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## 二刻拍案惊奇

AMAZING TALES

Second Series

III









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# 二刻拍案惊奇

## Amazing Tales

Second Series

III



凌濛初 著

李子亮 译

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Translated by Li Ziliang*



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## 卷 二 十

### 贾廉访贗行府牒 商功父阴摄江巡

诗曰：

世人结交须黄金，黄金不多交不深。

总令然诺暂相许，终是悠悠行路心。

这四句乃是唐人之诗，说天下多是势利之交，没有黄金成不得相交。这个意思还说得浅，不知天下人但是见了黄金，连那一向相交人也不顾了。不要说相交的，总是至亲骨肉，关着财物面上，就换了一条肚肠，使了一番见识，当面来弄你、算计你。几时见为了亲眷，不要银子做事的？几曾见眼看亲眷富厚，不想来设法要的？至于撞着有些不测事体，落了患难之中，越是平日往来密的，头一场先是他骗你起了。

直隶常州府武进县有一个富户，姓陈名定。有一妻一妾，妻巢氏，妾丁氏。妻已中年，妾尚少艾。陈定平日情分在巢氏面上淡些，在丁氏面上浓些，却也相安无说。巢氏有兄弟巢大郎，是一个鬼头鬼脑的人，奉承得姊夫姊姊好。陈定托他掌管





## *Tale 20*

### **Imperial Inspector Jia Forges an Official Document Shang Gongfu Acts as the Roving Minister of Hejiang in the Underworld**

A poem reads thus:

No gold, no acquaintances.  
Less gold, fewer good friends.  
One can stand by his promise for a while,  
None is able to stick it out to the end.

This is a poem written by a certain Tang Dynasty poet. Deeply impressed by the snobbishness of human beings, the poet sighs helplessly that true and everlasting friendships are hard to come by. This view is rather superficial. As a matter of fact, all people in the world will turn their backs on their friends once they are involved in matters concerning gold and silver. Not to mention friends, even kinfolks are always plotting against each other when they come to issues relating to money. Has any one seen such people who feel duty-bound to help their relatives? Has any one seen such people who do not try every possible means to get some money from their rich relatives? If anything untoward happens to you or when you are having a hard time, the first person who is to cheat you of your money will be the one who is on best terms with you.

Once there lived a rich man named Chen Ding in Wujin County, Changzhou Prefecture of Zhili. He had a middle-aged wife née Chao and a young and beautiful concubine née Ding. Though Chen Ding's love for Ding is deeper than his love for Chao on ordinary days, they three lived in peace with each other. Chao had a brother named Chao Dalang. Being a sneaky-looking man, Chao Dalang tried all possible means to flatter and toady to his sister and brother-in-law. Therefore, Chen Ding entrusted him to take charge of his family affairs. Grabbing power both within and



家事，他内外揽权，百般欺侵，巴不得姊夫有事，就好科派用度，落来肥家。

一日，巢氏偶染一病。大凡人病中，性子易得惹气。又且其夫有妾，一发易生疑忌，动不动就呕气，说道：“巴不得我死了，让你们自在快乐，省做你们眼中钉。”那陈定男人家心性，见大娘子有病在床，分外与小老婆肉麻的榜样，也是有的。遂致巢氏不堪，日逐嗔恼骂詈。也是陈定与丁氏合该悔气，平日既是好好的，让他是个病人，忍耐些个罢了。陈定见他聒絮不过，回答他几句起来。巢氏倚了病势，要死要活的颠了一场。陈定也没好气的，也不来管他好歹。巢氏自此一番，有增无减。陈定慌了，竭力医祷无效，丁氏也自尽心伏侍。争奈病痛犯拙，毕竟不起，呜呼哀哉了。

陈定平时家里饱暖，妻妾享用。乡邻人忌克他的多，看想他的也不少。今闻他大妻已死，有晓得他病中相争之事的，来挑着巢大郎道：“闻得令姊之死，起于妻妾相争。你是他兄弟，怎不执命告他？你若进了状，我邻里人家少不得要执结人命虚实，大家有些油水。”巢大郎是个乖人，便道：“我终日在姊夫家里走动，翻那面皮不转。不若你们声张出首，我在里头做好人，少不得听我处法，我就好帮衬你们了。只是你们要硬着些，



without the family, Chao Dalang used it to bully others. He earnestly wished that his brother-in-law Chen Ding would get into trouble so that he would be able to seize the opportunity to fatten himself while he disposed the family expenses.

One day Chao was affected with a disease. Generally speaking, sick people were liable to get upset. Apart from this, her husband had a concubine with him. For this reason she was easily consumed with jealousy. Flaring up at the slightest provocation, she would say, “You’re expecting my death. I know it! By then you can have your way! So I won’t be the thorn in your flesh any more!” It was true that, while Chao was on bed, there were instances when Chen Ding and his concubine Ding were really sickening when they were together. Unable to stand the insult, Chao let out sordid abuses all day long. Chen Ding and his concubine Ding were fated to ill luck. Knowing she was ill and having been on good terms with each other, Chen Ding and his concubine exercised patience. Once while Chao was going too far, Chen Ding fought back. Taking advantage of her illness, Chao made a big scene. Chen Ding didn’t pay any attention to her. After this terrible row, Chao got worse. Flurried, Chen Ding exerted his utmost to give her medical treatment, but in vain. Ding nursed her with all her heart and might too. However, Chao died of illness.

Well fed and well clad, Chen Ding had a wife and concubine and quite a number of his neighbors were jealous of him. Upon hearing the death of Chao, some neighbors who knew about their bickering while Chao was ill came to Chao Dalang to foment discord, saying, “It was said the death of your sister was caused by Chen Ding. You’re her brother. Why don’t you bring him to court? If you lodge a complaint, we neighbors will definitely appear as witnesses of this case of homicide. Such being the case, all of us can pick up a few crumbs from Chen Ding.”

Chao Dalang was a very smart man. He said, “I’ve been working for my brother-in-law for a long time and I’m afraid I can’t turn my back against him. Better you inform against him while I act as a Please-all. Just take a cue from me when it is time and by then I’ll be able to give you a hand. Also you must be hard-liners on this matter. Only after you





必是到得官，方起发得大钱。只说过了，处来要对分的。”邻里人道：“这个当得。”两下写开合同。

果然邻里间合出三四个要有事、怕太平的人来，走到陈定家里喧嚷说：“人命死得不明，必要经官，人不得殓。”巢大郎反在里头劝解，私下对陈定说：“我是亲兄弟，没有说话，怕他外人怎的。”陈定谢他道：“好舅舅，你退得这些人，我自重谢你。”巢大郎即时扬言道：“我姊姊自是病死的，有我做兄弟的在此，何劳列位多管！”邻里人自有心照，晓得巢大郎是明做好人之言，假意道：“你自私受软口汤，倒来吹散我们，我们自有说话处！”一哄而散。陈定心中好不感激巢大郎，怎知他却暗里串通地方，已自出首武进县了。

武进县知县是个贪夫，其时正有个乡亲在这里打抽丰，未得打发，见这张首状是关着人命，且晓得陈定名字是个富家，要在他身上设处些，打发乡亲起身。立时准状，金牌来拿陈定到官。不由分说，监在狱中。陈定急了，忙叫巢大郎到监门口与他计较，叫他快寻分上。巢大郎正中机谋，说道：“分上固要，



bring him to court will you be able to get big money from him. But let me not mince words. I'll have half of the gains." The neighbors replied, "No problem." Thus both parties signed an agreement in secret on this matter.

A couple of neighboring busybodies came to Chen Ding's house and started to make a racket, shouting, "The death of Chao is a mystery! This matter must be reported to the local yamen. Otherwise, you can't have her encoffined." Whereas Chao Dalang acted as a mediator, saying secretly to Chen Ding, "I'm her brother. I don't have anything to say about her death. Why care for what outsiders say about it?" Feeling grateful, Chen Ding said, "That's so kind of you. I'll surely thank you with huge rewards if you can make them withdraw from my house."

Turning his head towards the busybodies, Chao Dalang remarked, "It is true my sister died of illness. Since I, her brother, am here, it's not up to you to bother about this matter!" Knowing that Chao Dalang was merely paying lip service by those words, the neighboring busybodies put on an air and said, "You must have been silenced by Chen Ding's favors on you. So you are trying to drive us away. But we know where we'll go to and report this matter." So saying they all scattered immediately. Chen Ding felt deeply obliged to Chao Dalang for his assistance, but he never expected Chao Dalang would work hand in glove with his neighbors and lodge a complaint against him at the yamen of Wujin County.

The County Magistrate of Wujin turned out to be a corrupt official. Right at that time a fellow townsman of the County Magistrate was hanging around at the county *yamen* in the hope of seeking opportunities to extort money. Seeing that this complaint implicated a life and knowing that Chen Ding was a rich guy, the County Magistrate harbored the intention of getting some money from Chen so that he could send his fellow townsman off with some of his gains. With this in mind, the County Magistrate approved this lawsuit at once and issued an arrest warrant to bring Chen to the *yamen* without delay. Arriving at the *yamen*, Chen Ding was put into jail before he could have the chance to utter a word.

Flustered and confused, he hurriedly managed to bring Chao Dalang to the entrance of the jail and told him to solicit help. This fitted in exactly with Chao Dalang's wishes. "To solicit help from others is a must," said



原首人等也要洒派些，免得他每做对头，才好脱然无累。”陈定道：“但凭舅舅主张，要多少时，我写去与小妾，教他照数付与舅舅。”巢大郎道：“这个定不得数，我去用看，替姊夫省得一分是一分。”陈定道：“只要快些完得事，就多着些也罢了。”巢大郎别去，就去寻着了这个乡里，与他说倒了银子，要保全陈定无事。陈定面前说了一百两，取到了手，实与得乡里四十两。乡里是要紧归去之人，挑得篮里便是菜，一个信送将进去，登时把陈定放了出来。巢大郎又替他说合地方邻里，约费了百来两银子，尽皆无说。少不得巢大郎又打些虚账，又与众人私下平分，替他做了好些买卖，当官归结了。

乡里得了银子，当下动身回去。巢大郎贪心不足，想道：“姊夫官事，其权全在于我，要息就息。前日乡里分上，不过保得出狱，何须许多银子？他如今已离了此处，不怕他了。不免赶至中途，倒他的出来。”遂不通陈定知道，竟连夜赶到丹阳，撞见乡里正在丹阳写轿，一把扭住，讨取前物。乡里道：“已是说倒见效过的，为何又来番账？”巢大郎道：“官事问过，





Dalang, “but it’s also necessary to give some silver to the accusers if we want to have this lawsuit settled quickly, otherwise they won’t stop at that.” Chen Ding said, “You may have it your own way. Tell me however much silver you’ll need and I’ll write my concubine a note so that she can give you the money.” “It’s hard to say how much it will take,” said Chao Dalang. “It all depends, but I’ll try my best to economize for you as much as possible.” “I won’t mind if you are to spend a little more money so long as you can get me out of this place earlier,” Chen Ding told him.

Chao Dalang found the County Magistrate’s fellow townsman and they agreed on the amount of silver with which the fellow townsman would ensure Chen Ding of his being immediately released. Dalang took a hundred taels of silver from Chen Ding, but only forty taels went to the fellow townsman. Being eager to go back home, the fellow townsman accepted it and sent a word to the County Magistrate. Soon Chen Ding was set free. Chao Dalang demanded about another hundred taels of silver from Chen and distributed it among the neighbors. Apart from this, Dalang also cooked up some expenses, saying that he had spent a lot more money to get him out of the jail. Again he received some silver from Chen Ding and then divided it among the neighbors. Finally Chen Ding’s lawsuit was officially settled.

After receiving the silver, the fellow townsman of the magistrate set out for home at once. Chao Dalang was a greedy fellow. He thought aloud, “I played the key role in bailing out my brother-in-law. That fellow townsman did nothing for my brother-in-law except making a lip service. How should he get so much silver? Now that he has left this locale, I won’t be afraid of him anymore. Why not catch up with him and take the silver back from him?”

Without informing Chen Ding of his intentions, Chao Dalang made his way to Danyang that same night. The fellow townsman was unloading his sedan chair as Dalang caught up with him. Grabbing him by the hand, Dalang demanded for the silver he had given him. “How can you turn back on your word?” argued the fellow townsman. Dalang retorted, “The *yamen* and the local authorities probed into the case and found nothing amiss in it. As the brother of the deceased, I was in favor of patching up



地方原无词说，尸亲愿息，自然无事的。起初无非费得一保，怎值得许多银子？”两不相服，争了半日。巢大郎要死要活，又要首官。那个乡里是个有体面的，忙忙要走路，怎当得如此歪缠？恐怕惹事，忍着气拿出来还了他，巢大郎千欢万喜转来了。

乡里受了这场亏，心里不甘，捎个便信把此事告诉了武进县知县。知县大怒，出牌重问，连巢大郎也标在牌上，说他私和人命，要拿来出气。巢大郎虚心，晓得是替乡里报仇，预先走了。只苦的是陈定，一同妾丁氏俱拿到官，不由分说，先是一顿狠打，发下监中。出牌吊尸，叫集了地方人等简验起来。陈定不知是那里起的祸，没处设法一些手脚。知县是有了成心的，只要从重坐罪。先分付仵作报伤要重。仵作揣摩了意旨，将无作有，多报的是拳殴脚踢致命伤痕。巢氏幼时喜吃甜物，面前牙齿落了一个，也做硬物打落之伤，竟把陈定问了斗殴杀人之律，妾丁氏威逼期亲尊长致死之律，各问绞罪。陈定央了几个分上来说，只是不听。

丁氏到了女监，想道：“只为我一身，致得丈夫受此大祸。不若做我一个不着，好歹出了丈夫。”他算计定了。解审察院，



the dispute. So it was actually nothing serious. I merely had you stand as a guarantor at the moment. How should it cost me so much silver?" The two argued over this for a long time. Making a big scene, Chao Dalang intimidated that he would bring him to court if he was not to concede. Fearing that it would make him lose face or put him into trouble, the fellow townsman had to give in and returned the silver to Dalang. Wild with joy, Chao Dalang went back home.

Having suffered such a loss, the fellow townsman felt it hard to take it lying down at that. He passed a message on to the County Magistrate about what had happened to him. Flying into a rage, the County Magistrate issued a summons and ordered that this case be tried for a second time. Chao Dalang's name was on the summons too, with the charge that he too was implicated in this case of homicide. Being scared out of his wits and knowing that the County Magistrate was avenging his fellow townsman, Chao Dalang fled in advance.

Unfortunately Chen Ding and his concubine Ding were brought to the court. Before they could utter a word, they received a sound flogging and then were put behind the bars.

Postmortem examination was again conducted. Being unaware what had gone amiss concerning this matter, Chen Ding was at a loss who he should turn to for help. Strongly opinionated, the County Magistrate is determined to enforce strict punishment on Chen. So he forewarned the coroner to make a report that Chao had been seriously injured. As was told, the coroner submitted a postmortem examination report with a long list of fatal injuries caused by striking and kicking. Chao was fond of eating sweets when she was a child, so one of her front teeth was missing. In the postmortem examination report, the coroner made up the story that one of Chao's front teeth was knocked off by something hard.

Soon both Chen Ding and his concubine Ding were declared guilty of committing homicide and both were sentenced to death by hanging. Chen Ding sought help too, but in vain.

After being taken into the women's prison, Ding thought to herself, "It was because of me that my husband had met with such misfortune. I would rather sacrifice my own life so as to save my husband." Chen Ding





见了陈定，遂把这话说知。当官招道：“不合与大妻厮闹，手起凳子打落门牙，即时晕地身死。并与丈夫陈定无干。”察院依口词驳将下来，刑馆再问，丁氏一口承认。丁氏晓得有了此一段说话在案内了，丈夫到底脱罪。然必须身死，问官方肯见信，作做实据，游移不得，亦且丈夫可以速结，是夜在监中自缢而死。狱中呈报，刑馆看详巢氏之死，既系丁氏生前招认下手，今已惧罪自尽，堪以相抵，原非死后添情推卸，陈定止断杖赎发落。

陈定虽然死了爱妾，自却得释放，已算大幸，一喜一悲。到了家内，方才见有人说巢大郎许多事迹：“这件是非，全是他起的，在里头打偏手使用，得了诸多东西还不知足，又去知县、乡里处拔短梯，故重复弄出这个事来，他又脱身走了，枉送了丁氏一条性命。”陈定想着丁氏舍身出脱他罪一段好情，不觉越恨巢大郎得紧了，只是逃去未回，不得见面。

后来知县朝觐去了，巢大郎已知陈定官司问结，放胆大了，喜气洋洋，转到家里。只道陈定还未知其奸，照着平日光



and his concubine Ding met with each other when they were brought to the procurators. Ding first told Chen of her mind on the sly. She confessed in front of the procurators, "I had a fight with Chao and I knocked off her tooth with a stool. She fell down and died instantly. It had nothing to do with my husband Chen Ding." Having recorded her confession, the procurators returned the file to the criminal court for further interrogation. Upon interrogation, Ding admitted her crime without the slightest hesitation. She was very clear that her confession, as she had made thus, would surely save her husband's life. However, she calculated that in order to make the court believe her she must commit suicide, and the court, feeling deeply convinced at her words by then, would set her husband free immediately and settle the case. On that night she hanged herself.

The jailer reported the death of Ding to the court. The court officials reexamined the cause of Chao's death and found out that it went in conformity with Ding's confession. Now that Ding had hanged herself for fear of punishment, she paid it with her life. Chen Ding was released after receiving a good beating.

Though he lost his beloved concubine, Chen Ding was freed, and that was his luck. With mixed feelings of grief and joy, he returned home. It was not until then did he hear what Chao Dalang had done: "Chao Dalang was the chief offender of all these calamities. Though he had got quite a lot of gains on this matter through working hand in glove with those neighboring busybodies, he was still not content with what he had got. Turning back on his word, he again went back to the County Magistrate's fellow townsman to take the silver back, thus resulting in this trouble. Now he has disappeared, but Ding lost her life in vain." As he thought of Ding's kindness and devotion to him in coming to his rescue at the cost of her own life, he couldn't help bearing an increasingly deeper grudge against Chao Dalang. But Chao Dalang had run away and was not within his reach at the moment.

Later as he learned that the County Magistrate had gone on a pilgrimage and Chen Ding's case had been settled, Chao Dalang, radiant with joy, returned home. Considering that Chen Ding was still in the dark about



景前来探望。陈定虽不说破甚么，却意思冷淡了好些。巢大郎也看得出，且喜财物得过，尽勾几时的受用，便姊夫怪了也不以为意。岂知天理不容。自见了姊夫归家来，他妻子便癫狂起来，口说的多是姊姊巢氏的说话，嚷道：“好兄弟，我好端端死了，只为你要银子，致得我粉身碎骨，地下不宁！你快超度我便罢，不然，我要来你家作祟，领两个人去！”巢大郎惊得只是认不是讨饶，去请僧道念经设醮。安静得两日，又换了一个声口道：“我乃陈妾丁氏，大娘病死与我何干？为你家贪财，致令我死于非命，今须偿还我！”巢大郎一发惧怕，烧纸拜献，不敢吝惜，只求无事。怎当得妻妾两个，推班出色，递换来扰？不勾几时，把所得之物干净弄完。宁可赔了些，又不好告诉得人，姊夫那里又不作准了，恹恹气色，无情无绪，得病而死。此是贪财害人之报。可见财物一事，至亲也信不得，上手就骗害的。

小子如今说着宋朝时节一件事，也为至亲相骗，后来报得分明，还有好些希奇古怪的事，做一回正话。

利动人心不论亲，巧谋赚取囊中银。



his dealings, Chao Dalang called upon him as usual. Though he didn't intentionally let the cat out of the bag, Chen turned a cold shoulder to Dalang. However, Dalang didn't seem to care about it despite Chen's nonchalance, for he was still in high spirits of acquiring so much silver that would be enough for him to enjoy for quite some time.

Nevertheless, justice will not tolerate this. Seeing Chen Ding was back home, Dalang's wife went insane, and started to speak in a voice exactly like that of Chao. "My dear brother! My body was cut into pieces and my bones crushed to a pulp, and I was unable to rest in peace in the underworld solely because you hankered after money. Come on quick and release my soul from misery. Or I'll come and haunt your family and take you two to the underworld." Admitting his sins, Dalang had to ask her for mercy and invited monks and Taoist priests to chant sutras on his behalf. A couple of days later, Dalang's wife changed into another voice, "I'm Chen's concubine Ding. What has Chao's death got anything to do with me? Your lust for money killed me. You must pay with your life!"

Frightened out of his wits, Dalang had to burn joss sticks and offer sacrifices without stint, hoping he could get out of the trouble. But the ghosts of Chen Ding's wife Chao and concubine Ding pestered him in turns. Before long Dalang spent all the silver he had acquired from Chen Ding on sending the two ghosts off. He even spent some of his own money on it. Worse still, he found it hard to disclose his pains to others. His brother-in-law Chen Ding too left him in the cold. Weak and weary through illness, he grew more and more dispirited. Eventually he died of illness. This is a judgment on those who harm people for money. A lesson could be drawn from this story that even the closest relatives are not trustworthy when they come to matters of money.

\* \* \*

Now I'll tell you a tale happened in the Song Dynasty. It's also a tale about how an avaricious man swindles his relatives of their wealth and family properties and how justice is done later. There are also many strange things in this tale. This tale is as followed.

Driven by lust for money, kith and kin are nothing.

Tricks and plots work best in obtaining silver from others.



直从江上巡回日，始信阴司有鬼神。

却说宋时靖康之乱，中原士大夫纷纷避地，大多尽入闽广之间。有个宝文阁学士贾谿之弟贾谋，以勇爵入官，宣和年间曾为诸路廉访使者。其人贪财无行，诡诈百端。移来岭南，寓居德庆府。其时有个济南商知县，乃是商侍郎之孙，也来寄居府中。商知县夫人已死，止有一小姐，年已及笄。有一妾，生二子，多在乳抱。家资颇多，尽在这妾掌管，小姐也在里头照料，且自过得和气。贾廉访探知商家甚富，小姐还未适人，遂为其子贾成之纳聘，取了过门。后来商知县死了，商妾独自一个管理内外家事，抚养这两个儿子。商小姐放心不下，每过十来日，即到家里看一看两个小兄弟，又与商妾把家里遗存黄白东西在箱匣内的，查点一查点，及逐日用度之类，商量计较而



Not until after his return from his inspection tour along the Hejiang River,  
Has he firmly believed in the power of ghosts.

During the Catastrophe of Jingkang, when the Jin army marched south captured the capital of Song, and took both the emperor Qinzong and his father Huizong as prisoners, thus putting an end to the Northern Song Dynasty, masses of officials all left Central China in succession and most of them fled to the south such as Fujian, Guangxi and Guangdong. A man surnamed Jia, brother of a high-ranking official Jia Dang, moved to southern Guangxi with his family and settled down in Deqing Prefecture. During the Xuanhe Period of emperor Zhao Ji's reign (1119-1125), Jia used to be an Imperial Inspector. Inspector Jia was an extremely avaricious and immoral character.

Meanwhile, a man surnamed Shang, who used to be a County Magistrate in Jinan Prefecture, the grandson of Vice-minister Shang, also moved to Deqing Prefecture with his family. Magistrate Shang's wife died years ago, leaving a daughter behind her. Their daughter was then over fifteen years old. Magistrate Shang also had a concubine, who gave birth to two sons, and the two sons were still in their babyhood. Magistrate Shang had a huge family property. His concubine was in charge of the family property, and Shang's daughter sometimes assisted her in taking care of the family affairs. As it turned out, the whole family lived a comfortable life.

Having learned that the Shangs were a rich family and Shang's daughter was not engaged yet, Inspector Jia asked a matchmaker to talk with the Shangs about making his son Jia Chengzhi and Miss Jia a couple. Soon Miss Jia got married with Jia Chengzhi.

Some times later, Magistrate Shang died, and the concubine had to take care of everything concerning domestic matters. In addition to this, the concubine had to undertake the duty of bringing up her two sons. Meanwhile, as Miss Shang often worried about her own family, she would come back home and visit her two younger brothers every other ten days. Each time she was back home, she would also help Shang's concubine check the gold and silver wares stored in the trunks. As regards the daily family expenses, the concubine and Miss Shang would often consult each



行，习以为常。

一日，商妾在家，忽见有一个承局打扮的人，来到堂前，口里道：“本府中要排天中节，是合府富家大户金银器皿、绢段绫罗，尽数关借一用，事毕一一付还。如有隐匿不肯者，即拿家属问罪，财物入官。有一张牒文在此。”商妾颇认得字义，见了府牒，不敢不信。却是自家没有主意，不知该应怎的。回言道：“我家没有男子正人，哥儿们又小，不敢自做主，还要去贾廉访宅上，问问我小姐与姐夫贾衙内才好行止。”承局打扮的道：“要商量快去商量，府中限紧，我还要到别处去催齐回话的，不可有误！”商妾见说，即差一个当直的到贾家去问。

须臾，来回言道：“小人到贾家，入门即撞见廉访相公。问小人来意，小人说要见姐姐与衙内。廉访相公道见他怎的，小人把这里的事说了一遍。廉访相公道：‘府间来借，怎好不与？你只如此回你家二娘子就是。小官人与娘子处，我替他说知罢了。’小人见廉访是这样说，人就回来了。因恐怕家里官府人催促，不去见衙内与姐姐。”商妾见说是廉访相公教借与他，必是不妨。遂照着牒文所开，且是不少。终久是女娘家见识，看事不透，不管好歹多搬出来，尽情交与这承局打扮的，道：“只望排过节，就发来还了，自当奉谢。”承局打扮的道：“那不消



other before they reached agreements. And gradually they both had got accustomed to it.

One day while the concubine was at home alone, a *yamen* runner in a low-ranking official's attire arrived at the Shang's and said, "The *yamen* is planning to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival.<sup>1</sup> The *yamen* has decided to borrow all the gold and silver wares as well as satins and silks for this occasion from all the rich families in our prefecture, and the *yamen* will return them back to you once the celebration is over. Those who disobey the order and move their things to a hideout will be condemned guilty and their family properties will be confiscated. Here is the official document." The concubine could read. Seeing the official document, she naturally believed him. However, she was at a loss what to do. "I've got no grown-up man in my family, so I'm afraid I can't decide on this matter. I'll have to go to Inspector Jia's residence and talk it over with Miss Shang and her husband Jia Chengzhi before I can give you a reply." The runner in a low-ranking official's attire said, "Do it as you please. But time is pressing. I'm going to other families to collect the things. Remember, no delay is permitted."

The concubine then sent a servant to the Jia family to seek advice. Within an instant, the servant came back with words, "I met Inspector Jia the moment I arrived at his house. He asked me what I was here for. I told him I was here to see Miss Shang and her husband. 'What for?' he asked. I told him about what had happened in our family. Inspector Jia said, 'Since the *yamen* wanted to borrow our things, how should we refuse? Go tell the concubine what I said. I'll inform my son and daughter-in-law of this matter when they are back.' So now I'm back. Because I was very much worried that the *yamen* would come to press you about the matter, I didn't bother to go and find our miss and her husband."

Upon hearing Inspector Jia's permission, the concubine thought it absolutely unnecessary to take any precautions against this matter. Quite a lot of valuable things were on the list of the official document. Being short-sighted after all, the concubine handed out all the family gold and silver wares to the official-like runner, and said, "I would be very much indebted to you if you are to return them to me as soon as the celebration





说，官府门中岂肯少着人家的东西？但请放心，把这张牒文留下，若有差池，可将此做执照，当官禀领得的。”当下商妾接了牒文，自去藏好。这承局打扮的捧着若干东西，欣然去了。

隔了几日，商小姐在贾家来到自家屋里，走到房中，与商妾相见了，寒温了一会。照着若平时翻翻箱笼看，只见多是空箱，金银器皿之类一些也不见，到有一张花边栏纸票在内，拿起来一看，却是一张公牒，吃了一惊。问商妾道：“这却为何？”商妾道：“几日前有一个承局打扮的拿了这张牒文，说府里要排天中节，各家关借东西去铺设。当日奴家心中疑惑，却教人来问姐姐、姐夫，问的人回来说撞遇老相公说起，道是该借的，奴家依言借与他去。这几日望他拿来还我，竟不见来。正要来与姐姐、姐夫商量了，往府里讨去，可是中么？”商小姐面如土色，想道：“有些尴尬。”不觉眼泪落下来道：“偌多东西，多是我爹爹手泽，敢是被那个拐的去了！怎的好？我且回去与贾郎计较，查个着实去。”

当下亟望贾家来，见了丈夫贾成之，把此事说了一遍。贾成之道：“这个姨姨也好笑，这样事何不来问问我们，竟自支



is over.” “No problem,” replied the official-like runner. “How should the *yamen* take things from common folks? Just take it easy. Keep this official document with you. If anything wrong should happen, you may use it as a proof when you claim your things at the *yamen*.” Then the concubine took the official document and put it in a safe place. Then the official-like runner left with countless treasures, wild with joy.

A few days later, Miss Shang paid a visit to her own family. After exchanging greetings with the concubine, Miss Shang, as usual, checked the things in the trunks. To her surprise, all the trunks appeared to be empty, with all the gold and silver wares being gone. But a piece of fancy-bordered paper in one of the trunks, which had not been there before, came into her sight. A closer look at it affirmed her that it was an official document, the content of which being that the *yamen* wanted to borrow things from rich families to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival.

Miss Shang asked the concubine, “What’s all this about?” “A few days ago,” the concubine replied, “a man in a low-ranking official’s attire came to me with this official document, saying that the *yamen* was preparing for the Dragon Boat Festival celebrations and wanted to borrow things from rich families. Feeling skeptical at the moment, I sent a servant to consult you and your husband. The servant came back to me and said he met your father-in-law and your father-in-law said there was no reason to turn the *yamen* down. So I consented to it. I’m now looking forward to their return of my wares, but they haven’t shown up. I’m considering of asking for your and your husband’s advice about this matter. Do you think I should go to the *yamen* to get them back now?”

“There is something strange in it,” thought Miss Shang, looking ashen. Brimming with tears in her eyes, Miss Shang continued, “My father left us so many valuables. What if they have been swindled by evil people? I’ll go and talk it over with my husband and get to the bottom of this matter.”

Reaching her husband’s home, Miss Shang told Jia Chengzhi what had happened. “This concubine was really out of her mind. How come she didn’t come consult us? How should she have allowed that man to take those valuables away?” “The concubine told me that,” answered



分了去？”商小姐道：“姨姨说来，曾教人到我家来问，遇着我相公，问知其事，说是该借与他，问的人就不来见你我，竟自去回了姨姨，故此借与他去的。”贾成之道：“不信有这等事，我问爹爹则个。”贾成之进去问父亲廉访道：“商家借东西与府中，说是来问爹爹，爹爹分付借他，有些话么？”廉访道：“果然府中来借，怎好不借？只怕被别人狐假虎威诓去的，这个却保不得他。”贾成之道：“这等，索向府中当官去告，必有下落。”遂与商妾取了那纸府牒，在德庆府里下了状子。

府里太守见说其事，也自吃惊，取这纸公牒去看，明知是假造的，只不知奸人是那个。当下出了一纸文书给与缉捕使臣，命商家出五十贯当官赏钱，要缉捕那作不是的。访了多时，并无一些影响。商家吃这一闪，差不多失了万金东西，家事自此消乏了。商妾与商小姐但一说着，便相对痛哭不住。贾成之见丈人家里零替如此，又且妻子时常悲哀，心里甚是怜惜，认做自家身上事，到处出力，不在话下。

谁知这赚去东西的，不是别人，正是：

远不远千里，近只在眼前。

看官你道赚去商家物事的，却是那个？真个是人心难测，海水



Miss Shang, “she did send a servant to our house to seek advice from us. The servant ran into your father and told him what he had been here for. Your father instructed him that the concubine should lend him the wares. Upon hearing your father’s words, the servant didn’t come to see you and me. Instead, he went back to the concubine and told her what your father had said. For this reason the concubine consented to it.” “I could hardly believe it,” said Jia Chengzhi. “I’ll ask my father about it.”

Seeing his father, Jia Chengzhi asked, “Is it true that some one from the Shang’s family came to talk with you about lending their family property to the *yamen*?” “If the *yamen* did want to borrow something from her family,” replied Inspector Jia, “how should we turn it down? But I’m not quite sure whether their valuables were swindled out by some evil person in an official’s attire or not.” Jia Chengzhi said, “This being the case, I must report it to the *yamen*, and by then everything will be crystal clear.” So saying, Jia Chengzhi took the official document from the concubine and lodged a complaint at the court of Deqing Prefecture. The Prefect of Deqing was deeply surprised after hearing the story. Taking a look at the official document, the Prefect knew it was a fake, but was unable to tell who forged this official document. Soon the Prefect ordered the arrest-runners to capture the evildoer. Meanwhile, he also issued an order that the Shang family gave the arrest-runners fifty strings of cash as a reward. However, as it turned out, the evildoer was nowhere to be found. The Shangs thus sustained a heavy loss of almost ten thousand taels of silver.

From then on the Shang family experienced a decline. Each time they mentioned this matter, the concubine and Miss Shang would resign themselves to bitter weeping. At the sight of the deplorable conditions of his wife’s family and her distress caused by this misfortune, Jia Chengzhi felt very sorry from the bottom of his heart. Considering this matter his own business, he exerted his utmost in helping them out of the straitened circumstances. And more of this is not worth mentioning here. In fact, the backstage manipulator who made away with all these valuables was none other than a man close at hand though seemingly far away.

Readers, can you imagine who the person is behind the scenes? Indeed,

难量，元来就是贾廉访。这老儿晓得商家有资财，又是孤儿寡妇，可以欺骗。其家金银什物多曾经媳妇商小姐盘验，儿子贾成之透明知道。因商小姐带回数目一本，贾成之有时拿出来看，夸说妻家富饶。被廉访留心，接过手去，逐项记着。贾成之一时无心，难道有甚么疑忌老子不成？岂知利动人心，廉访就生出一个计较，假着府里关文，着人到商家设骗。商家见所借之物多是家中有的，不好推掉。又兼差当值的来，就问着这个日里鬼，怎不信了？此时商家决不疑心到亲家身上，就是贾成之夫妻二人，也只说是甚么神棍弄了去，神仙也不诳是自家老子。所以偌多时缉捕人那里访查得出？

说话的，依你说，而今为何知道了？看官听说，天下事欲人不知，除非莫为。

廉访拐了这主横财到手，有些毛病出来。俗语道：“偷得爷钱没使处。”心心念念要拿出来兑换钱钞使用。争奈多是见成器皿，若拿出来怕人认得，只得把几件来熔化。又不好托得人，便烧炽了炭，亲自坏销。销开了却没处倾成锭子。他心生了一计，将毛竹截了一段小管，将所销之银倾将下去，却成一





a person's heart is unpredictable. It was none other than Inspector Jia. Formerly Inspector Jia had known that the Shang family was very rich, and the concubine was a widow and her two sons fatherless. So he harbored the ill intention of swindling her out of her valuables. As his daughter-in-law Miss Shang knew well the gold and silver wares of the concubine, his son Jia Chengzhi later learned about the concubine's wealth too from Miss Shang. Miss Shang brought a list of the concubine's family property to her husband's home, and Jia Chengzhi, filled with admirations for her riches, sometimes took it out for a look.

As a careful person, Inspector Jia got it and remembered everything recorded on the list. Of course, Jia Chengzhi was careless at that time. Could we expect him to guard against his father? But man is often driven by lust for money. Inspector Jia worked out a scheme and instructed someone to cheat the concubine of her valuables under the name of the *yamen*. Upon seeing that the things the *yamen* was about to borrow, as listed, fitted in well with her family property, she knew it would be hard for her to decline the *yamen*. In addition, her servant, when coming to consult Miss Shang and her husband on this matter, just met that Inspector Jia and got his approval. Why shouldn't the concubine believe him? The Shangs would have never suspected it was Miss Shang's father-in-law who had plotted against them. Jia Chengzhi and his wife also took it for granted that the concubine was cheated by hooligans or the like. Such being the case, how could the arrest-runners find the suspect?

Storyteller, how did Inspector Jia give himself away, anyway? You might ask. I'd like to have your patience, my readers. Of all the things in the world, what is done by night appears by day. After he obtained this ill-gotten wealth, something went wrong with him. As an old saying goes, "You can't beat a stolen gong." Feeling disturbed, he thought of converting the valuables into cash. But as the valuables were all gold and silver house wares, he was afraid that the concubine might recognize them once he took them out of his house. Having no option, he had to melt some of the silver household wares with charcoal at his own home. However, he still couldn't make the melted silver into ingots. Suddenly an idea came up to his mind. He got a bamboo tube, cut a small section off and poured



个圆饼，将到铺中兑换钱钞。铺中看见廉访家里近日使的多是这竹节银，再无第二样。便有时零鏊了将出来，那圆处也还看得出。心里疑惑，问那家人道：“宅上银两，为何却一色用竹筒铸的？是怎么说？”家人道：“是我家廉访手自坯销，再不托人的。不知为着甚么缘故。”三三两两传将开去，道贾家用竹筒倾银用，煞是古怪。就有人猜到商家失物这件事上去。却是他两家儿女至亲，谁来执证？不过这些人费得些口舌。有的道：“他们只当一家，那有此事。”有的道：“官宦人家，怕不会唤银匠倾销物件，却自家动手？必是碍人眼目的，出不得手，所以如此。况且平日不曾见他这等的，必然蹊跷。”也只是如此疑猜，没人凿凿说得是不是。至于商家，连疑心也不当人子，只好含辛忍苦，自己懊悔怨怅，没个处法。缉捕使臣等听得这话，传在耳朵里，也只好笑笑，谁敢向他家道个不字？这件事只索付之东流了。

只可笑贾廉访堂堂官长，却做那贼的一般的事。曾记得无名子有诗云：

解贼一金并一鼓，迎官两鼓一声锣。  
金鼓看来都一样，官人与贼不争多。



the melted silver into it, thus making the silver into round flat cakes. Then he went to the bank with the round flat silver cakes to exchange them into cash. Seeing that the Inspector Jia's family often exchanged cash with round flat silver cakes done in a bamboo tube, the bank crushed one of the cakes and discovered in it some traces of silver household wares. Being skeptical, the bank asked the servant from the Inspector's family, "Why is it all the silver in your family is cast in a bamboo tube? Why so?" The servant answered, "Inspector Jia did it himself. He never took his silver to silversmiths. I don't know why."

Soon word spread out that Inspector Jia cast his silver with a section of bamboo tube, and all people thought it rather strange. Some people guessed it must have something to do with the Shangs' lost household wares. However, as these two families were relatives by marriage, who would be willing to ask for trouble by reporting it to the *yamen*? Some people remarked, "They are one family. How could that be possible?" Some others commented, "How could it be possible for an official's family to cast their silver on their own instead of taking it to silversmiths? It must be ill-gotten silver and can't be taken out of his house. So he has to do it this way. Moreover, we've never seen anyone who did so on ordinary days. There must be something behind it." Of course, all these were mere guesses. Nobody got indisputable facts.

As for the Shangs, they never had the slightest suspicion on Inspector Jia. They could do nothing about it except enduring all kinds of hardships and endless regrets. When these guesses reached the arrest-runners' ears, they just dismissed them with a laugh. Who would be bold enough to find faults with Inspector Jia? Thus this matter had to be gone with the eastward-flowing streams. But Inspector Jia, an impressive official as he was, made a laughing stock of himself by doing such disgraceful things like theft and robbery. An anonymous poem can describe it perfectly:

One beating of the gong and the drum signals the sending of  
a thief under escort.

Two beatings of the drum and one beating of the gong herald  
the arrival of an official.

Different occasions, but same performances.





又剧贼郑广受了招安，得了官位，曾因官员每做诗，他也口吟一首云：

郑广有诗献众官，众官与广一般般。

众官做官却做贼，郑广做贼却做官。

今日贾廉访所为，正似此二诗所言“官人与贼不争多”、“做官却做贼”了。却又施在至亲面上，欺孤骗寡，尤为可恨！若如此留得东西与子孙受用，便是天没眼睛。看官不要性急，且看后来报应。

果然光阴似箭，日月如梭，转眼二十年，贾廉访已经身故，贾成之得了出身，现做粤西永宁横州通判。其时商妾长子幼年不育，第三个儿子唤名商懋，表字功父，照通族排来，行在第六十五，同母亲不住德庆，迁在临贺地方，与横州不甚相远。那商功父生性刚直，颇有干才，做事慷慨，又热心，又和气。贾成之本意怜着妻家，后来略闻得廉访欺心赚骗之事，越加心里不安，见了小舅子十分亲热。商小姐见兄弟小时母子伶仃，而今长大知事，也自喜欢他。所以成之在横州衙内，但是小舅子来，千欢万喜，上百两送他，姐姐又还有私赠，至于与人通关节得钱的在外。来一次，一次如此。功父奉着寡母过日，靠



Officials and thieves have very little difference.

Again a notorious thief named Zheng Guang was also given an official title after he accepted amnesty and pledged loyalty to the government. As he saw some officials composing poems, Zheng Guang also recited one in a low voice:

Here is Zheng Guang's poem dedicated to you officials.

You officials and I are two peas exactly alike.

Officials though you are, you commit theft and robbery.

I used to be a thief, but now an official I am.

As is expressed by the above-mentioned two poems, thieves are no different from officials and officials are most likely to be thieves. This has been proved true in Inspector Jia as well as many other officials in the past. But Inspector Jia turned out to be more hateful, for he even cheated and bullied his close relative, a weak widow with two fatherless children. The Heaven would be blind if Inspector Jia's ill-gotten fortune was to be enjoyed by his offspring. Please be patient, readers. I'll go ahead with my tale and let's see how retribution is bound to follow.

Time flies. Twenty years passed. Inspector Jia died and his son Jia Chengzhi became an official. At the present Jia Chengzhi was the Deputy County Magistrate of Hengzhou County in Guangxi. The concubine's elder son had died at childhood. Her second son was named Shang Mao, his style name being Gongfu. the sixty-fifth son of the Shang family. The concubine and her second son Gongfu had moved to Linhe County, which was not far from Hengzhou County. Gongfu was upright and outspoken, talented, generous and kind-hearted.

Formerly Jia Chengzhi had been extremely considerate toward her wife's family. Later as he heard something about his father's evildoing in cheating the concubine, he felt exceedingly ill at ease. For this reason, he became even more warmhearted toward Gongfu whenever they met with each other. Miss Shang, seeing that her brother Gongfu had now grown up, was also very fond of him. So each time Gongfu visited Jia Chengzhi at the *yamen*, Jia would give him a warm reception and give him about a hundred taels of silver as a gift. Gongfu's sister would also give him some extra money before he left. Gongfu lived a quiet life with his mother.



着贾家姐姐、姐夫恁地扶持，渐渐家事丰裕起来。在临贺置有田产庄宅，广有生息。又娶富人之女为妻，规模日大一日，不似旧时母子旅邸荒凉景况。

过了几时，贾成之死在官上，商小姐急差人到临贺接功父商量后事。诸凡停当过，要扶柩回葬。商功父撙掇姐姐道：“总是德庆也不过客居，原非本籍。我今在临贺已立了家业，姐姐只该同到临贺寻块好地，葬了姐夫，就在临贺住下，相傍做人家，也好时常照管，岂非两便？”小姐道：“我是女人家，又是孀身孀居，巴不得依傍着亲眷。但得安居，便是住足之地。那德庆也不是我家乡，还去做甚？只凭着兄弟主张，就在临贺同住了。周全得你姐夫入了土，大事便定，吾心安矣。”

元来商小姐无出，有媵婢生得两个儿子，绝是幼小，全仗着商功父提拔行动。当时计议已定，即便收拾家私，一起望临贺进发。少时来到，商功父就在自己住宅边寻个房舍，安顿了姐姐与两个小外甥。从此两家相依，功父母亲与商小姐两人，朝夕为伴，不是我到你家，便是你到我家，彼此无间。商小姐中年寡居，心贪安逸，又见兄弟能事，是件周到停当，遂把内外大小之事，多托与他执料，钱财出入，悉凭其手，再不问起数目。又托他与贾成之寻阴地，造坟安葬，所费甚多。商功父



Gradually, with the help of his sister and brother-in-law, Gongfu's family financial circumstances improved greatly. Building houses and buying land at Linhe, Gongfu went on the way to prosperity. Also he got married with a girl from a rich family. Life for him and his mother at the moment became totally different from the life he and his mother had sojourned in desolateness years before.

Some time later Jia Chengzhi died at Hengzhou before the expiration of his term of office. Miss Shang sent someone to Linhe right away to bring over Gongfu to the Jia's family so as to consult him about her husband's funeral arrangements. With all the arrangements being well done, they decided to escort the coffin back to Deqing in Guangxi. Shang Gongfu urged his sister by saying, "Deqing is not our native place after all. Now that I've got married and made a home at Linhe, it is advisable you follow me to Linhe and choose a burying ground for my brother-in-law. Then you can settle down at Linhe County and we won't be living far away from each other. We can also take care of each other. Wouldn't that be nice?" "I'm a woman and a widow," said Miss Shang. "I'm only too anxious to live close to my relatives. If I can make a living there, it will be my home. Deqing is not my native place, why do I have to go there? I'll follow your advice and settle down at Linhe. I will feel at ease after we have had your brother-in-law buried."

Miss Shang had no children of her own. Jia Chengzhi had two sons by his concubine and these two sons were still in childhood. So Shang Gongfu took charge of all the affairs in Miss Shang's family. With the decision being made thus, they collected their family property and set out for Linhe.

Before long they arrived at Linhe County. Shang Gongfu selected a house just next to his own for his sister and his two nephews to settle down. From then on the two families started to make a living, depending on each other. Gongfu's mother, the concubine, and Miss Shang, like bosom friends, were in each other's company every day.

Having reached middle age, Miss Shang wished to have a carefree life. Seeing that her brother Gongfu was a talented man capable of arranging everything for her, she entrusted all of her household affairs to his care, allowing him to take charge of all her money and family property.

赋性慷慨，将着贾家之物作为己财，一律挥霍。虽有两个外甥，不是姐姐亲生，亦且是乳臭未除，谁人来稽查得他？商功父正气的人，不是要存私，却也只趁着兴头，自做自主，像心像意，那里还分别是你的我的？久假不归，连功父也忘其所以。贾廉访昔年设心拐去的东西，到此仍旧还与商家用度了。这是羹里来的饭里去，天理报复之常，可惜贾廉访眼里不看得见。

一日，商功父害了伤寒症候，身子热极。忽觉此身飘浮，直出帐顶，又升屋角，渐渐下来，恣行旷野。茫茫恰像海畔一般，并无一个伴侣。正散荡间，忽见一个公吏打扮的走来。相见已毕，问了姓名。公吏道：“郎君数未该到此。今有一件公事，郎君合当来看一看，请得府中走走。”商功父不知甚么地方，跟着这公吏便走。走到一个官府门前，见一个囚犯，头戴黑帽，颈荷铁枷，绑在西边两扇门外。仔细看这门，是个狱门。但见：

阴风惨惨，杀气霏霏。只闻鬼哭神号，不见天清日朗。

狰狞隶卒挨肩立，蓬垢囚徒侧目窥。凭教铁汉销魂，任是狂夫失色。

商功父定睛看时，只见这囚犯绑处，左右各有一人，执着大





She also asked him to find a resting place for her deceased husband and have him buried. A lot of money was spent on this matter. Gongfu, honest and upright as he was, was very liberal with money by nature. He squandered wantonly the money left by Jia Chengzhi. Though Gongfu had two nephews, they were not Miss Shang's own children. Moreover, they were still unfledged. Who were to check on what he was doing? Being an honest man of integrity, Gongfu was absolutely free from self-interest in doing so. He was simply enjoying acting on his own by his impulse. How would he care about whose money it was! Thus, totally forgetting what he was, he appropriated everything in the Jia family for his own use.

The money Inspector Jia swindled out of the concubine the other year was now returned to its original owner. Heaven's laws are manifest in themselves. Unfortunately Inspector Jia could no longer see it with his own eyes.

One day, Shang Gongfu got typhoid and ran a high fever. He felt as if he was circling in the air. At one moment he floated up to the ceiling of the house and then made a slow landing. Then he started to wander about in the vast expanse of mist and water. While he was strolling about, a man in an official's robe suddenly came to him. After exchanging greetings, the man in an official's robe inquired Gongfu of his name. Having learned his name, the man said to him, "The time is not up yet for you to come here. But I'd like to show you something. Follow me, please." Not knowing where he was, Gongfu followed the man to the entrance of a *yamen*, where he sighted a prisoner with a black hat on the head and iron chains on the neck, tied up between the two door leaves on the west side of the *yamen* building. Taking a closer look at the door leaf, Gongfu found it was the entrance of a prison. It was an awful sight:

Chill winds blow hard and murderous atmosphere overflows. Fiends weep and demons cry in utter darkness. Runners with ferocious features stand shoulder to shoulder while prisoners with disheveled hair steal glances out of the window. Men of iron will also turn pale with terror at such a sight.

Gazing fixedly at the prisoner at the door leaf, Gongfu saw that on either side of the prisoner stood a man, facing each other. Each holding a



扇相对而立。把大扇一挥，这枷的囚犯叫一声：“啊呀！”登时血肉糜烂，淋漓满地，连囚犯也不见，止剩得一个空枷。少歇须臾，依然如旧。功父看得浑身打颤，呆呆立着。那个囚犯忽然张目大呼道：“商六十五哥，认得我否？”功父仓卒间，不曾细认，一时未得答应。囚犯道：“我乃贾廉访也，生前做得亏心事颇多，今要一一结证。诸事还一时了不来，得你到此，且与我了结一件。我昔年取你家财，阳世间偿还已差不多了，阴间未曾结绝得。多一件多受一样苦，今日烦劳你写一供状，认是还足，我先脱此风扇之苦。”说罢，两人又是一扇，仍如起初狼籍一番。

功父好生不忍，因听他适间之言。想起家里事体来，道：“平时曾见母亲说，向年间被人赚去家资万两，不知是谁。后来有人传说是贾廉访，因为亲眷家，不信有这事。而今听他说起来，这事果然是真了，所以受此果报。看他这般苦楚，吾心何安？况且我家受姐夫许多好处，而今他家家事见在我掌握之中，元来是前缘合当如此。我也该递个结状，解他这一桩公案了。”就对囚犯说道：“我愿供结状。”囚犯就求旁边两人取纸笔递与功父，两人见说肯写结状，便停了扇不扇。功父看那张



door leaf in their hands, the two men wielded the door leaves against the prisoner. The prisoner screamed, instantly his body turning into a pile of blood and flesh. Soon the pile of blood and flesh vanished too, and only the iron chains were visible. After a while the prisoner resumed his original shape, just as what he was like before.

Seeing this, Gongfu trembled with fear. All of a sudden, the prisoner shouted, his eyes wide open, "Shang Gongfu, do you remember me?" Unable to recognize who he was, Gongfu didn't answer him at the moment. "I'm Inspector Jia," continued the prisoner. "I committed too many evildoings while I was alive. All the accounts have to be settled here and now. Now many accounts still remain unsettled. Since you're here, please help me settle one account. I swindled your family property in the past. Most of it has been returned to your family in the human world, but this account has not been settled in its entirety in the underworld. I'll have to suffer more if one more debt remains unsettled. I'd like to bother you to write an acknowledgement that I've returned it all to you so as to free me from the pressing of the door leaves." Hardly had he finished these words when the two men wielded the door leaves upon him as they did before, turning Inspector Jia into blood and flesh again. Gongfu could not bear to see this awful sight.

Upon hearing his words, Gongfu remembered what had happened to his family. He said to himself, "My mother used to say that years ago someone made away with our family property worthy of ten thousand taels of silver, but she didn't know who that man was. Later some people passed from mouth to mouth that it was Inspector Jia who did it. But we didn't believe it, because we are relatives. Now it's clear it was he who did it. This is why he is now being punished. How could I bear to see him being punished like this? Moreover, my brother-in-law has assisted me in many ways and all of his family property is at my disposal. It turns out that the Jias' property is originally mine. I should write an acknowledgement for him and have this case settled."

Having decided thus, Gongfu said to the prisoner, "I can write you the acknowledgement." The two men stopped wielding the door leaves as they heard Gongfu was willing to write the acknowledgement. Then the





纸时，原已写得有字，囚犯道：“只消舅舅押个字就是了。”功父依言提起笔来写个花押，递与囚犯。两人就伸手来，在囚犯处接了，便喝道：“快进去！”囚犯对着功父大哭道：“今与舅舅别了，不知几时得脱。好苦！好苦！”一头哭，一头被两个执扇的人赶入狱门。

功父见他去了，叹息了一回，信步走出府门外来。只见起初同来这个公吏，手执一符，引着卒徒数百，多像衙门执事人役，也有捐旗的，也有打伞的，前来声诺，恰似接新官一般。功父心疑，那公吏走上前行起礼来，跪着禀白道：“泰山府君道：‘郎君刚正好义，既抵阴府，不宜空回，可暂充贺江地方巡按使者！’天符已下，就请起程。”功父身不自由，未及回答，吏卒前导，已行至江上。空中所到之处，神祇参谒。但见华盖山、目岩山、白云山、茱山、歌山、泰山、蒙山、独山许多山神，昭潭洞、平乐溪、考槃涧、龙门滩、感应泉、漓江、富江、荔江许多水神，多来以次相见，待功父以上司之礼，各执文簿呈递。公吏就请功父一一查勘。查有境中某家，肯行好



prisoner begged the two men to hand the brush and paper over to Gongfu. Upon seeing the piece of paper, Gongfu found out that the acknowledgement had already been well written on the paper. "You may just sign it with a mark," said the prisoner. Gongfu did it as was told and handed the paper back to the prisoner. Taking the paper from the prisoner, the two men shouted, "Get in!" Turning to Gongfu, the prisoner said tearfully, "Now I'm leaving. I wonder when I can get delivered from these torments. I'm really miserable!" Weeping sadly, the prisoner was driven into the prison by the two men at the two door leafs.

After the prisoner was gone, Gongfu heaved a sigh and left the place. While Gongfu was strolling about aimlessly, the man in an official's robe who had been formerly with Gongfu came over to meet him with the greetings and formality that were especially supposed to be given to a newly appointed official. Gongfu was filled with doubts and suspicions. With a credential in the hand, the man in an official's robe, followed by several hundred men like *yamen* runners, some carrying flags and some carrying canopies, went down on his knees in front of Gongfu and said, "You, the grandson of Vice-minister Shang from Shandong, are an upright and honest man. Since you've now arrived at the underworld, you mustn't have come here in vain. You'd better take office as the Imperial Inspector of Hejiang Prefecture for the time being. Here is the credential issued by the Almighty of the Heaven. Now get on moving, please."

Almost involuntarily Gongfu followed the runners to the Hejiang River before he could give an answer. As he was traveling along the river, all the deities paid homage to him one after another, including many mountain deities from the mountains such as Huagai Mountain, Muyan Mountain, Baiyun Mountain, Rongshan Mountain, Geshan Mountain, Taishan Mountain, Mengshan Mountain, Dushan Mountain and many river deities from the rivers such as Zhaotandong, Kaopanjian, Longmentan, Ganyinquan, Lijiang, Fujiang and so on so forth. Then all the deities presented their official papers to Gongfu and let him go through and make comments. Gongfu looked into the papers and found out many cases in which people had been unjustly treated and good and evil had not been rewarded.

事，积有年数，神不开报，以致久受困穷；某家惯作歹事，恶贯已盈，神不开报，以致尚享福泽；某家外假虚名，存心不善，错认做好人，冒受好报；某家迹蒙暧昧，心地光明，错认做歪人，久行废弃；以致山中虎狼食人，川中波涛溺人，有冥数不该，不行分别误伤性命的，多一一诘责，据案部判。随人善恶细微，各彰报应。诸神奉职不谨，各量申罚。诸神诺诺连声，尽服公平。

迤邐到封州大江口，公吏禀白道：“公事已完，现有福神来迎，明公可回驾了。”就空中还到贺州，到了家里，原从屋上飞下，走入床中。一身冷汗，飒然惊觉，乃是南柯一梦。汗出不止，病已好了。

功父伸一伸腰，睁一睁眼，叫声“奇怪”！走下床来。只见母、妻两人，正把玄天上帝画像挂在床边，焚香祷请。元来功父身子眠在床上，昏昏不知人事，叫问不应，饮侵不进，不死不活，已经七昼夜了。母、妻见功父走将起来，大家欢喜道：“全仗圣帝爷爷保佑之力。”功父方才省得公吏所言福神来迎，





These cases included: though a certain family had been doing good for years, God had not repaid the family for their good deeds, making them live in poverty for so long; a certain family had been doing evil things and was guilty of too many crimes to escape punishment, but retribution had not come, on the contrary, this family was enjoying blessings and happiness; a certain family was enjoying an undeserved reputation while each member of the family had some dirty tricks up their sleeves, but they were regarded as nice people by mistake and were receiving good reward that they should in no way deserve; and a certain family, though open and aboveboard and kindhearted, were regarded as wicked people by mistake and had been maltreated ever since. He also found out that some people had been wrongly devoured by tigers and wolves and some had been wrongly drowned in water, thus causing many people to lose their lives by mistake. He rebuked each of the injustices and had all the wrongs righted. All the deities listened attentively and kept on saying “yes.”

As Gongfu reached the mouth of Hejiang River in Fengzhou County, the man in an official’s robe said to him, “Business is over. The God of Good Fortune has come to meet you. Now you can go back home.” Coming down from the air, Gongfu returned to Linhe and alighted on his house. Then he flew downward from the ceilings and made a landing on his bed. All of a sudden he regained consciousness with a start, trembling with a cold sweat. It turned out to be a dream. Getting covered in sweat, he recovered from his illness.

Straightening his back and opening his eyes, Gongfu got off his bed with the words, “How strange!” At that moment Gongfu’s mother and his wife were putting up the image of the Almighty of the Heaven on the framework of the bed, burning joss sticks and praying for blessings. As it turned out, Gongfu had remained unconscious on his bed for seven days and seven nights, without having any water or food. Upon seeing Gongfu started to move about in the room, Gongfu’s mother and wife were very delighted, and said, “We owe all this to the blessings of the Almighty of the Heaven!” By then Gongfu realized that, when the man in an official’s robe announced “the God of Good Fortune has come to meet you,” his



正是家间奉事圣帝之应。功父对母、妻把阴间所见之事，一一说来。母亲道：“向来人多传说道是这老儿拐去我家东西，因是亲家，决不敢疑心。今日方知是真，却受这样恶报，可见做人在财物上不可欺心如此。”正嗟叹间，商小姐恰好到来，问兄弟的病信，见说走起来了，不胜欢喜。商功父见了姐姐，也说了阴间所见。商小姐见说公公如此受苦，心中感动，商议要设建一个醮坛，替廉访解释罪业。功父道：“正该如此，神明之事，灼然可畏。我今日亲经过的，断无虚妄。”依了姐姐说，择一个日子，总是做贾家钱钞不着，建启一场黄箬大醮，超拔商、贾两家亡过诸魂，做了七昼夜道场。功父梦见廉访来谢道：“多蒙舅舅道力超拔，两家亡魂，俱得好处托生，某也得脱苦狱，随缘受生去了。”功父看去，廉访衣冠如常，不是前日蓬首垢面囚犯形容。觉来与合家说着，商小姐道：“我夜来梦见廉访相公，说话也如此，可知报应是实。”



mother and wife were paying respects to the Almighty of the Heaven, and the Almighty of the Heaven manifested its power.

Gongfu told his mother and his wife of his experiences in the underworld. "People passed from mouth to mouth in the past that that old fellow cheated us of our family property," remarked Gongfu's mother. "Because he is our relative, we never had the slightest suspicion of him. Now we've known the truth, and he has received due punishment in the underworld. It is thus clear that people can never go about swindling people." While they were sighing over this matter, Miss Shang came in to inquire about her brother's health. She was extremely pleased when she learned that he could now walk around. Shang Gongfu also told her what he had seen in the underworld. Hearing her father-in-law's sufferings, Miss Shang was filled with compassion. So she suggested that they set up a sacrificial altar on Inspector Jia's behalf and deliver him from his evildoing. "You're exactly right! Obviously the deities deserve to be regarded with awe. My own experiences have proved it." Gongfu chose a date and, as suggested by his sister, set up a large sacrificial altar with the money from the Jia family. Buddhist sacrificial rites were performed for seven days and seven nights running to expiate the sins of the dead of both the Shang and the Jia families.

One day Gongfu dreamed that Inspector Jia came to him with words of thanks, "I deeply appreciate what you've done to me. The dead of both the Shang and the Jia families have all been reborn in better places. I've also been released from the prison in the underworld and I'm now on my way to a certain place to be reborn as my fate might have it." Taking a glance at him, Gongfu found out that Inspector Jia was wearing his official's hat and robe as he did before, completely different from what he looked like the other day when he was a disheveled prisoner. Waking up from his dream, he told his family what he had dreamed. Miss Shang said, "Last night I dreamed of Inspector Jia too, and he also said the same thing to me. It is thus obviously clear that retribution is always bound to follow."

From then on Gongfu dedicated himself to doing good deeds and started to respect and trust deities and believe in Buddhism. Later when he reached

功父自此力行善事，敬信神佛。后来年至八十馀，复见前日公吏，执着一纸文书前来，请功父交代。仍旧卒徒数百人簇拥来迎，一如前日梦里江上所见光景。功父沐浴衣冠，无疾而终，自然入冥路为神道矣。

周亲忍去骗孤孀，到此良心已尽亡。

善恶到头如不报，空中每欲借巡江。



his eighties, he again saw the man in an official's robe he had met before in the underworld. Holding an official paper in his hands, the man came over to Gongfu to welcome him to the underworld. Within an instant several hundred runners gathered around Gongfu and gave him a warm reception, the scene being exactly the same with what he had experienced on the Hejiang River. Shang Gongfu, after taking a bath and changing his clothes, died without illness. Naturally, he must have joined the deities in the underworld.

He who has the heart to swindle a widow with fatherless children  
Must be both heartless and conscienceless.  
When good and evil are not to be rewarded,  
People will certainly resort to assistance from  
the Imperial Inspector of Hejiang.





## 卷 二 十 一

许察院感梦擒僧 王氏子因风获盗

诗云：

狱本易冤，况于为盗。

若非神明，鲜不颠倒。

话说天地间事，只有狱情最难测度。问刑官凭着自己的意思，认是这等了，坐在上面只是敲打。自古道：“捶楚之下，何求不得？”任是甚么事情，只是招了。见得说道重大之狱，三推六问。大略多守着现成的案，能有几个伸冤理枉的？至于盗贼之事，尤易冤人。一心猜是那个人了，便觉语言、行动件件可疑，越辨越像。除非天理昭彰，显应出来，或可明白。若只靠着鞠问一节，尽有屈杀了再无说处的。





## *Tale 21*

### **Obtaining Some Clues from a Dream, Investigating Censor Xu Brings the Monk to Justice Owing to a Gust of Wind, Two Sons of the Wang Family Regain Their Fathers' Silver Lost**

A poem reads thus:

Lawsuits are subject to unjust charges,  
Let alone cases of theft.  
Very few would not err in passing judgments  
Except sages.

Of all the things in the world, the most difficult one to do is to decide a case. Once he sets his mind to a certain decision, a court official will always pass a judgment on the basis of his own will. An old saying goes, "All will admit to false charges under savage torture." Whatever the truth is, everyone will have to confess under cruel torture. Repeated interrogations are generally conducted upon very important cases. Basically, most people are liable to accept the court verdicts as they are, and the fact is that few people can have their wrongs righted. When related to cases of robbery and theft, unjust judgments are extremely common.

Once he is bent on firmly believing in that a certain man is the very thief he wants, a court official will find the man's words and actions fishy, and the more he tries to reason it out, the more he is convinced that this man is most likely the thief." Only when Heaven's laws are manifest in themselves, some cases may betray themselves and thus be settled justly by the court. However, if court officials make decisions by mere questioning, they will unavoidably wrong countless people involved in lawsuits.

