十分嬖爱，尽力奉承，日夜不歇，淘虚了身子，一病而亡。青年少寡，那里熬得？待要嫁人，那边厢人闻得他妖淫之名，没人敢揽头，故此肯嫁与外方，才嫁这个董元广。怎当得元广稟性怯弱，一发不济，



long way from Zhushan to Lin'an, he could easily get there by boat along the Yangtze River. It happened that there was another boat sailing alongside Yuanguang's one. Inside this boat was an official too, who was surnamed Lü from Sichuan. People called him Governor Lü. He was also on his way to Lin'an on business. Official as he was, he was young and handsome with an easy and elegant bearing.

As the two boats sailed along side by side, Yuanguang and Governor Lü exchanged greetings. After learning that the man on the other boat was the son of the late prefect of Hanzhou Prefecture, Governor Lü got on board of Yuanguang's boat to pay his respect, for he used to be a subordinate of Yuanguang's father. Dong Yuanguang told him that most of his family were still living in Hanzhou and this wife of his was also from Hanzhou. So they all thought they had been old family friends, and all were very pleased with their encounter. It is generally acknowledged that travelers always suffer from the boredom and loneliness of long journeys and hope to seek companion travelers so as to have some contacts. Governor Lü and Dong Yuanguang were both officials and equal in social status, which made their contacts much easier and more reasonable. Thus they called on each other everyday, either on Lü's boat or on Dong's, drinking wine, or playing go, or chatting. Even brothers could not have been so intimate. However, this was also common practice for officials when they were out on business. Surprisingly, a person on Dong Yuanguang's boat was sentimentally aroused. Guess who it was? It was the wife of the County Magistrate of Zhushan.

It turned out that Dong Yuanguang's wife had been married to a military officer. The military officer was enormously attracted to her bewitching charms and made love with her day and night. Seriously enfeebled by his excessive sex, the military officer died of a disease. How could she stand the torment of loneliness when she was at the prime of her years? She wished to get married again, but was often turned down after they learned of her licentiousness. So nobody dared to marry her. Finally she had to agree to marry a man who was not a native of her place. That man was Dong Yuanguang.

Timid by nature, Dong Yuanguan became impotent and was unable to



再不能畅他的意。他欲心如火，无可煞渴之处，因见这吕使君丰容俊美，就了不得动火起来。况且同是四川人，乡音惯熟，到比丈夫不同。但是到船中来，里头添茶暖酒，十分亲热。又抛声调噪，要他晓得。那吕使君乖巧之人，颇解其意，只碍着是同袍间，一时也下不得手。谁知那孺人，或是露半面，或是露全身，眉来眼去，恨不得一把抱了他进来。日间眼里火了，没处泄得，但是想起，只做丈夫不着，不住的要干事。弄得元广一丝两气，支持不过，疾病上了身子。吕使君越来候问殷勤，晓夜无间，趁此就与董孺人眉目送情，两下做光，已此有好几分了。

舟到临安，董元广病不能起。吕使君分付自己船上道：“董爷是我通家，既然病在船上，上去不得，连我行李也不必发上岸，只在船中下着，早晚可以照管。我所有公事，抬进城去勾当罢了。”过了两日，董元广毕竟死了。吕使君出身替他经纪丧事，凡有相交来吊的，只说：“通家情重，应得代劳。”来往的人尽多赞叹他高义出人，今时罕有。那晓得他自有一副肚肠藏在里头，不与人知道的。正是：



meet her burning desire. Seeing that Governor Lü was young and handsome, she naturally became hot with sexual desire. Furthermore, since she and Governor Lü were both from Sichuan and spoke the same dialect, she felt more comfortable when she was with Lü than with her husband. Whenever Lü was on her boat, she would be eager to serve him tea and warm wine for him, showing her amorous feelings toward him. She would also purposely talk in a loud voice to arouse his attention. Meanwhile, Lü was smart and intelligent, and well understood her intentions. But he didn't venture to start an affair with her at once due to some considerations that she was the wife of an official. On the other hand, the wife flirted with him from time to time. Sometimes she emerged by halves and sometimes in full. She was simply dying to hold him in her arms. Her insatiable desire was thus aroused at daytime, but she couldn't find a way to give vent to it. When she was crazy about it, she would pester her husband. This turned out to be the last straw on her husband. Unable to stand it, Dong Yuanguang was affected with a disease.

Governor Lü seized this opportunity to come onto Yuanguang's boat to express his concerns for Yuanguang's health, no matter it was daytime or night hours. This provided Governor Lü and the wife with the chance of flirting with each other. Gradually the two became more deeply attracted to each other.

As their boats approached Lin'an, Dong Yuanguang was so sick that he couldn't rise out of bed. Governor Lü said to his followers on his boat, "Master Dong is my friend. Since he is so sick and can't get ashore, you don't need to take my luggage and belongings off my boat. Just leave them as where they are so that I can take care of them at daytime and night. I'll settle all businesses when I get to the town." After a couple of days, Dong Yuanguang breathed his last. Governor Lü stood out and took care of Dong's funeral. When friends came to pay homage to the deceased, Governor Lü would say, "Our two families have been on good terms and it's my obligation to do something for him after his death." Hearing this, people all marveled at his righteous deed and code of brotherhood, which were rarely seen at the present time. Who would have imagined that Lü had treacherous plans of his own, which was unknown to others.



周公恐惧流言日，王莽谦恭下土时。

假若当时身便死，一生真伪有谁知？

吕使君与董孺人计议道：“饶州家乡又远，蜀中信息难通，令公棺柩不如就在临安权且择地安葬。他年亲丁集会了，别作道理。”商量已定，也都是吕使君摆拨，一面将棺柩安顿停当。事体已完，孺人率领元广前妻遗女，出来拜谢使君。孺人道：“亡夫不幸，若非大人周全料理，贱妾茕茕母子，怎能勾亡夫入土？真乃是骨肉之恩也。”使君道：“下官一路感蒙令公不弃，通家往来，正要久远相处，岂知一旦弃撇？客途无人料理，此自是下官身上之事。小小出力，何足称谢！只是殡事既毕，而今孺人还是作何行止？”孺人道：“亡夫家口尽在川中，妾身也是川中人，此间并无亲戚可投，只索原回到川中去。只是路途迢递，茕茕母子，无可倚靠，寸步难行，如何是好？”使君陪笑道：“孺人不必忧虑，下官公事勾当一完，也要即回川中，便当相陪同往。只望孺人勿嫌弃足矣！”孺人也含笑道：“果得如此提掣，还乡有日，寸心感激，岂敢忘报！”使君带着笑，丢个眼色道：“且看孺人报法何如？”两人之言俱各有



There was a period of time when the Duke of Zhou,
a symbol of virtue, also feared scandals.

There was a period of time when Wang Mang,
a usurper, also treated scholars with respect.

Had they died right at that period,

Who would have suspected of their true nature?

Governor Lü said to Mrs. Dong, “Your native home Raozhou Prefecture is so far away from here and it’s hard to send a message to Sichuan. Better select a place in Lin’an and bury your husband. You can decide on moving his body when your whole family get together some years later.” Thus decided, Governor Lü arranged the burial of the dead. After Dong Yuanguang was buried, Mrs. Dong, leading his stepdaughter, came to Governor Lü to express her gratitude for his assistance in arranging the funeral.

Mrs. Dong said, “I feel sad my husband died. How could my dead husband have been buried so smoothly by me and this daughter of his, if it had not been for your generous help? I do appreciate your assistance!” Governor Lü responded, “Your husband was very kind to me all the way down the river and I was thinking of establishing a long-time friendship with him when all of a sudden he died. Since you’re away from home, the task of the funeral arrangements would certainly fall on me. It’s nothing. Don’t mention it. But, now the funeral is over, do you have any plan for your future?”

Mrs. Dong replied, “My husband’s family is now in Sichuan, and so is mine. I’ve got no relatives in this place to turn to. I’d love to go back to Sichuan, but it’s so far away from here and I’m afraid I won’t be able to make the trip by myself and the daughter without any help. I have no idea what to do next.” Smiling, Governor Lü said, “Don’t worry about it. As soon as I finish my business, I’ll return to Sichuan too. I’d like to be your company. I would be very happy if you don’t mind.” Smiling back in return, Mrs. Dong said, “If you’re so kind to do so, I’ll be greatly indebted to you. I will repay your kindness in the time to come.” With a grin, Governor Lü asked, throwing a meaningful glance at her, “I wonder how you’ll repay me.” The two had a tacit mutual understanding of each other’s



意，彼此心照。只是各自一只官船，人眼又多，性急不便做手脚，只好咽干唾而已。有一只《商调·错葫芦》单道这难过的光景：

两情人，各一舟。总春心不自由，只落得双飞蝴蝶梦庄周。活冤家犹然不聚头。又不知几时消受？抵多少眼穿肠断为牵牛。

却说那吕使君只为要营勾这董孺人，把自家公事趲干起了，一面支持动身。两只船厮帮着一路而行，前前后后，止隔着盈盈一水。到了一个马头上，董孺人整备着一席酒，以谢孝为名，单请着吕使君。吕使君闻召，千欢万喜，打扮得十分俏倬，趋过船来。孺人笑容可掬，迎进舱里，口口称谢。三杯茶罢，安了席，东西对坐了，小女儿在孺人肩下打横坐着。那女儿止得十来岁，未知甚么头脑，见父亲在时往来的，只说道可以同坐吃酒的了。船上外水的人，见他们说的多是一口乡谈，又见日逐往来甚密，无非是关着至亲的勾当，那管其中就里？谁晓得借酒为名，正好两下做光的时节。正是：

茶为花博士，酒是色媒人。

两人饮酒中间，言来语去，眉目送情，又不须用着马泊六，竟



words. However, they could do nothing but swallow their saliva down their throats at the presence of so many followers on their boats. The following *ci* poem to the tune of Shangdiao - Cuohulu thus describes the scene:

Two lovers, each on a boat, are apart.
Obsessed with ardent desire for love though,
They cannot reach each other's arms.
Their mind is fully preoccupied with dreams of fancy.
Oh, woe it is!
Without the least idea of when the time will come
When they can enjoy each other's love,
They have to wear out their eyes
Anxiously looking for the happy moment of a meeting.

In order to seduce Mrs. Dong, Governor Lü completed his business as quickly as possible. Then he prepared to set off. He had the two boats connected with a rope, and then the two boats set sail, one immediately after the other. As they came to a pier, Mrs. Dong fixed a table of dishes and wine and invited Governor Lü alone to dinner with the excuse of expressing her thanks for his assistance in arranging the funeral. Receiving the invitation, Governor Lü was overjoyed. Putting on his best clothes, he had his boat rowed over close to hers. Smiling from ear to ear, Mrs. Dong showed him into her cabin as she uttered words of thanks. First they had three cups of tea, then they moved to the dinner table and took their seats, one facing the east, while the other facing the west. Mrs. Dong's stepdaughter sat by her side. The daughter was just about ten years old, so she was ignorant of worldly affairs. In her memory the man had been a frequent visitor when her father was alive. So she thought it natural for them to sit at the dinner table together. Hearing they talked with the same accent, the other people on the two boats took them as close relatives and no one cared what they were actually up to. At the height of their drinking bout, the two took pleasure in flirtation. It is true indeed:

Tea enhances the beauty of flowers,
While wine stirs amorous desires.

Elated with the wine, the two amused themselves with flirtatious



是自家靛面打话，有什么不成的事？只是耳目众多，也要遮饰些个。看看月色已上，只得起身作别。使君道：“匆匆别去，孺人晚间寂寞，如何消遣？”孺人会意，答道：“只好独自个推窗看月耳。”使君晓得意思许他了，也回道：“月色果好，独睡不稳，也待要开窗玩月，不可辜负此清光也。”你看两人之言，尽多有意，一个说开窗，一个说推窗，分明约定晚间窗内走过相会了。

使君到了自家船中，叫心腹家童分付船上：“要两船相并帮着，官舱相对，可以照管。”船上水手听依分付，即把两船紧紧贴着住了。人静之后，使君悄悄起身，把自己船舱里窗轻推开来，看那对船时节，舱里小窗虚掩。使君在对窗咳嗽一声，那边把两扇小窗一齐开了。月光之中，露出身面，正是孺人独自个在那里。使君忙忙跳过船来，这里孺人也不躲闪。两下相偎相抱，竟到房舱中床上，干那话儿去了：

一个新寡的文君，正要相如补空；一个独居的宋玉，



remarks. Pimps were absolutely unnecessary. How come their affair would come to nothing? In spite of this, they had to refrain themselves a bit, because there were many people around watching and listening. Looking up, Governor Lü noticed that the moon was rising and thought he had to take his leave. He said, "I'm afraid I must be leaving now. You must be lonely at night. How would you kill time and pass the night?" Mrs. Dong replied, understandingly, "I'll have to push open the window and watch the moon alone." Governor Lü knew well from her words she had agreed to his advances. So he added, "Though the moonlight is wonderful, I don't think I'll have a good sleep if I sleep alone. I'll also open the window and enjoy the moon. I would rather not let the good moonlight down." Listen carefully to the words the two used. One said, "to push open the window," while the other said, "I'll also open the window." It was crystal clear that the two had made a secret appointment to get together for the night by crossing the window.

Returning back to his boat, Governor Lü told his servants to tie the two boats together side by side, making the cabins face each other so that the two families could look after each other. The boatmen did so as they were told. When evening fell and people on the boats became quiet, Governor Lü rose quietly and opened the window of his cabin. Taking a look at the cabin of the boat opposite, he noticed the window there was half open too. He coughed at the window opposite. Then the window was opened wide. In the dim moonlight, Mrs. Dong could be seen standing there alone. Governor Lü jumped over to her boat in a hurry. Not stepping aside to dodge him, Mrs. Dong hugged him tightly, and the two moved into the bed in the cabin for that business.

One is the newly widowed Zhu Wenjun,
 anxiously waiting for the arrival of Sima Xiangru¹.
 One is the Song Yu² living in solitude,
 whom the beautiful girl neighbor is expecting to marry.
 One is like an untied boat,
 pulled around or drawn along freely on the water,
 While the other is rocking and sailing
 against waves in midstream.



专待邻女成双。一个是不系之舟，随人牵挽；一个如中流之楫，惟我荡摇。沙边鸂鶒好同眠，水底鸳鸯堪比乐。

云雨既毕，使君道：“在下与孺人无意相逢，岂知得谐夙愿？三生之幸也！”孺人道：“前日瞥见君子，已使妾不胜动念。后来亡失遭变，多感周全。女流之辈，无可别报，今日报以此身。愿勿以妾自献为嫌，他日相弃，使妾失望耳。”使君道：“承子不弃，且自欢娱，不必多虑。”自此朝隐而出，暮隐而入，日以为常，虽外边有人知道，也不顾了。

一日正欢乐间，使君忽然长叹道：“目下幸得同路而行，且喜蜀道尚远，还有几时。若一到彼地，你自有家，我自有室，岂能常有此乐哉！”孺人道：“不是这样说，妾夫既身亡，又无儿女，若到汉州，或恐亲属拘碍。今在途中，惟妾得以自主，就此改嫁从君，不到那董家去了，谁人禁得我来？”使君闻言，不胜欣幸道：“若得如此，足感厚情，在下益州成都郫县自有田宅庄房，尽可居住。那是此间去的便道，到得那里，我接你上去住了，打发了这两只船。董家人愿随的，就等他随你住了；不愿的，听他到汉州去，或各自散去。汉州又远，料那边多是



Though they're like large mandarin duck
and drake-like water birds at the seashore,
They're much happier than the mandarin ducks.

When their lovemaking was over, Governor Lü said to her, "We met each other by chance and we're now together. I consider myself most fortunate." Mrs. Dong said, "When I first met you that day, I was deeply attracted to you. Later my husband died and I'm deeply indebted to you for your assistance. As a woman, I have nothing to repay you but my body. I do hope you will never look down upon me, desert me and let me down one day in future because I offered my body to you out of my own will." Governor Lü said, "Never worry about that. We'll surely have a good time if you love me." Ever since then, Governor Lü left her quietly in the morning and came to her secretly in the evening. Thus they carried on the affair everyday. Though some people realized it, nobody cared.

One day while they were on bed, Governor Lü suddenly let out a sigh, saying, "Now we're traveling together and there is still a long way ahead of us to reach Sichuan. We're lucky we still have some time to be together. But once we get there, could it be possible for us to keep on enjoying ourselves, since you have your own home and I have mine?" Mrs. Dong replied, "I don't think you're right. Since my husband has died and I have no children, my late husband's family will probably not feel at ease with my appearance if I go to Hanzhou to join them. As I'm out on a trip, I think I'm free to make a decision for myself. I want to be your wife and I don't want to go the Dongs' any more. Who can stop me?"

Governor Lü became wild with joy upon hearing these words. He said, "That couldn't be better. I feel much honored. I have a piece of land and a house in Pixian County of Chengdu in Yizhou Prefecture. The house there is in good condition for a living. We're going to pass there. When we get there, I'll put you up in the house and send the two boats away. The followers on the boat of the Dong family may stay with you if they love to. Those who are unwilling to stay may go back to Hanzhou or anywhere else as they please. It is a long distance from here to Hanzhou, and I guess most members of the Dong family are widows and orphans. Who're to care what we do in this place? If you hear anything unfavorable,



孤寡之人，谁管得到这里的事？倘有人说话，只说你遭丧在途，我已礼聘为外室了，却也无奈我何！”孺人道：“这个才是长远计较。只是我身边还有这小妮子，是前室祝氏所生，今这个却无去处，也是一累。”使君道：“这个一发不打紧，目下还小，且留在身边养着。日后有人访着，还了他去。没人来访，等长大了，不拘那里着落了便是，何足为碍？”

两人一路商量的停停当当，到了郟县，果然两船上东西尽情搬上去住了。可惜董家竹山一任县令，所有宦资连妻女，多属之他人。随来的家人也尽有不平的，却见主母已随顺了，吕使君又是个官宦，谁人敢与他争得？只有气不伏不情愿的，当下四散而去。吕使君虽然得了这一手便宜，也被这一干去的人各处把这事播扬开了。但是闻得的，与旧时称赞他高谊的，尽多讥他没行止，鄙薄其人。至于董家关亲的见说着这话，一发切齿痛恨，自不必说了。

董家关亲的，莫如祝氏最切。他两世嫁与董家。有好些出仕的在外，尽多是他夫人每弟兄叔侄之称。有一个祝次騫，在朝为官。他正是董元广的妻兄，想着董氏一家飘零四散，元广



just tell them you lost your husband during the trip and I have taken you as my concubine. I don't think they can do anything with me." Mrs. Dong said, "This should be the long-term plan. But the problem is that I have this girl with me, the daughter by Dong Yuanguang and his first wife Zhu. She is a burden on me and I can't find a suitable place for her to go." Governor Lü said, "She is not the problem. She is still young and we can keep her with us. When her family comes to look for in the future, we can return her to them. If no one comes to take her home, we can simply put her somewhere when she grows up. Why do you say she is a burden?" Thus Governor Lü and Mrs. Dong ended their discussion.

All the stuff on the two boats was moved into Governor Lü's house when the boats arrived at Pixian County. All the property and money of the County Magistrate of Zhushan, as well as his wife and daughter, now became the possession of another man. What a shame! Though some of the followers of the Dong family boiled with indignation, who dared argue about the matter, since Governor Lü was an official with whom their hostess had complied? Those who didn't want to give in and were not willing to stay scattered right away. Although Governor Lü gained a lot from this event, Dong's followers who had scattered made a wide circulation of Governor Lü's deeds. People who heard about it all ridiculed him for his ill deeds, though they had praised him previously for his generosity and loyalty to friends. As regards the Dong family and their relatives, they all felt a deep hatred for Governor Lü after they heard the story.

Among the Dongs' relatives, the Zhu family showed the greatest concern for this matter, for two women of the Zhu family had married into the Dong family. At that time, numerous men from the Zhus', most of whom were Dong Yuanguang's wife's brothers, uncles and nephews, were holding official positions in different places. There was a man called Zhu Ciqian who was Dong Yuanguang's wife's brother. He was a high-ranking official. Having learned of the breaking up of Dong Yuanguang's family and of his sister and niece's fall into another man's hands, and having no knowledge of their whereabouts, Zhu Ciqian was overwhelmed with anxiety and solicitude all day long. It happened that a fellow



妻女被人占据，亦且不知去向，日夜系心。其时乡中王恭肃公到四川做制使，托他在所属地方访寻。道里辽阔，谁知下落？

乾道初年，祝次騫任嘉州太守，就除利路运使。那吕使君正补着嘉州之缺，该来与祝次騫交代。吕使君晓得次騫是董家前妻之族，他干了那件短行之事，怎有胆气见他？迁延稽留，不敢前来到任。祝次騫也恨着吕使君是禽兽一等人，心里巴不得不见他，趁他未来，把印绶解卸，交与僚官权时收着，竟自去了。吕使君到得任时，也就有人寻他别是非，弹上一本。朝廷震怒，狼狈而去。

祝次騫枉在四川路上做了一番的官，竟不曾访得甥女儿的消息，心中常时抱恨。也是人有不了之愿，天意必然生出巧来。直到乾道丙戌年间，次騫之子祝东老，名震亨，又做了四川总干之职。受了檄文，前往成都公干，道经绵州。绵州太守吴仲



townsman of his named Wang Gongsu was about to go to Sichuan to take office as the Military Commander of the area. So Zhu Ciqian asked him to inquire about his sister's whereabouts in Sichuan. Though Sichuan was under Wang Gongsu's control, it was a pretty large area. How could it be possible for him to locate her?

During the early years of the Qiandao reign (1165-1173) of emperor Song Xiaozong, Zhu Ciqian used to be the prefect of Jiazhou. Later he got a promotion and was transferred to Lizhou Prefecture to be the Patrol Inspector, being in charge of the affairs concerning the frontier, public security and finance. Governor Lü was assigned the official post to fill the vacancy in Jiazhou, and was supposed to go through the handing over procedure with Zhu Ciqian.

Upon learning Zhu Ciqian was the brother of Mrs. Dong, how could Governor Lü have the guts to come and meet him, since he had done such a mean deed? Putting off the handing over again and again, he dared not to come to take office. Meanwhile, Zhu Ciqian resented Governor Lü too, thinking he was nothing but a beast in human shape. Therefore he would be only too glad to be spared the meeting with him. Seizing the opportunity before Lü's arrival, Zhu Ciqian handed the official seal to a fellow official and asked him to keep it for the time being. Then he left. After Governor Lü arrived and assumed office, some officials deliberately found some faults in him and reported to the imperial court. The emperor got infuriated and removed Lü from office. Zhu Ciqian failed to obtain any information about his sister, though he held an official post in Sichuan for quite some time, for which he was often haunted with profound remorse.

However, while a person is in a desperate situation, the will of Heaven will come to his help. Some years later, Zhu Donglao, style named Zhenheng, son of Zhu Ciqian, was appointed the post of Director General of the Military Rear Service in Sichuan. Taking the letter of appointment, he made his way to Chengdu. While he was passing through Mianzhou Prefecture, Wu Zhongguang, the Prefect of Mianzhou, came over to meet him and fixed dinner and wine for him. As an entitled senior civilian official, Wu Zhongguang was a man of literary taste and unconventional

广出来迎着，置酒相款。仲广原是待制学士出身，极是风流文采的人。是日郡中开宴，凡是应得承直的娼优无一不集。东老坐间，看见户椽旁边立着一个妓女，姿态恬雅，宛然闺阁中人，绝无一点轻狂之度。东老注目不瞬，看勾多时，却好队中行首到面前来斟酒，东老且不接他的酒，指着那户椽旁边的妓女问道：“这个人是谁？”行首笑道：“官人喜他么？”东老道：“不是喜他。我看他有好些与你们不同处，心中疑怪，故此问你。”行首道：“他叫得薛倩。”东老正要细问，吴太守走出席来，斟着巨觥来劝，东老只得住了话头，接着太守手中之酒，放下席间，却推辞道：“贱量实不能饮，只可小杯适兴。”太守看见行首正在傍边，就指着巨觥分付道：“你可在奉着总干，是必要总干饮干，不然就要罚你。”行首笑道：“不须罚小的，若要总干多饮，只叫薛倩来奉，自然毫不推辞。”吴太守也笑道：“说得古怪，想是总干曾与他相识么？”东老道：“震亨从来不曾到大府这里，何由得与此辈相接？”太守反问行首道：“这等，你为何这般说？”行首道：“适间总干殷殷问及，好生垂情于他。”东老道：“适才邂逅之间，见他标格，如野鹤在鸡群。据下官看起来，不像是个中之人，心里疑惑，所以在此询



in life style. Soon the dinner began. All the singsong girls were summoned over to entertain the guests.

While Zhu Donglao was having dinner, he noticed a singsong girl standing by the door. He found the girl was quiet and graceful in manners, absolutely a girl from a good family and definitely free from frivolities. He stared at her for quite a long time. While he was focusing his thoughts on the girl, the leader of the singsong girls came to pour wine for him. Paying no attention to his wine, Zhu Donglao asked the leader of the singsong girls, "Who is that girl?" The leader of the singsong girls said, "Do you like her, sir?" Zhu Donglao said, "Not exactly. I find her quite different from you all. I was just wondering why. This is why I asked you about her." The leader of the singsong girls said, "She is Xue Qian."

As Zhu Donglao was about to proceed with more questions, Prefect Wu rose from the table and came to Zhu Donglao, holding a large cup of wine in the hand. Zhu Donglao had to drop the subject. Receiving the cup of wine Prefect Wu offered him, Zhu Donglao put it on the table and declined his offer, saying, "I'm really not a good drinker. A smaller cup would suit me better." Prefect Wu saw that the leader of the singsong girls was beside him, so he said to her, pointing to the large cup of wine, "You may stay here and wait upon Director General. You must make him drink it all, otherwise you'll receive a penalty of drinking it all yourself." Smiling, the leader of the singsong girls said, "You needn't punish me, sir. If you want Director General to drink more, just bring Xue Qian over to wait upon him. I'm sure he will not refuse the wine."

Prefect Wu said, also smiling, "It sounds odd! Is it because Director General knows her?" Zhu Donglao said, "I've never been to your home before. How could I know this group of girls?" Prefect Wu turned to the leader of the singsong girls and questioned, "Why did you say so?" The leader of the singsong girls replied, "A moment ago, Director General inquired me about her earnestly. He must have a fancy for her." Zhu Donglao explained, "She came into my sight by chance a minute ago and her bearing impressed me deeply. She is like a crane standing among chickens. In my humble opinion, she doesn't look like one of the group. I was just curious, so I asked about her. How should I have other



问他为首的，岂关有甚别意来？”太守道：“既然如此，只叫薛倩侍在总干席傍劝酒罢了。”

行首领命，就唤将薛倩来侍着。东老正要问他来历，恰中下怀。命取一个小杌子赐他坐了，低问道：“我看你定然不是风尘中人，为何在此？”薛倩不敢答应，只叹口气，把闲话支吾过去。东老越疑心，过会又问道：“你可实对我说？”薛倩只是不开口，要说又住了。东老道：“直说不妨。”薛倩道：“说也无干，落得羞人。”东老道：“你尽说与我知道，焉知无益？”薛倩道：“尊官盘问不过，不敢不说，其实说来可羞。我本好人家儿女，祖、父俱曾做官，所遭不幸，失身辱地。只是前生业债所欠，今世偿还，说他怎的！”东老惻然动心道：“汝祖、汝父，莫不是汉州知州，竹山知县么？”薛倩大惊，哭将起来道：“官人如何得知？”东老道：“果若是，汝母当姓祝了。”薛倩道：“后来的是继母，生身亡母正是姓祝。”东老道：“汝母乃我姑娘也，不幸早亡。我闻你与继母流落于外，寻觅多年，竟无消耗，不期邂逅于此。却为何失身妓籍？可备与我说。”薛倩道：“自从父亲亡后，即有吕使君来照管丧事，与同继母一路归川。岂知得到川中，经过他家门首，竟自尽室占为己有。



intentions?" Prefect Wu said, "In this case, just tell Xue Qian to come here and wait upon Director General." Then the leader of the singsong girls went to send for Xue Qian.

This fitted in exactly with Zhu Donglao's wishes. He ordered to have a small stool for Xue Qian. In a low voice, he asked, "I'm certain you were not a singsong girl. But why are you now at this place?" Heaving a sigh, Xue Qian switched the subject evasively instead of giving an answer. This enhanced Zhu Donglao's suspicions. After a while, he said, "Just tell me the truth." Still Xue Qian remained silent. As she was about to say something, she shut up again. Zhu Donglao encouraged her and said, "Don't hesitate." Xue Qian said, "It's useless to talk about it. I'll die of shame." Zhu Donglao insisted, "Just go ahead and let me know about it. How could you know for sure it's useless?" Xue Qian said, "Since you questioned me repeatedly, I dare not to turn you down. However, it was really a disgrace on me. I am from a good family. My grandfather and my father used to be officials. A stroke of bad luck threw me into a house of ill repute. It must be that I did a sinful deed in my former life and now I'm paying for it in this life. Why talk about it now?"

Overcome with compassion, Zhu Donglao asked, "Are your grandfather and father the Prefect of Hanzhou and the County Magistrate of Zhushan?" Stunned, Xue Qian burst into tears and said, "How did you know that, sir?" Zhu Donglao said, "If I'm right, your mother's family name should be Zhu." Xue Qian said, "I have a stepmother. But my own mother died long ago and her family name is Zhu." Zhu Donglao said, "Your mother is my aunt. Bad luck she died long ago. I overheard from others that you were stranded in a remote place with your stepmother. I've been looking for you for years, but to no avail. I never expected I could meet you here. But how did you become a singsong girl? You may tell me in detail."

Xue Qian said, "After my father's death, Governor Lü made arrangements for the funeral. Then he traveled together with me and my stepmother as we made our way back to Sichuan. When we reached the central part of Sichuan, where he had a house of his own, he took her as his concubine. In the years that followed, my stepmother and I lived in



继母与我多随他居住多年。那年坏官回家，郁郁不快，一病而亡。连继母无所倚靠，便将我出卖，得了薛妈七十千钱，遂入妓籍，今已是一年多了。追想父亲亡时，年纪虽小，犹在目前。岂知流落羞辱，到了这个地位！”言毕，失声大哭，东老不觉也哭将起来。

初时说话低微，众人见他交头接耳，尽见道无非是些调情肉麻之态，那里管他就里？直见两人多哭做一堆，方才一座惊骇，尽来诘问。东老道：“此话甚长，不是今日立谈可尽，况且还要费好些周折，改日当与守公细说罢了。”太守也有些疑心，不好再问。酒罢各散，东老自向公馆中歇宿去了。

薛倩到得家里，把席间事体对薛妈说道：“总干官府是我亲眷，今日说起，已自从帐。明日可到他寓馆一见，必有出格赏赐。”薛妈千欢万喜。到了第二日，薛妈率领了薛倩，来到总干馆舍前求见。祝东老见说，即叫放他母子进来。正要与他细话，只见报说太守吴仲广也来了。东老笑对薛倩道：“来得正好。”薛倩母子多未知其意。

太守下得轿，薛倩走过去先叩了头。太守笑道：“昨日哭得不勾，今日又来补么？”东老道：“正要见守公说昨日哭的



his house. Suddenly one year, he was removed from office and was sent back home. Feeling deeply depressed, he died from sorrow. With no one to turn to for financial support, my stepmother sold me to Procuress Xue who paid her seventy thousand strings of cash. It has been over a year now since I became a singsong girl. Though I was very young when my father died, his image still remains clear in my mind. I never thought I would have such a disgrace and come to this!" As she said this, she cried herself hoarse. With tears welling up in his eyes, Zhu Donglao wept too.

In the beginning of their talk, their voices were pretty low. At the sight of their whispering to each other, all the people around considered they were amusing themselves by flirting. So none took any notice of what they were talking about. Seeing both of them wept and melted into tears, all people at the table were taken by surprise. Many thronged forward and questioned them why they were crying. Zhu Donglao said, "It's a long story. I'm afraid I can't explain it in a few words at present. Moreover, it will cause me a lot of trouble to tell you the whole story. Do you mind if I tell you in detail what had happened to us some other day, Prefect Wu?" Feeling suspicious about the matter, Prefect Wu asked no more. Everybody left when the dinner was over. Zhu Donglao went back to the living quarters especially prepared for him.

Later that day Xue Qian met Procuress Xue and said, "The Director General is my cousin. We claimed our relations at today's dinner. You can go and call on him tomorrow in his living quarters and I'm sure you'll get a handsome reward." Procuress Xue was very much delighted at the news.

On the next day, Procuress Xue, together with Xue Qian, came to Zhu Donglao's living quarters and requested an interview. Hearing this, Zhu Donglao granted her request. The moment Zhu Donglao was about to talk with Procuress Xue, a report came that Prefect Wu is coming too. Turning to Xue Qian, Zhu Donglao smiled and said, "He's come just in time!" Procuress Xue and Xue Qian were both confused.

After Prefect Wu stepped off his sedan chair, Xue Qian moved forward and kowtowed. Smiling, Prefect Wu said, "Didn't you cry enough yesterday? Are you here to make it up today?" Zhu Donglao interrupted



缘故，此子之父董元广乃竹山知县，祖父仲臣是汉州太守，两世衣冠之后。只因祖死汉州，父又死于都下。妻女随在舟次，所遇匪人，流落到此地位。乞求守公急为除去乐籍。”太守惻然道：“元来如此！除籍在下官所司，甚为易事。但除籍之后，此女毕竟如何？若明公有意，当为效劳。”东老道：“不是这话，此女之母即是下官之姑，下官正与此女为嫡表兄妹。今既相遇，必须择个良人嫁与他，以了其终身。但下官尚有公事须去，一时未得便有这样凑巧的。愚意欲将此女暂托之尊夫人处安顿几时，下官且到成都往回一番。待此行所得诸台及诸郡馈遗路赈之物，悉将来为此女的嫁资。慢慢拣选一个佳婿与他，也完我做亲眷的心事。”太守笑道：“天下义事，岂可让公一人做尽了？我也当出二十万钱为助。”东老道：“守公如此高义，此女不幸中大幸矣！”当下分付薛倩：“随着吴太守到衙中奶奶处住着，等我来时再处。”太守带着自去。东老叫薛妈过来，先



him by saying, "I was thinking of telling you why we two were all tears yesterday. This girl's father is Dong Yuanguang, the former County Magistrate of Zhushan. Her grandfather was Dong Zhongchen, the former Prefect of Hanzhou. She was a descendant of two generations of officials. Her grandfather died in Hanzhou and her father died in Sichuan. Dong Yuanguang's second wife and his daughter, this girl, had to travel on the boat. Unfortunately they fell into the hands of wicked persons and this is what she has become of. I sincerely implore you, Prefect Wu, to renounce her of her singsong girl identity."

Prefect Wu said compassionately, "So, that's how it all happened. It's very easy to renounce her of her singsong girl identity, for it is within my jurisdiction. But what are you going to do with this girl after she is relieved of her present identity? If you're interested in her, I'm ready to offer you my service." Zhu Donglao said, "You got me wrong. This girl's own mother is my aunt. She and I are cousins. Now that we've met with each other, I feel obliged to find her a man from a good family so as to get them married and accomplish the important event in her life. But now I have official businesses to attend to and I don't see any chance of finding a proper match for her at the present. I was wondering if I can leave my cousin to your wife and put her up for some time while I'm away on business. I'll set off for Chengdu and will return as soon as possible. I'll bring all the money I can obtain from this business trip and give it to her as her dowry. Then I'll do my utmost and manage to find her a good husband."

Smiling, Prefect Wu said, "How should I allow you to take on all the righteous deeds? I'd like to offer a donation of two hundred thousand strings of cash too." Zhu Donglao said, "That's very kind of you. Your generosity and kindness are the most fortunate blessings for this unfortunate girl!" Then Zhu Donglao asked Xue Qian to follow Prefect Wu to Mrs. Wu's living quarters in the *yamen*. Zhu Donglao added, "Stay here and wait for me till I'm back, and I'll take care of everything for you." After Prefect Wu and Xue Qian were gone, Zhu Donglao asked Procuress Xue to come over to him and awarded her with ten thousand strings of cash, saying, "The ransom for Xue Qian, together with the



赏了他十千钱，说道：“薛倩身价在我身上，加利还你。”薛妈见了是官府做主，怎敢有违？只得凄凄凉凉自去了。东老一面往成都进发，不题。

且说吴太守带得薛倩到衙里来，叫他见过了夫人，说了这些缘故，叫夫人好好看待他，夫人应允了。吴太守在衙里，仔细把薛倩举动看了多时，见他仍是满面忧愁，不歇的叹气，心里忖道：“他是好人家女儿，一向堕落，那不得意是怪他不得的。今既已遇着表兄相托，收在官衙，他日打点嫁人，已提掣在好处了，为何还如此不快？他心中毕竟还有掉不下的事。”教夫人缓缓盘问他备细。

薛倩初时不肯说，吴太守对他说：“不拘有甚么心事，只管明白说来，我就与你做主。”薛倩方才说道：“官人再三盘问，不敢不说，说来也是枉然的。”太守道：“你且说来，看是如何？”薛倩道：“贱妾心中实是有一个人放他不下，所以被官人看破了。”太守道：“是甚么人？”薛倩道：“妾身虽在烟花之中，那些浮浪子弟，未尝倾心交往。只有一个书生，年方弱冠，尚未娶妻，曾到妾家往来，彼此相爱。他也晓得妾身出于良家，深加悯恤，越觉情浓，但是入城，必来相叙。他家父母知道，拿回家去痛打一顿，锁禁在书房中。以后虽是时或有个信来，再不能勾见他一面了。今蒙官人每抬举，若脱离了此地，料此书生无缘再会，所以不觉心中怏怏，撇放不开，岂知被官人看了出来。”太守道：“那个书生姓甚么？”薛倩道：“姓史，



interest, will be on me." Hearing an official's commitment, how could Procuress Xue dare to have any objections? She left in low spirits. Then Zhu Donglao left for Chengdu.

Now let's turn to Prefect Wu and Xue Qian. Leading Xue Qian into the *yamen*, Prefect Wu took her to his wife and told her what had happened to the girl. He also asked his wife to take good care of Xue Qian, to which Mrs. Wu readily agreed. Prefect Wu observed Xue Qian's conduct closely for quite some time and discovered that she was still in low spirits and often sighed in dismay. He pondered, "She's from a good family, but she later became a singsong girl. However, she's not to blame for her mishap. Now that she has met her cousin who has put her up in my place and promised her to get her a good husband, she should be cheerful about it. Why is she still so sad? There must be some other thing that has kept her in suspense."

Prefect Wu then sent his wife to question her what was worrying her. Xue Qian was unwilling to give her an answer at the beginning. Then Prefect Wu came to Xue Qian and said, "Whatever load it is on your mind, just speak it up to me and I'll take care of you." Xue Qian replied, "Since you questioned me repeatedly, I have to tell you the truth. But I'm afraid you're in no position to help me." Prefect Wu said, "Just say it and let me know." Xue Qian said, "Actually I have a man in my heart and I can't drive him away from my mind. You've seen through my worries." Prefect Wu asked, "Who is he?" Xue Qian answered, "Though I used to be a singsong girl, I've never really had intimate associations with frivolous and dissipated young men. But a young scholar, who is not married yet, often made frequent visits to me, and we were truly in love. He also knew I was from a good family and showed great sympathy for me. He loved me so much that each time he was in town he would come to see me. But after his parents learned of our contacts, they grabbed him, took him home and gave him a beating. Then they locked him up in his study. Though I could occasionally get a letter from him later, I've never been able to see him in person. I'm indeed grateful to your help. If I can get out of the place of ill repute, I'm afraid I won't have the chance to see him again. This is why I'm sad." Prefect Wu asked, "What's the scholar's family



是个秀才，家在乡间。”太守道：“他父亲是甚么人？”薛倩道：“是个老学究。”太守道：“他多少家事，娶得你起么？”薛倩道：“因是寒儒之家，那书生虽往来了几番，原自力量不能，破费不多，只为情上难舍，频来看觑。他家兀自道破坏了家私，狠下禁锁，怎有钱财娶得妾身？”太守道：“你看得他做人如何？可真心得意他否？”薛倩道：“做人是个忠诚有馀的，不是那些轻薄少年，所以妾身也十分敬爱，谁知反为妾受累，而今就得意也没处说了。”说罢，早又眼泪落将出来。

太守问得明白，出堂去盍了一张密票，差一个公人，拨与一匹快马，“急取绵州学史秀才到州，有官司勾当，不可迟误”。公人得了密票，狐假虎威，扯做了一场火急势头，忙下乡来，敲进史家门去，将朱笔官票与看，乃是府间遣马追取秀才，立等回话的公事。史家父子惊得呆了，各没想处。那老史埋怨儿子道：“定是你终日宿娼，被他家告害了，再无他事。”史秀才道：“府尊大人取我，又遣一匹马来，焉知不是文赋上边有甚么相商处？”老史道：“好来请你？柬贴不用一个，出张朱票？”史秀才道：“决是没人告我！”父子两个胡猜不住，公人只催起身。老史只得去收拾酒饭，待了公人，又送了些辛苦



name?”

Xue Qian answered, “Shi is his family name. He is a *xiucaï* and his family lives in the countryside.” Prefect Wu asked, “What does his father do?” Xue Qian answered, “An old scholar.” Prefect Wu asked, “How much family property does he have? Can he afford to marry you?” Xue Qian said, “His family is shabby and poverty-stricken. I had some contacts with this young scholar, but he didn’t go to much expense for my sake due to the straitened circumstances in his family. He often came to see me because loved me. His parents thought he had wasted their money, so they became extremely angry and locked him up. How could he afford to marry me?” Prefect Wu asked, “What do you think of the young scholar’s personality? Do you really like him?” Xue Qian said, “Different from those frivolous and dissipated young men, he is a truly honest and righteous man. That is why I love him so much too. But I never expected I would put him to this trouble. Now I don’t think I can do anything about the matter even though I love him so much.” Having finished these words, tears rolled down her cheeks.

After Prefect Wu knew everything about Xue Qian’s love affair with Shi, he went to his office and issued a secret summons and ordered a runner to go on a flying horse to bring Shi Xiucai to the *yamen* without delay for lawsuit reasons. Holding the secret summons, the runner got to Shi’s home posthaste. After entering the Shi’s house, the runner showed the secret summons written in red with a brush to the Shi family. Seeing that the *yamen* was demanding Shi Xiucai to go to court, both father and son of the Shi family were stunned, not knowing what to do. Shi Xiucai’s father complained to his son, saying, “It must be that because you often visited that prostitute, her family has brought a suit against you. Nothing else!” Shi Xiucai said, “Since I’m wanted by the prefect in such a hurry, couldn’t it be possible that the prefect wants to exchange views with me on writing?” Father Shi said, “Absolutely impossible! Why the prefect issued a summons written in red? Why not an invitation card?” Shi Xiucai said, “Nobody will bring me to court, I’m sure!” As the father and son made wild guesses, the runner urged Shi Xiucai to hurry up and go with him. Father Shi had to prepare food and wine for the runner. After the



钱，打发儿子起身到州里来。正是：

乌鸦喜鹊同声，吉凶全然未保。

今日捉将官去，这回头皮送了。

史生同了官差，一程来到州中。不知甚么事由，穿了小服，进见太守。太守教换了公服相见，史生才把疑心放下了好些。换了衣服，进去行礼已毕，太守问道：“秀才家小小年纪，怎不苦志读书，倒来非礼之地频游，何也？”史生道：“小生诵读诗书，颇知礼法。蓬窗自守，从不游甚非礼之地。”太守笑道：“也曾去薛家走走么？”史生见道着真话，通红了两颊道：“不敢欺大人，客寓州城，诵读馀功，偶与朋友辈适兴闲步，容或有之，并无越礼之事。”太守又道：“秀才家说话不必遮饰！试把与薛倩往来事情，实诉我知道。”史生见问得亲切，晓得瞒不过了，只得答道：“大人问及于此，不敢相诳。此女虽落娼地，实非娼流，乃名门宦裔，不幸至此。小生偶得邂逅，见其标格，有似良人，问得其详，不胜义愤。自惜身微力薄，不能拔之风尘，所以怜而与游。虽系儿女子之私，实亦士君子之念。然如此鄙事，不知大人何以知而问及，殊深惶愧，只得实陈，伏乞大人容恕！”太守道：“而今假若以此女配足下，足



runner had finished the dinner, Father Shi gave the runner some money and told his son to follow the runner and go and see the prefect.

Simultaneously crows cry and magpies twitter.

No one knows whether they bode ill or well.

Now being taken to the official,

Most probably Shi Xiucan is doomed.

Having arrived at the *yamen* with the runner, Shi Xiucan, not knowing why he was wanted, changed into a common person's clothing and met Prefect Wu. Prefect Wu told him to put on his garment usually worn by *xiucans* for the interview. Hearing this, Shi felt much relieved. After changing into his *xiucan* garment, Shi entered and made a bow to Prefect Wu as salutation. Prefect Wu asked, "You're still young. Why do you always go visit prostitutes instead of concentrating yourself on your regular readings?" Shi answered, "I do read Confucian classics in my study and behave in accordance with the accepted rites. I've never visited prostitutes." Smiling, Prefect Wu asked, "So, you mean you've never been to the Xue's house?" At the point of hearing these words, Shi Xiucan flushed and said, "I do not dare to hoodwink you. While I was in town, I did occasionally stroll on the streets with some of my friends, but I never committed an indiscrete act."

Prefect Wu said, "Don't fool me around, young man. Tell me your affair with Xue Qian." Realizing he was unable to keep the matter secret, Shi had to tell the truth, saying, "Since you mentioned my contacts with Xue Qian, I have to be frank. Though she was landed in a place of ill-repute, she is by no means a prostitute. She is originally from an official's family, but she met with a mishap. I encountered her by chance and her manners showed me that she was like a girl from a good family. After I learned of her story, I was filled with fury and righteous indignation. However, it was beyond my power to get her out of this place. So, out of my compassion for her, I had some contacts with her. Though it was a matter of a man and a girl's love, I did what a gentleman is supposed to do. I wonder why you, sir, are interested in such a trivial matter. I've told you the truth about the matter. I do wish you may pardon me if there is anything improper in what I did." Prefect Wu asked, "Do you have any



下愿以之为室家否？”史生道：“淤泥青莲，亦愿加以拂拭，但贫士所不能，不敢妄想。”太守笑道：“且站在一边，我教你看一件事。”就掣一枝签，唤将薛妈来。

薛妈慌忙来见太守。太守叫库吏取出一百道官券来与他，道：“昨闻你买薛倩身价止得钱七十千，今加你价三十千，共一百道，你可领着。”时史生站在傍边，太守用手指着对薛妈道：“汝女已嫁此秀才了，此官券即是我与秀才出的聘礼也。”薛妈不敢违拗，只得收了。当下认得史生的，又不好问得缘故。老妈们心性，见了一百千，算来不亏了本，随他女儿短长，也不在他心上。不管三七二十一，欢欢喜喜自出去了。

此时史生看见太守如此发放，不晓其意，心中想道：“难道太守肯出己钱讨来与我不成？这怎么解？”出了神没可想处。太守唤史生过来，笑道：“足下苦贫不能得娶，适间已为足下下聘了。今以此女与足下为室，可喜欢么？”史生叩头道：“不知大人何以有此天恩，出自望外，岂不踊跃！但家有严父，不敢不告。若知所娶娼女，事亦未必可谐，所虑在此耳。”太守道：“你还不知，此女为总干祝使君表妹，前日在此相遇，已



objections if I make this girl your wife?" Shi answered, "Definitely no. I would be too glad. But I'm in such straitened circumstances that I do not dare to cherish this vain hope." With a smile, Prefect Wu said, "Just stay where you are and I'll show you someone." So saying, he ordered to bring Procuress Xue to his office.

Soon Procuress Xue arrived. Prefect Wu ordered to take out a bill worthy of a hundred thousand strings of cash and said to her, "Yesterday I learned that it took you seventy thousand strings of cash to buy Xue Qian. Now I give you an extra thirty thousand, totaling up to a hundred thousand. You may keep the money." At the moment, Shi was standing beside them. Pointing at Shi, Prefect Wu said to Procuress Xue, "Xue Qian has now been betrothed to this young man. This bill of a hundred thousand strings of cash is the betrothal gifts I offer on the behalf of this young man." Not daring to refuse, Procuress Xue had to accept the money. Though she knew Shi, she felt she was in no position to ask him about the whole story of the matter. At the sight of the one hundred thousand strings of cash, she knew she did not lose in business. So she left happily, giving no thought to the girl and the young man's love affair, which was in fact in accordance with procuresses' nature.

Unable to make head or tail of why Prefect Wu was doing so, Shi Xiucan thought to himself, "Is Prefect Wu buying back Xue Qian's freedom for me? Why is he doing this for me?" Lost in thought, Shi could not figure out why.

Prefect Wu asked Shi to get closer to him and said, smilingly, "I know you're not rich enough to get married. Just now I've delivered the betrothal gifts for you. Are you happy to have this girl as your wife?" Shi kowtowed and said, "I'm pleasantly surprised. But I don't know why you did me such a great favor. For one thing, I'll have to go back and tell it to my stern father. If my father learns that my future wife is a singsong girl, I'm afraid there will be some trouble in the matter. This is what's weighing on my mind."

Prefect Wu said, "There is something you don't know. This girl is Director General Zhu's cousin. They met here the day before yesterday. Director General Zhu entrusted me with the renouncement of her singsong



托下官脱了乐籍，俟成都归来，替他择婿。下官见此义举，原许以二十万钱助嫁。今此女见在我衙中。昨日见他心事不决，问得其故，知与足下两意相孚，不得成就。下官为此相请，欲为你两人成此好事。适间已将十万钱还了薛媪，今再以十万钱助足下婚礼，以完下官口信。待总干来时，整備成亲。若尊人问及，不必再提起薛家，只说总干表妹，下官为媒，无可虑也。”史生见说，欢喜非常，谢道：“鰕生何幸，有此奇缘，得此恩遇，虽粉骨碎身，难以称报！”太守又叫库吏取一百道官券，付与史生。史生领下，拜谢而去。看见丹榭之下荷花正开，赋诗一首，以见感恩之意。诗云：

莲染青泥埋暗香，东君移取一齐芳。

擎珠拟作衔杯报，已学葵心映日光。

史生到得家里，照依太守说的话回复了父母。父母道是喜从天降，不费一钱攀了好亲事，又且见有许多官券拿回家来，问其来历，说道是太守助的花烛之费，一发支持有馀，十分快活。一面整顿酒筵各项，只等总干回信不题。

却说吴太守虽已定下了史生，在薛倩面前只不说破。隔得一月，祝东老成都事毕，重回绵州，来见太守，一见便说表妹之事。太守道：“别后已干办得一个佳婿在此，只等明公来，便



girl identity and I've done it as requested. He'll see to her marriage after he returns from Chengdu. I've promised to offer a donation of two hundred thousand strings of cash for her marriage. At present this girl is in my residence. Yesterday I noticed she was in low spirits and inquired her about her worries. I learned you two are deep in love, but are unable to get married. That's why I've sent for you. I'd like to do my utmost to fulfill your wishes. A moment ago, I gave Procureess Xue a hundred thousand strings of cash to redeem Xue Qian. Now I'd like to offer another one hundred thousand strings of cash to you to accomplish your wedding. By doing so, I will fulfill my promise. We'll arrange for the wedding ceremony when Director General Zhu returns. If your father asks about the girl, mention no more about the Xue's house. Just tell him the girl is Director General Zhu's cousin and I'm the matchmaker. Tell him there is nothing to worry about."

Shi was overwhelmed with joy at these words, saying, "What a good fortune it is for me to have met you! I'm so greatly indebted to your kindness that I'll never be able to repay it even though I have my body smashed to pieces and my bones be crushed to a pulp." Then Prefect Wu asked the storehouse keeper to get Shi a bill worthy of a hundred thousand strings of cash. Shi accepted the bill gratefully and left.

After he returned home, Shi told his parents what had happened as Prefect Wu had instructed him. Shi's parents thought the matter was a windfall, obtaining a wife from a prominent family without spending a copper coin. At the sight of the bill, Shi's parents inquired about it. As they were told it was Prefect Wu's donation for the wedding, which they found was really a handsome amount, the parents were transported with joy. So they started to prepare for the wedding feast as they awaited Director General Zhu's return.

Though he had decided on the betrothal of Shi and Xue Qian, Prefect Wu didn't disclose it to Xue Qian. One month later, Zhu Donglao completed his business in Chengdu and returned to Mianzhou. He then went to see Prefect Wu. He brought up the matter of his cousin's marriage immediately after he met Prefect Wu. Prefect Wu said, "After your departure, I've found a perfect match for her. Now that you're back, I



可嫁了。”东老道：“此行所得合来有五十万，今当悉以付彼，使其成家立业。”太守道：“下官所许二十万，已将十万还其身价，十万备其婚资。今又有此助，可以不忧生计。况其人可倚，明公可以安心了。”东老道：“婿是何人？”太守道：“是个书生，姓史，今即去召他来相见。”东老道：“书生最好。”太守立刻命人去召将史秀才来到，教他见了东老。东老见他少年，丰姿出众，心里甚喜。太守即择取来日大吉，叫他备轿，明日到州，迎娶家去。

太守回衙，对薛倩道：“总干已到，佳婿已择得有人，看定明日成婚。婚资多备，从此为良人妇了。”薛倩心里且喜且悲。喜的是亏得遇着亲眷，又得太守做主，脱了贱地，嫁个丈夫，立了妇名！悲的是心上书生从此再不能勾相会了。正是：

笑啼俱不敢，方信做人难。

早知灯是火，落得放心安。

明日，祝东老早到州中，坐在后堂。与太守说了，教薛倩出来相见。东老即将五十万钱之数交与薛倩，道：“聊助子妆奁之费，少尽姑表之情。只无端累守公破费二十万，甚为不



think we can hold the wedding ceremony for them.” Zhu Donglao said, “I’ve got a total of five hundred thousand strings of cash from this business trip. I’ll give this money to her to help her get married and start a career.”

Prefect Wu said, “I promised a donation of two hundred thousand strings of cash. One hundred thousand has gone for her redemption, the other one hundred thousand has been delivered to the young man as betrothal gifts. Now you’ve got such a large sum for them, I’m sure they will not worry about their living anymore in the future. Apart from this, this young man is quite reliable. You may rest assured about the matter.” Zhu Donglao asked, “Who is this young man?” Prefect Wu said, “A young scholar with the family name of Shi. We may send for him right now.” Zhu Donglao said, “A young scholar is most suitable.” Then Prefect Wu sent for Shi Xiucan immediately. Shi met Zhu Donglao. Zhu was very satisfied with Shi’s outstanding bearing and youthful vitality. Prefect Wu picked up the next day as the auspicious date for the wedding. He then asked Shi to come over on time the next day and take the bride home.

Returning back to his residence, Prefect Wu said to Xue Qian, “Director General Zhu has come back and we’ve selected a good husband for you. The wedding ceremony is to be held tomorrow. All the money needed for your marriage is ready. From tomorrow on, you’ll be the wife of a nice young man.” At this point, Xue Qian was overwhelmed with both grief and joy. The joy was that she was fortunate to have met her cousin and have been renounced of the identity of a singsong girl with the help of Prefect Wu. And now she was going to get married with a nice young man. The grief was that she would never be able to have the chance to see her sweet Shi. Landing in a predicament, she could neither laugh nor weep. Up by now she was fully convinced that it was really hard to be a human. However, had she known the young man she was about to marry was her sweet Shi, wouldn’t she have been so upset?