During the first year of the Longxing reign of Emperor Xiaozong, (1163-1164) Zhao Shen, of the Song Dynasty, Commander-general Wu

记得宋朝隆兴元年，镇江军将吴超守楚州，魏胜在东海与虏人相抗，因缺军中赏赐财物，遣统领官盛彦来取。别将袁忠押了一担金帛，从丹阳来到。盛彦到船相拜，见船中白物堆积，笑道：“财不可露白。今满舟累累，晃人眼目如此。”袁忠道：“官物甚人敢轻觑？”盛彦戏道：“吾今夜当令壮士来取了去，看你怎地！”袁忠也笑道：“有胆来取，任从取去。”大家一笑而别。是夜果有强盗二十余人，跳上船来，将袁将捆缚，掠取船中银四百锭去了。

次日袁将到帅府中哭告吴帅，说昨夜被统领官盛彦劫去银四百锭，且被绑缚，伏乞追还究治。吴帅道：“怎见得是盛彦劫去？”袁将道：“前日袁忠船自丹阳来到，盛统领即来相拜，一见银两便已动心，口说道今夜当遣壮士来取去。袁忠还道他是戏言，不想至夜果然上船劫掠了四百锭去。不是他是谁？”





Chao garrisoned Zhenjiang city of Shanyang Prefecture, Chuzhou (Zhenjiang city, the seat of Shanyang Prefecture, is present-day Huai'an city in Jiangsu Province). Meanwhile, along the east coast Brigadier Wei Sheng was resisting the aggression of the Jin enemy from the north. Falling short of awards for his soldiers, Wei sent Military Regional Commander Sheng Yan back to Zhenjiang to fetch silver. It happened that another Military Regional Commander Yuan Zhong, having traveled a long distance by water from Danyang, also arrived at Zhenjiang with a large sum of silver on the boat.

When Regional Commander Sheng Yan visited Regional Commander Yuan Zhong at the boat, Regional Commander Sheng saw all this silver and spoke to Regional Commander Yuan, "You mustn't show your silver. But now your silver on the boat is so eye-catching!" Regional Commander Yuan refuted, "Who has the guts to squint at government silver?" Regional Commander Sheng said jokingly, "I'll send some of my soldiers to your boat to take it tonight. Let's wait and see what you'll do about it." Regional Commander Yuan replied, laughing, "Take it if you are bold enough." Then the two parted with a laugh. At night, about two dozens of robbers broke into the boat. Trussing up Regional Commander Yuan, they plundered four hundred silver ingots and made away with them.

On the next day, Regional Commander Yuan came to the Commander-general's Headquarters and tearfully reported the robbery to General Wu Chao, saying, "Last night, Regional Commander Sheng Yan and his soldiers tied me up and robbed me of four hundred silver ingots. It is hoped that your honor investigates into the matter and have my lost silver recovered." General Wu asked, "Why do you believe it is Regional Commander Sheng who robbed your money?" Regional Commander Yuan replied, "I arrived here from Danyang the day before yesterday. Upon my arrival, Regional Commander Sheng called on me and was immediately attracted by my silver on the boat. He told me face to face that he would send his soldiers to take my silver the same night. I thought he was just joking and I never expected he would really do it. But he and his men got onto my boat and looted four hundred silver ingots. Who else could it be if not him?"



吴帅听罢，大怒道：“有这样大胆的！”即着四个捕盗人，将盛彦及随行亲校尽数绑来。军令严肃，谁敢有违？须臾一千人众绑入辕门，到了庭下。盛统领请问得罪缘繇。吴帅道：“袁忠告你带领兵校，劫了他船上银四百锭，还说无罪？”盛彦道：“那有此事？小人虽然卑微，也是个职官，岂不晓得法度，干这样犯死的事？”袁忠跪下来证道：“你日间如此说了，晚间就失了盗，还推得那里去？”盛彦道：“日间见你财物太露，故此戏言，岂有当真做起来的？”吴帅道：“这样事岂可戏得？自然有了这意思，方才说那话。”盛彦慌了道：“若小人要劫他的，岂肯先自泄机？”吴帅怒道：“正是你心动火了，口里不觉自露。如此大事，料你不肯自招！”喝教用起刑来。盛彦杀猪也似叫喊冤屈，吴帅那里肯听？只是严加拷掠，备极惨酷。盛彦熬刑不过，只得招道：“不合见银动念，带领亲兵夜劫是实。”因把随来亲校逐个加刑起来。其间有认了的，有不认的。那不认的，落得多受了好些刑法，有甚用处？不由你不胡卢提



Hearing these words, General Wu said indignantly, "How audacious Sheng Yan is!" So saying, General Wu ordered four arrest runners to capture Regional Commander Sheng and his close followers and bring them to the general's headquarters. Who were bold enough to disobey a military order? Who were bold enough to disobey a military order? Soon Regional Commander Sheng and his close followers were brought in, all trussed up.

Regional Commander Sheng asked General Wu what offences he had committed. General Wu said, "Yuan Zhong accused you and your men of plundering four hundred silver ingots from his boat. Are you going to deny your crime?" Sheng Yan said, "How would I do such a thing? Humble as I am, I'm a military officer and I know all the military laws. How could I have possibly committed such a crime at the risk of my life?" Throwing himself on the knees, Yuan Zhong confirmed, "You said so at daytime and I was burgled at night. How can you flatly disavow it?" Sheng Yan defended himself by saying, "I saw at daytime that your money was too eye-catching, so I made those playful remarks. How could I really do it!" General Wu remarked, "How could you make such a joke? It is only natural that firstly you were bent on robbing the silver and then you made those remarks." Turning anxious and flurried, Sheng Yan said, "How could I have divulged my secrets beforehand had I really intended to rob him?"

General Wu said, "It must be that your interest was naturally aroused at the sight of this silver, so you betrayed yourself without your being aware of it. This is a big trouble, sure you won't confess it easily." So saying, he ordered to put Sheng Yan to torture. Though Sheng cried loudly about his grievances, General Wu would not listen to him. On the contrary, more savage torture was imposed on Sheng. Unable to put up with the torments, Sheng had to admit, "At daytime I was lured by his money. It is true that I robbed him of his silver with my soldiers at night." Then his close followers were also put to torture one after another. Some of them admitted to the charge while some others flatly denied it. However, the outcome turned out to be that those who denied it had to suffer more cruel torments before they finally admitted to the charge.



一概画了招伏。及至追究原赃，一些无有。搜索行囊已遍，别无踪迹。又把来加上刑法，盛统领没奈何，信口妄言道：“即时有个亲眷到湖湘，已尽数付他贩鱼米去了。”吴帅写了口词，军法所系，等不得赃到成狱，三日内便要押赴市曹，先行梟首示众。盛统领不合一时取笑，到了这个地位。正是：

浑身是口不能言，遍体排牙说不得。

且说镇江市上有一个破落户，姓王，名林，素性无赖，专一在扬子江中做些不用本钱的勾当。有妻冶容年少，当垆沽酒，私下顺便结识几个倜傥的，走动走动。这一日王林出去了，正与邻居一个少年在房中调情，搂着要干那话。怎当得七岁的一个儿子在房中顽耍，不肯出去。王妻骂道：“小业种，还不走了出去！”那儿子顽到兴头上，那里肯走？年纪虽小，也倒晓得些光景，便苦毒道：“你们自要入屁，干我甚事？只管来碍着我。”王妻见说着病痛，自觉没趣，起来赶去，一顿栗暴，又将出去。小孩子被打得疼了，捧着头，号天号地价哭，口里千入屁、万入屁的喊。恼得王妻性起，且丢着汉子，抓了一条面杖，赶来打他。小孩子一头喊，一头跑，急急奔出街心，已被他头上捞了一下。小孩子护着痛，口里嚷道：“你家干得甚



Of course, all the efforts of recovering the lost silver proved to be fruitless. Not a piece of silver was found in every one of Sheng and his followers' bags. Once again torture was set to Sheng. Having no alternative, Sheng had to blurt it out offhandedly, "After I robbed the silver, I ran into a relative of mine who happened to come to Huxiang. I gave all the silver to him and he immediately went away with the money to buy fish and rice." General Wu recorded Regional Commander Sheng's confession. As it was a military offence, actually there was no need to recover the lost silver so as to prove the case plausible. Regional Commander Sheng Yan would be taken to the public area to be beheaded in three days. Sheng got into such a frightful plight because of a casual joke, absolutely unable to clear it up even though he had a thousand mouths.

It happened that there lived a hooligan named Wang Lin in Zhenjiang city. As his family had gone down in the world, Wang Lin engaged himself in illegal activities and evildoings along the Yangtze River. Wang's wife, young and seductive, ran a wine shop. After she got acquainted with several men, she secretly carried on affairs with them. That day, Wang Lin was out. Wang's wife and a young man, a close neighbor, were taking pleasure in flirtation at her wine shop. But at that point her seven-year-old son was playing for fun at the wine shop, and was unwilling to go outdoors. Wang's wife scolded him, "You bastard, get out of here!" The boy was amusing himself in high spirits. How would he be willing to leave? Young as he was, he was also in the know about his mother's affair with that man. The boy refuted viciously and ruthlessly, "You go ahead and have sex. It's none of my business. I'm not in your way. Why drive me out?"

Feeling hurt and dejected, Wang's wife stroke her son with her bent fingers on the head and knocked him out of the wine shop. Covering his head with his hands, the boy kept on hurling abuses as he wailed and whined with pain. Greatly infuriated, Wang's wife, casting her lover aside, seized a rolling pin and started to beat the boy. Yelling desperately, the boy ran out onto the street, but one stroke had already fallen on his head before he had time to dodge. Feeling the pain on the head, the boy shouted, "What a good deed were you up to? Why you beat me? You tore down





么好事，倒来打我？好端端的灶头拆开了，偷别人家许多银子，放在里头，遮好了。不要讨我说出来！”呜哩呜喇的正在嚷处，王妻见说出海底眼，急走出街心拉了进去。

早有做公的听见这话，走去告诉与伙伴道：“小孩子这句话，造不出来的，必有缘故。目今袁将官失了银四百锭，冤着盛统领劫了，早晚处决。不见赃物。这个王林乃是惯家，莫不有些来历么？我们且去察听个消息。”约了五六个伙伴，到王林店中来买酒吃。吃得半阑，大叫道：“店主人，有鱼肉回些我们下酒！”王妻应道：“我店里只是腐酒，没有荤菜。”做公的道：“又不白吃了你们的，为何不肯？”王妻道：“家里不曾有得，变不出来。谁说白吃？”一个做公的便倚着酒势要来寻非，走起来道：“不信没有，待我去搜看！”望着内里便走。一个赶来相劝，已被他抢入厨房中，故意将灶上一撞，撞下一块砖来，跌得粉碎。王妻便发话道：“谁人家没个内外？怎吃了酒没些清头，赶到人家厨房中？灶砧多打碎了！”做公的回嗔作喜道：“店家娘子不必发怒，灶砧小事，我收拾好还你。”便把手去剗那碎处。王妻慌忙将手来遮掩道：“不妨事，待我们



our kitchen range when it was still in perfect good condition and you stole lots of silver and hid it in the kitchen range. Do you want me to disclose your secrets?" Upon hearing her son's remarks that gave away the secrets about the stolen silver, Wang's wife dragged him home forcefully.

An official runner who happened to be nearby heard the boy's remarks about the stolen silver. So, he told his fellow companions about it, and then added, "What the young boy said must not be made up. There must be something behind it. Just a moment ago, Regional Commander Yuan lost four hundred silver ingots. Regional Commander Sheng was made a scapegoat and is to be beheaded soon. But the lost silver has not been recovered. Wang Lin has a previous criminal record. Could it be possible that Yuan's silver was stolen by Wang Lin? Let's go to the wine shop and size things up." So saying, five to six official runners arrived at the wine shop and started to drink.

When they were tipsy with wine, the official runners shouted towards Wang's wife, "Bring us a dish of fish to go with our wine!" Wang's wife answered, "Only wine is available. I don't have fish in my shop." The official runners said, "We're not having a free meal. Why aren't you willing to cook a fish for us?" Wang's wife replied, "It's true I don't have fish in my shop. How can I make one? Who said it's a free meal?" Taking advantage of his drunkenness, an official runner rose from his seat in an attempt to provoke a row and make trouble. "I don't believe you," said the official runner. "I'll go and have a look in the kitchen for myself." So saying, the official runner moved towards the kitchen. Another official runner had already broken into the kitchen. The official runner intentionally bumped against the kitchen range and a brick came off and broke into pieces.

Wang's wife said angrily, "How can you be so rude and break into my kitchen? Are you drunk? Look, you knocked down my kitchen range!" Turing his anger into joy, the official runner said, "Don't be angry. The kitchen range is not seriously damaged. Let me fix it for you." As he said so, the official runner started to dig up the fallen part of the kitchen range with his hands. Seeing this, Wang's wife stepped forward to stop him,

自家修罢。”做公的看见光景有些尴尬，不由分说，索性用力一推，把灶角多推塌了，里面露出白晃晃大锭银子一堆来。胡哨一声道：“在这里了！”众人一齐起身，赶进来看见，先把王妻拴起。正要跟究王林，只见一个人撞将进来道：“谁在我家啰哩？”众人看去，认得是王林，喝道：“拿住！拿住！”王林见不是头，转身要走。众做公的如鹰拿燕雀，将索来绑缚了。一齐动手，索性把灶头扒开，取出银子数一数看，四百锭多在，不曾动了一些。连人连赃，一起解到帅府。

吴帅取问口词，王林招说打劫袁将官船上银两是实。推究党与，就是平日与妻子往来的邻近一伙恶少年，共有二十余人。密地擒来，不曾脱了一个，招情相同。即以军法从事，立时梟首，妻子官卖。方才晓得前日屈了盛统领并一干亲校，放了出狱。若不是这日王林败露，再隔一晚，盛统领并亲校的头多不在颈上了。可见天下的事，再不可因疑心妄坐着人的。



attempting to cover up the damaged part of the kitchen range. "It doesn't matter. Just leave it to me and I'll fix it myself." The official runner found something strange in her reaction. Refusing to listen to her, he pushed the corner of the kitchen range forcefully and it fell apart on the ground. A pile of large silver ingots revealed themselves. The official runner shouted toward his fellow companions, "I got it!" Rushing into the kitchen immediately, the official runners tied Wang's wife up.

Just at this instant, a man broke in and remarked, "Who are making trouble at my home?" Realizing the man was none other than Wang Lin, the official runners shouted in one voice, "Capture him! Capture him!" Seeing that something was amiss, Wang Lin turned back to run away, but was caught and tied up. The official runners then pulled down the whole kitchen range and collected the silver ingots together. They found the amount of the money hidden within was exactly four hundred ingots. Consequently, the Wang couple and the stolen money were taken to the Commander-general's Headquarters.

Commander-general Wu interrogated Wang Lin about his robbery of the four hundred silver ingots. Wang Lin confessed that he and some twenty young ruffians who used to hang around with his wife plundered Regional Commander Yuan's silver on the boat. Then Wu had all the other twenty robbers arrested secretly. When questioned, the twenty robbers all made the same confession. Wang Lin and the other twenty young ruffians then were punished in accordance with military law. Instantly, they were all beheaded and their heads were hung up as a warning to all. Wang Lin's wife was also duly sold. It was not until this time did everyone realize that Regional Commander Sheng and his soldiers had been wronged. Immediately Sheng and his soldiers were freed. Had Wang Lin not given away the show the other day, Sheng and his soldiers' heads would have been removed from their necks the next day. From this event, we can see clearly that one can never rely on his suspicions to make a decision.

\* \* \*

Here I'll tell you another case of theft, in which two men got involved and were suspected of the theft. But this case is eventually brought to



而今也为一桩失盗的事，疑着两个人，后来却得清官辨白出来，有好些委曲之处。待小子试说一遍。

讼狱从来假，翻令梦寐真。

莫将幽暗事，冤却眼前人。

话说国朝正德年间，陕西有兄弟二人，一个名唤王爵，一个名唤王禄。祖是个贡途知县，致仕在家。父是个盐商，与母俱在堂。王爵生有一子，名一皋。王禄生有一子，名一夔。爵、禄两人，幼年俱读书。爵进学为生员。禄废业不成，却精干商贾榷算之事，其父就带他去山东相帮种盐。见他能事，后来其父不出去了，将银一千两，托他自往山东做盐商去。随行两个家人，一个叫做王恩，一个叫做王惠，多是经履风霜、惯走江湖的人。

王禄到了山东，主仆三个，眼明手快，算计过人，撞着时运又顺利，做去就是便宜的，得利甚多。自古道：“饱暖思淫欲。”王禄手头饶裕，又见财物易得，便思量淫荡起来。接着两个表子，一个唤做天天，一个唤做蓁蓁，嫖宿情浓，索性兑出银子来包了他身体。又与家人王恩、王惠各娶了一个小老婆，多拣那少年美貌的。名虽为家人媳妇，伏侍天天、蓁蓁，



light by an honest and upright official. There are many intricacies in this case too.

People are often charged falsely,  
while dreams always turn out to be true.  
When a case is difficult to be cleared up,  
try not to wrong the innocent.

During the Zhengde reign of emperor Zhu Houzhao (1506-1521) of our Ming Dynasty, there once lived two brothers Wang Jue and Wang Lu in Shanxi. The grandfather of these two brothers, who used to hold the post of county magistrate, resigned his office some time ago and was now staying at home. The father, a salt merchant, and the mother of the two brothers were alive. Wang Jue had a son named Wang Yigao. Wang Lu had a son named Wang Yikui. While young, both Wang Jue and Wang Lu dedicated themselves to the study of Confucian classics. Wang Jue passed the imperial examinations at the county level and became a *xiuca*, while Wang Lu failed. However, Wang Lu displayed unusual talent in doing business. Thus, Wang Lu's father took Wang Lu to Shandong and asked him to work as his assistant in doing salt business. Seeing that his son Wang Lu was capable and shrewd, the father later quit the business. The father, giving Wang Lu a thousand taels of silver as the principal, sent Wang Lu to Shandong to continue with the salt business. Wang Lu had two family servants with him; one was Wang En and the other Wang Hui. Both servants were quite experienced in the ways of society.

Quick of eye and deft of hand, Wang Lu and his two family servants outdid all others in the trade. Moreover, Wang Lu had the best of luck and soon he made a fortune through dealing in salt in Shandong. As an old saying goes, "Easy circumstances tend to breed lewd desire." Richly endowed, Wang Lu started to long for sexual indulgence. First he visited two prostitutes, one named Yaoyao and the other Qinqin. Later he paid these two prostitutes some silver and kept them to himself. Also he managed to find a concubine for each of Wang En and Wang Hui, and he specially selected young and beautiful ones. In name the concubines of the Wang En and Wang Hui were serving maids of Yaoyao and Qinqin, in reality Wang Lu slept with them in turns, too. It turned out that Wang En

其实王禄轮转歇宿，反是王恩、王惠到手的时节甚少。兴高之时，四个弄做一床，大家淫戏，彼此无忌。日夜欢歌，酒色无度，不及二年，遂成劳怯。一丝两气，看看至死。王禄自知不济事了，打发王恩寄书家去与父兄，叫儿子王一夔同了王恩到山东来，交付帐目。王爵看书中说得银子甚多，心里动了火，算计道：“侄儿年纪幼小，便去也未必停当。况且病势不好，万一等不得，却不散失了银两？”意要先赶将去，却交儿子一夔相伴一夔同走。遂分付王恩道：“你慢慢与两位小官人收拾了，一同后来。待我星夜先自前去见二官人则个。”只因此去，有分交：白面书生，遽作离乡之鬼；缁衣佛子，翻为入狱之囚。正是：

福无双至犹难信，祸不单行果是真。

不为弟兄多滥色，怎教双丧异乡身？

王爵不则一日，到了山东，寻着兄弟王禄，看见病虽沉重，还未曾死。元来这些色病固然到底不救，却又一时不死，最有清头的，幸得兄弟两个还及相见。王禄见了哥哥，吊下泪来。





and Wang Hui had fewer chances to sleep with their concubines. When elated, Wang Lu slept with these four women unscrupulously at the same time.

In two years, Wang Lu gradually broke down due to excessive indulgence in wine and women. Soon he appeared to be on the brink of death. Realizing his days were numbered, he dispatched Wang En home with a letter for his father and brother. He also requested Wang En to bring his son Wang Yikui to Shandong so that he could hand over his account book to him.

Upon learning from the letter that Wang Lu had a large sum of silver, Wang Jue's interest was deeply aroused. "My nephew is too young to handle this matter," Wang Jue calculated in his mind. "What's more, my brother is now incurably ill. What if my brother dies before my nephew can reach Shandong? Wouldn't the large amount of silver be lost?" As he thought so, he decided to go to Shandong to see his brother in person. Then he told Yigao to accompany Yikui in making the journey to Shandong after they got everything ready. Turning to Wang En, Wang Jue said, "Take your time and help Yigao and Yikui pack. You may set out for Shandong after you got ready for the journey. I'll have to hurry and leave for Shandong right now and see my younger brother first." Our story just evolved from Wang Jue's departure for Shandong: the inexperienced young scholar would lose his life in a strange land and the Buddhist monk would become a prisoner.

Indeed, blessings do not come in pairs and calamities never come singly. If it hadn't been for Wang Lu's excessive indulgence in carnal desire, how would the two brothers have lost their lives in a strange land? Soon Wang Jue arrived in Shandong and saw his brother Wang Lu. Diseases resulted from excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures are indeed fatal, but people affected with such diseases do not die instantly, and this will leave them some time to have their unsettled businesses settled. Fortunately, there was still some time left for Wang Lu and the two brothers could see each other. Tears rolled down Wang Lu's cheeks when he saw his brother.

Upon seeing Wang Lu was beyond cure, Wang Jue asked, wet with





王爵见了兄弟病势已到十分，涕泣道：“怎便狼狈至此？”王禄道：“小弟不幸，病重不起，忍着死，专等亲人见面。今吾兄已到，弟死不恨了。”王爵道：“贤弟在外日久，营利甚多，皆是贤弟辛苦得来。今染病危急，万一不好，有甚遗言回覆父母？”王禄道：“小弟远游，父母、兄长跟前有失孝悌。专为着几分微利，以致如此。闻兄说我辛苦，只这句话，虽劳不怨了。今有原银一千两，奉还父母，以代我终身之养。其馀利银三千馀两，可与我儿一夔一半，侄儿一皋一半，两分分了。幸得吾兄到此，银既有托，我虽死亦瞑目地下矣。”分付已毕，王爵随叫家人王惠，将银子查点已过。王禄多说了几句话，渐渐有声无气，挨到黄昏，只有出的气，没有入的气，呜呼哀哉，伏惟尚飨。王爵与王惠哭做了一团，四个妇人也陪出了些哀而不伤的眼泪。

王爵着王惠去买了一副好棺木，盛贮了。下棺之时，王爵推说日辰有犯，叫王惠监视着四个妇女，做一房锁着，一个人也不许来看；殡殓好了，方放出来。随去唤那天天、蓁蓁的鸩儿到来，写个领子，领了回去。还有这两个女人，也叫元媒人领还了娘家，也不管眼面前的王惠有些不舍得，身背后的王恩



tears, “How come you’ve come to this?” Wang Lu answered, “I know I’m very ill. But I’ve been trying hard to restrain myself from death and looking forward to seeing my family members. Now that I’ve seen you, I can die without regret.” Wang Jue said, “You’ve been away from home for quite some time and made a huge profit. But you must have experienced untold hardships to earn this fortune. You’re now in a critical condition. If by any chance the worst befalls you, do you have any message for me to pass on to our parents?”

Wang Lu said, “As I’ve been far away from home doing business, I have done little filial duties to our parents and you. For the mere purpose of making some low profit, I’ve come to such a miserable condition. But I feel much relieved at hearing your understanding words. Here are one thousand taels of silver. I need to return this money to our parents and I hope it will be some help to them in the rest of their lives. The rest of my silver amounts to more than three thousand taels. Divide it into two halves, one half for my son Yikui and the other half for my nephew Yigao. Fortunately, you arrived here in time, and I have entrusted the money with you. I will rest easy in my grave even though I die now.” When Wang Lu’s finished these words, Wang Jue asked Wang Hui, the family servant, to have the amount of silver checked. At dusk, Wang Lu breathed his last. Wang Jue and Wang Hui cried their hearts out. The four women also shed some tears moderately.

Wang Jue told Wang Hui to buy the deceased Wang Lu a coffin. When Wang Lu was about to be laid in the coffin, Wang Jue sent Wang Hui to go and lock the four women up in a room and keep a watch on them, offering an excuse that the four women had contradictory horoscopes with Wang Lu at that time and so they must not be present while Wang Lu was being laid in the coffin. The four women were not set free until Wang Lu was well encoffined. Then, to make the trip home easier, Wang Jue sent the four women, Yaoyao, Qinqin and the concubines of the Wang family servants, back to their own homes respectively, though Wang Hui appeared to be reluctant to part with his concubine and Wang En, who had not returned from the Wang’s house, didn’t even have the chance to say goodbye to his concubine.

不曾相别得，只要设法轻松了，便当走路。当下一面与王惠收拾打叠起来，将银五百两装在一个大匣之内，将一百多两零碎银子、金首饰一副，放在随身行囊中，一路使用。王惠疑心，问道：“二官人许多银两，如何只有得这些？”王爵道：“恐怕路上不好走，多的我自有妙法藏过，到家便有。所以只剩得这些在外边。”王惠道：“大官人既有妙法，何不连这五百两也藏过？路上盘缠勾用罢了。”王爵道：“一个大客商尸棺回去，难道几百两银子也没有的？别人疑心起来，反要搜根剔齿，便不妙了。不如放此一匣在行李中，也勾看得沉重，别人便再不疑心还有甚么了。”王惠道：“大官人见得极是。”计较已定，去雇起一辆车来。车户唤名李旺。车上载着棺木，满贮着行李。自己与王惠短拨着牲口骑了，相傍而行。一路西来，到了曹州东关饭店内歇下，车子也推来安顿在店内空处了。

车户李旺，行了多日，习见匣子沉重，晓得是银子在内。起个半夜，竟将这一匣抱着，趁人睡熟时离了店内，连车子撇下，逃了出去。比及天明客起，唤李旺来推车，早已不知所向。急简点行李物件，止不见了匣子一个。王爵对店家道：“这个匣子装着银子五百两在里头，你也脱不得干系。”店家道：“若是小店内失所了，应该小店查还。今却是车户走了，车户是客





Wang Jue and Wang Hui then started to pack their things up for the trip home. Five hundred taels of silver were placed in a big suitcase, while another one hundred taels in small pieces, along with two gold jewelries, were placed in the traveling bags so that they could use them easily on the way. Filled with doubts and suspicions, Wang Hui asked, "Second Master Wang Lu had much more silver than this. How come we only carry this small sum with us?" Wang Jue answered, "I think it will be inconvenient to travel with such a huge amount of silver. I've hidden the rest in a secret good place, and you'll be able to see the money after we get home."

Wang Hui said, "Since you have a good place to hide the silver, why didn't you hide these five hundred taels as well? We can just take as much traveling expenses as is needed for the journey home." Wang Jue answered, "Would other people think it reasonable we carry a big businessman's body home without several hundred taels of silver on us? Others will certainly get to the bottom of things if they become suspicious. By then we'll get into trouble. Better put these five hundred in the suitcase and carry it with our luggage. In this way, we'll be free from doubts and suspicions." Wang Hui said, "An excellent idea."

Wang Jue and Wang Hui hired a carriage and a carriage driver named Li Wang. After they put the coffin and their luggage on the carriage, Wang Jue and Wang Hui traveled on draught animals alongside with the carriage. As they traveled westward and arrived at Caozhou Prefecture, they stopped at Dongguan Inn for the night. They also had the carriage parked at the courtyard of the inn.

As carriage driver Li Wang had traveled with the carriage for several days, he realized the suitcase was loaded with silver. At midnight, Li Wang got up and stole the suitcase and left the inn while everyone was fast asleep. When Wang Jue got up the next morning, he found Li Wang was missing. Immediately he checked his luggage and found that the suitcase was gone too. Turning to the innkeeper, Wang Jue said, "There are five hundred taels of silver in my suitcase. You can't shirk responsibility." The innkeeper said, "It is only natural I should be responsible for it if you lost anything in my inn. But now the carriage



人前途雇的，小店有何干涉？”王爵见他说得有理，便道：“就与你无干，也是在你店内失去，你须指引我们寻他的路头。”店家道：“客人这车户那里雇的？”王惠道：“是省下雇来的北地里回头车子。”店家道：“这等，他不往东去，还只在西去的路上。况且身有重物，行走不便，作速追去，还可擒获。只是得个官差同去，追获之时方无疏失。”王爵道：“这个不打紧。我穿了衣巾，与你同去禀告州官，差个快手便是。”店家道：“原来是一位相公，一发不难了。”问问州官，却也是个陕西人。王爵道：“是我同乡，更妙。”王爵写个帖子，又写着一纸失状。州官见是同乡，分外用情，即差快手李彪，随着王爵跟捕贼人，必要擒获，方准销牌。王爵就央店家另雇了车夫，推了车子，别了店家，同公差三个人，一起走路。

到了开河集上，王爵道：“我们带了累堆物事，如何寻访？不若寻一大店安下了，住定了身子，然后分头缉探消息方好。”李彪道：“相公极说得有理。我们也不是一日访得着的；访不着，相公也去不成。此间有个张善店，极大，且把丧车停在里头，相公住起两日来。我们四下寻访，访得影响，我们回覆相公，方有些起倒。”王爵道：“我正是这个意思。”叫王惠分付



driver is missing and you hired him before you came to my inn. How should I be responsible for the case of theft if it is your carriage driver who has made it away with him?"

Seeing that what the innkeeper said was reasonable, Wang Jue said, "You may not be responsible for the theft, but my luggage was stolen in your inn. You need to help us find the thief." The innkeeper asked, "Where did you hire this carriage driver? Do you know anything about him?" Wang Jue answered, "He is a native of Caozhou and he was about to return home when I hired him some days ago." The innkeeper said, "This being the case, he must have gone westward. The heavy suitcase must make it difficult for him to move fast. We might be able to catch him if we hurry. But we need a *yamen* runner to help us capture him once we find him." Wang Jue said, "This is easy. I can change into my long robe. Then we can go to the county *yamen* together and report this case to the County Magistrate, and ask him to send an official runner to help us." The innkeeper said, "It turns out you're a *xiuca*. Things will be much easier."

The County Magistrate of Caozhou was a native of Shaanxi too. Wang Jue submitted his written complaint to the County Magistrate. Upon realizing Wang Jue was his fellow townsman, the County Magistrate appeared to be extremely earnest to help. Immediately he commissioned a runner named Li Biao to help Wang Jue capture the carriage driver. Then Wang Jue hired another carriage driver and left the inn with Wang Hui and the *yamen* runner Li Biao.

After arriving Kaihe Fair, Wang Jue said, "How are we going to find Li Wang if we carry this coffin with us? We'd better find a big inn and settle down for the time being. Then we can move around easily and hunt for Li Wang separately." "Exactly," said Li Biao. "Anyway, it will take some time for us to find Li Wang and we won't be able to leave Kaihe Fair if we can't find him. There is a big inn here run by Zhang Shan. You may stop the carriage and the coffin at the inn and stay at this place for a few days. We'll search for Li Wang around this place and we'll come to report to you once we have any news about him." Wang Jue said, "An excellent idea. This is exactly what I'm thinking."



车夫，竟把车子推入张善店内。店主人出来接了。李彪分付道：“这位相公是州里爷的乡里，护丧回去，有些公干，要在此地方停住两日。你们店里拣洁净好房，收拾两间我们歇宿。须要小心承直。”店主张善见李彪是个公差，不敢怠慢，回言道：“小店在这集上算是宽敞的，相公们安心住几日就是。”一面摆出常例的酒饭来。王爵自居上房另吃，王惠与李彪同吃。吃过了，李彪道：“日色还早，小人去与集上一班做公的弟兄约会一声，大家留心一访。”王爵道：“正该如此。访得着了，重重相谢。”李彪道：“当得效劳。”说罢自去了。

王爵心中闷闷不乐，问店主人道：“我要到街上闲步一回，没个做伴，你与我同走走？”张善道：“使得。”王爵留着王惠看守行李房卧，自己同了张善走出街上来。在闹热市里挤了一番，王爵道：“可引我到幽静处走走。”张善道：“来，来，有一个幽静好去处在那里。”王爵随了张善，在野地里穿将去。走到一个所在，乃是个尼庵。张善道：“这里甚幽静。里边有好尼姑，我们进去讨杯茶儿吃吃。”张善在前，王爵在后，走入庵里。只见一个尼僧，在里面踱将出来。王爵一见，惊道：“世间有这般标致的！”怎见得那尼僧标致？

尖尖发印，好眉目新剃光头；窄窄缁袍，俏身躯雅裁称体。樱桃樊素口，芬芳吐气只看经；杨柳小蛮腰，袅娜



Arriving at the inn, Zhang Shan received them cordially. Li Biao said to Zhang Shan, "This man is a fellow townsman of the County Magistrate. He is now taking his deceased brother home in Shaanxi. We have some business here, so we need to stay at your inn for a few days. Get ready two clean rooms for us. You need to serve us nicely." Realizing Li Biao was an official runner, Zhang Shan dared not to slight him. "My inn is one of the best at this place. You just set your mind at rest and stay at my inn for some days." Immediately Zhang Shan prepared dinner and wine for them. Wang Jue had the dinner alone in the main room while Li Biao and Wang Hui had theirs together in another room. After dinner, Li Biao said to Wang Jue, "It's still early. I'll go to the fair and ask the local official runners to help us track down Li Wang." Wang Jue said, "A wonderful idea. I'll give you all a big reward for the capture of Li Wang." "I would be glad to offer you my service," replied Li Biao. Finishing these words, Li Biao left for the fair.

Wang Jue was in low spirits. So he said to Zhang Shan, "I'm of thinking of taking a stroll on the street, but I don't have a companion. Would you like to go with me?" "Sure," replied Zhang Shan. Wang Jue told Wang Hui to remain in the inn and attend to their luggage.

Within an instant, Wang Jue and Zhang Shan got to the busy fair. After a moment of hustling and bustling on the street, Wang Jue asked, "Can you take me to a certain quiet or interesting place?" Zhang Shan answered, "Sure. I know a good place." Crossing the wilds, Zhang Shan brought Wang Jue to a nunnery. "This is a quiet place," said Zhang Shan, "and there lives a pretty nun in it. Let us move in and beg for a cup of tea." With Zhang Shan taking the lead and Wang Jue following closely behind, they two arrived at the nunnery. Upon entering the nunnery, a nun came out hurriedly and showed them in. Seeing the nun, Wang Jue exclaimed with surprise, "What a beauty!" How does the nun look like?

Her nun's cap reveals her hair is newly cut.

A beauty with fine brows and clear eyes.

Her gown is perfectly tailored for her graceful figure.

Her mouth is as red and sweet as cherry when reading the scripture.

Her body is as delicate as willow when greeting people.





逢人旋唱喏。似是摩登女来生世，那怕老阿难不动心！王爵看见尼姑，惊得荡了三魂，飞了七魄。固然尼姑生得大有颜色，亦是客边人易得动火。尼姑见有客来，趋跄迎进，拜茶。王爵当面相对，一似雪狮子向火酥了半边，看看软了。坐间未免将几句风话撩他。那尼姑也是多见广识的，公然不拒。王爵晓得可动，密怀有意。

一盏茶罢，作别起身，同张善回到店中来。暗地取银一锭，藏在袖中，叮咛王惠道：“我在此闷不过，出外去寻个乐地适兴，晚间不回来也不可。店家问时，只推不知。你伴着公差，好生看守行李。”王惠道：“小人晓得，官人自便。”

王爵撇了店家，回身重到那个庵中来。尼姑出来见了，道：“相公方才别得去，为何又来？”王爵道：“心里舍不得师父美貌，再来相亲一会。”尼姑道：“好说。”王爵道：“敢问师父法号？”尼姑道：“小尼贱名真静。”王爵笑道：“只怕树欲静而风不宁，便动动也不妨。”尼姑道：“相公休得取笑。”王爵道：“不是取笑。小生客边，得遇芳容，三生有幸。若便是这样去了，想也教人想杀了。小生寓所烦杂，敢具白金一锭，在此要赁一间闲房住几晚，就领师父清诲，未知可否？”尼姑道：“闲房尽有，只是晚间不便，如何？”王爵笑道：“晚间宾主相陪，极是便的。”尼姑也笑道：“好一个老脸皮的客人！”元来那尼姑是个经弹的班鸠，着实在行的。况见了白晃晃一锭银子，心



She is just like a fairy maiden descending to the world.

Even Ananda would not resist her temptation

Naturally Wang Jue was deeply infatuated by the nun. He took a seat opposite the nun. Like a snow lion pouncing on a flame, he had already become weak and soft in the limbs. Unavoidably he tantalized her with some flirtatious remarks. Being experienced and knowledgeable, the nun showed no sign of anger and responded his flirtation with ease. Knowing he could carry on with the nun, Wang Jue started to nurse ulterior motives in his mind.

After having a cup of tea, Wang Jue rose to his feet and said goodbye to the nun, and returned to the inn with Zhang Shan. Taking an ingot of silver and hiding it in his sleeve, he said to Wang Hui, "It's really boring to stay in the inn. I'll go out to have some fun. I'm not sure if I can come back for the night. When the innkeeper inquires about me, just tell him you don't know. You and Li Biao need to keep an eye on our luggage." Wang Hui answered, "I got it, sir. Do as you please."

Again Wang Jue went back to the nunnery. Seeing Wang Jue coming back to the nunnery, the nun said, "You left only a moment ago. Why are you back again?" Wang Jue replied, "I'm reluctant to part with your beauty. So, I'm back. I wonder if we can share each other's company and make merry." The nun replied, "With my pleasure." Wang Jue asked, "May I know your clerical name?" "Zhenjing is my humble clerical name," replied the nun. Wang Jue said with a smile, "You must be lonely too. Why don't we do something?" The nun said, "No joking!" "I'm not joking," said Wang Jue. "As a traveler, I feel it really an honor to meet you. It will certainly drive me crazy if we only keep on talking without doing something. I'm fed up with living in the noisy inn. Here is an ingot of silver. I wonder if I can rent a room in your nunnery."

The nun said, "Rooms are available, but I don't think it is good for you to stay here for the night. What could be done about it?" "Guest and hostess make good companions for the night," replied Wang Jue, laughing. Also laughing, the nun said, "What a brazen-faced guest!" The nun was actually a slut. She had already agreed to his request at the sight of the white and bright silver. Stretching her hand to receive the silver, she said,



下先自要了。便伸手来接着银子道：“相公果然不嫌此间窄陋，便住两日去。”王爵道：“方才说要主人晚间相陪的。”尼姑微笑道：“夯货！谁说道叫你独宿？”王爵大喜，彼此心照。是夜就与真静一处宿了，你贪我爱，颠鸾倒凤，恣行淫乐，不在话下。

睡到次日天明，来到店中看看，打发差人李彪出去探访，仍留王惠在店，傍晚又到真静处去了。两下情浓，割扯不开。王惠与李彪见他出去外边歇宿，只说是在花柳人家，也不查他根脚。店主人张善一发不干他己事，只晓得他不在店里宿罢了。

如此多日。李彪日日出去，晚晚回店，并没有些消息。李彪对王爵道：“眼见得开河集上地方没影踪，我明日到济宁密访去。”王爵道：“这个却好。”就秤些银子与他做盘缠，打发他去了。又转一个念头道：“缉访了这几时，并无下落。从来说做公人的，捉贼放贼，敢是有弊在里头？”随叫王惠：“可赶上去，同他一路走，他便没做手脚处。”王惠领命也去了。王爵剩得一个在店，思量道：“行李是要看守的，今晚须得住在店里。”日间先走去与尼姑说了今夜不来的缘故。真静恋恋不舍，王爵只得硬了肚肠，别了到店里来。店家送些夜饭吃了，收拾歇宿。店家并叠了家伙，关好了店门，大家睡去。



“The rooms here are very shabby. You may put yourself up here for a couple of days if you don’t mind it.” “I’ve made it clear you need to accompany me at night,” said Wang Jue. With a faint smile, the nun said, “What a shameless guest! Who told you you’re to sleep alone?” Hearing these words, Wang Jue was carried away with wild joy. With a tacit mutual understanding, Wang Jue and the nun slept together at night.

On the next morning, Wang Jue came back to the inn. He dispatched Li Biao to fish for information about Li Wang and told Wang Hui to remain in the inn. At dusk, Wang Jue again arrived at Zhenjing’s place. Deeply attached to each other, Wang Jue and Zhenjing were almost inseparable. Seeing Wang Jue stayed out every night, Wang Hui and Li Biao thought he must be hanging around with prostitutes. Zhang Shan also knew that Wang Jue did not spend the night at his inn, but he thought it was of no immediate concern to himself.

This kept on for quite some days. Li Biao went out early every morning to hunt for Li Wang and returned late at night, but he got no news at all about Li Wang. One day, Li Biao said to Wang Jue, “Since we can’t find Li Wang at Kaihe Fair, I’ll go to Jining to search for him.” Wang Jue said, “This is a good idea. Just go ahead.” Finishing these words, Wang Jue suddenly thought to himself, “Li Biao has been seeking Li Wang for quite some days, but he got no news at all about him. People always say, ‘Official runners not only catch thieves, they also set thieves free.’ Could there be fraudulence for selfish purposes in it?” So thinking, Wang Jue called over Wang Hui and said, “Go catch up with him. Stay with him and he’ll have no chance for cheating in this matter.” As requested, Wang Hui left the inn too. Wang Jue, now left alone in the inn, calculated, “Tonight I’ll have to stay at the inn and take care of the luggage.”

At daytime, Wang Jue visited Zhenjing and told her that he was not coming for the night. Zhenjing found it hard to tear herself away from him. But Wang Jue had to part with her and go back to the inn, though he hated to. When Wang Jue came back to the inn, a waiter brought him some night snacks and made bed for him. After Wang Jue finished his supper, the waiter cleared up the table and closed the door for Wang Jue. Then everybody went to bed.



一更之后，店主张善听得屋上瓦响。他是个做经纪的人，常是提心吊胆的，睡也睡得惺惚。口不做声，嘿嘿静听。须臾之间，似有个人在屋檐上跳下来的声响。张善急披了衣服，跳将起来，口里一面喊道：“前面有甚么响动，大家起来看看！”张善等不得做工的起身，慌忙走出外边。脚步未到，只听得劈扑之声，店门已开了。张善晓得着了贼，自己一个人不敢追出来，心下想道：“且去问问王家房里看。”那王爵这间的住房门也开了。张善连声叫：“王相公！王相公！不好了，不好了，快起来点行李！”不见有人应。只见店外边一个人，气急咆哮的走将进来，道：“这些时怎生未关店门，还在这里做甚么？”张善抬头看时，却是快手李彪。张善道：“适间响动，想是有贼，故来寻问王相公。你到济宁去了，为何转来？”李彪道：“我掉下了随身腰刀在床铺里了，故连忙赶回拿去。既是响动，莫不失所了甚么？”张善道：“正要去问王相公。”李彪道：“大家去叫他起来。”走到王爵卧内，叫声不应。点火来看，一齐喊一声道：“不好了！”元来王爵已被杀死在床上。李彪呆了，道：“这分明是你店里的缘故了！见我每二人多不在，他是秀才家孤身，你就算计他了。”张善也变了脸道：“我每睡梦里听得响声，才起来寻问，不见别人，只见你一个。你既到济宁去，为何还在？这杀人事，不是你，倒说是我？”李彪气得眼睁道：“我自掉了刀，转来寻的。只见你夜晚了还不关门，故



After the first watch, the innkeeper Zhang Shan suddenly heard the cracking of the tiles on the top of the house. Being a businessman, Zhang Shan was always on tenterhooks. So he was very vigilant when sleeping at night. Holding his breath, he just listened quietly. Within an instant, he heard a sound, which sounded as if someone was jumping off the eaves. Immediately he put on his clothes and rose out of his bed and shouted, "Why that noise? Everyone get up and have a look!" As he shouted thus, Zhang Shan raced out of his room before his waiters got out of their beds. Then he heard the pit-a-pat of the inn gate. Getting closer to the gate, he found it was already opened. Believing it must be a thief, Zhang Shan dared not to go out of his inn and chase after him. "Better go and have a look at Wang Jue's room," he pondered. He found the door of Wang Jue's room was open too. "Wang Jue! Wang Jue! Something terrible happened! Get up quickly and check your luggage!" But no one answered.

Just at this moment, a man rushed into the inn, huffing and puffing, and said, "Why is the gate still open at this hour?" Looking up, Zhang Shan found the man was the official runner Li Biao. Zhang Shan answered, "Just now I heard a noise and I thought it must be a thief. So I'm on my way to Wang Jue's room to have a look. You've already gone to Jining. Why are you back?" Li Biao answered, "I forgot to bring my knife. I left it on my bed. I came back in such a hurry to take my knife. Is there anything lost in the inn?" Zhang Shan answered, "I'm here to ask Wang Jue if he has lost anything." Entering Wang Jue's room, they called him loudly, but got no answer at all. As they lit up the light, Zhang Shan and Li Biao let out a scream in unison, "Oh no!" Wang Jue was killed on the bed.

Dumbfounded, Li Biao remarked, "Obviously you killed him in your inn while Wang Hui and I were not here!" Tuning pale, Zhang Shan refuted, "A noise woke me up from my sleep. So I came out to see what was happening. I saw no one but you. You've already gone to Jining. But you are you still here? You must be the killer! How could you venomously slander me?" Glaring with rage, Li Biao shouted, "I forgot to bring my knife. So I'm especially back to take my knife. I found the inn gate was still open when I got here. This is why I asked you about the gate in the



此问你，岂知你先把人杀了！”张善也战抖抖的怒道：“你有刀的，怕不会杀了人？反来赖我！”李彪道：“我的刀须还在床上，不曾拿得在手里。”随走去床头，取了出来，灯下与张善看道：“你们多来看看，这可是方才杀人的？血迹也有一点半点儿？”李彪是公差人，能说能话，张善那里说得他过？嚷道：“我只为赶贼，走起来不见别贼，只撞着的是你。一同叫到房里，才见王秀才杀死，怎赖得我？”两个人彼此相疑，大家混争。惊起地方邻里人等，多来问故。两个你说一遍，我说一遍。地方见是杀人公事，道：“不必相争，两下多走不脱。到了天明，一同见官去。”把两个人拴起了，收在铺里。

一霎时天明，地方人等一齐解到州里来。知州升堂，地方带将过去，禀说是人命重情。州官问其缘由，地方人说：“客店内晚间杀死了一个客人，这两个人互相疑推，多带来听爷究问。”李彪道：“小人就是爷前日差出去同王秀才缉贼的公差。因停住在开河张善店内，缉访无踪，小人昨日同王秀才家人王惠，前往济宁广缉，单留得王秀才在下处。店家看见单身，贪他行李，把来杀了。”张善道：“小人是个店家。歇下王秀才在



beginning. But I never expected you'd already killed Wang Jue!" Feeling a bit frightened, Zhang Shan said angrily, "You've got a knife. You must be the killer. How can you shift it onto me?" Li Biao said, "My knife must be on my bed at present. I haven't got it yet." So saying, Li Biao went directly to his bed and took the knife out of the room. Getting close to the light, Li Biao showed the knife to Zhang Shan and said, "Look at it! Could it be a knife used for a murder? Is there a single stain of blood on it?"

Li Biao was an official runner and had a glib tongue. How could Zhang Shan be his match? But Zhang Shan still insisted in a loud voice, "I rushed out of my room to catch thief. But I didn't find anyone in the inn. I just ran into you. We two got into Wang Jue's room together and found Wang Jue was lying on his bed dead. How can you say I'm the killer?" As they disputed endlessly over this matter, the local authorities and neighbors came over to inquire what was wrong. Li Biao and Zhang Shan told their stories respectively. Seeing it involved a life, the local authorities announced, "No need to argue. None of you can get clear of it. Go see the County Magistrate tomorrow." Thus, both Li Biao and Zhang Shan were tied up and detained in the inn.

At daybreak, the local authorities took Zhang Shan and Li Biao to the county *yamen*. Then the local authorities reported to the County Magistrate that this case involved a life. The magistrate asked, "What happened?" The local authorities answered, "A guest was killed in the inn last night. These two men suspected each other for the murder. So we brought them to you to look into the matter and decide the case."

Li Biao said to the magistrate, "I'm the official runner you sent to help Wang Jue hunt for the thief. Wang Jue and I stopped at Zhang Shan's inn at Kaihe Fair and I stayed there for several days searching for the thief. But I got no news of the thief. Wang Jue's family servant Wang Hui and I went to Jining yesterday to continue to fish for information about the thief. Wang Jue was left alone in the inn. Seeing Wang Jue was alone in the inn, the innkeeper Zhang Shan killed him for his money and luggage." Zhang Shan reported to the magistrate, "I'm Zhang Shan, the innkeeper. Wang Xiucui had stayed at my inn for quite some days by yesterday, but





店几日了，只因访贼无踪，还未起身。昨日打发公差与家人到济宁去了，独留在店。小人晚间听得有人开门响，这是小人店里的干系，起来寻问。只见公差重复回店，说是寻刀。当看王秀才时，已被杀死。”知州问李彪道：“你既去了，为何转来，得知店家杀了王秀才？”李彪道：“小人也不知。小人路上记起失带了腰刀，与同行王惠说知，叫他前途等候，自己转来寻的。到得店中，已自更馀，只见店门不关，店主张善正在店里慌张。看王秀才，已被杀了。不是店家杀了，是谁？”知州也决断不开，只得把两人多用起刑来。李彪终久是衙门中人，说话硬浪，又受得刑起。张善是个经纪人，不曾熬过这样痛楚的，当不过了，只得屈招道：“是小人见财起意，杀了王秀才是实。”知州取了供词，将张善发下死囚牢中，申详上司发落。李彪保候听结。

且说王惠在济宁饭店宿歇，等李彪到了一同访缉。第二日等了一日，不见来到，心里不耐烦起来，回到开河来问消息。到得店中，只见店家嚷成一片，说是王秀才被人杀了，却叫我家问了屈刑。王惠只叫得苦，到房中看看家主王爵，颈下殓刀，已做了两截了。王惠号咷大哭了一场，急简点行李，已不见了



he failed to capture the thief. Yesterday he sent the official runner and his family servant to search for the thief in Jining. So he stayed at my inn by himself. Last night I heard something astir at the gate, so I rose to see what was happening. Right at this moment, I ran into the official runner returning to my inn. He told me he was coming back to fetch his knife. When we arrived at Wang Xiucui's room, we found he was already dead."

Turning to Li Biao, the magistrate asked, "You were supposed to go to Jining. But why did you come back to the inn? How did you know it was Zhang Shan who killed Wang Xiucui?" Li Biao answered, "As a matter of fact, I was not quite sure of it. While I was on my way to Jining, I remembered I'd forgotten to bring my knife with me. I told Wang Hui to wait for me after he got to Jining and I returned to the inn to get my knife. It was already nighttime when I came back to the inn. But I found the gate had not been closed yet and Zhang Shan was standing in the courtyard, looking quite flustered. As we saw Wang Xiucui, we found he had already been killed. Who else could the killer be if not the innkeeper?"

Also finding it hard to tell who the killer was, the magistrate put both Li Biao and Zhang Shan to torture. Being an official runner after all, Li Biao appeared to be a tough man and denied it. Zhang Shan was a businessman and had never suffered such torments. When he was unable to bear the torture, he admitted to it against his mind, saying, "It's true I killed Wang Xiucui for his money." After recording Zhang's confession about his crime, the magistrate put him into the death cell. Then he submitted the case to the higher authorities. Li Biao was released on bail.

Arriving at Jining, Wang Hui put himself up at Jining Inn and waited for Li Biao. On the next day he waited for a whole day, but Li Biao didn't show up. Feeling very much annoyed with impatience, Wang Hui returned to Kaihe to see what had gone wrong. Arriving at the inn, Wang Hui found there was a din in the inn. Everyone there was talking about Wang Xiucui's death as well as the wrong done to the innkeeper. Seeing Wang Jue's head had been cut off, Wang Hui could do nothing but groan inwardly. After wailing at Wang Jue's body for some time, he checked the luggage. To his surprise, he found that eighty taels of silver and the two jewelries were missing.



银子八十两，金首饰一副。王惠急去买副棺木，盛贮了尸首。恐怕官府要相认，未敢钉盖，且就停在店内，排个座位，朝夕哭奠。已知张善在狱，李彪保候，他道这件事一来未有原告，二来不曾报得失赃，三来未知的是张善谋杀，下面官府未必有力量归结，报得冤仇。须得上司告去，才得明白。闻知察院许公，善能断无头事，恰好巡按到来，遂写下一张状子，赴察院案下投告。

那个察院，就是河南灵宝有名的许尚书襄毅公，其时在山东巡按。见是人命重情，批与州中审解。州中照了原招，只坐在张善身上，其赃银候追。张善当官怕打，虽然一口应承，见了王惠，私下对他着实叫屈。且诉说那晚门响，撞见李彪的光景。连王惠心里也不能无疑，只是不好指定了那一个。一同解到察院来。许公看了招词，叫起两下一问，多照前日说了一番说话。许公道：“既然张善还扳着李彪，如何州里一口招了？”张善道：“小人受刑不过，只得屈招。其实小人是屋主，些小



Wang Hui then bought a coffin and placed Wang Jue's body in it. Considering the yamen might examine Wang Jue's body, Wang Hui didn't nail the lid on the coffin.

Upon learning that Zhang Shan had been put into the death cell and Li Biao was on bail, Wang Hui turned the matter over in his mind, "This case does not have an accuser. Furthermore, the burglary was not reported to the magistrate and no evidence is available to prove that Zhang Shan was the killer. The county *yamen* wouldn't be able to settle the case justly. To find the true killer and clear up the case, a complaint must be made to the higher authorities." Soon he learned that Investigating Censor Xu was an expert at clearing up cases with any clues. It so happened that Investigating Censor Xu was currently making an inspecting tour at Shandong. Wang Hui wrote a complaint and submitted it to the Investigation Bureau. Investigating Censor Xu, a native of Lingbao of Henan and originally titled Lord Xiangyi by the imperial edict, was actually the most renowned minister at the imperial court.

Seeing that it was a case involving a life, Investigating Censor Xu ordered that the case be returned to the County Magistrate for retrial. And the County Magistrate, as he had done before, again passed the same judgment that Zhang Shan was the killer and the spoils were to be recovered later. Though Zhang Shan admitted to it for fear of being tortured, he cried out about his grievances in the quiet when he met Wang Hui and recounted how the doorbell rang and how he ran into Li Biao. Even Wang Hui was filled with suspicions, but he was unable to tell who was the killer.

Before long, Zhang Shan and Li Biao, along with the files concerning the case, were handed over to the Investigation Bureau. After reading the confessions made by Zhang Shan and Li Biao, Investigating Censor Xu inquired them about the matter. But both repeated what they had spoken earlier to the magistrate in the very beginning. Turning to Zhang Shan, Investigating Censor Xu asked, "Since you still maintained Li Biao was the killer, why did you admit to it in your confession?" Zhang Shan answered, "I admitted to it because I could no longer bear the torture. I'm the owner of the inn. I would be even responsible for a minor theft. How

失脱，还要累及小人追寻，怎敢公然杀死了人，藏了财物？小人待躲到那里去？那日门开时，小人赶起来，只见李彪撞进来的。怎倒不是李彪，却栽着小人身上？”李彪道：“小人是个官差，州里打发小人随着王秀才缉贼的。这秀才是小人的干系，杀了这秀才，怎好回得州官？况且小人掉了腰刀，转身来寻的，进门时手中无物，难道空拳头杀得人？已后床头才取刀出来，众目所见的，须不是杀人的刀了。人死在张善店里，不问张善问谁？”许公叫王惠问道：“你道是那一个？”王惠道：“连小人心里也胡突。两下多可疑，两下多有辨，说不得是那一个。”许公道：“据我看来，两个多不是，必有别情。”遂援笔判道：

李彪、张善，一为根寻，一为店主，动辄牵连，肯杀人以自累乎？必有别情，监候审夺。

当下把李彪、张善多发下州监，自己退堂进去，心中只是放这事不下。晚间朦胧睡去，只见一个秀才同着一个美貌妇人前来告状，口称被人杀死了。许公道：“我正要问这事。”妇人口中说出四句道：

无发青青，彼此来争。

土上鹿走，只看夜明。

许公点头记着。正要问其详细，忽然不见，吃了一惊，飒然觉



could I be bold enough to kill my guest and grab his money. How could I rob his money and run away from my inn? On that night I only saw Li Biao rushing into the inn when I was getting to the gate to see what had happened. Why fabricate a charge against me? Li Biao must be the killer.”

Li Biao defended himself, saying, “I’m an official runner commissioned to help Wang Xiucan hunt for the thief. How would I explain the matter to the magistrate if I had killed him? What’s more, I forgot to bring my knife with me when I left the inn for Jining. I rushed back to the inn to get my knife. I had no weapons with me when I returned to the inn. Could I kill a man with my bare fists? Many people were present when I took my knife from my bed. It’s obviously clear Wang Xiucan was not killed by this knife. Wang Xiucan was killed in Zhang Shan’s inn, who else could the killer be if not Zhang Shan?” Investigating Censor Xu turned to Wang Hui and asked, “What’s your comment?” Wang Hui answered, “I’m confused too. Both are suspicious and at the same time both sounded reasonable. I can’t tell who did it.” Xu said, “In my opinion, none of them is the killer. The killer must be someone else.” So saying, Xu took up a writing-brush and made the following judgment:

Li Biao is an official runner commissioned to help Wang Jue search for the thief, while Zhang Shan is the owner of the inn. It is self-evident both would be implicated in the case if Wang Jue got killed. Could it be possible for them to put themselves into trouble? Therefore, the killer must be someone else. Put both of them behind the bars to wait for further investigation.

Instantly Li Biao and Zhang Shan were taken into the county jail. Declaring the court adjourned, Investigation Censor returned to his own room, but he still couldn’t tear himself away from this case. While sleeping at night, he had a dream that a xiucan, followed by a beautiful woman, came to him with a complaint, saying he had been killed by someone. Xu said, “This is exactly what is haunting me at present.” The woman spoke thus:

I am a hairless quiet woman, I got involved in an affair with two men. If no dust is available, seek assistance from the bright moon.

Xu kept these words in mind. As he was about to ask her to give an explanation of her words, the woman suddenly disappeared. Greatly taken



来，乃是一梦。那四句却记得清清的。仔细思之，不解其意。但忖道：“妇人口里说的首句，有‘无发’二字。妇人无发，必是尼姑也。这秀才莫不被尼姑杀了？且待明日细审，再看如何。这诗句必有应验处。”

次日升堂，就提张善一起再问。人犯到了案前，许公叫张善起来问道：“这秀才自到你店中，晚间只在店中歇宿的么？”张善道：“自到店中，就只留得公差与家人在店歇宿，他自家不知那里去过夜的。直到这晚，因为两人多差往济宁，方才来店歇宿，就被杀了。”许公道：“他曾到本地甚么庵观去处么？”张善想了一想，道：“这秀才初到店里，要在幽静处闲走散心，曾同了小人尼庵内走了一遭。”许公道：“庵内尼姑年纪多少？生得如何？”张善道：“一个少年尼僧，生得美貌。”许公暗喜道：“事有因了。”又问道：“尼僧叫得甚名字？”张善道：“叫得真静。”许公想着，拍案道：“是了！是了！梦中头两句‘无发青青，彼此来争’，‘无发’二字应了尼僧，下面‘青’字配着个‘争’字，可不是个‘静’字？这人命只在这真静身上。”就写个小票，掣一根签，差个公人李信速拿尼僧真静解院。

李信承了签票，竟到庵中来拿。真静慌了，问是何因。李信道：“察院老爷要问杀人公事，非同小可。”真静道：“爷爷呀，小庵有甚杀人事体？”李信道：“张善店内王秀才被人杀了。说是曾在你这里走动的，故来拿你去勘问。”真静惊得木呆，心下想道：“怪道王秀才这两晚不见来，元来被人杀了。苦也！苦也！”求告李信道：“我是个女人，不出庵门，怎晓得



aback, Xu woke up from his dream. Though he clearly remembered what the woman said in his dream, he could not make any sense out of it. “The woman said she was hairless,” Xu thought to himself, “so she must be nun. Could it be possible Wang Xiucui was killed by this nun? I’ll try this case again tomorrow. There must be something hidden in what this woman said.”

On the next day, Zhang Shan was brought to court to be questioned. Investigating Censor Xu asked, “Did Wang Xiucui spend the nights at your inn?” “No,” replied Zhang Shan, “he didn’t. Only his family servant Wang Hui and the official runner Li Biao passed the nights at my inn. I have no idea where Wang Xiucui spent the nights. Wang Xiucui stayed only one night at my inn after he had sent Li Biao and Wang Hui to Jining, and he was killed on that night.” Xu asked, “Did he ever go to any nunneries around here?”

Zhang Shan thought for a moment and then said, “When he first settled in my inn, he told me he wished to go a certain quiet good place for entertainment. I showed him to a nunnery nearby.” Xu asked, “How old is the nun? How about her looks?” Zhang Shan answered, “She is young and beautiful.” Xu continued with his questions, “What’s the name of the nun?” “Zhenjing 真静,” replied Zhang Shan. Xu thought for a moment. Suddenly he struck the table in surprise and said, “I got it! I got it! A hairless woman must be a nun. She also said she was a quiet 静 woman. The word ‘quiet’ 静 happens to refer to her name Zhenjing 真静. Zhenjing must have something to do with this case of murder.” Having finished these words, Xu immediately sent an official runner named Li Xin to the nunnery to bring Zhenjing to the Investigating Bureau.

Scared out of her wits, Zhenjing asked why she was wanted by the Investigating Bureau. Li Xin told her that the reason she was wanted was that Wang Xiucui had been killed in the inn and that he used to come to the nunnery to see her. Dumbfounded, Zhenjing said, “No wonder he didn’t come to see me recently. He was killed. Really too bad! But I’m a woman and I never go outdoors. How could I know anything about what had happened in the inn? Please have mercy on me and free me from going to the court. I will certainly repay your kindness if you could do me





他店里的事？牌头怎生可怜见，替我回覆一声，免我见官，自当重谢。”李信道：“察院要人，岂同儿戏！我怎生方便得？”真静见李信不肯，娇啼宛转，做出许多媚态来，意思要李信动心，拚着身子陪他，就好讨个方便。李信虽知其意，惧怕衙门法度，不敢胡行。只安慰他道：“既与你无干，见见官去，自有明白，也无妨碍的。”拉着就走。真静只得跟了，解至察院里来。

许公一见真静，拍手道：“是了！是了！此即梦中之人也。煞恁奇怪！”叫他起来跪在案前，问道：“你怎生与王秀才通奸？后来他怎生杀了？你从实说来，我不打你；有一句含糊，就活敲死了。”满堂皂隶雷也似吆喝一声。真静年纪不上廿岁，自不曾见官的，胆子先吓坏了，不敢隐瞒，战抖抖的道：“这个秀才，那一日到庵内游玩，看见了小尼。到晚来，他自拿了白银一锭，求在庵中住宿。小尼不合留他。一连过了几日，彼此情浓。他口许小尼道，店中有几十两银子，两副首饰，多要拿来与小尼。这一日说道有事干，晚间要在店里宿，不得来了。自此一去，竟无影响。小尼正还望他来，怎知他被人杀了？”许公看见真静年幼，形容娇媚，说话老实，料道通奸是真，须不会杀的人。如何与梦中恰相符合？及至说所许银两物件之类，又与告赃不差？踌躇了一会，问道：“秀才许你东西之时，有



a favor.”

Li Xin said, “You’re wanted by the Investigation Bureau. This is by no means a joking matter. There is no way for me to help you.” Seeing Li Xin was reluctant to help, Zhenjing put on all kinds of fawning expressions and tried every possible means to seduce Li Xin, hoping that he could free her from going to the court. Li Xin knew well what she meant, but, being fully aware of the laws, he did not dare to make a concession on this matter. Finally, Li Xin said, “Since you’ve got nothing to do with this matter, you might as well go see the official and tell him what you know about this matter.” So saying, Li Xin dragged Zhenjing to the Investigating Bureau.

The moment Xu saw Zhenjing at the court, he clapped his hands and exclaimed, “That’s it! She is the very woman in my dream. How strange!” Then Xu ordered her to move closer to the table and go down on her knees. “How did you carry on an affair with Wang Xiucui?” Xu asked. “How did you kill him? I won’t beat you if you tell me the truth. If you lie, I’ll beat you to death.” Zhenjing was actually in her teens and had never been to court. She didn’t dare to cover it up.