On the next day Zhu Donglao arrived at Prefect Wu’s residence, and soon Xue Qian came out. Handing the five hundred thousand strings of cash over to Xue Qian, Zhu Donglao said, “This money is your dowry. I give it to you as a token of my blessings for your marriage. But I feel uneasy about Prefect Wu’s spending two hundred thousand strings of



安。”太守笑道：“如此美事，岂可不许我费一分乎？”薛倩叩谢不已。东老道：“婿是守公所择，颇为得人，终身可傍矣。”太守笑道：“婿是令表妹所自择，与下官无干。”东老与薛倩俱愕然不解。太守道：“少顷自见。”

正话间，门上进禀史秀才迎婚轿到。太守立请史秀才进来，指着史生对薛倩道：“前日你再三不肯说，我道说明白了，好与你做主。今以此生为汝夫，汝心中没有不足处了么？”薛倩见说，方敢抬眼一看，正是平日心上之人。方晓得适间之言，心下暗地喜欢无尽。太守立命取香案，教他两人拜了天地。已毕，两人随即拜谢了总干与太守。太守分付花红、羊酒，鼓乐送到他家。东老又命从人抬了这五十万嫁资，一齐送到史家家里来。史家老儿只说是娶得总干府表妹，以此为荣，却不知就是儿子前日为阉了厮闹的表子。后来渐渐明白，却见两处大官府做主，又平白得了许多嫁资，也心满意足了。史生夫妻二人感激吴太守，做个木主，供在家堂，奉祀香火不绝。

次年，史生得预乡荐。东老又着人去汉州，访着了董氏兄



cash on your marriage.” Prefect Wu said, “How should you not allow me the chance of spending some money on such a laudable event?” Xue Qian expressed her thanks by kowtowing. Zhu Donglao said to Prefect Wu, “I’m really grateful you found a reliable husband for my cousin.” Smiling, Prefect Wu said, “Your cousin chose him herself. I’ve got nothing to do with this matter.” Hearing this, Zhu Donglao and Xue Qian were both confused. “You will understand it soon,” said Prefect Wu.

While they were talking, some people entered with a report, “Shi Xiucui’s sedan chair has arrived to take the bride.” Prefect Wu immediately asked Shi Xiucui to come on into the room. Pointing at Shi, Prefect Wu said to Xue Qian, “The other day you refused to speak your mind. I assured you that I would take care of the matter if you told me the load on your mind. This young man is going to be your husband. I’m sure you will be content, won’t you?” Xue Qian raised her head and saw the man in front of her was none other than her sweetheart Shi Xiucui. With her previous confusion gone, she was overjoyed.

Prefect Wu then ordered that a long table with an incense burner be placed. Then he asked the bride and the bridegroom to bow to heaven and earth. This being done, the young couple expressed their thanks to Director General Zhu and Prefect Wu by kowtowing. Prefect Wu then ordered that the newly-weds be sent to Shi’s home amid a great din of drums and pipes. Zhu Donglao told his followers to carry Xue Qian’s dowry of five hundred thousand strings of cash to Shi’s home. Shi Xiucui’s parents felt enormously graced at the thought that their son had married Director General Zhu’s cousin. But at the moment they were in the dark about the fact that their daughter-in-law was the very singsong girl their son had associated with before. Though they learned about the truth later, they became perfectly contented with their son’s marriage, the reason of which being that the marriage had been arranged by two powerful officials and that they had got such huge dowries for no reason whatever. Shi Xiucui and his wife fixed a memorial tablet in the main hall of their house to express their indebtedness to Prefect Wu and they never stopped burning incense for him.

The following year, Shi Xiucui was recommended to participate in the



弟，托与本处运使，周给了好些生计，来通知史生夫妻二人，教他相通往来。史生后来得第，好生照管妻家，汉州之后得以不绝。此乃是不幸中之幸，遭遇得好人，有此结果。不然，世上的人多似吕使君，那两代为官之后到底堕落了。天网恢恢，正不知吕使君子女又如何哩！

公卿宣淫，误人儿女。不遇手援，焉复其所？

瞻彼穹庐，涕零如雨。千载伤心，王孙帝主。

imperial examinations held at the provincial level. Zhu Donglao later assigned some of his followers the task of searching for the traces of Dong Yuanguang's younger brothers. Fortunately Zhu Donglao found them. In the years that followed, Zhu Donglao helped them a lot with their living. He also told Shi Xiucan and his wife about the whereabouts of Dong Yuanguang's younger brothers and asked them to contact the Dong brothers. Some time later, Shi Xiucan successfully passed the imperial examinations at the provincial level, and also gave a lot of financial support to his wife's family. Thus the family line of the Prefect of Hanzhou continued. This is the most fortunate aspect of this unfortunate event. Xue Qian ran into virtuous and righteous men and finally returned to the path leading to happiness. Otherwise, if the people in the world were all like Governor Lü, the two generations of officials of the Dong family would have been cut short. The net of Heaven has large meshes. I wonder what have become of the offspring of Governor Lü!

The girl of a good family fell victim of Governor Lü's indecency.

How could she have married her sweet heart

without the Prefect's generous help?

Looking up into the sky, everyone would shed tears like rain.

Alas, woe to the descendents of noble families!





卷 之 八

沈将仕三千买笑钱 王朝议一夜迷魂阵

词云：

风月襟怀，图取欢来。戏场中尽有安排。呼卢博赛，岂不豪哉？费自家心，自家力，自家财。有等奸胎，惯弄乔才。巧妆成科诨难猜。非关此辈，忒使心乖。总自家痴，自家狠，自家呆。（词寄《行香子》）

这首词说着人世上诸般戏事，皆可遣兴陶情，惟有赌博一途最是为害不浅。盖因世间人总是一个贪心所使，见那守分的一日里辛辛苦苦，巴着生理，不能勾近得多少钱；那赌场中一得了采，精金白银只在一两掷骰子上收了许多来，岂不是个不费本钱的好生理？岂知有这几掷赢，便有几掷输。赢时节，道是倘来之物，就有粘头的、讨赏的、帮衬的，大家来撮哄。这



Tale 8

Courtier Shen Makes Merry among Ladies with 3 000 Pieces of Gold Grand Master Wang of Court Audience Sets a One-night Trap

As a *ci* poem goes:

In games of love, many make merry, seek pleasures,
Though few are aware that ahead are snares.
Games of gambling really leave them thrilled
Yet needing too much trouble, effort and wealth.

Some are treacherous sly people accustomed to wile —
Assuming airs, comic gestures, hiding behind a smile.
This clique is ruthless by nature and most odious,
Though they always appear so dumb and foolish.
(To the tune of Xingxiangzi”)

This *ci* poem tells us that all the games of this world may be ways to vent one's feelings and refine one's sentiments; yet the exception is gambling, being truly harmful. Generally speaking, people are most often driven by avarice and are aware that those who abide by the law and behave properly can never make much money, however hard they work at their business day after day.

But once at the gambling table, they are always dazzled by the scenario that a large pile of gold and silver might roll into their pockets with a mere throw of a dice, making them imagine that it is a fine business indeed. Still, the truth is, although there are times when the dice lead them to win, there are also more times when the dice fails them. While on a winning streak, they take the money as an unexpected windfall and thus gladly distribute it to the host of the gambling den, and others who demand a



时节意气扬扬，出之不吝。到得赢骰过了，输骰齐到，不知不觉的弄个罄净，却多是自家肉里钱，傍边的人不曾帮了他一文。所以只是输的多，赢的少。有的不伏道：“我赢了就住，不到得输就是了。”这句话恰似有理，却是那一个如此把得定？有的巴了千钱要万钱，人心不足不肯住的。有的乘着胜来，只道是常得如此，高兴了不肯住的；有的怕别人讥诮他小家子相，碍上碍下不好住的。及至临后输来，虽悔无及，道先前不曾住得，如今难道就罢？一发住不成了，不到得弄完决不收场。况且又有一落场便输了的，总有几掷赢骰，不勾番本，怎好住得？到得番本到手，又望多少赢些，那里肯住？所以一耽了这件滋味，定是无明无夜，抛家失业，失魂落魄，忘餐废寝的。朋友们讥评，妻子们怨怅，到此地位，一总不理。只是心心念念记挂此事，一似担雪填井，再没个满的日子了。全不想钱财自命里带来，人人各有分限，岂由你空手博来，做得人家的？不要说不能勾赢，就是赢了，未必是福处。

宋熙宁年间，相国寺前有一相士，极相得着，其门如市。



fee. In the end, most of their winnings go into others' hands. At such moments, they always appear generous and brotherly. But when their luck goes against them and they start to lose, they dust out their pockets to give away their last copper without even realizing it, and the money they lose is always the money earned through onerous toil. Yet in these moments, the people around them never offer a single copper. In short, the gambler is sure to lose much more than they win.

Some gamblers may contend, "I'll quit when I'm winning and won't dawdle there to lose my money." This sounds reasonable, yet who is able to do so? After some people win one thousand strings of copper, they then desire to win ten thousand, for insatiable greed makes it feel impossible for them to stop. Some are too excited when they are on the winning side to desist. Fearing that others might sneer at their pettiness and narrow-mindedness, other gamblers also find it most difficult to quit in the middle of the course. By the time they realize they are losing toward the end of the game, their remorse always turns out to be too late. Now that they did not quit earlier while winning, they take it for granted that they should, by all means, stick it out to the very end. As a result of this, the end never comes until they have gambled away everything they have. So, once people take to gambling, they gamble no matter if it is day or night, leaving behind their families and careers, becoming muddleheaded and forgetting all about food and sleep.

Disregarding their friends' cold sneers or kind advice and their wives' frustration, they care about nothing but gambling. Once addicted to gambling, people will never be able to extricate themselves from it. In one way it is like filling a well with snow, for the day never comes when you can make the snow reach the top. It never occurs to gamblers that the fortunes of a person are predestined by fate and each has his balances fixed throughout his life. How could it be possible for a person to gamble others' money into his own pockets? Let us first forget that it is possible to win through gambling, for even if one does win, it does not necessarily mean one's lot will be happy.

During the Xining reign (1068-1077), there lived once a reputable physiognomist in front of the Councilor's Temple, and his house was



彼时南省开科，纷纷举子多来扣问得失，他一一决来，名数不爽。有一举子姓丁名湜，随众往访。相士看见大惊道：“先辈气色极高，吾在此阅人多矣，无出君右者。据某所见，便当第一人及第。”问了姓名，相士就取笔在手，大书数字于纸云：“今科状元是丁湜。”粘在壁上。向丁生拱手道：“留为后验。”丁生大喜自负，别了相士，走回寓中来。不觉心神畅快，思量要寻个乐处。

元来这丁生少年才俊，却有个僻性，酷好的是赌博。在家时先曾败掉好些家资，被父亲锁闭空室，要饿死他。其家中有姬怜之，破壁得逃。到得京师，补试太学，幸得南省奏名，只待廷试。心绪闲暇，此兴转高。况兼破费了许多家私，学得一番奢遮手段，手到处会赢。心中技痒不过。闻得同榜中有两个四川举子，带得多资，亦好赌博。丁生写个请帖，着家童请他



always awash with visitors. At that time, the highest imperial examinations held in the imperial palace were approaching. Many candidates for these imperial examinations came to his house to ask him if they would pass the examinations. He examined the candidates one after another, and all his predictions proved right.

Among these visiting candidates was one named Ding Shi. Upon catching sight of Ding Shi, the physiognomist said with surprise, "You are in the pink. I have read the faces of quite a lot of people, and I find you to be second to none. In my humble opinion, you shall come out first in the highest imperial examination." The physiognomist asked him for his name, and then put down the following words on a sheet of paper, "The Number One Scholar this year will be Ding Shi." After this he hung it on the wall of his room. Cupping his hands towards Ding Shi, he said, "Now let us use this sheet of paper as evidence, to see if I am right." Overwhelmed with joy and surprise, Ding Shi bade farewell to the physiognomist and made his way back to his lodgings. He was completely thrilled through every nerve, and felt quite serene and happy. He thought he should go out and have some fun.

Ding Shi was a handsome and talented young man, but he was of an eccentric mien. He was extremely fond of gambling. While he had been at home some time earlier, he had gambled away most of his family's property, and his father had once locked him up in an empty room hoping he would starve to death. His mother found him pitiable and helped him get out of the room. Ding Shi fled to the capital where he was admitted to the Imperial College. Later he successfully passed the examinations set for selecting the candidates for the highest imperial examination. At present, he was awaiting the examination's onset.

Now feeling quite carefree and joyous, he instantly became keen for the tumble of the dice. Also he felt certain he would win money, for he had managed to acquire some remarkable tactics while gambling away a lot of money. In the current circumstances he could hardly resist the temptation. He heard that there were two candidates from Sichuan who had a lot of money on them and were fond of gambling too. Ding Shi wrote out an invitation and asked his boy servant to take it to the two



二人到酒楼上饮酒。二人欣然领命而来，分宾主坐定。饮到半酣，丁生家童另将一个包袱放在左边一张桌子上面，取出一个匣子开了，拿出一对赏钟来。二客看见匣子里面藏着许多戏具，乃是骨牌、双陆、围棋、象棋及五木骰子、枚马之类，无非赌博场上用的。晓得丁生好此，又触着两人心下所好，相视而笑。丁生便道：“我们乘着酒兴，三人共赌一回取乐，何如？”两人拍手道：“绝妙！绝妙！”一齐立起来，看楼上旁边有一小阁，丁生指着道：“这里头到幽静些。”遂叫取了博具，一同到阁中来。相约道：“我辈今日逢场作戏，系是彼此同袍，十分大有胜负，忒难为人了。每人只以万钱为率，尽数赢了，止得三万，尽数输了，不过一万。图个发兴消闲而已。”说定了，方才下场，相博起来。

初时果然不十分大来往，到得掷到兴头上，你强我赛，各要争雄，一二万钱只好做一掷，怎好就歇得手？两人又着家童到下处再取东西，下着本钱，频频添入，不记其次。丁生煞是好手段，越赢得来，精神越旺。两人不伏输，狠将注头乱推，要博转来，一注大似一注。怎当得丁生连掷胜采，两人出注，正如众流归海，尽数赶在丁生处了。直赢得两人油干火尽。两人也怕起来，只得忍着性子住了，垂头丧气而别。丁生总计所赢，共有六百万钱。命家童等负归寓中，欢喜无尽。

隔了两日，又到相士店里来走走，意欲再审问他前日言语的确。才进门来，相士一见大惊道：“先辈为何气色大变？连



candidates and ask them for a drink of wine at an inn. The two candidates gladly consented and arrived. Ding Shi took the seat of the host and the two candidates the seats of the guests. By the middle of dinner, they had all turned a bit tipsy. Then Ding Shi's servant, on the table to their left, set down a cloth-wrapper, out of which he took a box, and opened it. The two from Sichuan noticed an assortment of gambling paraphernalia hidden in the box — Chinese dominoes, an ancient chess game, go and the like.

Seeing these gambling sets, both Ding Shi and the two candidates from Sichuan looked at each other and smiled. Ding Shi suggested, "How about we three amuse ourselves with some gambling at the height of our drinking bout?" The two clapped their hands and replied, "Terrific, terrific!" Pointing to an attic above, Ding Shi said, "That must be a quiet place." They then brought the gambling things with them and went up to the attic. To start with, they all agreed that they would simply gamble for fun and set a limit of only ten thousand coins each. If one of them were to win all the money, he would get no more than thirty thousand coins and each of the losers would only lose ten thousand coins. So saying, they started gambling.

At the beginning of their games, the gains and losses were really not that much. However, their enthusiasm began to get the better of them as the game went on, and all sought to outdo the others. Ten or twenty thousand coins became a mere single throw. The two from Sichuan asked their servant boys to go back to their dwelling places to fetch money time and again. As Ding Shi won more and more, his spirits soared. The other two refused to admit defeat and put down higher stakes, hoping to win their money back. But the dice were always on Ding Shi's side, so Ding won all their money. The other two could do nothing about it and had to leave in low spirits. Ding Shi counted his winnings. It amounted to six million coins. Delighted, he ordered his servant boy to carry the money to his dwelling place.

A couple of days later, Ding Shi came to see the physiognomist again, to ask him if he was sure about what he had said the other day. Hardly had he entered, when the physiognomist exclaimed in surprise, "The color of your face has changed so much, why? You'll not even pass the imperial

中榜多不能了，何况魁选！”急将前日所粘在壁上这一条纸扯下来，揉得粉碎。叹道：“坏了我名声，此番不准了。可恨！可恨！”丁生慌了道：“前日小生原无此望，是足下如此相许。今日为何改了口，此是何故？”相士道：“相人功名，先观天庭气色。前日黄亮润泽，非大魁无此等光景，所以相许。今变得枯焦且黑滞了，那里还望功名？莫非先辈有甚设心不良，做了些谋利之事，有负神明么？试想一想看。”丁生悚然，便把赌博得胜之事说出来，道：“难道是为此戏事？”相士道：“你莫说是戏事，关着财物，便有神明主张。非义之得，自然减福。”丁生悔之无及，忖了一忖，问相士道：“我如今尽数还了他，敢怕仍旧不妨了？”相士道：“才一发心，暗中神明便知。果能悔过，还可占甲科，但名次不能如旧，五人之下可望。切须留心。”

丁生亟回寓所，着人去请将二人到寓。两人只道是又来纠缠，正要翻手，三脚两步忙忙过来。丁生相见了，道：“前日



examination, let alone turn out to be the Number One Scholar!” Then he quickly pulled down the sheet of paper he had hung up on the wall the other day and tore it into pieces. He continued, “You’ve ruined my reputation. This time you have undermined my words. How truly detestable!”

Ding Shi grew nervous and asked, “I never expected to achieve Number One Scholar. It was you who promised me that. Why now have you changed your tune?” The physiognomist replied, “Scholarly honor and official position are usually decided by the color of the middle of a person’s forehead. Your forehead when I saw it the other day was most bright, fresh and smooth. No one except the Number One Scholar could have possessed such outstanding mien. Therefore I had pledged you would win the honor. But now your forehead has turned pale and bleak. Scholarly honor and official rank will become estranged from you. Did you in any way harbor evil intent or do something for profit? Did you run counter to the deities? Think about what you’ve done.”

Ding Shi was startled. He told the physiognomist about how he had gained some money through gambling, and asked, “Is this because of that small game of gambling?” The physiognomist said, “Do not call it a game, for when money is involved in any game, the deities will uphold justice. Gains obtained by dishonest means will certainly cut down your future good fortune.” Ding Shi was overcome with a sense of regret. After thinking for a moment, he asked the physiognomist, “What if I go and return them the money?” The physiognomist answered, “The moment you repent and think of returning them the money, the deities shall know everything about you. If you repent and return to the path of virtue, you will still pass the imperial examination successfully. Though you will not come out in first place as I had pledged earlier, you could, hopefully, achieve sixth place.”

Ding Shi hurried back to his dwelling and immediately sent for the two men from Sichuan. Thinking that Ding Shi was again badgering them to gamble, the two men readily agreed and came over without delay, for they had also been harboring thoughts about winning back their capital. After exchanging greetings, Ding Shi declared, “We were just playing a

偶尔做戏，大家在客中，岂有实得所赢钱物之理？今日特请两位过来，奉还原物。”两人出于不意，道：“既已赌输，岂有竟还之理！或者再博一番，多少等我们翻些才使得。”丁生道：“道义朋友，岂可以一时戏耍损伤客囊财物？小弟誓不敢取一文，也不敢再做此等事了。”即叫家童各将前物竟送还两人下处。两人喜出望外，道是丁生非常高谊，千恩万谢而去。岂知丁生原为着自己功名要紧，故依着相士之言，改了前非。

后来廷试唱名，果中徐铎榜第六人。相士之术不差毫厘。若非是这一番赌，这状头稳是丁湜，不让别人了，今低了五名。又还亏得悔过迁善，还了他人钱物，尚得高标。倘贪了小便宜，执迷不悟，不弄得功名没分了？所以说，钱财有分限，靠着赌博得来，便赢了也不是好事。

况且有此等近利之事，便有一番谋利之术。有一伙赌中光棍，惯一结了一班党与，局骗少年子弟，俗名谓之“相识”。用铅沙灌成药骰，有轻有重。将手指捻将转来，捻得得法，抛下去多是赢色。若任意抛下，十掷九输。又有惯使手法，捧红坐六的。又有阴阳出法，推班出色的。那不识事的小二哥，一团



game the other day, and we are all travelers. How could I take your money? Now I have especially invited you here in order to return you your money.” This being so contrary to their expectations, the two said, “How could you return us the money given we’ve already lost it? Better we gamble again and maybe have the chance of winning some back.”

Ding Shi replied, “How could I, a friend of yours, obtain your money through such a game? I will not take one single cent from you, and I shall not play this type of game anymore.” So saying, Ding asked his servants to carry the pair’s money to their dwelling places. Being most pleasantly surprised, the two men thought highly of Ding’s exalted friendship and felt extremely grateful as they left his place. They never imagined that Ding Shi had done so for the sake of his own scholarly honor and official rank, simply correcting his former wrongdoing as he had been told to by the physiognomist.

Some time later when the results of the imperial examination were announced, Ding Shi did indeed come out in sixth place, which perfectly justified what the physiognomist had said of him earlier. And, had he not gambled, he would have been the Number One Scholar of the year. Even his present sixth place owed much to his atonement for his wrongdoing, and his returning of the money to the other two men. If he had sought small gains and refused to mend his ways, he would have been kept out of official circles. So, each person’s aggregate of money is usually fixed. Even if he gets big money through gambling, it won’t do him any good.

Moreover, there must be some scheming in such profitable business like gambling. Usually a band of gamblers would gang up with other villainous henchmen to set up a trap and swindle the young out of their money, the popular name of which being “getting acquainted with each other.” Putting lead and sand into the dice, these gamblers would make special dice, some being heavier and some lighter. When these dice were cast with proper force, they would be often on the winning side. If these dice were cast casually, nine times out of ten the one who cast them would be the loser. In addition to this, these gamblers practiced all kinds of frauds in gambling.

The inexperienced young men would always be carried away with joy



高兴，好歹要赌，俗名唤作“酒头”。落在套中，出身不得，谁有得与你赢了去？奉劝人家子弟，莫要痴心想别人的。看取了湜故事，就赢了也要折了状元之福。何况没福的？何况必输的？不如学好守本分的为强。有诗为证：

财是他人物，痴心何用贪？
寝兴多失节，饥饱亦相参。
输去中心苦，赢来众口馋。
到头终一败，辛苦为谁甜？

小子只为苦口劝着世人休要赌博，却想起一个人来，没事闲游，撞在光棍手里，不知不觉弄去一赌，赌得精光，没些巴鼻。说得来好笑好听：

风流误入绮罗丛，自讶通宵依翠红。
谁道醉翁非在酒？却教眨眼尽成空。

这本话文，乃在宋朝道君皇帝宣和年间。平江府有一个官人姓沈，承着祖上官荫，应授将仕郎之职，赴京听调。这个将仕家道丰厚，年纪又不多，带了许多金银宝货在身边。少年心



of gambling and they were always eager to try their luck regardless of the results. The popular name for these inexperienced young men was “dishes to go with wine.” Once landed in the trap, they would never be able to extricate themselves. How could the gamblers let you win a penny? My advice to young men is never daydream about others’ money as has been proved by Ding Shi’s story. Even though he won some money, he ruined his happy lot by letting slip the chance of becoming the Number One Scholar. Not to mention those who have got no happy lot and those who are bound to lose! So do behave yourselves and never go beyond what is proper.

A person’s money throughout his life is always fixed.
 Isn’t it a fond dream to covet the money that belongs to others?
 Once taken to gambling, they forget all about food and sleep
 Or if it’s day or night, becoming muddleheaded completely.
 Gamblers groan inwardly when gambling away their wealth;
 On-lookers drool with greed at their winnings once they win.
 Sure enough, gamblers always turn out to be on the losing side.
 Alas, for whom have they been toiling hard?

As I am exhorting people with patience and sincerity to stay away from gambling, another fellow comes to mind, one who sauntered into a gang of gamblers and gambled away all his fortune. I would now like to tell you the story of this gambler.

By mistake a young man falls into a group of young ladies,
 And enjoys a wonderful time, feeling perfectly content.
 But the drinker’s heart is not in the cup —
 In a twinkling all his wealth disappeared abruptly.

* * *

During the Xuanhe reign (1119-1126) of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty, there lived an official surnamed Shen in Pingjiang Prefecture. Due to his forefathers’ meritorious service, he received the privilege of being granted the official title of Court Gentleman for Ceremonial Service. To receive the nomination he made his way to the capital city. Court Gentleman Shen was both very wealthy along with being young in age. He always carried a pile of gold and silver and many other valuables with

性，好的是那歌楼舞榭，倚翠偎红，绿水青山，闲茶浪酒，况兼身畔有的是东西。只要撞得个乐意所在，挥金如土，毫无吝色。

大凡世情如此：才是有个撒漫使钱的勤儿，便有那帮闲慵懒的陪客来了。寓所差不多远，有两个游手人户：一个姓郑，一个姓李，总是些没头鬼，也没个甚么真名号，只叫做郑十哥、李三哥。终日来沈将仕下处，与他同坐同起，同饮同餐，沈将仕一刻也离不得他二人。他二人也有时破些钱钞，请沈将仕到平康里中好姊妹家里摆个还席。吃得高兴，就在姊妹人家宿了。少不得串同了他家，扶头打差，一路儿撮哄，弄出些钱钞，大家有分，决不到得白折了本。亏得沈将仕壮年贪色，心性不常，略略得味就要跳槽，不迷恋着一个，也不能起发他大主钱财，只好和哄过日，常得嘴头肥腻而已。

如是盘桓将及半年，城中乐地也没有不游到的所在了。一日，沈将仕与两人商议道：“我们城中各处走遍了，况且尘嚣嘈杂，没甚景趣。我要城外野旷去处走走，散心耍子一回，何如？”郑十、李三道：“有兴，有兴。大官人一发在行得紧。只是今日有些小事未完，不得相陪，若得迟至明日便好。”沈将



him, whenever he frequented places with singsong girls, or amused himself among young ladies, or traveled extensively across beautiful lands to enjoy tea and wine. With so much money on him, he would spend it like water without restraint whenever he happened to sight a place where he could have some fun.

In most cases, those who squander wantonly will certainly attract some loafers who do no decent work. Not far from the place he boarded, there were two loafers, one surnamed Zheng and the other Li, whose identities were unknown in this region. In addition, they had no real names except Tenth Brother Zheng and Third Brother Li. Each day Zheng and Li came to visit Court Gentleman Shen, staying to have meals with him. Shen also felt drawn to them, always unable to part with them for even a moment. There were also a couple of times when Zheng and Li spent a bit of money and acted as hosts to treat Shen to dinner in return at places frequented by certain young ladies. Filled with delight after such dinners, Shen would then spend the nights in the ladies' boudoirs. At night, Zheng and Li would act in tandem with the ladies to urge Shen to drink even more wine. The young ladies would ardently ply him with wine and food so as to dupe money out of him, of which Zheng and Li would also get their share. By conducting themselves in this way, Zheng and Li never suffered losses, though they acted the hosts.

However, Court Gentleman Shen, crazy as the young man was about women, had little staying power and would leave the ladies after only a brief period of time. Realizing it was difficult to get big money out of him in this way, they two had to constantly prance around him and enjoy his dinners with him.

Half a year went by quickly and they had been to all the places of interest in town. One day Shen suggested to Zheng and Li, "We've already gone through all the entertainment in this town. Besides, it's too noisy and crowded around here in the city, and not much fun. I'm thinking of going out of town to the countryside for a change. What do you think?" Zheng and Li answered, "Great! What an idea! You are indeed somebody who knows how to have fun! But we're afraid we cannot go today, because we have certain business to attend to. We would very much appreciate it

仕道：“就是明日无妨，却不可误期。”郑、李二人道：“大官人如此高怀，我辈若有个推故不去，便是俗物了，明日准来相陪就是。”

两人别去了一夜，到得次日，来约沈将仕道：“城外之兴何如？”沈将仕道：“专等，专等。”郑十道：“不知大官人轿去？马去？”李三道：“要去闲步散心，又不赶甚路程，要那轿马何干？”沈将仕道：“三哥说得是。有这些人随着，便要催你东去西去，不得自由。我们只是散步消遣，要行要止，凭得自家，岂不为妙？只带个把家童去跟跟便了。”沈将仕身边有物，放心不下，叫个贴身安童背着一个皮箱，随在身后。一同郑、李二人踱出长安门外来。但见：

甫高城廓，渐远市廛。参差古树绕河流，荡漾游丝飞野岸。布帘沽酒处，惟有耕农村老来尝；小艇载鱼还，多是牧竖樵夫来问。炊烟四起，黑云影里有人家；路径多歧，青草痕中为孔道。别是一番野趣，顿教忘却尘情。

三人信步而行，观玩景致，一头说话，一头走路。迤逦有二三里之远，来到一个塘边。只见几个粗腿大脚的汉子，赤剥了上身，手提着皮挽，牵着五七匹好马，在池塘里洗浴。看见



if you could put it off until tomorrow.” Shen said, “Tomorrow is fine with me. But no further delay!” The two men said, “You are so kind and generous! We would be a couple of useless fellows if we go back on our word. We’ll surely go with you tomorrow.”

The next day Zheng and Li came to Shen and asked, “Are you ready for the trip out of town?” Shen answered, “Yes, I’m ready.” Zheng asked, “I wonder whether you, Master, would like to go by horse or ride a sedan-chair?” Li said, “Since we are going to take a stroll for leisure, what is the point of using a horse or sedan-chair?” Shen added, “Exactly, Brother Li. If we have servants coming with us, tending to the horses and sedan-chairs, we won’t feel free to move around. We are just going for a joy ride. It will be up to us where we go and where we stay. What fun it’s going to be! So we’ll just bring just one or two servants along with us.” Then Shen had one of his favorite servant boys carry a small leather case with his valuables inside and follow them. The three of them sauntered out through Chang’an Gate. What they saw out of town was quite a different sight:

Beyond the city walls, they gradually got away from the madding crowds. Out in the wilderness, old trees towered with branches and twigs entangled along the river while webs of gossamer floated over the riverbanks. A small wine shop and inn with a cloth-curtained entrance stood nearby, only frequented by peasants and elderly locals. Fishing boats were returning home with their catch, only encountering buffalo boys and woodsmen awaiting them to make purchases. Wisps of smoke spiraled skyward from the chimneys of houses shrouded in dense fog, and roads branched off into forks vanishing into thick bushes. What a different view of the countryside this was, immediately making them forget all their mundane affairs.

The three men, fascinated by the natural beauty of the wild landscape, walked in a leisurely and aimless manner as they chatted with one another. After a short stroll of two or three *li*, they wandered across a pond, where they found several burly men with stout legs and big feet, who, stripped to the waist and holding straps in their hands, were giving a bath to about half a dozen good horses. On seeing the three approaching, these men immediately jumped out of the pond like a shot, hurriedly put on their



他三人走来至近，一齐跳出塘子，慌忙将衣服穿上，望着三人齐声迎喏。沈将仕惊疑，问二人道：“此辈素非相识，为何见吾三人恭敬如此？”郑、李两人道：“此王朝议使君之隶卒也。使君与吾两人最相厚善，故此辈见吾等走过，不敢怠慢。”沈将仕道：“元来这个缘故，我也道为何无因至前。”

三人又一头说，一头走，离池边上前又数百步远了。李三忽然叫沈将仕一说道：“大官人，我有句话商量着。”沈将仕道：“甚话？”李三道：“今日之游，颇得野兴，只是信步浪走，没个住脚的去处。若便是这样转去了，又无意味。何不就骑着适才王公之马，拜一拜王公，岂不是妙？”沈将仕道：“王公是何人？我却不曾认得，怎好拜他？”李三道：“此老极是个妙人，他曾为一大郡守，家资绝富，姬妾极多。他最喜的是宾客往来，款接不倦。今年纪已老，又有了些痰病，诸姬妾皆有离心。却是他防禁严密，除了我两人忘形相知，得以相见，平时等闲不放出外边来。那些姬妾无事，只是终日合伴顽耍而已。若吾辈去看他，他是极喜的。大官人虽不曾相会，有吾辈同往，只说道钦慕高雅，愿一识荆。他看见是吾每的好友，自不敢轻。吾两人再递一个春与他，等他晓得大官人是在京调官的，衣冠



clothing and bowed in greeting towards them. Surprised, Shen asked his companions, "They are strangers, but why are they showing such respect toward us?" The two companions replied, "They are servants of Grand Master Wang of the Court Audience. Master Wang is a close friend of ours. That is why they are so courteous toward us." Shen said, "Oh I see. They wouldn't have done so without reason."

They continued with their aimless roaming along the side of the pond as they chatted with one another and in a short time they were a couple of hundred of steps beyond the pond. All of a sudden Li stopped Shen and said, "Court Gentleman Shen, I have an idea." Shen asked, "What is it?" Li replied, "We've been really enjoying ourselves appreciating the country charms out here today. But we've been strolling for so long without a specific destination. And we have no idea where we are to stop for a break. It'll become pretty boring soon if we keep on walking like this. Why not check out the horses of Master Wang we saw just now, and take a ride to visit him at his home today? Is that not a good idea?" Shen said, "Who is this Master Wang? I don't know him. Is it right for me to intrude upon him?"

Li replied, "Master Wang is really a nice old man. He used to be the prefect of a large prefecture. He is extremely wealthy and has a large amount of family property. He also keeps an army of concubines. He is a very hospitable person and used to never tire of entertaining his guests. Unfortunately he is now advanced in years and suffers from asthma. His concubines are all thinking of leaving him. But he always has his gate guarded under close watch. Nobody is allowed entry, except the two of us because we are close to him. By the way, those concubines of his have nothing to attend to, so they gather together to play and amuse themselves all day long. If we go see him, I'm sure he'll be quite happy. Though you haven't met him before, you can simply come with us and say you admire his noble character and would like to make his acquaintance. He'll definitely show you courtesy, since you're our friend. Zheng and I will bring him some wine as a gift and, as soon as he knows you're going to the capital city to take up a position, he'll surely treat you with special attention. Then we're sure to have a good feast. If that happens, we can



一脉，一发注意了，必有极精的饮馔相款。吾每且落得开怀快畅他一晚，也是有兴的事。强如寂寂寞寞，仍旧三人走了回去。”沈将仕心里未决，郑十又道：“此老真是会快活的人，有了许多美妾，他却又在朋友面上十分殷勤，寻出兴趣来。更兼留心饮馔，必要精洁，惟恐朋友们不中意，吃得不尽兴。只这一片高兴热肠，何处再讨得有？大官人既到此地，也该认一认这个人，不可错过。”沈将仕也喜道：“果然如此，便同二位拜他一拜也好。”李三道：“我每原回到池边，要了他的马去。”

于是三人同路而回。走到池边，郑、李大声叫道：“带四个马过来！”看马的不敢违慢，答应道：“家爷的马，官人每要骑，尽意骑坐就是。”郑、李与沈将仕各骑了一匹，连沈家家童捧着箱儿也骑了一匹。看马的带住了马头，问道：“官人每要往那里去？”郑生将鞭梢指道：“到你爷家里去。”看马的道：“晓得了。”在前走着引路，

三人联镳按辔而行。转过两个坊曲，见一所高门，李三道：“到了，到了。郑十哥且陪大官人站一会，待我先进去报知了，好出来相迎。”沈将仕开了箱，取个名帖，与李三带了报去。李三进门内去了，少歇出来道：“主人听得有新客到此，甚是喜欢。



drink like fish tonight. That's sure to give us a great deal of fun. How nice it'll be! Isn't this much better than our just walking back all the way home?"

While Shen was hesitating, Zheng urged him on, saying: "Master Wang is really a rather cheerful old guy. Though he enjoys living with many beautiful concubines, his generosity toward his friends is also exceptional, as he always manages to make his visitors enjoy themselves as much as possible. Also, he pays much attention to the quality of dinners for his friends, and always sees to it that the food served is carefully chosen and cleaned. He is always worried that his friends might not have a good time at his home and afraid of ruining the otherwise good appetite of his guests. I wonder whether you will ever meet another person as generous and kind as he is. Since we've happened to cross by here today, I suggest you take this opportunity and get to know him. Don't pass up this chance." Hearing all this, Shen was filled with delight and said, "All right, I'd like to go with you two and meet him." Li said, "Now let's go back to the pond and check out some of the horses."

They then made their way back to the pond. Zheng and Li shouted towards the horsemen, "Bring us four horses, please!" Without any hesitation, the horsemen responded, "They are our master's horses. Feel free to use them." Zheng, Li and Shen each took a horse. Even the servant boy who was carrying the case for his master was provided with one. One leading horseman grabbed the rein of one horse and asked, "Could you tell me where you are going?" Pointing his whip in the direction of Master Wang's house, Zheng said, "To your master's home." The horseman said, "I see." And then he took the lead and headed for Master Wang's home.

The three rode side by side and, after passing two hamlets, came to a large residence with a huge tall gate. Li said, "Here we are. Brother Zheng, please wait here with Shen for a moment, while I go inside and tell our host so that he may come out to meet you." Shen opened his case, took out a name card and handed it to Li to show it to the host. Li took the card and went inside. Before long, Li came out and said, "Our host is very glad to hear a new visitor has come to his home. Unfortunately, he's been ill for a long time and feels uncomfortable putting on his official hat and



只是久病倦懒，怕着冠带，愿求便服相见。”沈将仕道：“论来初次拜谒，礼该具服。今主人有命，恐怕反劳；若许便服，最为洒脱。”李三又进去说了。只见王朝议命两个安童扶了，一同李三出来迎客。沈将仕举眼看时，但见：

仪度端庄，容颜羸瘦。一前一却，浑如野鹤步罡；半喘半吁，大似吴牛见月。深浅躬不思而得，是鹭鸳班里习将来；长短气不约而同，敢莺燕窝中输了去？

沈将仕见王朝议虽是衰老模样，自然是士大夫体段，肃然起敬。王朝议见沈将仕少年丰采，不觉笑逐颜开，拱进堂来。沈将仕与二人俱与朝议相见了。沈将仕叙了些仰慕的说话，道：“幸郑、李两兄为介绍，得以识荆，固快夙心，实出唐突。”王朝议道：“两君之友，即仆友也。况两君胜士，相与的必是高贤。老朽何幸，得以沾接，”茶罢，朝议揖客进了东轩，分付当直的设席款待。分付不多时，杯盘果饌，倾刻即至。沈将仕看时，虽不怎的大摆设，却多精美雅洁，色色在行，不是等闲人家办得出的。朝议谦道：“一时不能治具，果菜小酌，勿怪轻褻。”郑、李二人道：“沈君极是脱洒人，既忝吾辈相知，原



girdle. He wonders if he could meet you in casual dress.” Shen said, “Well, though the dress code requires formal attire for a new visitor—since he’s not up to dressing, I should not trouble him to do so. He will feel more comfortable and at ease in casual dress.” Then Li again went inside and informed the host. A moment later, in the company of Li, Master Wang came out supported by two servant boys to greet them. Shen looked up and saw a man:

Dignified and possessing impressive looks and a graceful manner, yet he was thin and weak. When walking, he staggered; when talking, he breathed hard. His frequent courteous bowing seemed to be inspired from egrets and mandarin ducks; while his shortness of breath might have been the result of his overindulgence in sensual pleasures.

Shen noticed that Wang, though quite old, still carried the bearing of a high-ranking official, which left him rather awestruck. Seeing his visitor was young and handsome, Master Wang smiled and courteously led Shen into a reception hall. There the three visitors, Shen, Zheng, and Li, met their host formally. Having first expressed his admiration for Master Wang, Shen said, “Fortunately, through the introduction of my friends Zheng and Li, I’ve had the chance to make your acquaintance, probably an essential step toward future success in my career. Today’s meeting has fulfilled my wishes, but I do apologize for the intrusion.” Master Wang replied, “I take any friend of these two gentlemen as one of my own. Besides, since these two gentlemen are well accomplished in learning, any person in their company, like yourself, must unquestionably be one of a high caliber of intelligence. I am honored to have you as my friend.”

After tea, Master Wang showed his guests into an eastern room and ordered the house manager to prepare dinner. Before long the food and fruit arrived along with the dinnerware. Shen noticed, though it was not a banquet, the serving of the food was refined, delicate and professional, absolutely beyond the means of any ordinary family. Master Wang said politely, “I apologize I was in a rush and can only present a humble dinner of a few dishes. I hope you do not mind.” Zheng and Li said, “Shen is rather a carefree man. Since he is our friend, please do not take him as a new guest. Just feel free to do what you please as our host. Drink and



不必认作新客。只管尽主人之兴，吃酒便是，不必过谦了。”小童二人频频斟酒，三个客人忘怀大酺，主人勉强支陪。

看看天晚，点上灯来。朝议又陪了一晌，忽然喉中发喘，连嗽不止，痰声曳锯也似响震四座，支吾不得。叫两个小童扶了，立起身来道：“贱体不快，上客光顾，不能尽主礼，却怎的好？”对郑生道：“没奈何了，有烦郑兄代作主人，请客随意剧饮，不要阻兴。老朽略去歇息一会，煮药吃了，少定即来奉陪。恕罪，恕罪。”朝议一面同两个小童扶拥而去。剩得他三个在座，小童也不出来斟酒了。李三道：“等我寻人去。”起身走了进去。

沈将仕见主人去了，酒席阑珊，心里有些失望。欲待要辞了回去，又不曾别得主人，抑且馀兴犹未尽，只得走下庭中散步。忽然听得一阵欢呼掷骰子声，循声觅去，却在轩后一小阁中，有些灯影在窗隙里射将出来。沈将仕将窗隙弄大了些，窥看里面。不看时万事全休，一看看见了，真是：

酥麻了半壁，软瘫做一堆。

你道里头是甚光景？但见：

明烛高张，巨案中列。掷卢赛雉，纤纤玉手擎成；喝



enjoy! Forget about any formality.” Then the three visitors started to drink in copious quantities, attended by two servant boys who kept pouring wine into their cups, while the host, though in an ailing condition, struggled to keep up with the occasion.

Soon darkness fell upon them and candles were lit. Master Wang managed to sit for another few moments, but suddenly he fell short of breath and gave himself over to a fit of coughing. His continuous loud spitting defeated his efforts to bring himself under control and disturbed the others. He had the two servant boys prop him up and then said to his guests, “I’m sorry I’m not feeling well. You’re my honorable guests, but I don’t feel up to doing my duty as host. What an embarrassment this is!” Then he turned to Zheng and continued, “Brother Zheng, I’m sorry I can’t stay here any longer. Could you please do me the favor of taking over as host and see that everyone enjoys himself? I have to leave and have a rest, and take some brewed medicine. I’ll be back with you shortly. Excuse me, excuse me...” So saying, Master Wang took his leave supported by the two servant boys, leaving the three men at the table. The boys who had poured wine for them were also gone. Li said, “Let me go and bring us some company,” and he went inside.

With the host gone and the dinner on hold, Shen was a little disappointed. He thought of departing, but he had not formally taken his leave to the host. What was more, he had only had a few cups of wine and that was far from enough. So he strolled out into the courtyard. Suddenly the sound of dice clicking and roars of excitement caught his attention. Following the sounds, he found himself outside a small room and saw some candlelight radiating from a crack in the window. He pulled the crack wider and peeped through it. If he had not done this, everything would have been fine. But the moment he stole a glance through the crack, his limbs grew weak and numb and his body disintegrated.

Readers, what do you think was going on inside? What a spectacle it was!

In the middle of the room was a large square table, surrounded by seven or eight beauties all standing. As their rosy mouths shouted for the roll of the highest number, as they threw the dice they waved their delicate jade-



六呼么，点点朱唇吐就。金步摇，玉条脱，尽为孤注争雄；风流阵，肉屏风，竟自和盘托出。若非广寒殿里，怎能勾如许仙风？不是金谷园中，何处来若干媚质？任是愚人须缩舌，怎教浪子不输心！

元来沈将仕窗隙中看去，见里头是美女七八人，环立在一张八仙桌外。桌上明晃晃点着一枝高烛，中间放下酒榼一架，一个骰盆。盆边七八堆采物，每一美女面前一堆，是将来作注赌采的。众女掀拳裸袖，各欲争雄。灯下偷眼看去，真个个如嫦娥出世，丰姿态度，目中所罕见。不觉魂飞天外，魄散九霄，看得目不转睛，顽涎乱吐。

正在禁架不定之际，只见这个李三不知在那里走将进去，也窜在里头了，抓起色子，便待要掷下去。众女赌到间深处，忽见是李三下注，尽嚷道：“李秀才，你又来鬼厮搅，打断我姊妹们兴头！”李三顽着脸皮道：“便等我在里头，与贤妹们帮兴一帮兴也好。”一个女子道：“总是熟人，不妨事。要来便来，不要酸子气，快摆下注钱来！”众女道：“看这个酸鬼那里熬得起大注？”一递一句讥诮着。李三掷一掷，做一个鬼脸，大家把他来做一个取笑的物事。李三只是忍着羞，皮着脸，凭他擘面啐来，只是顽钝无耻，挨在帮里。一霎时，不分彼此，竟大家着他在里面掷了。

沈将仕看见李三情状，一发神魂摇荡，顿足道：“真神仙境界也！若使吾得似李三，也在里头厮混得一场，死也甘心！”急得心痒难熬，好似热地上蜒蚰，一歇儿立脚不定，急走来要与郑十商量。郑十正独自个坐在前轩打盹，沈将仕急摇



like hands. Golden hairpins, jade bracelets were all being used as stakes. Where else would we find so many beauties except in the legendary palace of the moon? Where else would we see so many charming girls except in the Jingu Garden? Even slow-witted people would be stunned at such a scene. Let alone a womanizer!

On the table was a tall candle. There was a wine vessel and a dice pot in the center of the table. Each lovely lass had a pile of chips in front of her as stakes. Rolling up their sleeves, these young ladies were all in the highest of spirits, in hopes of trying their chances. Shen gazed at them. Each was as beautiful as the moon goddess. Staring lustfully at them, Shen lost himself in a trance.

As Shen was fixing his eyes on the young ladies, Li sprang from nowhere into the game-playing party. Li grabbed the dice and was about to throw them when these women, in the heat of the moment, noticed his intrusion and shouted, "Scholar Li, you've come here to make trouble again. You're interrupting our game!" Li said shamelessly, "I think you need me to add more fun to your game of dice." One lady said, "He's an old friend. Let him play. But you should play a fair game. Take out your money and put down a stake!" Another lady chimed in, "Look at him, what a wretch! Do you expect him to lay down any big stakes?" Such derisive remarks bombarded him one after another. Li made a few more throws of the dice, with a wry smile, thus becoming a target of ridicule, but he accepted it shamelessly, not caring what they said. Moments later, the gamble came out even, and the ladies eventually yielded to his brazenness and let him join the game.

The sight of Li having such fun with these ladies totally beguiled Shen. He stamped his feet, saying to himself, "What a paradise! If I could get the chance to enjoy myself in there like Li, I would be perfectly content even if I die soon after!" Shen became flustered, fidgeting about as if he were on pins and needles. Then he hurriedly went to find Zheng, hoping to speak to him of what he had seen.

At that moment, Zheng was alone in his chair having a little nap. Shen woke him up with a nudge, and declared, "How strange you should be sleeping out here, when Brother Li is having so much fun inside!" Zheng



他醒来道：“亏你还睡得着！我们一样到此，李三哥却落在蜜缸里了。”郑十道：“怎么的？”沈将仕扯了他手，竟到窗隙边来，指着里面道：“你看么！”郑十打眼一看，果然李三与群女在里头混赌。郑十对沈将仕道：“这个李三，好没廉耻！”沈将仕道：“如此胜会，怎生知会他一声，设法我也在里头去掷掷儿，也不枉了今日来走这一番。”郑十道：“诸女皆王公侍儿。此老方才去眠宿了，诸女得闲在此顽耍。吾每是熟极的，故李三插得进去。诸女素不识大官人，主人又不在面前，怎好与他们接对？须比我每不得。”沈将仕情极了道：“好哥哥，带挈我带挈。”郑十道：“若挨得进去，须要稍物，方才可赌。”沈将仕道：“吾随身篋中有金宝千金，又有二三千张茶券子可以为稍。只要十哥设法得我进去，取乐得一回，就双手送掉了这些东西，我愿毕矣。”郑十道：“这等，不要高声，悄悄地随着我来，看相个机会慢慢插将下去。切勿惊散了他们，便不妙了。”沈将仕谨依其言，不敢则一声。郑十拽了他手，转弯抹角，且是熟溜，早已走到了聚赌的去处。

诸姬正赌得酣，各不抬头，不见沈将仕。郑十将他捏一把，扯他到一个稀空的所在站下了。伺了许久，直等两下决了输赢，会稍之时，郑十方才开声道：“容我每也掷掷儿么？”众女抬头看时，认得是郑十。却见肩下立着个面生的人，大家喝道：“何处儿郎，突然到此！”郑十道：“此吾好友沈大官人，知卿等今宵良会，愿一拭目，幸勿惊讶。”众女道：“主翁与汝等通家，故彼此各无避忌。如何带了他家少年来搀预我良人之会？”



asked, "What's up?" Shen pulled him by the hand to the window and, pointing inside, said, "Look!" Zheng peeked in and saw Li gambling with those ladies. Zheng said to Shen, "Shameless Li!" Shen exclaimed, "What a party! What fun! How can I let him know that I want to join them in the game too? That will make my trip here most worthwhile." Zhen said, "Those ladies are Master Wang's maids. This old gentleman has gone to sleep so they have the chance to enjoy themselves. Li and I are frequent visitors here, so he has no problem messing around with them. But you are a stranger to the ladies and the host is not around. I'm afraid it would be inappropriate for you to join them. Though it's quite a different case with us." Out of desperation, Shen said, "My good brother, do me a favor and get me in there."

Zheng said, "If you do want to join them, you must have something to wager." Shen said, "I have some valuables in my case worth about a thousand taels of silver. I also have a couple of thousand tea-coupons. I can use these as stakes. If you can manage to have me join them and have fun tonight, I'd be willing to give them all up." Zheng replied, "All right, now lower your voice and come with me quietly. I'll find a chance to sneak you in at the right time. It's best not to disrupt them." Shen kept quiet and Zheng, grasping his hand, led him forward and made a few turns, like he was quite familiar with the compound. A moment later, they stole in by the side of the gambling table.

The ladies were in high spirits, bent over the table, and none had noticed their arrival. Zheng pinched Shen and dragged him to an inconspicuous spot. They waited for some time until the current round was over. As the excitement calmed down, Zheng said loudly, "Would you mind if I have a shot?" The ladies all raised their heads and realized Zheng was there, but they also saw a stranger beside him. They shouted, "Who is this man, and how did he get in here?" Zheng replied, "This is my friend Master Shen. He learned you were having a party here, and he wanted to have a look. No need to panic." The ladies fussed, "Our master and you have been on good terms for some time and we have nothing to hide from one another. But why are you bringing a young stranger here tonight to intrude upon us?" One middle-aged lady said, "I think it's fine, since this



一个老成些的道：“既是两君好友，亦是一体的。既来之，则安之，且请一杯迟到的酒。”遂取一大卮，满斟着一杯热酒，奉与沈将仕。沈将仕此时身体皆已麻酥，见了亲手奉酒，敢有推辞？双手接过来，一饮而尽，不剩一滴。奉酒的姬对着众姬笑道：“妙人也，每人可各奉一杯。”郑十道：“列位休得炒断了掷兴，吾友沈大官人，也愿与众位下一局。一头掷骰，一头饮酒助兴，更为有趣。”那老成的道：“妙！妙！虽然如此也要防主人觉来。”遂唤小鬟：“快去朝议房里伺候，倘若睡觉，函来报知，切勿误事！”小鬟领命去了。

诸女就与沈将仕共博，沈将仕自喜身入仙宫，志得意满，采色随手得胜。诸姬头上钗钿首饰，尽数除下来作采赌赛，尽被沈将仕赢了，须臾之间，约有千金。诸姬个个目瞪口呆，面前一空。郑十将沈将仕扯一把道：“赢勾了，歇手罢！”怎当得沈将仕魂不附体，他心里只要多插得一会寡趣便好，不在乎财物输赢，那里肯住？只管伸手去取酒吃，吃了又掷，掷了又吃。诸姬又来趁兴，奉他不休。沈将仕越肉麻了，风将起来，弄得诸姬皆赤手，无稍可掷。



gentleman is a friend of yours. As he's here already, why not have a late drink of wine?" She picked up a big vessel, poured a cup of warm wine and presented it to Shen.

Seeing the lady offering him a cup of wine with both hands, Shen was seized with ecstasy. How would he dare decline it? He took the cup in both hands and downed the wine completely, not leaving a single drop. The lady commented, "He really is a sensible young man! You should each offer him a drink, too." Zheng said, "Wait a minute. We don't mean to dampen your spirits while you're playing. Master Shen would be interested in participating in a round of the game with you. Let's throw the dice while having drinks. This will provide us with more fun." The middle-aged lady said, "That would be great! But we must make sure not to let our master know what's going on here." She ordered a young servant-girl to go to Master Wang's room and keep watch, telling her to hurry back and let them know the moment the master woke up. She also urged the young servant to be particularly watchful and allow for no mishaps. The young girl left with the assignment, and the ladies resumed the dice game with Shen.

Shen was overjoyed with his good luck to be inside an abode of female angels. As his wishes were now fulfilled and his enthusiasm was running high, luck seemed to be on his side. He won one game after another. To find something to bet with, the women had to strip jewels off their heads, items such as hairpins and jade earrings worth of about one thousand taels of silver. But all these things were won by Shen. The ladies were stunned, with now nothing left in front of them. Nudging Shen, Zheng said to him, "You've won enough. Shouldn't you stop now?" But at that moment Shen was feeling a tremendous surge of adrenaline as if his soul had left his body. He thought of nothing but to stay longer, and was beyond care for his winnings and losses. How would he be willing to quit the game at that moment? He went on with his spree of throwing dice and drinking. The women added spice to his playing by making teasing remarks to him. Shen continued to play with even more gusto. Soon his good luck had left the ladies completely empty-handed.