Trembling with fear, she answered, “Wang Xiucui ran into me the other day while he was visiting the nunnery. That night he again came to see me with an ingot of silver and asked for accommodation in the nunnery. Deeply attached to each other, I slept with him for several days. He told me he still had dozens of taels of silver and two jewelries in the inn and he would bring them all to me. One day he told me he would not be able to come to see me at night because he had to stay at the inn for some important business. Ever since then I’ve never seen him again. I’ve been looking forward to seeing him for a long time. It never occurred to me he was killed.”

Judging by her young age, her beautiful looks and her sincerity in telling the story, Xu knew for sure that what Zhenjing confessed about her affair with Wang Xiucui was true, but she must not be the killer. “But how did Zhenjing appeared to be exactly the same with the woman in my dream?” wondered Xu. “How come the stolen money and two jewelries happened to be in keeping with Zhenjing’s account of Wang Xiucui’s



人听见么？”真静道：“在枕边说的话，没人听见。”许公道：“你可曾对人说么？”真静想了一想，通红了脸，低低道：“是了，是了，不该与这狠厮说。这秀才苦死是他杀了！”许公拍案道：“怎的说？”真静道：“小尼该死。到此地位，瞒不得了。小尼平日有一个和尚私下往来，自有那秀才在庵中，不招接了他。这晚秀才去了，他却走来，问起与秀才交好之故。我说秀才情意好，他许下我若干银两东西，所以从他。和尚问秀才住处，我说他住在张善大店中。和尚就忙忙的起身去了，这几时也不见来。想必这和和尚走去，就把那秀才来杀了。”许公道：“和尚叫甚名字？”真静道：“叫名无麈。”许公听说了和尚之名，跌足道：“是了！是了！‘土上鹿走’，不是‘麈’字么？他住在那寺里？”真静道：“住光善寺。”许公就差李信去光善寺里拿和尚无麈，分付道：“和尚干下那事必然走了，就拿他徒弟来问去向。但和尚名多相类，不可错误生事。——那尼僧晓得他徒弟名字么？”真静道：“他徒弟名月朗，住在寺后。”许公推详道：“一发是了！梦中道：‘只看夜明’。‘夜明’不是‘月朗’么？一个个字多应了！但只拿了月朗，便知端的。”

李信领了密旨，去到光善寺拿无麈，果然徒弟回道师父几日前不知那里去了。李信问得这徒弟就是月朗，一索套了，押



valuables?” After turning the matter over for a moment, Xu asked, “Did anyone hear you when Wang Xiucan promised you his money?” Zhenjing answered, “No, it was an absolutely private talk.” Xu asked, “Did you tell anyone else about it?” Zhenjing thought for a moment and turned crimson. “Now I see,” Zhenjing said in a low voice. “I shouldn’t have told this heartless guy about it. It must be him who killed Wang Xiucan!”

Xu shouted, “Why? Tell me the truth!” Zhenjing answered, “It was my fault. Even death is too light a punishment for me. Now that it has come to this, I’m afraid I won’t be able to cover it up any more. I used to carry on an affair with a monk secretly before I knew Wang Xiucan. While Wang Xiucan stayed at the inn that night, this monk came to me and inquired me why I had cold-shouldered him recently. I told him the reason I fell for Wang Xiucan was that he was pretty good to me and promised me some silver. Then the monk asked me where Wang Xiucan was. I told him Wang was at Zhang Shan’s inn. Then the monk left in a hurry. I haven’t seen him since he took leave of me that night. I guess he must have gone to the inn and killed Wang Xiucan.”

“What’s the monk’s name?” asked Xu. “Wuchen 无塵,”<sup>1</sup> replied Zhenjing. Stamping his feet, Xu exclaimed, “I got it! The monk’s name ‘Wuchen’ conforms exactly with the lines ‘If no dust 无塵 is available’ the woman had spoken to me in my dream! Where does he live?” “Guangshan Temple,” was Zhenjing’s answer. Then Xu assigned Li Xin to capture Wuchen at Guangshan Temple, saying, “Monk Wuchen must have gone into hiding. If he is not there, ask his disciple where he has gone.” Turning to Zhenjing, Xu asked, “Do you know Wuchen’s disciple’s name?” Zhenjing answered, “His name is Yuelang 月朗<sup>2</sup> and he lives in the backyard of the temple.” Hearing these words, Xu pondered, “The disciple’s name Yuelang fits perfectly with the words ‘bright moon’ the woman had mentioned to me in my dream. What the woman had spoken to me has all been confirmed. The whole thing will be out in the open once we catch Yuelang.”

Instantly Li Xin went to Guangshan Temple to capture Wuchen. As was expected, Wuchen’s disciple Yuelang told Li Xin that his master had already been away for several days. Then Li Xin tied Yuelang up and

到公庭。许公问无塵去向，月朗一口应承道：“他只在亲眷人家，不要惊张，致他走了。小的便与公差去挨出来。”许公就差李信押了月朗，出去访寻。

月朗对李信道：“他结拜往来的亲眷甚多，知道在哪一家？若晓得是公差访他，他必然惊走。不若你扮做道人，随我沿门化饭，访得的当，就便动手。”李信道：“说得是。”当下扮做了道人，跟着月朗，走了几日，不见踪迹。来到一村中人家，李信与月朗进去化斋，正见一个和尚在里头吃酒。月朗轻轻对李信道：“这和尚正是师父无塵。”李信悄悄去叫了地方，把牌票与他看了，一同闯入去。李信一把拿住无塵道：“你杀人事发了，巡按老爷要你！”无塵说着心病，慌了手脚，看见李信是个道妆，叫道：“斋公，我与你并无冤仇，何故首我？”李信扑地一掌打过去，道：“我把你这瞎眼的贼秃！我是斋公么？”掀起衣服，把出腰牌来，道：“你睁着驴眼认认看！”无塵晓得是公差，欲待要走，却有一伙地方在那里，料走不脱，





brought him to the Investigating Bureau.

Xu inquired Yuelang about his master Wuchen's whereabouts. Yuelang answered, "My master is now at the home of one of his relatives. Better avoid disclosure of the matter so as not to alert him and make him run away. I'll manage to find him if you could send a runner to help me." Then Xu assigned Li Xin to follow Yuelang and help him capture Wuchen.

Yuelang said to Li Xin, "He had many relatives and sworn acquaintances. Who knows who he is with at present? If he learns he is being wanted by the *yamen*, he will surely be startled and run away. Why don't you disguise yourself as a Taoist and beg alms with me from door to door? Once we make sure of his hiding place, we can take actions immediately to capture him. Disguising himself as a Taoist, Li Xin, accompanied by Yuelang, wandered for several days from place to place to hunt for Wuchen. But no trace of Wuchen was found. One day while they were begging alms from door to door, they found that a monk was having wine in a certain family. Yuelang said to Li Xin in a whisper, "That monk over there is my master Wuchen."

Li Xin hurriedly went to the local authorities to request assistance. A group of official runners from the local *yamen* were dispatched to help Li Xin capture Wuchen. Li Xin and the group of official runners from the local *yamen* broke into the house and arrested Wuchen in a twinkling. "The homicide you committed has been brought to light. You are wanted by the Investigating Censor." These words touched upon Wuchen's sore point and threw him into a flurry. Seeing Li Xin was a Taoist, Wuchen yelled, "Taoist, we have no enmity between us. Why do you inform against me to the *yamen*?" Giving Wuchen a slap in the face, Li Xin said, "Baldheaded blind monk! Open your donkey's eyes and see if I'm a Taoist!" So saying, Li Xin lifted his dress and showed Wuchen his pass worn at the waist.

Realizing Li Xin was an official runner, Wuchen immediately thought of taking to his heels. But he found he had been surrounded by a group of official runners. Knowing for sure he could no longer run away, Wuchen had to follow Li Xin and move out of the house obediently. When Wuchen saw Yuelang, Wuchen cursed him roundly, shouting, "You bastard! You



软软地跟了出来。看见了月朗，骂道：“贼弟子！是你领他到这里的？”月朗道：“官府押我出来，我自身也难保。你做了事，须自家当去，我替了你不成？”

李信一同地方押了无塵，俟候许公升堂，解进察院来。许公问他：“为何杀了王秀才？”无塵初时抵赖，只推不知。用起刑法来，又叫尼姑真静与他对质。真静心里也恨他，便道：“王秀才所许东西，止是对你说得，并不曾与别个讲。你那时狠狠出门，当夜就杀了，还推得那里？”李信又禀他在路上与徒弟月朗互相埋怨的说话。许公叫起月朗来，也要夹他。月朗道：“爷爷不要夹得，如今首饰、银两还藏在寺中箱里，只问师父便是。”无塵见满盘托出，晓得枉熬刑法不济事了，遂把真情说出来道：“委实一来忌他占住尼姑，致得尼姑心变了；二来贪他这些财物，当夜到店里去杀了这秀才，取了银两首饰是实。”画了供状，押去取了八十两原银、首饰二副，封在曹州库中，等待给主。无塵问成死罪，尼姑逐出庵舍，赎了罪，当官卖为民妇。张善、李彪与和尚月朗俱供明无罪，释放宁家。这件事方得明白。若非许公神明，岂不枉杀了人？正是：

两值命途乖，相遭各致猜。

岂知杀人者，原自色中来。



brought them here, right?” Yuelang answered, “The *yamen* forced me to do so. I could hardly save myself. You should accept the responsibility for what you did. Should I hold myself responsible for whatever you did?”

Li Xin and the official runners from the local *yamen* escorted Wuchen to the Investigating Bureau. When Wuchen was brought to court, Investigating Censor Xu asked, “Why did you kill Wang Xiucan?” Wuchen simply denied the accusation in the beginning. Therefore, he was put to torture. Zhenjing was also summoned to face him in court. Overcome with hatred, Zhenjing said, “That night I only told you alone about what Wang Xiucan had promised me. You left my room ferociously and killed him that night. How are you going to deny it?” Li Xin reported to Xu how Wuchen and Yuelang had tried to shift the blame on to each other on their way to the Investigating Bureau. Xu summoned Yuelang to court and wanted to put him to torture too. Yuelang said, “Please don’t put me to torture, sir. The silver and the two jewelries are now hidden in a box in the temple. You may ask my master about it.”

Seeing everything had been brought to light, Wuchen knew it would be of no use for him to continue to endure the torments. Thus he confessed, “For one thing, I hated Wang Xiucan very much because he grabbed Zhenjing from me and made her ditch me. For another, I hankered after his money. So I killed him that night at the inn and took his silver and two jewelries.” Then Wuchen made his mark on the confession. Soon the eighty taels of silver and the two jewelries were recovered from the temple and were then placed in the storehouse of Caozhou County. Wuchen was sentenced to death. Zhenjing was driven out of the nunnery and sold by the *yamen* to be someone’s wife after she had atoned for her crime. Zhang Shan, Li Biao and Yuelang, all proved to be innocent, were released and sent home. Thus the truth was fully revealed. Had it not been for Investigating Censor Xu’s great insight and wisdom, Zhang Shan and Li Biao would have been wronged.

Being out of luck, Zhang and Li have to harbor suspicions.

Never will they expect the killer would be a monk.

As Wang Hui went to Investigating Censor Xu with the petition to





当下王惠禀领赃物，许公不肯，道：“你家两个主人俱死了，赃物岂是与你领的？你快去原籍叫了主人的儿子来，方准领去。”王惠只得叩头而出。走到张善店里，大家叫一声：“悔气！亏得青天老爷追究得出来，不害了平人。”张善烧了平安纸，反请王惠、李彪吃得大醉。王惠次日与李彪说：“前有个兄弟到家接小主人，此时将到。我和你一同过西去迎他，就便访缉去。”李彪应允。王惠将主人棺盖钉好了，交与张善看守，自己收拾了包裹，同了李彪，望着家里进发。

行至北直隶开州长垣县地方，下店吃饭。只见饭店里走出一个人来，却是前日家去的王恩。王惠叫了一声，两下相见。王恩道：“两个小主人多在里面。”王惠进去叩见一臬一夔，哭说两位老家主多没有了，备述了这许多事故。四个人抱头哭做一团。哭了多时，李彪上前来劝。三个人却不认得。王惠说：“这是李牌头，州里差他来访贼的，劳得久了，未得影踪。今幸得接着小主人，做一路儿行事，也不枉了。目今两棺俱停在



take back the stolen money and the two jewelries, Xu said, “Both of your masters are dead. How am I going to allow you to take them? Go back to your masters’ native home and tell their sons to come here and take the stolen money and the jewelries.” Hearing this, Wang Hui kowtowed and took his leave. Back at Zhang Shan’s inn, Li Biao and Wang Hui cursed, “What rotten luck! Thanks to the just-minded judge Investigating Censor Xu, we’re not wronged!” Zhang Shan burned some paper to offer sacrifices to gods and ghosts and prayed for peace and safety. Then Zhang Shan entertained Wang Hui and Li Biao with wine to celebrate their safe return from the yamen and the dinner did not come to an end until all were drunk.

On the next day, Wang Hui said to Li Biao, “A fellow companion of mine called Wang En left for home several days ago to meet my master’s son. I guess they will be arriving at this region pretty soon. Let us go westward to meet them. When we meet them, we can let them join us in the search for Li Wang.” Li Biao consented. When Wang Hui had laid the lid on the coffin and nailed it, he left Wang Xiucui’s coffin in the care of Zhang Shan. Then Wang Hui got packed and set out for home with Li Biao.

Arriving at Changyuan County, Kaizhou Prefecture of North Zhili, Wang Hui and Li Biao stopped at a restaurant to have dinner. While they were having dinner at the restaurant, they suddenly found Wang En coming downstairs. Wang Hui called out for him and the two met each other. “Our two young masters are just upstairs,” Wang En told Wang Hui. Seeing Yi Gao and Yikui, Wang Hui wept and told them that their fathers were dead.

Upon hearing this, Yi Gao, Yikui, Wang Hui and Wang En all started to weep bitterly in each other’s arms. After they had wept for some time, Li Biao came over to stop them. But Wang En, Yigao and Yikui did not know who he was. Wang Hui said to the two young masters, “This is Li Biao, an official runner from the county *yamen*. The County Magistrate assigned him to help me hunt for Li Wang the thief. I thought you would be arriving at this place soon, so Li Biao and I have come here to meet you. At present, your fathers’ coffins are at Kaike County and the eighty



开河。小人原匡小主们将到，故与李牌头迎上来。曹州库中现有银八十两，首饰一副，要得主人们亲到才肯给领。只这一项盘缠，两个棺木回去勾了。只这五百两一匣未有下落，还要劳着李牌头。”王恩道：“我去时官人尚有偌多银子，怎只说得这些？”王惠道：“银子多是大官人亲手着落。前日我见只有得这些发出来，也曾疑心，问着大官人。大官人回说：‘我自藏得妙，到家便有。’今大官人已故，却无问处了。”王恩似信不信，来对一臬、一夔说：“许多银两，岂无下落？连王惠也有些信不得了。小主人记在心下，且看光景行去。道路之间，未可发露。”

五个人出了店门，连王惠、李彪多回转脚步，一起走路，重到开河来。正行之间，一阵大风起处，卷得灰沙飞起，眼前对面不见，竟不知东西南北了。五个人互相牵扭，信步行去，到了一个村房，方才歇了足。定一定喘息，看见风沙少静，天色明朗了，寻一个酒店，买碗酒吃再走。见一酒店中，止有妇人在内。王惠抬眼起来，见了一件物事，叫声“奇怪”，即扯着李彪密密说道：“你看店桌上这个匣儿，正是我们放银子的，如何却在这里？必有缘故了。”一臬、一夔与王恩多来问道：“说甚么？”王惠也一一说了。李彪道：“这等，我们只在这家买酒吃，就好相脚手，盘问他。”一齐走至店中，分两个座头



taels of silver and some jewelries are kept at the storehouse of Caozhou County. You'll have to go there in person to claim them. I think this money will be enough for us to take the two coffins back home. But the whereabouts of the box containing five hundred taels of silver is still unknown to us. So we'll have to bother Li Biao to help us track down the thief."

Wang En asked, "Our master had quite a large amount of silver with him when I left for home. Why you only mentioned these five hundred taels of silver?" Wang Hui answered, "Master Wang Jue told me he had hidden the large amount of silver in a secret place and we would be able to see it after we got home. Wang Jue is now dead and we've got no one to ask about where he had hidden it." Wang En was not quite convinced at these words. Turning to Yigao and Yikui, Wang En said, "How could such a large amount of silver disappear without a trace? Even what Wang Hui said is somewhat unreliable. Just keep this matter in mind, young masters, and see what we can do about it. But remember not to make it known to others on our way forward.

Coming out of the restaurant, Wang Hui and Li Biao had to move backward in the direction of Kaihe County together with the other three. When they were halfway, there suddenly came a gust of violent wind, sending all the dusts whirling. There were so many dusts around them that they couldn't even see one another though they stood face to face. Having no sense of direction at all, they held each other's hands and moved on aimlessly in the wind. They didn't stop for a rest until they reached a small village. Slowly it became less windy and soon the sky cleared up. At this point, a wine shop came into their sight. They decided to have some wine. There was only one woman in the wine shop.

At the entrance, Wang Hui caught sight of something in the wine shop. "How strange!" he murmured to himself. Pulling Li Biao's dress, Wang Hui said in a low voice, "Look at the box on the table. We put the five hundred taels of silver right in that box. How come it is in this wine shop? There must be some reason behind it." Turning to Yigao, Yikui and Wang En, Li Biao and Wang Hui said, "Let's get in and have a drink so that we can inquire about it and do as we see fit." So saying, they entered the



上坐了。妇人来问：“客人打多少酒？”李彪道：“不拘多少，随意烫来。”王惠道：“你家店中男人家那里去了？”妇人道：“我家老汉与儿子旺哥昨日去讨酒钱，今日将到。”王惠道：“你家姓甚么？”妇人道：“我家姓李。”王惠点头道：“惭愧！也有撞着的日子。”低低对众人道：“前日车户正叫做李旺。我们且坐在这里吃酒，等他来认。”五个人多磨枪备箭，只等拿贼。

到日西时，只见两个人踉踉跄跄走进店来。此时众人已不吃了酒，在店闲坐。那两个带了酒意，问道：“你每一起是甚么人？”王惠认那后生的这一个正是车户李旺，走起身来，一把扭住道：“你认得我么？”四人齐声和道：“我们多是拿贼的！”李旺抬头，认得是王惠，先自软了。李彪身边取出牌来，明开着车户李旺盗银之事，把出铁链来锁了颈项，道：“我每只管车户里打听，你却躲在这里卖酒！”连老儿也走不脱，也把绳来拴了。李彪终久是衙门人手段，走到灶下，取一根劈柴来，先把李旺打一个下马威。问道：“银子那里去了？”李旺是贼皮贼骨，一任打着，只不开口。王惠道：“匣子赃证现在，你不说便待怎么？”正施为间，那店里妇人一眼估着灶前地下，只管努嘴。——元来这妇人是李旺的继母，李旺凶狠，不把娘来看待，这妇人巴不得他败露的，不好说得，只做暗号。——一臬、一夔看见，叫王惠道：“且慢着打，可从这地下掘看。”王惠掉了李旺，奔来取了一把厨刀，依着指的去处挖开泥来，泥内一堆白物。王惠喊道：“在这里了！”王恩便取了



wine shop and took their seats at two separate tables. After Li Biao ordered some wine, Wang Hui asked the woman, "Where has your husband gone?" The woman replied, "My husband and my son Wang went to demand the payment of some wine yesterday. They'll be coming back today." "What's your husband's family name?" asked Wang Hui. "Li is his family name," the woman replied. Upon hearing these words, Wang Hui turned to the others and whispered, "The carriage driver we hired the other day is called Li Wang. Let's just stay here to drink wine and wait for Li Wang."

Late in the afternoon, two men staggered into the wine shop. At that moment, these five men had finished their wine and were sitting there to while away time. The two men, being slightly tipsy, asked, "Who are you guys?" Recognizing the younger one to be none other than the carriage driver Li Wang, Wang Hui rose and caught hold of him, shouting, "Do you know me?" The other four all shouted in chorus, "We're here to capture thief!" Looking up, Li Wang saw it was Wang Hui. At once Li Wang became weak all over. Showing Li Wang the arrest warrant that clearly listed the fact of his stealing the silver, Li Biao took out the iron chains and tied Li Wang up. We just searched for you among the carriage drivers, but you're hiding in this place and selling wine!. Even Li Wang's father was trussed up too.

"Where did you hide the silver?" Li Biao asked. Every inch a thief, Li Wang simply remained silent no matter how hard Li Biao beat him. Wang Hui shouted at Li Wang, "The money-box is right here. Are you going to deny it?" At this moment, the woman kept on pouting her lips toward the kitchen range. — This woman was actually Li Wang's stepmother. Li Wang was fierce and ruthless towards her and never treated her nicely. So this woman was only too anxious to see Li Wang captured. Finding it difficult to speak up her mind, she just pouted her lips as a signal.

Having noticed the woman's signal, Yigao and Yikui said to Wang Hui, "Stop beating him for the time being. Come on and dig at his place." Taking up a kitchen knife, Wang Hui started to dig by the kitchen range. Surprisingly, he unearthed a large mount of silver from the ground. "We got it," shouted Wang Hui. Wang En came in with a box and then put the silver back into the box., keeping in mind the total pieces of the silver.



匣子，走进来，将银只记件数，放在匣中。一皋、一夔将纸笔来，写个封皮封记了，对李彪道：“有劳牌头这许多时，今日幸得成功，人赃俱获。我们一面解到州里发落去。”李彪又去叫了本处地方几个人，一路防送，一直到州里来。

州官将银当堂验过，收贮库中，候解院过，同前银一并给领。李彪销牌记功，就差他做押解，将一起人解到察院来。许公升堂带进，禀说是王秀才的子侄一皋、一夔，路上适遇盗银贼人，同公差擒获，一同解到事情。遂将李旺打了三十，发州问罪，同僧人无塵一并结案。李旺父亲年老免科。一皋、一夔当堂同递领状，求批州中同前入库赃物一并给发。许公准了。抬起眼来，看见一皋、一夔多少年俊雅，问他作何生理。禀说多在学中。许公喜欢，分付道：“你父亲不安本分，客死他乡，几乎不得明白。亏我梦中显报，得了罪人。今你每路上，无心又获原贼，似有神助。你二子必然有福。今将了银子回去，各安心读书向上，不可效前人所为了。”二人叩谢流泪，就禀说道：“生员每还有一言：父亲未死之时，寄来家书，银数甚多。今被贼两番所盗同贮州库者，不过六百金。据家人王惠所言，



Finding a strip of paper and a writing brush, Yigao and Yikui did the sealing of the silver box. Turning to Li Biao, Yigao and Yikui said to Li Biao, “We deeply appreciate what you have done for us on this matter. Fortunately we’ve recovered our lost silver and captured the thief. Let’s take the silver and the thief to the *yamen* of the county.” So saying, Li Biao gathered several runners from the locality and asked them to help him send Li Wang and his father under escort to the county *yamen*.

At the court, the County Magistrate examined the silver and then put it in the storehouse for the time being and waited to be handed over to the Investigating Bureau and given to its true owners along with the other amount of silver. Li Biao reported back and was awarded for his meritorious service. The County Magistrate again assigned Li Biao to escort Li Wang to the Investigating Bureau. Investigating Censor Xu heard the case and pronounced that Li Wang be punished with thirty floggings and be sent back to the county court to receive due judgement along with the monk Wuchen. Li Wang’s father was exempted from punishment because of his old age Yigao and Yikui submitted an application to Xu, requesting the return of the stolen money and goods. Xu granted their request.

Seeing that Yigao and Yikui were young and handsome, Xu asked them how they were doing. Yigao and Yikui reported back that they were still attending school. Glad to hear they were at school, Xu said, “Your fathers lost their lives in a strange land because of their indiscreet conducts. Thanks to my dream, we’ve brought the killer to justice. Moreover, you recovered the lost money and captured the thief inadvertently on your way here. It seems as if the deities have rendered us help. You two will surely have happy lot in the future. Now you can take the money and leave for home. But remember to study hard and make progress. Never follow the examples of your fathers.”

With tears in their eyes, Yigao and Yikui kowtowed to express their gratitude toward Xu. Then Yikui again reported, “I have something more to say. My father wrote a letter home when he was still alive, telling us he had a large amount of silver. But the amount of silver the two thieves had stolen, now being kept in the county storehouse, is no more than six





此外止有二棺寄顿饭店，并无所有。必有隐弊。乞望发下州中，推勘前银下落，实为恩便。”许公道：“当初你父亲随行是那个？”二子道：“只有这个王惠。”许公便叫王惠，问道：“你小主说你家主死时银两甚多，今在那里了？”王惠道：“前日着落银两，多是大主人王爵亲手搬弄，后来只剩得这些上车。小人当时疑心，就问缘故。主人说：‘我有妙法藏了，但到家中，自然有银。’今可惜主人被杀，就没处问了。小人其实不晓得。”许公道：“你莫不有甚欺心藏匿之弊么？”王惠道：“小人孤身在此，途路上那里是藏匿得的所在？况且下在张善店中时，主人还在，止有得此行李与棺木，是店家及推车人、公差李彪众目所见的，小人那里存得私？”许公道：“前日王禄下棺时，你在面前么？”王惠道：“大主人道是日辰有犯，不许看见。”许公笑一笑道：“这不干你事，银子自在一处。”取一张纸来，不知写上些甚么，叫门子封好了，上面用颗印印着，付与二子道：“银子在这里头，但到家时开看，即有取银之处了。不可在此担搁，又生出事端来。”

二子不敢再说，领了出来。回到张善店中，看见两个灵柩，一齐哭拜了一番。哭罢，取了院批的领状，到州中库里领这两



hundred taels. Wang Hui told me we had nothing else except the two coffins which are at present kept at Zhang Shan's inn. The rest of the silver must have been hidden in some place. We will appreciate it very much if you could help us find the silver." Xu asked, "Who was with your father at that time?" "Wang Hui," replied Yikui. Turning to Wang Hui, Xu asked, "Your young master said his father Wang Lu left quite a large amount of silver behind him when he died. Where is it now?"

Wang Hui answered, "Master Wang Jue took over the silver and handled it all by himself. So far as I know we only carried these six hundred taels of silver with us on the carriage. I was also very much puzzled at the time and I asked Wang Jue about the rest of the silver. Wang Jue said, 'I've hidden it in a secret good place and you will see it when we get home.' Too bad Wang Jue is now dead and there is no one we can turn to to ask about it. To be honest, I really don't know where the rest of the silver is." Xu interrogated, "You must have hidden it somewhere, am I right?" Wang Hui answered, "I had no friends or relatives with me. How could I find any place on the road to hide it? Moreover, when we stopped at Zhang Shan's inn, our master was still alive and the luggage and the coffin were what we had with us at the moment. The innkeeper, the carriage driver and the *yamen* runner Li Biao were all witnesses. Where could I be able to hide it?"

Xu asked, "Were you present when Wang Lu was laid in the coffin?" Wang Hui answered, "At that time, Master Wang Jue told me to leave him alone, saying that it was unsuitable for me to see Wang Lu being encoffined." Upon hearing these words, Xu said with a smile, "I see. You've got nothing to do with this matter. Now I know where the rest of the silver is." So saying, Xu took out a sheet of paper and wrote something on it. Then he had the sheet of paper sealed up and handed it to Yigao and Yikui, saying, "You'll know where the rest of the silver is hidden after you read this note. But don't open it until you get home. Leave here without delay before further trouble arises"

Taking the note with them, Yigao and Yikui left the Investigating Bureau. Soon they arrived at Zhang Shan's inn and started to weep at the sight of the two coffins. After they stopped weeping, they went to the



项银子。州官原是同乡，周全其事，衙门人不敢勒措，一些不少如数领了。到店中，将二十两谢了张善，一向停柩，且累他吃了官司。就央他写顾诚实车户，车运两柩回家。明日置办一祭，奠了两柩。祭物多与了店家与车脚夫，随即起柩而行。

不则一日，到了家中，举家号咷，出来接着。

雄纠纠两人次第去，四方方两柩一齐来。

一般丧命多因色，万里亡躯只为财。

此时王爵、王禄的父母俱在堂，连祖公公岁贡知县也还康健，闻得两个小官人各接着父亲棺柩回来，大家哭得不耐烦。慢慢说着彼中事体，致死根由，及许公判断许多缘故，合家多感戴许公问得明白。不然，几乎一命也没人偿了。其父问起馀银，一皋、一夔道：“因是馀银不见，禀告许公，许公发得有单。今既到家，可拆开来看了。”遂将前日所领印信小封，一齐拆开看时，上面写道：

银数既多，非仆人可匿。尔父云藏之甚秘，必在棺中。若



storehouse of the county to take the lost silver. As the County Magistrate was their fellow townsman and had helped them arrange everything, they got the silver in full from the storehouse keepers. After returning to the inn, they gave Zhang Shan twenty taels of silver as a token of thanks for his taking care of the coffins and at the same time as a payment for getting him involved in a lawsuit for no reason at all. Then Yigao and Yikui asked him to help them hire a kind-hearted and honest carriage driver so that they could take the two coffins back home. On the following day Yigao and Yikui offered sacrifices to the two dead. The sacrificial offerings were given to the innkeeper and the carriage driver. When everything was ready, they set off homeward on the next day.

After several days of travel, Yigao and Yikui returned home. The whole family, including Wang Jue and Wang Lu's parents and grandfather, cried with abandon as they came out to meet them and the deceased Wang Jue and Wang Lu.

Two brothers, valiant and ambitious, left home in succession.

Two coffins, square and solid, returned home in unison.

Some people lose their lives for sex.

Some others lose their lives for money.

Slowly the whole family learned how Wang Lu and Wang Jue had lost their lives. As they learned about Investigating Censor Xu's outstanding performance in deciding the case, the whole family felt deeply indebted to his great kindness. Wang Jue and Wang Lu's parents then inquired about the silver Wang Lu had left behind. Yigao and Yikui answered, "In the beginning we found the rest of the silver missing, so we reported it to Investigating Censor Xu. Xu wrote us a note. Now that we're back home, we can open it and see what's written on the paper." So saying, they opened the seal. It read thus:

As it was a considerably large amount of silver, it would be completely impossible for the family servant to cover it up in any place. Judging from Wang Jue's words that he had hidden the rest of the silver in a secret good place, the silver must have been hidden in the coffin. Considering it is a violation of the law to open the coffin, hereby I write this note as an authorization.

Having read the note, Wang Hui said, "Wang En and I were not allowed



虑开棺碍法，执此为照。看罢，王惠道：“当时不许我每看二官人下棺，后来盖好了，就不见了许多银子。想许爷之言，必然明见。”其父道：“既给了执照，况有我为父的在，开棺不妨。”即叫王惠取器械来，轻轻将王禄灵柩撬开，只见身尸之傍，周围多是白物。王惠叫道：“好个许爷！若是别个昏官，连王惠也造化低了。”一梟、一夔大家动手，尽数取了出来，眼同一兑，足足有三千五百两。内有一千，另是一包，上写道：“还父母原银。”馀包多写“一梟、一夔均分”。合家看见了这个光景，思量他们在外死的苦恼，一齐恸哭不禁。仍把棺木盖好了，银子依言分讫。那个老知县祖公公，见说着察院给了执照、开棺见银之事，讨枝香来点了，望空叩头道：“亏得许公神明，仇既得报，银子得归。愿他福祿无疆，子孙受享。”举家顶戴不尽。

可见世间刑狱之事，许多隐昧之情，一些造次不得的。有诗为证：

世间经目未为真，疑似繇来易枉人。

寄语刑官须仔细，狱中尽有负冤魂。



to be present when our master was encoffined. When the lid was laid on the coffin, most of the silver was gone. I guess what Lord Xu wrote on this paper must be correct. Wang Jue and Wang Lu's father said, "We've got authorization from Investigating Censor Xu to open the coffin. Moreover, I'm the father of the deceased. Just open the coffin." So saying, he asked Wang Hui to fetch some tools and open Wang Lu's coffin carefully. When the coffin was opened, they found a large amount of silver wrapped in bundles around Wang Lu's body. Wang Hui exclaimed, "How great Lord Xu is! Had it been another decrepit and muddle-headed official, I would have been led astray!" Taking the silver out of the coffin, they weighed it on the scales. This silver weighed more than three thousand five hundred taels. Among these three thousand taels five hundred of silver, one thousand taels were wrapped in a big bundle on which were written these words, "This silver is for my parents. I borrowed it from my parents when I first started my business." On the other bundles were written the words, "For Yigao and Yikui." Seeing all these, the whole family again started to weep sadly. Then they laid the lid on the coffin. The silver for Yigao and Yikui was equally divided.

When the grandfather, the old county magistrate, learned about the whole things, he brought over a joss stick and lit it up. Raising his head toward the sky, he kowtowed and said, "Thanks to Investigating Censor Xu's great insight and wisdom, the killer has been brought to justice and our silver has been recovered and returned to us. May Lord Xu enjoy happiness and high rank! May his offspring have success in their official career and happiness in their life!" Indeed, the whole family felt more grateful to Investigating Censor Xu than words could express.

It is thus clear that there are always many unjust charges against innocent people. As it is common that what one sees with his own eyes may not necessarily turn out to be true, suspicions and doubts often lead to miscarriage of justice. All court officials and judges have to be careful when trying cases, for any reckless moves concerning this matter may easily wrong the innocent people, and sometimes even cause them to lose their lives. Therefore, lawsuits must in no way be trifled with.

## 卷 二 十 二

痴公子狠使噪脾钱 贤丈人巧赚回头婿

诗云：

最是富豪子弟，不知稼穡艰难。

悖入必然悖出，天道一理循环。

话说宋时汴京有一个人，姓郭，名信。父亲是内诸司官，家事殷富，止生得他一个，甚是娇养溺爱。从小不教他出外边来的，只在家中读些点名的书。读书之外，毫厘世务也不要他经涉。到了十七八岁，未免要务了声名，投拜名师。其时有个蔡元中先生，是临安人，在京师开馆。郭信的父亲出了礼物，叫郭信从他求学。那先生开馆去处，是个僧房，颇极齐整。郭家就赁了他旁舍三间，亦甚幽雅。郭信住了，心里不像意，道是不见华丽。看了舍后一块空地，另去兴造起来。总是他也不



## *Tale 22*

### **A Senseless Young Master Squanders His Fortune in Liberal Donations The Virtuous Father-in-law Makes Him Turn over a New Leaf with a Clever Scheme**

A poem reads thus:

As the children of the rich never know how hard farming is,  
They never realize the difficulties of life.  
As ill-gotten wealth never thrives,  
The Way of Heaven never changes its course.

During the Song Dynasty, there once lived a man named Guo Xin in Bianliang (present-day Kaifeng city in Henan Province). His father, a senior official in charge of the internal affairs of the imperial court, was extremely wealthy. As the only son of the family, Guo Xin was very much pampered. During his childhood, he was kept indoors, reading some window-dressing books. Apart from some reading, he was freed from all of the worldly affairs. When reaching the age of seventeen or eighteen, he would naturally begin to think of pursuing fame and honor under the guidance of renowned tutors. At that time a scholar from Lin'an named Cai Yuanzhong was running a school in Bianliang. Guo Xin's father presented Cai Yuanzhong some gifts as tuition before he sent his son to this school. Located in a temple, the school was clean and tidy. Guo Xin's father rented three rooms for him in the temple. These three rooms were tastefully laid out.

However, Guo Xin was not satisfactory with them, saying that they were not sumptuously furnished. Later when he found a piece of empty land behind these three rooms, he had a new house built on it. Having no knowledge of how much money he had and unaware of the cost of the building materials, Guo Xin entrusted his servants and some artisans with





知数目，不识物料，凭着家人与匠作扶同破费，不知用了多少银两，他也不管。只见造成了几间，妆饰起来，弄得花簇簇的，方才欢喜住下了。终日叫书童打扫，门窗梁柱之类略有点染不洁，便要匠人连夜换得过，心里方掉得下。身上衣服穿着必要新的，穿上了身，左顾右盼，嫌长嫌短，甚处不熨贴，一些不当心里，便别买段匹，另要做过。鞋袜之类，多是上好绫罗，一有微污，便丢下另换。至于洗过的衣服，决不肯再着的。

彼时有赴京听调的一个官人，姓黄，表字德琬。他的寓所，恰与郭家为邻。见他行径如此，心里不然。后来往来得熟了，时常好言劝他道：“君家后生年纪，未知世间苦辣。钱财入手甚难，君家虽然富厚，不宜如此枉费。日复一日，须有尽时。日后后手不上了，悔之无及矣。”郭信听罢，暗暗笑他道：“多是寒酸说话！钱财那有用得尽的时节？吾家田产不计其数，岂有后手不上之理？只是家里没有钱钞，眼孔子小，故说出这等议论，全不晓得我们富家行径的。”把好言语如风过耳，一毫不理，只依着自己性子行去不改。黄公见说不听，晓得是纵惯了的，道：“看他后来怎生结果！”得了官，自别过出京去了，以后绝不相闻。

过了五年，有事干，又到京中来。问问旧邻，已不见了郭



the building of the house, totally regardless of how much silver they had spent. He didn't move into the new house until it was gorgeously furnished. He loved his new house very much and asked his servant boy to sweep the rooms all day long.

Once he noticed the slightest stain on the doors, windows, roof beams or pillars, he would instantly let the artisans change them that very night. Otherwise he would not rest at ease. In addition, everything he wore must be new. After he put on his clothing, he would look all around it with all kinds of complaints like this was too long and that was too short. If he was not satisfied with it, he would order his servants to buy a piece of new cloth and make a new one. His shoes and socks were all made of best silks and satins. Once they were stained, he would throw them away and change into new ones. Also, he would never wear clothes that had been washed.

Meanwhile, an official named Huang Dewan came to the capital city to wait for a transfer of post. The dwelling place of Huang happened to be the Guo's next door neighbor. As he saw Guo Xin's conduct, Huang shrugged disapprovingly. Later as they got to know each other well, Huang often admonished him with well-intentioned words, "You're young and inexperienced. You have no knowledge of the hardship in life. Money does not come easy. Though your family is rich, you should not squander wantonly like this. It will run out with the passage of time. It will be too late to repent when you become short of money later." Guo Xin ridiculed him in his mind, "Only shabby and miserable people talk like that! How could money be used up? Our family's real estates are too many to count. How will I be short of money? They say so because they're poor and have no idea how we rich people live." Turning a deaf ear to these well-intentioned words, Guo Xin continued his extravagant life as before. Seeing that Guo Xin refused to follow his instruction, Huang understood he had been spoiled. "Wait and see what will become of him!" he said to himself. Upon receiving his assignment, Huang left the capital city and had no news of Guo Xin for quite a long time.

Five years later, Huang came to the capital city again on business. He inquired about his old neighbor but was told that the Guo family had left.



家踪迹。偌大一个京师，也没处查访了。一日偶去拜访一个亲眷，叫做陈晟。主人未出来，先叫门馆先生出来陪着。只见一个人葳葳蕤蕤踱将出来，认一认，却是郭信。戴着一顶破头巾，穿着一身蓝缕衣服，手臂颤抖抖的，叙了一个礼，整椅而坐。黄公看他脸上饥寒之色，殆不可言，恻然问道：“足下何故在此，又如此形状？”郭信叹口气道：“谁晓得这样事！钱财要没有起来，不消用得完，便是这样没有了。”黄公道：“怎么说？”郭信道：“自别尊颜之后，家父不幸弃世。有个继娶的晚母，在丧中罄卷所有，转回娘家。第二日去问，连这家多搬得走了，不知去向。看看家人多四散逃去，剩得孑然一身，一无所有了。还亏得识得几个字，胡乱在这主家，教他小学生，度日而已。”黄公道：“家财没有了，许多田业须在，这是偷不去的。”郭信道：“平时不曾晓得田产之数，也不认得田产在那一块所在，一经父丧，簿籍多不见了，不知还有一亩田在那里。”黄公道：“当初我曾把好言相劝，还记得否？”郭信道：“当初接着东西便用，那管他来路是怎么样？只道到底如此。见说道要惜费，正不知惜他做甚么。岂知今日一毫也没来处了！”黄公道：“今日这边所得束修之仪多少？”郭信道：“能有多少？每月千钱，不勾充身。图得个朝夕糊口，不去寻柴米就好了。”黄公道：“当时一日之用，也就有一年馆资了。富家儿女，到此地位，可怜！”



The capital city was so large that Huang gave up the idea of tracing them. One day, he went to call on a relative named Chen Shen. Before Chen Shen was out to meet him, the family teacher was sent over first to greet Huang and keep him company. A fatigued man paced over to Huang. This man was none other than Guo Xin. He was wearing a worn-out turban on the head and a ragged dress. He greeted Huang and then sat down on a chair, his hands trembling.

At the sight of Guo Xin's pale complexion due to hunger and cold, Huang asked compassionately, "How come you're here? Why are you in such a miserable shape?" Guo Xin said with a sigh, "Heaven knows why! When money is gone, it's gone forever!" Huang asked, "What happened to you?" Guo Xin answered, "Soon after your departure, my father passed away. My stepmother took all of my father's properties to her parents' home while we were still observing mourning for him. The next day we went to her home to inquire about the matter, but it turned out that her family had moved away and to where nobody knew. All of my family members and servants took to their heels, leaving me alone with nothing to my name in the world. Fortunately I had read some books so that I can eke out a living by working as a family teacher here."

Huang said, "It's possible you could spend all of your money, but you still have lot of fields. No one can steal them." Guo Xin said, "I had no idea how many fields my family used to possess and where they were. Moreover, after my father's death, all the registration books were gone. So I have no idea if I still have a piece of land to my name." Huang asked, "I did admonish you with well-intentioned words. Do you still remember it?" Guo Xin said, "At that time, I had money and just I spent it freely, giving no thought to how it was made. Now I've come to this miserable condition, without a single coin!" Huang asked, "How much do you get from your present job as a teacher?" Guo Xin answered, "Not very much, only a thousand strings. Not enough to feed myself. I'm only content with that I'm assured of three meals every day and do not have to worry about my stomach."

Huang said, "Your expenses one day at that time wouldn't be less than your yearly income at present. Children of rich and powerful families



可怜！”身边恰带有数百钱，尽数将来送与他，以少见故人之意。少顷，主人出来，黄公又与他说了郭信出身富贵光景，教好看待他。郭信不胜感谢，捧了几百个钱，就像获了珍宝一般，紧紧收藏。只去守那冷板凳了。

看官，你道当初他富贵时节，几百文钱，只与他家赏人也不爽利；而今才晓得是值钱的，却又迟了。只因幼年时不知稼穡艰难，以致如此。到此地位，晓得值钱了，也还是有受用的。所以说“败子回头好作家”也。

小子且说一回败子回头的正话。

无端浪子昧持筹，偌大家缘一旦休。

不是丈人生巧计，夫妻怎得再同俦？

话说浙江温州府有一个公子，姓姚。父亲是兵部尚书，丈人上官翁也是显宦。家世富饶，积累钜万，周匝百里之内，田圃池塘，山林川藪，尽是姚氏之业。公子父母俱亡，并无兄弟，独主家政。妻上官氏生来软默，不管外事。公子凡事只凭着自己而行，自恃富足有馀，豪奢成习。好往来这些淫朋狎友，把言语奉承他，哄诱他，说是“自古豪杰英雄，必然不事生产，手段慷慨；不以财物为心，居食为志，方是侠烈之士”。公子



have come to such a plight. What a shame!” Huang had several hundred strings of coins with him at the moment. He gave all the money he had to Guo Xin to express his sympathy for him. Soon the host came out to meet Huang. Huang told the host about Guo Xin’s wealthy origin and asked him to treat Guo Xin nicely. Guo Xin was very much obliged to Huang. He kept the several hundred strings of coin closely to his bosom, as if he had obtained a rare treasure, and withdrew to the cold stool by the wall.

Readers, several hundred strings were not enough for him to tip his servants when he had been rich. When he realized several hundred strings were also money, his wealth had already gone. Because of his ignorance of the difficulties in life while he was a child, he had come to such a deplorable state. However, once he knew he was wrong and was determined to make a new start, it would never be too late. So we have the old saying “A prodigal who returns is more precious than gold.”

\* \* \*

Here I’d like to tell you a story of a prodigal who returns.

Knowing nothing about household management,

A good-for-nothing wastrel reduces tremendous wealth to nil.

How could the husband and wife have reunited

Had it not been for Father-in-law’s clever scheme and keen insight?

Once there lived a young man with the family name of Yao in the Wenzhou Prefecture of Zhejiang. His father used to be the Minister of the Ministry of War, and his father-in-law, Shangguan, also held a high government position. The Yao family was very rich, with an enormous amount of wealth and a great deal of property that covered one hundred li across and encompassed many cultivated fields, orchards, gardens, ponds, hills, woods, streams and lakes. Since his parents had died and he had no brothers, the young master was in charge of the household affairs. His wife was submissive, unmindful of anything beyond her threshold. The young master followed his inclinations and developed a wasteful way of life, taking it for granted that he had an inexhaustible supply of wealth. A few rogues with whom he kept company, flattered and abetted him by saying, “Heroes either in the past or at present do no manual labor, but spend lavishly. Their reputations for chivalry reside in their scorn of

少年心性，道此等是好言语，切切于心。见别人家算计利息，较量出入，孳孳作家的，便道齷齪小人，不足指数的。又懒看诗书，不习举业，见了文墨之士便头红面热手足无措，厌憎不耐烦，远远走开。只有一班捷给滑稽之人，利口便舌，胁肩谄笑，一日也少不得。又有一班英勇骁悍之辈，揎拳舞袖，说强夸胜，自称好汉，相见了便觉分外兴高，说话处脾胃多燥，行事时举步生风。是这两种人，才与他说得话着。有了这两种人，便又去呼朋引类，你荐举我，我荐举你，市井无赖少年，多来倚草附木，献技呈能，掇臀捧屁。公子要人称扬大量，不论好歹，一概收纳。一出一入，何止百来个人扶从他？那百来个人多吃着公子，还要各人安家分例，按月衣粮。公子皆千欢万喜，给派不吝，见他们拿得家去，心里方觉爽利。

公子性好射猎，喜的是骏马良弓。有门客说道何处有名马一匹，价值千金，日走数百里，公子即便如数发银，只要买得



materialism and denial of a frugal existence.”

Young and vain, this young master took their words as good advice and kept them in mind. If he saw a man who cared about his business transactions in terms of profit and kept his living on a budget, he would frown and take him to be a contemptible person beneath his notice. He hated learning and had no interest in pursuing any career.

Therefore when he met with scholars, he would feel ill at ease. Painfully uncomfortable, he would get away from them at once. However, he could not tear himself away, even for one day, from a bunch of loafers, who were constantly joking, jabbering, making sharp-tongued remarks seeking favors. Another group of people who delighted him were valiant, brawny fellows, interested only in flexing their muscles, practicing fist-fighting, admiring confrontations of might, and bragging of themselves as heroes. Associating with them made the young master talk eloquently and walk briskly. He felt comfortable only with these two groups of people. They introduced him to other acquaintances of their group. So idlers and young scoundrels of the town all gathered around him, totaling up to a hundred. They did their best to convince him of their dedication to his service by showing off and flattering him in an attempt to depend upon him for a living.

In order to win the reputation of generosity, the young master received them all, asking them no questions about their individual backgrounds. Wherever he went, more than one hundred of such hangers-on kept company with him. These men were not only on the young master's payroll, but they took the young master's supply of staples back to their homes according to the size of their own families —staples such as monthly rations of clothing and grain. Seeing them carrying these things away from his house, the young master was complaisant.

The young master loved horse-riding and hunting. So a fine steed and strong bow were two prizes he sought. One day one of his men told him about a fine steed on which had been placed a price of one thousand taels of silver, and which could run several hundred *li* each day. Upon hearing it, the young master gave the man that amount of money and let him purchase it, telling him not to haggle over the price. When the horse was





来，不争价钱多少。及至买来，但只毛片好看，略略身材高耸些，便道值的了。有说贵了的，倒反不快，必要争说买便宜方喜。人晓得性子，看见买了物事，只是赞美上前了。遇说有良弓的，也是如此。门下的人，又要利落，又要逢迎，买下好马一二十匹，好弓三四十张。公子拣一匹最好的，时常乘坐，其余的随意听骑。每与门下众客相约，各骑马持弓，分了路数，纵放辔头，约在某处相会，先到者有赏，后到者有罚。赏的多出公子己财，罚不过罚酒而已。只有公子先到，众皆罚酒，又将大觥上公子称庆。有时分为几队，各去打围。须臾合为一处，看擒兽多寡，以分赏罚。赏罚之法，一如走马之例，无非只是借名取乐。似此一番，所费酒食赏劳之类，已自不少了。还有时联镳放马，踏伤了人家田禾，惊失了人家六畜等事。公子是人心天理，又是慷慨好胜的人，门下客人又肯帮衬，道：“公子们出外，宁可使小百姓巴不得来，不可使他怨怅我每来。今若有伤损了他家，便是我每不是，后来他望见就怕了。必须加



brought in front of him, so long as the horse had a nicer hide and a bit taller body than usual, he took it as a good deal. However, when someone commented that it was not worth the money he had paid, the young master was very much irritated. He was not satisfied until he forced everyone to agree it was a good deal. Having learned about his personality, the people around him would throng in front of him praising him over any purchase he made. This was also true about his purchases of strong bows. Thus his friends developed a sense of understanding and flattering. And in this way they helped him purchase about twenty fine steeds and forty strong bows.

The young master picked out the best horse for himself, letting the rest be shared among his friends. He often scheduled horse-riding tours and raced with his men in different directions, holding their bows. He would designate a place as their destination, rewarding those whoever got there first and penalizing those whoever came in last.

The rewards were often from the young master's money and the penalty was nothing more than a drink of wine as a fine. If the young master beat them all, every one was fined with a drink, which was followed by a presentation of a large vessel of wine to the young master himself as congratulations. Sometimes, the group broke into a few hunting platoons trekking different trails and in no time at all joined at one junction. The purpose was to see who could obtain the largest catch, and the rewards and fines were allotted exactly the same way as they were in the horse-riding race. These games were conducted purely for fun. One such game would cost the young master a pretty large sum in covering the food, drink and prizes. Sometimes the participants also held galloping races, with several abreast. As they did so, they trotted heedlessly into fields, crushing a farmer's crops and frightening away the cattle, or causing other similar damages.

As the young master was kind-hearted and generous, his men would say to him, "It's better for a touring young master to make them eager to see you than to generate grudges among local subjects. If we damage their crops, it's our fault, and they would fear seeing us come again. Only when we pay them double their losses, they will feel they got the better of

倍赔他，他每道有些便宜，方才赞叹公子，巴不得公子出来行走了。”公子大加点头道：“说得极有见识。”因而估值损伤之数，分付：“宁可估好看些，从重赔还，不要亏了他们。”门客私下与百姓们说通了，得来平分，有一分，说了七八分。说去，公子随即赔偿，再不论量。这又是射猎中分外之费，时时有的。

公子身边最讲得话、像心称意的，有两个门客，一个是箫管朋友贾清夫，一个是拳棒教师赵能武。一文一武，出入不离左右。虽然献谄效勤、哄诱撺掇的人不计其数，大小事多要串通得这两个方才弄得成。这两个一鼓一板，只要公子出脱得些，大家有味。

一日，公子出猎，草丛中惊起一个兔来。兔儿腾地飞跑，公子放马赶去，连射两箭，射不着。恰好后骑随至，赵能武一箭射个正着，兔儿倒了，公子拍手大笑。因贪赶兔儿，路来得远了，肚中有些饥饿起来。四围一看，山明水秀，光景甚好，可惜是个荒野去处，并无酒店饭店。贾清夫与一群少年随后多到，大家多说道：“好一个所在，只该聚饮一回。”公子见说，兴高得不耐烦，问问后头跟随的，身边银子也有，铜钱也有，



you and thus will welcome your frequent return.” The young master would nod in complete agreement, and say, “This is an insightful idea indeed!” He would then ask them to estimate the damage, saying, “Better calculate the cost amply and make a handsome payment. Don’t hurt them.” His men would make secret agreement with the local people that they would share the compensation. So the calculation of the cost usually came to seven or eight times the actual loss. The young master would immediately pay for it, never checking the amount his men had calculated. During his hunting trips this became a common expenditure.

The young master had two companions who were particularly intimate with him and in his favor. One of them was a man of letters called Jia Qingfu and the other an instructor in martial arts called Zhao Nengwu. Wherever the young master went, the two men, one brainy and the other brawny, followed him like a shadow. Any suggestion made to the young master, without the cooperation of these two men, would come to no avail, even though numerous words were showered on the young master daily in flattering, prodding and coaxing. With the two men working hand in glove, the young master usually spent lavishly and thus all his followers could get benefit out of his generosity.

One day when the young master was hunting, a startled hare shot out in a sprint. He whipped his horse in chase and shot two arrows, but he missed it. Right at this point, his men caught up with him and Zhao Nengwu knocked down the hare with one shot. The young master clapped his hands as he laughed happily. They had come a long way from home in hunting the hare before they realized that hunger was preying on them. Looking around, they found they were in a wild place which, with beautiful scenery of hills and streams though, lacked any tavern or restaurant. Jia Qingfu and the others who were also participating in the hunt soon arrived. They all admired the wonderful surroundings, saying, “What a sight! How nice it should be if we can have a drink here!”

The young master felt encouraged. Turning around, he asked his men to check the money they had brought with them. They had enough silver and copper coins, but the problem was that they had no place to buy food and drink. Zhao Nengwu remarked, “Why do you say we don’t have



只没设法酒肴处。赵能武道：“眼面前就有东西，怎苦没肴？”众人道：“有甚么东西？”赵能武道：“只方才射倒的兔儿，寻些火煨起，也勾公子下酒。”贾清夫道：“若要酒时，做一匹快马不着，跑他五七里路，遇个村坊去处，好歹寻得些来。只能勾多带得，可以畅饮。”公子道：“此时便些少也好。”

正在商量处，只见路旁有一簇人，老少不等，手里各拿着物件，走近前来迎喏道：“某等是村野小人，不曾识认财主贵人之面。今日难得遇公子贵步至此，谨备瓜果鸡黍、村酒野蔬数品，聊献从者一饭。”公子听说是酒肴，喜动颜色，回顾一班随从的道：“天下有这样凑巧的事，知趣的人！”贾清夫等一齐拍手道：“此皆公子吉人天相，酒食之来，如有神助。”各下了马，打点席地而坐。野老们道：“既然公子不嫌饮食粗粝，何不竟到舍下坐饮？椅桌俱便。乃在此草地之上吃酒，不像模样。”众人一齐道：“妙！妙！知趣得紧。”

野老们恭身在前引路，众人扶从了公子，一拥到草屋中来。那屋中虽然窄狭，也倒洁净。摆出椅桌来，拣一只齐整些的古老椅子公子坐了，其余也有坐椅的，也有坐凳的，也有扯张稻床来做杌子的，团团而坐。吃出兴头来，这家老小们供应



things to eat? We have something just in front of us.” The rest asked, “What is it?” Zhao Nengwu answered, “The hare we just shot. Let’s set up a fire and roast it. Then our master should have enough food to go with his drink.” Jia Qingfu cut in with the remark, “For drink, we can send someone with a fine horse to get wine. A village is just five to seven li away from here. But I’m afraid such a trip won’t bring back enough wine to satisfy our craving for spirits.” The young master said, “Well, it will be good to obtain whatever you can get.”

While they were talking about how to get food and wine, they saw a group of people, old and young, approaching them with some things in their hands. These people greeted the young master and said, “We’re country folks, sir. We have never met a distinguished master before. It’s a rare occasion today that you, young master, have honored us with your presence here. We have scraped together some modest food and drink, things such as fruit, chickens, millet, home-made wine and edible wild herbs. We’re now presenting them to your followers for picnic.”

Hearing about food and drink, the young master became excited with joy. He turned around and said to his men, “I just can’t believe this coincidence that some people have such inspiration in the world!” Jia Qingfu and the rest remarked, with applause, “It’s simply due to the fact that you, master, are a man of good fortune so that you can have the food and drink brought to you with divine assistance.” They dismounted from their horses and sat down on the ground. Then the villagers said, “Since your young master doesn’t frown upon our coarse supply, why not come to our home and sit down to eat and drink. We’ve got chairs and tables there. It doesn’t look good for you to dine out here in this wilderness.” The group responded, “Terrific! It couldn’t be better.”

With the villagers respectfully leading the way, the companions helped the young master walk to a thatched cottage, which, though lacking in space, was neat and clean. Then tables and chairs were set. One steady, old chair was especially chosen as the seat for the young master. The rest of his companions took seats too, some on chairs, some on stools and still others on a rice-threshing rack pulled out from somewhere. Sitting in a circle, they ate and reveled, as the host family was kept busy supplying



不迭。贾清夫又打着擗鼓儿道：“多拿些酒出来，我们要吃得快活，公子是不亏人的。”这家子将酝下的杜茅柴不住的烫来，吃得东倒西歪，撑肠拄腹。又道是“饥者易为食，渴者易为饮”，大凡人在饥渴之中，觉得东西好吃。况又在兴趣头上，就是肴馔粗些，鸡肉肥些，酒味薄些，一总不论，只算做第一次嘉肴美酒了。公子不胜之喜。门客多帮衬道：“这样凑趣的东道主人，不可不厚报他的。”公子道：“这个自然该的。”便教贾清夫估他约费了多少。清夫在行，多说了些。公子教一倍偿他三倍。管事的和众人克下了一倍自得，只与他两倍。这家子道已有了对合利钱，怎不欢喜？当下公子上马回步，老的少的多来马前拜谢，兼送公子。公子一发快活道：“这家子这等殷勤！”赵能武道：“不但敬心，且有礼数。”公子再教后骑赏他。管事的策马上前问道：“赏他多少？”公子叫打开银包来，看见有几两零碎银子，何止千百来块。公子道：“多与他们罢，论甚么多少？”用手只一抬，银子块块落地，只剩得一个空包。那些老小们看见银子落地，大家来抢，也顾不得尊卑长幼，扯扯



the table. Then Jia Qingfu called out, "Please bring us more wine. We want to have a good time. Our master won't let you down in terms of payment." The host family kept bringing out and warming the home-brewed wine for the guests. The young master and his men ate and drank their fill until they were unable to sit straight. As the saying goes, "The hungry are not particular about food, the thirsty are not particular about drink," so it is universally true that hungry and thirsty people all feel their food and drink tasty. The party was now in high spirits, so they decided that the dinner was the best feast they had ever had, despite the rough food, fat chicken meat and stale alcohol.

The young master was very pleased. His men all said to him, "This host deserves a double reward." The young master agreed happily, saying, "Surely he does." He let Jia Qingfu come up with an estimate of the cost, and the latter, only too familiar with what he usually did, gave a much higher figure than needed. The young master wanted to pay the host three times that figure. The young master's manager and the rest of the men took one third of the payment behind the young master's back before handing the remainder to the host. How could the host family be unhappy as it was reaping such a great interest on their investment?

So all the members of the family turned out to express their gratitude in front of the young master as he mounted his horse to leave. This added to the rapture in the young master's heart. So he observed, "Look, how cordial these people are!" Zhao Nengwu rejoined, "They're not only hospitable, they are courteous as well." The young master therefore bade his followers to give them even more of a reward. The manager galloped up and inquired, "How much do you want to reward them, sir?" The young master let him check the amount of money left in his silver sack. The manager opened it and saw several taels of silver inside. The silver was in hundreds of pieces.

Then the young master ordered, "Let them take all of it. Why bother to count it?" He lifted the sack with his hand and dumped all the pieces of silver onto the ground. The sack was then empty. Seeing the silver dropping all over the place, the members of the host family dashed forward to collect it, jostling and shoving one another in neglect of their filial respect





拽拽，磕磕撞撞。溜撒的拾了大块子，又来拈撮；迟夯的将拾到手，又被眼快的先取了去。老人家战抖抖的拿得一块，死也不放，还累了两个地滚。公子看此光景，与众客马上拍手大笑道：“天下之乐，无如今日矣！”公子此番虽费了些赏赐，却噪尽了脾胃；这家子赔了些辛苦，落得便宜多了。

这个消息传将开去，乡里人家只叹惜无缘，不得遇着公子。自此以后，公子出去，就有人先来探听。马首所向，村落中无不整顿酒食，争来迎接。真个是：

东驰，西人已为备馔；南猎，北人就去戒厨。士有馀粮，马多剩草。一呼百诺，顾盼生辉，此送彼迎，尊荣莫并。凭他出外连旬乐，不必先营隔宿装。

公子到一处，一处如此。这些人也竭力奉承，公子也加意报答，还自歉然道：“赏劳轻微，谢他们厚情不来。”众门客又齐声力赞道：“此辈乃小人，今到一处，即便供帐备具，奉承公子，胜于君王。若非重赏，何以示劝？”公子道：“说得有理。”每每赏了又赏，有增无减。元来这圈套，多是一班门客串同了百姓



for the old and custodial care of the young. The quickest one picked up a big piece of silver and then swooped down for a second, while no sooner had the slowest one retrieved a piece than it was grabbed away by a quicker hand. The old host picked one piece of silver, holding it tightly and trying to keep his tattering body steady before he slipped twice on the ground. The young master and his men burst into laughter and applause, saying, "This is the funniest thing we've ever come across!" Though the trip resulted in a large expenditure, the young master had a good time. And the host family was amply paid for their labor.

This news soon spread throughout the local area. The other villagers felt shame over the fact that they didn't have the good luck to run into this young master. After that, someone would always come to inquire about the young master's schedule whenever he planned to go out on a tour, and welcoming country folks would line the road carrying jugs of wine and pots of food wherever he rode. It was just like:

When going eastward, people in the west would prepare food to wait for his return. When going hunting southward, people in the north would start a fast. Both his followers and his horses had surplus grain and fodder. When giving a call, a hundred people would say aye. When looking around, his eyes would glow with radiance. Warm receptions were always there waiting for him each time when a warm sending-off at one place was performed. What incomparable dignity and prestige! For tens of days he would stay out to amuse himself without bothering about what to wear and where to accommodate the next day.

In each place the local people would flatter him profusely, while he would repay their hospitality handsomely, usually with a modest remark, "The payment is too paltry for the hospitality." Inciting him on, his companions would say, "They're mere villagers, sir. But they accommodated you with the best of their possessions, treating you more honorably than they would the emperor. If you fail to pay them substantially, how will you be able to encourage them?" The young master would answer, "Exactly!" So rewards were added to the payments, and the payments steadily increased. Actually this was a trap contrived by his companions together with the local people. Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu



们，又是贾、赵二人先定了去向，约会得停当，故所到之处，无不如意。及至得来赏赐，尽皆分取，只是撙掇多些了。

亲眷中有老成的人，叫做张三翁，见公子日逐如此费用，甚为心疼。他曾见过当初尚书公行事来的，偶然与公子会间，劝讽公子道：“宅上家业丰厚，先尚书也不纯仗做官得来的宦橐，多半是算计做人家来的。老汉曾经眼见先尚书早起晏眠，算盘天平、文书簿籍不离于手。别人少他分毫，也要算将出来，变面变孔，费唇费舌，略有些小便宜，即便喜动颜色。如此挣来的家私，非同容易。今郎君十分慷慨撒漫，与先尚书苦挣之意，太不相同了。”公子面色通红，未及回答。贾清夫、赵能武等一班儿朋友大嚷道：“这样气量浅陋之言，怎么在公子面前讲？公子是海内豪杰，岂把钱财放在眼孔上？况且人家天做，不在人为。岂不闻李太白有言：‘天生吾才终有用，黄金散尽还复来。’先尚书这些孜孜为利，正是差处。公子不学旧样，尽改前非，是公子超群出众、英雄不羁之处，岂田舍翁所可晓哉？”公子听得这一番说话，方才觉得有些吐气扬眉，心里放下。张三翁见不是头，晓得有这一班小人，料想好言不入，再不开口了。



at the head of them first planned the itinerary and made arrangements in advance. That's why the young master would be warmly entertained wherever he went. Then they would share the gains and work for more profit the next time.

Among the young master's relatives, there was an old man called Zhang San. He found it shameful that the young master spent his wealth so extravagantly. He remembered how the young master's father, the late minister of the Ministry of War, lived. So he advised the young master when he met him, saying, "Your father had a wealth of property. But he did not achieve it merely through receiving a regular government salary. As a matter of fact, most of his income came from strict expenditures. I personally saw that he budgeted and calculated early in the morning and turned in late at night, working with a weigh-scale, account books and other things. If someone owed even a tiny amount of money, he would argue with a stern face until he was given his due. Occasionally he snapped up a small bargain. Then I saw his joy was tremendous. Therefore the legacy of wealth he left you was hard come by. Now your wasteful expenditures are worlds apart from your father's frugality."

The young master flushed with embarrassment. Before he could make a reply, some of his companions, headed by Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu, yelled, "How can you speak to our young master about such a narrow-minded style of living! The young master is a hero known in the region. How can he be particular about gains or losses of wealth? Besides, one's family fortune is granted by Heaven, rather than being achieved through one's effort. Don't you know that Li Bai wrote a line of poetry which reads, 'I was born to fulfill a heavenly designated mission, and gold dissipated will come again.' What the late father of the young master did only shows his miserliness, which certainly was a flaw. Our young master does not follow in his path but gives up the convention. This demonstrates our master's unrestricted and chivalrous character. This can never make sense to a country bumpkin!" These words worked to help the young master regain his confidence and feel a lot easier. Meanwhile, Zhang San realized that the young master was in these knaves' pocket and wouldn't listen to any good advice. So he never brought up the subject again.



公子被他们如此舞弄了数年，弄得囊中空虚，看看手里不能接济。所有仓房中庄舍内积下米粮，或时兑银使用，或时即发米代银，或时先在那里移银子用了，秋收还米，也就东扯西拽，不能如意。公子要噪脾时，有些掣肘不爽利。门客每见公子世业不曾动损，心里道：“这里面尽有大想头。”与贾、赵二人商议定了，来见公子献策道：“有一妙着，公子再不要愁没银子用了。”公子正苦银子短少，一闻此言，欣然起问道：“有何妙计？”贾、赵等指手画脚道：“公子田连阡陌，地占半州，足迹不到所在，不知多少。这许多田地，大略多是有势之时小民投献，富家馈送，原不尽用价银买的。就有些买的，也不过债利盘算，准折将来。或是户绝人穷，止剩得些硗田瘠地，只得收在户内，所值原不多的。所以而今荒芜的多，开垦的少，租利没有，钱粮要紧。这些东西，留在后边，贻累不浅的。公子看来，不过是些土泥；小民得了，自家用力耕种，才方是有用的。公子若把这些作赏赐之费，不是土泥尽当银子用了？亦且自家省了钱粮之累。”公子道：“我最苦的是时常来要我完甚么钱粮，激聒得不耐烦。今把来推将去，当得银子用，这是极便宜的事了。”

自此，公子每要用银子之处，只写一纸卖契，把田来准去。



For a few years, the young master was manipulated this way by his companions and eventually all his wealth drained away. Therefore he started to use grain as currency, grain which had been collected in his granaries over the years. He would either sell some grain for some silver or simply pay with grain, or borrow silver at the time of purchase and pay it back after the fall harvest. But this tight budgeting bothered him a lot.

Seeing that the young master's property remained intact, his companions decided, "The young master still has a lot left for us to desire." After discussions with Jia and Zhao, they came to see the young master and made a suggestion, saying, "Here's a good idea, sir, to remove your worries about money." Being anxious to find a way to get out of the difficulties, the young maser asked quickly, "What is it?"

Those men gesticulated as they replied, "You own a great deal of land crisscrossed with paths that take up half of the county's area. It's a pity that you have no idea how much of the land you've never set your foot to. In the past when your household was at the peak of prosperity, it often received plots of land from local farmers as a token of their respect, or from rich families by way of gifts. So the lands were not necessarily all obtained through purchases. Even some of the purchased land was obtained after deductions of interest and debts owed to your family. Actually, a few of the landowners were impoverished, with no inheritors left behind them, and had to turn the land over to your family for little payment. Therefore most of your land lies waste now. Only a small part of it is being farmed. Without renting out the land, you currently don't receive interest. But you need money and grain at this point. If you don't make arrangements to get rid of the land now, it's going to be a problem for you in the future. The land is nothing but trash to you now. It would be quite useful for the peasants to till it. If you were to let farmers take the land, wouldn't you turn your trash into silver? Besides, you will save money and grain." The young master answered, "You're right. I really hate dealing with issues regarding money and grain. If I can get them out of my way and come by some silver that will be something worth doing."

After that, whenever there was in need of money, the young master would simply write out a sales contract for a certain plot of land. Usually



那得田的，心里巴不得，反要妆个腔儿说不情愿，不如受些现物好。门客每故意再三解劝，强他拿去。公子蹴踏不安，惟恐他不受，直等他领了文契，方掉得下。所有良田美产，有富户欲得的，先来通知了贾、赵二人，借打猎为名，迂道到彼家边，极意酒食款待。还有出妻献子的，或又有接了娼妓养在家里，假做了妻女来与公子调情的。公子便有些晓得，只是将错就错，自以为得意。吃得兴阑将行，就请公子写契作赏。公子写字不甚利便，门客内有善写的，便来执笔。一个算价钱，一个查簿籍，写完了，只要公子押字。公子也不知田在那里，好的歹的，贵的贱的，见说押字，即便押了。又有时反有几两银子找将出来，与公子用，公子却像落得的，分外喜欢。

如此多次，公子连押字也不耐烦了，对贾清夫道：“这些时不要我拿银子出来，只写张纸，颇觉便当。只是定要我执笔押字，我有些倦了。”赵能武道：“便是我们搭着枪棒且溜撒，只这一管笔重得可厌相。”贾清夫道：“这个不打紧。我有一策，大家可以省力。”公子道：“何策？”贾清夫道：“把这些卖契



the land-buyers desired the bargain, but would feign reluctance saying he would rather receive some other things instead. The men surrounding the young master would then talk the land-buyers into accepting it. At such moments the young master often felt uneasy and worried about the buyers' refusal to take the land until the contract was signed. If a rich man was interested in a given fertile plot of the young master's land, he would inform Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu in secret. The two men would lead the young master on a detour to the rich man's home, using hunting as the excuse. The host often happily gave the young master a special treat of dinner, and sometimes he would let his wife come and entertain the young master. Some land-seekers even kept prostitutes at home to pose as their wives, women who would lure the young master.

The motive behind such arrangements was not totally unknown to the young master, but he responded with tacit approval, feeling proud of himself. Toward the end of each dinner, the young master would be asked to make payment with a titled deed. The young master was not good at handwriting. So a good writer among his men would do the writing, while another one calculated the cost of the dinner and still another located the lot of land in the account book. After this was done, all that was left for the young master to do was to sign his name on the paper. He knew nothing about the location and quality of the land. When told to sign the paper, he quickly did so. Occasionally, the calculation of the cost of the land would be more than the expense for the dinner, so a couple of taels of silver would be given to the young master to cover the difference, which delighted him greatly.

As such transactions took place frequently, signing such papers became a bore for him. Then the young master spoke to Jia Qingfu, "Now I don't feel like handling silver any more. Just give them a written paper and I'll feel easy and relieved. However, I still have to bother with the signing of my name on the deeds, and I'm tired of it." Zhao Nengwu replied, "We have no problem in wielding the lance and stave. But using the writing-brush, if you want us to, is really an achievement way above us." Jia Qingfu put in, "I've got an idea that will save labor." The young master inquired, "What is that?" Jia Qingfu answered, "We can cut printing





套语，刊刻了板，空了年月，刷印百张，放在身边。临时只要填写某处及多少数目，注了年月。连公子花押，也另刻了一个，只要印上去，岂不省力？”公子道：“妙，妙。却有一件，卖契刻了印板，这些小见识的必然笑我，我那有气力逐个与他辨？我做一首口号，也刻在后面，等别人看见的，晓得我心事开阔，不比他们猥琐的。”贾清夫道：“口号怎么样的？”公子道：“我念来，你们写着：

千年田土八百翁，何须苦苦较雌雄。  
古今富贵知谁在？唐宋山河总是空。  
去时却似来时易，无他还与有他同。  
若人笑我亡先业，我笑他人梦中。”

念罢，叫一个门客写了。贾清夫道：“公子出口成章如此，何愁不富贵？些须田业，不足恋也。公子若刻此佳作在上面了，去得一张，与公子扬名一张矣。”公子大喜，依言刻了。每日印了十来张，带在贾、赵二人身边。行到一处，遇要赏赐，即取出来填注几字，印了个花押，即已成契了。公子笑道：“真



blocks containing those words, caving blanks for the year and month. Then we can print a hundred copies and keep them with us. Once you need to use one, just put in the amount of land to be sold and then fill in the blanks with the year and month. To simplify your signing process, we can even cut your name into a seal. Then you will be able to print your name instead of signing it at the time of need. Won't that save you labor?"

The young master replied, "Absolutely right! But I still have one thing to worry about. If I give up my property so lavishly through block printing, people with petty sophistication may laugh at me. How can I put a lot of effort into explaining the matter to them one by one? I have improvised a doggerel and I'd like to have it cut into the printing blocks, too, and print it at the end of the document. When they read it, they will know I'm broad-minded, not despicable like them." Jia Qingfu asked, "What's your doggerel?" The young master said, "I read it, and you can put it down." The doggerel read thus:

The land stands for ages, but not the landlords,  
So why should I keep expense records?  
Where are those wealthy and powerful in past?  
Even the imperial dynasties have turned to dust!  
Fortune goes lightly — equally light it will come.  
Having none of it is as good as having some.  
Ridicule me for wasting a legacy on whim,  
And I will laugh at you for living in a vain dream.

As he finished these lines, he had someone write it down. Jia Qingfu commended him, saying, "See, you're a highly accomplished poet, sir. Who will doubt that you will be able to achieve fame and wealth sooner or later in future? On the contrary, the land is nothing to be worried about. Since you put down a poem on the contract, your good reputation will increase with each distributed sheet."

The young master was overjoyed and immediately ordered that over ten copies be printed each day, which were to be kept by Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu. When payment was needed on any of the subsequent tours, they took out one copy, put down a few words and put the seal on it, and thus a contract for the land was made and the land given out. The young

正简便！此后再不消捏笔了。快活！快活！”其中门客每自家要的，只须自家写注，偷用花押，一发不难。如此过了几时，公子只见逐日费得几张纸，一毫不在心上。岂知皮里走了肉，田产俱已荡尽，公子还不知觉。但见供给不来，米粮不继，印板文契丢开不用，要些使费，别无来处。问问家人何不卖些田来用度，方知田多没有了。

门客看见公子艰难了些，又兼有靠着公子做成人家、过得日子的，渐渐散去不来。惟有贾、赵二人，哄得家里瓶满瓮满，还想道“瘦骆驼尚有千斤肉”，恋着未去。劝他把大房子卖了，得中人钱；又替他买小房子住，得后手钱。搬去新居不像意，又与他算计改造，置买木石，落他的。造得像样，手中又缺了。公子自思：“宾客既少，要这许多马也没干。”托着二人，把来出卖，比原价只好十分之一二。公子问：“为何差了许多？”二人道：“骑了这些时，走得路多了，价钱自减了。”公子也不计





master smiled and said, "It has really simplified the business! I don't need to touch the brush any more. Wonderful! It's really wonderful!" When some of his men wanted to obtain a plot of land for themselves, they simply filled in the form with whatever words needed to put in and put the master's seal on it stealthily. As time elapsed, the young master never worried, knowing the daily cost was just a few sheets of paper. But he was ignorant of the fact that his land was being quickly nibbled away. He enjoyed himself until all the land was lost, the provision of food and grain ceased, and the printing facilities and contract forms were untended. Without a supply of food, he called his followers and asked them why they didn't sell some land to get his daily supply, only to get the reply that he had become landless.

Seeing that financial troubles now weighed down the young master, some of his men, those who had fleeced him out of land and built up their own family fortune, gradually deserted him. But Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu remained, though they, too, had enriched their own families with full jugs and vessels of supply at home. Believing that, as a proverb went, a skinny camel still gives a thousand *jin* of meat, they hung on. Then they talked the young master into selling his large house and made money for themselves as brokers in the deal. Later they went on with their wheedling and purchased a small house for the young master and made money out of the transaction for themselves as well. After he moved into the new house, they told the young master that the house needed renovation. So they discussed with him the remodeling costs in terms of purchasing timbers and rocks, out of which they profited a lot too. The house soon assumed an impressive appearance but the young master was short of money again.

The young master thought to himself, "Now that I don't have many dependents, there is no need to keep these horses." Then the two men took charge of selling the horses. However, the price dropped to one or two-tenths of the original cost. The young master asked, "Why has the price come down so much?" The two men answered, "Well, they've been ridden and run quite a distance, so the price has definitely dropped." The young master did not explore the matter further, because he had gotten

论，见着银子且便接来应用。起初还留着自己骑坐两三匹好的，后来因为赏赐无处，随从又少，把个出猎之兴叠起在三十三层高阁上了，一总要马没干，且喂养费力，贾、赵二人也设法卖了去。价钱不多，又不尽到得公子手里，勾他几时用？只得又商量卖那新居。枉自装修许多，性急要卖，只卖得原价钱到手。新居既去，只得赁居而住。一向家中牢曹什物，没处藏叠，半把价钱，烂贱送掉。

到得迁在赁的房子内时，连贾、赵二人也不来了，惟有妻上官氏随起随倒。当初风花雪月之时，虽也曾劝谏几次，如水投石，落得反目；后来晓得说着无用，只得凭他。上官氏也是富贵出身，只会吃到口茶饭，不晓得甚么经求，也不曾做下一些私房。公子有时，他也有得用；公子没时，他也没了。两个住在赁房中，且用着卖房的银子度日。走出街上来，遇见旧时的门客，一个个多新鲜衣服，仆从跟随。初时撞见公子，还略略叙寒温；已后渐渐掩面而过；再过几时，对面也不来理着了。





for the moment something to spend. At first he had two or three fine horses left for his use. Later on, as he did not need to reward anyone and had a far smaller platoon of followers, and thus the issue of hunting sank into oblivion, even the two or three horses were of no use. Furthermore, horse-tending took labor and skill. Eventually, Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu found an opportunity to sell them, but it was not a good price and, in addition, not all the earnings reached the hands of the young master.

Now the two men shifted their attention to the young master's house that he had purchased only recently. The earlier renovation of the new house had turned out to be a waste and, since its sale was urgent, the original price was the best the young master could obtain. With the house gone, renting became a necessity. Due to the lack of space in the rented house, his remaining possessions, most of them of little value, were sold at half price or given away as trash.

After the young master moved into the rented house, Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu soon disappeared and didn't show up again. His only companion left was his wife. When he led an extravagant life, his wife had also advised him a number of times against his extravagant spending. Not only did the young master turn a deaf ear to her words, but squabbles over the matter erupted periodically. Knowing that her warnings did not help, she had to let the matter take its own course. His wife, of course, was born of an upper-class background. She depended upon others for her living, not caring about the future. So she had never put aside a sum for herself. When the young master was rich, she was well off; when her husband was in poverty, she was too. Hence they lived in the rented house on the money they earned from the sale of their house.

At intervals the young master strolled along the streets and bumped into some of his former followers, who were all now well-dressed and surrounded by their own followers. For the first couple of times they exchanged greetings with the young master, showing a minimum of courtesy. Later, they would hurry past, shielding their faces. Finally on any encounter with their former master, they would march forward without greeting him.

One morning the young master ran into Zhao Nengwu, who said to

一日早晨，撞着了赵能武。能武道：“公子曾吃早饭未曾？”公子道：“正来买些点心吃。”赵能武道：“公子且未要吃点心，到家里来坐坐，吃一件东西去。”公子随了他到家里。赵能武道：“昨夜打得一只狗，煨得糜烂在这里，与公子同享。”果然拿出热腾腾的狗肉来，与公子一同狼飧虎咽，吃得尽兴。公子回来饱了一日，心里道：“他还是个好人。”没些生意，便去寻他。后来也常时躲过，不十分招揽了。贾清夫遇着公子，原自满面堆下笑来。及至到他家里坐着，只是泡些好清茶来，请他评品些茶味，说些空头话。再不然，趲着脚儿，把管箫闲吹一曲，只当是他的敬意。再不去破费半文钱钞，多少弄些东西来点饥。公子忍饿不过，只得别去。此外再无人理他了。

公子的丈人上官翁，是个达者。初见公子败时，还来主张争论。后来看他行径，晓得不了不住，索性不来管他。意要等他干净了，吃尽穷苦滋味，方有回转念头的日子。所以富时也不来劝戒，穷时也不来资助，只像没相干的一般。公子手里罄尽，衣食不敷，家中别无可卖。一身之外，只有其妻。没做思



him, "Have you had your breakfast, sir?" The young master replied, "No, not yet. I'm going to buy some refreshments." Zhao Nengwu replied, "Since you want to have some refreshments, why not come to my home and have a taste of something I have just cooked." The young master then followed him to his home. Zhao Nengwu said, "I killed a stray dog last night and made of it a very tender in stew. Please enjoy it with me." So saying, he brought out the steaming dog meat and the two then devoured it instantly. After this hearty meal, the young master returned home, thinking Zhao Nengwu was a good man. Whenever he became bored, he went to Zhao Nengwu's place. But later the warmth cooled off, and Zhao Nengwu also shunned the young master.

Jia Qingfu sometimes met his former young master too. He would pretend to be all smiles. When the young master was led to his home, a cup of fine green tea would be the best treat he could receive. Jia Qingfu would let the young master have a taste of his tea and then talk empty words. He would also sit cross-legged, playing a piece of music on his vertical bamboo flute. That was a show of his respect. He did not even bother to buy the young master some scanty food for little cost, which would have somewhat subdued the guest's hunger. Unable to withstand his hunger, the young master had to leave, looking very much depressed and unsatisfied. No one else paid any attention to him.

The young master's father-in-law, Shangguan, was a sensible man. In the beginning when the young master happily squandered his wealth and properties, the father-in-law used to come and advise him against his way of living. But later, seeing the young man had no intention of turning back, the father-in-law backed off, figuring he would wait until the young master wastefully spent all his possessions and suffered a great deal so that he would realize how senseless his life was. Therefore the old man did not put forth a further word of admonishment when the young man was wealthy, nor did he give him a hand when financial plight tormented him, as if he had nothing to do with his son-in-law at all.

When the young master ran out of money, food and clothing, and had nothing in his house for sale, he hit upon the stupid idea, after long meditation, of selling his wife. He decided that would save a mouth to





量处，痴算道：“若卖了他去，省了一个口食，又可得些银两用用。”只是怕丈人，开不得这口。却是有了这个意思，未免露些光景出来。上官翁早已识破其情，想道：“省得他自家蛮做出事来，不免用个计较，哄他在圈套中了，慢作道理。”遂挽出前日劝他好话的那个张三翁来，托他做个说客。商量说话完了，竟来见公子。

公子因是前日不听其言，今荒凉光景了，羞惭满面。张三翁道：“郎君才晓得老汉前言不是迂阔么？”公子道：“惶愧，惶愧。”张三翁道：“近闻得郎君度日艰难，有将令正娘子改适之意，果否如何？”公子满面通红了道：“自幼夫妻之情，怎好轻出此言？只是绝无来路，两口饭食不给，惟恐养他不活。不如等他别寻好处安身，我又省得多一个口食，他又有着落了，免得跟着我一同忍饿。所以有这一点念头，还不忍出口。”张三翁道：“果有此意，作成老汉做个媒人何如？”公子道：“老丈有甚么好人家在肚里么？”张三翁道：“便是有个人叫老汉打听，故如此说。”公子道：“就有了人家，岳丈面前怎好启齿？”张三翁道：“好教足下得知：令岳正为足下败完了人家，令正后边日子难过，尽有肯改嫁之意。只是在足下身边起身，



feed and give him some money as well. Though he did not express this thought out of fear of his father-in-law, he showed some of such signs in spite of himself. Shangguan read his son-in-law's mind from the very beginning, and thought in his mind, "I should take actions first before he makes such a rash move. I'll make him fall into my trap and then wait and see what to do with him." So he summoned Zhang San, the one who had advised the young master before, and asked him to act as a disguised envoy and talk to the young master. Zhang San went on the mission accordingly.

The young master felt ashamed of the fact that he had ignored Zhang San's earlier advice and had thus sunk to such depths of hopelessness. Zhang San said, "Do you now realize that what I said to you in the past was wise advice?" The young master replied, "Now I feel sorry for myself." Zhang San said, "I heard that you're having a rough time and is thinking of disposing your wife. Is that true?" Blushing from ear to ear, the young master replied, "We got married in our early years, so how could I have made such a casual remark? However, I'm at the end of my resources and have nothing with which to feed the two of us. I thought that, instead of letting her die of hunger, I might as well send her to a good family. On the one hand, I will then only have myself to feed. On the other, she will be well placed in someone else's home instead of suffering from hunger with me. I hate to say this, but that idea did cross my mind."

Zhang San then said, "If you're serious about it, would you be willing to let me be the matchmaker?" The young master said, "That would be fine. But do you have any idea as to what interested family there might be?" Zhang San said, "Yes, someone did ask me to keep my eyes open regarding this matter. That's why I came to talk to you." The young master said, "The problem is how I can shamelessly bring up the matter in front of my father-in-law, even if someone wants to take her." Zhang San said, "I have come to let you know that your father-in-law has learned about your squandering your property and he is worried about your wife's life in the days to come. He has the same idea of remarrying her. But it would look disgraceful if she left your house and went straight into somebody



甚不雅相。令岳欲待接着家去，在他家门里择配人家，那时老汉便做个媒人。等令正嫁了出去，寂寂里将财礼送与足下，方为隐秀，不伤体面。足下心里何如？”公子道：“如此委曲最妙，省得眼睁睁的我与他不好分别。只是既有了此意，岳丈那里我不好再走去了。我在那里问消息？”张三翁道：“只消在老汉家里讨回话。一过去了，就好成事体，我也就来回覆你的。不必挂念。”公子道：“如此做事，连房下面前我不必说破，只等岳丈接他归家便了。”张三翁道：“正是，正是。”两下别去。

上官翁一径打发人来接了女儿，回家住了。过了两日，张三翁走来见公子道：“事已成了。”公子道：“是甚么人家？”张三翁道：“人家豪富，也是姓姚。”公子道：“既是富家，聘礼必多了。”张三翁道：“他们道是中年再醮，不肯出多，是老汉极力称赞贤能，方得聘金四十两。你可省吃俭用些。再若轻易弄掉了，别无来处了。”公子见就有了银子，大喜过望，口口称谢。张三翁道：“虽然得了这几两银子，一入豪门，终身不得相见了，为何如此快活？”公子道：“譬如两个一齐饿死了。而今他既落了好处，我又得了银子，有甚不快活处？”——元来这银子就是上官翁的，因恐他把女儿当真卖了，故装成这个



else's home. So your father-in-law wants to bring her back to his house and let her stay there while waiting for the selection of a choice marriage partner. At that time I will be the matchmaker. After the marriage, I'll quietly bring the dowry to you. That will keep your reputation unharmed. What do you think of that?"

The young master said, "That's a very good idea, despite the hassle. That will spare me needless embarrassment in parting with her. Since my father-in-law is making arrangements about this, it's inappropriate for me to go and see him now. But where do you think I should go to pick up information about her marriage?" Zhang San answered, "You just come to my home for more information. After she goes to your father-in-law's house, the marriage should be settled in no time and I will send you word. Don't worry about that." The young master said, "In this case, I will keep this from my wife and simply wait until my father-in-law sends people here to take her back home." Zhang San said, "Exactly." Then they parted.

Soon Shangguan sent people to bring his daughter home. A few days later, Zhang San came to see the young master and said, "The marriage is done." The young master asked, "Who married her?" Zhang San said, "A rich man, whose family happens to be Yao, too." The young master said, "If he's rich, the dowry should be plentiful?" Zhang San said, "They said it's her second marriage at middle age and, therefore, they refused to offer more. After I highly praised her kindness and competence, they offered forty taels of silver. From now on you should lead a simple and budgeted life. Don't be wasteful. Otherwise you won't have anything more." The young master received the silver and was overjoyed, expressing his thanks repeatedly. Zhang San said, "Since you've got some silver, you can't expect to see your wife anymore now that she has married into a rich family. I wonder why you're so happy?" The young master explained, "Well, it's better than that we both die of hunger. Now she is going to have a good life and I'm better off with the silver. Why should I be unhappy?"

It so happened that the father-in-law wanted to play this trick of taking his daughter back home for fear of the young master's selling of her. The forty taels of silver the young master received were from his father-in-



圈套，接了女儿家去，把这些银子暗暗助他用度，试看他光景。

公子银子接到手，手段阔惯了的，那里勾他的用？况且一向处了不足之乡，未免房钱、柴米钱之类挂欠些在身上，拿来一出摩诃萨，没多几时，手里又空。左顾右盼，别无可卖，单单剩得一个身子。思量索性卖与人了，既得身钱，又可养口。却是一向是个公子，那个来兜他？又兼目下已做了单身光棍，种火又长，拄门又短，谁来要这个废物！

公子不揣，各处央人寻头路。上官翁知道了，又拿几两银子，另挽出一个来，要了文契，叫庄客收他在庄上用。庄客就假做了家主，与他约道：“你本富贵出身，故此价钱多了。既已投靠，就要随我使用，禁持苦楚，不得违慢。说过方收留你。”公子思量道：“我当初富盛时，家人几十房，多是吃了着了闲荡的，有甚苦楚处？”一力应承道：“这个不难。既已靠身，但凭使唤了。”公子初时，看见遇饭吃饭，遇粥吃粥，不消自己经营，颇谓得计。谁知隔得一日，庄客就限他功课起来，早晨要打柴，日里要挑水，晚要舂谷簸米，劳筋苦骨，没一刻得安闲。略略推故懈惰，就拿着大棍子吓他。公子受不得那苦，不



law who intended to help him financially. The old man would now wait and see what the young master would do with the silver.

With the silver in hand, the young master didn't need to stint on his expenditures. But how long could he continue in this way? Besides, he had been unable to keep his head above water in terms of a number of unpaid bills for housing and food. Therefore his spending of the silver did not last long before he fell into destitution again. As he saw he had nothing for sale but himself, the thought of selling himself tangled his mind. He believed he might make money on the sale and at the same time have something to eat. But who would be willing to purchase a young master like him? Besides, he was a single man now, as useless as a stick too long for firewood and too short for a door-prop. Who would want to buy trash like him?

Brushing aside embarrassment, he sought assistance for the sale of himself. When this news soon reached Shangguan, he took out a few taels of silver as payment for the young master and had a farmhand sign a contract to purchase him, and keep him on one of his manors. The farmhand, posing as the host of the manor, said to the young master, "You're not of humble stock, so you have been better paid. But now you're one of my men and should be at my disposal. You should be able to sustain hard work and be obedient. I won't take you unless you accept these terms." The young master figured that when he was rich, he had tens of servants at home. They usually got fed and idled about every day. He wondered what kind of hard work and rough time this man could have for him?

So he agreed readily, saying, "That's fine, sir. Since I have been sold to you as your slave, I'll do whatever I'm told to do." At first the young master did no work but just ate whatever he was offered. He thought his sale to this family was a good deal. However, a couple of days later, the host imposed a daily work quota on him. He had to cut firewood in the morning, shoulder jugs of water during the day, and husk grain with a pestle and mortar and winnow away the chaff in the evening. He was exhausted with aches and pains all over his body, but he was given no breaks at all. When he paused for a breath, the farmer would threaten to



勾十日，魑魅地逃去。庄客受了上官翁分付，不去追他，只看他怎生着落。

公子逃去两日，东不着边，西不着际，肚里又饿不过。看见乞儿每讨饭，讨得来倒有得吃，只得也皮着脸，去讨些充饥。讨了两日，挨去乞儿队里做了一伴了。自家想着当年的事，还有些气傲心高，只得作一长歌，当做似《莲花落》，满市唱着乞食。歌曰：

人道光阴疾似梭，我说光阴两样过。昔日繁华人羨我，一年一度易蹉跎。可怜今日我无钱，一时一刻如长年。我也曾轻裘肥马载高轩，指麾万众驱山前。一声围合魑魅惊，百姓邀迎如神明。今日黄金散尽谁复矜？朋友离群猎狗烹。昼无饘粥夜无眠，落得街头唱哩莲。一生两截谁能堪？不怨爹娘不怨天。早知到此遭坎坷，悔教当日结妖魔。而今无计可奈何，殷勤劝人休似我！

上官翁晓得公子在街上乞化了，教人密地分付了一班乞儿，故意要凌辱他，不与他一路乞食。及至自家讨得些须来，



beat him with a cudgel. He was not able to bear it anymore. He stayed for less than ten days and then ran away. As required by Shangguan, the farmhand did not pursue him and waited to see how he would make a living.

The young master was on the run with no definite place to go. He was hungry, and seeing that beggars who got alms had something to eat, he swallowed his pride and begged for food. After a few days of independent wandering, he joined a platoon of beggars. But his sense of dignity nagged at him, reminding him of his happy days in the past. Then he composed a long song. He sang the song to the melody of "The Fall of Lotus Flowers," as he rambled down the street begging. The song went like this:

They say time, like a shuttle, flies fast;  
I say time can pass in different ways.  
I was envied in my glorious past,  
But I have wasted my happy days.  
Today, alas! My riches are all spent.  
Each moment to me is never-ending torment.  
I used to ride a strong horse, wear fur coat and cap tall.  
And see an army of millions march at my call.  
The shouting hunters, encircling, scared forest elves into fleeing;  
Villagers welcomed and treated me as if I were a heavenly being.  
Now my gold is gone, so my friends have left.  
With hares gone, like old arrows on the shelf I'm bereft.  
I haven't a bowl of gruel in the day nor sleep all night long,  
I wander in the streets singing a vagabond song.  
Who can bear a fall from paradise to an infernal state?  
I should not blame my parents, nor blame fate.  
Had I foreseen this dire hour of need,  
I wouldn't have befriended men of greed.  
Now helpless, I advise you all:  
Take a lesson from my downfall.

Learning that his son-in-law had reduced to street beggary, Shangguan sent someone to ask the young master's fellow beggars to insult him, rob him of the food he had obtained through begging, and leave him alone.





又来抢夺他的，没得他吃饱。略略不顺手，便吓他道：“你无理，就扯你去告诉家主。”公子就慌得手脚无措，东躲西避，又没个着身之处。真个是冻馁忧愁，无件不尝得到了。

上官翁道：“奈何得他也勾了。”乃先把一所大庄院，与女儿住下了。在后门之傍，收拾一间小房，被窝什物，略略备些在里边。又叫张三翁来寻着公子，对他道：“老汉做媒不久，怎知你就流落此中了？”公子道：“此中了，可怜众人还不容我。”张三翁道：“你本大家，为何反被乞儿欺侮？我晓得你不是怕乞儿，只是怕见你家主。你主幸不遇着，若是遇着，送你到牢狱中，追起身钱来，你再无出头日子了。”公子道：“今走身无路，只得听天命。早晚是死，不得见你了。前日你做媒，嫁了我妻子出去，今不知好过日子否？”说罢大哭。张三翁道：“我正有一句话要对你说。你妻子今为豪门主母，门庭贵盛，与你当初也差不多。今托我寻一个管后门的。我若荐了你去，你只管晨昏启闭，再无别事，又不消自爨，享着安乐茶饭，这可好么？”公子拜道：“若得如此，是重生父母了。”张三翁道：“只



Therefore the young master suffered a great deal more from hunger. But whenever he showed signs of resistance, his fellow beggars would threaten him by saying, "If you dare to offend us, we will go and tell your owner about you!" That made him panic and run away. But he had nowhere to go and had to live on the streets. He experienced all the bitterness and hardship of suffering from cold, hunger and worry that life had to offer.

Meanwhile, Shangguan decided that the young man had had enough. So he let his daughter move into a large residence and had a small room close to the back gate of its yard cleaned up, with some simple bedding put inside. Then he asked Zhang San to go and fetch the young master. Accordingly Zhang San spoke to the young master, "How did you fall into such a miserable state so soon after my matchmaking for your wife?" The young master answered, "Such a miserable state? That's not all of it. I have to endure those beggars' bullying as well!" Zhang San said, "But you're from a family of noble origin. How should you tolerate those beggars' bullying? I know you are not afraid of them, but you fear seeing your owner. You are lucky your owner hasn't found you. Otherwise you would be sent to jail. If he were to take you to court for seizing the money from selling yourself, the rest of your life would be mined!" The young master replied, "Now I've got no way to survive but have to put myself at fate's mercy. I'll die sooner or later and won't see you again. You did the matchmaking and helped marry off my wife. How are things with her these days?" As he said this, he started crying.

Zhang San said, "That's something I wanted to talk to you about. Your wife is currently the mistress of a rich family with broad social relations, as imposing as yours were years ago. Recently they asked me to find them a doorkeeper for the back of their yard. I'd like to introduce you to them. Your job will be just to open the gate in the morning and shut it in the evening, nothing more. You will enjoy plenty of free time and meals. How would you like the job?" The young master said, "If you can help me get this job, the kindness you've shown me will be as great as that of my parents."

Zhang San said, "There's one thing you've got to bear in mind, however. Your wife is now the mistress of the household — your



有一件，他原先是你妻子，今日是你主母，必然羞提旧事。你切不可妄言放肆，露了风声，就安身不牢了。”公子道：“此一时，彼一时。他如今在天上，我得收拾门下，免死沟壑，便为万幸了。还敢妄言甚么？”张三翁道：“既如此，你随我来，我帮衬你成事便了。”

公子果然随了张三翁去，住在门外等候回音。张三翁去了好一会，来对他道：“好了，好了，事已成了。你随我进来。”遂引公子到后门这间房里来。但见：

床帐皆新，器具粗备。萧萧一室，强如庵寺坟堂；寂寂数椽，不见露霜风雨。虽单身之入卧，审容膝之易安。公子一向草栖露宿，受苦多了，见了这一间清净房室，器服整洁，吃惊问道：“这是那个住的？”张三翁道：“此即看守后门之房，与你住的了。”公子喜之不胜，如入仙境。张三翁道：“你主母家富，故待仆役多齐整。他着你管后门，你只坐在这间房里，吃自在饭勺了。凭他主人在前面出入，主母在里头行止，你一切不可窥探。他必定羞见你。又万不可走出门一步，倘遇着你旧家主，你就住在此不稳了。”再三叮嘱而去。

公子吃过苦的，谨守其言。心中一来怕这饭碗弄脱了，二来怕露出踪迹，撞着旧主人的是非出来，呆呆坐守门房，不敢



immediate superior. It will bring shame to her if it becomes known that you were formerly married to her. So keep your mouth shut on that matter, or you will lose the job." The young master said, "Life changes. Now she's up there in heaven while I'm down here as a doorkeeper for her. It's my good fortune that I will not die from starvation and have my body cast in a ditch in the wilderness. I will be pretty happy with my state and not brag about anything." Zhang San said, "All right. Come with me and I'll help you get the job."

The young master followed Zhang San there and waited outside the gate of the residence. It took a long time before Zhang San came out and said to him, "Everything is in order. Come on in with me, please." He led the young master to the room at the rear of the mansion. The room was roughly furnished with a new bed and bed-drapes as well as the major articles for everyday use. Though the room was located in an out-of-the-way place, it was much better than temples and ancestral halls. Shabby and small as it was, it could house him and protect him from the wind and rain. For some time the young master had spent nights in the open, experiencing the harshest forms of life. He was overwhelmed at the cleanness and tidiness of the room and household necessities.

He asked in surprise, "Who lives in this room?" Zhang San replied, "It's for the doorkeeper, and now it's your room." The young master was delighted since the room seemed like paradise to him. Zhang San then warned him, "Your mistress is wealthy and has an army of pretty servants. She wants you to take care of the back gate. You should simply stay here and enjoy your light job. The master of the family and your mistress may go in and out of their rooms at the front gate. Don't poke your nose into their business. She would feel disgraced if she meets you. Don't step outside your gate. If you run into your former owner, you'll not be able to stay here any more." He repeated the warning several more times and then left.

The young master had been through hard living, so he now acted with particular caution. On the one hand, he feared losing this job; on the other hand, he dared not give away his identity and create trouble if he stumbled across his former owner. Thus he kept to himself inside the room and



出外。过了两个月馀，只是如此。上官翁晓得他野性已收了，忽一日，叫一个人拿一封银子与他，说道：“主母生日，众人多有赏。说你管门没事，赏你一钱银子买酒吃。”公子接了，想一想，这日正是前边妻子的生辰。思量在家富盛之时，多少门客来作贺，吃酒兴头，今却在别人家了，不觉凄然泪下。藏着这包银子，不舍得轻用。隔几日，又有个人走出来道：“主母唤你后堂说话。”公子吃一惊，道：“张三翁前日说他羞见我面，叫我不露形，怎么如今唤我说话起来？我怎生去相见得？”又不好推故，只得随着来人一步步走进中堂。只见上官氏坐在里面，俨然是主母尊严。公子不敢抬头。上官氏道：“但见说管门的姓姚，不晓得就是你。你是富公子，怎在此与人守门？”说得公子羞惭满面，做声不得。上官氏道：“念你看门勤谨，赏你一封银子买衣服穿去。”丫鬟递出来，公子称谢受了。上官氏分付，原叫领了门房中来。公子到了房中，拆开封筒一看，乃是五钱足纹，心中喜欢。把来与前次生日里赏的一钱并做一处，包好藏在身边。就有一班家人来与他庆松，哄他拿出些来



stayed there for more than two months.

Shangguan learned that the mind of his son-in-law had become sensible, and so he sent a man one day to take an envelope to him with a silver reward sealed inside and to tell him, "The mistress is having her birthday celebration today and this is a reward for each servant. She said you did a good job in watching the gate, so she rewards you one *qian* of silver to buy yourself some wine." Taking it in his hand, the young master remembered the day was indeed his former wife's birthday anniversary. He recalled that when his family fortune was at its zenith, he often had invited many guests to come and present their congratulations, and to enjoy drinks during the birthday celebration. But now he was an employee of somebody else. Tears started to roll down his cheeks. He wrapped up the silver, and was reluctant to spend it.

A few days later a man came in and said to him, "The mistress wants to talk to you in her room." Surprised, the young master murmured, "Zhang San told me the other day that she would feel ashamed if she met me, and he asked me to keep my identity from others. Why is she now asking me to see her? How can I go and see her at this point?" But he was in no position to turn down her request. So he followed the man through to the main hall of the house. He saw her sitting there with the dignified bearing of the mistress. The young master lowered his head in shame. The wife said to him, "I heard about a doorkeeper with the family name of Yao, but I didn't realize it was you. You're from a wealthy house. How have you become a doorkeeper working for my house?"

The young master, with a shameful face, could not utter a word in reply. The woman continued, "Since you're doing a good job at door-keeping, here's an envelope containing a reward for you. You may use it to purchase some clothes." A servant-girl handed him the reward. He accepted it with thanks. Then the mistress had him led back to his small room at the back gate. In his room, he opened the envelope and found five *qian* of silver inside. He was overjoyed and wrapped them together with the silver equivalent to one string of cash that he had received on the mistress' birthday, and put this money away. But some of his fellow servants came and tried to coax him to spend the newly received reward



买酒吃。公子不肯。众人又说：“不好独难为他一个，我们大家凑些，打个平火。”公子捏着银子道：“钱财是难得的，我藏着后来有好处。这样闲好汉再不做。”众人强他不得，只得散了。

一日黄昏时候，一个丫鬟走来，说道主母叫他进房中来，问旧时说话。公子不肯道：“夜晚间不是说话时节。我在此住得安稳，万一有些风吹草动，不要我管门起来，赶出去，就是个死。我只是守着这斗室罢了。你与我回覆主母一声，决不敢胡乱进来的。”

上官翁逐时叫人打听，见了这些光景，晓得他已知苦辣了。遂又去挽那张三翁来看公子。公子见了，深谢他荐举之德。张三翁道：“此间好过日子否？”公子道：“此间无忧衣食，吾可以老死在室内了。皆老丈之恩也。若非老丈，吾此时不知性命在那里。只有一件，吃了白饭，闲过日子，觉得可惜。吾今积攒几钱银子在身边，不舍得用。老丈是好人，怎生教导我一个生利息的方法儿？或做些本等手业，也不枉了。”张三翁笑道：“你几时也会得惜光阴、惜财物起来了？”公子也笑道：“不是一时学得的。而今晓得也迟了。”张三翁道：“我此来，单为你有一亲眷，要来会你，故着我先来通知。”公子道：“我到此地位，亲眷无一人理我了，那个还来要会我？”张三翁道：“有一个在此，你随我来。”



on drinks. He turned them down. Not giving up, they said, "Okay, perhaps it will cost him too much. We should throw in our share, making it half-and-half." The young master held his money tightly in his hand, replying, "There's no easy money. I will put this to good use later. I don't want to be a prodigal 'good fellow' any more." They found him unyielding, and so they all left.

At dusk one day, a servant-girl came and said to him, "The mistress wants to talk to you in her room about things of the past." Refusing to meet the request, the young master said, "It's not an appropriate time for me to talk to her in the evening. I'm here to keep the door secure. If something happens, they will fire me and throw me out onto the street. I will then definitely die. I think I should stay here in the room. Please go back and tell the mistress that I don't dare to enter her quarters."

In the meantime, Shangguan sent men to check on the young master periodically and learned of the change in him after his undergoing so much hardship. So Shangguan asked Zhang San to visit the young master again. Meeting Zhang San, the young master expressed his deep gratitude for his recommendation of him for the job. Zhang San asked him, "How do you find life here?" The young master said, "I won't need to worry about my food and clothing anymore until death as long as I live in this room. I owe you a debt for doing me this favor. Without your help, I might have died long ago somewhere. However, I have one thing on my mind: I think it shameful to earn easy food and idle away time as I do. I feel sorry for myself. I've saved some money and I'll never spend it. You're a good man. Please teach me a way to earn interest on the money, or teach me a trade so that I can make the rest of my life more meaningful." Zhang San replied, "Alas, when did you learn to value time and property?" With a grin, the young master said, "It took a long time to learn this. But now it's too late." Zhang San said, "I have come to you with a message that one of your relatives wishes to see you." The young master replied, "I've sunk so low that none of my relatives cares about me anymore. Who wants to see me now?" Zhang San said, "There is one. Come with me." Zhang San led him into the parlor.

A man with a stately hat on his head and elegantly attired emerged and





张三翁引了他走入中堂，只见一个人在里面，巍冠大袖，高视阔步，踱将出来。公子望去一看，见是前日的丈人上官翁。公子叫声：“呵也！”失色而走。张三翁赶上，一把拉住道：“是你的令岳，为何见了就走？”公子道：“有甚么面孔见他？”张三翁道：“自家丈人，有甚么见不得？”公子道：“妻子多卖了，而今还是我的丈人？”张三翁道：“他见你有些务实了，原要把女儿招你。”公子道：“女儿已是此家的主母，还有女儿在那里？”张三翁道：“当初是老汉做媒卖去，而今原是老汉做媒还你。”公子道：“怎么还得？”张三翁道：“痴呆子！大人家的女儿，岂肯再嫁人？前日恐怕你真胡行起来，令岳叫人接了家去，只说嫁了，今住的原是你令岳家的房子。又恐怕你冻饿死在外边了，故着老汉设法了你家来，收拾在门房里。今见你心性转头，所以替你说明，原等你夫妻完聚。这多是令岳造就你成器的好意思。”公子道：“怪道住在此多时，只见说主母，从不见甚么主人出入。我守着老实，不敢窥探一些，岂知如此就里。元来岳丈恁般费心！”张三翁道：“还不上前拜见他去！”一手扯着公子，走将进来。上官翁也凑将上来，撞着道：“你而今记得苦楚，省悟前非了么？”公子无言可答，大哭而



walked up with measured, haughty strides. The young master saw it was his former father-in-law, Shangguan. "Aha!" the young master let out a cry, turned pale and tried to leave. Zhang San darted up and grabbed him, saying, "That's your father-in-law. Where are you going?" The young master answered, "How can I have the courage to face him?" "Why not?" Zhang San said. "He is your father-in-law." The young master replied, "I sold my wife. How can he still be my father-in-law?" Zhang San said, "He has learned that you have become sensible, so he wants to let you and his daughter renew your marriage." The young master said, "His daughter is the mistress of the family I'm now working for. Does he have another daughter to marry off?" Zhang San said, "I did the matchmaking to sell your wife before. But now I'm doing the matchmaking to return your wife to you." The young master asked, "How can you do that?"

Zhang San said, "You stupid idiot! How could a privileged family remarry their daughter? In those days your father-in-law had feared that you might behave recklessly and so he sent his men to bring your wife back home. But he told you that she remarried. You're now living in one of your father-in-law's residences. Because he was afraid that you might die of hunger and cold on the streets, he asked me to make arrangements to bring you to that room as the doorkeeper. Now that you've completely discarded your former way of life, I've been sent here to let you know what's really happened and to prepare you for a reunion with your wife. The whole course of developments has been in the control of your father-in-law, with his good intentions of making you turn over a new leaf in life."

Hearing these words, the young master said, "No wonder I've been living in the room for such a long time, knowing there was a mistress of the family, but never seeing the master. I was rather compliant with your request and didn't inquire about anything. I didn't know something like this was happening. How amazing that my father-in-law went out of his way to help me!" Zhang San said, "Why not go up and give him your greetings?" He led the young master forward by holding his hand, while Shangguan came toward him and remarked, "Have you made up your mind to remember your suffering and get rid of your former style of



拜。上官翁道：“你痛改前非，我把这所房子与你夫妻两个住下，再拨一百亩田与你管运，做起人家来。若是饱暖之后，旧性复发，我即时逐你出去，连妻子也不许见面了。”公子哭道：“经了若干苦楚过来，今受了岳丈深恩，若再不晓得省改，真猪狗不值了。”上官翁领他进去，与女儿相见。夫妻抱头而哭。说了一会，出来谢了张三翁。

张三翁临去，公子道：“只有一件不干净的事，倘或旧主人寻来怎么办？”张三翁道：“那里甚么旧主人，多是你令岳捏弄出来的。你只要好做人家，再不必别虑。”公子方得放心。住在这房子里做了家主。虽不及得富盛之时，却是省吃俭用，勤心苦抵，衣食尽不缺了。记恨了日前之事，不容一个闲人上门。

那贾清夫、赵能武见说公子重新做起人家来了，合了一件来拜望他。公子走出来道：“而今有饭我要自吃，与列位往来不成了。”贾清夫把些趣话来说，议论些箫管；赵能武又说某家的马健，某人的弓硬，某处地方禽兽多。公子只是冷笑，临了道：“两兄看有似我前日这样主顾，也来作成我，做一伙同去，赚他些儿。”两人见说话不是头，扫兴而去。



living?” Shamefully at a loss for words, the young master dropped to his knees and burst into tears. Shangguan said, “Since you now hate your stupid behavior of the past, I will give you and your wife this residence and one hundred *mu* of land so that you can make a living. But if you slip back into your former way of life, I’ll throw you out and never let you see your wife again.”

Crying bitterly, the young master said, I’ve suffered a lot and received tremendous benevolence from you. If I fail to mend my ways sincerely, I will sink into a state so worthless swine and dogs will be more valued!” Then Shangguan led him into another room to meet his daughter. The husband and wife flung themselves into each other’s arms and cried. Then they talked to each other and came out to express their thanks to Zhang San.

The young master said to Zhang San, as the latter was about to leave, “I’ve got one more thing to worry about. If my former owner finds me, what should I do?” Zhang San replied, “There is no such an owner. Your enslavement was scheduled by your father-in-law! If you can manage your household, you needn’t worry about anything.” Then the young master felt easy. As the host, he lived with his wife in the residence, enjoying a life of adequate food and clothing, which was earned through diligent work and careful budgeting, although his life was not as abundant as it had been in his early years. With painful recollections of the past lingering in his mind, the young master refused to allow a single loafer into his place anymore.

As the news of the young master’s renewal of family life reached Jia Qingfu and Zhao Nengwu, the two men with some of their fellows visited their former companion. The young master came out and said to them, “I’m fine and I want to be left alone. I don’t want to associate with you anymore.” At this Jia Qingfu broached such subjects as the playing of music, and Zhao Nengwu talked about someone’s fine horse, another man’s strong bow, and some places that had many birds and wild animals. The young master simply gave a cold sneer and made this remark after their monologues were finished, “If you two brothers find someone like I used to be, please come and let me know, so we can go together and

上官翁见这些人又来歪缠，把来告了一状，搜根剔齿，查出前日许多隐漏白占的田产来，尽归了公子。公子一发有了家业，夫妻竟得温饱而终。可见前日心性，只是不曾吃得苦楚过。世间富贵子弟，还是等他晓得些稼穡艰难为妙。至于门下往来的人，尤不可不慎也。

贫富交情只自知，翟公何必署门楣？  
今朝败子回头日，便是奸徒退运时。



fleece him.” The two men felt snubbed and beat a hasty retreat in disappointment.

When Shangguan learned that those men had come to bother the young master again, he sued them. A thorough legal investigation into their doings was conducted. A large part of land they had seized illegally was confiscated and returned to the young master. The young master’s property thus grew larger. The husband and wife lived a happy life till death. The moral of the tale lies in the fact that the young master led a prodigal way of life simply due to his lack of life experience of hardship. It is highly significant that children of a rich family should go through difficulties and suffering in their lives, and they should use caution in dealing with their followers as well.

Whenever in times of rich or poor,  
Be vigilant on those who befriend you.  
On the day when the loafer returns,  
The perfidious will be down on their luck.



## 卷 二 十 四

### 庵内看恶鬼善神 井中谭前因后果

经云：

要知前世因，今生受者是。

要知来世因，今生作者是。

话说南京新桥有一人，姓丘，字伯皋。平生忠厚忠诚，奉佛甚谨，性喜施舍，不肯妄取人一毫一厘，最是个公直有名的人。一日独坐在家内屋檐之下，朗声诵经。忽然一个人背了包裹，走到面前来，放下包裹在地，向伯皋作一个揖道：“借问老丈一声。”伯皋慌忙还礼道：“有甚话？”那人道：“小子是个浙江人，在湖广做买卖。来到此地，要寻这里一个丘伯皋，不知住在何处？”伯皋道：“足下问彼住处，敢是与他旧相识么？”那人道：“一向不曾相识，只是江湖上闻得这人是个长者，忠信可托。今小子在途路间有些事体，要干累他，故此动问。”伯皋道：“在下便是丘伯皋。足下既是远来相寻，请到里面来细讲。”立起身来，拱进堂内坐定，问道：“足下高姓？”那人道：“小子姓南，贱号少营。”伯皋道：“有何见托？”少





## *Tale 24*

### **The Evil and the Good Emerge in front of a Temple The Cause and Effect of the Incident Is Revealed in a Well**

The Buddhist sutra reads thus:

What you did in your previous existence decides  
what you are in this life.

What you do in this life decides  
what you will be in your next existence.

Once there lived a man named Qiu Bogao in Xinqiao, Nanjing. Qiu was an extremely honest man and a devout believer in Buddhism. He was glad to give alms and never took anything from other people.

One day while he was chanting Buddhist sutra alone under the eaves of his house, a man carrying a bag on the back suddenly appeared before him. Putting the bag on the ground, the man bowed to Qiu and said, "Excuse me, sir." Returning the salute, Qiu asked immediately, "Can I help you?" The man said, "I'm a native of Zhejiang, and I'm a private trader in the Hunan and Hubei region. I've come here to look for a man named Qiu Bogao. Could you tell me where he lives?" Qiu asked, "Now that you're inquiring about his whereabouts, is he an old friend of yours?" "No," the man replied, "we don't know each other. But I've long heard that Qiu is a venerable elder and is most loyal and honest. It is said he is a person people can entrust important business with. As I'm on the journey, I have something to bother him. This is why I'm asking about him." "I am Qiu Bogao," said Qiu. "Come on in, please, and tell me what I can do for you." So saying, Qiu rose and showed the man into the sitting room. After they were seated, Qiu asked, "May I know your name?" "My name is Nan Shaoying," replied the man. Qiu asked, "What can I do for you?"





营道：“小子有些事体，要到北京会一个人，两月后可回了。”手指着包裹道：“这里头颇有些东西。今单身远走，路上干系，欲要寄顿停当，方可起程。世上的人，便是亲眷朋友最相好的，撞着财物交关，就未必保得心肠不变。一路闻得吾丈大名，是分毫不苟的人，所以要将来寄放在此，安心北去，回来叩领。即此便是干累老丈之处，别无他事。”伯皋道：“这个当得。但请足下封记停当，安放舍下，只管放心自去，万无一失。”少营道：“如此多谢。”当下依言，把包裹封记好了，交与伯皋拿了进去。伯皋见他是远来的人，整治酒饭待他。他又要置办上京去的几件物事，未得动身。伯皋就留他家里住宿两晚，方才别去。

过了两个多月，不见他来。看看等至一年有馀，杳无音耗。伯皋问着北来的浙江人，没有一个晓得他的。要差人到浙江问他家里，又不晓得他地头住处。相遇着浙人，便问南少营，全然无人认得。伯皋道：“这桩未完事，如何是了？”没计奈何，巷口有一卜肆甚灵，特去问卜一卦。那占卦的道：“卦上已绝生气，行人必应沉没在外，不得回来。”

伯皋心下委决不开，归来与妻子商量道：“前日这人与我素不相识，忽然来寄此包裹。今一去不来，不知包内是甚么东西。意欲开来看一看，这人道我忠厚可托，故一面不相识，肯



Nan said, "I'm on my way to Beijing to visit a friend. I'll be back here in two months." Pointing at his bag on the ground, Nan continued, "There are some important things in this bag. As I'm going to continue to travel farther alone, I'll have to leave it at a safe place. Even the closest relatives and the best friends are not necessarily reliable when they come to money or properties. I've long heard of your reputation as an extremely honest man. So I'm thinking of leaving it with you so that I may rest assured while I continue my journey north. I'll come and take it when I am back. This is what I'd like to bother you about." "No problem," said Qiu. "But you'd better seal it up before you leave it to me. Then you can set your mind at rest and continue your journey. It will be perfectly safe in my place." "Thousand thanks," said Nan.

As was requested, Nan sealed up his bag and handed it to Qiu, and Qiu took it into his inner room. As Nan was a guest from a distant place, Qiu entertained him with food and wine. Nan wanted to purchase a couple of things for the journey, so he didn't set off for Beijing on that day. Qiu put him up in his house for two nights. On the third day Nan left for Beijing. More than two months passed, but Nan didn't come back for his bag. One year passed, Qiu got no news at all about Nan. Each time Qiu met natives of Zhejiang coming from the north, he would ask them if they knew a man named Nan Shaoying. The answer he got was always "no." He thought of sending someone to Zhejiang to inquire about Nan's whereabouts, unfortunately he had no idea in which part of Zhejiang Nan lived. Having no alternative, Qiu went to the fortune-teller's stall at the entrance of the lane to seek an answer from divination. The fortune-teller said, "This oracle shows that the man you're inquiring about must have run out of breath in a strange land and will never come back again."

Not knowing what to do, Qiu returned home and consulted his wife about the matter, saying, "That man named Nan and I were complete strangers when he came to visit me the other day. But he entrusted me to take care of this bag for him. He has been away for over a year now. I have no idea what's in this bag. Nan showed great confidence in me, saying that I am an honest man and I am the person he could entrust his important things with. Therefore he left this bag in my care. Is there any



寄我处，如何等不得他来？欲待不看，心下疑惑不过。我想只不要动他原物，便看一看，想也无害。”妻子道：“自家没有欺心便是，看看何妨？”取将出来，觉得沉重；打开看时，多是黄金白银，约有千两之数。伯臬道：“原来有这些东西在这里，为何却不来了？启卦的说卦上已绝生气，莫不这人死了，所以不来？我而今有个主意，在他包里取出五十金来，替他广请高僧，做一坛佛事，祈求佛力，保佑他早早回来。倘若真个死了，求他得免罪苦，早早受生。也是我和他相与一番，受寄多时，尽了一片心，不便是这样埋没了他的。”妻子道：“若这人不死，来时节动了他五十两，怎么回他？”伯臬道：“我只把这实话对他讲，说是保佑他回来的，难道怪我不成？十分不认帐，我填还他也罢了。佛天面上，那里是使了屈钱处？”算计已定，果然请了几众僧人，做了七昼夜功果。伯臬是致诚人，佛前至心祈祷，愿他生得早归，死得早脱。功果已罢，又是几时，不见音信，眼见得南少营不来了。伯臬虽无贪他东西念头，却没个还处，自佛事五十两之外，已此是人己的财物。伯臬心里常怀着不安。日远一日，也不以为意了。



reason I shouldn't wait for his return? But I'm only too anxious to know what is in this bag. I guess it won't matter much for us to take a look at the things inside only if we do not take anything from the bag." "There is no harm in taking a look at it if we do not have any ill intentions," said Qiu's wife.

As they took the bag out of the room, they found it rather heavy. Opening the bag, they saw the bag was filled up with gold and silver, approximately equaling one thousand taels of silver. "So much silver in this bag," said Qiu. "But why hasn't he returned to take it? The fortune-teller said he had run out of breath in a strange land. Could it possible he is dead and will not come back to take it? Now I've got an idea. Let's take fifty taels of silver and invite some monks to hold a Buddhist service on his behalf. May Buddha bless him! With Buddha's blessings, let's hope he will return as soon as possible. If he is dead, hope he will be excused from sufferings and get to be reborn as early as possible. Only by doing so can I be worthy of the trust he placed in me." Qiu's wife asked, "If he is not dead, what shall we say to him about these fifty taels of silver when he returns?" "We just tell him the truth," said Qiu, "and tell him that we've spent it on his behalf. Could it be possible he will blame us for it? I may as well repay him this money if he refuses to acknowledge my kindness to him. Moreover, it will never be wrong if we spend money for Buddha's sake."

Having decided thus, Qiu invited some monks to his home and held a Buddhist service for seven days and seven nights for Nan Shaoying's sake. Being a faithful believer of Buddhism, Qiu prayed with devout reference in front of the image of Buddha, wishing Nan to return to him as early as possible if he was still alive and to free himself from worldly worries as soon as possible if he was dead. Time passed, but there was still no news about Nan. Qiu took it for granted that Nan shall never return to take his silver. Though Qiu had never had the idea of pocketing the money as his own, he could not find Nan Shaoying to return him the silver. Apart from the fifty taels spent on the Buddhist service, Qiu kept the rest of the money for quite some time and always felt uneasy about it. However, with the passing of time, he didn't seem to care very much



伯臬一向无子，这番佛事之后，其妾即有妊孕。明年，生下一男，眉目疏秀，甚觉可喜，伯臬夫妻十分爱惜。养到五六岁，送他上学，取名丘俊。岂知小聪明甚有，见了书就不肯读，只是赖学。到得长大来，一发不肯学好，专一结识了一班无赖子弟，嫖赌行中一溜，撒漫使钱，戒训不下。乡里人见他如此作为，尽皆叹息道：“丘伯臬做了一世好人，生下后代乃是败子，天没眼睛，好善无报如此。”过了几时，伯臬与他娶了妻，生有一子，指望他渐渐老成，自然收心。不匡丘俊有了妻儿，越加狂肆，连妻儿不放在心上，弃着不管。终日只是三街两市和着酒肉朋友串哄，非赌即嫖，整个月不回家来。便是到家，无非是取钱钞，要当头。伯臬气忿不过。

一日，伯臬出外去。思量他在家非为，哄他回来，锁在一间空室里头，团团多是墙壁，只留着一个圆洞，放进饮食。就是生了双翅，也没处飞将出来。伯臬去了多时，丘俊坐在房里，真如囹圄一般。其大娘甚是怜他，恐怕他愁苦坏了。一日早起，走到房前，在壁缝中张他一张，看他在里面怎生光景。不看万事全休，只这一看，那一惊非小可。正是：



about it any more.

Qiu Bogao had no son. Surprisingly, his concubine became pregnant some time after the Buddhist service. In the following year the concubine gave birth to a baby boy. The boy was remarkably handsome. Qiu and his wife loved this boy very much. When the boy was about five or six years old, Qiu named him Qiu Jun and sent him to school.

Smart as he was, Qiu Jun did not like to read books and hated to go to school. When he became a grow-up, he even started to learn from bad examples and got acquainted with a group of hooligans. Whoring, gambling and spending money freely, he led a life of dissipation. Qiu Bogao repeatedly admonished him to behave good, but Qiu Jun wouldn't listen. Seeing Qiu Jun's bad way of life, all his neighbors said regretfully, "Qiu Bogao has been a good person throughout his life, but his son turns out to be a good-for-nothing. The Heaven must be blind! Good is not rewarded with good."

Some time later, Qiu Bogao chose a wife for his son Qiu Jun. Then Qiu Jun's wife gave birth to a son. Qiu Bogao hoped that his son would naturally have a change of heart and turn over a new leaf as he became more and more experienced in worldly affairs. However, he acted more wildly after his marriage and the birth of his son. He kept on hanging around with his hooligan friends, completely neglecting his wife and son. He would often stay out for a whole month. When he happened to come back home, he would do nothing but take money or demand family property as pledges. Qiu Bogao was overcome with indignation.

One day, Qiu Bogao planned to go out on a certain business. Fearing that his son would run amuck while he was away from home, Qiu managed to coax him to come back home and then locked him up in an empty room. Qiu Jun could only get food and water from a small hole on the wall. He was unable to fly away even if given wings. Qiu Bogao was away for quite some time, while Qiu Jun stayed in the room like a prisoner. Qiu Bogao's wife pitied him very much.

One early morning, Qiu Bogao's wife, deeply worried about how Qiu Jun was getting along in the room, came close to Qiu Jun's room to take a look at him from the crack of the wall. Qiu Bogao's wife was greatly



分开八片顶阳骨，倾下一桶雪水来。

丘俊的大娘看见房里坐的，不是丘俊的模样，吃了一惊。仔细看时，俨然是向年寄包裹的客人南少营。大娘认得明白，不敢则声，嘿嘿归房。恰好丘伯皋也回来。妻子说着怪异的事，伯皋猛然大悟道：“是了！是了！不必说了。原是他的东西，我怎管得他浪费？枉做冤家。”登时开了门，放了丘俊出来，听他仍旧外边浮浪。快活不多几时，酒色淘空的身子，一口气不接，无病而死。伯皋算算所费，恰正是千金的光景。明晓得是因果，不十分在心上，只收拾孙子过日，望他长成罢了。

后边人议论：丘俊是南少营的后身，来取这些寄下东西的不必说了；只因丘伯皋是个善人，故来与他家生下一孙，衍着后代，天道也不为差。但只是如此忠厚长者，明受人寄顿，又不曾贪谋了他的，还要填还本人，还得尽了方休。何况实负欠了人，强要人的，打点受用，天岂容得你过？所以冤债相偿，因果的事，说他一年也说不了。小子而今说一个没天理的与看官们听一听。

钱财本有定数，莫要欺心胡做。

试看古往今来，只是一本帐簿。



shocked at what she saw. She realized that the man sitting in the room was not Qiu Jun at all. Upon a closer look, she found out the man inside the room was none other than Nan Shaoying, the man who left his bag here years ago. Not daring to utter a word, Qiu Bogao's wife returned to her own room quietly.

Just at that moment Qiu Bogao came back home. Having heard this strange thing, Qiu suddenly realized the truth and said, "That's it! That's it! No need to say more. It's his money. How shall I stop him squandering his own money?" So saying, he instantly unlocked the door of the room and set Qiu Jun free, allowing him to take his own course and do whatever he wished. However, Qiu Jun's merrymaking didn't last long. Before long, wine and women made him extremely weak, and then one day he suddenly died without any illnesses. Qiu Bogao calculated the money Qiu Jun had spent in his lifetime and found out that it was just about one thousand taels of silver. Being fully aware that this was exactly preordained fate, Qiu Bogao didn't take it seriously. Instead, he only placed his hope in his grandson and expected that he could bring him up smoothly.

Qiu Bogao's neighbors commented thus: Qiu Jun is the reincarnation of Nan Shaoying and it goes without saying that Nan has come back to life in the shape of Qiu Jun to take his own money he had entrusted in Qiu Bogao's care; as Qiu Bogao is an honest and kind-hearted person, the Heaven has done him justice in granting him a grandson to carry on his family line.