The youngest and most beautiful among the ladies was the one who



其间有一小姬年最少，貌最美，独是他输得最多，见沈将仕风风世世，连掷采骰，带者怒容，起身竟去。走至房中转了一转，提着一个羊脂玉花樽到面前，向桌上一掬道：“此瓶值千缗，只此作孤注，输赢在此一决。”众姬问道：“此不是尔所有，何故将来作注？”小姬道：“此主人物也。此一决得胜固妙；倘若再不如意，一发输了去，明日主人寻究，定遭鞭笞。然事势至此，我情已极，不得不然！”众人劝他道：“不可赶兴，万一又输，再无挽回了。”小姬佛然道：“凭我自主，何故阻我！”坚意要掷。众人见他已怒，便道：“本图欢乐，何故到此地位？”沈将仕看见小姬光景，又怜又爱，心里踌躇道：“我本意岂欲赢他？争奈骰子自胜。怎生得帮衬这一掷输与他了，也解得他的恼怒，不然反是我杀风景了。”

看官听说：这骰子虽无知觉，极有灵通，最是跟着人意兴走的。起初沈将仕神来气旺，胜采便跟着他走，所以连掷连赢。歇了一会，胜头已过，败色将来。况且心里有些过意不去，情愿认输，一团锐气已自馁了十分了。更见那小姬气忿忿，雄纠纠，十分有趣，魂灵也被他吊了去。心意忙乱，一掷大败。小姬叫声：“惭愧！也有这一掷该我赢的。”即把花樽底儿朝天倒将转来。沈将仕只道止是个花樽，就是千缗，也赔得起。岂知花樽里头尽是金钗珠琲塞满其中，一倒倒将出来，辉煌夺目，



had lost the most. Becoming irritated at Shen's incessant winning and drinking, she rose and went back to her room. A few moments later, she returned with a white jade patterned wine vessel. She set it on the table and said, "Here is a vessel worth one thousand strings of cash. I'm going to have one last shot with it." The other ladies were all amazed and said, "But it's not yours. How can you use it as a stake?" The young lady said, "I know it's our master's, but it'll give me one last chance. If I win, that's fine. But if I lose again, I won't get the vessel back. Tomorrow the master will definitely inquire about it and I'll be ready for his lashes. But I am in such a desperate situation, I have no choice."

The rest responded, "No, you can't let yourself be driven by emotion. If you lose the vessel, you'll never be able to get it back." Infuriated, the young lady retorted, "I'll take care of that. Don't say anything more." She refused to change her mind. Seeing her growing so angry, the rest said, "We were only meaning to have fun. Why are you taking it so seriously?" The young lady's obstinacy attracted Shen. He took a liking to her, and at the same time felt sorry for her. He figured, "Originally I was not interested in the results of the game. But luck has been on my side. Now I think I should do her a favor by losing the next game so as to calm her down. Otherwise I'm going to be blamed for spoiling all the fun."

Readers, dice, though not human, do have inspiration and run according to one's wishes and mood. At first, Shen was very enthusiastic, so the dice brought him a number of wins in succession. After some time, things started to turn. In addition, he was worried about the young lady and intended to give up the game, and hence his high mood. Shen was indeed carried away by the young lady's behavior, her anger and obstinacy. As a result, he cast the dice in a flurry and lost the round. The young lady yelled out, "Great! I'm sorry, Sir, it's my turn to win!" So saying, she turned the wine vessel upside down and dumped the contents onto the table. Originally Shen had thought the wine vessel was worth around the value of one thousand strings of coins and he would be able to afford it once he lost. He had never thought it would be full of jewels and pearls. The dazzling jewels were quite precious. Since the wine vessel and the



正不知多少价钱，尽该是输家赔偿的。沈将仕无言可对。

郑、李二人与同诸姬公估价值，所值三千缗钱。沈将仕须赖不得，尽把先前所赢尽数退还，不上千金。只得走出叫家僮取带来箱子里面茶券子二千多张，算了价钱，尽作赌资还了。说话的，“茶券子”是甚物件，可当金银？看官听说，“茶券子”即是“茶引”。宋时禁茶榷税，但是茶商纳了官银，方关茶引认引不认人。有此茶引，可以到处贩卖。每张之利，一两有馀。大户人家尽有当着茶引生利的，所以这茶引当得银子用。苏小卿之母受了三千张茶引，把小卿嫁与冯魁，即是此例也。沈将仕去了二千馀张茶引，即是去了二千馀两银子。沈将仕自道只输得一掷，身边还有剩下几百张，其余金宝他物在外不动，还思量再下局去，博将转来。忽听得朝议里头大声咳嗽，急索唾壶。诸姬慌张起来，忙将三客推出阁外，把火打灭，一齐奔入房去。

三人重复走到轩外元饮酒去处，刚坐下，只见两个小童又出来劝酒道：“朝议多多致意尊客：夜深体倦，不敢奉陪，求尊客发兴多饮一杯。”三人同声辞道：“酒兴已阑，不必再叨了，



jewels within were the stakes for the game, Shen, as the loser, had no choice but to pay that sum of money.

Zheng, Li and the ladies around estimated that it was all worth of about three thousand strings of cash. Shen, unable to deny the simple facts, turned in everything he had won previously, which was worth less than one thousand taels of silver. Then he went out of the room and asked his servant boy to get him from his case the over two thousand tea-coupons, whose value were counted, and all were paid as the stake. Readers, you may wonder what the tea-coupons were and how they could be used in the place of gold and silver. Now, please allow me to explain. During the Song Dynasty, the government imposed a levy on tea and issued tea-coupons to tea vendors who had paid their taxes. This tax payment receipt was accepted everywhere and could be traded at the value of more than one tael of silver. Some rich families made profits from tea-coupon transactions. This is why the tea-coupons could be used as silver. There was a well-known story about a young courtesan named Su Xiaoqing, who was sold by a brothel owner to Feng Kuei, a tea merchant, for three thousand tea-coupons.

The two thousand or so tea-coupons Shen lost were approximately worth two thousand taels of silver. Shen thought to himself that, though he had lost this round, he still had several hundred tea-coupons left with him and all his treasure in other places was still intact. He figured he could play another round of the game and thus win it all back. Right at that instant, there suddenly came the sounds of Master Wang's coughing from the inner room, and his asking for a spittoon. Agitated, the ladies pushed the three men out of the room, put out the candle, and raced inside to attend to their master.

The three men returned to the room in which they had been drinking earlier that evening. The moment they seated themselves, two servant boys came over to offer them more wine, saying: "Our master asked me to tell you he appreciates your coming as honorable guests, but it is late and he is tired. He doesn't feel up to being with you now, but he asks that you have one more drink." The three men answered, "We've had enough. Thank you. We'd like to say goodbye to him before we leave." The servant



只要作别了便去。”小童走进去了，又走出来道：“朝议说：‘仓卒之间，多有简慢。夜已深了，不劳面别。此后三日，再求三位同会此处，更加尽兴，切勿相拒。’”又叫分付看马的仍旧送三位到寓所，转来回话。

三人一同沈家家僮，乘着原来的四匹马，离了王家。行到城门边，天色将明，城门已自开了。马夫送沈将仕到了寓所，沈将仕赏了马夫酒钱，连郑、李二人的也多是沈将仕出了，一齐打发了去。郑、李二人别了沈将仕道：“一夜不睡，且各还寓所安息一安息，等到后日再去赴约。”二人别去。

沈将仕自思夜来之事，虽然失去了一二千本钱，却是着实得趣。想来老姬赞他，何等有情。小姬怒他，也自有兴。其余诸姬递相劝酒，轮流赌赛，好不风光！多是背着主人做的。可恨郑、李两人先占着这些便宜，而今我既弄入了门，少不得也熟分起来，也与他二人一般受用。或者还有括着个把上手的事在里头，也未可知。转转得意。

因两日困倦不出门，巴到第三日，清早起来，就要去再赴王朝议之约。却不见郑、李二人到来。急着家僮到二人下处去



boys went into their master's room and told him of their visitors' plan to exit, and returned the next moment, saying, "Our master says, 'I was caught unprepared and apologize for not attending to you very well. Now it's deep into the night and I'm sorry I can't see you off. Please come again in three days and I'm sure we shall enjoy ourselves some more. Please do not turn me down.' He has also made arrangements for having the horsemen see you back home and report to him after that."

The three men and Shen's servant boy left the house of Master Wang, riding the four horses they had ridden on their way there earlier that day. As they came to the city gate, dawn was breaking and the gate was already open. The horsemen took Shen back his lodging place. Shen tipped the horsemen for himself as well as for Zheng and Li. Then the horsemen left. As they were taking their leave, Zheng and Li said to Shen, "We've amused ourselves the whole night. Now we can go home and have some sleep. Let's make sure we keep the appointment and go for the party in a couple of days." Then the two left.

Shen recalled with pleasure what had happened to him the previous night. Though he lost a couple of thousand taels of silver, he thought he had had a wonderful time. He recollected how affectionate and tender the middle-aged lady was when she had praised him; how attractive the youngest lady had looked when she had flown into a rage at him. It was also thrilling for him to recall how the ladies had offered drinks to him in turn and competed with him in the game, all done behind the back of their master, and how bewitched and proud of himself he felt. However, there was one thing that made him feel upset, and that was that Zheng and Li had snatched such a good chance of enjoyment ahead of him. He murmured to himself, "Since I have now gotten onto the right track, things will ease up for me in getting familiar with them. Eventually I'm going to have an equal share in the gains of those two. Probably I may get the better of them someday. Who knows?" He felt very pleased with himself. Shen stayed indoors for the next two days due to his lethargy. On the third day, he got up early in the morning and prepared himself for the appointment with Master Wang. However, Zheng and Li did not show up. Shen became anxious and sent servants to their homes to fetch them.



请。下处人回言走出去了，只得呆呆等着。等到日中，竟不见来。沈将仕急得乱跳，肚肠多爬了出来。想一想道：“莫不他二人不约我先去了？我既已拜过扰过，认得的了，何必待他二人？只是要引进内里去，还须得他每领路。我如今备些礼物，去酬谢前晚之酌，若是他二人先在，不必说了；若是不在，料得必来，好歹在那里等他每为是。”叫家僮雇了马匹，带了礼物，出了城门。竟依前日之路，到王朝议家里来。

到得门首，只见大门拴着。先叫家僮寻着傍边一个小侧门进去，一直到了里头，并无一人在内。家僮正不知甚么缘故，走出来回覆家主。沈将仕惊疑，犹恐差了，再同着家僮走进去一看，只见前堂东轩与那聚赌的小阁，宛然那夜光景在目，却无一个人影。大骇道：“分明是这个里头，那有此等怪事！”急走到大门左侧，问着个开皮铺的人道：“这大宅里王朝议全家那里去了？”皮匠道：“此是内相侯公公的空房，从来没个甚么王朝议在此。”沈将仕道：“前夜有个王朝议，与同家眷正在此中居住。我们来拜他，他做主人留我每吃了一夜酒。分明是此处，如何说从来没有？”皮匠道：“三日前有好几个恶少年挟了几个上厅有名粉头，税了此房吃酒赌钱，次日分了利钱，



The servants came back with the message, "They are out." He waited for them until noon, and there was still no sign of their arrival.

As he waited, Shen began to grow terribly anxious. Then it occurred to him, "Could it be also possible that they might have set out for Master Wang's place without letting me know? Since I've been to Master Wang's house and know the way there, why do I have to bother to wait for Zheng and Li? But I will need their help if I want to get inside Master Wang's house. Now I'd better bring some gifts with me as a token of my gratitude for all the hospitality I received the other night. If they're there ahead of me, that's good. If they're not there yet, they must be on their way and I can simply wait for them." So he called a servant boy to saddle his horse and prepare some gifts. Then he went out of town and made his way to Master Wang's house, as he had done the previous day.

When he arrived, he found the gate was shut. He asked his servant to go inside from the side door and have a look. The servant went farther into the courtyard and found nobody inside. He became puzzled and came out to tell Shen. Shen was shocked. Uncertain now whether or not he had come to the right place, he went in with the servant to double-check. It was indeed an empty residence, although there was the familiar sight of the reception hall, east porch, and the small room that reminded him of the gambling party the previous night. Quite bewildered, Shen said, "It must have been here. How strange!" He dashed outside, and found a man operating a fur store to the left of the gate. He said to the storekeeper, "Excuse me, sir. This is Master Wang's residence. Could you tell me where Master Wang and his family have gone?"

The fur dealer answered, "This is the property of Lord Hou, minister of domestic affairs. He has left the residence empty and unused. There has never been a person living here by the name of Master Wang." Shen said, "A Master Wang with his family was here three days ago. I came here to visit him, and he hosted and treated me to dinner with wine the whole night. I'm sure this is the right place. How can you say no such person ever lived here?" The fur dealer said, "Three days ago, a group of young rogues, together with a few well-known courtesans, rented this place for a feast and a gambling party. The following day they settled the



各自散去，那里是甚么王朝议请客来？这位官人莫不着了他道儿了？”沈将仕方才疑道是奸计，装成圈套来骗他这些茶券子的。一二千金之物分明付了一空了。却又转一念头，追思那日池边唤马，宅内留宾，后来阁中聚赌，那是无心凑着的，难道是设得来的计较？似信不信道：“只可惜不见两人，毕竟有个缘故在内，等待几日，寻着他两个再问。”

岂知自此之后，屡屡叫人到郑、李两人下处去问，连下处的人多不晓得，说道：“自那日出后，一竟不来，虚锁着两间房，开进去，并无一物在内，不知去向了。”到此方知前日这些逐段逐节行径，令人看不出一些，与马夫小童多是一套中人物，只在迟这一夜里头打合成的。正是拐骗得十分巧处，神鬼莫测也。

漫道良朋作胜游，谁知胥篋有阴谋？

清闺不是闲人到，只为痴心错下筹。



accounts among themselves and went their separate ways. As far as I know, there was no such person as a Master Wang playing host to a dinner party. Have you perhaps been taken in by them, sir?"

It was not until then did Shen begin to suspect that he had fallen into a trap set by the two impostors, who had swindled him of his tea-coupons and a few thousand taels of silver. Then he recalled all that had taken place, from encountering the horsemen by the side of the pond, to visiting Master Wang, staying for dinner and then joining in the gambling in the small room. These events baffled him as to whether they were mere coincidence or by careful design. Quite flustered, he said to himself, "How terrible I can't track these two men down now! There must be some reason for these occurrences. I'll find them in a few days and ask them about this."

However, though he dispatched his servants to Zheng and Li's dwellings time and again in the following days to inquire about their whereabouts, he was able to get no news of them at all. Their host had lost track of them, too, saying, "Ever since they left that day, they never showed up again. Their rooms were locked. After the doors were opened, nothing was found inside. We have no idea where they've gone." Only then did it become crystal clear to Shen that all these events had been carefully plotted by Zheng and Li, the two swindlers—even the horsemen and servant boys had been working for them too. It had taken them only one night to carry through their scheme. But their craftsmanship in completely fleecing Shen was truly amazing.

Never trust those acquaintances with excessive warm-hearts.

Who knows if they have set up a trap to snatch your wealth with arts?

Women's boudoirs are no places for outsiders to hang around,

For act inspired by sheer illusion will be surely ridiculed as a foolish move.

卷 之 九

莽儿郎惊散新莺燕 伪梅香认合玉蟾蜍

诗云：

世间好事必多磨，缘未来时可奈何？

直至到头终正果，不知底事欲蹉跎。

话说从来有人道：“好事多磨。”那到底不成的自不必说，尽有到底成就的，起初时千难万难，挫过了多少机会，费过了多少心机，方得了结。就如王仙客与刘无双两个，中表兄妹，从幼许嫁，年纪长大，只须刘尚书与夫人做主，两个一下配合了，有何可说？却又尚书反悔起来，千推万阻。比及夫人撺掇得肯了，正要做亲，又撞着朱泚、姚令言之乱，御驾蒙尘，两下失散。直到得干戈平静，仙客入京来访，不匡刘尚书被人诬





Tale 9

Rash Young Brothers Startle Lovers Clever Young Woman Recognize Jade Toads

A poem reads thus:

The course of true love never runs smooth.
What should be done before lovers enter into wedlock by fate?
Eventually husbands and wives they will become,
Though many chances might have been repeatedly missed.

This poem well agrees with the popular saying, “Good things never come easy.” It’s true indeed that some lovers didn’t become husbands and wives in the end, and I would not like to dwell on this matter and go into unnecessary details about them. There were also some lovers who eventually succeeded in attaining conjugal bliss. Though at the first stage they tried every scheme, they let slip countless chances of success and their love affairs appeared to be hindered by thousands of obstacles. But in the end they did become happy couples.

The love story of Wang Xianke and Liu Wushuang is one of such instances. Wang and Liu were cousins and they had been arranged to be husband and wife by the parents of both sides when they were still in their childhood. It seemed doubtless that they two would naturally get married when they grew up upon Minister Liu and Mrs. Liu’s consent. Out of everybody’s expectation, Minister Liu later changed his mind and stood in the way. Unfortunately, when the match was about to be reestablished at Mrs. Liu’s insistence, General Yao Lingyan and his followers rose in rebellion against Li Shi, emperor Dezong, Wang Xianke and Liu Wushuang were separated due to the confusion of the war. After the war was over, Wang came to the capital city to visit Liu. But Minister Liu was framed and persecuted. All the members of the Liu family were put under house arrest in the imperial harem.



陷，家小配入掖庭。从此天人路隔，永无相会之日了。姻缘未断，又得发出宫女打扫皇陵。恰好差着无双在内，驿庭中通出消息与王仙客。跟寻得希奇古怪的一个侠客古押衙，将茅山道士仙丹，矫诏药死无双在皇陵上，赎出尸首来救活了，方得成其夫妇，同归襄汉。不知挫过了几个年头，费过了多少手脚了。早知到底是夫妻，何故又要经这许多磨折？真不知天公主的是何意见！可又有一说，不遇艰难，不显好处。古人云：

不是一番寒彻骨，怎得梅花扑鼻香？

只如偷情一件，一偷便着，却不早完了事？然没一些光景了。毕竟历过多少间阻，无限风波，后来到手，方为希罕。所以在行的道：“偷得着不如偷不着。”真有深趣之言也。

而今说一段因缘，正要到手，却被无意中搅散。及至后来两下各不指望了，又曲曲湾湾反弄成了。这是氤氲大使颠倒人的去处。且说这段故事出在那个地方，甚么人家，怎的起头，怎的了结？看官不要性急，待小子原原委委说来。有诗为证：



Wang thought he would never be able to have the chance to see Liu Wushuang again. However, the marriage made by Heaven had not yet come to the end. One day, it happened that Liu Wushuang was assigned to go out to sweep the imperial graves with some other maids in-waiting from the imperial palace. Someone from the post house informed Wang Xianke about this forthcoming event. Wang immediately went to an eccentric chivalrous swordsman for help. The swordsman procured a miraculous pill from a Taoist living on the Maoshan Mountain and counterfeited an imperial edict, ordering to kill Liu Wushuang with poison in the imperial graveyard. Later the swordsman bought out Liu's body and brought her back to life. Wang Xianke and Liu Wushuang finally got married. Since they were predestined to be husband and wife, why should they have to wait for so long and experience so many twists and turns?

No one can read the will of Heaven! However, we also have another old saying, "No pains, no gains." As the ancient people always said, "The Chinese plum flower will not smell so sweet if it had not been for the bitter coldness of the winter." Similarly, a stealthy love affair will become insipid and uninteresting if the lovers can make it very easily. Only when they have undergone countless difficulties before the affair can they truly cherish it. This is why all those who have gone through it often say with emotion, "Failure in having a secret love affair tastes better than success." Indeed, this is an amazing and meaningful remark!

* * *

Now I'll tell you a story about a pair of lovers who were disturbed by unexpected intruders when they were about to start the affair. As time passed, both lovers, becoming hopeless, took it for granted that their affection for each other would come to nothing. But it finally turned out that they did become husband and wife after having experienced lots of ups and downs. Actually this is how the Goddess of Sentimental Attachment is exercising her power to get lovers down. Readers, do you know where and in which family this story took place, how it began and how it ended? Please be patient and allow me to tell you the story in detail. The following poem may describe it:

While beating the ducks,

打鸭惊鸳鸯，分飞各异方。

天生应匹耦，罗列自成行。

话说杭州府有一个秀才，姓凤名来仪，字梧宾。少年高才。只因父母双亡，家贫未娶。有个母舅金三员外，看得他是个不凡之器，是件照管周济他。凤生就冒了舅家之姓进了学，入场考试，已得登科。朋友往来，只称凤生；榜中名字，却是金姓。金员外一向出了灯火之资，替他在吴山左畔赁下园亭一所，与同两个朋友做伴读书。那两个是嫡亲兄弟，一个叫做窦尚文，一个叫做窦尚武，多是少年豪气，眼底无人之辈。三个人情投意合，颇有管鲍、雷陈之风。窦家兄弟为因有一个亲眷上京为官，送他长行，就便往苏州探访相识去了。凤生虽已得中，春试尚远，还在园中读书。

一日傍晚时节，诵读少倦，走出书房散步。至园东，忽见墙外楼上有一女子凭窗而立，貌若天人。只隔得一垛墙，差不得多少远近。那女子看见凤生青年美质，也似有眷顾之意，毫不躲闪。凤生贪看自不必说。四目相视，足有一个多时辰。凤生只做看玩园中菊花，步来步去，卖弄着许多风流态度，不忍



A couple of mandarin ducks are startled.
However, if they're fated to be a couple,
Heaven will surely bring them together.

Once there lived a young and intelligent scholar named Feng Laiyi in Hangzhou, with the formal name Wubin. Because the death of his parents left him with little property, he still remained single. Jin San, his uncle on his mother's side, knew that the nephew would have a promising future and so he took good care of Laiyi. Feng Laiyi, in return, adopted his uncle's family name, Jin, as his own and entered school with the name of Jin Laiyi. Later he successfully passed the civil service examinations at the provincial level and became a *juren*.

Among his friends he was often addressed as Mr. Feng, but on the list of those who had passed the examinations his family name appeared as Jin. His uncle spent a huge sum of money and rented him a residence, a garden on the left side of Wushan Mountain, letting him study there with two of his best friends by the name of Dou Shangwen and Dou Shangwu. These two friends of Feng Laiyi's were brothers, young, generous and arrogant. Feng and the brothers were congenial friends. Later the two brothers went to Suzhou to see off a relative of theirs who was leaving for the capital city to assume an official position. Although Feng had passed the examinations at the provincial level, there would be some time before the national examinations. Therefore he stayed alone in his residence to study.

One evening Feng Laiyi felt a bit tired after he had done some reading. So he went out to take a stroll in his garden. As he sauntered to the east part of the garden, he noticed a goddess-like woman standing behind a second-floor window of the neighboring building just across the garden wall. The woman also saw Feng clearly and was deeply impressed by his youthful features. Instead of being shy, she tarried there, her eyes focused on him. Feng couldn't take his eyes off her either. Standing there motionless, the two fixed their eyes on each other for a long time. Then Feng walked to and fro in the yard, pretending to enjoy the chrysanthemums around him. Unwilling to leave, he lingered there until darkness fell, assuming all kinds of flirtatious postures to attract the

走回。直等天黑将来，只听得女子叫道：“龙香，掩上了楼窗。”一个侍女走起来，把窗扑的关了。凤生方才回步，心下思量道：“不知邻家有这等美貌女子。不晓得他姓甚名谁，怎生打听一个明白便好！”

过了一夜，次日清早起来，也无心想观看书史，忙忙梳洗了，即望园东墙边来。抬头看那邻家楼上，不见了昨日那女子。正在惆怅之际，猛听得墙角小门开处，走将一个清清秀秀的丫鬟进来，竟到圃中采菊花。凤生要撩拨他开口，故作厉声道：“谁家女子，盗取花卉！”那丫鬟啐了一声道：“是我邻家的园子！你是那里来的野人，反说我盗？”凤生笑道：“盗也非盗，野也不野。一时失言，两下退过罢。”丫鬟也笑道：“不退过，找你些甚么？”凤生道：“请问小姐子，采花去与那个戴？”丫鬟道：“我家姐姐梳洗已完，等此插戴。”凤生道：“你家姐姐高姓大名？何门宅眷？”丫鬟道：“我家姐姐姓杨，小字素梅，还不曾许聘人家。”凤生道：“堂上何人？”丫鬟道：“父母俱亡，傍着兄嫂同居。性爱幽静，独处小楼刺绣。”凤生道：“昨日看见在楼上凭窗而立的，想就是了？”丫鬟道：“正是他了，那里还有第二个？”凤生道：“这等，小姐子莫非龙香姐么？”



woman's attention. Suddenly the woman called out, "Longxiang, shut the windows, please." Soon a servant girl showed up and closed the windows. Feng had to make his way back to his room, thinking, "What a beauty that neighboring family of mine has! I wonder who she is. I'll find out her name."

When he woke up the next morning, Feng Laiyi felt it hard to concentrate on his reading. Quickly he finished washing and dressing and went out to the east part of the garden. He looked up, but the woman was not there by the window. As he waited there in low spirits, a small door around the corner of the building suddenly opened and out came a pretty servant girl. She came into the yard to pick some chrysanthemums. In order to start a conversation, Feng scolded her loudly, saying, "Why does a girl come stealing plants here in the yard?" The servant girl spat and said, "This plot is part of our neighbor's property. You are a boorish intruder. How can you accuse me of stealing?" Grinning broadly, Feng said, "Alright, you're not a thief and I'm not a boorish intruder. It was just a slip of my tongue. Let's both forgive and forget." Also with a smile, the servant girl said, "Well, if I don't forgive and forget, what damages could I claim from you?"

Feng said, "Young lady, could you tell me who'll be wearing the blossoms you are picking?" The servant girl said, "Our young lady. She's finished her washing and making-up, and is now awaiting the blossoms." Feng asked, "Could I know her name? And where she comes from?" The servant girl said, "She's called Sumei. Her family name is Yang. She's not been betrothed yet." Feng asked, "What about her parents?" The servant girl replied, "Her parents have died and she's currently living with her elder brother and sister-in-law. She is a quiet girl and loves to do embroidery alone in her room up there on the second floor of our building." Feng said, "I guess she is the one I saw yesterday standing by the window?" "Exactly," the servant girl replied. "It couldn't have been anybody else."

Feng said, "Then you must be Sister Longxiang?" The girl asked with surprise, "How did you know my name, sir?" Actually Feng Laiyi had overheard her name being called by her young lady the day before, but he lied, saying, "I've long known that there is a young lady of superb beauty



丫鬟惊道：“官人如何晓得？”凤生本是昨日听得叫唤明白在耳朵里的，却诌一个谎道：“小生一向闻得东邻杨宅有个素梅娘子，世上无双的美色。侍女龙香姐十分乖巧，十分贤惠，仰慕已久了。”龙香终是丫头家见识，听见称赞他两句，道是外边人真个说他好，就有几分喜动颜色，道：“小婢子有何德能？直叫官人知道。”凤生道：“强将之下无弱兵。恁样的姐姐，须得恁样的梅香姐方为厮称。小生有缘，昨日得瞥见了姐姐，今日又得遇着龙香姐，真是天大的福分。龙香姐怎生做得一个方便，使小生再见得姐姐一面么？”龙香道：“官人好不知进退！好人家女儿，又不是烟花门户，知道你是甚么人？面生不熟，说个一见再见？”凤生道：“小生姓凤，名来仪，今年秋榜举人。在此园中读书，就是贴壁紧邻。你姐姐固是绝代佳人，小生也不愧今时才子。就相见一面，也不辱没了你姐姐！”龙香道：“惯是秀才家有这些老脸说话，不耐烦与你缠帐！且将菊花去与姐姐插戴则个。”说罢，转身就走。凤生直跟将来送他，作个揖道：“千万劳龙香姐在姐姐面前，说凤来仪多多致意。”龙香只做不听，走进角门，扑的关了。

凤生只得回步转来。只听得楼窗豁然大开，高处有人叫一声：“龙香，怎么去了不来？”急抬头看时，正是昨日凭窗女子，新妆方罢，等龙香采花不来，开窗叫他，恰好与凤生打个



called Sumei of the Yang family living in the east part of this neighborhood. And her servant girl, Sister Longxiang, is gentle and virtuous. I've been admiring you both for a long time." Longxiang was indeed a servant girl of little education and limited experience. After hearing these compliments, she thought that Feng was serious about it and meant what he said. So she grew happy and excited. She said, "I can't believe my incompetence should have caught your attention, sir!" Feng replied, "Well, the ranks of an invincible general keep no weak soldiers. Your beautiful young lady should be matched in the company of an equally pretty maid. Fortunately, I caught a glimpse of your young lady yesterday, and today I have run into you, Sister Longxiang. That's really good luck bestowed on me. Sister Longxiang, could you do me a favor and arrange a date for me and your Miss?"

Longxiang said, "You're going too far, sir. Our young lady is of honorable and noble origin, not from a loose family. We don't know who you are and where you're from. Why are you so shamelessly talking about dating her?" Feng said, "My name is Laiyi and my family name is Feng. I just passed the fall examinations at the provincial level this year. At present I'm studying in this residence next door to your house. It's true your young lady is an unrivalled beauty. But I'm a promising scholar. I guess my meeting with her will not degrade her." Longxiang said, "All of you scholars like to talk like that. It's disgusting! I don't want to continue this conversation. I'll have to take the blossoms to my young lady." She then turned around and walked ahead in the direction of her house. Feng followed her closely and pleaded, with his hands folded in front, "Please do me a favor. Send my best regards to your young lady." Turning a deaf ear to what he said, Longxiang went straight into the building and slammed the door closed.

As Feng Laiyi was turning back, he suddenly heard the window of the building being pushed wide open and someone shouting, "Longxiang, what are you doing down there? Come back!" He looked up and saw that it was the woman he had seen the day before. She had just finished her make-up and was waiting for Longxiang to bring her the blossoms. She and Feng looked at each other squarely. To Feng, she looked even more

照面。凤生看上去，愈觉美丽非常。那杨素梅也看上凤生在眼里了，呆呆偷觑，目不转睛。凤生以为可动，朗吟一诗道：

几回空度可怜宵，谁道秦楼有玉箫。

咫尺银河难越渡，宁教不瘦沈郎腰。

楼上杨素梅听见吟诗，详那诗中之意，分明晓得是打动他的了，只不知这俏书生是那一个，又没处好问得。正在心下踌躇，只见龙香手撚了一朵菊花来，与他插好了，就问道：“姐姐，你看见那园中狂生否？”素梅摇手道：“还在那厢摇摆，低声些，不要被听见了。”龙香道：“我正要他听见。有这样老脸皮没廉耻的！”素梅道：“他是那个？怎么样没廉耻？你且说来。”龙香道：“我自采花，他不知那里走将来，撞见了，反说我偷他的花，被我抢白了一场。后来问我采花与那个戴，我说是姐姐。他见说出姐姐名姓来，不知怎的就晓得我叫做龙香。说道一向仰慕姐姐芳名，故此连侍女名字多打听在肚里的。又说昨日得瞥见了姐姐，还要指望再见见。又被我抢白他是面生不熟之人，他才说出名姓来，叫做凤来仪，是今年中的举人，在此园中读书，是个紧邻。我不睬他，他深深作揖，央我致意姐姐，道姐姐是佳人，他是才子。你道好没廉耻么？”素梅道：“说轻些，看来他是个少年书生，高才自负的。你不理他便罢，不要十分轻口轻舌的冲撞他。”龙香道：“姐姐怕龙香冲撞了他，等龙香去叫他来见见姐姐，姐姐自回他话罢。”素



beautiful than she had the day before. Sumei, gazing admiringly at Feng, was also carried away by his appearance and bearing. Feng improvised a poem on the spot and read it out loudly:

I passed many lovely nights in vain,
No one knows my secret anxiety.
My love is nigh but barriers are high —
So I wear myself down in pain.

On hearing the chanting, Sumei realized it was aimed at her. However, she didn't know who he was, nor did she think it proper to make inquiries about him. While she was hesitating to make a move, Longxiang came in with the handful of chrysanthemum blossoms and set them in her hair. Longxiang asked her, "Sister, do you see that young boaster over there in the garden?" Sumei said with a wave of her hand, "He's hanging around there. Lower your voice, or he may hear what you are saying." The servant girl replied, "No. I'm simply making a point of letting him hear what I'm saying. What a shameless piece of trash!" Sumei asked, "Who is he? Why do you say he's a piece of shameless trash? Tell me!"

Longxiang recounted, "While I was picking blossoms in the yard, he popped up from nowhere and accused me of stealing them. I gave him a rebuff. Then he asked me for whom I was gathering the blossoms. I told him they were for you, my Miss. After I mentioned your name, it's strange that he said my name is Longxiang. He also said he had heard your good name long before and had even learned something about me as your servant girl. He then said he spotted you by chance yesterday, and now he wanted to see you personally some day. Then I cursed him again for his rudeness. So he told me his name is Feng Laiyi. He passed this year's examinations at the provincial level. Now he's studying in that residence next door to us. I told him I was not interested in what he had said. But he bowed to me and begged me to give you his best regards. He also said you're a beauty and he is a talented scholar. Don't you think he is shameless?"

Sumei replied, "Don't speak so loudly. I think he's a young scholar, well-read and proud of himself! It's alright that you didn't listen to him, but you'd better not hurt him with harsh words." Longxiang said, "Okay. If you don't want to slight him, I'm going to get him over here and you



梅道：“痴丫头，好个歹舌头！怎么好叫他见我？”两个一头说，一头下楼去了。

这里凤生听见楼上唧唧一番，虽不甚明白，晓得是一定说他，心中好生痒痒。直等楼上不见了人，方才走回书房。

从此书卷懒开，茶饭懒吃，一心只在素梅身上，日日在东墙探头望脑，时常两下撞见。那素梅也失魂丧魄的，掉那少年书生不下。每日上楼几番，但遇着便眉来眼去，彼此有意，只不曾交口。又时常打发龙香，只以采花为名，到花园中探听他来踪去迹。龙香一来晓得姐姐的心事，二来见凤生腼腆，心里也有些喜欢，要在里头撮合。不时走到书房里传消递息，对凤生说着素梅好生钟情之意。凤生道：“对面甚觉有情，只是隔着楼上下，不好开得口，总有心事，无从可达。”龙香道：“官人何不写封书与我姐姐？”凤生喜道：“姐姐通文墨么？”龙香道：“姐姐喜的是吟诗作赋，岂但通文墨而已！”凤生道：“这等，待我写一情词起来，劳烦你替我寄去，看他怎么说？”凤生提起笔来，一挥而就。词云：



can talk to him personally.” Sumei said, “You mad girl. What a sharp tongue you have! How should I go and see him?” They went downstairs as their conversation continued.

Feng heard their voices but couldn’t catch exactly what they had said. However, he was sure they were talking about him and so he felt nervous and excited. He lingered for a few more moments and didn’t go back to his study until the two women had disappeared from his sight.

In the days that followed Feng could hardly concentrate himself on his reading, and lost his appetite. Each day he snooped around along the east walls of his garden, and occasionally spotted Sumei up by the window. Sumei also lost her head in a surge of longing for him. Each day she would emerge a few times at the window on the second floor. If Feng showed up by chance, they would cast eyes at each other, though words were not exchanged, and their glances brought home their respective feelings and intentions. Sumei made sure Longxiang went to the yard a couple of times every day, pretending to pick blossoms while keeping track of Feng’s routine.

Longxiang could read Sumei’s mind. At the same time she was also interested in Feng’s shyness. Accordingly, she decided to act as the mediator between the two lovers. From time to time she would come to Feng’s place and deliver some messages, telling him that her young lady had taken a fancy to him. Feng Laiyi said to her, “I also realized her affection for me, but unfortunately we’re separated by distance, she being upstairs out there and me being downstairs here. It’s really hard for me to express my love.” Longxiang suggested, “Why not write a letter to her?” Excited, Feng asked, “Can she read and write?” Longxiang replied, “She loves to compose poetry and poetic prose, not to speak of reading and writing.” Feng said, “Alright, I’ll write down a *ci* poem and I’d like to bother you to take it to her. I’ll wait and see how she responds.” He put his feelings on paper and had Longxiang take it to Sumei. The *ci* poem went as follows:

Vegetation luxuriates the courtyards.
Outside of my house, high up in the sky,
Patches of red clouds lingers on.



木落庭皋，楼阁外、彤云半拥。偏则向、凄凉书舍，早将寒送。眼角偷传倾国貌，心苗曾倩多情种。问天公，何日判佳期，成欢宠？（词寄《满江红》）

凤生写完，付与龙香。

龙香收在袖里，走回家去，见了素梅，面带笑容。素梅问道：“你适在那边书房里来，有何说话，笑嘻嘻的走来？”龙香道：“好笑那凤官人见了龙香，不说甚么说话，把一张纸一管笔，只管写来写去，被我趁他不见，溜了一张来。姐姐，你看他写的是甚么？”素梅接过手来，看了一遍，道：“写的是一首词。分明是他叫你拿来的，你却掉谎！”龙香道：“不瞒姐姐说，委实是他叫龙香拿来的。龙香又不识字，知他写的是好是歹？怕姐姐一时嗔怪，只得如此说。”素梅道：“我也不嗔怪你，只是书生狂妄，不回他几字，他只道我不知其意，只管歪缠。我也不与他吟词作赋，卖弄聪明，实实的写几句说话回他便了。”龙香即时研起墨来，取幅花笺摊在桌上。好个素梅，也不打稿，提起笔来就写。写道：



Yet I have to keep myself in the study, alone,
Desolate and chilly.

However, after I stole some secret glances
At your ravishing beauty,
My heart ran wild with tender affections.
Oh, Lord on High, I implore thee,
When will you grant us a meeting
So we two can indulge in a spree?
(To the tune of “Manjianghong”)

Longxinng slipped the paper into her sleeve and went back to Sumei’s room. Seeing Longxiang return with all smiles, Sumei asked, “What did you talk about in his study? What made you so happy?” Longxiang answered, “It’s funny that he didn’t talk to me when I was there, but kept writing something on a sheet of paper. I took the opportunity, when he didn’t notice, to snatch the paper away and come back with it. Sister, please read it and see what he wrote.” Sumei took the paper and read it. “It’s a poem,” she said. “I think the truth is that he asked you to bring it to me. But you lied to me?”

Longaiang answered, “To be frank, you got it. He did ask me to take it to you. Because I can’t read, it doesn’t make any sense to me. I was afraid I might be blamed for something offensive in it. For this reason, I made up a story.” Sumei said, “You’re not to blame. But this man is too arrogant. If I do not answer him, he may think I have failed to get his message and he will keep bugging me with his writing. I won’t write any poem in reply to him to show my learning. I will just put down some simple words to let him know what’s on my mind.” Longxiang started to prepare ink by rubbing an ink stick on an ink slab and then she put a piece of colorful writing paper on the table. Sumei was unquestionably well educated. She picked up the writing brush and started to write without composing a drain. The letter read thus:

Since time immemorial, it’s been crucial that a virtuous girl sets high value on chastity while a courageous woman loves a bright mind. Both kinds of women are considered to be commendable, though they have different moral



自古贞姬守节，侠女怜才。两者俱贤，各行其是。但恐遇非其人，轻诺寡信，侠不如贞耳。与君为邻，幸成目遇，有缘与否，君自揣之。勿徒调文琢句，为轻薄相诱已也。聊此相复，寸心已尽，无多言。

写罢封好了，教龙香藏着，隔了一日拿去与那凤生。

龙香依言来到凤生书房，凤生惊喜道：“龙香姐来了，那封书儿，曾达上姐姐否？”龙香拿个班道：“甚么书不书，要我替你淘气！”凤生道：“好姐姐，如何累你受气？”龙香道：“姐姐见了你书，变了脸，道：‘甚么人的书要你拿来？我是闺门中女儿，怎么与外人通书帖？’只是要打。”凤生道：“他既道我是外人不该通书帖，又在楼上眼睁睁看我怎的？是他自家招风揽火，怎倒打你？”龙香道：“我也不到得与他打，我回说道：‘我又不识字，知他写的是甚么！姐姐不像意，不要看他，拿去还他罢了，何必着恼？’方才免得一顿打。”凤生道：“好谈话！若是不曾看着，拿来还了，有何消息？可不误了我的事？”龙香道：“不管误事不误事，还了你，你自看去。”袖中摸出来，撩在地下。凤生拾起来，却不是起先拿去的了，晓得是龙香耍他，带着笑道：“我说你家姐姐不舍得怪我，必是好音回我了。”拆开来细细一看，跌足道：“好个有见识的女子！分明有意与我，只怕我日后负心，未肯造次耳。我如今只



standards. But fearing that one might acquaint herself with a treacherous lover, and give herself up to flattery and insincere promises, it is better to be virtuous than courageous. I live next door to you and we've seen each other a few times. But whether we'll eventually end up in a union is completely up to you. Please stop writing your high-sounding piece, which is nothing but shallow and flirtatious. I'm making this reply because it contains all that I have on my mind.

Sumei sealed the letter and gave it to Longxiang, who was to take it to Feng the following day.

Feng was very happy to see Longxiang arrive. He said to her, "Glad to see you, Sister Longxiang. Did you deliver my letter to your young lady?" Longxiang put on a serious expression and replied, "That letter of yours got me into a trap!" Feng asked, "Good sister, what problem did it bring to you?" Longxiang said, "When she heard that I had brought a letter from you, my young lady flared up at me, saying, 'Whose letter are you bringing to me? I'm a maiden. Am I supposed to keep up a correspondence with a man?' Then she made to hit me." Feng said, "If she thought I'm a stranger and shouldn't exchange letters with me, why did she look at me steadily from her second-floor window? She is the one who has stirred up trouble. Why was she to beat you?" Longxiang said, "Actually she didn't go so far as to beat me. I replied to her, 'I can't read. How can I know what he has written? If you really take it seriously, sister, I'll just send it back to him. What's the point of getting angry?' Thus I averted a beating." Feng said, "Nonsense! If she didn't read the letter and you take it back to me, what's the point of my writing it? You must have ruined my plans!" Longxiang said, "I've no idea whether your plans are ruined or not. Here's the reply for you. Go ahead and read it."

She slipped the letter out of her sleeve and tossed it on the floor. Feng picked it up. It was not the one he wrote. He then knew that Longxiang was teasing him. With a grin he said, "I knew from the beginning that your young lady wouldn't blame me. This must be good news from her." After reading the letter, he was overjoyed. "What a woman of insight!" he said, stamping his feet. "She is in love with me but worried about my loyalty. That's why she's taking a wait-and-see attitude. Now I should



得再央龙香姐拿件信物送他，写封实心实意的话，求他定下个佳期，省得此往彼来，有名无实，白白地想杀了我！”龙香道：“为人为彻，快写来，我与你拿去，我自有道理。”凤生开了箱子，取出一个白玉蟾蜍镇纸来，乃是他中榜之时，母舅金三员外与他作贺的，制作精工，是件古玩。今将来送与素梅作表记。写下一封书，道：

承示玉音，多关肝鬲。仪虽薄德，敢负深情？但肯俯通一夕之欢，必当永矢百年之好。谨贡白玉蟾蜍，聊以表信。荆山之产，取其坚润不渝；月中之象，取其团圆无缺。乞订佳期，以苏渴想。

末写道：

辱爱不才生凤来仪顿首 素梅娘子妆前。

凤生将书封好，一同玉蟾蜍交付龙香。对龙香道：“我与你姐姐百年好事，千金重担，只在此两件上面了！万望龙香姐竭力周全，讨个回音则个。”龙香道：“不须嘱咐。我也巴不得你们两个成了事，有话面讲，不耐烦如此传书递柬。”凤生作个揖道：“好姐姐，如此帮衬，万代恩德。”

龙香带着笑拿着去了，走进房来，回覆素梅道：“凤官人见了姐姐的书，着实赞叹，说姐姐有见识，又写一封回书，送一件玉物事在此。”素梅接过手来，看那玉蟾蜍光润可爱，笑道：“他送来怎的？且拆开书来看。”素梅看那书时，一路把头



give her something as proof of my faithfulness and write another letter to express my true feelings and let her schedule a meeting. Sister Longxiang, I must bother you once more to take my letter to her. Otherwise, it will just be a waste of our time to keep this correspondence going on, and it will leave me in suspense." Longxiang said, "I will help you. Hurry up and write the letter. I'll take care to deliver it." Feng opened his suitcase and took out a jade paperweight in the shape of a toad, which had been presented to him earlier that year by his uncle, Jin, in celebration of his winning a scholarly honor. It was a valuable antique, exquisitely designed. Now he decided to present it to Sumei as a token of his true love. He then started to write a letter:

Thank you for your letter. I know these words of yours come from the bottom of your heart. Though I am modest in virtue, how would I dare to betray your deep feelings? If you would be kind enough to have a wonderful time with me for a short moment, I swear I'll take you as my life. Here I present this jade toad to you as a token of my true love. This kind of jade, which comes from Jingshan, is solid and sleek and signifies unyielding faithfulness; while the toad, a symbol of the full moon, signifies union and perfection. I entreat you to give me a favorable reply in terms of a rendezvous to gratify my wish.

At the end of the letter, he concluded it with the words:

Feng Laiyi, a humble scholar appreciating the love of Sumei, Your Ladyship.

Feng sealed the letter and gave it to Longxiang, along with the jade paperweight. He said to her, "Our future lifelong happy marriage will hinge on your delivery of these two things. Would you please take special care to do this and bring me back a reply?" Longxinng said, "Stop telling me to take special care. I am eager to let you two become a couple. If you talk directly face to face, no letter-exchanging will burden me." Feng said, "You're right, good sister. I will be grateful forever if you can do this favor for me." Longxiang smiled and left.

Back home, Longxiang said to Sumei, "Master Feng read your letter and said a lot in praise about your insight. He has sent you a reply letter and a piece of jade." Sumei took that jade paperweight of the toad, a lovely shining antique. She smiled and said, "Is this for me? But let me



暗点，脸颊微红，有些沉吟之意。看到“辱爱不才生”几字，笑道：“呆秀才，那个就在这里爱你？”龙香道：“姐姐若是不爱，何不绝了他，不许往来？既与他兜兜搭搭，他难道到肯认做不爱不成？”素梅也笑将起来道：“痴丫头，就像与他一路的。我到有句话与你商量：我心上真有些爱他，其实瞒不得你了。如今他送此玉蟾蜍做了信物，要我去会他，这个却怎么使得？”龙香道：“姐姐，若是使不得，空爱他也无用。何苦把这个书生哄得他不上不落的，呆呆地百事皆废了？”素梅道：“只恐书生薄幸，且顾眼下风光，日后不在心上，撇人在脑后了，如何是好？”龙香道：“这个龙香也做不得保人。姐姐而今要绝他，却又爱他；要从他，却又疑他。如此两难，何不约他当面一会？看他说话真诚，罚个咒愿，方才凭着姐姐或短或长，成就其事；若不像个老实的，姐姐一下子丢开，再不要缠他罢了。”素梅道：“你说得有理。我回他字去。难得今夜是十五日团圆之夜，约他今夜到书房里相会便了。”素梅写着几字，手上除下一个累金戒指儿，答他玉蟾蜍之赠，叫龙香拿去。

龙香应允，一面走到园中，心下道：“佳期只在今夜了，便宜了这酸子，不要直与他说知。”走进书房中来，只见凤生朝



read the letter first.” Her reading down the sheet brought a little flush to her cheeks as she nodded slightly in pleasure. She sank into thought until she came to the words, “a humble scholar appreciating the love of Sumei, Your Ladyship.” She said with a smile, “What an interesting scholar! Who is in love with you?” Longxiang said, “Well, sister, if you don’t love him, why not turn down his wooing and never let him contact you again? But since you’ve kept in touch with him, how can he remain detached?” Laughing, Sumei said, “What a character you are, girl, as interesting as he is! Listen, I’ve got something to talk to you. I indeed have some affections toward him, to be frank. Now that he has given me this jade paperweight of a toad as proof of his loyalty and has asked me to schedule an appointment with him, what should I do?”

Longxiang said, “Sister, if you don’t want to do anything about it, your love will be in vain. Why do you want to keep him in suspense and ruin an otherwise possible happy marriage?” Sumei said, “But I fear a young man such as him tends to be infatuated for a moment and then turns his love toward someone else in the future. If that happened, what should I do?” Longxiang replied, “I’m afraid I can’t guarantee this for you, sister. But the problem is that you want to quit your relation with him even though you love him. You want to go further with a date, but you’re suspicious of his faithfulness. That is a dilemma. I wonder whether you might want to meet him once and see what kind of character he is. If he is sincere, you can wring a vow out of him. Then you can play it by ear later and make your own decision about the issue. If he is not honest, forget about it and never talk to him again.”

Sumei said, “That’s a good idea. I’m going to write him. Since tonight is the fifteenth of the lunar month and there is a full moon, I’ll meet him in his study tonight.” She put down a few words on a piece of paper and slid her gold ring off her finger to give him as a gift in reply to Feng’s jade paperweight of a toad. She sent Longxiang away with these to his place.

With this errand, Longxiang ran into Feng’s garden. On her way she thought to herself, “A date tonight! That’ll be an easy gain for that bastard! I’m not going to tell him directly.” As she entered his room, Feng was



着纸窗正在那里呆想。见了龙香，魑地跳将起来，道：“好姐姐，天大的事如何了？”龙香道：“什么如何如何！你道你不知进退，开口便问佳期，这等看得容易，一下性子，书多扯坏了，连那玉蟾蜍也攒碎了！”凤生呆了道：“这般说起来，教我怎的才是？等到几时方好？可不害杀了我！”龙香道：“不要心慌，还有好话在后。”凤生欢喜道：“既有好话，快说来！”龙香道：“好自在性，大着嘴子‘快说来！快说来！’不直得陪个小心？”凤生陪笑道：“好姐姐，这是我不是了。”跪下去道：“我的亲娘！有什么好说话，对我说罢。”龙香扶起道：“不要馋脸。你且起来，我对你说。我姐姐初时不肯，是我再三撺掇，已许下日子了。”凤生道：“在几时呢？”龙香笑道：“在明年。”凤生道：“若到明年，我也害死好做周年了。”龙香道：“死了，料不要我偿命。自有人不舍得你死，有个丹药方在此医你。”袖中摸出戒指与那封字来，交与凤生道：“到不是害死，却不要快活杀了。”凤生接着拆开看时，上写道：

徒承往复，未测中心。拟作夜谈，各陈所愿。固不为投梭之拒，亦非效逾墙之徒。终身事大，欲订完盟耳。



looking at the paper-patched window, lost in thought. He sprang to his feet when Longxiang walked in. "Good sister, what's the news about the matter I've been concerned about all day?" he asked. Longxiang replied, "Stop talking about the news! She was sick of your rashness in asking for an appointment. What an easy thing you thought to obtain! Her mood changed. She tore up the letter. That jade paperweight of a toad tumbled to pieces, too." Feng was stunned, "Really? What can I do then? How long will I have to wait to talk to her? This has made a wreck of my life!"

Longxiang said, "Take it easy. Take it easy. I've something good to talk to you." Feng became delighted and said, "Come on and tell me about it now." Longxiang complained, "How conceited you are, simply shouting, 'Tell me about it! Tell me about it!' Don't you think you should apologize first for your rashness?" Feng said with an obsequious smile, "Alright, good sister. It is my fault." He fell down on his knees and continued, "My dear sister, I'm begging you. Please let me know about it." Longxiang pulled him up and said, "Don't be brazen. Get up and listen. My young lady was not willing to meet you at first. But I kept pushing her until she agreed to see you some day." Feng asked, "When?" Longxiang said, smiling, "Next year." Feng said, "Next year? It's going to be one year from now? I'll die waiting." Longxiang said, "Well, I'll not be held responsible for your death and pay for it with my own life. But someone would definitely hate to see you die. Here's a good prescription for your mental sickness." She took out the gold ring and letter and handed them to Feng, saying, "You may die in rejoicing rather than in lovesickness!" Feng took the two things and opened the letter, which read:

Our correspondence falls short of our desire to express our true feelings. I suggest we hold an evening appointment to obtain a clearer understanding of each other. Though I might not turn down your offer, I refuse to accept a temporary and stealthy love affair. This is going to be of vital importance to our lives and needs to be on the basis of a pledge of love. So I am sending you my ring as a token of my sincerity. My word is as precious as gold and I am as good as my word. We should keep away from superficiality and deceitfulness.



先以约指之物为定，言出如金，浮情且戒，如斯而已。

末附一诗云：

试敛听琴心，来访吹箫伴。

为语玉蟾蜍，清光今夜满。

凤生看罢，晓得是许下了佳期，又即在今夜，喜欢得打跌。对龙香道：“亏杀了救命的贤姐，教我怎生报答也！”龙香道：“闲话休题，既如此约定，到晚来，切不可放甚么人在此打搅！”凤生道：“便是同窗两个朋友，出去久了；舅舅家里一个送饭的人，送过便打发他去，不呼唤他，却不敢来。此外别无甚人到此，不妨，不妨！只是姐姐不要临时变卦便好。”龙香道：“这个到不消疑虑，只在我身上，包你今夜成事便了。”龙香自回去了。凤生一心只打点欢会，住在书房中，巴不得到晚。

那边素梅也自心里忒忒地，一似小儿放纸炮，又爱又怕。只等龙香回来，商量到晚赴约。恰好龙香已到，回覆道：“那凤官人见了姐姐的字，好不快活，连龙香也受了他好些跪拜了。”素梅道：“说便如此说，羞答答地怎好去得？”龙香道：“既许了他，作耍不得的。”素梅道：“不去便怎么？”龙香道：“不去不打紧，龙香说了这一个大谎，后来害死了他，地府中还要攀累我。”素梅道：“你只管自家的来世，再不管我的终身！”龙香道：“甚么终身？拚得立定主意嫁了他便是了。”素梅道：“既如此，便依你去走一遭也使得，只要打听兄嫂睡了方好。”



And a poem was attached:

From capture by a lover's strings I refrain
But my mate, a flute player, I'll entertain.
Let a jade toad be messenger of good intent,
The moonlight tonight will be truly brilliant.

Feng understood this was an appointment with him scheduled for tonight. Reeling in rapture, he turned to Longxiang, "This is a tremendous help you've given me. What can I do for you in return?" Longxiang said, "Stop talking trash! Since you have this date tonight, make sure no one will hang around here and mess things up." Feng said, "I've only two roommates who left on a business long ago. A meal deliverer brings my food each day from my uncle's place. But he won't stay. He's not supposed to come here unless needed. For the rest of the day, I'm pretty much alone. Don't worry about that. However, I hope your young lady won't change her mind right before our meeting." Longxiang said, "Please rest assured. You can count on me. I guarantee you a beautiful rendezvous." Longxiang then departed. Feng was in a very excited state, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the evening.

Sumei couldn't sit still, either. She was like a child lighting firecrackers — she was delighted and at the same time a bit nervous. She wanted to talk to Longxiang once she returned about the arrangements for the meeting. At this point, Longxiang came back and said to her, "The young man was overjoyed to see your writing. I myself was better off when he thanked me on his knees." Sumei said, "He is such an ardent lover, I feel embarrassed. How can I go to see him tonight?" Longxiang said, "You have made a promise, so you cannot trifle with it." Sumei said, "What kind of fuss will there be if I break my promise?" Longxinng replied, "You'll be alright in that case. But I promised him you would be there. If you don't keep the appointment, I will be thought of as a liar. He may die as a result and will haunt me in the nether world." Sumei said, "You only care about your afterlife, but not about my marriage!" Longxiang said, "Your marriage? Don't hesitate any more. Make up your mind and marry him. That's it." Sumei said, "All right. I'll keep the appointment. But I'll wait until my brother and sister-in-law have gone to bed."