Being an exceptionally kind-hearted and honest elder, Qiu Bogao didn't pocket Nan's wealth as his own when he was entrusted to take care of his money. In spite of all this, Qiu Bogao had to repay Nan all the money left in his care by Nan, let alone those who are in debt or who take forcible possession of others' property. Would justice tolerate such people? Every injustice has its perpetrator and every debt its debtor, and the truth is all accounts will be eventually settled sooner or later. This is destiny. I won't be able to finish talking about destiny even if I talk about it for a whole year. Now I'll tell you a story about a man who goes against justice.

A person's fortune is predestined.

Better not commit evil deeds and go about swindling people.



却说元朝至正年间，山东有一人姓元，名自实。田庄为生，家道丰厚。性质愚钝，不通文墨，却也忠厚认真，一句说话两个半句的人。同里有个姓缪的千户，与他从幼往来相好。一日，缪千户选授得福建地方官职，收拾赴任，缺少路费，要在自实处借银三百两。自实慨然应允。缪千户写了文券送过去。自实道：“通家至爱，要文券做甚么？他日还不还在你心里，你去做官的人，料不赖了我的。”此时自实恃家私有馀，把这几两银子也不放在心上，竟自不收文券，如数交与他去。缪千户自去上任了。

真是事有不测，至正末年间，山东大乱，盗贼四起。自实之家，被群盗劫掠一空。所剩者田地屋宇，兵戈扰攘中，又变不出银子来。恋着住下，又恐性命难保，要寻个好去处避兵。其时福建被陈友定所据，七郡地方，独安然无事。自实与妻子商量道：“目今满眼兵戈，只有福建平静。况缪君在彼为官，可以投托。但道途阻塞，人口牵连，行动不得。莫若寻个海船搭





Just take a look at the past.

It's nothing but an account book.

\* \* \*

During the Zhizheng's reign (1341-1367) of the Yuan Dynasty, there lived a man named Yuan Zishi in Shandong. Yuan Zishi lived on farming and his family was comfortably off. Slow-witted and illiterate as he was, he was honest and kind-hearted. He had a close friend in the village surnamed Miao. Miao was a hereditary Battalion Commander of about ten thousand soldiers. Yuan and Miao had been on good terms with each other ever since childhood.

One day Miao was appointed a local official post in Fujian. As he was about to set out for Fujian to assume office, he found he was short of traveling expenses. He asked Yuan for a loan of three hundred taels of silver. Yuan agreed to lend him the money without stint. Miao wrote a loan agreement and took it to Yuan. "We're intimate friends," said Yuan. "Why we need a loan agreement? Return it or not is simply up to you. As you're going to assume office, I don't think you'll refuse to return me the money." At this moment, Yuan was extremely conceited. Considering he was well-off, he didn't take this sum of silver seriously at all. So he handed exactly the amount of money to Miao, without taking the loan agreement. With this money as traveling expenses, Miao set out for Fujian.

Indeed, something unexpected may happen at any moment. During the last years of Zhizheng's reign, Shandong was thrown into disorder. Bandits rose like swarms of wasps. Yuan Zishi's home was ransacked completely. War-torn, he could not sell his land or houses for money. Though reluctant to leave his hometown, he feared that his life would be in danger. So he came up with the idea of seeking asylum in a peaceful place.

At that time Fujian was under the control of a warlord named Chen Youding. Therefore Fujian was the only place of peace. Yuan said to his wife, "Life is chaotic in Shandong at present. Fujian alone is a place of peace. What's more, Miao is holding an official position in Fujian. We can go there to seek his patronage. But we have difficulties getting there by land, because traffic must be held up and there are so many of us.



了他，由天津出海，直趋福州，一路海洋，可以径达。便可挈家而去了。”商量已定，收拾了些零剩东西，载了一家，上了海船，看了风讯开去。

不则几时，到了福州地面。自实上岸，先打听缪千户消息。见说缪千户正在陈友定幕下当道用事，威权隆重，门庭赫奕。自实喜之不胜，道是来得着了。匆忙之中，未敢就去见他，且回到船里，对妻子说道：“问着了缪家，他正在这里兴头，便是我们的造化了。”大家欢喜。

自实在福州城中赁下了一个住居，接妻子上来，安顿行李停当，思量要见缪千户。转一个念头道：“一路受了风波，颜色憔悴，衣裳蓝缕。他是兴头的时节，不要讨他鄙贱，还宜从容为是。”住了多日，把冠服多整饰齐楚，面庞也养得黑色退了，然后到门求见。门上人见是外乡人，不肯接帖。问其来繇，说是山东。门上人道：“我们本官最怕乡里来缠，门上不敢禀得，怕惹他恼燥。等他出来，你自走过来觑面见他，须与吾们无干。他只这个时节出来快了。”自实依言，站着等候。果然不多一会，缪千户骑着马出来拜客。自实走到马前，躬身打拱。缪千户把眼看别处，毫厘不像认得的。自实急了，走上前去，说了山东土音，把自己姓名大声叫喊。缪千户听得，只得叫拢



We'd better go there by a steamer. We can put out to sea from Tianjin and reach Fuzhou nonstop." Having decided thus, Yuan packed up some of the fragmentary things remained in his family and got on board a steamer with his whole family.

Before long, the steamer reached Fuzhou. Getting off the steamer, Yuan went downtown to inquire about Miao. Fortunately he learned that Miao was holding a powerful official position in Chen Youding's headquarters. Overcome with joy, Yuan thought he had come to the right place. As he was in a rush, he didn't call upon him then and there. Instead, he returned to the steamer and said to his wife, "The Miao family is in Fuzhou. How lucky we are!" Everyone of the Yuan family was very happy at the good news.

Yuan Zishi and his family rented a house in Fuzhou and settled themselves down. As he was considering of making a call upon Miao, he thought better of it. "Being travel-worn, I must look extremely haggard and my clothes are in rags," Yuan thought to himself. "As he is now at the height of his power and glory, I'd better not be looked down upon by him. So I must be patient." After quite some time, Yuan's swarthy complexion was gone. He dressed up immaculately and went to call at Miao's house.

Arriving at the entrance of Miao's house, Yuan was denied admittance by the doorkeepers. When asked where he was from, Yuan told the doorkeepers he was from Shandong. "Our master hates to be disturbed by his fellow townsmen," said the doorkeepers. "We do not dare to inform him of your arrival, for we're afraid of making him angry. You may go and meet him directly when he comes out of his house, and it will have nothing to do with us. He is coming out soon." As was told, Yuan had to stand there, waiting for the appearance of Miao.

Before long, Miao came out of his house on horseback. He was going to visit a friend. Yuan moved closer to him and greeted him by making a bow with hands folded in front. However, Miao deliberately looked at other places, as if he did not know Yuan at all. Overcome with anxiety, Yuan greeted him with a strong local Shandong accent and shouted his own name at the top of his voice. Upon hearing someone shouting with a



住了马，认一认，假作吃惊道：“元来是我乡亲，失瞻！失瞻！”下马来作了揖，拉了他，转到家里来，叙了宾主坐定。一杯茶罢，千户自立起身来道：“适间正有小事要出去，不得奉陪。且请仁兄回寓，来日薄具小酌，奉请过来一叙。”自实不曾说得甚么，没奈何且自别过。

等到明日，千户着个人拿了一个单帖，来请自实。自实对妻子道：“今日请我，必有好意。”欢天喜地，不等再邀，跟着就走。到了衙内，千户接着。自实只说道长久不见，又远来相投，怎生齐整待他；谁知千户意思甚澹，草草酒果三杯，说些地方上大概的话，略略问问家中兵戈光景，亲眷存亡之类，毫厘不问着自实为何远来，家业兴废若何。比及自实说着遭劫逃难，苦楚不堪，千户听了，也只如常，并无惊骇怜恤之意。至于借银之事，头也不提起，谢也不谢一声。自实几番要开口，又想到：“刚到此地，初次相招，怎生就说讨债之事？万一冲撞了他，不好意思。”只得忍了出门。

到了下处，旅寓荒凉，柴米窘急。妻子问说：“何不与缪家说说前银，也好讨些来救急？”自实说初到不好启齿未曾说



Shandong accent, Miao had to stop his horse. After recognizing Yuan Zishi, Miao put on an air of surprise and said, “So my fellow townsman is here! I’m awfully sorry I didn’t recognize you. Sorry!” Alighting his horse, Miao greeted Yuan in return by folding his hands in a bow. Then Miao showed Yuan into his home. After having had a cup of tea, Miao rose to his feet and said, “A minute ago I was about to go out to attend to my personal matters. I’m afraid I won’t be able to keep you company. Please go back to your dwelling place. I’ll invite you to my home for a chat and entertain you to wine some other day.” Unable to do anything about it, Yuan had to take his leave.

On the next day, Miao sent an errand to invite Yuan to his office. Overwhelmed with joy, Yuan followed the errand to Miao’s office. Miao met Yuan at the door of his office and then showed him in. As they had not seen each other for quite some time and now Yuan had come from afar to seek his patronage, Yuan cherished great expectations for a warm reception by Miao, but in fact he was cold-shouldered. He was treated with nothing but a few cups of wine and some fruits. Miao only asked Yuan a couple of general questions like how the war in Shandong was going on and how his own relatives were doing. He never asked Yuan why he had come here from afar and how his family was doing.

When Yuan spoke out his misery and sufferings in fleeing from the calamity, Miao remained as calm as usual and showed no signs of shock and compassion. As to his loan of three hundred taels of silver, he never mentioned it at all. He didn’t express his thanks, either. Each time Yuan was about to mention it, he thought better of it, “I haven’t been here for long and this is the first time he invites me to his place. How should I bring up the subject of the payment of a debt? What if I offend him?” Thus he left Miao’s office without mentioning the loan.

When he returned to his dwelling place, Yuan felt extremely grieved at the desolateness of living far away from home and the straitened circumstances. His wife asked, “Why didn’t you mention the loan to Miao and ask him to repay us some silver so that we can make both ends meet?” Yuan explained that he didn’t do so because he felt it very hard to bring this matter up at their first meeting in this new place. His wife complained,

得的缘故。妻子怨怅道：“我们万里远来，所干何事？专为要投托繆家。今特特请去一番，却只贪着他些微酒食，碍口识羞，不把正经话提起。我们有甚么别望头在那里？”自实被埋怨得不耐烦，踌躇了一夜，次日早起，就到繆千户家去求见。

千户见说自实到来，心里已有几分不像意了。免不得出来见他，意思甚倦，叙得三言两语，做出许多勉强支吾的光景出来。自实只得自家开口道：“在下家乡遭变，拚了性命，挈家海上远来，所仗惟有兄长。今日有句话，不揣来告。”千户不等他说完，便接口道：“不必兄说，小弟已知。向者承借路费，于心不忘。虽是一宦萧条，俸入微薄，恰是故人远至，岂敢辜恩？兄长一面将文券简出来，小弟好照依数目，打点陆续奉还。”

看官，你道此时繆千户肚里，岂是忘记了当初借银之时并不曾有文券的？只是不好当面赖得，且把这话做出推头，等他拿不出文券来，便不好认真催逼。此乃负心人起赖端的圈套处。——自实是个老实人，见他说得蹊跷了，吃惊道：“君言差矣！当初乡里契厚，开口就相借，从不曾有甚么文契。今日怎么说出此话来？”千户故意妆出正经面孔来道：“岂有是理！债负往来，全凭文券，怎么说个没有？或者兵火之后，君家自失去了；容或有之。然既与兄旧交，而今文券有无也不必论，自然处来还兄。只是小弟也在不足之乡，一时性急不得。从容些个，勉强措办才妙。”自实听得如此说了，一时也难相逼，只得唯唯而出。一路想：“他说话古怪，明是欺心光景。却是既到此地，不得不把他来作傍。他适才也还有从容处还的话，



“What have we come here for from ten thousand *li* away? We’re especially here to seek Miao’s patronage. Today he invited you to his place, but you were afraid to wound his feelings. You were only greedy for his food and drink instead of mentioning the most important thing. What else would we expect from him except getting back the silver he borrowed from us? Very much annoyed by his wife’s complaints and after undergoing a whole night’s shilly-shally, Yuan set out for Miao’s home early the next morning. The moment he heard about Yuan’s arrival, Miao appeared extremely dissatisfied. However, he had to come out to meet him. After exchanging greetings in a few words, he hummed and hawed, assuming an air of indifference. Having no choice, Yuan had to speak out, “I met with misfortune at home. Now I’ve traveled a long distance by sea at the risk of my life and have brought my whole family here to seek your help. I have one thing to talk to you.” Before Yuan could finish, Miao interrupted, “I know what you’re going to say. I once borrowed some traveling expenses from you. Though I’m an official, I have a meager income. Now you’ve come from afar, how should I forget your kindness? Please show me the loan agreement so that I can pay it back to you one sum after another.”

Readers, do you think Miao has forgotten that they didn’t have a loan agreement? As a matter of fact, because Miao felt it hard to repudiate the debt face to face with Yuan, he used it as an excuse to shirk the debt. This is a heartless man’s trick used to deny a debt. Taken aback at Miao’s strange remarks, Yuan said, “You must have got it wrong! We never had a loan agreement. Why you say so?” Deliberately assuming an air of seriousness, Miao said, “What nonsense! If there is a loan, there must be a loan agreement. How could you say we didn’t have one? You’ve probably lost it during the war. Anyway, since we’re intimate friends, it doesn’t matter much whether you have it or not. I’ll manage to repay you the money. But I don’t think you should be impatient about it, as I’m not quite well off at present. Better wait for some time.” Upon hearing this, Yuan had to leave. On his way home, Yuan thought in his mind, “What he said sounded rather strange. Obviously he was denying the loan. However, since I’ve come to this place to seek his help, I’ll have to wait for some



不是绝无生意的。还须忍耐几日，再去求他。只是我当初要好的不是，而今权在他人之手，就这般烦难了。”

归来与妻子说知，大家叹息了一回，商量还只是求他为是。只得挨着面皮，走了几次。常只是这些说话，推三阻四，一千年也不赖，一万年也不还。耳朵里时时好听，并不见一分递过手里来。欲待不走时，又别无生路。自实走得一个不耐烦，正所谓：

羝羊触藩，进退两难。

自实枉自奔波多次，竟无所得。日挨一日，倏忽半年，看看已近新正。自实客居萧索，合家嗷嗷，过岁之计，分毫无处。自实没奈何了，只得到繆家去。见了千户，一头哭，一头拜将下去道：“望兄长救吾性命则个！”千户用手扶起，道：“何至于此？”自实道：“新正在迹，妻子饥寒，囊乏一钱，瓶无一粒粟，如何过得日子？向者所借银两，今不敢求还；任凭尊意，应济多少，一丝一毫，尽算是尊赐罢了。就是当时无此借贷一项，今日故人之谊，也求怜悯一些。”说罢大哭。千户见哭得慌了，也有些不安，把手指数一数道：“还有十日，方是除夜。兄长可在家专待。小弟分些禄米，备些柴薪之费，送到贵寓，



days before I go claim it again. Anyway he told me he was going to manage to repay me the money. Now it has proved that I made a mistake in having excessive trust in him. And it has put me in an awkward position, for whether I can get back my money or not will be totally up to him.” Back to his dwelling place, Yuan told his wife about his failure in getting back the money. Heaving sighs of helplessness, both he and his wife agreed that they would have to go and claim it some time later.

Some days later, Yuan Zishi, summoning up his courage, paid several visits to Miao and demanded the payment of the debt. However, each time Yuan saw Miao, Miao gave him a cold shoulder with some casual remarks and all sorts of excuses of being unable to repay him the money. Also Miao would verbally agree to the payment of the debt. But the fact was that he never kept his word. Yuan thought of giving it up, but he could find no other way out. This totally landed Yuan on the horns of dilemma. Thus all Yuan’s efforts turned out to be of no avail.

Half a year passed quickly and the Spring Festival was drawing near. Living far away from his native place, Yuan’s family financial situation went from bad to worse. As Yuan had no money for the Spring Festival, his whole family was landed in an impasse. Having no alternative, he had to go and see Miao again. At the sight of Miao, Yuan kowtowed and said tearfully, “Help me, please, my friend.” Propping him up, Miao asked, “Why you behave like this?” “The Spring Festival is drawing near,” said Yuan. “My wife and children are suffering from hunger. I haven’t got a copper coin in my pocket, neither have I got a grain of rice in my kitchen. How am I going to live? As to the silver I lent you, I do not dare to cherish excessive demands of getting it back. I only hope you could help me meet a pressing need. It’s up to you to help me with as much money as you please. I’ll be extremely grateful to your kindness and generosity. Just forget about the fact I once lent you some money. Now for an old friend’s sake, hope you could take pity on me and do me a favor.” Having finished these words, Yuan burst into tears.

Seeing that Yuan wept so sadly, Miao also felt quite uneasy. Counting on his fingers, Miao said, “It will be New Year’s Eve in ten days. You just wait in your dwelling place. I’ll do my utmost and get some money for



以为兄长过岁之资。但勿以轻微为怪，便见相知。”自实穷极之际，见说肯送些东西了，心下放掉了好些，道：“若得如此，且延残喘到新年，便是盛德无尽。”欢喜作别。临别之时，千户再三叮嘱道：“除夕切勿他往，只在贵寓等着便是。”自实领诺。归到寓中，把千户之言对妻子说了，一家安心。

到了除日，清早就起来坐在家里等候。欲要出去寻些过年物事，又恐怕一时错过。心里还想等有些钱钞到手了，好去运动。呆呆等着，心肠扒将出来。叫一个小厮站在巷口，看有甚么动静，先来报知。去了一会，小厮奔来道：“有人挑着米来了。”自实急出门一看，果然一个担夫挑着一担米，一个青衣人前头拿了帖儿走来。自实认道是了。只见走近门边，担夫并无歇肩之意，那个青衣人也径自走过了。自实疑心道：“必是不认得吾家，错走过了。”连忙叫道：“在这里，可转来。”那两个并不回头。自实只得赶上前去，问青衣人道：“老哥送礼到那里去的？”青衣人把手中帖与自实看道：“吾家主张员外送米与馆宾的。你问他则甚？”自实情知不是，佯佯走了转来。



you, and I'll have someone send it over to your dwelling place so that you can use it for the Spring Festival. Hope you won't mind it if it's not much." At that time Yuan was actually in an extremely difficult financial situation. He felt very much relieved when he heard that Miao was going to give him some silver. "This being the case, my family will be able to eke out a living till the Spring Festival and I'll always remember the infinite kindness you show on me." Yuan left happily. Before Yuan's departure, Miao urged Yuan again and again, "Just stay in your dwelling place and wait there on New Year's Eve." Yuan agreed. Arriving at his dwelling place, Yuan told his wife that Miao had promised to give them some money for the Spring Festival. The whole family was wild joy at the good news.

Yuan Zishi got up early on the morning of the last day of the year and sat in his room to wait for Miao to bring him some money. Though he had the desire of going out to the stores to buy necessities for the Spring Festival, he feared he would miss Miao's arrival once he was out. Therefore he just stayed home waiting and entertaining a wild hope that he would be able to go shopping when he got the money. He waited and waited anxiously, as if he was on pins and needles. Feeling terribly worried from waiting, he dispatched a servant boy to keep a watch at the entrance of the lane. Before long, the servant boy hurried back and said to Yuan, "A person carrying loads of rice on a pole is coming."

Running out in haste, Yuan found a porter carrying rice on a pole is coming toward him. The porter was guided by a servant in black who was carrying a brief note in one hand. Yuan thought that this porter must be from the Miao family. However, the porter showed no sign of stop as he passed by Yuan's dwelling place and the servant in black went past Yuan's house. "It must be that they do not know where I live, so they missed my house," Yuan thought in his mind. Quickly Yuan shouted at them, "This is my house. Come back, please!" Both the porter and the servant gave no answer. Yuan hastened to catch up with the servant in black and said, "Excuse me, brother. To whom are you sending the gift?" Showing the note to Yuan, the servant said, "This rice is our master Zhang's gift for his family school tutor. Why do you ask?" Having learned these



又坐在家里一会，小厮又走进来道：“有一个公差打扮的，肩上驮了一肩钱走来了。”自实到门边探头一望，道：“这番是了。”只见那公差打扮的，经过门首，脚步不停，更跑得紧了些。自实越加疑心，跑上前问时，公差答道：“县里知县相公送这些钱与他乡里过节的。”自实又见不是，心里道：“别人家多纷纷送礼，要见只在今日这一日了，如何我家的偏不见到？”自实心里好像十五个吊桶打水，七上八落的；身子好像鳌盘上蚂蚁，一霎也站脚不住。

看看守到下午，竟不见来。落得探头探脑，心猿意马，这一日一件过年的东西也不买得。到街前再一看，家家户户多收拾起买卖，开店的多关了门，只打点过新年了。自实反为缪家所误，粒米束薪，家里无备。妻子只是怨怅啼哭。别人家欢呼畅饮，爆竹连天；自实攒眉皱目，凄凉相对。自实越想越气，双脚乱跳，大骂：“负心的狠贼，害人到这个所在！”一愤之气，箱中翻出一柄解腕刀来，在磨石上磨得雪亮，对妻子道：“我不杀他，不能雪这口气！我拚着这命抵他。好歹三推六问，也还迟死几时。明日绝早清晨，等他一出门来，断然结果他了！”



two men were not from the Miao family, Yuan returned home in low spirits.

After some time, Yuan's servant boy again hastened back to him and said, "A man in a *yamen* runner's clothing is coming in the direction of our house. He is carrying a bag of money on the shoulder." Yuan got out of his house and saw a man was coming towards his house. "This one must be from the Miao family," Yuan thought to himself. But the *yamen* runner didn't stop at the entrance of Yuan's house. He even quickened his paces as he went past Yuan's house. Filled with doubts and suspicions, Yuan caught up with the *yamen* runner and asked him where he was heading for. The runner answered, "This money is our County Magistrate's gift for his fellow townsmen for the Spring Festival." Feeling dejected once again, Yuan thought to himself, "Many people are sending gifts for the Spring Festival. But why hasn't Miao shown up with my money?" Yuan had his heart clanging like fifteen buckets in a single well, seven going up and eight down. Like an ant on a hot pan, he couldn't remain still.

Yuan Zishi waited till the afternoon of the day, but no one from the Miao family showed up. Prying about furtively, he remained quite unsettled in mind most of the day and bought nothing for the Spring Festival. He went out onto the streets, but found that all the stores were closed and the storekeepers had all gone home for the Spring Festival. Because Miao turned out not to be as good as his word, Yuan failed to get anything for the Spring Festival. His wife complained and wept. Every family drank to their hearts' content and the firecrackers licked the heavens; while the Yuans, knitting their brows, looked gloomy and depressed. The more Yuan Zishi thought of it, the more furious he became. Stamping his feet with indignation, he cursed Miao roundly, "Heartless bastard! You've caused so much harm to me!" In an outburst of anger, he rummaged about a suitcase and took out a knife. Having sharpened the knife brightly against a grindstone, Yuan said to his wife, "I won't be able to give vent to my anger if I do not kill him! I'll give my life for his. Certainly repeated interrogations will take some time, and my death will come later than his. I'll kill him the moment he gets out of his house early tomorrow morning."



妻子劝他且耐性，自实那里接纳得下？捏刀在手，坐到天明，鸡鸣鼓绝，径望缪家门首而去。

且说这条巷中间，有一个小庵，乃自实家里到缪家必由之路。庵中有一道者，号轩辕翁，年近百岁，是个有道之士。自实平日到缪家时经过此庵，每走到里头歇足，便与庵主轩辕翁叙一会闲话。往来既久，遂成熟识。此日是正月初一日元旦，东方将动，路上未有行人。轩辕翁起来开了门，将一张桌当门放了，点上两枝蜡烛，朝天拜了四拜，将一卷经摊在桌上，中间烧起一炉香，对着门坐下，朗声而诵。诵不上一两板，看见街上天光熹微中，一个人当前走过，甚是急遽，认得是元自实。因为怕断了经头，繇他自去，不叫住他。这个老人家道眼清明，看元自实在前边一面走，后面却有许多人跟着。仔细一看，那里是人？乃是奇形异状之鬼，不计其数，跳舞而行。但见：

或握刀剑，或执椎凿。

披头露体，势甚凶恶。

轩辕翁住了经不念，口里叫声道：“怪哉！”把性定一回，重把经念起。不多时，见自实复走回来，脚步懒慢。轩辕翁因是起先诧异了，嘿嘿看他自走，不敢叫破。自实走得过，又有百来个人跟着在后。轩辕翁着眼细看，此番的人多少比前差不远，



Upon hearing this, Yuan's wife urged him to calm down. But how would he listen to her? Holding the knife in his hand, he sat in his house until it was daybreak. At cockcrow, he set out for Miao's home.

In the middle of the lane was a temple which was the only way for Yuan to go to Miao's home. There lived an old Taoist surnamed Xuanyuan. Taoist Xuanyuan was almost a hundred years old. On ordinary days, Yuan would stop at the temple to have a chat with Xuanyuan each time he passed by it. As Yuan had lived here for quite some time, he and Taoist Xuanyuan gradually became acquainted with each other.

It was the first day of the first month of the year. As the first rays of the sun were just beginning to set forth in the east, not a single soul could be seen in the lane. Taoist Xuanyuan got up and opened the door of the temple. He set a table at the door, lit up two candles, made four bows to the heaven, and put a volume of sutra on the table. Then he placed an incense burner in the middle of the table and lit up the joss sticks within. When everything was ready, he started to chant the sutra. Hardly had he chanted a couple of pages when he saw a man rushing by in front of him in the faint rays of the dawning sun. Taoist Xuanyuan knew it was Yuan Zishi. Fearing he would be interrupted, he didn't stop him. With a penetrating insight, he noticed that while Yuan walked ahead, many people were following him at his heels. Taking a closer look at the men behind Yuan, Xuanyuan found out they were by no means humans, but innumerable ghosts of grotesque shapes and appearances who followed Yuan with dancing steps, naked. With disheveled hair, all the ghosts wore vicious looks on their faces. Some of them held sabers, while some held awls.

Xuanyuan stopped chanting the sutra and murmured to himself, "Strange!" Then he calmed down and continued with his chanting. Before long, he saw Yuan walking back in an unhurried and leisurely way. He also found out that Yuan was again followed by about a hundred people. Though the two groups of people were almost the same in number, this time Xuanyuan noticed that this group, all gorgeously dressed, were completely different from the first group in dresses who had followed after Yuan previously. With genial expressions on their faces, they all



却是打扮大不相同，尽是金冠玉佩之士。但见：

或挈幢盖，或举旌幡。

和容悦色，意甚安闲。

轩辕翁惊道：“这却是甚么缘故？岁朝清早，所见如此，必是元生死了，适间乃其阴魂，故到此不进门来，相从的多是神鬼。然恶往善归，又怎么解说？”心下狐疑未决。一面把经诵完了；急急到自实家中，访问消耗。

进了元家门内，不听得里边动静。咳嗽一声，叫道：“有客相拜。”自实在里头走将出来，见是个老人家，新年初一相拜，忙请坐下。轩辕翁说了一套随俗的吉利话，便问自实道：“今日绝清早足下往何处去？去的时节甚是匆匆，回来的时节甚是缓缓，其故何也？愿得一闻。”自实道：“在下有一件不平的事，不好告诉得老丈。”轩辕翁道：“但说何妨？”自实把缪千户当初到任借他银两，而今来取，只是推托，希图混赖，及年晚哄送钱米竟不见送，以致狼狈过年的事，从头至尾，说了一遍。轩辕翁也顿足道：“这等恩将仇报，其实可恨！这样人必有天报。足下今日出门，打点与他寻闹么？”自实道：“不敢欺老丈，昨晚委实气了一晚。吃亏不过，把刀磨快了，巴到天明，意要往彼门首，等他清早出来，一刀刺杀了，以雪此恨。及至到了门首，再想一想，他固然得罪于我，他尚有老母妻子，平日与他通家往来的，他们须无罪。不争杀了千户一人，他家老母妻子就要流落他乡了。思量自家一门流落之苦，如此难





looked unruffled. Some of them carried canopies and some carried flags in their hands. “Why so?” wondered Xuanyuan with surprise. “Yuan must have died. The one I saw a moment must be his spirit. So, it didn’t stop at my place, and the ones at his heels were most probably ghosts. But why did he return in a kindly and affable manner?” Xuanyuan felt very much puzzled. He hastened to finish chanting the sutra. Then he went to the Yuans in a hurry to see what had gone with Yuan Zishi.

Arriving at Yuan’s dwelling place, Xuanyuan found that it was very quiet. Making a cough, he called, “Anybody in?” Yuan came out of his room and found it was an old man. Considering that the old man was paying him a visit on the New Year’s day, Yuan immediately asked him to take a seat. After making some common auspicious remarks, Xuanyuan asked, “Where were you going early this morning? Why were you in a rush when went out and why did you walk in such a slowly way when you returned?” “I’ve suffered an injustice,” replied Yuan, “and I feel it embarrassing to tell you about it.” Xuanyuan said, “Just say it, please.” Yuan then gave a full account about how Miao had borrowed the money from him the other year as traveling expenses when he was about to assume office, how Miao had intended to repudiate the loan and delayed the repayment of it with various excuses, how Miao had fooled him by promising to give him some rice or money as partial repayment of the loan on the New Year’s Eve, and how he and his family had had a hard time for the Spring Festival.

Stamping his feet, Xuanyuan said, “It is detestable for Miao to return evil for good! He will come to no good end. Were you thinking of picking a fight when you first went to look for him?” “To tell you the truth,” said Yuan, “it really drove me mad last night. Unable to put up with the indignation, I sharpened my knife and I was just dying to kill him the moment he got out of his house early in the morning so as to avenge myself. However, when I thought of the matter carefully, I changed my mind at the entrance of his house. It is true Miao has offended me, but his old mother, his wife and children are not guilty and they have been on good terms with me for years. If I kill Miao, his whole family will certainly be forced to leave Fuzhou and lead a dog’s life in a strange land. How



堪，怎忍叫他家也到这地位？宁可他负了我，我不可做那害人的事。所以忍住了这口气，慢慢走了来。心想未定，不曾到老丈处奉拜得，却教老丈先降，得罪，得罪。”轩辕翁道：“老汉不是来拜年，其实有桩奇异，要到宅上奉访。今见足下诉说这个缘故，当与足下称贺了。”自实道：“有何可贺？”轩辕翁道：“足下当有后禄。适间之事，神明已知道了。”自实道：“怎见得？”轩辕翁道：“方才清早足下去时节，老汉看见许多凶鬼相随；回来时节，多换了福神。老汉因此心下奇异。今见足下所言如此，乃知一念之恶，凶鬼便至；一念之善，福神便临。如影随形，一毫不爽。暗室之内，造次之间，万不可萌一毫恶念，造罪损德的。足下善念既发，鬼神必当嘿佑，不必愁恨了。”自实道：“虽承老丈劝慰，只是受了负心之骗，一个新岁，钱米俱无，光景难堪。既不杀得他，自家寻个死路罢，也羞对妻子了。”轩辕翁道：“休说如此短见的话。老汉庵中尚有馀粮，停会当送些过来，权时应用。切勿更起他念。”自实道：“多感！多感！”轩辕翁作别而去。

去不多时，果然一个道者领了轩辕翁之命，送一挑米、一贯钱到自实家来。自实枯竭之际，只得受了。转托道者，致谢庵主。

道者去后，自实展转思量：“此翁与我向非相识，尚承其



should I bear to see them come to such a miserable end? Better let him betray me than I betray him. I thought I mustn't harm others. So I restrained myself and returned slowly. I was lost in thought at the moment, so I didn't stop to pay my respect to you. And now you've come to see me! I feel rather guilty for my impoliteness."

"I'm not here to pay you a New Year call," said Xuanyuan. "I've come to see you because I've got something to inform you. After hearing your account of the story, I think I should offer my congratulations to you." "What for?" asked Yuan. Xuanyuan answered, "From now on, you're going to have good fortune. All the deities have known your mind and actions." "What made you say so?" asked Yuan. Xuanyuan answered, "I saw many sinister-looking ghosts at your heels when you first went to Miao's home. But I saw that you were followed by many good-fortune deities when you returned. This is why I was puzzled at the moment. Upon hearing your words, I was fully convinced that evil spirits do emerge once a person harbors ill intentions and happy-fortune deities do make their presence felt once good intentions come into a person's mind. One should never harbor ill intentions against others and harm people. Since you've got good intentions in your mind, the ghosts or evil spirits will surely go away from you. So you should not feel sad any more."

"Thank you for your comforting me, but I'm really hurt by Miao's heartlessness. Moreover, I suffered enormously in my heart because Miao had caused me to spend the New Year without a coin or any food. Though I do not have the heart to kill him, I guess I should commit suicide, for I do feel ashamed before my wife." "None of these short-sighted remarks!" said Xuanyuan. "I have some extra grains in my temple. I'll bring them to you soon. Forget those foolish ideas!" "Thank you very much, thank you very much!" Yuan said repeatedly. Then Xuanyuan left.

Before long, a Taoist, at Xuanyuan's order, came to Yuan's place with a basket of rice as well as some money. As Yuan was in a desperate position, he accepted them. Then he asked the Taoist to express his thanks to Xuanyuan.

After the Taoist left, Yuan turned over the matter carefully in his mind. "Xuanyuan and I are complete strangers," he thought to himself, "yet he



好意如此。叵耐繆千户负欠了我的，反一毛不拔。本为他远来相投，今失了望，后边日子如何过得？我要这性命也没干。况且此恨难消。据轩辕翁所言，神鬼如此之近，我阳世不忍杀他，何不寻个自尽，到阴间告理他去？必有伸诉之处。”遂不与妻子说破，竟到三神山下一个八角井边，叹了一口气，仰天喊道：“皇天有眼，我元自实被人赖了本钱，却教我死于非命。可怜！可怜！”说罢，扑通的跳了下去。

自实只道是水泔将来，立刻可死，谁知道井中可煞作怪，自实脚踏实地，点水也无。伸手一摸，两边俱是石壁削成，中间有一条狭路，只好容身。自实将手托着两壁，黑暗中只管向前，依路走去。走勾有数百步远，忽见有一线亮光透入。急急望亮处走去，须臾壁尽路穷，乃是一个石洞小口。出得口时，豁然天日明朗，别是一个世界。又走了几十步，见一所大宫殿，外边门上牌额四个大金字，乃是“三山福地”。自实瞻仰了一会，方敢举步而入。但见：

古殿烟消，长廊昼静。徘徊四顾，阒无人踪；钟磬一声，恍来云外。自是洞天福地，宜有神仙在此藏；绝非俗境尘居，不带夙缘那得到？



is so kind to me. Miao owes me money, but is so close-fisted. I've come to him for help from afar, but he has let me down. How am I going to eke out a living? For me, death is better than a wretched existence. Further more, I can't clear up my anger. According to what Xuanyuan had said, ghosts and deities are very close around me. Though I don't have the heart to kill him in this human world, why don't I kill myself and then bring him to court in the underworld? I'm sure the injustice done on me will be righted in the underworld." Without letting his wife know his mind, Yuan went to an octagonal well at the foot of the Sacred Hill of Three Deities. Heaving a sigh, he shouted towards the sky, "The Great Heaven have eyes! Someone refused to pay back the money he had borrowed from me. But I have to die such an unnatural death! What a shame!" So saying, he jumped into the well.

Yuan Zishi took it for granted that he would be drowned instantly after he fell into the well. But he never expected it was a dry well. Thus Yuan landed on the solid ground of the well. Feeling the wall around him in the well, he found that the wall of the well was all made of smoothly-cut stones. In the middle of the wall was a small cave about the size of a person's body. Feeling the wall of the cave with both hands, he groped his way forward in the dark. All of a sudden, a beam of light emerged in front of him after he had walked about a hundred paces. He headed for the light in a hurry. Within an instant, he reached the end of the cave and found out that the light was the entrance of the stone cave. Coming out of the cave, he found himself in a bright open space, an absolutely different world. Another dozens of steps took him to a huge palace, on the lintel of its door was a horizontal board bearing several large characters reading "The Land of Happiness of Three Deity Hills." Yuan didn't dare to enter the palace until he had looked at it with reverie for quite some time.

Once arriving at the inside of the palace, he found that the halls were laden with incense smoke and the long corridors were as bright as day. Looking around, he saw no souls. The tolling of the bell in the palace seemed to have come from the heavens. It was the land of happiness where immortals lived. It was by no means an ordinary dwelling place for the mortals or laymen in this world. Had he not had the happy fate,



自实立了一晌，不见一个人面，肚里饥又饥，渴又渴，腿脚又酸，走不动了。见面前一个石坛，且是洁净，自实软倒来，只得眠在石坛傍边，歇息一回。

忽然里边走出一个人来，乃是道士打扮，走到自实跟前，笑问自实道：“翰林已知客边滋味了么？”自实吃一惊，道：“客边滋味，受得勾苦楚了；如何呼我做翰林？岂不大差！”道士道：“你不记得在兴庆殿草诏书了么？”自实道：“一发好笑。某乃山东鄙人，布衣贱士，生世四十，目不知书，连京里多不曾认得，晓得甚么兴庆殿，草甚么诏书？”道士道：“可怜！可怜！人生换了皮囊，便为嗜欲所汨，饥寒所困，把前事多忘记了。你来此间，腹中已饿了么？”自实道：“昨晚忿恨不食，直到如今。为寻死地到此，不期误入仙境。却是腹中又饿，口中又渴，腿软筋麻，当不得，暂卧于此。”道士袖里摸出大梨一颗，大枣数枚，与自实道：“你认得这东西么？此交梨红枣也。你吃了下去，不惟免了饥渴，兼可晓得过去之事。”自实接来手中，正当饥渴之际，一口气吃了下去。不觉精神爽健，瞑目一想，惺然明悟。记得前生身为学士，在大都兴庆殿侧草诏，犹如昨日。一轂辘扒将起来，拜着道士道：“多蒙仙长佳果之味，不但解了饥渴，亦且顿悟前生。但前生既如此清贵，



how could he have possibly got to this place?

Yuan stood in the hall for quite some time, but still not a single soul came into his sight. Overcome with hunger, thirst and fatigue, he could no longer move forward. Just at this moment, he saw a clean stone altar in front of him. Then he got to the stone altar and lay down beside it to have a break.

Suddenly a Taoist came over to Yuan Zishi and asked him smilingly, "You've tasted the hardships of living away from your home, haven't you, Imperial Academician?" Greatly shocked, Yuan said, "It's true I've had lot of hardships of living away from home, but why do you call me Imperial Academician? You must have made a mistake!" The Taoist asked, "Don't you remember you used to draft imperial instructions at the Xinqing Palace?" Yuan answered, "You must be kidding. I'm an ordinary man from Shandong. Though I'm forty, I can neither read nor write. I've never been to the capital. How should I know anything about the Xinqing Palace? How should I ever have the chance to draft imperial instructions?"

"What a pity!" said the Taoist. "Once a person changes into another skin-bag, he is instantly seized with the desire for the satisfaction of the senses and haunted by hunger and cold, completely forgetting his past. Now you must be hungry, am I right?" Yuan said, "I'm so angry that I haven't eaten anything since last night. I meant to commit suicide, but accidentally I fell into this wonderland. Overcome with hunger and thirst, I was completely exhausted when I arrived here. So I stopped at the altar to have a rest." Taking a big pear and several jujubes out of his sleeve, the Taoist handed them to Yuan and said, "Do you know what they are? They are magical fruits of immortality. Eat them. They will not only appease your hunger and thirst, but also will help you recall your past." Yuan ate them without a break. Without his being aware of it, he felt exhilarated at once. Closing his eyes, he sunk into thoughts and his previous existence suddenly dawned on him. He clearly remembered that he used to be an academician in his former life, and drafted imperial instructions at the Xinqing Palace in Dadu (present Beijing). Getting onto his feet, he bowed toward the Taoist and said, "Thank you for your magical fruits of immortality. They not only appeased my hunger and thirst, but also helped





未知作何罪业，以致今生受报，弄得如此没下稍了。”道士道：“你前世也无大罪。但在职之时，自恃文学高强，忽略后进之人，不肯加意汲引，故今世罚你愚懵，不通文义。又妄自尊大，拒绝交游，毫无情面，故今世罚你漂泊，投人不着。这也是一还一报，天道再不差的。今因你一念之善，故有分到此福地，与吾相遇，救你一命。”道士因与自实说世间许多因果之事：某人是善人，该得好报；某人是恶人，该得恶报。某人乃是无厌鬼王出世，地下有十个炉替他铸横财，故在世贪饕不止，贿赂公行，他日福满，当受幽囚之祸。某人乃多杀鬼王出世，有阴兵五百，多是铜头铁额的，跟随左右，助其行虐，故在世杀害良民，不戢军士，他日命衰，当受割截之殃。其余凡贪官污吏，富室豪民，及矫情干誉，欺世盗名，种种之人，无不随业得报，一一不爽。

自实见说得这等利害明白，打动了心中事，遂问道：“假似缪千户欺心混赖，负我多金，反致得无聊如此，他日岂无报应？”道士道：“足下不必怪他。他乃是王将军的库子，财物不是他的，他岂得妄动耶？”自实道：“见今他享荣华，我受贫苦，眼前怎么当得？”道士道：“不出三年，世运变革，地



me know my former life. Since I was so distinguished and aloof in my previous existence, what evil deeds did I do to make me come to such miserable conditions in this life?"

"Actually you didn't commit any serious faults," said the Taoist. "But while you were in office in your previous existence, you were extremely conceited, considering all others' literary talent beneath your notices. Therefore you are slow-witted and illiterate in this life. In addition to this, you were so arrogant that you refused to make friends and spared no one's sensibilities. For this reason you deserve to wander from place to place and have no one to turn to when you are in trouble in this life. Retribution is bound to follow, and this is the Way of Heaven. Because of your momentary good intentions, you are fortunate to have come to this happy land and met me. And I saved your life."

Then the Taoist started to tell Yuan many instances about the cause and effect in this human world: "Somebody is a good person and will be rewarded with good; somebody is an evil person and will be rewarded with evil. Somebody is the transmigration of a gluttonous ghost, so he rapaciously seeks money in this world. After his death, he will be imprisoned in the nether world. Somebody is the transmigration of killer ghost, and was surrounded by five hundred ghost soldiers with bronze heads and iron foreheads who were all his helpers in doing evil deeds, so he kills good people in this world. After his death, he will be severed by cutting into pieces as a punishment. As to the corrupt officials, rich and cruel people, and those who gain fame and honor by dishonest means, retributions will definitely fall upon each of them accordingly."

As Yuan heard clearly the Taoist's words about the serious consequences of the retributions, the load weighing on his mind suddenly touched him. "Miao owes me a lot of money," said Yuan, "and he refused to pay it back to me. Isn't he going to pay for his heartlessness some day?" "You needn't blame him for it," said the Taoist. "He is only the watchman of General Wang's storehouse. It is not his money. How dare he is going to spend the money rashly?" Yuan said, "He is now enjoying all the comforts of luxury while I'm living in poverty. How should I put up with it?" "Within three years," said the Taoist, "the turmoil of war will



方将有兵戈大乱，不是这光景了。你快择善地而居，免受池鱼之祸。”自实道：“在下愚昧，不识何处可以躲避。”道士道：“福宁可居。且那边所在与你略有缘分，可偿得你前日好意贷人之物，不必想缪家还了。此皆子善念所至也。今到此已久，家人悬望，只索回去罢。”自实道：“起初自井中下来，行了许多暗路，今不能重记。就寻着了旧路，也上去不得，如何归去？”道士道：“此间别有一径，可以出外，不必从旧路了。”因指点山后一条路径，叫自实从此而行。自实再拜称谢。道士自转身去了。

自实依着所指之径，行不多时，见一个穴口，走将出来，另有天日。急回头认时，穴已不见。自实望去百步之外，远远有人行走，奔将去问路，元来即是福州城外。遂急急跑回家来。家人见了，又惊又喜道：“那里去了这几日？”自实道：“我今日去，就是今日来，怎么说几日？”家人道：“今日是初十了。自那日初一出门，到晚不见回来，只道在轩辕翁庵里。及至去问时，却又说不曾来。只疑心是有甚么山高水低，轩辕翁说你



arise in this place and everything will be changed. You'd better move away from this place as soon as possible to somewhere else, which is suitable for you, so as not to be caught in trouble for no reason at all." Yuan said, "I'm an ignorant person. I have no idea where I can find a good shelter." "You can move to Funing (present-day Xiapu County in Fujian Province) and get settled there," said the Taoist. "And Funing has some predestined relations with you. There you'll be rewarded for your kindness in lending money to Miao. From now on, you'd better forget that Miao still owes you the money. You owe all this to your good intentions. Since you've been here for a long while, your family must be worrying about you. Now you'd better go back home."

"I came here from the well," said Yuan, "and I walked a long distance in the dark. I don't remember the way back. I won't be able to climb up the well even though I might find my way back to the well. How can I go back home?" The Taoist said, "Here is another way out. You needn't take the way you originally took." Pointing at a path behind the hill, the Taoist showed Yuan how to get out. Once again Yuan thanked the Taoist, and thus the two parted.

Before long, Yuan Zishi reached the exit of the cave. Then he got out of the cave and saw the light of day. Looking back immediately, he found that the cave had already been gone. Just at this moment, he saw that someone was passing by about a hundred paces away from him. Rushing over to the passer-by, he made inquiries about his way home. He was told that he was right at the outskirts of Fuzhou. Then he hurriedly raced back home.

Seeing that Yuan was back home, his family asked, "Where have you been for these days?" Yuan said, "I left today, and I'm coming back today. Why do you say 'for these days'?" "It is the tenth day of the first month today. You left on the first day of the first month. Seeing that you didn't come back home that night, we thought you must be staying the night at Xuanyuan's temple. We went to look for you at the temple, but were told that you had not been there. We were deeply worried if there would be anything wrong with you, but Xuanyuan told us everything would be all right with you, for you still have boundless future happiness.



家主人还有后禄，定无他事，所以多勉强宽解。这几日杳然无信，未免慌张。幸得来家，却好了！”自实把愤恨投井，谁知无水不死，却遇见道士，奇奇怪怪许多说话，说了一遍，道：“闻得仙家日月长。今吾在井里只得一晌，世上却有十日，这道士多分是仙人。他的说话，必定有准。我们依言，搬在福宁去罢。不要恋恋繆家的东西，不得到手，反为所误了。”一面叫家人收拾起来，打点上路。

自实走到轩辕翁庵中，别他一别，说迁去之意。轩辕翁问：“为何发此念头？”自实把井中之事说了一遍。轩辕翁跌足道：“可惜足下不认得人，这道士乃芙蓉真人也！我修炼了一世，不能相遇，岂知足下当面错过。仙家之言，不可有违。足下迁去为上。老汉也自到山中去了。若住在此地，必为乱兵所杀。”自实别了回来，一径领了妻子，同到福宁。

此时天下扰乱，赋役烦重，地方多有逃亡之屋。自实走去，寻得几间可以收拾得起的房子，并叠瓦砾，将就修葺来住。挥锄之际，铮然有声，掘将下去，却是石板一块。掇将开来，中



Upon hearing his words, we felt a bit relieved. However, as we've got no news at all about you for the last few days, we became extremely worried. Now you're back home, and we are so glad to see you back!" Yuan told his family that, out of grief and indignation, he jumped into the well in the hope of committing suicide, but it happened to be a dry well and he failed to kill himself, and in the well he met a Taoist who talked lots of things with him. Finally Yuan said, "It is often said that days in the abode of immortals are much longer than ours in this world. I only stayed half a day in the well, but it turned out to be ten days in the human world. So this Taoist must be an immortal. What he has said will definitely come true. We'd better follow his advice and move to Funing. We should not always keep thinking about the money Miao had borrowed from us. Otherwise, we'll be held up by him." So saying, he told his family to pack up their things and get ready to leave for Funing.

Then Yuan Zishi went to Xuanyuan's temple to say goodbye to him as well as to tell him that he was planning to leave for Funing. Xuanyuan asked, "Why?" Yuan told him about his encounter with the Taoist in the well. Stamping his feet, Xuanyuan said, "What a pity you don't know who he is! This Taoist is Hibiscus the Immortal! I've been practicing Taoism all my life, but I haven't been able to have the chance to see Hibiscus the Immortal. You met him face to face, but you don't know him! The immortal's words are not to be disobeyed. It will be the best policy for you to move out of this place. I will resort to the mountains too. If we continue to stay here, we'll certainly be killed by the soldiers." After bidding farewell to Xuanyuan, Yuan returned to his home. Then his whole family moved to Funing.

During this time the whole country was in disorder and heavy taxes and corvées were being charged. For this reason, many people abandoned their houses and fled. After arriving at Funing, Yuan Zishi found an old shabby house. As the house was in poor condition, he started to have the house repaired. While he was hoeing up tiles on the ground, there came a sharp clank. Digging further, a flagstone came into his sight. Lifting it up, he found that beneath the flagstone were dozens of ingots of silver. The whole family was overcome with joy at the sight of so much money.



有藏金数十锭。合家见了，不胜之喜，恐怕有人看见，连忙收拾在箱匣中了。自实道：“井中道士所言，此间与吾有些缘分，可还所贷银两，正谓此也。”将来秤一秤，果是三百金之数，不多不少。自实道：“井中人果是仙人，在此住料然不妨。”从此安顿了老小，衣食也充足了些，不愁冻馁，放心安居。

后来张士诚大军临福州，陈平章遭掳，一应官吏多被诛戮。缪千户一家，被王将军所杀，尽有其家资。自实在福宁，竟得无事。算来恰恰三年，道士之言，无一不验。可见财物有定数，他人东西，强要不得的。为人一念，善恶之报，一些不差的。有诗为证：

一念起时神鬼至，何况前生夙世缘。  
方知富室多悭吝，只为他人守业钱。



Fearing that other people might see it, Yuan hid the silver in a box in a hurry. Turning to his family, Yuan said, “The Taoist told me in the well that Funing has some predestined relations with me and I’ll be rewarded for my kindness in lending Miao the money. I think he must be referring to this money when he said so.” Weighing the silver with the steelyard, he realized it was exactly three hundred taels. “The Taoist in the well is really an immortal,” said Yuan. “We can live in this place in peace and everything will be okay for us.” From then on, Yuan Zishi and his family settled down in Funing. Being well-fed and well-clad, the whole family enjoyed a fairly comfortable life.

Some time later, General Zhang Shicheng seized Fuzhou and captured Chen Youding. All the local officials in Fuzhou were killed. Miao and his family were killed by General Wang. All of Miao’s family property fell into the hands of General Wang. At that time Yuan Zishi, together with his family, was at Funing, so he survived. It had been three years since Yuan left Fuzhou and what the Taoist said all came true. From this story we can see clearly that a person’s wealth or property is indeed preordained. One should never pocket anything that does not belong to him. And it is perfectly right that good intentions will be always rewarded with good and evil intentions with evil. The following lines may serve as a conclusion to this tale:

A momentary thought may bring deities or ghosts,  
Let alone the predestined fate decided by a person’s previous existence.  
In deed, rich people are stingy by nature.  
But the truth is they are often no more than money keepers for others.



## 卷 二 十 五

徐茶酒乘闹劫新人 郑蕊珠鸣冤完旧案

词云：

瑞气笼清晓。卷珠帘、次第笙歌，一时齐奏。无限神仙离蓬岛，凤驾鸾车初到。见拥个、仙娥窈窕。玉佩玎珰风缥缈，望娇姿、一似垂杨袅。天上有，世间少。刘郎正是当年少。更那堪、天教付与，最多才貌。玉树琼枝相映耀，谁与安排忒好？有多少、风流欢笑。直待来春成名了，马如龙、绿绶欺芳草。同富贵，又偕老。

这首词名《贺新郎》，乃是宋时辛弃疾为人家新婚吉席而作。天下喜事，先说洞房花烛夜，最为热闹。因是这热闹，就有趁哄打劫的了。吴兴安吉州富家新婚。当夜有一个做贼的，趁着人杂时节溜将进去，伏在新郎的床底下了，打点人静后出





## Tale 25

### Tea-and-wine Master Xu Kidnaps the Bride Amid Wedding Festivities Zheng Ruizhu Voices Grievances Ending an Unsettled Case

As a *ci* poem reads thus:

A clear morning is shrouded in auspicious atmosphere. Rolling up the bead curtain, music and singing start in unison. Like fairies from the fabled abode of the immortals, the bride and bridegroom in their sedans arrive. Like a celestial being, a fair young lady gets out of the sedan, thronged by a crowd of people. Her jade pendants clattering in the light breeze, her tender and graceful bearing resembles weeping willows. Such a figure could be seen in Heaven, but rare on the earth.

The bridegroom Liu is young and promising, most talented and good-looking as if bestowed by Heaven. Alas, who has ever seen such a perfect match? With cheers and laughter reverberating and lingering in the air, how romantic! As he establishes his reputation and rises in position the following spring, the bridegroom's green ribbons attaching to official seals will override the sweet green grass. Sharing wealth and honor in peaceful harmony, they will live to a ripe old age in conjugal bliss.

This *ci* poem, entitled "Ode to Wedding Celebrations", was improvised by Xin Jiakuan of the Song Dynasty on someone's wedding occasion. Of all the happy occasions, the wedding occasion comes first in terms of busy and bustling activities. There're some people who take this very opportunity to fish in troubled waters.

Once a wedding ceremony was being held in a rich family in Wuxing County of Anji Prefecture. At night, a thief, taking advantage of the disorder, stole into the wedding chamber and hid himself under the newly-weds' bed, hoping to take away things when peace and tranquility returned.



来卷取东西。怎当这人家新房里头，一夜停火到天明。床上新郎新妇，云雨欢浓了一会，枕边切切私语，你问我答，烦琐不休。说得高兴，又弄起那话儿来，不十分肯睡。那贼躲在床下，只是听得肉麻不过，却是不曾静悄。又且灯火明亮，气也喘不得一口，何况脱身出来做手脚？只得耐心伏着不动。水火急时，直等日间床上无人时节，就床下暗角中撒放。如此三日夜，毕竟下不得手。肚中饿得难堪，顾不得死活，听得人声略定，拚着命魑魑走出，要寻路逃去。火影下早被主家守宿人瞧见，叫一声：“有贼！”前后人多扒起来，拿住了。先是一顿拳头脚尖，将绳捆着，整備天明送官。贼人哀告道：“小人其实不曾偷得一毫物事，便做道不该进来，适间这一顿臭打也折算得过了，千万免小人到官。放了出去，小人自有报效之处。”主翁道：“谁要你报效！你每这样歹人，只是送到官打死了才干净。”贼人道：“十分不肯饶我，我到官自有说话。你每不要懊悔。”主翁见他说得倔强，更加可恨，又打了几个巴掌。

捆到次日，申破了地方，一同送到县里去。县官审问时，正是“贼有贼智”，那贼人不慌不忙的道：“老爷详察，小人不是个贼，不要屈了小人。”县官道：“不是贼，是甚么样人，躲



Unexpectedly, the light in the wedding chamber kept burning till daybreak. After a moment of lovemaking, the newly-weds kept on talking endlessly in whispers on the bed about petty and tedious details in the form of questions and answers. As they reached the height of excitement during their conversation, they started to make love again. They were unwilling to go to sleep. The thief under the bed felt very much sickening at their intimacy, while the couple on the bed didn't stop talking and lovemaking. In addition, as the room was brightly lit throughout the night, panting seemed almost impossible, let alone getting out from under the bed to steal. Therefore, he had to stay there with patience. When wanting to pass water, he had to wait until the couple were out of bed at daytime and then did it at the dark corner under the bed. This situation lasted for three days and three nights, but still the thief failed to seize a chance to steal anything. Unable to stand hunger, he got out of the bed one night desperately regardless of consequences when it seemed tranquil and quiet, hoping to find his way out.

But he was seen in the lamplight by the servants who were keeping night watch. "Stop thief!" one shouted. Hearing this, many people got up and caught him. After he was beaten up, the thief was tied up with ropes and was told to be taken to the court at daybreak. The thief pleaded, "I didn't steal anything. I was wrong to have come in and I've received strikes and kicks for my misdeed. Please spare me and don't take me to the court. Please! If you let me go, I'll definitely do whatever I can to repay for your great kindness!" The master of the house said, "Who wants you to repay? Evildoers like you only deserve to be taken to the court and let the officials beat you to death." The thief said, "If you do not spare me, I'll tell the court the truth about my coming here. Till then, it will be late for you to regret." Seeing he was reluctant to admit the error, the master found him more hateful and again gave him several slaps on the face.

On the next morning, the host first reported the matter to the village authorities and then, together with the village authorities took the thief to the County Magistrate. As the saying goes, "Thieves are crafty and full of tricks." When interrogated, the thief replied calmly, "I'm not a thief.



在人家床下？”贼人道：“小人是个医人。只为这家新妇，从小有个暗疾，举发之时，疼痛难当，惟有小人医得，必要亲手调治，所以一时也离不得小人。今新婚之夜，只怕旧疾举发，暗约小人随在房中防备用药，故此躲在床下。这家人不认得，当贼拿了。”县官道：“那有此话！”贼人道：“新妇乳名瑞姑。他家父亲宠了妾生子女，不十分照管他。母亲与他一路，最是爱惜，所以有了暗疾，时常叫小人私下医治。今若叫他到官，自然认得小人，才晓得不是贼。”知县见他丁一确二说着，有些信将起来，道：“果有这等事，不要冤屈了平人。而今只提这新妇当堂一认就是了。”元来这贼躲在床下这三夜，备细听见床上的说话。新妇果然有些心腹之疾，家里常医的，因告诉丈夫，被贼人记在肚里。恨这家不饶他，当官如此攀出来，不惟可以遮饰自家的罪，亦且可以弄他新妇到官，出他家的丑。这是那贼人惫赖之处。那晓县官竟自被他哄了，果然提将新妇起来。

富家主翁急了，负极去求免新妇出官。县官那里肯听？富家翁又告：“情愿不究贼人罢了。”县官大怒道：“告别人做贼也是你，及至要个证见，就说情愿不究，可知是诬赖平人为盗。



Don't wrong me. Please look into the matter in details, my Lord." The County Magistrate asked, "What are you, if not a thief? Why were you under their bed?" The thief answered, "Actually, I'm a doctor. The bride acquired an unmentionable disease in her childhood. When it comes on, the pain is hard to endure. I'm the only person who can relieve her of her pain and I've got to treat her personally. So I follow her around wherever she goes. She asked me in secret to stay in her room and treat her with medicine in case she fell ill. That's why I was there. But the other members of her family did not know me. So they took me as a thief."

The County Magistrate exclaimed, "What nonsense!" The thief said, "The bride's name is Ruigu. Her father doted on his children by his concubine and did not give much care to her. But her mother loved her very much. Her mother often asked me to go and treat her when she was suddenly ill with the unmentionable disease. If you bring her to court, I'm certain she'll recognize me. Then you'll know I'm not a thief."

Seeing what he said was reasonable, the County Magistrate somewhat started to believe him. So he said, "If what you said is true, I will not wrong a good person. Everything will be settled once we bring the bride to the court." It turned out that the thief heard everything the newly-weds talked about while he was staying under the bed during those three days. It was true that the bride had an unmentionable disease and often took medicine while she was at her own home. As she told her husband about it, the thief kept it in his mind. Bearing a grudge against this family for their not sparing him in the beginning, the thief made up this story at the court. He figured that it would not only cover up his crime, but also would bring disgrace on this family by taking the bride to the court. This was the thief's cunning trick. But the County Magistrate was fooled by him and really asked the bride to appear in court.

The master of this rich family became very much worried. He hurried to the County Magistrate and asked him to excuse the bride from the appearance in court. How would the County Magistrate listen to him? The master of the family added, "I'd rather drop the lawsuit." Becoming furious, the County Magistrate shouted, "You sued him for stealing. When I wanted a witness to appear in court, you told me you were willing to



若不放新妇出来质对，必要问你诬告。”富家翁计无所出，方悔道：“早知如此，放了这猾贼也罢。而今反受他累了！”衙门中一个老吏，见这富家翁彷徨，问知其故，便道：“要破此猾贼也不难，只要重重谢我。我去禀明了，有方法叫他伏罪。”富家翁许了谢礼十两。老吏去禀县官道：“这家新妇初过门，若出来与贼盗同辨公庭，耻辱极矣。老爷还该惜其体面。”县官道：“若不出来，怎知贼的真假？”老吏道：“吏典倒有一个愚见。想这贼潜藏内室，必然不曾认得这妇人的，他却混赖其妇有约。而今不必其妇到官，密地另使一个妇人代了，与他相对。他认不出来，其诬立见。既可以辨贼，又可以周全这家了。”县官点头道：“说得有理。”就叫吏典悄地去唤一娼妇，打扮了良家，包头素衣，当贼人面前带上堂来，高声禀道：“其家新妇瑞姑拿到。”贼人不知是假，连忙叫道：“瑞姑，瑞姑，你约我到房中治病的，怎么你公公家里拿住我做贼送官，你就不说一声？”县官道：“你可认得正是瑞姑了么？”贼人道：“怎么不认得？从小认得的。”县官大笑道：“有这样奸诈贼人，险些被你哄了！元来你不曾认得瑞姑，怎赖道是他约你医病？这是个



withdraw the charge. It's obvious you were bringing a false charge against a good person. If you refuse to let the bride face him in court, I'll denounce you for false accusation." At his wit's end, the master regretted, "Had I known it, I would have let the thief go. Now he's put me to too much trouble!"

Seeing the master of the family was in a state of indecision and agony, an old court attendant inquired him about the matter. The master told him about it. Then the old attendant said, "It's not difficult to beat the thief, only if you could offer me a handsome reward. I'll talk to the County Magistrate and I can make the thief admit his guilt." The master promised to give him ten taels of silver as a reward. The old attendant said to the County Magistrate, "The wife is newly married. It will be really a disgrace for her to confront the thief in court. I think you should make allowances for her, sir." The County Magistrate asked, "How could I tell if he is a thief or not if she doesn't show up?" The old attendant said, "In my humble opinion, since this thief hid himself in the newly-weds' bedroom, he must not know the bride. Instead, he confessed it was the bride who had asked him secretly to come to her room. Now we do not need to bring the bride to court. We just get another woman to replace the bride and face the thief in court. If he doesn't know the woman, he is a thief. In this way, we can not only settle the case, but also save the bride's face."

Nodding his head, the County Magistrate said, "That's a very good idea." Then the County Magistrate asked the old attendant to bring over a singsong girl. The singsong girl, dressed up as a woman from a good family, was taken to the court. The County Magistrate announced in a loud voice, "Here comes the bride Ruigu."

Unaware of the identity of the woman, the thief said to her, "Ruigu, you asked me to stay in your room in case you fell ill. Your father-in-law took me as a thief and sent me to the court. Why do you keep silent about it?" The County Magistrate asked, "Are you sure you know Ruigu?" The thief replied, "Of course I am. We've known each other since childhood." The County Magistrate said, laughing, "What a cunning thief! I was almost fooled by you! Actually you do not know Ruigu. How dare you lied she had invited you to come to her room to cure her of her disease? This





娼妓，你认得真了么？”贼人对口无言。县官喝叫：“用刑！”贼人方才诉说不曾偷得一件，乞求减罪。县官打了一顿大板，枷号示众。因为无赃，恕其徒罪。富家翁新妇方才得免出官。这也是新婚人家一场大笑话。

先说此一段，做个笑本。小子的正话，也说着一个新婚人家，弄出好些没头的官司，直到后来，方得明白。

本为花烛喜筵，弄作是非苦海。

不因天网恢恢，哑谜何时得解？

却说直隶苏州府嘉定县，有一人家，姓郑，也是经纪行中人，家事不为甚大。生有一女，小名蕊珠，这倒是个绝世佳人，真个有沉鱼落雁之容，闭月羞花之貌。许下本县一个民家，姓谢，是谢三郎，还未曾过门。这个月里拣定了吉日，谢家要来取去。三日之前，蕊珠要整容开面，郑家老儿去唤整容匠。

元来嘉定风俗，小户人家女人篦头剃脸，多用着男人。其时有一个后生，姓徐名达，平时最是不守本分，心性奸巧好淫，专一打听人家女子那家生得好，那家生得丑。因为要像心看着内眷，特特去学了那栲工生活，得以进入内室；又去做那婚筵茶酒，得以窥看新人。如何叫得“茶酒”？即是那边候相之名。



woman is a singsong girl. Now see her clearly?” The thief was at a loss for words. The County Magistrate ordered, “Put him to torture!” Till now the thief had to confess that he didn’t steal anything and begged to be treated with leniency. The County Magistrate punished him by flogging him and putting him in a wooden yoke before the public. When this was done, the chief was set free, because he hadn’t stolen away anything. The bride of the rich family turned out to be excused from appearing in court. This is a joke about a newly-married couple.