说话之间，早已天晚，天上皎团团推出一轮明月。龙香走去了，一更多次，走来道：“大官人、大娘子多吃了晚饭，我守他收拾睡了才来的。我每不要点灯，开了角门，趁着明月悄悄去罢。”素梅道：“你在前走，我后边尾着，怕有人来。”果然龙香先行，素梅在后，遮遮掩掩走到书房前。龙香把手点道：“那有灯的不就是他书房？”素梅见说是书房，便立定了脚。凤生正在盼望不到之际，心痒难熬，攒出攒入了一会，略在窗前歇气。只听得门外脚步响，急走出来迎着。这里龙香就出声道：“凤官人，姐姐来了，还不拜见！”凤生月下一看，真是天仙下降！不觉的跪了下去，道：“小生有何天幸，劳烦姐姐这般用心，杀身难报。”素梅通红了脸，一把扶起道：“官人请尊重，有话慢讲。”凤生立起来，就扶着素梅衣袂道：“外厢不便，请小姐快进房去。”素梅走进了门内，外边龙香道：“姐姐，我自去了。”素梅叫道：“龙香，不要去。”凤生道：“小姐，等他回去安顿着家中的好。”素梅又叫道：“略转转就来。”龙香道：“晓得了，凤官人关上了门罢。”

当下龙香走了转去。凤生把门关了，进来一把抱住道：“姐姐想杀了凤来仪！如今侥幸杀了凤来仪也！”一手就去素梅怀里乱扯衣裙。素梅按住道：“官人不要性急，说得明白，方可



The evening arrived before the conversation was over. A full moon was slowly unveiled against the clear night sky. Longxiang went to Sumei's brother's living quarters and came back to Sumei after a while, telling her, "Your brother and sister-in-law have finished their dinner and I've attended them to bed. Now we can leave. We'd better not light lamps. We'll sneak out through that small door around the corner of the building and find our way there in the moonlight. How about that?" Sumei said, "All right. You lead the way and I'll follow you in case someone is trailing us." Then they set out stealthily as planned to Feng's room. Pointing forward, Longxiang said, "Do you see that lit-up room? It's his study." Sumei stopped in front of the room.

At the same time, Feng Laiyi was nervously waiting for the arrival of Sumei. He paced in and out of the room a couple of times before he settled by the window for a breath. At the sound of footsteps close to his room, he shot out of the door. Then came Longxiang's voice, "Here's my young lady, sir. Come on and greet her." At the sight of Sumei, Feng was stunned by her beauty. He fell on his knees and said, "It is good fortune that has brought you here to see me. I cannot repay your kindness even with my life!" Sumei flushed with embarrassment, as she propped him up and said, "I don't deserve this, sir. Please calm down."

Feng got to his feet and got hold of her sleeve, saying, "It's not appropriate to talk out here, Miss. Please come on in." Once Sumei entered the room, Longxiang said from the outside, "I'm leaving, sister." Sumei said, "No, please stick around, Longxiang." Feng suggested, "I guess you'd better let her go so that she can get her business done at home." Then Sumei said to her, "You may go home, Longxiang, and see if everything is alright and come back here." Longxiang said, "Okay. Please shut the door, Mr. Feng."

After Longxiang left, Feng shut the door. He turned around and dragged Sumei into his arms, saying, "It has almost killed me to have the burden of thinking about you when you were not in front of me, my sweet! Now that I have you with me, I am willing to die with happiness!" So saying, he reached for her chest and started to undo her garment. Sumei said, holding his hands, "Don't behave in such a rash, sir. Let's voice our



成欢。”凤生道：“我两人心事已明，到此地位，还有何说？”只是抱着推他到床上来。素梅挣定了脚不肯走，道：“终身之事，岂可草草？你咒也须赌一个，永不得负心！”凤生一头推，一头口里啖道：“凤来仪若负此怀，永远前程不吉！不吉！”素梅见他极态，又哄他又爱他，心下已自软了，不由的脚不放松，任他推去。

正要倒在床上，只听得园门外一片大嚷，擂鼓也似敲门。凤生正在喉急之际，吃那一惊不小，便道：“做怪了！此时是甚么人敲门？想来没有别人，姐姐不要心慌，门是关着的，没事。我们且自上床，凭他门外叫唤，不要睬他！”素梅也慌道：“只怕使不得，不如我去休！”凤生极了，狠性命抱住道：“这等怎使得？这是活活的弄杀我了！”正是色胆如天，凤生且不管外面的事，把素梅的小衣服解脱了，忙要行事。那晓得花园门年深月久，苦不甚牢，早被外边一伙人踢开了一扇，一路嚷将进来，直到凤生书房门首来了。凤生听见来得切近，方才着忙道：“古怪！这声音却似窦家兄弟两个。几时回来的？恰恰到此。我的活冤家，怎么是好？”只得放下了手，对素梅道：“我去顶住了门，你把灯吹灭了，不要做声！”素梅心下惊惶，一手把裙裤结好，一头把火吹息，魑魑地拣暗处站着，不敢喘气。凤生走到门边，轻轻掇条凳子，把门再加顶住，要走进来温存素梅。只听得外面打着门道：“凤兄，快开门！”凤生战抖抖



positions clearly before we make love.” Feng said, “Well, we’ve expressed our affection toward each other clearly. What else should we talk about?” As he was saying this, Feng pushed her toward the bed. Sumei resisted by firmly placing her feet on the floor, saying, “This is a vitally important matter for our whole lives. How can we take it so lightly? Whatever you do, you should at least swear an oath saying you will remain faithful to me forever!” As he kept pushing her to the bed, Feng mumbled, “If I become unfaithful, let bad fortune strike me in the future!” Seeing that he was so ardent and kept uttering words of endearment, Sumei started to waver in her resolve, and finally submitted to his will.

As they were about to fall into bed, a roar came from outside the gate of the garden, followed by a thunderous knocking at the gate. Feng was taken by surprise as he was in a hurry to do that business. He said, “That’s really weird! Who is knocking at the gate at this time of the night? I don’t think they’re coming for me. Don’t worry, Miss. The door is shut, and nothing will happen. Let us get into bed. Let them yell out there, we just won’t care.” Feeling quite nervous about it, Sumei said, “No, I’m afraid we can’t do it. I’d better leave at once!” In desperation, Feng held her tightly in his arms, saying, “Do you really want to leave me? You’re going to kill me!”

Overcome with lust and with no thought of the consequences, Feng paid no attention to what was happening outside. He took off Sumei’s underwear and was about to make love with Sumei when the gate gave way to kicking. Due to the wear of many years’ use, the gate fell down with the kicking and in came the intruders. They marched over to Feng’s study as they shouted. As the sound got closer, Feng said, “Strange! They sound as though they are the Dou brothers. When did they come back? Why are they coming at this time? What lousy luck I have! What should I do?” He then let go of Sumei and said, “Let me prop something against the door. Please blow out the candle and keep quiet.” Panic-stricken, Sumei blew out the candle while tying up her pants and skirt. Holding her breath, she trembled in the dark.

Feng Laiyi tiptoed to the door. He gently pulled over a bench and set it against the door. Then he came back to soothe Sumei. Just at this moment,



的回道：“是是是那个？”一个声气小些的道：“小弟窦尚文。”一个大喊道：“小弟窦尚武。两个月不相聚了，今日才得回来。这样好月色，快开门出来，吾们同去吃酒。”凤生道：“夜深了，小弟已睡在床上，懒得起来，明日尽兴罢。”外边窦大道：“寒舍不远，过谈甚便。欲着人来请，因怕兄已睡着，未必就来，故此兄弟两人特来自邀，快些起来！”凤生道：“夜深风露，热被窝里起来，怕不感冒了？其实的懒起，不要相强，足见相知。”窦大道：“兄兴素豪，今夜何故如此？”窦二便嚷道：“男子汉见说着吃酒看月有兴的事，披衣便起，怕甚风露？”凤生道：“今夜偶然没兴，望乞见谅。”窦二道：“终不成使我们扫了兴，便自这样回去了？你若当真不起来时，我们一发把这门打开来，莫怪粗卤！”凤生着了急，自想道：“倘若他当真打进，怎生是好？”低低对素梅道：“他若打将进来，必然事露。姐姐你且躲在床后，待我开门出去打发了他就来。”素梅也低低道：“撇脱些，我要回去。这事做得不好了，怎么办？”素梅望床后黑处躲好，凤生才掇开凳子，开出门来。见了他兄弟两个，且不施礼，便随手把门扣上了，道：“室中无火，待我搭上了



a voice rose along with pounding on the door, "Open the door please, Brother Feng!" Feng asked, his utterance filled with trepidation, "Who, who, who is it?" A softer voice answered, "This is Dou Shangwen, your younger brother." Then another one shouted loudly, "I'm your brother Dou Shangwu. We've not seen you for two months. We just got back today. It's a nice evening with a beautiful moon. Open the door and come on out, please. Let's go and have a drink, okay?" Feng replied, "Sorry, it's late. I've already gone to bed. I don't feel like getting up. Would you like to come back to me and have fun tomorrow?" Elder Brother Dou said, "In fact our dwelling's not far from yours and we can have a nice chat there. I thought you might have gone to bed, and would refuse to come if I sent someone else for you. So we brothers have made a special trip to fetch you. Hurry up and go, please."

Feng said, "It's a pretty late hour, and the wind is chilly. I may catch a cold once I leave my warm quilt. So I really don't want to rise. Please leave me alone. You know we're good friends and I do appreciate your kindness very much." Elder Brother Dou asked, "What's happening to you tonight, Brother? You used to like fooling around with friends." Younger Brother Dou chimed in, "Having drinks in the moonlight is a great delight and a man should jump for it even if he's in bed, without any fear of catching cold." Feng said, "I'm really not in the mood tonight. I would surely appreciate it if you would show some understanding." Younger Brother Dou said, "Do you mean to send us back home tonight disappointed? If you don't want to get out of bed, we're going to knock the door open. Don't blame us for being rude then!"

Feng was truly at a loss what to do. He calculated, "If they do storm in, what should I do?" He then muttered in a low voice to Sumei, "If they force their way into the room, they will discover what we are doing. Please go and hide behind the bed over there. I'll go and answer the door and send them away." Sumei whispered in his ear, "Be quick. I want to get out of here. If things get messed up, what should we do?" After she settled down in the dark, Feng removed the bench and opened the door. Seeing the two brothers waiting outside, he latched the door behind him before greeting them. Feng said, "I don't have a stove inside to keep warm,



门，和兄每两个坐话一番罢。”两窠道：“坐话甚么？酒盒多端正在那里了，且到寒家呼卢浮白，吃到天明。”凤生道：“小弟不耐烦，饶我罢！”窠二道：“我们兴高得紧，管你耐烦不耐烦？我们大家扯了去！”兄弟两个多动手，扯着便走。又加家僮们推的推，攘的攘，不由你不走。凤生只叫得苦，却又不好说出。正是：

哑子慢尝黄柏味，难将苦口向人言。

没奈何，只得跟着吆吆喝喝的去。

这里素梅在房中，心头丕丕的跳，几乎把个胆吓破了，着实懊悔无尽。听得人声渐远，才按定了性子，走出床面前来。整一整衣服，望门外张一张，悄然无人，忖道：“此时想没人了，我也等不得他，趁早走回去罢。”去拽那门时，谁想是外边搭住了的。狠性子一拽，早把两三个长指甲一齐蹴断了。要出来，又出来不得；要叫声龙香，又想他决在家里，那里在外边听得？又还怕被别人听见了，左右不是，心里烦躁撩乱，没计奈何。看看夜深了，坐得不耐烦，再不见凤生来到。心中又气又恨，道：“难道贪了酒杯，竟忘记我在这里了？”又替他解道：“方才他负极不要去，还是这些狂朋没得放他回来。”转展踌躇，无聊无赖，身体倦怠，呵欠连天。欲要睡睡，又是别人家床铺，不曾睡惯，不得伏贴。亦且心下有事，焦焦躁躁，那里睡得去？闷坐不过，做下一首词云：



brothers. I'm sorry we should go and talk for a while somewhere else." The two brothers said, "What to talk about! We've got dinner ready at our place. Come on and let's go to our home. We can party and gamble until dawn." Feng pleaded, "I'm sorry, but I am really not in the mood to go. Please spare me!"

The two brothers said in one voice, "But we're in high spirits now and we don't care what you say. We'll pull you over there." So saying, the two brothers started to drag Feng away. Their servants also came to their help, pushing and pulling. Cursing himself because of his lousy luck, Feng had to swallow his disappointment and give in. It was just like a dumb person tasting bitter herbs, Feng felt it hard indeed to express his discomfort to others. Having no other alternative, he had to go with them.

Meanwhile, Sumei, her heart pounding violently, shivered with fright at the back of the room, full of regret over what she had done. As the noise died away, she heaved a sigh of relief and stepped to the front of the bed. She adjusted her dress and stuck out her head to look out of the door. Nobody was outside. She pondered, "It's rather late. I'd better go home instead of waiting for him here." She pulled at the door, not knowing it had been latched from the outside. As she pulled harder, she exerted so much strength that two pieces of her long fingernails were chipped off. She wanted to go home but couldn't get out of the room. She wanted to call "Longxiang", but she knew the servant girl was at home at that moment and wouldn't hear her. Between a rock and a hard place, she was restless and desperate for help. It became well past midnight, and Sumei couldn't sit still. As she couldn't see any sign of Feng's return, her anxiety gave way to a rage. She said to herself, "What happened? Did Feng go on a drinking spree and forget about me completely?" Thinking better of this, she said, "He didn't want to go in the first place. It must be those rowdy friends of his who have held him up." Nervously, she fidgeted about. Gradually sleepiness began to creep upon her and she couldn't stop yawning. She would like to have lain down on the bed but the thought of being in someone else's bed assured her she would feel uncomfortable sleeping in it. Besides, with something on her mind, how could she fall asleep? Finally she sat down and wrote a poem:



幽房深锁多情种，清夜悠悠谁共？羞见枕衾鸳凤，闷则和衣拥。无端猛烈阴风动，惊破一番新梦。窗外月华霜重，寂寞桃源洞。（词寄《桃源忆故人》）

素梅吟词已罢，早已鸡鸣时候了。

龙香在家里睡了一觉醒来，想道：“此时姐姐与凤官人也快活得勾了，不免走去伺候，接了他归来早些，省得天明有人看见，做出事来。”开了角门，踏着露草，慢慢走到书房前来。只见门上搭着扭儿，疑道：“这外面是谁搭上的？又来奇怪了！”自言自语了几句。里头素梅听得声音，便开言道：“龙香来了么？”龙香道：“是，来了。”素梅道：“快些开了门进来。”龙香开进去看时，只见素梅妆容不卸，独自一个坐着。惊问道：“姐姐起得这般早？”素梅道：“那里是起早！一夜还不曾睡。”龙香道：“为何不睡？凤官人那里去了？”素梅叹口气道：“有这等不凑巧的事，说不得一两句话，一伙狂朋踢进园门来，拉去看月，凤官人千推万阻，不肯开门，他直要打进门来。只得开了门，随他们一路去了。至今不来，且又搭上了门。教我出来又出来不得，坐又坐不过，受了这一夜的罪。而今你来得正好，我和你快回去罢。”龙香道：“怎么有这等事！姐姐有心得到这时候了，凤官人毕竟转来，还在此等他一等么？”素梅不觉泪汪汪的，又叹一口气道：“还说甚么等他？只自回去罢了。”正是：

蓦地鱼舟惊比目，霎时樵斧破连枝。

素梅自与龙香回去不题。



Should an affectionate lass
A fair night in solitude pass?
Seeing embroidered bedding she's embarrassed
And lies down in gloomy mood, fully dressed.
A sudden gust of weird wind
Breaks her sweet dream.
She finds herself in a secluded fairyland
In the bright and dewy moonbeam.
(To the tune of "Taoyuanyiguren")

As she finished her writing, dawn broke with roosters crowing. Waking up early on the following morning, Longxiang thought to herself, "My young lady and Feng must have had a good time by now. It's still early. I should go and bring her back. Otherwise, as people get up later on, she will be discovered and get into trouble." She opened the corner door of the building and tiptoed on the dew-seeped grass toward Feng's study. Seeing the door was latched, she was perplexed. She said to herself, "Who latched the door from outside? It's so strange!" Inside Sumei heard her murmur and asked, "Is it Longxiang?" Longxiang replied, "Yes, it's me, Sister." Sumei said, "Come on and open the door."

On entering the room, Longxiang saw Sumei sitting there with her clothes on. Greatly surprised, Longxiang asked, "Why did you get up so early?" Sumei replied, "It's not that I got up early, the fact is that I stayed awake the whole night!" Longxiang asked, "What was it that kept you awake for the whole night? Where has Feng gone?" Heaving a sigh, Sumei said, "It turned out to be bad luck! The moment we started to talk, a batch of rowdy friends of his broke into the yard and wanted to take him with them to a party in the moonlight. He tried to hold the door shut, but they forced their way in. So he had to give up and go with them. He's not come back yet, and the door was latched. I couldn't get out, nor did I feel at ease when I was seated. The night was hell for me! I'm glad you've come. Let us hurry and go back home." Longxiang said, "How could this happen? But if you still want to see Feng, would you like to wait a little longer since it's time he should be coming back home?" As tears welled up in her eyes, Sumei sighed and said, "Forget it. Let us go." Then they



且说凤生被那不做美的窦大、窦二不由分说拉去吃了半夜的酒。凤生真是热地上蜒蚰，一时也安不得身子。一声求罢，就被窦二大碗价罚来。凤生虽是心里不愿，待推却时，又恐怕他们看出破绽，只得勉强发兴，指望早些散场。谁知这些少年心性，吃到兴头上，越吃越狂，那里肯住？凤生真是没天得叫。直等东方发白，大家酩酊吃不得了，方才歇手。凤生终是留心，不至大醉。带了些酒意，别了二窦，一步恨不得做十步，踉跄归来。

到得园中，只见房门大开，急急走近叫道：“小姐！小姐！”那见个人影？想着昨宵在此，今不得见了，不觉的趁着酒兴，敲台拍凳，气得泪点如珠的下来，骂道：“天杀的窦家兄弟坑杀了我！千难万难，到得今日才得成就，未曾到手，平白地搅开了。而今不知又要费多少心机，方得圆成。只怕着了这惊，不肯再来了，如何是好？”闷闷不乐，倒在床上，一觉睡到日沉西，方起得来，急急走到园东墙边一看，但见楼窗紧闭，不见人踪。推推角门，又是关紧了的。没处问个消息，怏怏而回，且在书房纳闷不题。

且说那杨素梅归到自己房中，心里还是恍惚不宁的，对龙香道：“今后切须戒着，不可如此！”龙香道：“姐姐只怕戒不定。”素梅道：“且看我狠性子戒起来。”龙香道：“到得戒时已是迟了。”素梅道：“怎见得迟？”龙香道：“身子已破了。”素梅道：“那里有此事！你才转得身，他们就打将进来。说话也



made their way home.

Feng Laiyi had been dragged away by the two thoughtless brothers, and had to drink with them for half a night. He couldn't rest for even one minute. He wanted to quit drinking, only to find the two brothers pressed him to have two more bowls of wine. Though sick of it, he pretended to be in a good mood for fear of revealing any of his inner thoughts. He hoped the party would be over soon. But the two brothers, young as they were, wouldn't stop once they had started. The more they drank, the more they enjoyed drinking. Feng felt helpless until the east put on a morning sheen. The two brothers were now entirely drunk and the party broke up. Feng had watched the amount of wine he consumed, so he was only a little intoxicated. After taking leave of the two brothers, he tottered unsteadily on his way back home.

Once in his garden, he found the door to his study was open. He raced into his study, shouting, "Sister! Sister!" Not a soul was there! The thought of Sumei being there the night before and now not being able to see her infuriated him, and tears started to fall down his cheeks as he slapped the table and benches in drunkenness. He swore at the two brothers, saying, "Damn you, Dou brothers! You've ruined me! I've worked like hell to get a chance last night. But before I could make it, you screwed it up. I wonder how much effort I'll have to go through to obtain another chance. The problem is that she might have been frightened and will not come again. What can I do about it then?" He dropped into bed in frustration. He slept until sunset. Then he hurried to the east side of the garden and saw that the windows of the building were shut. Then he went to the building and pushed at the corner door, but it was locked. With no one around to turn to for inquiry, he strolled back home in dismay.

Earlier, Sumei had returned to her room, agitated. She said to Longxiang, "I should be careful in future and never behave like this again!" Longxiang replied, "I doubt you'll be able to keep your word." Sumei said, "Just wait and see. I will keep my word." Longxiang said, "But I'm afraid it's too late." Sumei said, "Why do you say it's too late?" Longxiang answered, "Because you've lost your virginity." Sumei said, "No, it's not true. As soon as you left last night, those people broke in. We didn't even

不曾说得一句，那有别事？”龙香道：“既如此，那人怎肯放下？定然想杀了，极不也害个风癫，可不是我们的阴鹭？还须今夜再走一遭的是。”素梅道：“今夜若去，你住在外边，一边等我，一边看人，方不误事。”龙香冷笑了一声，素梅道：“你笑甚么来？”龙香道：“我笑姐姐好个狠性子，着实戒得定。”

两个正要商量晚间再去赴期，不想里面兄嫂处走出一个丫鬟来，报道：“冯老孺人来了。”元来素梅有个外婆，嫁在冯家，住在钱塘门里。虽没了丈夫，家事颇厚，开个典当铺在门前。人人晓得他是个富室，那些三姑六婆没一个不来奉承他的。他只有一女，嫁与杨家，就是素梅的母亲，早年夫妇双亡了。孺人想着外甥女儿虽然傍着兄嫂居住，未曾许聘人家，一日与媒婆每说起素梅亲事，媒婆每道：“若只托着杨大官人出名，说把妹子许人，未必人家动火。须得说是老孺人的亲外甥，就在孺人家里接茶出嫁的，方有门当户对的来。”孺人道是说得有理，亦且外甥女儿年纪长大，也要收拾他身畔来，故此自己抬了轿，又叫了一乘空轿，一直到杨家，要接素梅家去。素梅接着外婆，孺人把前意说了一遍。素梅暗地吃了一惊，推托道：



have chance to exchange a few words. How could we have time to do anything like that?" Longxiang said, "If so, he will not let go of this business easily. It will certainly drive him crazy. If he goes out of his mind because of this, should we be held responsible? I think you should make another try tonight." Sumei said, "If I meet him tonight, you should stay outside the room, waiting and watching to make sure no one is around. Then everything would be alright." A smile of scorn sprang onto Longxiang's face. "Why do you smile?" asked Sumei. Longxiang replied, "I thought it was interesting, Sister. Didn't you say you would keep your word and never do it again?"

As they were planning for the second meeting for that night, a servant girl of Sumei's brother came to Sumei and said, "Old Lady Feng, your grandmother, has come for a visit." Sumei's grandmother on her mother's side had married into the family of Feng and lived inside the Qiantang Gate. Though widowed, this grandmother led a relatively affluent life and ran a pawnshop in front her house. Knowing she was wealthy, the local inhabitants of low status, like matchmakers, fortune-tellers or nuns, all favor with her. She had had only one daughter, Sumei's mother, who had married into the family of Yang. Sumei's father and mother both died when she was young. For this reason, Sumei had to live with her brother and sister-in-law.

That Sumei had not yet been betrothed weighed on the grandmother's mind. One day the old lady happened to talk about Sumei's marriage with a woman matchmaker. The matchmaker had said, "If you marry her as the sister of her brother, Master Yang, people will not show much interest or think highly of her. You must marry her as your granddaughter and you should also take the marital gifts at your home. That will draw the attention of privileged families." The grandmother had nodded her approval. Then she had decided that her granddaughter, now a grown-up girl, should come back to live with her. Therefore she came in a sedan chair and had another empty sedan chair with her as she made her way to Sumei's place.

Sumei met her grandmother and listened to the old lady's account of her intentions. Sumei was somewhat startled and raised an excuse, saying,

“既然要去，外婆先请回，等甥女收拾两日就来。”孺人道：“有甚么收拾？我在此等了你去。”龙香便道：“也要拣个日子。”孺人道：“我拣了来的，今日正是个黄道吉日，就此去罢。”素梅暗暗地叫苦，私对龙香道：“怎生发付那人？”龙香道：“总是老孺人守着在此，便再迟两日去，也会他不得了。不如且依着了，等龙香自去回他消息，再寻机会罢。”素梅只得怀着不快，跟着孺人去了。

所以这日凤生去望楼上，再不得见面。直到外边去打听，才晓得是外婆家接了去了。跌足叹恨，悔之无及。又不知几时才得回家，再得相会。正在不快之际，只见舅舅金三员外家金旺来接他回家去，要商量上京会试之事。说道：“园中一应书箱行李，多收拾了家来，不必再到此了。”凤生口里不说，心下思量道：“谁想当面一番错过，便如此你东我西，料想那还有再会的日子？只是他十分的好情，教我怎生放得下？”一边收拾，望着东墙只管落下泪来。却是没奈何，只得匆匆出门。到得金三员外家里，员外早已收拾盘缠，是件停当。吃了钱行酒，送他登程，叫金旺跟着，一路伏侍去了。

员外闲在家里，偶然一个牙婆走来卖珠翠，说起钱塘门里冯家有个女儿，才貌双全，尚未许人。员外叫讨了他八字来，



“If I’m going to your place, I’ll join you in a couple of days after I get things ready. Would you please go back home first?” The grandmother said, “Do you have many affairs to order? I’ll wait for you here and then we can leave together.” Longxiang chimed in, “I think we’d better pick a lucky day for the departure.” The grandmother said, “I did. Today is an auspicious date. Let’s go today.” Sumei felt sorry for herself and whispered in Longxiang’s ear, “What should we say to that gentleman?” Longxiang replied, “So long as the grandmother is here waiting, you’ll not be able to have the chance to leave and meet him even for another two days. I think you should go with your grandmother now. I’ll manage to let him know about this and see to it that we’ll have another chance later on.” Deeply frustrated, Sumei left with her grandmother.

That’s why Feng Laiyi didn’t see her in the house that day. Some time later he was told that the old lady had taken her away. His heart filled with dismay, he stamped his feet and let out sighs, wondering when she could come back there to meet him. As he was sitting in his residence, distressed, a servant of his uncle, Jin, came to take him back to his uncle’s home for the forthcoming imperial examinations in the capital city. The servant, named Jin Wang, told Feng, “Please pack all your book boxes and suitcases and come home with me. You won’t be coming back here in future.” Without uttering a response, Feng thought, “This means that was the last possible meeting with Sumei. I lost the chance and didn’t know we would have to part from each other so soon. Will there ever be another chance to see her in the future? She is so affectionate with me. How can I stop missing her?” As he looked across the wall to the east, tears began to roll down his cheeks. He left, downhearted. His uncle met him at his home with everything lined up for his journey to the capital, including his traveling expenses. After a send-off dinner, Feng left for the capital in the company of Jin Wang.

One day while the uncle was idling away his time at home, a woman came to sell pearls and jade. She talked to him about a girl from the Feng family living inside the Qiantang Gate. She said the girl was beautiful and well-educated and not yet betrothed. The uncle asked for the signs of the girl’s birth time and then had a fortune-teller compare those with the



与外甥合一合看。那看命的看得是一对上好到头夫妻，夫荣妻贵，并无冲犯。员外大喜，即央人去说合。那冯孺人见说是金三员外，晓得他本处财主，叫人通知了外甥杨大官人，当下许了。择了吉日，下了聘定，欢天喜地。

谁知杨素梅心里只想着凤生，见说许下了甚么金家，好生不快，又不好说得出来。对着龙香只是啼哭。龙香宽解道：“姻缘分定，想当日若有缘法，早已成事了。如此对面错过，毕竟不是对头。亏得还好，若是那一夜有些长短了，而今又许了一家，却怎么处？”素梅道：“说那里话！我当初虽不与他沾身，也曾亲热一番，心已相许。我如今痴想还与他有相会日子，权且忍耐。若要我另嫁别人，临期无奈，只得寻个自尽，报答他那一点情分便了，怎生撇得他下？”龙香道：“姐姐一片好心固然如此，只是而今怎能勾再与他相会？”素梅道：“他如今料想在京会试。倘若姻缘未断，得登金榜，他必然归来寻访着我。那时我辞了外婆，回到家中，好歹设法得相见一番。那时他身荣贵，就是婚姻之事，或者还可挽回。万一不然，我与他一言面诀，死亦瞑目了。”龙香道：“姐姐也见得是，且耐心着，不要烦烦恼恼，与别人看破了，生出议论来。”

不说两个唧喙，且说凤生到京，一举成名，做了三甲进士，



ones of his nephew. The fortune-teller told him, “Their fates match perfectly. Their marriage will be filled with honor and wealth and will last throughout their lives.” The uncle was overjoyed and sent a woman matchmaker to deliver the proposal. The grandmother of Sumei learned that Jin was a rich man in the area. She approved of the marriage at once and sent someone to inform her nephew, Yang. After that a favorable date was chosen for the formal ceremony of betrothal in a cheerful atmosphere.