\* \* \*

Now let’s move to my main story. It is also about a newly-married couple, who get themselves involved in baffling lawsuits.

Wedding festivities are among the happiest occasions.

But this newly-married couple are put to a sea of trouble.

When would the case be settled

If the net of Heaven hadn’t had large meshes?

In Jiading County of Suzhou Prefecture, Zhili (today’s Jiangsu Province), there lived a family surnamed Zheng, who maintained a brokerage profession on a small scale. The family had a daughter called Ruizhu, whose extraordinary beauty brought such shame to the natural world that it made fish sink, wild geese fall from the sky, the moon grow dim and flowers fade to obscurity. She was betrothed to a man named Xie Sanlang from the same county, and awaited the time to be married. A fortunate date of the month was chosen, and the family of Xie prepared to come and carry her away in marriage. Three days before that date, Ruizhu needed her hair styled. Her father decided to bring in a hairdresser.

The local convention at that time was that an ordinary family with a daughter to be married usually hired a man to do the make-up. There was a young man called Xu Da, who was indecent, vicious and full of lust. He had set his mind on finding out which families had pretty girls. To satisfy his desire to ogle such pretty young ladies, he made a special effort to learn the trade of hairdressing so that he could be allowed into the rooms of women. He also went through training to work as a Tea-and-wine Master so that he could leer at the brides. What was a Tea-and-wine Master? He was a master of ceremony. At the wedding ceremony the master usually



因为赞礼时节，在傍高声“请茶”、“请酒”，多是他口里说的，所以如此称呼。这两项生意多傍着女人行止，他便一身兼做了。比时郑家就叫他与女儿蕊珠开面。

徐达带了篦头家火，一径到郑家内里来。蕊珠做女儿时节，徐达未曾见一面，而今却叫他整容，煞是看得亲切。徐达一头动手，一头觑玩，身子如雪狮子向火，看看软起来。可惜碍着前后有人，恨不就势一把抱住，弄他一会。郑老儿在傍看见模样，识破他有些轻薄意思，等他用手一完，急打发他出到外边来了。

徐达看得浑身似火，心里掉不下。晓得嫁去谢家，就设法到谢家包做了吉日的茶酒。到得那日，郑老儿亲送女儿过门，只见出来迎接的傧相，就是前日的栲工徐达，心下一转道：“元来他又在此！”比至新人出轿，行起礼来，徐达没眼看得，一心只在新娘子身上，口里哩哩咧咧，把礼数多七颠八倒起来。但见：

东西错认，左右乱行。信口称呼，亲翁忽为亲妈；无心赞喝，该拜反做该兴。见过泰山，又请岳翁受礼；参完堂上，还叫父母升厅。不管糟坏郎君，只是贪看新妇。



stood aside, calling out, "Please have some tea," and "Please have some wine." That was why he was called "Tea-and-wine Master." By doing these two kinds of work, Xu Da could have the chance to get close to women. The Zhengs asked him to do the make-up for their daughter, Ruizhu.

Xu Da arrived at the Zhengs' with combs and other tools, and went straight into the room of Ruizhu. He had never seen her before. Now he had the chance to see her clearly as he worked on her face. The sight of her beauty filled him with lust. While working on her hair, he turned and bent, sending lecherous glances toward her. His body, like a snowman near fire, was half-melted. If there had been no other people around at that moment, he would have cuddled and touched her for a while. Ruizhu's father, seeing all this, realized Xu Da's evil intentions. No sooner had Xu Da finished than he ordered him to get out of the room.

Xu Da was fully aroused, and returned home with the girl constantly on his mind. Knowing that she was marrying into the family of Xie, he managed to obtain the job of working as the Tea-and-wine Master on the day of Ruizhu's wedding. On that day, Zheng Ruizhu's father took his daughter to the bridegroom's home and saw that the master of ceremony coming out to greet them was none other than Xu Da, who had styled his daughter's hair a couple of days before. Surprised, he said to himself, "I didn't know he would be here too!" As the bride rose from the sedan chair and greetings were exchanged, Xu Da struggled for glimpses of her, thinking of nothing else. The ritual calls he uttered as the Tea-and-wine Master became mumbled and muddled. As a result the ceremony proceeded in total disorder.

Wagging his tongue at random, he asked the bride to call her father-in-law mother-in-law. Totally absent minded, he instructed the bride and groom to rise when it was time to do obeisance to the seniors. The groom's father-in-law was again asked to receive kowtows when the groom had made kowtows to his father-in-law. The groom's parents were again asked to receive bows when the bride and groom had performed the ritual. Totally ignoring groom, Xu Da only fixed his greedy eyes on the bride.

At Xu's confusing orders the bride made many greetings until the

徐达乱嘈嘈的行过了许多礼数，新娘子花烛已过，进了房中，算是完了，只要款待送亲吃喜酒。这谢家民户人家，没甚人力，谢翁与谢三郎只好陪客在外边。里头妈妈率了一二个养娘，亲自厨房整酒。有个把当直的，搬东搬西，手忙脚乱，常是来不迭的。徐达相礼，到客人坐定了席，正要“请汤”、“请酒”，是件赞唱，忽然不见了他。两三次汤送到，只得主人自家请过吃了。将至终席，方见徐达慌慌张张在后面走出来，喝了两句。比至酒散，谢翁见茶酒如此参前失后，心中不喜，要叫他来埋怨几句，早又不见。当值的道：“方才往前面去了。”谢翁道：“怎么寻了这样不晓事的？如此淘气！”亲家翁不等茶酒来赞礼，自起身谢了酒。

谢三郎走进新房，不见新娘子在内。疑他床上睡了，揭帐一看，仍然是张空床。前后照着，竟不见影。跑至厨房问人时，厨房中人多嚷道：“我们多只在这里收拾。新娘子花烛过了，自坐房中，怎么倒来问我们？”三郎叫了当值的，后来各处找寻。到后门一看，门又关得好好的。走出堂前说了，合家惊惶。当





wedding ceremony was over and the bride retired to her bedroom. The next item on the agenda was to entertain the relatives and friends with a wedding feast. The family of Xie, not very rich, was short-handed. So Xie, the father, and Xie Sanlang, the bridegroom, had to be in the main room with the merrymaking guests. Back in the kitchen, the mother personally directed two woman servants in fixing drinks of wine. A couple of managers looked after the party, and they were always in a rush. Xu Da was supposed to perform the rite proceedings.

When the guests were all seated awaiting his calls of “please have your soup” and “please have your drink,” Xu Da disappeared. After two or three trips were made delivering soup to the guests, the host himself had to replace Xu Da in the performance of rite. Toward the end of the feast, they saw Xu Da come out from behind, all in a fluster, to make a few calls. As the party was about to be dismissed, Old Man Xie, having become unhappy with this Tea-and-wine Master’s demeanor, wanted to call him in for a scolding, but Xu Da was nowhere to be found. One of the managers of the ceremony said, “He went to the front a moment ago.” Old Man Xie complained, “Why did we hire such an irresponsible person? How negligent he is!” Unable to wait any longer for the Tea-and-wine Master to come and perform the rites, he had to express his thanks to the guests personally.

Meanwhile, as Xie Sanlang went to his bridal chamber, he was surprised to find his bride was not there. Thinking she might have gone to sleep, he lifted the bed-drapes only to discover an empty bed. Looking around, he still found no sign of her. He rushed to the kitchen and asked the people there where she might be. They shouted at him, “We’ve been busy here with kitchen work. After the wedding ceremony, the bride was alone in her room. Why are you coming to ask us?” Sanlang called over the house retainers and together they searched everywhere in the house. As they came to the rear gate of the house, they found it locked. Then they went back to the main hall and told everybody there about the strange turn of events. The whole family was panic-stricken and became very much distressed.

One of the house retainers said, “This Tea-and-wine Master has not

直的道：“这个茶酒，一向不是个好人。方才喝礼时节，看他没心没想，两眼只看着新人，又两次不见了他，而今竟不知那里去了。莫不是他有甚么奸计，藏过了新人么？”郑老儿道：“这个茶酒，元不是好人。小女前日开面也是他，因见他轻薄态度，正心里怪恨。不想宅上茶酒也用着他！”郑家随来的仆人也说道：“他元是个游嘴光棍，这篦头、赞礼，多是近新来了，揸哄过日子的。毕竟他有缘故。去还不远，我们追去。”谢家当值的道：“他要内里拐出新人，必在后门出后巷里去了。方才后门关好，必是他复身转来关了，使人不疑，所以又到堂前衍这一回。必定从前面转至后巷去了，故此这会不见。是他无疑！”此时是新婚人家，篋子火把多有在家里，就每人点着一根。两家仆人与同家主，共是十来个，开了后门，多望后巷里赶来。

元来谢家这条后门路是一个直巷，也无弯曲，也无傍路。火把照起，明亮犹同白日，一望去多是看见的。远远见有两三个人走，前头差一段路，去了两个，后边有一个还在那里。疾忙赶上，拿住火把一照，正是徐茶酒。问道：“你为何在这里？”徐达道：“我有些小事，等不得酒散，我要回去。”众人道：“你





been an honest one. When he was making the ritual calls, he was absent minded and his eyes were fastened on the bride. And he failed to show up twice this evening. Now he's even disappeared. Did he work out some plan and steal the bride?" Old Man Zheng said, "The Tea-and-wine Master was not a decent person. The other day when my daughter needed her hair styled, it was he who came and did the work. I noticed his despicable behavior and I loathed him very much. I was surprised that you had hired him as the Tea-and-wine Master."

The servant who came with the family of Zheng said, "He originally was a good-for-nothing street ruffian. He only learned hairdressing and directing nuptial routines not long ago, so that he could spend his days bluffing his way around. I think there must be some reason for his sudden disappearance. He won't go far. Let's go and hunt for him." The house retainers of the family of Xie said, "If he kidnapped the bride from her room, he had to take her out through the rear gate. A moment ago we saw that the rear gate was well locked, he must have come back to secure it from the inside. That is clear. And that is why he showed up the last time we saw him. He must have gone outside the front gate and into the rear alley. That's why we don't see him now. It's unquestionable that he had taken her away." The bridegroom's family had torches available in the house. With torches lit, the servants of the two families and their masters, totaling about ten persons, each with a torch in hand, opened the rear gate and hurried down the alley.

It turned out that this alley behind Xie's house was straight without curves or forks. The torches illuminated the alley as clearly as if it were broad daylight. Three men could be seen walking ahead a little distance away. Later two of them were gone, leaving the last one on the road. The group hurried to catch up with him. Under the torchlight, they could see that it was indeed the Tea-and-wine Master Xu Da.

They asked him, "Why are you out here?" Xu Da answered, "I've got some business to attend to, so I left for home without staying through to the end of the party." The men asked, "Since you wanted to go home, why didn't you let the host know? Apart from this, you were not seen at the party for quite some time tonight, but you're now here in the alley





要回去，直不得对本家说声？况且好一会不见了你，还在这里行走，岂是回去的？你好好说，拐将新娘子那里去了？”徐达支吾道：“新娘子在你家里，岂是我掌礼人包管的？”众人打的打，推的推，喝道：“且拿这游嘴光棍到家里，拷问他出来！”

一群人拥着徐达，到了家里，两家亲翁一同新郎各各盘问，徐达只推不知。一齐道：“这样顽皮赖骨，私下问他，如何肯说？绑他在柱上，待天明送到官去。难道当官也赖得？”遂把徐达做一团捆住，只等天明。此时第一个是谢三郎扫兴了。

不能勾握雨携云，整備着鼠牙雀角。

喜筵前枉唤新郎，洞房中依然独觉。

众人闹闹嚷嚷，簇拥着徐达，也有吓他的，也有劝他的，一夜何曾得睡？徐达只不肯说。

须臾天已大明，谢家父子教众人带了徐达，写了一纸状词，到县堂上告准，面禀其故。知县惊异道：“世间有此事！”遂唤徐达问道：“你拐的郑蕊珠那里去了？”徐达道：“小人是婚筵的茶酒，只管得行礼的事，怎晓得新人的去向？”谢公就把他不辞而去、在后巷赶着之事，说了一遍。知县喝叫：“用刑起来！”徐达虽然是游花光棍，本是柔脆的人，熬不起刑。初时支吾两句，看看当不得了，只得招道：“小人因为开面时



walking. Are you really heading home? You'd better tell us the truth. Where did you take the bride to?" Xu Da answered evasively, "The bride should be in your home. Am I, a Tea-and-wine Master, supposed to look after her?" The men struck and shoved him, yelling, "Bring this villain home and torture him to make him tell us the truth!"

They escorted him back to the Xies' home. The host, the bride's father and the bridegroom interrogated him for a while, but Xu Da categorically denied any knowledge of the bride's whereabouts. Then they said, "What a hardened, deceptive bag of shit! He won't yield anything to our interrogation today. Fasten him to a post, and take him to the county *yamen* tomorrow. Will he refuse to tell the truth to the authorities as well?" So they tied him up and waited until the next day. At the time the most disappointed one was Xie Sanlang.

He's got no way of making love,  
Though he has got himself ready for the wedding night.  
He has to sleep alone in the bridal chamber,  
Though he is the groom

Surrounding Xu Da, the men babbled and prattled all night, some intimidating him and others trying to persuade him. How could they get any sleep? Xu Da simply remained silent on the matter.

Soon it was well into the morning. The father and son and the Xie family told the servants to take Xu Da, with a written complaint, to the county *yamen* for prosecution. Upon hearing the accusation, the County Magistrate was shocked and said, "Did such a thing really happen?" Then he questioned Xu Da, "Where did you take Zheng Ruizhu to?" Xu Da replied, "I was the Tea-and-wine Master at the wedding. I was in charge of the performance of rites. How can I know where the bride is?" Then Old Man Xie recounted the story of how Xu Da had left without saying goodbye and how he had been caught in the alley later that night.

The County Magistrate shouted loudly, "Put him to torture!" Though a rogue, Xu Da was weak-willed and could not stand the torture. He equivocated with a few words at first and then yielded to the physical pain by saying, "When doing the hairdressing the other day, I was attracted to the girl's beauty and started to harbor an evil plan. After I learned that

见他美貌，就起了不良之心。晓得嫁与谢家，谋做了婚筵茶酒，预先约会了两个同伴，埋伏在后门了。趁他行礼已完，外边只要上席，小人在里面一看，只见新人独坐在房中。小人哄他还要行礼，新人随了小人走出。新人却不认得路，被小人引他到了后门，就把新人推与门外二人。新人正待叫喊，却被小人关好了后门，望前边来了。仍旧从前边抄至后巷，赶着二人。正要奔脱，看见后面火把明亮，知是有人赶来。那两个人顾不得小人，竟自飞跑去了。小人有这个新人在旁，动止不得。恰好路傍有个枯井，一时慌了，只得抱住了他，摔了下去。却被他们赶着，拿了送官。这新人现在井中。只此是实。”知县道：“你在他家时为何不说？”徐达道：“还打点遮掩得过，取他出井来受用。而今熬刑不起，只得实说了。”知县写了口词，就差一个公人，押了徐达，与同谢、郑两家人，快到井边来勘实回话。

一行人到了井边，郑老儿先去望一望，井底下黑洞洞，不见有甚声响，疑心女儿此时毕竟死了，扯着徐达狠打了几下，道：“你害我女儿死了，怕不偿命！”众人劝住道：“且捞了起来，不要厮乱。自有官法处他！”郑老儿心里又慌又恨，且把徐达咬住一块肉不肯放。徐达杀猪也似叫喊。这边谢公叫人停当了竹兜绳索，一面下井去救人。一个胆大些的家人，扎缚好





she was to be married to the Xie family, I decided to get the job of Tea-and-wine Master at the wedding. I and another two men plotted in advance that they would wait outside the rear gate in the evening. As the bride completed her wedding rituals and the feast began in the main room, I went inside and saw that the bride was sitting alone in the room. I lied to her by telling her that she had other wedding rites to perform. So she came out with me. She didn't know her way in the house and so I led her to the rear gate and pushed her out to the two men waiting there. The bride wanted to cry out but I quickly locked the rear gate and came back to the front. Then I went out the front gate, ran to the alley at the back of the house and caught up with the two men. As we were about to make off, we saw torches flashing behind us. We knew we were being pursued. The two men left me in desperation and ran away. I had the bride with me and so I couldn't get away. It happened that there was a dry well by the roadside. I hastily lifted her up and dropped her into the well. But I was caught by the men and brought here in front of you. The bride is still in the well. That's all I can tell you."

The County Magistrate asked him, "But why did you not tell the truth while you were in their home?" Xu Da answered, "I thought I could get away with it, and later I could take her out of the well to enjoy her. But now I couldn't bear the torture and had to tell the truth." Then the County Magistrate had his words recorded. He told a runner to escort Xu Da, with the two families of Zheng and Xie, to the well, saying, "Go to the well to check on his words and report back to me at once."

The group of people arrived at the well. Old Man Zheng looked down into it. It was pitch-dark and quiet at the bottom. Thinking that his daughter might have died by now, he grabbed Xu Da and dealt him a few sound blows, saying, "You killed my daughter. You must pay with your life!" The rest stopped him by saying, "Let's get her body out first. Stop beating him. The law will mete out his punishment." But Old Man Zheng was frantic and vengeful. He began to bite Xu Da and would not let go of his flesh. Xu Da screamed painfully like a pig being slaughtered. Meanwhile, Old Man Xie told the servants get a bamboo basket and a rope ready. Someone had to go down into the well. A brave soul from among the



了，挂将下去。井中无水，用手一摸，果然一个人蹲倒在里面。推一推看，已是不动的了。抱将来放在兜中，吊将上去。众人一看，那里是甚么新娘子？却是一个大胡须的男子，鲜血模糊，头多打开的了。众人多吃了一惊。郑老儿将徐达又是一巴掌，道：“这是怎么说？”连徐达看见，也吓得呆了。谢公道：“这又是甚么跷蹊的事？”对了井中，问下边的人道：“里头还有人么？”井里应道：“并无甚么了，接了我上去。”随即放绳下去，接了那个家人上来，一齐问道：“井中还有甚么？”家人道：“止有些石块在内，是一个干枯的井。方才黑洞洞地摸起来的人，不知死活，可正是新娘子么？”众人道：“是一个死了的胡子，那里是新人？你看么！”押差公人道：“不要鸟乱了！回覆官人去，还在这个入娘的身上寻究新人下落！”郑、谢两老儿多道：“说得是。”就叫地方人看了尸首，一同公人去禀白县官。

知县问徐达道：“你说把郑蕊珠推在井中，而今井中却是一个男尸。且说郑蕊珠那里去了？这尸是那里来的？”徐达道：“小人只见后边赶来，把新人推下井里是实。而今却是一个男尸，连小人也猜不出了。”知县道：“你起初约会这两个同伴，叫做甚么名字？必是这二人的缘故了。”徐达道：“一个张寅，一个李卯。”知县写了名字住址，就差人去拿来。瓮中捉



servants fastened the rope around his body and slid down to the bottom. He found no water there but touched something with his hand. It was indeed a human body lying on the ground. He pushed at it, but it remained motionless. He lifted it up with his arms and put it into the basket, which was pulled up out of the well.

The men were shocked to see that it was not the bride at all, but a thickly-bearded man with blood all over his body and his head split open. They were all stunned at the sight of this. Old Man Zheng gave Xu Da another slap, saying, "What do you have to say about this?" However the sight also frightened Xu Da out of his wits. Old Man Xie said, "What the hell is this bizarre thing?" Then he called to the man down in the well, "Is there anybody else down there?" The man answered, "Nobody else. Please get me out of here." They threw down the rope and pulled him out. Then they asked him, "What else did you see down there?"

He replied, "Only rocks. It's a dry well. I picked up that person in the dark, but I didn't know whether it was alive or dead. Is it the bride?" The men told him, "No, it's a dead man with a beard, not the bride at all. Look, it's over there." Then the runner said, "Don't waste time talking nonsense! Let's go back and report to the County Magistrate. I think this guy is the only source for locating the bride's whereabouts." Old Man Zheng and Old Man Xie said, "Exactly!" So they left someone to take care of the body and the rest of them went back with the runner to report to the County Magistrate.

The County Magistrate said to Xu Da, "You told us that you dropped Zheng Ruizhu into the well. Now we find it's a man's body instead. Tell me where Zheng Ruizhu is and where this man's body came from?" Xu Da answered, "I saw people coming after me. It is true that I pushed the bride into the well. But now it has become a man's body. I'm confused too." Then the County Magistrate asked, "You had two fellows to work with you. What are their names? They must be tied in with this matter?" Xu Da replied, "One of them is called Zhang Yin and the other Li Mao." The County Magistrate wrote down the names and addresses and sent men to arrest them.

To capture the two was as easy as picking up a turtle bottled in a jar.



鳖，立时拿到。每人一夹棍，只招得道：“徐达相约后门等待。后见他推出新人来，负了就走。徐达在后赶来，正要同去，望见后面火把齐明，喊声大震，我们两个胆怯了，把新人掉与徐达，只是拚命走脱了。已后的事一些也不知。”又对着徐达道：“你当时将的新人那里去了？怎不送了出来，要我们替你吃苦？”徐达对口无言。知县指着徐达道：“还只是你这奴才奸巧！”喝叫再夹起来。徐达只喊得是“小人该死”，说来说去，只说到推在井中，便再说不去了。

知县便叫郑、谢两家父亲，与同媒妁人等，又拘齐两家左右邻里，备细访问。多只是一般不知情，没有甚么别话，也没有一个认得这尸首的。知县出了一张榜文，召取尸亲家属认领埋葬，也不曾有一个说起的。郑、谢两家自备了赏钱，知县又替他写了榜文访取郑蕊珠下落，也没有一个人晓得影响的。知县断决不开，只把徐达收在监中，五日一比。谢三郎苦毒，时时催禀。县官没法，只得做他不着，也不知打了多多少少。徐达起初一时做差了事，到此不知些头脑，教他也无奈何。只好巴过五日，吃这番痛棒。也没个打听的去处，也没个结局的法儿，真正是没头的公事。表过不提。

再说郑蕊珠那晚被徐达拐至后门，推与二人，便见把后门



As they were brought in, each was placed in a leg-clamp. They immediately confessed. "Xu Da asked us to wait outside the rear gate that night," they said. "Later we saw him push the bride out. We carried her on our backs and started to run. He came up from behind. As we were getting away, we saw torches blazing away behind us and men clamoring. We were scared, so we left the bride with Xu Da and fled in desperation. As to what happened afterwards, we have no idea." Then they turned to Xu Da and asked, "Where did you take the bride to? Why don't you give her up now? We have to bear punishment for you!" Xu Da couldn't say anything. The County Magistrate, pointing at Xu Da, said, "You slippery slave are the only source of the truth!" Then he called loudly, "More torture to him!" Xu Da only cried desperately, saying, "I deserve death." He told his story again up to the part where he dropped the bride into the well, but he could not go any further.

The County Magistrate then asked the fathers of the two families and the matchmaker to visit their neighbors and make a thorough investigation. Those neighbors who were asked had no knowledge of the incident, so they provided no clues, and were unable to identify the dead body. The County Magistrate posted a notice announcing the finding of an unidentified body, but no one emerged to claim it. The families of Zheng and Xie offered a reward from their own money for anyone who could give a clue about Zheng Ruizhu's whereabouts, and the County Magistrate prepared notices for them. But no news emerged. Unable to close the case, the County Magistrate threw Xu Da into jail and took him out every five days for further interrogation. Xie Sanlang was worried and kept pushing for action. The County Magistrate did his best but still couldn't force any additional information out of Xu Da, even after repeated floggings. Xu Da had begun with sinister motives but now ended up in a quandary, hopelessly unable to free himself from suffering. So he lived in trepidation through the cycle of five-day thrashings. The case lingered on with neither any clue for further action nor any way of solving it. We will now leave it for the moment.

As for Zheng Ruizhu, when she was taken by Xu Da that night to the back gate of the house, she was handed over to the other two men. Seeing



关了，方晓得是歹人的做作。欲待叫着本家人，自是新来的媳妇，不曾知道一个名姓，一时叫不出来。亦且门已关了，便口里喊得两句“不好了”，也没人听得。那些后生背负着只是走。心里正慌，只见后面赶来，两个人撇在地下，竟自去了。那个徐达一把抱来丢在井里。井里无水，又不甚深，只跌得一下，毫无伤损。听见上面众人喧嚷，晓得是自己家人，又火把齐明，照得井里也有光。郑蕊珠负极叫喊救人，怎当得上边人拿住徐达，你长我短，嚷得一个不耐烦。妇人声音终久娇细，又在井里，那个听见？多簇拥着徐达，吆吆喝喝，一路去了。郑蕊珠听得人声渐远，只叫得苦，大声啼哭。看看天色明亮，蕊珠想道：“此时上边未必无人走动。”高叫两声：“救人！”又大哭两声，果然惊动了上边两个人。只因这两个人走将来，有分教：

黄尘行客，翻为坠井之魂；绿鬓新人，竟作离乡之妇。

说那两个人，是河南开封府杞县客商，一个是赵申，一个是钱已，合了本钱，同到苏松做买卖，得了重利，正要回去。偶然在此经过，闻得啼哭喊叫之声，却在井中出来。两个多走到井边，望下一看。此时天光照下去，隐隐见是个女人。问道：“你是甚么人，在这里头？”下边道：“我是此间人家新妇，被强盗劫来，丢在此的。快快救我出来，到家自有重谢！”两人



the gate was bolted, she realized she had fallen into the hands of villains. She wanted to yell for help, but since she was just married into this family, she didn't yet know any of their names and so couldn't call to them. She hastily let out two shouts of "Help!" but they raised no attention. The two men carried her on their backs and raced away. She was terrified. Then they suddenly saw that they were being chased from behind. They set her on the ground and fled. Xu Da then grabbed her and pushed her down to the well. It was dry at the bottom and not deep. She stumbled but was not injured. She heard people talking and yelling outside the well and realized they were from her own family looking for her. The torches lit up the area, shedding some light into the well. Zheng Ruizhu cried "Help!" at the top of her voice.

However the men had by now seized Xu Da who kept squalling so loudly. So nobody could hear her. The bride had a soft voice and was down in the well, so her cries were drowned out. A moment later the men took Xu Da away and their talking and yelling gradually died down in the distance. Zheng Ruizhu lost hope and burst into weeping. Later as the day began to dawn, Zheng Ruizhu thought to herself, "There should be someone up there coming and going by now." So she shouted "Help!" several times, and then broke into howling again. It so happened that there were indeed two men passing by the well. Because of their arrival:

A traveler became a ghost deep down in a well;

A bride was made a stranger's wife far away from home.

The two men were traveling merchants from the Qixian County in Kaifeng Prefecture, Henan. One was called Zhao Shen and the other Qian Si. They had joined forces by putting their money together and had come to the region of Suzhou and Songjiang to do business. After obtaining a huge profit, they were now on their way home. As they accidentally passed by this place, they heard the shouting and weeping coming from inside the well. They walked over to the mouth of the well and looked down. In the bright daylight, they faintly saw a woman in the well. Then they called, "Who are you down there?" The answer came up, "I'm a bride kidnapped by some bandits. They threw me down here. Please help me out. You'll surely get a huge reward once I'm back home." The two men then talked

听得，自商量道：“从来说‘救人一命，胜造七级浮屠’。况是个女人，怎能勾出来？没人救他，必定是死。我每撞着，也是有缘。行囊中有长绳，我每坠下去救了他起来。”赵申道：“我溜撒些，等我下去。”钱已道：“我身子笨，果然下去不得。我只在上边吊着绳头，用些笨气力罢。”也是赵申晦气到了，见是女子，高兴之甚，揎拳裸袖，把绳缚在腰间，双手吊着绳。钱已一脚踹着绳头，双手提着绳，一步步放将下去。到了下边，见是没水的，他就不慌不忙，对郑蕊珠道：“我救你则个。”郑蕊珠道：“多谢大恩。”赵申就把身上绳头解下来，将郑蕊珠腰间如法缚了，道：“你不要怕，只把双手吊着绳，上边自提你上去。缚得牢，不掉下来的。快上去了，把绳来吊我。”郑蕊珠巴不得出来，放着胆，吊了绳。上边钱已见绳急了，晓得有人吊着，尽气力一扯一扯的吊出井来。钱已抬眼一看，却是一个艳妆的女子：

虽然鬓乱钗横，却是天姿国色。

猛地井里现身，疑是龙宫拾得。

大凡人不可有私心，私心一起，就要干出没天理的勾当来。起初钱已与赵申商量救人，本是好念头。一下子救将起来，见是个美貌女子，就起了打偏手之心，思量道：“他若起来，必



to each other. “The old saying goes, ‘saving a life is a deed more meritorious than building a seven-tiered Buddhist pagoda.’ In addition it’s a woman. How can she get out by herself? Without help, she will definitely die. It’s our good luck to come across her. We’ve got a long rope in our baggage. Let’s go down and get her out.”

Zhao Shen said, “I’m skinny and light. Let me go down.” Qian Si said, “I’m large and heavy, not fit for this kind of work. I’ll stay up here and pull the end of the rope, expending some physical labor.” That was the beginning of Zhao Shen’s doom. He was delighted at the sight of a woman. Rubbing his fists and rolling up his sleeves, he tied the rope around his waist and then held onto it with both hands. With one foot stepping on one end of the rope, Qian Si clutched the rope in his hands and slowly let Zhao Shen slide down. As Zhao Shen reached the bottom, he could see there was no water there. Relaxing himself, he said to Zheng Ruizhu, “Let me get you out of here.” Zheng Ruizhu replied, “I’m deeply grateful to your kindness.” Then Zhao Shen untied the rope from his waist and tied it around hers the same way he had for himself. He said to her, “Don’t panic. Just hold the rope tightly and the man up there will hoist you up. The rope has been tied fast and you won’t slip. Once you’re out, pull me up.” Eager to get out, Zheng Ruizhu summoned up her courage and grasped the rope. At the mouth of the well, Qian Si could see the rope getting tight and knew that someone was hanging at the other end of it. So he made one strenuous effort after another and pulled her out. Then he saw in front of him a beautiful young lady:

Despite the disheveled hair and displaced hairpins,

She was the beauty second to none.

Unexpectedly she rose from the well,

Like a narrow escape from the palace of the Dragon King.

A person should keep away from selfish desires. If such a desire seizes one’s mind, the person may commit an atrocious crime. Originally Qian Si and Zhao Shen had agreed to save the woman. That was a worthy motive. After the woman was pulled out of the well and turned out to be a beauty, the idea of seizing all the gain flashed into Qian Si’s mind. He thought to himself, “If Zhao Shen gets out of the well, he will surely want



要与我争，不能勾独享。况且他囊中本钱尽多。而今生死之权，操在我手。我不放他起来，这女子与囊橐多是我的了。”歹念正起，听得井底下大叫道：“怎不把绳下来？”钱已发一个狠道：“结果了他罢！”在井傍掇起一块大石头来，照着井中，叫声：“下去！”可怜赵申眼盼盼望着上边放绳下来，岂知是块石头，不曾提防的，回避不及，打着脑盖骨，立时粉碎，呜呼哀哉了。

郑蕊珠在井中出来，见了天日，方抖擞衣服，略定得性。只见钱已如此做作，惊得魂不附体，口里只念“阿弥陀佛”。钱已道：“你不要慌。此是我仇人，故此哄他下去，结果了他性命。”郑蕊珠心里道：“是你的仇人，岂知是我的恩人。”也不敢说出来，只求送在家里去。钱已道：“好自在话！我特特在井里救你出来，是我的人了，我怎肯送还你家去？我是河南开封富家，你到我家里，就做我家主婆，享用富贵了。快随我走！”郑蕊珠昏天暗地，不认得这条路是那里，离家里是近是远。又没个认得的人在傍边，心中没个主见。钱已催促他走动道：“你若不随我，仍旧撞你在井中，一石头打死了。你见方才那个人么？”郑蕊珠惧怕，思量无计，只得随他去。正是：

才脱风狂子，又逢轻薄儿。

情知不是伴，事急且相随。

钱已一路分付郑蕊珠，教道他到家见了家人，只说苏州讨



to take a share of the profit. Then I can't expect to enjoy the young lady all by myself. Besides, he has plenty of money in his bag. His life is now in my hands. If I kill him, this young lady and his money will both be mine." As these sinful thoughts turned in his mind, he heard a shout coming from inside the well, "Why don't you toss down the rope for me?" Qian Si hardened his heart and said aloud, "Kill him!" Then he picked up a big rock by the side of the well and flung it in, shouting, "Get it!" Alas, Zhao Shen had anxiously been waiting for the rope to come down, but he never thought it would be a rock thrown down instead. With no preparation to dodge it, he was hit on the skull. His skull was shattered and he was killed immediately.

After Zheng Ruizhu was rescued, she adjusted her clothes and pulled herself together. But when she saw what Qian Si had done, her heart leaped into her mouth and she mumbled repeatedly, "May Buddha preserve me!" Qian Si said to her, "Don't worry. He is my foe. That's why I coaxed him into going down the well and then killed him." Zheng Ruizhu thought to herself, "Your foe but my savior!" However, she dared not express her feelings. She only begged Qian Si to take her back home. He responded, "What a daydream! I went out of my way to get you out of the well. Now you're mine. I come from Kaifang of Henan. Come with me to my home and be my wife. You'll enjoy plenty of wealth. Come on, let's go!" Zheng Ruizhu was completely at a loss. She couldn't tell where the road led to and whether it was close or faraway from her home. With no one around that she knew, she didn't know what to do next. But Qian Si pushed her by saying, "If you reject me, I'll throw you down into the well again and kill you with a rock, too! Did you see what happened to that man?" Zheng Ruizhu, in great fear and unable to do otherwise, was led away by him. It was exactly:

No sooner had she got free of lechers' jaws  
Than she fell into a lecher's claws.  
Knowing he was not a man with whom to consort  
She only followed him as the last resort.

On their way Qian Si told Zheng Ruizhu, "Once we're home and you meet my family members, tell them you're from Suzhou. If people ask

来的；有人来问赵申时，只回他还在苏州就是了。不多几日，到了开封杞县，进了钱已家里。谁知钱已家中还有一个妻子万氏，小名叫做虫儿。其人狠毒的甚，一见郑蕊珠，就放出手段来，无所不至摆布他。将他头上手饰、身上衣服，尽多夺下，只许他穿着布衣服。打水做饭，一应粗使生活，要他一身支当。一件不到，大棒打来。郑蕊珠道：“我又不是嫁你家的，你家又不曾出银子讨我的，平白地强我来，怎如此毒打得我？”那个万虫儿那里听你分诉？也不问着来历，只说是小老婆，就该一味吃醋蛮打罢了。万虫儿一向做人恶劣，是邻里妇人没一个不相骂断的。有一个邻妈，看见他如此毒打郑蕊珠，心中常抱不平。忽听见郑蕊珠口中如此说话，心里道：“又不嫁，又不讨，莫不是拐来的？做这样阴鹭事，坑着人家儿女！”把这话留在心上。

一日，钱已出到外边去了。郑蕊珠打水，走到邻妈家借水桶。邻妈留他坐着，问道：“看娘子是好人家的出身，为何宅上爹娘肯远嫁到此，吃这般磨折？”郑蕊珠哭道：“那里是爹娘嫁我来的？”邻妈道：“这等，怎得到此？”郑蕊珠把身许谢家，初婚之夜被人拐出抛在井中之事，说了一遍。邻妈道：“这等，是钱家在井中救出了你，你随他的了？”郑蕊珠道：“那里是！其时还有一个人下井，亲身救我起来的。这个人好苦，



about Zhao Shen, the dead man, tell them he's still in Suzhou."

A few days later, they arrived at Qian Si's home in Qixian County. Zheng Ruizhu was surprised to find out that Qian Si had a wife by the name of Wan, with the pet name Chonger. A vicious woman, Chonger showed her true nature immediately after meeting Zheng Ruizhu. She bullied Ruizhu in every way she could. She stripped Zheng Ruizhu of her jewels and the clothes she wore and had her put on a coarse dress. She made her carry out all the harsh household chores alone. When Ruizhu failed to meet any requirement, a beating ensued. Zheng Ruizhu said, "I'm not married to your family. You didn't pay any silver to get me here. I was brought here by force. Why are you beating me so cruelly?" Wan Chonger didn't listen to her complaints. She didn't even bother to find out Ruizhu's background. Chonger assumed that she was a concubine and so she was subjected to jealousy and cruelty. Wan Chonger was notorious for her odious conduct and the other women in her neighborhood all reproached her for it. A woman living nearby often felt indignant on Ruizhu's behalf when she saw Chonger beat Zheng Ruizhu so ferociously. One day a woman neighbor overheard Zheng Ruizhu's complaints. The woman mused, "The girl is not married, nor was she bought. Then she must have been abducted. Such a wicked deed must have ruined someone's daughter!" She kept this in mind.

Some time later, Qian Si was out for business. Zheng Ruizhu came to the woman's home to borrow a bucket with which to fetch water. The neighbor woman asked her to stay for a while. Then she asked Ruizhu, "I can see that you come from a decent family. But why did your parents marry you off so far from home and let you suffer such cruelty?" Zheng Ruizhu wept and said, "How could my parents have married me here?" So the woman asked, "Then how have you come here?"

Zheng Ruizhu told the story of her betrothal to the family of Xie, her abduction at the wedding night and being flung into the well. The neighbor asked, "Was it because Qian Si saved you from the well that you came with him?" Zheng Ruizhu replied, "No, it was another man who went down into the well and saved my life. What a bad fortune that man had! He thought that once I got out he would be pulled up with the rope. Nobody





指望我出井之后，就将绳接他。谁知钱家那厮狠毒，就把一块大石头丢下去，打死了那人，拉了我就走。我彼时一来认不得家里，二来怕他那杀人手段，三来他说道到家就做家主婆。岂知堕落在此，受这样磨难！”邻妈道：“当初你家的与前村赵家一同出去为商。今赵家不回来，前日来问你家时，说道还在苏州，他家信了。依小娘子说起来，那下井救你吃打死的，必是赵家了。小娘子何不把此情当官告明了，少不得牒送你回去，可不免受此间之苦？”郑蕊珠道：“只怕我跟人来了，也要问罪。”邻妈道：“你是妇人家，被人迫诱，有何可罪？我如今替你把这个情先对赵家说了，赵家必定告状。再与你写一张首状，当官递去。你只要实说，包你一些罪也没有，且得还乡见父母了。”郑蕊珠道：“若得如此，重见天日了。”

计较已定，邻妈一面去与赵家说了，赵家赴县理告。这边郑蕊珠也拿首状到官。杞县知县问了郑蕊珠口词，即时差捕钱已到官。钱已欲待支吾，却被郑蕊珠是长是短，一口证定。钱已抵赖不去，恨恨的向郑蕊珠道：“我救了你，你倒害我！”郑蕊珠道：“那个救我的，你怎么打杀了他？”钱已无言。赵家又来求判填命。知县道：“杀人情真，但皆系口词，尸首未见，



could have known that Qian Si would be so treacherous and cruel. He threw a big rock into the well and killed that man. Then he dragged me away by force. At that moment I was lost. I also feared he would kill me. Besides, he told me that I would be his wife after I came to his home. I really didn't know that I would sink into such a wretched sate and suffer from such cruelty!"

The neighbor woman said, "Originally Qian Si went with a Zhao from our neighbor village on a business tour. But Zhao hasn't come back till today. The Zhaos asked your man about Zhao's whereabouts and got the reply that he was still in Suzhou. The Zhao family took Qian Si's words for granted. Now on the basis of what you just told me, I believe that the man who went down into the well to save you and later got killed must be Zhao. Young lady, why not report this event to the *yamen* so that you will be sent back home and be able to free yourself from such suffering?" Zheng Ruizhu replied, "I'm afraid that, since I came here with him, I may bear the responsibility for an offense as well." The neighbor said, "No, you're a woman who was kidnapped. What offense did you commit? I'm going to let the Zhao family know about the truth. They will definitely sue the murderer. Then I'll write a statement for you so you can take it to the *yamen*. As long as you tell truth, I can guarantee you'll be free of accusation and able to go back to your family." Zheng Ruizhu said, "If that's the case, I will be able to renew my decent life."

After they agreed to this, the neighbor woman left to tell the Zhaos about this matter. At the same time as the family of Zhao filed a lawsuit, Zheng Ruizhu turned in her statement to the county *yamen*. The County Magistrate of Qixian questioned Zheng Ruizhu about her statement and then sent runners to arrest Qian Si and bring him to the court. Qian Si gave an evasive answer to the court's questioning, but Zheng Ruizhu offered irrefutable details that dashed Qian Si's elusive attempts. Qian Si cursed Zheng Ruizhu, saying, "I saved your life. But you're damning me in return!" Zheng Ruizhu said, "That man saved my life. Why did you kill him?" Qian Si was thus silenced. The Zhao family requested that the murderer pay with his own life.

The County Magistrate said, "The murder is admitted, but it is based



这里成不得狱。这是嘉定县地方做的事，郑蕊珠又是嘉定县人，尸首也在嘉定县，我这里只录口词成招，将一行人连文卷押解到嘉定县结案就是了。”当下先将钱已打了三十大板，收在牢中。郑蕊珠召保，就是邻妈替他递了保状。且喜与那个恶妇万虫儿不相见了。杞县一面叠成文卷，签了长解，把一千人多解到苏州府嘉定县来。

是日正逢五日比较之期，嘉定知县带出监犯徐达，恰好在那里比较。开封府杞县的差人投了文，当堂将那解批上姓名，逐一点过。叫到郑蕊珠，蕊珠答应。徐达抬头一看，却正是这个失去的郑蕊珠，是开面时认得亲切的。大叫道：“这正是我的冤家！我不知为你打了多少，你却在那里来？莫不是鬼么？”知县看见，问徐达道：“你为甚认得那妇人？”徐达道：“这个正是井里失去的新人，不消比较小人了。”知县也骇然道：“有这等事！”唤郑蕊珠近前，一一细问。郑蕊珠照前事细说了一遍。知县又把来文逐一简看，方晓得前日井中死尸乃赵申，被钱已所杀。遂吊取赵申尸首，令仵作人简验得头骨碎裂，系是生前被石块打伤身死。将钱已问成死罪，抵赵申之命。



on verbal statements only, without any evidence or a body. So the case can't be settled. The murder was committed in Jiading County, and Zheng Ruizhu comes from that county. That is where the dead body is, too. What I can do here is to record all oral statements and send them together with persons concerned to Jiading County. This case can be concluded there." Then he had Qian Si flogged with thirty strokes and shut behind bars. Zheng Ruizhu was released on a surety bond completed on her behalf by the neighbor woman. Zheng Ruizhu was happy that she was able to leave that brutal Wan Chonger. The County Magistrate established a lawsuit file, signed the order to escort the prisoner on a long journey, and sent this group of concerned persons to Jiading County of Suzhou Prefecture.

The day that the group arrived in Jiading was the day scheduled for the regular interrogation of Xu Da. As the Jiading County Magistrate had Xu Da brought into court, the runner from Qixian of Kaifeng Prefecture handed in the lawsuit file. The Jiading County Magistrate at once called out the names listed in the file. When the roll-call got down to the name of Zheng Ruizhu, she answered. Looking up, Xu Da realized she was the one who had disappeared, the one he had seen clearly when doing her hair. He shouted loudly, "She's exactly the one my life hinges on! I don't know how many beatings I've received because of you. Where have you been? You're not a ghost, are you?" On hearing this, the County Magistrate asked Xu Da, "How do you know this woman?" Xu Da replied, "This is the bride who was in the well. Now you needn't torture me for her whereabouts."

The County Magistrate was astonished, saying, "What a strange thing!" So he called Zheng Ruizhu to the front and questioned her closely. Zheng Ruizhu retold her story in detail. Then the County Magistrate went over the lawsuit file and came to the conclusion that the dead body in the well was that of Zhao Shen who was deliberately killed by Qian Si. He ordered that Zhao Shen's body be brought in and examined by the coroner. The coroner's verdict showed that a fractured skull, caused by the striking of a rock, had led to the death of the man. Thus the County Magistrate convicted Qian Si of a capital crime. Xu Da was involved in the abduction,

徐达拐骗，虽事不成，祸端所自，问三年满徒。张寅、李卯，各不应杖罪。郑蕊珠所遭不幸，免科，给还原夫谢三郎完配。赵申尸骨，家属领埋；系隔省，埋讫，释放宁家。

知县发落已毕，笑道：“若非那边弄出，解这两个人来，这件未完何时了结也？”嘉定一县，传为新闻。可笑谢三郎，好端端的新妇，直到这日方得到手，已是个弄残的了。又为这事，坏了两条性命。其祸皆在男人开面上起的，所以内外之防不可不严也。

男子何当整女容？致令恶少起顽凶。

今朝试看含香蕊，已动当年函谷封。



and the one who initiated the plot, although it eventually failed. So a three-year imprisonment was given to him. Zhang Yin and Li Mao, his accomplices, were flogged with a stick in the light of their individual offenses. The judge said that Zheng Ruizhu suffered from misfortune and, with a verdict of innocence, should be returned to her husband, Xie Sanlang. Zhao Shen's body could be claimed and buried by his family members. After the burial, which took place away from his native place, the family was allowed to leave for home.

The verdict having been delivered thus, the County Magistrate said with smile, "If they had not solved the case there in Qixian and sent these two persons here, this unsettled legal matter would have never been closed." The news circulated quickly in Jiading County. Poor Xie Sanlang lost his bride on the wedding night and did not get her back until then, but she was no longer a virgin. Two human lives were lost in the event. All the bad fortune originated in a man's styling hair for a girl. Hence a strict watch on outsider men should be maintained.

How should a man style hair for a girl?  
Evil and murderous intentions suddenly occur  
to a young ruffian.  
Once a darling bud of May the girl was,  
But now a faded woman ruthlessly trampled.

## 卷 二 十 六

懵教官爱女不受报 穷庠士助师得令终

诗曰：

朝日上团团，照见先生盘。

盘中何所有？苜蓿长阑干。

这首诗乃是广文先生所作，道他做官清苦处。盖因天下的官，随你至卑极小的，如仓大使、巡简司，也还有些外来钱。惟有这教官，管的是那几个酸子，有体面的还来送你几分节仪，没体面的终年面也不来见你，有甚往来交际？所以这官极苦。然也有时运好，撞着好门生，也会得他的气力起来。这又是各人的造化不同。

浙江温州府曾有一个廩膳秀才，姓韩，名赞卿。屡次科第不得中式，挨次出贡，到京赴部听选，选得广东一个县学里的





## *Tale 26*

### **A Muddle-headed Instructor Is Mistreated by His Pampered Daughters A Once Poor Scholar Finances His Instructor for a Happy Old Age**

A poem reads thus:

The sun rises full and bright.

An instructor's dish shines brightly in the sunlight.

What is it in the dish?

Nothing but alfalfa piled up in a mess.

A Tang-dynasty poet named Xue Wenguang composed these lines to express his poor living conditions while he held a civilian official post. All officials, including the lowest-ranking officials like storehouse keepers or bailiffs who are in charge of local public security, can get some extra money in one way or another. But school instructors are in charge of poor scholars. Those poor scholars who mind their manners sometimes will pay some courtesy calls to their school instructors, but those who are lacking in manners will never show up all the year round. What associations and dealings will school instructors and poor scholars have between each other? So, teaching profession always offers relatively few comforts. However, there are also special occasions when the wheel of fortune turns in their favor if they happen to meet some good students who may turn out to be of great help to them. After all, it is a matter of luck.

Once there was a scholar living on a government stipend in Wenzhou, Zhejiang. The scholar's name was Han Zanqing. Having failed to pass the imperial examinations time and again to become an official, Han was finally recommended by the local government to make further studies at the national capital. Upon graduation, he was assigned to a county school





司训。那个学直在海边，从来选了那里，再无人去做的。你道为何？元来与军民府州一样，是个有名无实的衙门。有便有几十个秀才，但是认得两个“上大人”的字脚，就进了学，再不退了。平日只去海上寻些道路，直到上司来时，穿着衣巾，摆班接一接、送一送，就是他向化之处了。不知国朝几年间曾创立得一个学舍，无人来住，已自东倒西歪。旁边有两间舍房，住一个学吏，也只管记记名姓簿籍；没事得做，就合着秀才一伙去做生意。这就算做一个学了。韩赞卿悔气，却选着了这一个去处。曾有走过广里的，备知详细，说了这样光景。合家恰像死了人一般，哭个不歇。韩赞卿家里穷得火出，守了一世书窗，指望巴个出身，多少挣些家私，今却如此遭际，没计奈何。韩赞卿道：“难道便是这样罢了不成？穷秀才结煞，除了去做官，再无路可走了。我想朝廷设立一官，毕竟也有个用处。见放着一个地方，难道是去不得、哄人的？也只是人自怕了。我总是没事得做，拚着穷骨头去走一遭，或者撞着上司可怜，有些别样处法，作成些道路，就强似在家里坐了。”遂发一个狠，决意要去。亲眷们阻当他，多不肯听。措置了些盘缠，别了家眷，冒冒失失，竟自赴任。



in Guangdong to be an instructor. Because this county school was very close to the sea, none of those who had been assigned this post went there to assume office.

Actually it was only an official post in name. It was true there were dozens of scholars registered in this school, but they could read and write very few characters. They would change into their scholar's long robes and return to the school only when their superiors came to visit the school. On ordinary days they would put out to sea to do business. There were several tumbledown houses in the school. But when this school was founded was unknown to everyone. In one of the houses lived the school director who only attended to the registers. Having nothing to do all the day long, the school director joined the scholars in doing business too. Presumably, it was a school. Han Zhanqing was appointed the instructor of this school. What lousy luck!

A person who had been to Guangdong knew the details of the inside story and thus told Han Zhanqing the true state of the affair. Upon hearing this bad news, Han's whole family was thrown into utter despair. As his family had lived in abject poverty, Han studied extremely hard for years in the hope of becoming an official and earning some money. He never expected he would be appointed to such an official post. Feeling at a loss what to do, he thought in his mind, "What should I do about it? A poor scholar can achieve nothing except becoming an official. Since the imperial court has set up such a post, it must be of some specific use. At present, an official post is just within my reach. Could this official post be really unsuitable to me and just designated to fool people? Or it might be also possible that people are filled with doubts and misgivings. Anyway I have nothing to attend to at present. Why not have a try? It's also possible I'll meet a considerate official who'll show some mercy to me by assigning me to some other post. After all it will be better than stay idle at home." Thus he decided to go to Guangdong to take office. His family and relatives tried hard to stop him, but he refused to listen to them. After borrowing some money for the journey, he bade his family farewell and set out for Guangdong.

While he was passing the provincial capital, Han met some of his



到了省下，见过几个上司，也多说道：“此地去不得。住在会城，守几时，别受些差委罢。”韩赞卿道：“朝廷命我到此方行教，岂有身不履其地，算得为官的？是必到任一番，看如何光景。”上司闻知，多笑是迂儒腐气，凭他自去了。

韩赞卿到了海边地方，寻着了那个学吏，拿出吏部急字号文凭，与他看了。学吏吃惊道：“老爹你如何直走到这里来？”韩赞卿道：“朝廷教我到这里做教官，不到这里，却到那里？”学吏道：“旧规但是老爹们来，只在省城住下，写个谕帖来知会我们，开本花名册子送来，秀才廩粮中扣出一个常例，一同送到，一件事就完了。老爹每俸薪，自在县里去取，我们不管。以后升除去任，我们总不知道了。今日如何却竟到这里？”韩赞卿道：“我既是这里官，须管着这里秀才。你去叫几个来见我。”学吏见过文凭，晓得是本管官，也不敢怠慢，急忙去寻几个为头的积年秀才，与他说知了。秀才道：“奇事！奇事！有个先生来了！”一传两，两传三，一时会聚了十四五个人。商量道：“既是先生到此，我们也该以礼相见。”有几个年老些的，穿戴了衣巾，其余的只是常服，多来拜见先生。韩赞卿接见已毕，逐个问了姓，叙些寒温，尽皆欢喜。略略问起文字大意，一班儿都相对微笑。老成的道：“先生不必拘此，某等敢以实情相告。某等生在海滨，多是在海里去做生计的。当道恐怕某



superiors. They all said to Han, "It's not sensible to go there. Better stay in the capital city for a few days and wait for a different assignment." Han said, "Since I've been assigned to teach there, there is no reason for me not to go there to perform my duties. I'm determined to go there and have a try." Upon hearing this, his superiors all derided him for being pedantic. Ignoring others' suggestions, Han made his way to Guangdong to take office.

Arriving at the county school by the sea, Han came to the school director and showed him the letter of appointment issued by the Ministry of Civil Personnel. Greatly shocked by Han's appearance, the school director said, "Why have you come to such a place?" Han replied, "The imperial court has appointed me as the instructor of this county school. How can I go to some other place but this one?" The school director explained, "The customary practice is that those who are appointed the position of instructor in this school put themselves up in the provincial capital instead of coming to this school in person. They just write us a note to inform us of this matter and we accordingly send them a name list of the *xiucais* studying in this school along with some tips. And that's all. They go to the county *yamen* to take their salaries and we're not responsible for this. What promotions they will get in the future often remains unknown to us. So, your arrival at this school is really a big surprise to me."

Han said, "Being the instructor of this school, I must take care of the school administration. Bring some *xiucais* here to see me!" Not daring to cold-shoulder him, the school director hurriedly took his leave and told some aged *xiucais* about this matter. Hearing the news, one aged *xiucais* said, "How strange! How strange! An instructor has come to our school!" The news spread from mouth to mouth and soon over a dozen of *xiucais* knew about it. They gathered together and said, "Since an instructor has come to our school, we must treat him with due respect." Thus decided, they all came to call on Instructor Han to pay their respects.

After some usual polite small talks, Han asked them about their studies. The *xiucais* only smiled at each other. Some experienced aged *xiucais* answered, "Please don't stand on ceremony, sir. To be frank, we all grow up by the sea, and we all put out to sea to do business. In order to refrain



等在内地生事，作成我们穿件蓝袍，做了个秀才，羁縻着。唱得几个喏，写得几字，就是了；其实不知孔夫子义理怎么样的。所以再没有先生们到这里的。今先生辛辛苦苦来走这番，这所在不可久留，却又不好叫先生便如此空回去。先生且安心住两日，让吾们到海中去去，五日后却来见先生，就打发先生起身。只看先生造化何如。”说毕，哄然而散。韩赞卿听了这番说话，惊得呆了，做声不得。只得依傍着学吏，寻间民房，权且住下。

这些秀才去了五日，果然就来。见了韩赞卿道：“先生大造化！这五日内，生意不比寻常，足足有五千金，勾先生下半世用了。弟子们说过的话，毫厘不敢入己，尽数送与先生，见弟子们一点孝意。先生可收拾回去，是个高见。”韩赞卿见了许多东西，吓了一跳，道：“多谢列位盛意。只是学生带了许多银两，如何回去得？”众秀才道：“先生不必忧虑，弟子们着几个与先生做伴，同送过岭，万无一失。”韩赞卿道：“学生只为家贫无奈，选了这里，不得不来。岂知遇着列位，用情如此。”众秀才道：“弟子们从不曾见先生面的，今劳苦先生一番，周全得回去，也是我们弟子之事。已后的先生不消再劳了。”当下众秀才替韩赞卿打叠起来，水陆路程舟车之类，多是众秀才备得停当。有四五个陪他一路起身，但到泊舟所在，有些人来



us from making mischief on land, the authorities asked us to wear *xiucais* robes and made us become *xiucais* in name. Apart from making vocal responses with bows and knowing how to write a few characters, we actually know nothing about the Confucian doctrines. So, no instructors have ever visited our school. It is inadvisable for you to stay here for long, sir. But now that you've taken all the trouble to get here, we won't let you leave empty handed. Just set your mind at rest and stay here for a few days. We'll put out to sea and come back to see you in five days and then see you off. It is a matter of luck whether a good fortune will come your way or not." Having finished these words, the *xiucais* scattered in a rush. Dumbfounded to hear this, Han could not utter a single word. With the help of the school director, Han found a house and put himself up for the time being.

Within five days, the *xiucais* returned. "You're really lucky, sir!" said the *xiucais*. "We made a good deal in the past five days and we made as much money as five thousand taels of silver. It will be enough to support you for the rest of your life. As we've made a promise earlier, we do not dare to keep a single piece of silver to ourselves. Now we give this money to you in full to express our filial respect. It is advisable that now you get your things packed and go back home." This large amount of silver gave Han a start. "Thank you all for your great kindness," said Han. "But how can I take so much silver home with me?" The *xiucais* answered, "Don't worry about it. We'll go along with you and help you take the silver and see you out of Guangdong. It will be perfectly safe." Han said, "My family is poverty stricken, so I had no other choice but come here to take office. I never expected to meet such kindhearted *xiucais* like you." The *xiucais* answered, "We've never seen any instructors before. We deeply appreciate it that you've taken so much trouble to get to our school. So we see it as our duty to present you some silver. But we don't think it necessary for later instructors to come here in the future."

Finishing these words, all the *xiucais* started to help Han get packed. Then they made preparations for the journey both by land and water, getting ready a carriage, a boat and other things needed. Four to five *xiucais* set out for the journey along with Han and escorted him all the

相头相脚，面生可疑的，这边秀才不知口里说些甚么，抛个眼色，就便走开了去。直送至交界地方，路上太平的了，然后别了韩赞卿告回。韩赞卿谢之不尽，竟带了重资回家。一个穷儒，一旦饶裕了。可见有造化的，只是这个教官，又到了做不得的地方，也原有起好处来。

在下为何把这个教官说这半日？只因有一个教官，做了一任回来，贫得彻骨，受了骨肉许多的气。又亏得做教官时一个门生之力，挣了一派后运，争尽了气，好结果了。

正是：

世情看冷暖，人面逐高低。  
任是亲儿女，还随阿堵移。

话说浙江湖州府近太湖边地方，叫做钱篓，有一个老廩膳秀才，姓高，名广，号愚溪。为人忠厚，生性古执。生有三女，俱已适人过了。妻石氏已死，并无子嗣。止有一侄，名高文明，另自居住，家道颇厚。这高愚溪积祖传下房屋一所，自己在里头住，侄儿也是有分的。只因侄儿自挣了些家私，要自家像意，见这祖房坍塌下来修理不便，便自己置买了好房子，搬出去另外住了。若论支派，高愚溪无子，该是侄儿高文明承继的。只





way till they were traveling on the boat. While traveling by water, some dubious characters moved close to Han's boat and looked at Han from head to toe. Seeing this, the *xiucais* mumbled a few words, which was illegible to Han, towards these people and gave them a wink, and then these dubious men left. When they were out of Guangdong, the *xiucais* said goodbye to Han when they believed that the journey ahead of him was completely peaceful. After expressing a thousand thanks for the *xiucais*, Han returned home with a big fortune and became a rich man. This shows that fortune will be smiling at anyone who is in good luck, and this poor instructor Han has set us a good example.

Why have I babbled on Instructor Han for such a long while? It is because I have a story about another instructor to tell you. This instructor ended up in utter destitution, and at the expiration of his term of office he suffered a lot of maltreatment from his own family. However, as it turned out later, one of his former students gave him enormous financial help and won honor for him. Now I'd like to have your patience.

Human relationships are but paper-thin.

Social connections are as loose as they could be.

Only money talks,

Even though between parents and children.

\* \* \*

Once there was a scholar living on a government stipend in the area of Qianlou near Taihu Lake, in Huzhou Prefecture, Zhejiang. The scholar's name was Gao Guang and his formal name was Yuxi. Honest and upright as he was, he had a stubborn character. He had three daughters who were all married. His wife was dead and he had no son. But he did have a nephew by the name of Gao Wenming, who lived in a separate house and was quite wealthy. Gao Yuxi lived in a house that had been handed down to him from earlier generations. In fact his nephew was also entitled to part of the estate. However, since Wenming had earned a great deal of money, he thought he deserved better housing, given the fact that the old house was crumbling and repairs would not be easy. Therefore the nephew Wenming bought a good house and lived separately from his uncle. In terms of the rights of succession, Gao Yuxi's property should go to his



因高愚溪讳言这件事，况且自有三女，未免偏向自己骨肉，有积趲下的束修、本钱，多零星与女儿们去了。后来挨得出贡，选授了山东费县教官，转了沂州，又升了东昌府。做了两三任归来，囊中也有四五百金宽些。看官听说：大凡穷家穷计，有了一二两银子，便就做出十来两银子的气质出来。况且世上人的眼光极浅，口头最轻，见一两个箱儿匣儿略重些，便猜道有上千上万的银子在里头。还有凿凿说着数目，恰像亲眼看见、亲手兑过的一般，总是一划的穷相。彼时高愚溪带得些回来，便就声传有上千的数目了。

三个女儿晓得老子有些在身边，争来亲热，一个赛一个的要好。高愚溪心里欢喜，道：“我虽是没有儿子，有女儿们如此殷勤，老景也还好过。”又想一想道：“我总是留下私蓄，也没有别人得与他，何不拿些出来，分与女儿们了，等他们感激，越坚他每的孝心。当下取三百两银子，每女儿与他一百两。女儿们一时见了银子，起初时千欢万喜，也自感激。后来闻得说身边还多，就有些过望起来，不见得十分足处。大家唧啷道：“不知还要留这偌多与那个用？”虽然如此说，心里多想他后手的東西，不敢冲撞，只是赶上前的讨好。侄儿高文明照常往来，





nephew Wenming after his death since he had no son. But Gao Yuxi deliberately avoided mentioning this matter. Besides, Gao Yuxi naturally was partial to his three flesh-and-blood daughters. Some of his savings from teaching and other earnings were gradually given to them. Later, on the official recommendation of the imperial court, he was granted a teaching position in Feixian County of Shandong. Afterwards he moved to Yizhou and was promoted to be the Prefect of Dongchang Prefecture. After two or three terms in office, he returned home with savings of more than four to five hundred taels of silver.

Readers, you should know that usually a humble person with one or two taels of silver tends to pose as someone in the possession of ten taels. In addition, most people are shortsighted and prone to gossip about others. The mere sight of a suitcase a little heavier than usual often sets tongues wagging, with people guessing that there are possibly thousands of taels of silver in it. Some even pin down on exact figure as if they have personally seen and weighed the silver. Undoubtedly this is a typical provincial sentiment. When Gao Yuxi came back home with some earnings, word spread that he had brought back a fortune of thousands.

After learning that their father was now rich, the three daughters came and competed with one another in currying favor with him. Gao Yuxi was delighted and said to himself, "Though I do not have a son, my daughters are very good to me. My life should be alright in my later years." But, on second thoughts, he said, "I've made some money over these years and have no one to share them with. Why not give some to my daughters? After they get my silver, they will surely show even more filial respect toward me." So thinking, he took out three hundred taels of silver and divided it equally among his three daughters. His daughters were overjoyed and grateful at first, but later when they learned their father had more money that he had kept from them, they became unsatisfied.

Desiring to get more from their father, they said to one another, "Who knows to whom he will give the rest of his huge amount of money?" Although they constantly thought of this, they said nothing about it to him for fear of offending him. Instead, they kept on flattering him. Meanwhile, Gao Wenming paid regular visits to his uncle and Gao Yuxi



高愚溪不过体面相待。虽也送他两把俸金，几件人事，恰好侄儿也替他接风洗尘，只好直退。侄儿有些身家，也不想他的，不以为意。

那些女儿闹哄了几日，各要回去，只剩得老人家一个，在这些败落旧屋里面居住，觉得凄凉。三个女儿你也说，我也说，多道来接老爹家去住几时，各要争先。愚溪笑道：“不必争，我少不得要来看你们的。我从头而来，各住几时便了。”别去不多时，高愚溪在家清坐了两日，寂寞不过，收拾了些东西，先到大女儿家里住了几时。第二个、第三个女儿多着人来相接，高愚溪以次而到。女儿们只怨怅来得迟，住得不长远，过得两日，又来接了。高愚溪周而复始，住了两巡。女儿们殷殷勤勤，东也不肯放，西也不肯放。高愚溪思量道：“我总是生得儿子，如今年已老迈，又无老小，何苦独自个住在家里？有此三个女儿轮转供养，勾过了残年了。只是白吃他们的，心里不安。前日虽然每人与了他百金，他们也费些在我身上了，我何不与他们说过，索性把身边所有，尽数分与三家，等三家轮供养了我，我落得自由自在。这边过几时，那边过几时，省得老人家还要去买柴余米，支持辛苦。最为便事。”把此意与女儿们说了，女儿们个个踊跃从命，多道：“女儿养父亲，是应得的。就



showed due respect in treating his nephew. He also gave his nephew a little sum of money out of his government stipend or a few gifts. But considering that his nephew hospitably welcomed his uncle's return home, the gifts could merely offset the entertainment. The nephew possessed a large enough fortune, so he had no craving for his uncle's money.