Sumei, however, had her mind on Feng Laiyi. She became quite upset at the news of her betrothal to the family of Jin. Unable to air her complaint, she wept incessantly in front of Longxiang. Longxiang tried to console her by saying, “Marriages are predestined. If you had been predestined to marry Feng, you two would have been a happy couple. You two had such a good chance of being together that night, but you failed to make it. This shows that you were not destined to be a match. But it’s good that nothing happened between you two that night. Otherwise, how could you handle the situation of being betrothed to another man today?” Sumei said, “What are you talking about! Though I didn’t sleep with him that night, we had some intimate moments together. I have become his. I’ve been planning to wait in distress until the day when I can see him again. If they want to marry me to somebody else, in desperation as the deadline draws near, I will take my own life in order to show him my love in return. How can I reject him?”

Longxiang said, “You’re very faithful to him, sister. But how can you see him again?” Sumei said, “I think he’s currently taking the imperial examinations in the capital city. If we’re still linked by a predestined marriage, he’ll come back home looking for me, after passing the examinations. By that time I’ll leave my grandmother for home and meet him. He should have become honored and rich at that time. There will still be some possibility of reversing the marriage situation. If that opportunity fails me, I will see him for the last time and die in contentment.” Longxiang remarked, “What you said is correct, sister. You should be patient and wait. Take it easy and relax. Otherwise people may read your mind and speculation aroused.”

Now come back to Feng Laiyi. Feng had arrived in the capital city. He

选了福建福州府推官。心里想道：“我如今便道还家，央媒议亲，易如反掌。这姻缘仍在，诚为可喜。进士不足言也！”正要打点起程，金员外家里有人到京来，说道：“家中已聘下了夫人，只等官人荣归毕姻。”凤生吃了一惊，道：“怎么，聘下了甚么夫人？”金家人道：“钱塘门里冯家小姐，见说才貌双全的。”凤生变了脸道：“你家员外，好没要紧！那知我的就里？连忙就聘做甚么？”金家人与金旺多疑怪道：“这是老员外好意，官人为何反怪将起来？”凤生道：“你们不晓得，不要多管！”自此心中反添上一番愁绪起来。正是：

姻事虽成心事违，新人欢喜旧人啼。

几回暗里添惆怅，说与傍人那得知？

凤生心中闷闷，且待到家再作区处，一面京中自起身，一面打发金家人先回报知，择日到家。

这里金员外晓得外甥归来快了，定了成婚吉日，先到冯家下那袍段钗环请期的大礼。他把一个白玉蟾蜍做压钗物事。这蟾蜍是一对，前日把一个送外甥了，今日又替他行礼，做了个



came in at the top in the imperial examinations and won the title of *jinshi*. Now a famous scholar, he was appointed to be a judge, the third executive, of Fuzhou Prefecture of Fujian, responsible for supervising judicial proceedings in the jurisdiction. He thought to himself, “As I go and visit my home on my way to my official post, it will be as easy as taking my hand over to fulfill the marriage with Sumei. I’m glad that I have found my intended one. The title of *jinshi* is not worth mentioning.”

As he was about to pack and leave, a servant sent by his uncle arrived with the message, “Your betrothal to a young lady has been concluded at home. We welcome you back home to get married.” Greatly astonished, Feng asked, “What are you talking about? What a lady am I going to marry?” The servant answered, “It’s a woman from the family of Feng living inside Qiantang Gate. It’s said she’s beautiful and learned.” Feng scowled and said, “My uncle is really mindless! He knew nothing of my intentions. Why did he handle my betrothal in such a hurry?” The servant and Jin Wang, Feng’s traveling companion, were confused, saying, “Old master did this for you out of good motivations. Why are you unhappy about this marriage arrangement?” Feng said, “You know nothing about it. Leave the matter with me.” Then Feng was shrouded in a cloud of dismay, for although a betrothal to a young lady had been concluded for him at home, he only had Yang Sumei on his mind. How could others know his mind?

Feng decided to leave for home and see what could be done about it, low-spirited as he was. As he sent the servant back to inform his uncle of his forthcoming arrival, he took leave of the capital city and started the journey home.

On learning that his nephew was on his way home, Jin decided on an auspicious date for the nuptial. He went to the house of Feng and presented the family with a generous gift, including gowns and hairpins. He added one more gift, a white jade paperweight of a toad. The paperweight of the toad originally came in pairs. But he had given one of them to his nephew, Feng Laiyi. Now he was giving the other to the bride-to-be, in view of making a perfect gift for the new couple. He asked the matchmaker to deliver the gift to the Feng family and tell them, “The young gentleman



囿囿人情，教媒婆送到冯家去，说：“金家郎金榜题名，不日归娶，已起程将到了。”那冯老孺人好不欢喜。旁边亲亲眷眷看的人，那一个不啧啧称叹？道：“素梅姐姐生得标致，有此等大福！”多来与素梅叫喜。

谁知素梅心怀鬼胎，只是长吁短叹，好生愁闷，默默归房去了。只见龙香走来道：“姐姐，你看见适才的礼物么？”素梅道：“有甚心情去看他！”龙香道：“一件天大侥幸的事，好叫姐姐得知。龙香听得外边人说，那中进士聘姐姐的那个人，虽然姓金，却是金家外甥。我前日记得凤官人也曾说甚么金家舅舅，只怕那个人就是凤官人也不可知。”素梅道：“那有此事！”龙香道：“适才礼物里边，有一件压钗的东西，也是一个玉蟾蜍，与前日凤官人与姐姐的一模二样。若不是他家，怎生有这般一对？”素梅道：“而今玉蟾蜍在那里？设法来看一看。”龙香道：“我方才见有些跷蹊，推说姐姐要看，拿将来了。”袖里取出，递与素梅看了一会，果像是一般的；再把自家的在臂上解下来，并一并看，分毫不差。想着前日的情，不觉掉下泪来，道：“若果如此，真是姻缘不断。古来破镜重圆，钗分再合，信有其事了。只是凤郎得中，自然说是凤家下礼，如何只说金家？这里边有些不明。怎生探得一个实消息，果然是了便好。”龙香道：“是便怎么？不是便怎么？”素梅道：“是他了，万千欢喜，不必说起。若不是他，我前日说过的，临到迎娶，自缢而死！”龙香道：“龙香到有个计较在此。”素梅道：



of the Jin family has succeeded in passing the imperial examinations. He's now on his way home for the marriage." Sumei's grandmother, Lady Feng, was very happy, and so were relatives and friends, who remarked in praise, "Sumei is good-looking and has such good luck as well." Congratulations kept pouring in.

However, Sumei was heavy-hearted and shut herself up in the room, giving out one sigh after another in discouragement. Longxiang came over and said to her, "Did you see the gifts they've brought here, sister?" Sumei said, "No, I'm not in the mood." Longxiang said, "It's such coincidence, you know. I heard the gentleman who won the title of *jinshi* and is going to marry you is the nephew of the family of Jin. I remember Feng once talked about his uncle who has the family name of Jin. I wonder whether this gentleman is Feng Laiyi!" Sumei exclaimed, "How could that happen?" Longxiang replied, "But I saw among the gifts something like your paperweight. It's a jade paperweight of a toad, exactly the same as the one Feng gave you. If they don't come from the same family, how could the two jade toad paperweights happen to be so similar?" Sumei said, "Where's that jade toad paperweight? Could you bring it to me?"

Longxiang said, "Yes, sister. I thought there must be a story about the toad. So I told them you wanted to have a look at it as an excuse and brought it here." So saying, she took it out of her sleeve. Sumei took it and looked closely at it. It did look familiar with hers. Then she untied the one she wore from her arm and put the two together. Of exactly the same design, they matched perfectly as a pair. Tears began to drop as she recalled her past relations with Feng. She said, "If it's true, our predestined marriage bond has not been cut off! As of a shattered mirror can be patched again and a split pair of hairpins can also come together. But I don't understand why they sent these gifts in the name of Jin instead of Feng. We should find out what's going on. I just want to make sure he's the right person." Longxiang asked, "What will you do if he's the right man and what if he's not?"

Sumei said, "If he's the one, I will be very happy, of course. If it's another man, I'll hang myself right before the wedding as I told you before." Longxiang then said, "I've got an idea." "Tell me about it," Sumei



“怎的计较？”龙香道：“少不得迎亲之日，媒婆先回话。那时龙香妆做了媒婆的女儿，随了他去。看得果是那人，即忙回来说知就是。”素梅道：“如此甚好。但愿得就是他，这场喜比天还大。”龙香道：“我也巴不得如此，看来像是有些光景的。”两人商量已定。

过了两日，凤生到了金家了。那时冯老孺人已依着金三员外所定日子成亲，先叫媒婆去回话，请来迎娶。龙香知道，赶到路上来对媒婆说：“我也要去看一看新郎。有人问时，只说是你的女儿，带了来的。”媒婆道：“这等折杀了老身，同去走走就是。只有一件事要问姐姐。”龙香道：“甚事？”媒婆道：“你家姐姐天大喜事临身，过门去就做夫人了，如何不见喜欢？口里唧唧啾啾，倒像十分不快活的，这怎么说？”龙香道：“你不知道，我姐姐自小立愿，要自家拣个像意姐夫。而今是老孺人做主，不管他肯不肯，许了他。不知新郎好歹，放心不下，故此不快活。”媒婆道：“新郎是做官的了，有甚么不好？”龙香道：“夫妻面上，只要人好，做官有甚么用处？老娘晓得这做官的姓甚么？”媒婆道：“姓金了，还不知道？”龙香道：“闻说是金员外的外甥，元不姓金，可知道姓甚么？”媒婆道：“是便是外甥，而今外边人只叫他金爷。他的肉姓姓得有些异样的，不好记，我忘记了。”龙香道：“可是姓凤？”媒婆想了



urged her. Longxiang said, "On the day of the wedding, the matchmaker will go to the man's family with the message of the bride's readiness to leave home. I will go there with her, posing as her daughter. I will make sure if the man is the right person. Then I'll come back to let you know." Sumei said, "That's really a good idea. I hope there's no mistake. It will be the happiest thing in my life." Longxiang said, "I hope so, too. It seems it is he." Then they settled on Longxiang's plan.

Feng Laiyi arrived at Jin's home a couple of days later. On the day for the wedding that Jin had chosen, Sumei's grandmother sent the matchmaker to inform the bridegroom's family of the bride's coming. Longxiang caught up with the matchmaker as she made her way and said to her, "I want to go with you to have a look at the bridegroom. If someone is curious about me, please tell them I'm your daughter coming with you." The matchmaker replied, "I certainly do not deserve the good fortune of having you as my daughter. Just come with me. Don't worry about it. By the way, I've got a question to ask you." Longxiang asked, "What is it?" The matchmaker said, "Your young lady's going to get married and become a lady. This is the happiest thing that could happen to her. But I could see no sign of happiness on her face. She's murmuring all the time. She seems unhappy. What's happened to her?"

Longxiang said, "You don't know it. She made up her mind at an early age to have a perfect husband. But now her grandmother made this choice of marriage for her without consulting her. She doesn't know if the bridegroom is good. For this she's worried, and that's why she's not happy." The matchmaker said, "The bridegroom is a government official. Why is she worried about him?" Longxiang replied, "To live together, he should be a good husband. What's so good about being a government official? By the way, do you know his family name, madam?" The matchmaker said, "Of course. It's Jin. I know it definitely." Longxiang said, "I heard this nephew of Jin originally did not have Jin as his family name. Do you know anything about that?" The matchmaker replied, "I know he's Jin's nephew. People call him Master Jin. But his original family name is an uncommon one. I can't remember it. I've forgotten it." Longxiang asked, "Is it Feng?" Nodding her head, the matchmaker replied,



一想，点头道：“正是这个什么怪姓。”龙香心里暗暗欢喜，已有八分是了。

一路行来，已到了金家门首。龙香对媒婆道：“老娘，你先进去，我在门外张一张罢。”媒婆道：“正是。”媒婆进去见了凤生，回覆今日迎亲之事。正在问答之际，龙香门外一看，看得果然是了，不觉手舞足蹈起来，嘻嘻的道：“造化！造化！”龙香也有意要他看见，把身子全然露着，早已被门里面看见了。凤生问媒婆道：“外面那个随着你来？”媒婆道：“是老媳妇的女儿。”凤生一眼瞅去，疑是龙香。便叫媒婆去里面茶饭，自己踱出来看，果然是龙香了。凤生忙道：“甚风吹你到此？你姐姐在那里？”龙香道：“凤官人还问我姐姐，你只打点迎亲罢了。”凤生道：“龙香姐，小生自那日惊散之后，有一刻不想你姐姐，也叫我天诛地灭！怎奈是这日一去，彼此分散，无路可通。侥幸往京得中，正要归来央媒寻访，不想舅舅又先定下了这冯家。而今推却不得，没奈何了，岂我情愿？”龙香故意道：“而今不情愿，也说不得了。只辜负了我家姐姐一片好情，至今还是泪汪汪的。”凤生也拭泪道：“待小生过了今日之事，再怎么约得你家姐姐一会面，讲得一番心事明白，死也甘心！而今你姐姐在那里？曾回去家中不曾？”龙香哄他道：“我姐姐也许下人家了。”凤生吃惊道：“咳！咳！许了那一家？”龙香道：“是这城里甚么金家，新中进士的。”凤生道：“又来胡说！城中再那里还有个金家新中进士？只有得我。”龙



“Yes, it is that strange name.” Almost assured that the bridegroom was that scholar, Longxiang was secretly delighted.

As they reached the house of the Jin family, Longxiang said to the matchmaker, “You go in first, Madam. I’ll stay here and wait for you.” The matchmaker replied, “Okay.” The matchmaker got in and talked to Feng Laiyi about the wedding. Meanwhile Longxiang saw, from outside, that it was none other than Feng. She jumped for joy, saying, “Great! Great!” Then she purposely showed her face at the window to give him a full view of herself. Feng, on noticing her, asked the matchmaker, “Is that girl with you?” The matchmaker answered, “Yes, sir. She’s my daughter.” Suspecting the girl he saw was Longxiang, Feng ask the matchmaker to go in and have some tea and food while he strolled out of the room, only to find that it was indeed Longxiang.

He asked her, “Why are you here? Where’s your young lady?” Longxiang answered, “Why are you still concerned about her? Go and get ready for your wedding.” Feng responded, “Sister Longxiang, let Heaven strike me dead if I’ve ever stopped thinking about her since we were scattered that other day! But I never expected we would be separated for so long and there would be no way of getting contact with her. Later I was very lucky to win the title of *jinshi* in the capital city. As I was about to leave for home, my uncle sent me a message about his arrangement for this marriage of me to the family of Feng. At this point, I could do nothing but accept it. Do you think I would do this out of my own free will?” Longxiang intentionally teased him by saying, “It’s too late to talk about that. But our young lady’s love has gone in vain and she’s been sad and wept all the time.” Wiping tears from his face, Feng said, “Let me get today’s business done and then I’ll make another appointment with your lady and talk to her in detail. Then I will die content. But where’s she now? Did she get a chance to go back home?” With the intention of carrying the fun further, Longxiang lied, “She’s engaged too.”

Feng asked, “With whom?” Longxiang replied, “It’s said that it’s a man with the family name of Jin living in this town. A man who has just won the title of *jinshi*.” Feng said, “You’re talking nonsense! There couldn’t be another *jinshi* with the family name Jin in this town except



香道：“官人几时又姓金？”凤生道：“这是我娘舅家姓，我一向榜上多是姓金不姓凤。”龙香嘻的一笑道：“白日见鬼，枉着人急了这许多时。”凤生道：“这等说起来，敢是我聘定的，就是你家姐姐？却怎么说姓冯？”龙香道：“我姐姐也是冯老孺人的外甥，故此人只说是冯家女儿，其实就是杨家的人。”凤生道：“前日分散之后，我问邻人，说是外婆家接去，想正是冯家了？”龙香道：“正是了。”凤生道：“这话果真么？莫非你见我另聘了，特把这话来耍我的？”龙香去袖中摸出两个玉蟾蜍来道：“你看这一对先自成双了。一个是你送与姐姐的，一个是你家压钗的，眼见得多在这里了，还要疑心？”凤生大笑道：“有这样奇事，可不快活杀了我！”龙香道：“官人如此快活，我姐姐还不知道明白，哭哭啼啼在那里。”凤生道：“若不是我，你姐姐待怎么？”龙香道：“姐姐看见玉蟾蜍一样，又见说是金家外甥，故此也有些疑心，先教我来打探。说道不是官人，便要自尽。如今即忙回去报他，等他好梳妆相待。而今他这欢喜，也非同小可。”凤生道：“还有一件，他事在急头上，只怕还要疑心是你权时哄他的，未必放心得下。你把他前日所与我的戒指拿去与他看，他方信是实了，可好么？”龙香道：“官人见得是。”凤生即在指头上勒下来，交与龙香去了，一面分付鼓乐酒筵齐备，亲往迎娶。



me.” Longxiang asked, “At what time did you adopt the family name of Jin?” Feng said, “Jin is my uncle’s family name. My family name was listed as Jin, not Feng, on the list of winners in the examinations.” With a grin, Longxiang said, “This is strange. It’s caused a great deal of anxiety for us!” Feng asked, “Therefore, the one I’m going to marry is your lady, is that correct? But how come her family name was Feng?” Longxiang said, “Our young lady is the granddaughter of the Feng’s family. In public she was regarded as a girl from the Feng family and had the surname of Feng. As a matter of fact, she is a Yang.”

Feng said, “After our separation the other day, I learned from your neighbor that she had been taken to her grandmother’s home. I guess it must be the Feng’s family!” Longxiang said, “Exactly!” Feng said, “You are not teasing me, are you? I wonder if you’ve made up the whole story to tease me now that you knew I would marry somebody else?” Hearing this, Longxiang took out the two jade paperweights from her sleeve and said, “Look, here are two paperweights that make up a pair. One of them is the one you gave our lady as a gift. The other one is an extra piece your family added to the betrothal gifts. Look at them. Do you still have any doubts?” Feng said, “Wow, I just can’t believe it! This is the happiest thing that’s happened to me in my life!” Longxiang said, “You’re happy now, sir. But our lady is still in the dark about this matter and is sobbing at home.” Feng said, “If I were not the bridegroom, what would she do?” Longxiang replied, “After she saw the jade paperweight and heard the bridegroom was from the Jin family, she had some doubts too. So she sent me here to check it. She said if it were not you, she would commit suicide. Now I must hurry back and let her know the truth. After washing and making-up, she’ll be ready to see you. She’ll be in heaven, too.”

Feng then said, “One more thing. She must have been so anxious that she may think you’re trying to calm her down with a story. So it might not set her mind at ease. Take this ring with you and show it to her. It’s the one she gave me. At the sight of this ring, she will believe what you say, all right?” Longxiang said, “That’s a good idea.” Feng slid the ring off his finger and handed it to her. After Longxiang left, he told the band of musicians to get ready and had dinner set up. Soon he would be leaving



却说龙香急急走到家里，见了素梅，连声道：“姐姐，正是他！正是他！”素梅道：“难道有这等事？”龙香道：“不信，你看这戒指那里来的？”就把戒指递将过来，道：“是他手上亲除下来与我，叫我拿与姐姐看，做个凭据的。”素梅微笑道：“这个真也奇怪了！你且说他见你说些甚么？”龙香道：“他说自从那日惊散，没有一日不想姐姐，而今做了官，正要来图谋这事，不想舅舅先定下了，他不知是姐姐，十分不情愿的。”素梅道：“他不匡是我，别娶之后，却待怎么？”龙香道：“他说原要设法与姐姐一面，说个衷曲，死也瞑目！就眼泪流下来。我见他说得至诚，方与他说明白了这些话，他好不欢喜！”素梅道：“他却不知我为他如此立志，只说我轻易许了人家，道我没信行的了，怎么好？”龙香道：“我把姐姐这些意思，尽数对他说了。原说打听不是，迎娶之日，寻个自尽的。他也着意，恐怕我来回话，姐姐不信，疑是一时权宜之计哄上轿的说话，故此拿出这戒指来为信。”素梅道：“戒指在那里拿出来的？”龙香道：“紧紧的勒在指头上，可见他不忘姐姐的了。”素梅此时才放心得下。

须臾，堂前鼓乐齐鸣，新郎冠带上门，亲自迎娶。新人上轿，冯老孺人也上轿，送到金家，与金三员外会了亲。吃了喜



to bring his bride home.

Longxiang ran back to tell Sumei, "It is he, sister! It is he!" Sumei said, "Could it be possible?" Longxiang said, "If you don't believe me, look at this ring!" As she said this, she handed the ring to Sumei and said, "He slid it from his finger in front of me and asked me to bring it to you as proof of his identity." Sumei smiled and said, "Really incredible! Tell me what he said to you." Longxiang said, "He told me he had never stopped thinking about you since you were separated from one another the other day. After he was appointed a government official, he intended to fulfill his union with you. But his uncle arranged his marriage without consulting him. He had no idea at all that he was going to marry you and was rather upset about his uncle's arrangement for his marriage." Sumei said, "Since he didn't know who the bride was, what did he say he would do after the marriage?"

Longxiang replied, "He told me he would manage to see you once after the marriage to let you know about his love for you. Then he could die without regrets. As he said this, tears came down his cheeks. Realizing he was sincere and faithful to you, I told him the truth. He was overwhelmed with joy and happiness!" Then Sumei said, "But he didn't know I had made up my mind to marry him and would take my life if I couldn't do so. He might simply believe I had slighted my love and given myself to somebody else. What can I do about it?" Longxiang said, "I told him everything about your intentions and your saying that if the bridegroom was somebody else, you would die on the day of the wedding. He became very worried. He feared that when I came back to tell you the truth, you might be doubtful, thinking I made up the story in order to get you into the sedan chair for the marriage. So he gave me this ring of his as verification." Sumei asked, "How did he carry the ring?" Longxiang said, "He took the ring from his finger. It shows he indeed has you on his mind." Upon hearing all these, Sumei felt relieved.

Shortly thereafter, music was played and drums beaten, while the bridegroom, in his formal wedding dress, got to the Feng's house to get his bride. Sumei stepped into the sedan chair, followed by her grandmother in a second one. Jin San met them at his home and then the wedding

酒，送入洞房，两下成其夫妇。恩情美满，自不必说。

次日，杨家兄嫂多来会亲，窦家兄弟两人也来作贺。凤生见了二窦，想着那晚之事，不觉失笑。自忖道：“亏得原是姻缘，到底配合了；不然这一场搅散，岂是小可的？”又不好说得出来，只自家暗暗侥幸而已。做了夫妻之后，时常与素梅说着那事，两个还是打噤的。因想世上的事最是好笑，假如凤生与素梅索性无缘罢了，既然到底是夫妻，那日书房中时节，何不休要生出这番风波来？略迟一会，也到手了。再不然，不要外婆家去，次日也还好再续前约。怎生不先不后，偏要如此间阻？及至后来两下多不打点的了，却又无意中聘定成了夫妇。这多是天公巧处，却像一下子就上了手，反没趣味，故意如此的。却又有一时不偶便到底不谐的，这又不知怎么说。有诗为证：

从来女侠会怜才，到底姻成亦异哉！
也有惊分终不偶，独含幽怨向琴台。



banquet began. The newlyweds entered their bedroom after the feast. Needless to say, the new couple was a perfect pair. The next day witnessed a visit by Sumei's brother and sister-in-law and the two Dou brothers with their congratulations. The sight of the Dou brothers brought the incident of the other night to the mind of Feng Laiyi, who let go a smile. He thought, "Fortunately our marriage is a predestined one, so we've at last got married. Otherwise, that night's experience would have been a disaster for me!" Reluctant to give voice to his inner thoughts, he was content with his secret joy. Later in their life when Feng Laiyi occasionally mentioned about that experience of fright of that night, fear still lingered on their mind. In retrospect, we may find the world is full of amusing occurrences.

If Feng Laiyi and Sumei had been doomed to be strangers to one another throughout their life, they would have had their respective uneventful life scenarios. Since they were to become husband and wife, why should they have experienced the setback in the study? Suppose the Dou brothers had come a moment later, Feng would have achieved his end! On the other hand, if Sumei had not gone to her grandmother's home, she would have been able to have a second date with Feng Laiyi the following day. But all the happenings took place punctually then and there to hinder them! Later on, as neither of them were prepared for the union, they became husband and wife due to a betrothal that seemed to be unwanted to both of them. It is true that all these were deliberately schemed by Heaven. There were also cases in which lovers failed to become husbands and wives for the rest of their lives because of accidental separations. I just can't figure out why it was so. The following lines can serve as the ending of this tale:

From time immemorial, intelligent women have a keen eye for men of talent.
More amazing is that they often enter into conjugal bliss as happy fate has it!
Instances of failing to be lifelong couples due to accidental break-ups also exist.

Such women, disappointed in love, have to endure everlasting torment of ill fate.



NOTES

Tale 1

¹an area bounding northern Jiangxi and southern Zhejiang provinces.

²Java in Indonesia was, in the past, regarded as an extremely remote place.

³the founder of Buddhism (565-486 BC).

Tale 2

¹the founding Duke of Lu Prefecture, a great calligrapher from the Tang Dynasty.

²scholar who passed the county-level imperial examination.

³Ge Hong was a famous Taoist alchemist of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, and Dong Shuangcheng is popularly known as the attendant of the Grand Old Lady of the West.

⁴literally Elder Brother Hu.

Tale 3

¹Wen Qiao was a general of the Jin Dynasty.

Tale 4

¹written by Zhou Mi, who lived through the latter years of the Song and early years of the Yuan dynasties.

²execute by the slow process of dismembering the culprit's body.

Tale 6

¹Princess Lechang was the sister of Emperor Chen Houzhu, Chen Shubao by name, of the State of Chen (557-589) of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). Princess Lechang, both beautiful and talented, got married with Xu Deyan. During wartime, Xu, fearing that he and his wife might be separated from each other, broke a mirror into two halves. Xu and his wife Prince Lechang each kept one half of the mirror as a proof for their future reunion. The war ended with the fall of the State of Chen and Princess Lechang fell into the hands of Yang Su, the Lord of the State of Yue. Later Yang Su returned Prince Lechang to Xu Deyan and the couple reunited.

Tale 7

¹Zhuo Wenjun and Sima Xiangru were both natives of Sichuan during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC – 25 AD). Zhuo Wenjun, a talented woman from Linqiong (present-day Qionglai), was good at playing drums and zither, while Sima Xiangru was a great writer. For some time after the death of her husband, Zhuo lived alone by herself. Later she fell in love with Sima and they fled to Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan. Not long after their marriage, they returned to Linqiong together and started a wine shop. For ages, the story of Zhuo Wenjun has been very popular among the people and has been the subject matter of many stories and plays written by the later generations.

²Song Yu was a great *ci* poet of the State of Chu during the Warring States Period. In one

of his *ci* poems, he stated that a beautiful girl, who was his close neighbor, kept on spying on him for three years and suffered unrequited love.

Tale 8

¹Located near Luoyang, it was a private garden of Shi Chong of the Jin Dynasty (265-420). Shi Chong once kept a large troop of singsong girls and entertained guests in this garden.



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