When the few days of excitement ended, the three daughters took off for their homes. The old man was left alone in the run-down house, feeling abandoned. Before long the three daughters came to their father and vied with one another in bringing their father to their homes to live with them. Yuxi smiled and said, "Don't argue about this. I'll surely see you a great deal. I think I'll go to live with each of you in turn." After they left, Gao Yuxi stayed at home for a couple of days, feeling quite lonely. Annoyed by the boredom, he packed and made his way to his eldest daughter's place. Later the second eldest daughter and youngest daughter both sent for him. Gao Yuxi arrived at their homes in due order. The daughters even grumbled about his coming too late and staying too short. In a couple of days one of the others would come to take him. Thus Gao Yuxi's were through two rounds of stays with his daughters, who showed him profound kindness and were all reluctant to part from him.

Gao Yuxi thought in his mind, "All in all, I have no son. I'm now getting on in years and becoming very weak, and have no wife or son to support. Why do I have to live by myself? Now that I have three daughters accommodating me by turns, I will be well taken care of in my remaining years. However, I feel uneasy indeed about depending on them. When I returned home I gave each of them one hundred taels of silver, from which, of course, they have spent some on me. Why not let them know that I will divide the rest of my money equally among them and they should take turns in supporting me? Then I'll be free of cares, living with this one for a time and another one for a time. It will save me trips to purchase firewood and rice, hard things for me to do in old age, and of course this will make my life a lot easier."

When he told his daughters about his plan, they couldn't agree more, and said to him, "It is a daughter's duty to support her father. We couldn't complain even if you were to give us nothing." Gao Yuxi was overjoyed



不分得甚么，也说得不得。”高愚溪大喜，就到自屋里，把随身箱笼有些实物的，多搬到女儿家里来了。私下把箱笼东西拼拼凑凑，还有三百多两。装好汉，发个慷慨，再是一百两一家，分与三个女儿，身边剩不多些甚么了。三个女儿接受，尽皆欢喜。

自此，高愚溪只轮流住在三个女儿家里过日，不到自家屋里去了。这几间祖屋，久无人住，逐渐坍将下来。公家物事，卖又卖不得。女儿们又撺掇他，说是有分东西，何不拆了些来？愚溪总是不想家去住了，道是有理。但见女婿家里有些甚么工作修造之类，就去悄悄载了些作料来，增添改用。东家取了一条梁，西家就想一根柱，甚至猪棚屋，也取些椽子板障来拉一拉。多是零碎取了的，侄儿子也不好小家子样来争，听凭他没些搭煞的，把一所房屋狼籍完了。

祖宗缔造本艰难，公物将来弃物看。

自道婿家堪毕世，宁知转眼有炎寒。

且说高愚溪初时在女婿家里过日，甚是热落，家家如此。以后手中没了东西，要做些事体也不得自由，渐渐有些不便当起来。亦且老人家心性，未免有些嫌长嫌短，左不是、右不是的难为人。略不像意，口里便恨恨毒毒的说道：“我还是吃用自家的，不吃用你们的。”聒絮个不住。到一家，一家如此。那



when he heard such remarks. He went back to his home and moved suitcases and wooden boxes containing his belongings to his daughters' homes. He rummaged through his belongings and came up with more than three hundred taels of silver. With an air of generosity, he distributed one hundred taels to each family, leaving little for himself. The daughters were, of course, delighted at receiving the money.

After that Gao Yuxi lived with each of his three daughter in due succession and never returned to his own home. The house, which had been passed down from earlier generations, remained empty for quite a long time and gradually started to collapse. Since it was not one man's property, it could not be sold. His daughters advised him that since there were useful materials in the broken-down house he should tear down some of the rooms and bring the useful things back to them. Gao Yuxi saw no reason to go back to his own house, so he agreed. Making sure about what his sons-in-law needed for renovations, he went back to his house and carried various construction materials to their homes. One family took away a roof beam at one point and another family seized a post at another. Even the rafters and planks were pulled off the pigsty. Bit by bit most things were taken away. His nephew, not petty-minded, did not compete with the daughters in seizing bits of the property. Soon the house had been demolished and turned into nothing.

As everybody knows, it must be very hard for the forefathers to build up their fortune. Gao Yuxi, taking it for granted that his daughters and sons-in-law might support him in his remaining years, had reduced the house handed down to him and his nephew by the earlier generations to waste. He should have known the fickleness of human relationships.

In the beginning, when he still possessed some money, Gao Yuxi felt comfortable living with each of his sons-in-law's families. Later, when he had nothing more to give, he found himself lacking freedom and convenience in doing things. Like an ordinary elder, he liked to find faults over trifles and grumble, which would cause distress in her daughters' families. When offended by anything, he would grumble harshly, "I'm living on my own, not a dependent yet." Such words kept rolling out of his mouth as he stayed with one family after another. Gradually he became

些女婿家里，未免有些厌倦起来。况且身边无物，没甚么想头了，就是至亲如女儿，心里较前也懈了好些。说不得个推出门，却是巴不得转过别家去了，眼前清静几时。所以初时，这家住了几时，未到满期，那家就先来接他。而今就过日期也不见来接，只是巴不得他迟来些。高愚溪见未来接，便多住了一两日，这家子就有些言语出来，道：“我家住满了，怎不到别家去？”再略动气，就有的发话道：“当初东西，三家均分，又不是我一家得了的。”言三语四，耳朵里听不得。高愚溪受了一家之气，忿忿地要告诉这两家，怎当得这两家真是一个娘养的，过得两日这些光景也就现出来了。闲话中间，对女儿们说着姊妹不是，开口就护着姊妹伙的。至于女婿，一发彼此相为。外貌解劝之中，带些尖酸讥评，只是丈人不是，更当不起。高愚溪恼怒不过，只是寻是寻非的炒闹，合家不宁。数年之间，弄做个老厌物，推来攘去。有了三家，反无一个归根着落之处了。

看官，若是女儿、女婿说起来，必定是老人家不达时务，惹人憎嫌；若是据着公道评论，其实他分散了好些本钱，把这三家做了靠傍，凡事也该体贴他意思一分，才有人心天理。怎当得人情如此：与他的便算己物，用他的便是冤家。况且三家





disliked in the three families of his sons-in-law. Furthermore, as nothing he owned remained to be desired, much of the former warmth left his daughters.

Though they restrained themselves from throwing him out, they were eager to push him to the next family so that they might have a few days of peace. Previously, usually a few days ahead of the schedule, Gao Yuxi would be picked up by the next family. But now, the next family often did not come after the scheduled time had passed, in hopes that he would stay longer with the current family. Seeing that no one came to pick him up, Gao Yuxi would have to stay a couple of more days. Then comments arose in the family, such as, “Your time for staying with us is over. Why don’t you leave for my sister’s home?” Sometimes the words would carry a feeling of fury like: “You divided your money equally among our three families. I didn’t take it alone!” Gao Yuxi found those complaints unbearable. After one family hurt his feelings, he uttered complaints to the other two families. But the sisters had inherited the same temperament from the same mother. They all showed their true nature as time went on. Whenever he grumbled against one of his daughters, the other two would come to her defense. His sons-in-law unquestionably sided with their wives, and their mediation over the disputes bore apparent ridicule of and blame against him. Gao Yuxi was driven beyond forbearance. Thus he incessantly squabbled on pointless matters, and the peace of the families was shattered. He became a disgusting old man to them, being pushed back and forth among them for years. As a result he had no dependable place for a living, despite the fact that he stayed in three homes in turn.

Readers, from the perspective of the daughters and sons-in-law, it must be that the old man lacked reason and sense, and was loathsome. But, in terms of justice, he had given away all his savings and counted upon the three families for a living. It would therefore have been reasonable for the daughters to show certain understanding toward him. However, such is human nature that one takes from others for granted but regards anyone who uses some of his money as an enemy. Meanwhile, there were always issues that could be hardly settled fairly in terms of the obligations for each family. If the old man wanted to entertain a guest, the daughter with





相形，便有许多不调匀处。假如要请一个客，做个东道，这家便嫌道：“何苦定要在我家请？”口里应承时，先不爽利了。就应承了去，心是懈的，日挨一日。挨得满了，又过了一家。到那家提起时，又道：“何不在那边时节请了，偏要留到我家来请？”到底不请得，撒开手。难道遇着大小一事，就三家各派不成？所以一件也成不得了，怎教老人家不气苦？这也是世态自然到此地位的。只是起初不该一味溺爱女儿，轻易把家事尽情散了。而今权在他人之手，岂得如意？只该自揣了些己也罢，却又是亲手分过银子的，心不甘伏。欲待憋了口气，别走道路，又手无一钱，家无片瓦，争气不来，动弹不得。要去告诉侄儿，平日不曾有甚好处到他，今如此行径，没下梢了，恐怕他们见笑，没脸嘴见他。左思右想，恨道：“只是我不曾生得儿子，致有今日。枉有三女，多是负心向外的，一毫没干，反被他们赚得没结果了！”使一个性子，噙着眼泪，走到路傍一个古庙里坐着，越想越气，累天倒地的哭了一回。猛想道：“我做了一世的儒生，老来弄得这等光景，要这性命做甚么？我把胸中气不忿处，哭告菩萨一番，就在这里寻个自尽罢了。”

又道是无巧不成话。高愚溪正哭到悲切之处，恰好侄儿高



whom he was staying had to play host. She would complain, saying, “Why should I be host?” She might accept the responsibility verbally, but not wholeheartedly, and she would put the matter off day after day until the time he could leave for the next family. As he brought up the matter to this family, they would say, “You should have performed this in their homes when you stayed with them. Why are you making a point of doing it here in my family?” So the daughters would turn him down and in the end the old man had to give up his plan. How could the old man treat each business in an absolutely fair way so that each of the three families felt satisfied? Hence nothing was ever completed. How could the old man rest at ease? However, this was a natural outcome in terms of human nature.

He should not have pampered his daughters by giving away his money — but now, as he was obligated to them, how could he feel free? He should be a bit more submissive — but since he had divided the money among them, he wasn’t willing to be treated that way. He also thought about taking leave of them so as to avoid further insults. But as he had neither money nor a home, he found he was landed in a dilemma. He could neither maintain his dignity nor move out. The idea of going to talk to his nephew about the matter was not good either, since he had given his nephew nothing in the past. He believed his current plight would only raise ridicule and he had no face to see his nephew. He turned the matter over in his mind again and again and ruefully talked to himself, “Because I didn’t raise a son, I’m suffering today! I have three daughters, but they are ungrateful and don’t have their hearts in the right place toward me.” Feeling particularly sad, he walked into an old temple with tears in his eyes, and sat down. As he recalled and regretted, his rage became greater and greater. Finally he lay down on the ground and started to cry loudly. Suddenly an idea came across his mind, “I’ve been a scholar all my life, but now I’m old and in a rotten state. What meaning does life hold to me? I’d better cry and tell my grievances in front of the Bodhisattva, and then commit suicide here.”

As an old saying goes, “Coincidence makes up the soul of a tale.” While Gao Yuxi was weeping sadly, his nephew Gao Wenming happened



文明在外边收债回来，船在岸边摇过，只听得庙里哭声。终是关着天性，不觉有些动念，仔细听着，像是伯伯的声音。便道：“不问是不是，这个哭哭得好古怪。就住拢去看一看，怕做甚么？”叫船家一橹邀住了船，船头凑岸，扑的跳将上去。走进庙门，喝道：“那个在此啼哭？”各抬头一看，两下多吃了一惊。高文明道：“我说是伯伯的声音，为何在此？”高愚溪见是自家侄儿，心里悲酸起来，越加痛切。高文明道：“伯伯老人家，休哭坏了身子。且说与侄儿，受了何人的气，以致如此？”高愚溪道：“说也羞人。我自差了念头，死靠着女儿，不留个后步，把些老本钱多分与他们了，今日却没一个理着我了。气忿不过，在此痛哭，告诉神明一番，寻个自尽。不想遇着我侄，甚为有愧。”高文明道：“伯伯怎如此短见！姊妹们是女人家见识，与他认甚么真？”愚溪道：“我宁死于此，不到他三家去了。”高文明道：“不去也凭得伯伯，何苦寻死？”愚溪道：“我已无家可归，不死何待？”高文明道：“侄儿不才，家里也还奉养得伯伯一口起，怎说这话？”愚溪道：“我平时不曾有好处到我侄，些些家事，多与了别人，今日剩得个光身子，怎好来扰得你？”高文明道：“自家骨肉，如何说个扰字？”愚溪道：“便做道我侄不弃，侄媳妇定嫌憎的。我出了偌多本钱，买别人嫌憎过了，何况孑然一身！”高文明道：“侄儿也是个男子汉，岂由妇人做主？况且侄妇颇知义理，必无此事。



to pass by outside on his way back from collecting his debts. His boat was sailing along the riverbank when he heard somebody weeping inside the temple. Instinctively he could not uncaringly go past. He pricked up his ears and realized that it sounded like his uncle crying. Then he said to himself, "Be the man my uncle or not, the crying sounds strange. I'm going to take a look." He told the boatman to stop rowing and, as the bow hit the shore, sprang out onto the bank.

He entered the temple and shouted, "Who's crying here?" As both parties looked up at each other, they were stunned. Gao Wenming said, "I thought it might be you, Uncle. Why are you crying here?" Seeing it was his nephew, Gao Yuxi became more grieved. Gao Wenming tried to calm him down, "Uncle, you're aged and should refrain from grief. Otherwise you'll harm your health. Please tell me who has hurt your feelings and made you feel so sad?" Gao Yuxi replied, "It's a shame to talk about this. I was stupid in counting on my daughters alone. I gave them all my savings, leaving none for my future. Now they have all turned their backs on me! It infuriated me so much that I cried here. I was going to vent my grief to the deities before I commit suicide. I didn't expect to meet you here. I do feel ashamed!"

Gao Wenming said, "Why are you so narrow-minded, Uncle? The sisters are behaving from a female perspective. Don't take it seriously!" Gao Yuxi said, "I would rather die here than go back to any of their homes." Gao Wenming said, "It's up to you, Uncle, to stay with them or not. But it's certainly not the matter for suicide." Gao Yuxi said, "I'm homeless now. How can I continue to live?" Gao Wenming said, "I'm not prosperous, but I would certainly have no problem in supporting you. Why are you talking like this?" Gao Yuxi said, "In the past I never granted any favor to you. All my property went to my daughters. Now I'm broke. How could I trouble you?"

Gao Wenming said, "We're flesh-and-blood kin. Don't talk about troubling." Gao Yuxi said, "Even if you're kind to me, your wife will not like to have me in your home. I've had the experience of paying dearly for cold treatment. Besides, not to mention that I have nothing other than myself!" Gao Wenming replied, "I'm a man and won't let a woman take



伯伯只是随着侄儿到家里罢了，再不必迟疑。快请下船同行。”高文明也不等伯子回言，一把扯住衣袂，拉了就走，竟在船中载回家来。

高文明先走进去，对娘子说着伯伯苦恼，思量寻死的话。高娘子吃惊道：“而今在那里了？”高文明道：“已载他在船里回来了。”高娘子道：“虽然老人家没搭煞，讨得人轻贱，却也是高门里的体面，原该收拾了回家来，免被别家耻笑。”高文明还怕娘子心未定，故意道：“老人家虽没用了，我家养这一群鹅在圈里，等他在家，早晚看看也好的，不到得吃白饭。”娘子道：“说那里话！家里不争得这一口，就吃了白饭，也是自家骨肉，又不养了闲人。没有侄儿叫个伯子来家看鹅之理。不要说这话，快去接了他起来。”高文明道：“既如此说，我去请他起来，你可整理些酒饭相待。”说罢，高文明三脚两步走到船边，请了伯子起来。到堂屋里坐下，就搬出酒肴来，伯侄两人吃了一会。高愚溪还想着可恨之事，提起一两件来告诉侄儿，眼泪簌簌的下来。高文明只是劝解。自此且在侄儿处住下了。

三家女儿知道，晓得老儿心里怪了，却是巴不得他不来。虽体面上也叫个人来动问动问，不曾有一家说来接他去的。那高愚溪心性古撇，便接也不肯去了。一直到了年边，三个女儿家才假意来说接去过年，也只是说声，不见十分殷勤。高愚溪



charge! Moreover, my wife is very righteous and reasonable. She won't behave like that, I'm sure. Come with me and go to my home, Uncle. Don't hesitate. Come aboard the boat, please." Before the old man could make a reply, Gao Wenming grabbed his uncle's sleeve and dragged him onto the boat. He shipped the old man home.

Gao Wenming stepped into his house first and told his wife about his uncle's sorrow and intention of suicide. His wife was shocked and said, "Where is he now?" Gao Wenming answered, "I brought him back by boat." She said, "Though the old man is poor and miserable, we should take him into our home to keep the dignity of the Gao family. Otherwise we would be ridiculed by others." Not quite sure about his wife's sincerity, Gao Wenming made an intentional remark, saying, "It's true that he's useless. But we have some geese in the pen. Let him tend them during the day so that he won't be totally dependent."

His wife replied, "What are you talking about? To feed one more mouth won't break us. Even if he does nothing, we're of one family and he's not an outsider! It's outrageous for a nephew to let his uncle tend geese at home. Don't talk any more. Go and bring him in." "If you think it's all right," Gao Wenming said, "I'm going to bring him in. Please go and fix food and drink for us." Then Gao Wenming strode down to the boat and got his uncle. They came into the main room and took seats while dinner was brought onto the table. Still lost in deep sorrow, Gao Yuxi told his nephew one or two more of his grievances, tears streaming down his face, while Gao Wenming tried to calm him down. Thus they started to live together.

The news reached his daughters. They understood their father's hurt, but were pleased at his staying away from them. Occasionally they sent someone to present greetings to the old man but none of them expressed any intention of bringing him back to their homes. Gao Yuxi, odd and stubborn, would not have gone to them even if invited.

As the Spring Festival was coming around, the daughters hypocritically sent a message that they would come to get their father for the festival. Their verbal expression was followed by no sincere action. Gao Yuxi's reply, of course, was a "no." The daughters didn't push the matter any

回道“不来”，也就住了。高文明道：“伯伯过年，正该在侄儿家里住的，祖宗影神也好拜拜。若在姊妹们家里，挂的是他家祖宗，伯伯也不便。”高愚溪道：“侄儿说得是。我还有两个旧箱笼，有两套圆领在里头，旧纱帽一顶，多在大女儿家里，可着人去取了来，过年时也好穿了拜拜祖宗。”高文明道：“这是要的。可写两个字去取。”随着人到大女儿家里去讨这些东西。那家子正怕这厌物再来，见要这付行头，晓得在别家过年了，恨不得急烧一付退送纸，连忙把箱笼交还不迭。高愚溪见取了这些行头来，心里一发晓得女儿家里不要他来的意思，安心在侄儿处过年。

大凡老休在屋里的小官，巴不得撞个时节吉庆，穿着这一付红闪闪的，摇摆摇摆，以为快乐。当日高愚溪着了这一套，拜了祖宗，侄儿、侄媳妇也拜了尊长，一家之中，甚觉和气，强似在别人家了。只是高愚溪心里时常不快，道是不曾掉得甚么与侄儿，今反在他家打搅，甚为不安。就便是看鹅的事，他也肯做，早是侄儿不要他去。

同枝本是一家亲，才属他门便路人。

直待酒阑人散后，方知叶落必归根。



more. Gao Wenming said to him, "It's absolutely right that you should spend the Spring Festival in my home so that you can worship our ancestors. If you were in any of your daughter's homes, they would have the pictures of their husband's ancestors on display and you would find it inconvenient to do what you want." Gao Yuxi said, "Exactly! I have two old suitcases with two robes in them, plus an old black gauze cap. They are at the home of my eldest daughter. It was a convention that pictures of the ancestors of each family were put up over the lunar New Year for a period starting from the New Year's Eve. We can send someone to get them and then I'll be able to wear them when I worship the ancestors."

Gao Wenming said, "Yes, Uncle. You need them. I'll write a note and have someone go and get them." So a man was sent to the eldest daughter's home to get these things. The eldest daughter's family was fearful that the old nuisance might come again. Seeing the man who had come to take the outfit, they understood that he would be spending the Spring Festival in his nephew's home. They immediately returned the old suitcases as if they were burning paper money to expel an evil spirit. Gao Yuxi received his outfit and realized that he would not be allowed to go back to his daughter's home. So he set his heart on spending the Spring Festival with his nephew.

Generally speaking, low-ranking officials in retirement liked to wear their red glittering outfits on special occasions. This offered them a lot of consolation and pleasure. At the Spring Festival Gao Yuxi wore his outfit and worshipped his ancestors. His nephew, with his wife, kowtowed to the uncle in respect. The whole family was immersed in happiness and harmony. The old man thought this was much better than staying in somebody else's home. However, Gao Yuxi often felt guilty over the fact that he had given his nephew nothing before and was now living off his nephew's family. He expressed his willingness to tend the geese, only to be turned down by his nephew.

Men of the same clan are one family

While others are all strangers.

It's not until the end of the feast

Does one realize fallen leaves will return to their roots.



一日，高愚溪正在侄儿家闲坐，忽然一个人——公差打扮的——走到面前，拱一拱手道：“老伯伯，借问一声，此间有个高愚溪老爹否？”高愚溪道：“问他怎的？”公差道：“老伯伯指引一指引。一路问来，说道在此间。在下要见他一见，有些要紧说话。”高愚溪道：“这是个老朽之人，寻他有甚么勾当？”公差道：“福建巡按李爷，山东沂州人，是他的门生。今去到任，迂道到此，特特来访他，找寻两日了。”愚溪笑道：“则我便是高广。”公差道：“果然么？”愚溪指着壁间道：“你不信，只看我这顶破纱帽。”公差晓得是实，叫声道：“失敬了！”转身就走。愚溪道：“你且说山东李爷叫甚名字？”公差道：“单讳着一个某字。”愚溪想了一想道：“元来是此人！”公差道：“老爹家里收拾一收拾，他等得不耐烦了。小的去禀，就来拜了。”公差访得的实，喜喜欢欢自去了。

高愚溪叫出侄儿高文明来，与他说知此事。高文明道：“这是兴头的事。贵人来临，必有好处。伯伯当初怎么样与他相处起的？”愚溪道：“当初吾在沂州做学正，他是童生新入学，家里甚贫，出那拜见钱不起，有半年多了，不能勾来尽礼。斋中两个同僚，撺掇我出票去拿他，我只是不肯。后来访得他果贫，去唤他来见，是我一个做主，分文不要他的。斋中见我如此，也不好要得了。我见这人身虽寒俭，意气轩昂，模样又好。问



One day as Gao Yuxi was sitting idly, a man in a runner's attire came and said to him, with one hand cupped in another, "Sir, I have an inquiry. Is there an old man named Gao Yuxi around here?" Gao Yuxi asked, "Why are you looking for him?" The runner replied, "I've been asking directions all the way and am told he lives here. I'd like to see him and talk to him about something urgent." Gao Yuxi said, "He is now old and useless. What business do you want to talk to him about?" The runner said, "Lord Li is the Imperial Inspector of Fujian. He's from Yizhou in Shandong and used to be one of Gao Yuxi's students. The Imperial Inspector has made a detour on his way to his office to visit Gao Yuxi. He has inquired about him for a couple of days." Gao Yuxi smiled and said, "I'm Gao Guang." The runner said with excitement, "Really?" Pointing to the wall, Gao Yuxi said, "If you don't believe me, look at my worn gauze cap." The runner realized what he said was true and replied, "I'm sorry for my rough manners." He turned to go. Gao Yuxi said, "Can you tell me the name of this Lord Li from Shandong?" The runner answered his name was so and so. Gao Yuxi thought for a moment and then said, "It's turned out to be that man!" The runner said, "Please get ready, sir. He's running out of patience. I'm going to report to him and he'll be here in no time." With the good news, the runner left in happiness.

Calling for his nephew, Gao Yuxi told him about this matter. Gao Wenming said, "This is going to be something significant. An important person's visit should be good luck for you. How did you get to know him, Uncle?"

Gao Yuxi said, "When I worked as an instructor in Yizhou, he was a new scholar in the school. His family was poor and couldn't afford present to be given to his teacher on the first meeting. More than half a year passed, and he was still unable to come and present me with gifts. Two of my colleagues urged me to issue a summons and force him to come. I didn't do it. Later I found out that he was indeed very poor. So I summoned him in front of me and told him I had decided to waive his presentation of gifts. My colleagues saw what I did and they were not in a position to take anything from him either. I noticed that though the new student was poor and humble in origin, he appeared dignified and good-looking. I

他家里，连灯火之资多难处的。我倒助了他些盘费回去，又替他各处赞扬，第二年就有了一个好馆。在东昌时节，又府里荐了他。归来这几时不相闻了。后来见说中过进士，也不知在那里为官。我已是老迈之人，无意世事，总不记在心上，也不去查他了。不匡他不忘旧情，一直到此来访我。”高文明道：“这也是个好人了。”

正说之间，外边喧嚷起来，说一个大船泊将拢来了，一齐来看。高文明走出来，只见一个人拿了红帖，竟望门里直奔。高文明接了，拿进来看。高愚溪忙将古董衣服穿戴了，出来迎接。船舱门开处，摇摇摆摆，踱上个御史来。那御史生得齐整，但见：

胸蟠豸绣，人避骢威。揽辔想像澄清，停车动摇山岳。  
霜飞白简，一笔里要管闲非；清比黄河，满面上专寻不是。  
若不为学中师友谊，怎肯来林外野人家？

那李御史见了高愚溪，口口称为老师，满面堆下笑来，与他拱揖进来。李御史退后一步，不肯先走。扯得个高愚溪气喘不迭，涎唾鼻涕乱来。李御史带着笑，只是谦逊。高愚溪强不过，只得扯着袖子，占先了些，一同行了。进入草堂之中，御史命设了毯子，纳头四拜，拜谢前日提携之恩。高愚溪还礼不迭。拜过，即送上礼帖，候敬十二两。高愚溪收下，整椅在上



asked about his family and learned that his family was too poor to pay for lighting expenses. Hence I gave him some money, and praised him a great deal to others. That helped him acquire a tutorship in a well-paid private school the following year. When I worked in Dongchang, I recommended him to the prefecture school. Since I returned home I've heard nothing of him. Later I heard that he had passed the highest imperial examinations, but I did not know where he held office after that. I'm old and not interested in worldly affairs. I didn't care about things and did not bother to inquire as to his whereabouts. But I'm glad that he's still kept my kindness toward him in mind and has found his way here to see me." "He's really a good man," Gan Wenming said.

As they talked, uproar arose outside. A big boat was pulling in to shore, and many people turned out to have a look. Gao Wenming stepped out and saw a man racing toward the house with a red note. Gao Wenming accepted it. Gao Yuxi hastily put on his old outfit and ran out to welcome the guest. As the cabin-door opened, out stalked an imperial official, who appeared imposing and neat. The sight was like this:

He was in glittering attire, brocaded,  
Which awed the public into withdrawal.  
As he mounted the horse, he set out to rid the world of evils.  
When his chariot halted the earth and mountains shuddered.  
An ivory tablet he held was as white as frost, a token of justice.  
His complexion, clear and stern, struck all evildoers with terror.  
If not for a student's gratitude to his teacher,  
How could he have deigned to visit such a wild shelter?

Imperial Inspector Li met with Gao Yuxi and, all smiles, kept calling him "my teacher," as they cupped their hands in greeting each other. When they headed for Gao's lodging, Imperial Inspector Li paused, unwilling to walk ahead. He urged Gao Yuxi to go first. This left the latter gasping for breath. Since Imperial Inspector Li persisted, Gao Yuxi had to yield to his courtesy and, with a lift of his sleeve, made steps first. When they came to the main room, Imperial Inspector Li had a rug spread out on the floor and made four kowtows to Gao Yuxi for his past generous help. Gao Yuxi returned the salute repeatedly. Then a gilt note was presented



面。御史再三推辞，定要傍坐，只得左右相对。御史还不肯占上，必要愚溪右手高些，才坐了。御史提起昔日相与之情，甚是感谢，说道：“侥幸之后，日夕想报师恩，时刻在念。今幸适有此差，道由贵省，迂途来访。不想高居如此乡僻。”高愚溪道：“可怜，可怜。老朽那得有居？此乃舍侄之居，老朽在此趁住的。”御史道：“老师当初，必定有居。”愚溪道：“老朽拙算，祖居尽废。今无家可归，只得在此强颜度日。”说罢，不觉哽咽起来。老人家眼泪，极易落的，扑的掉下两行来。御史恻然不忍道：“容门生到了地方，与老师设处便了。”愚溪道：“若得垂情，老朽至死不忘。”御史道：“门生到任后，便着承差来相候。”说勾一个多时的话，起身去了。

愚溪送动身，看船开了，然后转来。将适才所送银子来看一看，对侄儿高文明道：“此封银子，我侄可收去，以作老汉平日供给之费。”高文明道：“岂有此理？供养伯伯，是应得的。此银伯伯留下，随便使用。”高愚溪道：“一向打搅，心实不安，手中无物，只得赧颜过了。今幸得门生送此，岂有累你供给了，我白收物事自用之理？你若不收我的，我也不好再住了。”高



containing a sum of twelve taels of silver. Gao Yuxi accepted it. When chairs were set for people to sit, the Imperial Inspector insisted on not taking the seat of honor, so they were reconciled to taking seats on the left and right sides facing each other. Still the Imperial Inspector would not sit down until he had had Gao Yuxi's take the seat on the right which was usually reserved as the seat of honor too. When coming to the subject of Gao Yuxi's past financial support, the Imperial Inspector expressed his deep appreciation, saying, "Since I passed the examinations by luck, I've been thinking about returning your kindness every moment of each day. Now I'm fortunate to have this chance to be going by way of your province to my appointed office. I've detoured to come here to see you. But I'm surprised to see that your residence is in such a remote area."

Gao Yuxi replied, "It's my shame! My shame! How could I say I have my residence? It's my nephew's. I'm just seeking temporary lodging here." The Imperial Inspector said, "I thought you had a house of your own, teacher." Gao Yuxi said, "I miscalculated and lost my inherited house. Now I have nowhere to stay but here." So saying, he started to choke up. The old man's tears quickly welled up in his eyes and streamed down his cheeks. Feeling sympathetic for him, the Imperial Inspector said, "Be a little patient, teacher. When I go to my office I'll find a way to settle you down." Gao Yuxi said, "If you are so kind to me, I'll cherish your kindness till death." The Imperial Inspector said, "As soon as I arrive at my post, I'll send men to take you there." Their talk continued for some time before the Imperial Inspector took his leave.

Gao Yuxi saw him off and watched as the boat moved away. Then he opened the pack and had a look at the silver he had received, and said to Gao Wenming, "Take the silver as my payment for the expenses of my living here." Gao Wenming replied, "What are you talking about? It's my duty to support you, Uncle. Please keep it for your own use for the future." Gao Yuxi said, "I've been troubling you a lot. I feel quite uneasy. I had nothing to give you in the past and now have to live in shame. I got the silver from my student. How can I keep it for myself after I have cost you so much? If you refuse to accept it, I won't feel comfortable about living here any more." Unable to turn him down, Gao Wenming said, "If that's



文明推却不得，只得道：“既如此说，侄儿取了一半去，伯伯留下一半别用罢。”高愚溪依言，各分了六两。

自李御史这一来，闹动了太湖边上，把这事说了几日。女儿家知道了，见说送来银子，分一半与侄儿了，有的不气干道：“光辉了他家，又与他银子！”有的道：“这些须银子，也不见几时用，不要欣羨他。免得老灰物来家也勾了，料没得再有几个御史来送银子。”各自唧唧不题。

且说李御史到了福建，巡历地方，祛蠹除奸，雷厉风行，且是做得利害。一意行事，随你天大分上挽回不来。三月之后，即遣承差到湖州公干，顺便赍书一封，递与高愚溪，约他到任所。先送程仪十二两，教他收拾了，等承差公事已毕，就接了同行。高愚溪得了此信，与侄儿高文明商量，伯侄两个一同去走走。收拾停当，承差公事已完，来促起身。一路上多是承差支持，毫不费力，不二十日，已到了省下。

此时察院正巡历漳州。开门时节，承差进禀：“请到了高师爷。”察院即时送了下处，打轿出拜。拜时赶开闲人，叙了许多时说话。回到衙内，就送下程。又分付办两桌酒，吃到半



the case, I'll take half of it. Please keep the rest." Gao Yuxi agreed and they each took six taels.

The Imperial Inspector's visit raised a flurry of discussion across the region around Taihu Lake. Talk circulated for days and eventually reached Gao Yuxi's daughters. They also heard that the nephew of their father had gotten half of the silver he received. One of them said resentfully, "The Imperial Inspector's presence was an honor for his nephew's family. And his nephew also got some silver!" Another one said, "His silver is not much and won't last long. Don't envy him. We're better-off, free of that disgusting old trash. He won't have any more Imperial Inspectors coming to give him silver." Thus their muttering continued.

Imperial Inspector Li arrived in Fujian, went on extensive tours of inspection, rid the region of evils and executed criminals. His performance was vigorous and swift, and his enforcement of the law was strict. He had outlaws brought to justice no matter what their backgrounds were. Three months later, he sent a runner on business to Huzhou. At the same time he gave the runner a letter to be delivered to Gao Yuxi, asking that Gao come to his government office and including an initial gift of twelve taels of silver to cover the old man's expenses for the journey. The runner was told to come back with Gao Yuxi after completing his business. Upon receiving the letter, Gao Yuxi talked to Gao Wenming and they decided that they would go together. They packed and set off with the runner, who had finished his business and come to pick them up. The journey cost Gao Yuxi little since the runner paid the expenses. In less than twenty days they were in the capital city of Fujian.

At that moment the Imperial Inspector was on an inspection tour in Zhangzhou. The runner went to him and reported, "Master Gao is here." Immediately the Imperial Inspector ordered that he be provided with temporary lodging and then he personally went to meet him in a sedan chair. At their meeting the Imperial Inspector ordered his attendants to clear out, then they talked a great deal in privacy. After his return to his office, the Imperial Inspector sent another gift of silver to Gao Yuxi to cover the expenses of his return journey. Then he had two tables of food prepared for the old man and they ate and talked until midnight.





夜方散。外边见察院如此绸缪，那个不钦敬？府县官多来相拜送下程，尽力奉承。大小官吏多来掇臀捧屁，希求看觑，把一个老教官抬在半天里。因而有求荐奖的，有求免参论的，有求出罪的，有求免赃的，多来钻他分上。察院密传意思，教且离了所巡境地，或在省下，或游武夷，已叮嘱了心腹府县，其有所托之事，钉好书札，附寄公文封筒进来，无有不依。

高愚溪在那里半年，直到察院将次复命，方才收拾回家。总计所得，足足有二千馀两白物，其余土产货物，尺头礼仪之类甚多，真叫做满载而归。只这一番，比似先前自家做官时倒有三四倍之得了。伯侄两人满心欢喜，到了家里，搬将上去。邻里之间，见说高愚溪在福建巡按处抽丰回来，尽来观看。看见行李沉重，货物堆积，传开了一片，道：“不知得了多少来家。”

三家女儿知道了，多着人来问安，又各说着要接到家里去的话。高愚溪只是冷笑，心里道：“见我有了东西，又来亲热了！”接着几番，高愚溪立得主意定，只是不去。正是：

自从受了卖糖公公骗，至今不信口甜人。



Seeing the tremendous respect and hospitality that the Imperial Inspector showed to Gao Yuxi, who else would not show due respect to the guest? Government officials of prefectures and counties all came to present their gifts and flattering remarks poured down on him. Local officials, high and low, were not slow in showing their respect in hopes that the inspector might give them favorable treatment. All of this made the old teacher feel greatly elated. Many people came to request favors from him: some asked him to help them get a commendation; some hoped to be released from the indictment on their offenses; some wanted to be exempted from punishment; some desired to obtain a waiver on the demand for returning money they had received as bribes. The Imperial Inspector made secret arrangements with his favorites of prefectures and counties that, as he finished his inspection in this area and went to the capital of the prefecture or to the area of Wuyi County, they should bind the records of the matters entrusted in sealed envelopes and send them to him. He would grant all those requests.

Gao Yuxi stayed for half a year until the Imperial Inspector left to report back on his mission. Gao Yuxi packed for leaving. He counted his total acquisitions to be worth more than two thousand taels of silver. Other numerous things he received included local products and cloth. That was a huge gain, three or four times the salary he had received as a government official years before. The uncle and nephew were overwhelmed with joy. They shipped the gifts home and moved them into the house. As neighbors learned that Gao Yuxi had returned with a fortune obtained from the Imperial Inspector in Fujiun, they all came out to have a look. They saw piles of heavy suitcases. Word got around, "What a large wealth he's brought back home!"

When the three daughters learned of this, they sent men to present their regards and a message inviting the old man to come to live with them. Gao Yuxi sneered. He thought to himself, "They see that I'm rich now, and so they pretend to be good to me!" A few more invitations arrived, but he made the point that he would not go.

Once cheated by the sweets seller,

One never believes in smooth-tongued people



这三家女儿见老子不肯来，约会了一日，同到高文明家里来。见高愚溪个个多撮得笑起来，说道：“前日不知怎么样冲撞了老爹，再不肯到家来了。今我们自己来接，是必原到我每各家来住住。”高愚溪笑道：“多谢，多谢。一向打搅得你们勾了，今也要各自揣己，再不来了。”三个女儿你一句、我一句说道：“亲的只是亲，怎么这等见弃我们？”高愚溪不耐烦起来，走进房中去了一会，手中拿出三包银子来。每包十两，每一个女儿与他一包道：“只此见我老人家之意。以后我也再来相扰，你们也不必再来相缠了。”又拿一个柬帖来，付高文明，就与三个女儿看一看。众人争上前看时，上面写道：

平日空囊，止有亲侄收养；今兹馀囊，无用他姓垂涎。

一生宦资，已归三女；身后长物，悉付侄儿。书此为照。女儿中颇有识字义者，见了此纸，又气忿又没趣，只得各人收了一包，且自各回家里去了。

高愚溪罄将所有，尽交付与侄儿。高文明那里肯受？说道：“伯伯留些防老，省得似前番缺乏了，告人便难。”高愚溪道：“前番分文没有时，你兀自肯白养我；今有东西与你了，倒怠慢我不成？我老人家心直口直，不作久计了。你收下我的，一家一计过去，我倒相安。休分彼此，说是你的我的。”高文明



As the daughters learned that their father had turned them down, they scheduled a time to go together to Gao Wenming's place and visit their father. All smiles, they said to him, "We don't know how we have hurt your feelings, Father, so that you don't want to come and live with us. Now we're coming personally to invite you. Please come and stay some time with each of us." Gao Yuxi said with a grin, "Many thanks! Many thanks! I bothered you a lot before. This time I'll be sensible and won't go to your places any more!" Then the daughters competed in saying, "We're one family anyway, Father. Why do you so loathe us?" Gao Yuxi lost his patience. He rose and entered his inner room. A moment later he emerged with three packs of silver in his hands, each containing ten taels. He gave one pack to each of his three daughters and said, "Here's a gift from me, an old man. I won't bother you any more. You needn't come to pester me, either." He then took out a note, handed it to Gao Wenming, and showed it to his daughters. They pressed forward to take a look at it. It read:

When I was poor, my nephew alone took me in and looked after me; now I have a fat purse and do not want outsiders to harbor any wild wishes; I have given all I had saved during my government career to my three daughters; this legacy is to go to my nephew; this paper should be my testimony.

Some of the daughters could read between lines. As they understood what it said, they became infuriated and felt snubbed. Disappointed, they picked up their packages and left for home.

Gao Yuxi decided to give all his possessions to his nephew. But Gao Wenming would not accept them, saying, "You should keep them for yourself for your future life. Otherwise you might get into trouble again and need the support of others, as in the past." Gao Yuxi replied, "You took me in the past when I had nothing. Now that I want to give you my property, will you treat me badly instead? I'm an old man, frank and outspoken. I don't need any long-term plan. Accept this property and we will live as one family. I will feel comfortable that way. Don't fuss over what's yours and what's mine." Gao Wenming could not decline any more but accepted the property. In the years that followed, he did his best to support his uncle, meeting all his requests and making his life happy. Gao

依言，只得收了。以后尽心供养，但有所需，无不如意。高愚溪到底不往女儿家去，善终于侄儿高文明之家。所剩之物，尽归侄儿，也是高文明一点亲亲之念不衰，毕竟得所报也。

广文也有遇时人，自是人情有假真。

不遇门生能报德，何缘爱女复思亲？



Yuxi never again went to his daughters' homes. He lived and died in his nephew's house, leaving all his possessions with Gao Wenming. The feeling of endearment Gao Wenming showed for his uncle was eventually rewarded.

Flimsy as human relationship might be,  
Every dog has its day.  
How could the daughters return with fawning,  
Had Gao Guang's former student not returned good for good?



## 卷二十七

伪汉裔夺妾山中 假将军还姝江上

诗云：

曾闻盗亦有道，其间多有英雄。

若逢真正豪杰，偏能掉臂于中。

昔日宋相张齐贤，他为布衣时，值太宗皇帝驾幸河北，上太平十策。太宗大喜，用了他六策，馀四策斟酌再用。齐贤坚执道：“是十策皆妙，尽宜亟用。”太宗笑其狂妄，还朝之日对真宗道：“我在河北得一宰相之才，名曰张齐贤，留为你他日之用。”真宗牢记在心。后来齐贤登进士榜，却中在后边。真宗见了名字，要拔他上前，争奈榜已填定，特旨一榜尽赐及第。他日直做到宰相。





## *Tale 27*

### **The Chen Robbers, Offspring of an Illegitimate Emperor, Snatch a Beauty on Junshan Mountain Wang Xiucui, Posing as a Military Official, Regains His Sweetheart on Dongting Lake**

A poem reads thus:

It is often said thieves and robbers have their own way of conduct.  
If you're fortunate enough,  
You can always find good fellows in them,  
Uninhibited and bold by nature.

Zhang Qixian was the prime minister in the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty. But it happened that while Zhang was still a commoner, emperor Song Taizong went to Hebei on an imperial tour of inspection. Seizing this opportunity, Zhang Qixian presented to the emperor ten proposals for developing the country. Very much delighted, Song Taizong adopted six of his ten proposals and left the other four for later consideration. Self-willed, Zhang Qixian said persistently, "These ten proposals of mine are perfect and the imperial court should adopt all of them at once."

Song Taizong laughed at Zhang for his arrogance. Upon his arrival at the imperial court, Song Taizong said to his successor Song Zhenzong, "I met a talented man in Hebei named Zhang Qixian. You can use him as your prime minister in the future." Zhenzong kept this in his mind. Later, as it turned out, though he took part in the imperial examinations in the provincial level, Zhang Qixian ranked quite behind in sequence of names among the candidates who would be chosen to take part in the highest imperial civil service examinations. Upon seeing that Zhang Qixian's name was among the last few candidates, Zhenzong intended to shift his name to the front. Unfortunately the list of candidates to be admitted had





这个张相未遇时节，孤贫落魄，却倜傥有大度。一日偶到一个地方，投店中住止。其时适有一伙大盗劫掠归来，在此经过，下在店中造饭饮酒，枪刀森列，形状狰狞。居民恐怕拿住，东逃西匿，连店主多去躲藏。张相剩得一身在店内，偏不走避。看见群盗吃得正酣，张相整一整巾帻，岸然走到群盗面前，拱一拱手道：“列位大夫请了。小生贫困书生，欲就大夫求一醉饱，不识可否？”群盗见了容貌魁梧，语言爽朗，便大喜道：“秀才乃肯自屈，何不可之有？但是吾辈粗疏，恐怕秀才见笑耳。”即立起身来请张相同坐。张相道：“世人不识诸君，称呼为盗，不知这盗非是齷齪儿郎做得的。诸君多是世上英雄，小生也是慷慨之士，今日幸得相遇，便当一同欢饮一番，有何彼此？”说罢，便取大碗斟酒，一饮而尽。群盗见他吃得爽利，再斟一碗来，也就一口吸干。连吃个三碗。又在桌上取过一盘猪蹄来，略擘一擘开，狼飧虎咽，吃个罄尽。群盗看了，皆大惊异，共相希咤道：“秀才真宰相器量！能如此不拘小节，决非凡品。他日做了宰相，宰制天下，当念吾曹为盗多出于不得



been well written. Zhenzong then issued a special imperial edict, granting all the candidates on the list to be admitted to take part in the highest imperial civil service examinations. Later it turned out Zhang Qixian did become the prime minister.

While he was a poor commoner, Zhang Qixian used to be in dire straits. Nevertheless, he was still a broad-minded and magnanimous man with easy and elegant bearing. Once while he was staying in an inn, a band of robbers with sinister looks stopped at the inn with their loots to have food and wine, their spears and knives lining up against the wall. All the local inhabitants, as well as the innkeeper, fled for fear of being caught by the robbers. Being left alone in the inn, Zhang didn't go into hiding.

Seeing that the robbers were enjoying their dinner, Zhang adjusted his clothes and went straightforward to the robbers with ease and grace. Cupping one hand in the other, he said, "Sorry to interrupt you, gentlemen. I'm a poor scholar. I wonder if I could have some of your wine with you." At the sight of such a big and tall man who was so forthright in making a request, all the robbers felt very pleased and said, "Of course you can, if you want to. But we're all vulgar in behavior. Hope you don't mind." Then they asked Zhang to take a seat. "Those who do not know you call you robbers," said Zhang. "But they don't know robbers are in no cases mean and sordid by nature. I know you're all heroes. I am a just and generous man too. Now that we've met each other, we should share and enjoy the wine." Finishing these words, Zhang helped himself to a large bowl of wine. Seeing he was an open and straightforward man, the robbers poured another bowl of wine for him, and Zhang downed it without a break. After three bowls of wine went down to his stomach, Zhang took a dish of pig's feet from the table and, breaking them off roughly, devoured them ravenously and gobbled them up in a twinkling of the eye.

Greatly surprised, the robbers looked at each other and said, "This man has the heart of a prime minister! His never bothering about trifles and niceties well proves that he is by no means an ordinary man." Turning to Zhang, they continued, "When you become the prime minister and govern the country one day, please show some understanding upon us robbers, for we take to robbery simply because we have no alternative.



已之情。今日尘埃中，愿先结纳，幸秀才不弃。”各各身畔将出金帛来赠，你强我赛，堆了一大堆。张相毫不推辞，一一简取，将一条索子捆缚了，携在手中，叫声：“聒噪！”大踏步走出店去。此番所得，倒有百金，张相尽付之酒家，供了好些时酣畅。只此一段气魄，在贫贱时就与人不同了。这个是胆能玩盗的。有诗为证：

等闲卿相在尘埃，大嚼无惭亦异哉。  
自是胸中多磊落，直教剧盗也怜才。

山东莱州府掖县，有一个勇力之士邵文元，义气胜人，专要路见不平，拔刀相助。有人在知县面前，谤他恃力为盗。知县初到，不问的实，寻事打了他一顿。及至知县朝觐入京，才出境外，只见一人骑着马，跨着刀，跑至面前，下马相见。知县认得是邵文元，只道他来报仇，吃了一惊。问道：“你自何来？”文元道：“小人特来防卫相公入京。前途剧贼颇多，然闻了小人之名，无不退避的。”知县道：“我无恩于你，你怎倒有此好心？”文元道：“相公前日戒训小人，也只是要小人学好。况且相公清廉，小人敢不尽心报效？”知县心里方才放了



We feel it an honor to make friends with you.” So saying, all the robbers presented Zhang a large sum of money and countless gifts. Accepting them all, Zhang said, “Sorry to have bothered you!” Then he left the inn in big strides. The money and gifts he got this time were worth one hundred taels of silver. Later Zhang spent all this money on drinking wine. Zhang Qixian, the would-be prime minister, had proved himself to be exceedingly different in table manners from ordinary persons even when he was in straits. He was a commoner who was so bold and uninhibited by nature that even the robbers showed respect and admiration for him.

Though a commoner he was before becoming the prime minister,  
His shamelessly ravenous eating manners astounded all present.  
Open-hearted and upright in character,  
He even moved robbers to compassion.

\* \* \*

Once there lived a valorous man called Shao Wenyuan in Yexian County of Laizhou Prefecture, Shandong. Being a generous and upright man, Shao Wenyuan was always ready to come to the rescue of people in distress. Someone made up a story against him in front of the County Magistrate, saying that he took advantage of his strength to commit robbery. The County Magistrate, being new to this place, deliberately picked on him and gave him a sound flogging without first looking into the matter. One day while the County Magistrate was on his way to the capital, a man on horseback, carrying a knife at his side, suddenly caught up with him and requested to have an audience with him.

Realizing this man was Shao Wenyuan, the County Magistrate was taken aback. He thought that he must have come to avenge himself. “Why are you doing this?” asked the County Magistrate. “I want to escort you to the capital,” replied Shao Wenyuan. “Many bandits will be in your way. But they will all run away once they know I’m with you.” The County Magistrate asked, “I didn’t treat you nicely the other day. Why are you being so good to me?” Wenyuan answered, “You gave me a beating because you wanted me to behave nicely. Moreover, you’re an honest and upright official. Is there any reason for me not to serve you wholeheartedly?” Upon hearing these words, the County Magistrate



一个大挖搭。文元随至中途，别了自去，果然绝无盗言。

一日出行，过一富翁之门，正撞着强盗四十余人在那里打劫他家。将富翁捆绑住，着一个强盗将刀加颈，吓他道：“如有官兵救应，即先下手。”其余强盗尽劫金帛。富翁家里有一个钱堆，高与屋齐。强盗算计拿他不去，尽笑道：“不如替他散了罢！”号召居民，多来分钱。居民也有怕事的，不敢去；也有好事的，去看光景；也有贪财大胆的，拿了家伙，称心的兜取，弄得钱满阶墀。邵文元闻得这话，要去玩弄这些强盗，在人丛中侧着肩膀，挨将进去，高声叫道：“你们做甚的？做甚的？”众人道：“强盗多着哩，不要惹事！”文元走到邻家，取一条铁叉，立在门内，大叫道：“邵文元在此。你们还了这家银子，快散了罢！”富翁听得，恐怕强盗见有救应，即要动刀，大叫道：“壮士快不要来。若来，先杀我了。”文元听得，权且走了出来。

群盗齐把金银装在囊中，驮在马背上，有二十驮。仍绑押了富翁，送出境外二十里，方才解缚。富翁披发，狼狈而归。谁知文元自出门外，骑着马，即远远随来。看见富翁已回，急鞭马追赶。强盗见是一个人，不以为意。文元喝道：“快快把金银放在路傍！汝等认得邵文元否？”强盗闻其名，正慌张未



heaved a sigh of relief. Wen yuan left the County Magistrate when he had escorted the County Magistrate halfway, and not a single bandit came into their sight.

On another occasion, when Wen yuan was passing by a rich family, he noticed that about forty robbers were plundering the property of the rich family. Trussing up the rich man, a robber set his knife on the neck of the rich man and said, "If any official runners come to your rescue, I'll kill you first." All the other robbers started to take the rich man's money and valuables. The rich man's money piled up to the ceiling. The robbers calculated they could not take all of it away with them. So they told the local inhabitants to come over and get some money for themselves. Some chicken-hearted and overcautious local inhabitants dared not to go take the money; some were curious and went to see it for fun; some were daring and money-grubbing and took as much as they desired.

After learning what was happening inside, Shao Wen yuan decided to give the robbers a lesson. Elbowing his way through the crowd, Wen yuan stepped forward and shouted, "How dare you do this! Stop it!" "Many of us robbers are here," the robbers said. "Don't ask for trouble!" Shao Wen yuan went to a neighboring house and got a long iron fork. Returning to the rich man's house, he shouted at the top of his voice, "I am Shao Wen yuan! Put down the silver and get out of here!" Hearing Wen yuan's words, the rich man was seized with fear that the robbers might kill him upon seeing someone coming to save him. So the rich man shouted, "Let them go, hero! If you come to my rescue, they'll kill me first." Shao Wen yuan then left for the time being.

Putting the gold and silver and other valuables into bags, the robbers took them away on as many as twenty horses. They also took the rich man away with them, and they didn't untie him until they had covered a distance of twenty *li*. Then the rich man returned home, his hair disheveled. However, Wen yuan was tailing behind the robbers at a certain distance. Seeing that the rich man had returned home safe and sound, he whipped his horse on with a crop and stopped the robbers. Upon seeing he was alone, the robbers didn't take it seriously. Wen yuan shouted, "Put down the money on the road! Don't you know me Shao Wen yuan?!" The robbers



答，文元道：“汝等迟迟，且着你看一个样！”飏的一箭，已把内中一个射下马来，死了。众盗大惊，一齐下马，跪在路傍，告求饶命。文元喝道：“留下东西，饶你命去罢！”强盗尽把囊物丢下，空身上马，逃遁而去。文元就在人家借几匹马，负了这些东西，竟到富翁家里，一一交还。富翁迎着叩头道：“此乃壮士出力夺来之物，已不是我物了。愿送至君家，吾不敢吝。”文元怒叱道：“我哀怜你家横祸，故出力相助。吾岂贪私邪？”尽还了富翁，不顾而去。这个是力能制盗的。有诗为证：

白昼探丸势已凶，不堪壮士笑谈中。  
挥鞭能返相如璧，尽却酬金更自雄。

再说一个见识能作弄强盗的汪秀才，做回正话。看官要知这个出处，先须听我《潇湘八景》：

云暗龙堆古渡，湖连鹿角平田。薄暮长杨垂首，平明秀麦齐肩。人羨春游此日，客愁夜泊如年。（《潇湘夜雨》）



became flustered at the name of Shao Wenyuan. Before they could utter an answer, Shao Wenyuan said, "If you refuse, I'll first punish one as an example to you all!" As soon as he had finished speaking, he shot one of the robbers dead with one arrow.

Dumbfounded, all the robbers alighted their horses, went on their knees and begged repeatedly to be spared. "Leave the bags here and go!" shouted Shao Wenyuan. The robbers then fled on their horses, empty-handed. Shao Wenyuan borrowed some horses to carry the bags and returned the money to the rich man. The rich man kowtowed and said, "You wrested back the money, hero. It's no longer mine. You may take it to your home." "I felt sorry for your sudden disaster," said Shao Wenyuan, "so I rushed up to help you. Could it be possible I did it because I hankered after your wealth?" Leaving the money with the rich man, Shao Wenyuan took his leave. In this story, Shao Wenyuan subdued the robbers with his strength and valor.

Though overwhelmingly ferocious and aggressive evildoers are,  
A hero can crush them, talking and laughing with graceful bearing.  
Returning the robbed silver to its original owner,  
He declines the reward resolutely, revealing the true colors of a hero

\* \* \*

The following tale is our main one. It's about how Wang Xiucan made a fool of a band of robbers with his resourcefulness. Before we proceed to our main tale, I'd like you readers to read the following *Eight Poems on Eight Views in the Xiaoxiang Region* (also Chuzhong, a region covering northern Hunan and Southern Hubei) so that you may have a general idea about the setting of this tale. The eight poems read as follows:

Dragon-shaped dark clouds cover up the age-old ferry.  
The lake, extending far into the distance, links up the  
deerhorn-shaped grain field.  
At dusk, weeping willow trees bow their heads.  
At dawn, the graceful wheat reached the shoulders.  
All envy its beautiful scenery for a spring outing,  
While the tourists there have to stay overnights  
that seem a year.





湘妃初理云鬟，龙女忽开晓镜。银盘水面无尘，玉魄天心相映。一声铁笛风清，两岸画阑人静。（《洞庭秋月》）

八桂城南路香，苍梧江月音稀。昨夜一天风色，今朝百道帆飞。对镜且看妾面，倚楼好待郎归。（《远浦归帆》）

湖平波浪连天，水落汀沙千里。芦花冷澹秋容，鸿雁差池南徙。有时小棹经过，又遣几群惊起。（《平沙落雁》）

轩帝洞庭声歇，湘灵宝瑟香销。湖上长烟漠漠，山中古寺迢迢。钟击东林新月，僧归野渡寒潮。（《烟屿晚钟》）



(Evening Rain at Xiaoxiang)

The Goddess of Xiang River has just knotted her hair bun.  
The Dragon King's daughter has suddenly unveiled her morning mirror.  
The silver plate and the water surface are dustless.  
The soul of jade and the heart of the sky form a wonderful contrast.  
A flute whistles in the cool soothing breeze.  
Silence reigns as the spectacular lakeside view fades away  
in the dim light of dusk.

(Autumn Moon over Dongting Lake)

In the southern part of the city in August, Osmanthus flowers  
send forth a delicate fragrance.  
All is quiet, the verdant Chinese parasol trees, the lake and the moon.  
It blew hard last night.  
A hundred sails set out homeward bound today.  
Facing the mirror, a wife looks at herself.  
Leaning against the balustrade of the building,  
she awaits her husband's return.

(The Sail Comes in Sight from the Distance)

Billows of the vast lake surge sky-high.  
A thousand li of sand beach surfaces when the water recedes.  
When reed catkins leave autumn out in the cold,  
The swan geese fly over the lake to migrate south.  
When occasionally a small boat paddles up,  
Other flocks of swan geese take off with a start.  
(Swan Geese on the Sand Beach)

The roaring of Dongting Lake has now ceased.  
The fragrance of the treasured zither has now vanished.  
Misty smoke curls upward over the wide and still lake.  
An ancient temple lies quiet in the distant mountain.  
The bell tolls as the crescent moon rises above the east wood.



湖头俄顷阴晴，楼上徘徊晚眺。霏霏雨障轻过，闪闪夕阳回照。渔翁东岸移舟，又向西湾垂钓。（《渔村夕阳》）

石港湖心野店，板桥路口人家。少妇篋中麦苳，村翁筒里鱼虾。蜃市依稀海上，岚光咫尺天涯。（《山市晴岚》）

陇头初放梅花，江面平铺柳絮。楼居万玉丛中，人在水晶深处。一天素幔低垂，万里孤舟归去。（《江天暮雪》）

此八词多道着楚中景致，乃一浙中缙绅所作。楚中称道此词颇得真趣，人人传诵的。这洞庭湖八百里，万山环列，连



A monk is returning home on a ferryboat.  
(Evening Bell on the Misty Islet)

Now cloudy, now sunny, the weather in the lake area  
is changeable.

Pacing up and down, a fisherman overlooks the lake  
from the top of the building.

When the pouring rain ceases,  
The setting sun in the west shines so bright.  
Untying his boat from the eastern shore,  
The fisherman sails westward to go fishing.  
(A Fishing Village in the Last Rays of the Setting Sun)

By the lake are a stone fishing port and a country inn.  
Beside the crossroad and the plate girder bridge is a household.  
A young married woman is busy with the wheat harvest,  
While a fisherman is gathering together the fish and shrimps.  
A mirage is faintly visible over the lake.  
The mist, though just a short distance away, seems to be so far apart.  
(A Mountain Village Shrouded in Mist)

On the hills the Chinese plum flowers are in blossom.  
On the river willow catkins form a pavement.  
Houses are against the backdrop of jade-white.  
People live in the depth of the crystal world.  
In the whirling snow across the sky,  
A solitary ferryboat is fading away into the distance.  
(Evening Snow and the Vast Sky over a River)

These eight poems, written by gentry from Zhejiang, are a vivid portrayal of the wonderful scenery of Chuzhong. Natives of Chuzhong all marveled at the excellence and originality of the eight poems. The lines from these eight poems have been on the lips of the local inhabitants of Chuzhong.

Covering an area of eight hundred *li* in diameter and linking three



着三江，乃是盗贼渊藪。国初时，伪汉陈友谅据楚称王，后为太祖所灭。今其子孙住居瑞昌、兴国之间，号为柯陈，颇称蕃衍。世世有勇力出众之人，推立一个为主。其族负险善斗，劫掠客商。地方有亡命无赖，多去投入伙中。官兵不敢正眼觑他，虽然设立有游击、把总等巡游武官，提防地方非常事变，却多是与他们豪长通同往来，地方官不奈他何的。宛然宋时梁山泊光景。

且说黄州府黄冈县有一个汪秀才，身在黉宫，家事富厚，家僮数十，婢妾盈房。做人倜傥不羁，豪侠好游，又兼权略过人，凡事经他布置，必有可观，混名称他为汪太公，盖比他吕望一般智术。他房中有一爱妾，名曰回风，真个有沉鱼落雁之容，闭月羞花之貌。更兼吟诗作赋，驰马打弹，是少年场中之事，无所不能。汪秀才不惟宠冠后房，但是游行，再没有不带



rivers, Dongting Lake is a vast expanse of water surrounded by continuous stretch of hills on four sides. It is also the den of bandits and thieves. In the early years of our Ming Dynasty, Chen Youqiong exercised control over this region and proclaimed himself emperor, but he was later suppressed down by Ming Taizu, Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty. From then on the descendants of Chen Youqiong, addressing themselves as the “Offspring of Chen,” have lived and procreated in Ruichang County (the present Ruichang County in Jiangxi Province) and Xingguo County (the present Yangxin County in Hubei Province). In each of the Chen’s generations, the one with exceptional valor and might would be chosen by all as the chieftains. Being brave and seasoned warriors, the Chens engaged themselves in robbing the merchants. All desperate scoundrels in this region went to the Chens for shelter. Even government runners and soldiers dared not to look at them face to face. Local officials could do nothing about the Chens, for in one way or another like the Song Dynasty outlaws of the marsh in Liangshan County of Shandong, they kept close contacts with both the military and public security authorities.

Once there lived a rich scholar named Wang Xiucan in Huanggang County of Huangzhou Prefecture. He kept dozens of servant boys and a large number of concubines and servant girls. Unrestrained and overflowing with talent, he was a man of courage and chivalry and loved traveling. Moreover, he was also extremely resourceful. All schedules and arrangements he set up would be meticulous and the outcome would be worth seeing, thus winning him the name of Wang Taigong, which implied that he was as intelligent and resourceful as Jiang Taigong, a legendary character modeled after Lü Wang, a statesman and strategist of the Zhou Dynasty who was renowned for his resourcefulness.

Of all his concubines Wang Xiucan made a pet of one called Huifeng, who was so beautiful that her charms would have made fish sink and wild geese fall from the sky, and her beauty put the moon and flowers to shame. Furthermore, Huifeng proved to be capable in everything young people undertook, such as writing and chanting poems, riding horses and shooting arrows. Each time Wang Xiucan went on a sightseeing trip, he



他同走的。怎见得回风的标致？

云鬓轻梳蝉翼，翠眉淡扫春山。朱唇缀一颗樱桃，皓齿排两行碎玉。花生丹脸，水剪双眸。意态自然，技能出众。直教杀人壮士回头觑，便是入定禅师转眼看。

一日，汪秀才领了回风来到岳州，登了岳阳楼。望着洞庭浩渺，巨浪拍天。其时冬月水落，自楼上望君山，隔不多些水面。遂出了岳州南门，拿舟而渡，不上数里，已到山脚。顾了肩舆，与回风同行十馀里，下舆谒湘君。祠右数十步，榛莽中有二妃冢。汪秀才取酒来，与回风各酌一杯。步行半里，到崇胜寺之外，三个大字是“有缘山”。汪秀才不解。回风笑道：“只该同我们女眷游的，不然何称‘有缘’？”汪秀才去问僧人，僧人道：“此处山灵，妒人来游，每将渡，便有恶风浊浪阻人。得到此地者，便是有缘，故此得名。”汪秀才笑对回风道：“这



would have her accompany him. How did Huifeng look like? Here is a description of her charm and beauty:

Her hair is as black and smooth as cicadas' wings, and her eyebrows are a bit jade green like the color of mountains in spring. Her mouth looks like a cherry, and her teeth two rows of white jade. Her face looks like a flower and her eyes are as crystal as clear water. A woman of many talents surpassing all others, she has easy and unaffected manners. None will be able to refrain from looking back at her, heroes or monks sitting in meditation.

One day Wang Xiucan and his concubine Huifeng made a sightseeing tour to Yueyang Pavilion in Yuezhou Prefecture (the present Yueyang city in Hunan Province). Ascending Yueyang Pavilion, they watched the waters of Dongting Lake extending into the distance and mountainous mighty waves lashing at the shore. It was winter; and the water in the lake had ebbed. So Yueyang Pavilion and Junshan Mountain appeared to be separated by little water. Coming out of the southern gate of Yuezhou, Wang Xiucan and Huifeng got on a ferry and headed for the Junshan Mountain across the lake. After traveling several *li* on the lake, they arrived at the foot of the mountain. When the ferry drew alongside, they hired a sedan chair and moved onward for about a dozen of *li* until finally they reached the Temple of the Goddess of Xiangshui River. Lying to the right side of the temple only about ten steps farther were the tombs of the two concubines Ehuang and Nüying, who had become the goddesses after their death in the Xiangshui River. Wang Xiucan and Huifeng each drank a cup of wine at this place.

After traveling a little farther for half a *li*, they found themselves at the entrance of Chongsheng Temple. Looking up, they saw three big characters, reading "Happy Fate Hill." Realizing Wang Xiucan was puzzled by the name of the hill, Huifeng explained with a smile, "You can only bring us women here for sightseeing. You and I are fated to have come here, and this is our happy fate." Wang Xiucan consulted a monk. "This hill is miraculous and has magic powers," replied the monk, "and it hates to see sightseers. So, it creates evil winds and violent billows to stop sightseers each time they are coming. Those who can arrive here must have happy fate. Hence the name." Turning to Huifeng, Wang Xiucan





等说来，我与你今日到此，可谓侥幸矣！”其僧遂指引汪秀才许多胜处，说有：

轩辕台乃黄帝铸鼎于此 酒香亭乃汉武帝得仙酒于此

朗吟亭乃吕仙遗迹 柳毅井乃柳毅为洞庭君女传书处

汪秀才别了僧人，回了回风，由方丈侧出去，登了轩辕台。凭阑四顾，水天一色，最为胜处。又左侧过去，是酒香亭。绕出山门之左，登朗吟亭。再下柳毅井，旁有传书亭，亭前又有刺橘泉许多古迹。正游玩间，只见山脚下走起一个大汉来，仪容甚武，也来看玩。回风虽是遮遮掩掩，却没十分好躲避处。那大汉看见回风美色，不转眼的上下膘觑，跟定了他两人，步步傍着不舍。汪秀才看见这人有些尴尬，急忙下山。将到船边，只见大汉也下山来，口里一声胡哨。左近一只船中吹起号头答应，船里跳起一二十彪形大汉来，对岸上大汉声喏。大汉指定回风道：“取了此人，献大王去！”众人应一声，一齐动手，犹如鹰拿燕雀，竟将回风抢到那只船上，拽起满篷，望洞庭湖中而去。汪秀才只叫得苦。这湖中盗贼去处，窟穴甚多，竟不知是那一处的强人弄的去了。凄凄惶惶，双出单回，甚是苦楚。正是：

不知精爽落何处，疑是行云秋水中。

汪秀才眼看爱姬失去，难道就是这样罢了？他是个有攀划的人，即忙着人四路找听。是省府州县闹热市镇去处，即贴了



said, smiling, "In this case, happy fate has brought you and me here today!" Then the monk told Wang that four places of historical interest were worth seeing, namely Xuanyuantai Pavilion, Fragrant Wine Pavilion, Langyinting Pavilion and Liuyijing Pavilion.

Guided by the abbot, Wang Xiucan and Huifeng first ascended Xuanyuantai Pavilion. Leaning on the railings and looking around, they were deeply impressed by the magnificent view of Dongting Lake, which was a vast expanse of water merging with the horizon far beyond. Coming down Xuanyuantai Pavilion, they visited Fragrant Wine Pavilion, Langyinting Pavilion and Liuyijing Pavilion successively. While they were visiting Liuyijing Pavilion, there suddenly came a big, tall strong man. Huifeng tried to steer clear of the stranger, but she failed to find a hiding place. Seeing Huifeng was beautiful, the big tall man watched her intently, and then started to follow her and Wang Xiucan wherever they went. Feeling quite uneasy and upset at this stranger's harassment upon them, Wang Xiucan and Huifeng went down the mountain in a hurry.

As they were approaching their ferry, they found the big tall man had also climbed down the mountain. Suddenly the man whistled, and a whistle sounded in reply from a boat on Wang's left. Then a dozen of burly fellows emerged abruptly on the boat and greeted the big tall man in a loud voice. Pointing at Huifeng, the big tall man shouted, "Capture this woman and take her to our chieftain!" The band of fellows went into action one and all and, like hawks snatching up swallows and sparrows, took Huifeng onto their boat. Hoisting the sail, they set out for Dongting Lake. Wang Xiucan could do nothing but groan inwardly. As there were innumerable bandits' lairs around the lake, Wang Xiucan did not know which band of robbers had snatched away Huifeng. Though sad and anxious, he had to return home alone.

Not knowing his love's whereabouts,

He wonders she must have been melted into thin air.

However, how could Wang Xiucan call it quits then and there? Being of a calculating sort, he would not give it up so easily. Immediately after he returned home, he dispatched his servants to inquire about Huifeng's whereabouts and at the same time put up notices at every busy street in



榜文：“但有知风来报的，赏银百两。”各处传遍道：“汪家失了一妾，出着重赏招票。”

从古道：“重赏之下，必有勇夫。”汪秀才一日到省下来，有一个都司向承勋，是他的相好朋友，摆酒在黄鹤楼请他。饮酒中间，汪秀才凭栏一望，见大江浩渺，云雾苍茫，想起爱妾回风，不知在烟水中那一个所在，投袂而起，亢声长歌苏子瞻《赤壁》之句云：

渺渺兮予怀，望美人兮天一方。

歌之数回，不觉潜然泪下。向都司看见，正要请问，旁边一个护身的家丁慨然向前道：“秀才饮酒不乐，得非为家姬失去否？”汪秀才道：“汝何以知之？”家丁道：“秀才遍榜街衢，谁不知之？秀才但请与我主人尽欢，管还秀才一个下落。”汪秀才纳头便拜，道：“若得知一个下落，百觥也不敢辞。”向都司道：“为一女子，直得如此着急？且满饮三大卮，教他说明白。”汪秀才即取大卮过手，一气吃了三巡。再斟一卮，奉与家丁道：“愿求壮士明言，当以百金为寿。”家丁道：“小人是



the provincial capital and the county seats, roughly reading, "Anyone who furnishes secret information about Huifeng's whereabouts will be awarded with one hundred taels of silver." Thus it was known to all that one of Wang Xiuc'ai's concubines was kidnapped and a huge bounty was offered for those who could provide information about Huifeng's whereabouts.

An old saying goes, "A big reward will make the brave come forward." One day, Wang Xiuc'ai arrived at the provincial capital. An old friend of Wang Xiuc'ai's named Xiang Chengxun, the Military Regional Commander of Chuzhong, entertained him at Huanghelou Pavilion. In the middle of their drinking, Wang Xiuc'ai leaned on the railing and watched the flowing river enveloped in the mist and clouds. All of a sudden, he started to think of his sweetheart Huifeng. Still not knowing where she was, he chanted two lines loudly from Su Shi's poem entitled *Chibi*,

My feelings of sadness are like the never-ending river.

Looking into the distance, I know not where my love is.

He repeated these two lines several times and tears rolled down his cheeks without his knowing it. As Regional Commander Xiang was about to ask him what was wrong with him, Xiang's bosom family servant came to Wang and asked, "You look unhappy. Is it because your concubine got kidnapped the other day?" "How do you know my mind?" asked Wang Xiuc'ai. The servant said, "Your notices can be seen everywhere on the streets and everyone knows about it. All you have to do now is to enjoy the wine with my master. I'll tell you her whereabouts after the dinner is over." Upon hearing this, Wang cupped one hand in the other and said, "If I could know her whereabouts, I would not decline a hundred big cups of wine under any circumstances." Xiang asked Wang, "Is it worthwhile for you to worry over a woman? Drink three big cups of wine first and then listen to what he's got to say about the matter." Wang drank three big cups of wine in a row. Then he poured a big cup of wine and handed it to the servant, and said, "I would be very much obliged if you could tell me her whereabouts. And I'll give you a hundred taels of silver as a reward."

The servant said, "I'm a native of Xingguo County and my home is at



兴国州人，住居闾阎山下，颇知山中柯陈家事体。为头的叫做柯陈大官人。有几个兄弟，多有勇力，专在江湖中做私商勾当。他这一族最大。江湖之间，各有头目，惟他是个主。前日闻得在岳州洞庭湖劫得一美女回来，进与大官人，甚是快活，终日饮酒作乐。小人家里离他不上十里路，所以备细得知。这个必定是秀才家里小娘子了。”汪秀才道：“我正在洞庭湖失去的，这消息是真了。”向都司便道：“他这人慷慨好义，虽系草窃之徒，多曾与我们官府往来，上司处也私有进奉。盘结深固，四处响应，不比其他盗贼，可以官兵缉拿得的。若是尊姬被此处弄了去，只怕休想再合了。天下多美妇人，仁兄只宜丢开为是。且自畅饮，介怀无益。”汪秀才道：“大丈夫生于世上，岂有爱姬被人所据，既已知下落，不能用计夺转来的？某虽不才，誓当返此姬，以博一笑。”向都司道：“且看仁兄大才。谈何容易？”当下汪秀才放下肚肠，开怀畅饮而散。

次日，汪秀才即将五十金送与向家家丁，以谢报信之事。就与都司讨此人去做眼，事成之后，再奉五十金，以凑百两。向都司笑汪秀才痴心，立命家丁到汪秀才处，听凭使用，看他怎么作为。家丁接了银子，千欢万喜，头颠尾颠，巴不得随着



the foot of Helü Mountain. I know the Chen clan perfectly well. The head of the clan is called Big Brother Chen. Big Brother Chen has several capable and gallant brothers who are engaged in private businesses on the lake. There are innumerable valorous men of the world on the lake, but Big Brother Chen is the chieftain. It is said some of his followers snatched a beauty for him on Dongting Lake in Yuezhou County. He then indulged himself all day long in drinking wine and having fun with that beautiful woman. My home is no more than ten *li* away from his, so I know it well. This woman must be your concubine.”

Wang Xiucan said, “My concubine got kidnapped right at Dongting Lake. So what you said must be true.” “This Big Brother Chen is a generous and chivalric man,” said Xiang. “An outlaw as he is, he has frequent contacts with us officials and often presents all kinds of valuables to the *yamen*. He can summon wind and rain among the bandits as he likes, and all the bandits in this region will always rise in response to his calls. Unlike other ordinary robbers and thieves, he is not to be arrested offhandedly by the *yamen* runners. If your concubine had been taken away to his place, I’m afraid you’ll never be able to get her back. There are countless beauties in the world. You’d better forget her. Help yourself to the wine. It’s no use to worry about her.” Wang Xiucan said, “I am a man. My concubine was captured by someone else and now I’ve known her whereabouts. Shouldn’t I use a ruse to get her back? Though I am without talent, I’m determined to regain her. Just for your entertainment.” “I’ll be looking forward to your good news,” said Xiang, “but it won’t be an easy job.” So saying, Wang Xiucan and Regional Commander Xiang drank to their hearts’ content and then said goodbye to each other.

On the next day, Wang Xiucan gave Xiang’s servant fifty taels of silver as a reward for his information. Then he asked Xiang to allow the servant to act as a scout for him so as to rescue his concubine. He also offered to give the servant another fifty taels of silver to make the reward a hundred taels as he had previously promised after he got back her concubine. Xiang thought that Wang was just daydreaming. In spite of this, he still put his servant at Wang’s command right away. The servant, overwhelmed with joy at receiving the silver, was only too anxious to take orders from Wang.



他使唤了。就向家丁问了柯陈家里弟兄名字。

汪秀才胸中算计已定，写下一状，先到兵巡衙门去告。兵巡看状，见了柯陈大等名字，已自心里虚怯，对这汪秀才道：“这不是好惹的。你无非只为一妇女小事，我若行个文书下去，差人拘拿对理，必要激起争端，致成大祸，决然不可。”汪秀才道：“小生但求得一纸牒文，自会去与他讲论曲直，取讨人口。不须大人的公差，也不到得与他争竞，大人可以放心。”兵巡见他说得容易，便道：“牒文不难。即将汝状判准，排号用印，付汝持去就是了。”汪秀才道：“小生之意，也只欲如此，不敢别求多端。有此一纸，便可了一桩公事来回覆。”兵巡似信不信，分付该房如式端正，付与汪秀才。

汪秀才领了此纸，满心欢喜，就像爱姬已取到手了一般的，来见向都司道：“小生状词已准，来求将军助一臂之力。”都司摇头道：“若要我们出力添拨兵卒，与他厮斗，这决然不能的。”汪秀才道：“但请放心，多用不着，我自有人。只那平日所驾江上楼船，要借一只；巡江哨船，要借二只；与平日所用伞盖、旌旗、冠服之类，要借一用。此外不劳一个兵卒相助，只带前日报信的家丁去就勾了。”向都司道：“意欲何为？”汪



Then Wang Xiucan inquired the servant about the names of the Chen brothers.

With his ruse already in mind, Wang Xiucan wrote a complaint and submitted it to the Military Defense and General Surveillance Circuit of Chuzhong. Seeing Big Brother Chen's name on the complaint, the Military Defense and General Surveillance Circuit became cowardly. "You can't afford to offend the Chen brothers," said the Military Circuit. "You're just doing this for nothing but a woman. If I issue an official paper to arrest the Chen brothers and bring them to court, it will kick up a fuss and get me into trouble. I can in no way do this."

"I only need to obtain a written permission from you of your having accepted my petition," said Wang. "I'll go talk with the Chen brothers about the matter and get back my concubine on my own. You don't have to send your runners to handle this matter. It won't cause any trouble. So you may just rest assured about it." "It's not difficult for me to grant you a written permission of my having accepted your petition," said the Military Circuit. "I can do it for you right now and you can take it with you." Wang Xiucan said, "I have no other demands except your written permission. With this written permission in my hand I will have this case settled." Half-believing, half-doubting, the Military Circuit issued an official statement of having accepted Wang's petition and gave it to Wang.

Having received the official statement, Wang Xiucan, rapt with joy, went to Regional Commander Xiang and said, "My petition has been approved. I hope you can lend me a helping hand." Xiang said, "I won't allow my soldiers to come to blows with the Chen Brothers." "Just take it easy," said Wang. "I'm not going to use your soldiers. I think I can manage it on my own. I only need to borrow a large towered ship, two reconnaissance ships, some canopies, flags and some hats and clothing for *yamen* officials. Apart from these things, I also need the help of your bosom servant who tipped me off the other day. I won't need to bother one single soldier of yours." Xiang asked, "How are you going to manage it?" Wang replied, "I have my own way of settling this matter. I'm afraid I can't disclose it to you at this moment. You will know it after I've gotten back my concubine." Xiang nodded his consent and lent Wang all the





秀才道：“汉家自有制度，此时不好说得，做出便见。”向都司依言，尽数借与汪秀才。汪秀才大喜，罄备了一个多月粮食，唤集几十个家人，又各处借得些号衣，多打扮了军士，一齐到船上去，撑驾开江。鼓吹喧阗，竟像武官出汛一般。有诗为证：

舳舻千里传赤壁，此日江中行画鹢。

将军汉号是楼船，这回投却班生笔。

汪秀才驾了楼船，领了人从，打了游击牌额，一直行到阖间山江口来。未到岸四五里，先差一只哨船，载着两个人前去，——一个是向家家丁，一个是心腹家人汪贵。——拿了一张硬牌，去叫齐本处地方居民，迎接新任提督江洋游击。就带了几个红帖，把汪姓去了一画，帖上写名江万里，竟去柯陈大官人家投递。几个兄弟，每人一个帖子，说新到地方的官，慕大名就来相拜。两人领命去了。汪秀才分付船户，把船漫漫自行。

且说向家家丁是个熟路，得了汪家重赏，有甚不依他处？领了家人汪贵，一同下在哨船中了。顷刻到了岸边，掬了硬牌，上岸各处一说，多晓得新官船到，整备迎接。家丁引了汪贵，同到一个所在，元来是一座庄子。但见：

冷气侵人，寒风扑面。三冬无客过，四季少人行。团团苍桧若龙形，郁郁青松如虎迹。已升红日，庄门内鬼火



things as requested. Overjoyed, Wang Xiucan got ready plenty of provisions which were enough to feed dozens of men for over a month. Then he gathered dozens of his family servants and dressed them up as soldiers. After going aboard the ships, they set sail in a great din of drums and pipes. It was exactly like the scene that a high-ranking military official was setting out for a tour of inspection. The following lines may serve as a proof:

Thousand-*li* convoy of ships have set sail for the voyage.

Piloting forward the large towered ship, Wang renounces the pen for the sword.

Posing himself as the Mobile Corps Commander, Wang Xiucan and his men sailed toward the river mouth at the foot of Helü Mountain. When it was about four or five *li* from Wang's ship to the shore, Wang first ordered two men to go board the reconnaissance ship and go ashore, the two men being Xiang's bosom family servant and Wang's own bosom family servant named Wang Gui. Meanwhile, he ordered his towered ship to drift slowly with the current.

Xiang's bosom family servant, a native of this place, knew his way perfectly well around here. As he had got a handsome reward from Wang Xiucan, how could he disobey his orders? Following Wang Xiucan's instructions, the two servants got onto the reconnaissance ship and set sail in the direction of the shore. Soon they got ashore. Carrying a big wooden signboard on the shoulder, indicating that a high-ranking official was coming along, they told the local inhabitants to get ready to meet the newly appointed Mobile Corps Commander. They also had several sheets of red paper with them, which were notes for the Chen brothers, reading roughly, "Jiang Wanli, the newly appointed Mobile Corps Commander, would like to make the Chen brothers' acquaintances." Instantly Xiang's family servant led Wang Gui, Wang Xiucan's family servant, to the village where the Chen Brothers and the other robbers lived.

The wind is piercingly cold. No outsiders enter this village in winter and few passersby set their feet on this piece of land all the year round. Clusters of Chinese junipers appear to be dragon-shaped and the green pine trees tiger-shaped. Though the sun has risen, will-o'-the-wisp glimmers inside



荧荧；未到黄昏，古涧边悲风飒飒。盆盛人酢酱，板盖铸钱炉。蓦闻一阵血腥来，元是强人居止处。

家丁原是地头人，多曾认得柯陈家里的，一径将帖儿进去报了。柯陈大官人认得向家家丁是个官身，有甚么疑心？与同兄弟柯陈二、柯陈三等会集，商议道：“这个官府，甚有吾每体面。他既以礼相待，我当以礼接他。而今吾每办了果盒，带着羊酒，结束鲜明，一路迎将上去。一来见我每有礼体，二来显我每弟兄有威风。看他举止如何，斟酌待他的厚薄就是了。”商议已定，外报：“游府船到江口，一面叫轿夫打轿拜客，想是就起来了。”柯陈弟兄果然一齐戎装，点起二三十名喽啰，牵羊担酒，擎着旗幡，点着香烛，迎出山来。

汪秀才船到泊里，把借来的纱帽红袍穿着在身，叫齐轿夫，四抬四插，抬上岸来。先是地方人等声喏已过，柯陈兄弟站着两傍，打个躬，在前引导。汪秀才分付一径抬到柯陈家庄上来。抬到厅前，下了轿。柯陈兄弟忙掇一张坐椅，摆在中间。柯陈大开口道：“大人请坐，容小兄弟拜见。”汪秀才道：“快不要行礼。贤昆玉多是江湖上义士好汉，下官未任之时，闻名



the village gate. Before dusk falls, the age-old ravines turn desolately windy. The bowls are filled with human flesh jam and under the planks are coin-casting stoves. A bloody smell assails the nostrils, and this is the place where the bandits live.

As he was on familiar terms with the Chen's family, Xiang's family servant went straight into the Chen's house with the notes and met the Chen brothers. Knowing Xiang's family servant perfectly well, how would Big Brother Chen be suspicious of him? After seeing the note, Big Brother Chen called over Second Brother Chen and Third Brother Chen and said, "This Mobile Corps Commander is showing due respect for our feelings. We should be polite to him too. Now get ready some fruits and good wine and dress us up nicely. Let's go meet him. On one hand, we show him our courtesy and manners; on the other hand, we can manifest our power and prestige. When we meet him, we may also use judgment and do what we deem best." When the Chen brothers had thus decided, one of their men came up and reported, "The Mobile Corps Commander's ship has arrived at the mouth of the river and the sedan chair carriers are all ready to take the Commander over to see you. So he'll be right here." The Chen brothers dressed themselves up in their best suits and, with dozens of their followers behind them, some holding fruits and wine and some carrying flags, set out to meet Wang Xiucui at the foot of the mountain.

Before long Wang Xiucui's towered ship pulled in to shore. Having put on the official's hat and red robe he had borrowed, Wang was carried off the ship in a big sedan chair by eight carriers. After the local inhabitants expressed their warm welcome to the Commander, the Chen brothers bowed and exchanged greetings with Wang, and then guided him to their village.

Arriving at Big Brother Chen's house, Wang Xiucui alighted from the big sedan chair and was showed into the sitting room. Losing no time, the Chen brothers placed a chair in the center of the sitting room. "Be seated, please," said Big Brother Chen, "and accept our kowtows." Wang said, "No kowtows. You brothers are all generous and upright heroes. I've long heard of your great names before I was appointed Mobile Corps Commander of this region. I'm lucky to have been assigned this post.



久矣。今幸得守此地方，正好与诸公义气相与，所以特来奉拜。岂可以官民之礼相拘？只是个宾主相待，倒好久长。”柯陈兄弟跪将下去。汪秀才一手扶起，口里连声道：“快不要这等。吾辈豪杰，不比寻常，决不要拘于常礼。”柯陈兄弟谦逊一回，请汪秀才坐了，三人侍立。汪秀才急命取坐来，分左右而坐。柯陈兄弟道游府如此相待，喜出非常，急忙治酒相款。汪秀才解带脱衣，尽情欢宴，猜拳行令，不存一毫形迹。行酒之间，说着许多豪杰勾当，掀拳裸袖，只恨相见之晚。柯陈兄弟不唯心服，又且感恩，多道：“若得恩府如此相待，我辈赤心报效，死而无怨。江上有警，一呼即应，决不致自家作孽，有负恩府青目。”汪秀才听罢，越加高兴，接连百来巨觥，引满不辞。自日中起，直饮至半夜，方才告别下船。

此一日算做柯陈大官人的酒。第二日就是柯陈二做主，第三日就是柯陈三做主，各各请过。柯陈大官人又道：“前日是仓卒下马，算不得数。”又请吃了一日酒，俱有金帛折席。汪



I've especially come to pay my respect for you because I highly esteem and admire your generosity and loyalty to friends. How can I regard myself as an official and take you as commoners? I suggest we get along with each other as hosts and guest. Only in this way can we have long-standing friendship." The Chen Brothers threw themselves on their knees in front of Wang. Wang propped them up hurriedly and said, "Stop doing this! You're no commoners. Don't confine yourselves to conventional norms of rites!" With a modest and polite demeanor, the Chen brothers asked Wang to be seated while they stood beside him attentively.

Upon seeing this, Wang immediately ordered to bring some seats for them. Then he told the Chen brothers to take their seats on his left and right. Feeling it a great honor to have the Commander's presence at their home, the Chen brothers entertained Wang with a feast. At the table, Wang took off his outerwear and drank to his heart's content. During their drinking, Wang and the Chen brothers expressed same views about heroes and heroic deeds, and regretted for not having met each other earlier. The Chen brothers admired Wang from the bottoms of their hearts and at the same time were very grateful to the favor and kindness the "Commander" had shown onto them. So they all said in one voice, "You're so nice to us brothers. We'll do whatever we can to repay you for your great kindness and we'll do so without regret. We'll be always ready to follow your orders whenever an emergency comes on the lake. Also we'll commit no evildoings and will never let you down." Hearing these remarks, Wang became more delighted than ever and drank about a hundred more cups of wine in succession with no hesitation. Their drinking lasted till midnight. When the feast was over, Wang said good night to the Chen brothers and went back to his ship.

Big Brother Chen played the host for this feast. On the following two days, Second Brother Chen and Third Brother Chen played hosts and entertained Wang with banquets respectively. After these two banquets, Big Brother Chen said to Wang, "The dinner I gave the other day in your honor was not well prepared, so it should not count." Then Big Brother Chen chose a day and entertained Wang again cordially. All the three Chen brothers gave Wang plenty of money and presents, and Wang



秀才多不推辞，欣然受了。

酒席已完，回到船上。柯陈兄弟，多来谢拜。汪秀才留住  
在船上，随命治酒相待。柯陈兄弟推辞道：“我等草泽小人，承  
蒙恩府不弃，得献酒食，便为大幸，岂敢上叨赐宴？”汪秀才  
道：“礼无不答。难道只是学生叨扰，不容做个主人还席的？况  
我辈相与，不必拘报施常规。前日学生到宅上就是诸君作主；  
今日诸君见顾，就是学生做主。逢场作戏，有何不可？”柯陈  
兄弟不好推辞，早已排上酒席，摆设已完。汪秀才定席已毕，  
就有带来一班梨园子弟上场做戏，做的是《桃园结义》、《千里  
独行》许多豪杰襟怀的戏文。柯陈兄弟多是山野之人，见此花  
哄，怎不贪看？岂知汪秀才先已密密分付行船的，但听戏文锣  
鼓为号，即便趲地开船，趁着月明，沿流放去，缓缓而行，要  
使舱中不觉。行来数十馀里，戏文方完。兴未肯阑，仍旧移席  
团坐，飞觞行令。乐人清唱，劝酬大乐。

汪秀才晓得船已行远，方发言道：“学生承诸君见爱，如



accepted them happily. When the banquets were over, Wang returned to his ship.

Soon the Chen Brothers came aboard Wang's ship to express their thanks for Wang's kindness. Wang asked them to stay on the ship and ordered that a banquet be set to repay their hospitality in return. "We're just humble commoners," said the Chen brothers. "We all feel it an honor to have your presence at our homes. We would not dare to bother you to hold a dinner for us." "Courtesy demands reciprocity," said Wang. "You treated me cordially when I was at your homes. Now that you've come onto my ship, shouldn't I entertain you with a banquet in return for your hospitality?" Moreover, people like you and I should not cling to formalities that one must repay the other's kindness. You all played the hosts the other day when I was at your homes. Now that you've come to my place to see me, I must play the host this time and treat you to dinner and wine. Why not just join in the fun?"

Unable to decline the offer, the Chen brothers had to sit at the table. After everybody was seated, a group of opera singers, as had been well arranged previously by Wang, came forward and started to sing to the accompaniment of a band. The operas they performed, namely *Becoming Sworn Brothers at the Peach Blossom Garden* and *Guan Yu's Adventurous Ride Alone*, were based on the stories of Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, gallant heroes in the novel *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*. So, the Chen brothers were deeply attracted by their singing and performances. Actually Wang Xiucai had already secretly told his boatmen in advance that the moment they heard the music they should make the ship drift with the current slowly without letting the people on board realize its moving. The singing and the music did not come to an end until the ship had floated a distance of more than ten *li*. After the performances and music were over, Wang Xiucai and the Chen brothers started to drink merrily. Meanwhile opera singers stood by the table and sang arias without make-ups as they urged Wang and the Chen brothers to drink more.

Wang Xiucai was aware that the ship had drifted a long distance away from the shore. Turning to the Chen brothers, Wang said, "I feel it a great honor to have your presence at my dinner table and it's really nice to





此倾倒，可谓极欢。但胸中有一件小事，甚不便于诸君，要与诸君商量一个长策。”柯陈兄弟愕然道：“不知何事，但请恩府明言，愚兄弟无不听令。”汪秀才叫从人掇一个手匣过来，取出那张榜文来，捏在手中，问道：“有一个汪秀才告着诸君，说道劫了他爱妾，有此事否？”柯陈兄弟两两相顾，不好隐得。柯陈大回言道：“有一女子，在岳州所得，名曰回风，说是汪家的。而今见在小人处，不敢相瞒。”汪秀才道：“一女子是小事。那汪秀才是当今豪杰，非凡人也。今他要去上本，奏请征剿，先将此状告到上司。上司密行此牒，托与学生勾当此事。学生是江湖上义气在行的人，岂可兴兵动卒，前来搅扰？所以邀请诸君到此，明日见一见上司，与汪秀才质证那一件公事。”柯陈兄弟见说，惊得面如土色，道：“我等岂可轻易见得上司？一到公庭，必然监禁，好歹是死了！”人人思要脱身，立将起来推窗一看，大江之中，烟水茫茫，既无舟楫，又无崖岸，巢穴已远，救应不到，再无个计策了。正是：

有翅膀飞腾天上，有鳞甲钻入深渊。

既无窟地升天术，目下灾殃怎得延？



make friends with you. But one small thing has been weighing on my mind for some time and I'm afraid it's quite harmful to you. Now I'd like to discuss it with you and find a solution." "What is it?" the Chen brothers said with a surprise. "Just tell us what it is, and we will do whatever you instruct us to do." Wang Xiucan told one of his followers to bring him the suitcase. Taking the official statement out of the suitcase, Wang said to the Chen brothers, "A man named Wang Xiucan submitted a complaint against you to the yamen, saying that you grabbed his concubine. Did you do it?" Feeling perplexed, the Chen brothers looked at each other blankly for a while. However, they knew they couldn't conceal it from Wang.

"We did get a woman from Yuezhou," said Big Brother Chen. "Her name is Huifeng and it's said she is from the Wang family. She is now at my home. I would not dare to hide it from you." Wang Xiucan said, "A little woman is nothing serious. But that Wang Xiucan is a truly extraordinary hero of our time. He is now planning to present a memorial to the throne so as to win the emperor's approval of making an expedition against you. Now he has already brought this lawsuit to my superior. My superior issued this official statement privately and asked me to take charge of this matter. I know perfectly the valorous men of the wide world. How could I send an army to disturb you? So I've brought you all to my place. I hope you can meet my superior tomorrow and confront Wang Xiucan at court."

Turning pale in terror, the Chen brothers said, "How could we be bold enough to see your superior? Definitely we'll be put into jail once we appear at court. We're going to be finished!" Instantly they thought of getting out of the ship, but as they pushed open the window, they found they were in the middle of the big river, far away from their lair. They were totally at a loss what to do. The following lines well depict the distress of the Chen brothers:

The winged creatures can fly up into the sky.  
The scaled and shelled creatures can go down into the deep pool.  
Having neither wings nor scales and shells,  
How should they free themselves from a calamity?



柯陈兄弟明知着了道儿，一齐跪下道：“恩府救命则个。”汪秀才道：“到此地位，若不见官，学生难以回覆；若要见官，又难为公等。是必从长计较，使学生可以销得此纸，就不见官罢了。”柯陈兄弟道：“小人愚昧，愿求恩府良策。”汪秀才道：“汪生只为一妾着急。今莫若差一只哨船，飞棹到宅上，取了此妾来船中。学生领去，当官交付还了他，这张牒文可以立销，公等可以不到官了。”柯陈兄弟道：“这个何难？待写个手书与当家的做个执照，就取了来了。”汪秀才道：“事不宜迟，快写起来。”柯陈大写下执照，汪秀才立唤向家家丁与汪贵两个到来，他一个是认得路的，一个是认得人的，悄地分付，付与执照，打发两只哨船一齐棹去，立等回报。船中且自金鼓迭奏，开怀吃酒。柯陈兄弟见汪秀才意思坦然，虽觉放下了些惊恐，也还心绪不安，牵筋缩脉。汪秀才只是一味豪兴，谈笑洒落，饮酒不歇。

候至天明，两只哨船已此载得回风小娘子飞也似的来报。汪秀才立教请过船来。回风过船，汪秀才大喜，叫一壁厢房舱中去。一壁厢将出四锭银子来，两个去的人各赏一锭，两船上



The Chen brothers knew they had been trapped. Throwing themselves on their knees, they said, "Please help us, sir." Wang Xiucan said, "Under the present circumstances, if I don't take you to my superior, there is no way for me to account for my mission; if I take you to my superior, you'll definitely get into trouble. We should consider the matter carefully before making a decision. I'm wondering if you can help me get rid of this official statement. If that could be done, I guess you may as well be excused from meeting my superior."

The Chen brothers said, "We're slow-witted. We'd rather have your instructions." "That Wang Xiucan cares for nothing but regaining his concubine," suggested Wang Xiucan. "Why don't we send a reconnaissance ship to your house and bring that woman onto my ship? I can take this woman to my superior, and my superior can return this woman to Wang Xiucan at court. When this is done, my superior will surely write off this sheet of official statement and you will be excused from going to court." The Chen brothers said, "This is quite easy! I can write a note to my housekeeper. When my housekeeper sees my handwriting, he will certainly let the woman go with your followers." "This must be done without delay," Wang Xiucan said. "Write a note right now." Then Big Brother Chen wrote his housekeeper a note, telling him to let that woman go with the men carrying the note.

When the note was ready, Wang Xiucan gave it to the two servants. One was Xiang's family servant who knew the way and the other his own servant Wang Gui who knew the concubine. Carrying the note with them, the two servants set out for Big Brother Chen's home on two reconnaissance ships.

Accompanied by the music, Wang Xiucan and the Chen brothers continued with their drinking as usual. Seeing Wang's big-heartedness, the Chen brothers recovered a bit from the terror. But they still looked troubled and upset. Wang, however, went on drinking as he talked and laughed with graceful bearing.

At daybreak, Huifeng was brought back to Wang's towered ship. Overjoyed, Wang Xiucan led her into a compartment. Then Wang granted each of the two servants a reward of one ingot of silver. The other

各赏一锭，众人齐声称谢。

分派已毕，汪秀才再命斟酒三大觥，与柯陈兄弟作别道：“此事已完，学生竟自回覆上司，不须公等在此了。就此请回。”柯陈兄弟感激，称谢救命之恩。汪秀才把柯陈大官人须髯捋一捋道：“公等果认得汪秀才否？我学生便是。那里是甚么新升游击？只为不舍得爱妾，做出这一场把戏。今爱妾仍归于我，落得与诸君游宴数日，备极欢畅，莫非结缘？多谢诸君，从此别矣。”柯陈兄弟如梦初觉，如醉方醒，才放下心中疙瘩，不觉大笑道：“元来秀才诙谐至此！如此豪放不羁，真豪杰也。吾辈粗人，幸得陪侍这几日，也是有缘。小娘子之事，失於不知，有愧！有愧！”各解腰间所带银两出来，约有三十馀两，赠与汪秀才道：“聊以赠小娘子添妆。”汪秀才再三推却不得，笑而受之。柯陈兄弟求差哨船一送。汪秀才分付送至通岸大路，即放上岸。柯陈兄弟殷勤相别，登舟而去。

汪秀才房舱中唤出回风来，说前日惊恐的事。回风呜咽告诉。汪秀才道：“而今仍归吾手，旧事不必再提，且喝一杯酒压惊。”两人如渴得浆，吃得尽欢，遂同宿于舟中。

次日起身，已到武昌码头上。来见向都司，道：“承借船



participants of this action were also rewarded with some silver.

Then Wang Xiucan ordered to fill three big cups with wine for the Chen brothers as a farewell toast. Meanwhile he said to them, "Now that this business has been settled, I'll go see my superior and report on my work. You're dismissed." Upon hearing these words, the Chen brothers were moved to tears of gratitude, saying they were greatly indebted to him for his saving their lives. However, Wang stroked Big Brother Chen's beard and said, "You don't know Wang Xiucan, do you? I am Wang Xiucan! Newly appointed Mobile Corps Commander? No! I put on all this show just because I didn't want to lose my concubine, my sweetheart. Now my sweetheart is back. And I've had a wonderful time with you all for the last few days. Don't think it's predestined? It's really nice to know you. Thank you all for your kindness. Goodbye."

As if waking up from a dream, the Chen brothers let out a sigh of relief. Laughing heartily, they said, "So witty and humorous you are! What an unconventional and uninhibited hero! We are just boors. We really feel it an honor to have been together with you for these days. Indeed, fate has brought us together. As for this woman, we didn't know she is your concubine. We are very sorry for what we did to her. Please forgive us!" So saying, they took out the silver they had on them, amounting to about thirty taels, and presented it all to Wang Xiucan. "Please take this money as a token of our respect and buy some dresses for your concubine," they said. Unable to turn them down, Wang had to accept it kindly. Then, as requested by the Chen brothers, Wang dispatched a reconnaissance ship to take them ashore. Getting aboard the ship, the Chen brothers waved goodbye toward Wang Xiucan.

Wang Xiucan went into the compartment and asked Huifeng to come out. Then the two talked about that unfortunate event happened to them the other day. Huifeng wept sadly as she recalled her bitter experiences. "Anyway, you're back with me now," said Wang Xiucan. "No need to mention the past. Have a cup of wine to help you get over the shock." Thus Wang Xiucan and his concubine drank to their hearts' content and passed the night together on the ship.

On the next day Wang Xiucan's towered ship reached Wuchang. Wang



只家伙等物，今已完事，一一奉还。”向都司道：“尊姬已如何了？”汪秀才道：“叨仗尊庇，已在舟中了。”向都司道：“如何取得来？”汪秀才把假妆新任，拜他赚他的话，备细说了一遍，道：“多在尊使肚里，小生也仗尊使之力不浅。”向都司道：“有此奇事！真正有十二分胆智，才弄得这个伎俩出来。仁兄手段，可以行兵。”当下汪秀才再将五十金送与向家家丁，完前日招票上许出之数。另顾下一船，装了回风小娘子，再与向都司讨了一只哨船护送，并载家僮人等。

安顿已定，进去回覆兵巡道，缴还原牒。兵巡道问道：“此事已如何了，却来缴牒？”汪秀才再把始终之事，备细一禀。兵巡道笑道：“不动干戈，能入虎穴取出人口，真奇才奇想！秀才他日为朝廷所用，处分封疆大事，料不难矣！”大加赏叹。汪秀才谦谢而出，遂载了回风，还至黄冈。黄冈人闻得此事，尽多惊叹道：“不枉了汪太公之名，真不虚传也！”有诗为证：

自是英雄作用殊，虎狼可狎与同居。

不须窃伺骊龙睡，已得探还颌下珠。



made a call at Regional Commander Xiang's house. Seeing Xiang, Wang said, "My business is over. I'm here to return your ships and other things I borrowed from you." "How about your concubine?" asked Xiang. "Thanks to your help," replied Wang, "she is now on the ship." "How did you regain her?" asked Xiang. Wang Xiucui then gave a full account of how he had gotten back his concubine. Finally Wang said, "I'm greatly indebted to your kind and generous help." "How amazing it is!" exclaimed Xiang. "Only a true man with exceptional valor and resourcefulness can make it. You have the makings of a general." Instantly Wang Xiucui gave Xiang's bosom family servant another fifty taels of silver to make it one hundred, as was guaranteed earlier on his notice. When everything was settled, Wang hired a boat and asked his concubine to go on board, and he again borrowed a reconnaissance ship from Xiang to take his family servants and at the same time to escort his hired boat as well while traveling on the river.

After everything was carefully arranged, Wang Xiucui went to the Military Defense and General Surveillance Circuit of Chuzhong to return the sheet of official statement to him. "How is everything going with this matter? Why are you returning it to me?" asked the Military Circuit. Again Wang Xiucui reported how he had regained his concubine from the Chen brothers. The Military Circuit said, laughing, "You can get back your concubine from the tigers' den without resorting to arms. What a miracle! I'm sure one day you'll make a great frontier general garrisoning our country!" Wang Xiucui thanked the Military Circuit modestly and politely for his compliment and left for Huanggang County with Huifeng.

As the natives of Huanggang later learned about Wang Xiucui's adventures in regaining his concubine, all marveled at his exceptional valor and resourcefulness, saying, "He is really true to the name of Wang Taigong!"

True heroes have the valor to take liberties with tigers and wolves  
And live with them under one roof with ease.  
Able indeed is Wang Xiucui,  
Who regains his sweetheart with wisdom and intelligence?



## 卷二十八

程朝奉单遇无头妇 王通判双雪不明冤

诗云：

人命关天地，从来有报施。

其间多幻处，造物显其奇。

话说湖广黄州府有一地方，名曰黄圻嶠，最产得好瓜。有一老圃以瓜为业，时时手自灌溉，爱惜倍至。圃中诸瓜独有一颗结得极大，块垒如斗。老圃特意留着，待等味熟，要献与豪家做孝顺的。一日，手中持了锄头去圃中掘菜，忽见一个人掩掩缩缩在那瓜地中，急赶去看时，乃是一个乞丐在那里偷瓜吃，把个篱笆多扒开了。仔细一认，正不见了这颗极大的，已被他打碎，连瓢连子，在那里乱啃。老圃见偏摘掉了加意的东西，不觉怒从心上起，恶向胆边生，提起手里锄头，照头一下。却元来不禁打，打得脑浆迸流，死于地下。老圃慌了手脚，忙把锄头锄开一楞地来，把尸首埋好，上面将泥铺平。且喜是个乞丐，并没个亲人来做苦主讨命，竟没有人知道罢了。





## *Tale 28*

### **Rich Cheng Encounters a Headless Female Body Assistant Prefect Wang Clears up Two Unsettled Cases**

A poem reads thus:

Life and death is a matter of vital importance.  
From time immemorial, one has to give as life for a life.  
Though truth may be well concealed for the time being,  
The Creator will eventually manifest its prowess.

Huangqiliao, a place in Huangzhou Prefecture of the Huguang region (present-day Hunan and Hubei provinces), teemed with top-grade watermelons. Once there was an old watermelon man who lived on growing watermelons. He toiled hard on his watermelon garden and valued his watermelons very much. There was an unusually large watermelon in his watermelon garden. Standing out alone among the others, this unique watermelon was as large as a dou.<sup>1</sup> He specially kept this large watermelon and intended to present it to the rich and influential family as an offering when it was ripe.

One day he carried a hoe on the shoulder and went to hoe up weeds in the garden. Suddenly he caught sight of a man who was stealthily trying to hide himself in his watermelon garden. Immediately rushing to the garden, he found that a beggar was lying low there eating a watermelon. Upon a closer look, he discovered that the largest watermelon was missing. It turned out that the beggar had smashed it open and was now nibbling at it, rind and seeds all together. Unable to restrain his fury, the old watermelon man swung his hoe and hit the beggar on the head. The beggar fell onto the ground and died, with his brains dashing out. Getting flustered, the old watermelon man dug up a pit in the garden with his hoe and buried the body of the beggar. Luckily the beggar had no close relatives to bring the homicide to court. Thus, the death of the beggar remained

到了明年，其地上瓜愈盛，仍旧一颗独结得大，足抵得三四个小的，也一般加意爱惜，不肯轻采。偶然县官衙中有个害热渴的，想得个大瓜清解，各处买来多不中意，累那买办衙役比较了几番。衙役急了，四处寻访，见说老圃瓜地专有大瓜，遂将钱与买。进圃选择，果有一瓜，比常瓜大数倍，欣然出了十个瓜的价钱，买了去，送进衙中。衙中人大喜，见这个瓜大得异常，集了众人共剖。剖将开来，瓢水乱流，多嚷道：“可惜好大瓜，是烂的了。”仔细一看，多把舌头伸出，半晌缩不进去。你道为何？元来满桌多是鲜红血水，满鼻是血腥气的。众人大惊，禀知县令。县令道：“其间必有冤事！”遂叫那买办的来问道：“这瓜是那里来的？”买办的道：“是一个老圃家里地上的。”县令道：“他怎生法儿，养得这瓜恁大？唤他来，我要问他。”买办的不敢稽迟，随去把个老圃唤来当面。悬令



unknown to the public.

In the next year, the watermelons in his garden were growing luxuriantly, and again one of them appeared to be unusually large. It was so large that it equaled to three to four ordinary-sized ones put together. Also cherishing this large watermelon profoundly, the old watermelon man was unwilling to pick it up rashly.

It so happened that one of officials in the county *yamen* got a fever. The sick county official was eager to have a large watermelon to relieve internal heat. The *yamen* runners bought many watermelons from different places, but the county official was unsatisfactory with them. For this reason, the *yamen* runners were put to torture as a punishment. Becoming anxious to get a large watermelon, the *yamen* runners searched high and low. Finally they learned that the old watermelon man had an unusually large one in his garden. Arriving at the old watermelon man's garden, they did find an extremely large one, the size of which appeared to be several times larger than ordinary ones.

The *yamen* runners bought it at a high price and took it to the *yamen*. All the *yamen* officials were carried away with joy at the sight of this large watermelon. However, as they cut it open, the flesh of the watermelon flew out onto the table in a mess. Heaving a sigh, everyone said, "What a pity! This large watermelon has gone bad." But as they examined the flesh carefully, they all put out their tongues in terror and could not withdraw them back for quite a long time. Do you know why? The flesh of the watermelon was actually blood, and everyone present could smell the blood. Greatly astounded, the county officials immediately reported it to the County Magistrate.

The County Magistrate said, "There must be an injustice behind it!" Then he called forward the *yamen* runners who bought the watermelon and asked, "Where did you get it?" The *yamen* runners answered, "We got it from an old watermelon man's garden." The County Magistrate asked, "How could he grow such a large watermelon? Bring him to me. I have some questions to ask him." Losing no time, the *yamen* runners brought the old watermelon man to the *yamen* to see the County Magistrate.



问道：“你家的瓜为何长得这样大？一圃中多是这样的么？”老圃道：“其馀多是常瓜，只有这颗，不知为何恁大。”县令道：“往年也这样结一颗儿么？”老圃道：“去年也结一颗，没有这样大，略比常瓜大些。今年这一颗大得古怪，自来不曾见这样。”县令笑道：“此必异种，他的根毕竟不同。快打轿，我亲去看。”

当时抬至老圃家中，叫他指示结瓜的处所，县令教人取锄头掘将下去，看他根是怎么样的。掘不多深，只见这瓜的根在泥土中，却像种在一件东西里头的。扒开泥土一看，乃是个死人的口张着，其根直在里面出将起来。众人发声喊，把锄头乱挖开来，一个死尸全见。县令叫挖开他口中，满口尚是瓜子。县令叫把老圃锁了，问其死尸之故。老圃赖不得，只得把去年乞丐偷瓜吃，误打死了埋在地下的事，从实说了。县令道：“怪道这瓜瓤内的多是血水，元来是这个人冤气所结。他一时屈死，膏液未散，滋长这一棵根苗来。天教我衙中人渴病，拣选大瓜，得露出这一场人命。乞丐虽贱，生命则同。总是偷窃，不该死罪，也要抵偿。”把老圃问成殴死人命绞罪，后来死于狱中。



The magistrate asked, "How did you grow such a huge watermelon? Are all the other melons in your garden so large too?" The old watermelon man answered, "The others are just ordinary ones, not so large as this one. I have no idea why this one grew so large." The County Magistrate asked, "How about last year? Did you also get a large watermelon like this one in your garden last year?" "Yes, I did," replied the old watermelon man. "But it wasn't so large as this one. This one is exceptionally large and I've never seen such a large watermelon before." Smiling, the County Magistrate said, "The seed of this large watermelon must be a special one. Also it must have got special roots. Get ready my sedan chair now. I want to go there and have a look in person."

Arriving at the garden, the County Magistrate asked the watermelon man to show him the exact place where this watermelon had grown. Then he ordered that the spot be dug up to examine the roots of this huge watermelon. With only a little digging, the diggers discovered that the roots seemed to have been rooted in something unknown to them. Removing the soil, the diggers found the roots were planted in the mouth of a dead person. Greatly shocked, the diggers started to unearth more of this place and soon they saw the entire body of a dead person. In the mouth of the dead were filled with countless watermelon seeds.

The County Magistrate then locked up the old watermelon man and interrogated him about the death of this person. Knowing for sure that he would not be able to deny it, the old watermelon man had to confess how he had caught a beggar in his garden eating his watermelon and how he had killed him by mistake and buried him in the garden the year before. The County Magistrate said, "No wonder the flesh of this watermelon was blood. It was actually the product of his unjust death and it has nurtured this watermelon. It is Heaven's will that a case of murder be brought to light when one of my officials needed a large watermelon to cure his fever. Mean and lowly as the beggar was, his life was also a life. Though he stole your watermelon, you should not kill him. You'll have to pay with your life for a life." Thus the old watermelon man was sentenced to the gallows for beating the beggar to death. Later the old watermelon man died in prison.

可见人命至重。一个乞丐死了，又没人知见的，埋在地下已是一年，又如此结出异样大瓜来，弄一个明白，正是天理昭彰的所在。

而今还有一个，因这一件事露出那一件事来，两件不明不白的官司，一时显露，说着也古怪。有诗为证：

从来见说没头事，此事没头真莫猜。

及至有时该发露，一头弄出两头来。

话说国朝成化年间，直隶徽州府有一个富人，姓程。他那边土俗，但是有资财的就呼为朝奉，盖宋时有朝奉大夫，就像称呼富人为员外一般，总是尊他。这个程朝奉拥着巨万家私，真所谓“饱暖生淫欲”，心里只喜欢的是女色。见人家妇女生得有些姿容的，就千方百计，必要弄他到手才住。随你费下几多东西，他多不吝，只是以成事为主。所以花费的也不少，上手的也不计其数。自古道天道祸淫，才是这样贪淫不歇，便有希奇的事体做出来，直教你破家辱身。急忙分辨得来，已吃过大亏了。这是后话。

且说徽州府岩子街有一个卖酒的，姓李，叫做李方哥。有妻陈氏，生得十分娇媚，丰采动人。程朝奉动了火，终日将买酒为由，甜言软语，哄动他夫妻二人。虽是缠得熟分了，那陈



It is thus clear that human life is of the most important of all. Originally the death of the beggar was unknown to everyone. Moreover, one year had gone by since the body of the beggar was buried in the garden. Out of everyone's expectation, an unusually huge watermelon grew out of the mouth of the dead and this watermelon eventually brought to light the case of murder. Indeed, Heaven will eventually settle all accounts.

\* \* \*

Now I'd like to tell you another similar story in which one case touched off another and thus two unsettled cases finally got cleared up. You will find it rather strange. The following lines may serve as a proof:

Clueless cases are common everywhere.

Never make pure guesses at clueless cases.

But when the time has come for a case to be brought to light,

This case will touch off another.

Once there was a rich man, whose family name was Cheng, in Huizhou Prefecture, Zhili Province, during the Chenghua reign (1465-1487) in our Ming Dynasty. According to local convention, a rich man was usually called "chaofeng." This had been the form of address applied to high-ranking government officials in the Song Dynasty. It was just as a rich man was then addressed as Esquire, as a means of showing respect. Cheng possessed immense wealth. And, as an old saying goes, "Easy circumstances breed lewd thoughts," he was only interested in women. If he saw a woman of certain attraction, he would go to great lengths to seduce her. He didn't care how much it might cost, so long as his desire could be met. Thus his expenditures ran high, and the number of women he lured was also large. An old proverb also says, "Heaven brings misfortune to the lecherous." A person driven by a constant desire for sex will commit inconceivable deeds, which will eventually lead to the destruction of both family and reputation. Regrets usually come after the ruin. However, let's just leave this subject for later treatment.

There lived a wine-seller called Brother Li Fang in the town of Yanzi in Huizhou. His wife, née Chen, was full of charm and attraction. Cheng took a fancy for her and lusted after her. So he hung around the tavern all day long, talking to the husband and wife in the disguise of buying drinks.





氏也自正正气气，一时也勾搭不上。程朝奉道：“天下的事，惟有利动人心。这家子是贫难之人，我拚舍着一主财，怕不上我的钩？私下钻求，不如明买。”

一日，对李方哥道：“你一年卖酒，得利多少？”李方哥道：“靠朝奉福荫，借此度得夫妻两口，便是好了。”程朝奉道：“有得赢馀么？”李方哥道：“若有得一两二两赢馀，便也留着些做个根本。而今只好绷绷拽拽，朝升暮合过去，那得赢馀？”程朝奉道：“假如有个人帮你十两五两银子做本钱，你心下何如？”李方哥道：“小人若有得十两五两银子，便多做些好酒起来，开个兴头的槽坊，一年之间，度了口，还有得多。只是没寻那许多东西。就是有人肯借，欠下了债，要赔利钱。不如守此小本经纪罢了。”朝奉道：“我看你做人也好。假如你有一点好心到我，我便与你二三十两也不打紧。”李方哥道：“二三十两是朝奉的毫毛，小人得了，却一生一世受用不尽了。只是朝奉怎么肯？”朝奉道：“肯倒肯，只要你好心。”李方哥道：“教小人怎么样的才是好心？”朝奉笑道：“我喜欢你家里一件物事，是不费你本钱的。我借来用用，仍旧还你。若肯时，我即时与你三十两。”李方哥道：“我家里那里有朝奉用得着的东西？况且用过就还，有甚么不奉承了朝奉，却要朝奉许多银子？”朝奉笑道：“只怕你不肯。你肯了，又怕你妻子不舍得。”



Though he gradually achieved familiar terms with them, Chen was righteous and left no chance for him to seduce her. Cheng thought to himself, "In this wide world, no one can resist the temptation of money. Brother Li Fang and his wife are poor. I will go for high stakes by throwing a huge sum of money at them. Will she not be hooked then? Seeking her favors with her in secret is not as good as a deal made in the open."

One day he asked Brother Li Fang, "How much do you make each year by selling wine?" Brother Li Fang replied, "Even with your kindness, it is good luck if my wife and I are able to barely survive in this trade." Cheng then said, "Do you have anything left after the deduction of your costs every year?" Brother Li Fang said, "If I can have a profit of one or two taels of silver, I keep it as capital for future business. We're actually doing business on a shoestring right now. How can we expect to make a profit?" Cheng asked, "If someone lends you five or ten taels of silver as capital, would you take it?" Brother Li Fang said, "If I had five or ten taels of silver, I would start a prosperous tavern. Then we would not only be able to feed ourselves, but also make some profit every year. But where could I get such a huge loan? Even if someone loaned us some money, we would be in debt and have to worry about paying the interest in the future. I think it's less risky to keep this small business."

Cheng then said, "I think you're an honest person. If you can do me a favor, I will give you twenty or thirty taels. It doesn't make much difference to me." Brother Li Fang said, "Twenty or thirty taels of silver might be nothing to you, but that amount would benefit me for the rest of my life! Why would you be willing to do that?" Cheng replied, "I would, if you should be kind to me." Brother Li Fang said, "Please tell me how I can be of any service to you." With a smile, Cheng said, "I'm interested in something in your home. It won't cost you anything. I will just check it out and return it to you after I use it. If you agree, I'll give you thirty taels of silver at once." Brother Li Fang asked, "What do I have in my home that is useful to you, and after you use it, you will return it to me, something that will cost me nothing? Why should I get paid so much money by you?" Then Cheng laughed and said, "I have doubt that you would like me to use it. If you would, your wife might not. You'd better talk to your



你且两个去商量一商量，我明日将了银子来与你现成讲兑。今日空口说白话，未好就明说出来。”笑着去了。

李方哥晚上把这些话与陈氏说道：“不知是要我家甚么物件？”陈氏想一想道：“你听他油嘴！若是别件动用物事，又说道借用就还的，随你奢遮宝贝，也用不得许多贯钱。必是痴心想到我身上来讨便宜的说话了。你男子汉放些主意出来，不要被腾倒。”李方哥笑笑道：“那有此话！”

隔了一日，程朝奉果然拿了一包银子，来对李方哥道：“银子已现有在此，打点送你的了，只看你每意思如何。”朝奉当面打开包来，白灿灿的一大包。李方哥见了，好不眼热，道：“朝奉明说是要怎么，小人好如命奉承。”朝奉道：“你是个晓事人，定要人说个了话？你自想家里是甚东西是我用得着的，又这般直钱就是了。”李方哥道：“教小人没想处。除了小人夫妻两口身子外，要直上十两银子的家伙，一件也不曾有。”朝奉笑道：“正是身上的，那个说是身子外边的？”李方哥通红了脸道：“朝奉没正经，怎如此取笑？”朝奉道：“我不取笑。现钱买现货，愿者成交。若不肯时，也只索罢了。我怎好强得你？”说罢，打点袖起银子了。自古道：

清酒红人面，黄金黑世心。

李方哥见程朝奉要收拾起银子，便呆着眼不开口，仅有些沉吟不舍之意。程朝奉早已瞧科，就中取着三两多重一锭银子，塞在李方哥袖子里道：“且拿着这锭去做样，一样十锭就是了。你自家两个计较去。”李方哥半推半就的接了。程朝奉正是会家



wife today. I'll be back tomorrow with the silver to see whether we can make a deal. I am just giving you a hint today and can't say anything more about it explicitly." Still laughing, Cheng left.

Brother Li Fang told his wife about the matter that evening. "I wonder what it is in our home that he is interested in," he said. Thinking for a moment, Chen said, "You're taken in by his round-about way of talking! If he wants to borrow some object from us and will return it after the use, the most valuable thing you possess cannot deserve such great sum. He must have been calculating on me. You're a man. Make sense of it. Don't let him deceive you." Brother Li Fang laughed and said, "How could that be true?"

On the next day Cheng came as promised with a pack of silver, and said to Brother Li Fang, "Here's the silver, I've got it ready for you. Now it's up to you to make a decision." Cheng opened the pack and showed him the bright shining silver. Staring at the white silver with wide-opened eyes, Brother Li Fang was greatly tempted. He said, "Please tell me directly what you need, so I can lend it to you." Cheng said, "You're a sensible man. Do you really want me to make it explicit? Just think, what you possess in your home is so valuable?" Brother Li Fang said, "I just can't figure it out. I don't have anything worth more than ten taels except the bodies of me and my wife." Cheng laughed and said, "Exactly. Who talked about anything incorporeal?" Flushing with shame, Brother Li Fang said, "You're kidding. How can you make such a joke?" Cheng said, "I'm not kidding. I'm paying ready money for an article on hand. If you consent, we'll make a deal. Otherwise I'm only making an offer. How can I push you?" So saying, he started to gather up the silver.

An old saying goes, "A drink of wine makes one blush and shining gold leads one to evil." Seeing that Cheng was about to pick up his silver, Brother Li Fang stared in silent hesitation. Cheng read his mind. So he took out an ingot of silver, more than three taels in weight, stuck it into Brother Li Fang's sleeve and said, "Take this first as a sample. You'll get ten ingots like this one. You two may give thought to the matter." Brother Li Fang took the silver with much hesitation. Cheng was rather composed in his usual sophistication, knowing that Brother.



不忙，见接了银子，晓得有了机关，说道：“我去去再来讨回音。”

李方哥进到内房，与妻陈氏说道：“果然你昨日猜得不差，元来真是此意。被我抢白了一顿，他没意思，把这一锭子作为陪礼，我拿将来了。”陈氏道：“你不拿他的便好。拿了他的，已似有肯意了，他如何肯歇这一条心？”李方哥道：“我一时没主意，拿了。他临去时就说：‘像得我意，十锭也不难。’我想，我与你在此苦挣一年，挣不出几两银子来。他的意思，倒肯在你身上舍主大钱。我每不如将计就计哄他，与了他些甜头，便起他一主大银子也不难了，也强如一盏半盏的与别人论价钱。”李方哥说罢，就将出这锭银子放在桌上。陈氏拿到手来看一看，道：“你男子汉，见了这个东西，就舍得老婆养汉了？”李方哥道：“不是舍得。难得财主家倒了运，来想我们。我们拚忍着一时羞耻，一生受用不尽了。而今总是混帐的世界，我们又不是甚么阔阅人家，就守着清白也没人来替你造牌坊。落得和同了些。”陈氏道：“是倒也是。羞人答答的，怎好兜他？”李方哥道：“总是做他的本钱不着，我而今办着一个东道在房里，请他晚间来吃酒。我自到外边那里去避一避。等他来时，只说我偶然出外，就来的，先做主人陪他。饮酒中间，他自然撩拨你，你看着机会，就与他成了事。等得我来时，事已过了。可不是不知不觉的，落得赚了他一主银子？”陈氏道：“只是有些害羞，使不得。”李方哥道：“程朝奉也是一向熟的，有甚么羞？你只是做主人陪他吃酒，又不要你先去兜他，只看他怎么样来，才回答他就是。也没甚么羞处。”陈氏见说，算来也不打紧的，当下应承了。



Li Fang's accepting of the silver was a sign of success. So he said, "I've got to go and will be back later to get your word."

Brother Li Fang entered his room and said to his wife, "You guessed right yesterday. What he wanted is exactly what you said. I taunted him and he felt embarrassed. So he gave this ingot to me as an apology. I've kept it." Chen then said, "It would have been better if you had not taken the silver. Since you took it, he may take it a sign of your approval. How can he give up his lecherous desire?" Brother Li Fang said, "I was at a loss for words when I took it. Before he left, he said, 'If I'm satisfied, I won't mind giving you ten of these.' I figured, we toil a whole year and can't make a few taels of silver. He intends to spend a great deal of money on you. We may as well take advantage of his desire and satisfy him a little bit so that we can later get a big sum of silver from him. It's a lot easier money than what we make out of each bargain we make with a customer." Then Brother Li Fang set the silver on the table. Chen picked it up and looked at it, saying, "You're a man. Does the mere sight of this make you willing to let your wife have a lover?"

Brother Li Fang said, "It's not the matter of willingness. But it's that a rich man comes to us to ask for a favor. Let's bear the momentary pain of shame and have lasting wealth. We're not an illustrious family. In the topsy-turvy world of today, even if we keep a clean record, we can't expect someone to build a memorial archway for us. We may just follow the trend." Chen said, "It sounds alright. But it's rather humiliating for me to lure him." Brother Li Fang said, "Anyway he will pay for everything. I'll play the host by inviting him to come in for a drink in the evening. Then I'll leave you alone by going outside. When he arrives, tell him that I am out and will be back shortly. If you have a drink with him, he will certainly make advances towards you. You may see the chance and yield to him. When I get back, it will be over. We'll obtain a lot of money from him so easily!" Chen said, "It's just too humiliating. I can't do it." Brother Li Fang said, "Cheng is no stranger to us. Why do you feel ashamed? You'll be the hostess in drinking with him. You don't need to go outside to solicit him. You just see what he does and says, and then behave accordingly. It's certainly not something embarrassing." Chen heard this

李方哥一面办治了东道，走去邀请程朝奉，说道：“承朝奉不弃，晚间整酒在小房中，特请朝奉一叙。朝奉就来则个。”程朝奉见说，喜之不胜，道：“果然利动人心，他已商量得情愿了！今晚请我，必然就成事。”巴不得天晚前来赴约。

从来好事多磨。程朝奉意气洋洋，走出街来，只见一般儿朝奉姓汪的，拉着他水口，去看甚么新来的表子王大舍，一把拉了就走。程朝奉推说没功夫得去。他说：“有甚么贵干？”程朝奉心忙里，一时造不出来。汪朝奉见他没得说，便道：“原没事干，怎如此推故扫兴？”不管三七二十一，同了两三个少年子弟，一推一攘的，牵的去了。到了那里，汪朝奉看得中意，就秤银子办起东道来，在那里入马。程朝奉心上有事，被带住了身子，好不耐烦。三杯两盏，逃了席就走，已有二更天气。此时李方哥已此寻个事繇，避在朋友家里了，没人再来相邀的。程朝奉径自急急忙忙，走到李家店中，见店门不关，心下意会了。进了店，就把门拴着。那店中房子，苦不深邃，抬眼望见房中灯烛明亮，酒肴罗列，悄无人声。走进看时，不见一个人影。忙把桌上火移来一照，大叫一声：“不好了！”正是：

分开八片顶阳骨，倾下一桶雪水来。

程朝奉看时，只见满地多是鲜血，一个没头的妇人躺在血泊里，不知是甚么事繇，惊得牙齿捉对儿厮打。抽身出外，开门



and saw that nothing too much was demanded of her. So she agreed.

Brother Li Fang made arrangements and went to Cheng's place with the invitation, saying, "I appreciate your kindness in not detesting me. I've got some wine ready in my humble home. You're invited to have a chat with me this evening. Please come." Seeing this, Cheng was quite happy. He said to himself, "Everyone wavers at the sight of gains! He must have talked his wife into agreement. Since he is inviting me for wine tonight, I'll be able to make it with her." Impatiently Cheng waited for the arrival of the evening appointment.

It is universally acknowledged that success involves setbacks. That evening Cheng joyously sauntered out into the street. He stumbled into another rich man called Wang, who seized him by his sleeve and asked him to go with him to see a newly arrived whore called Wang Dashe. As Wang urged him to go, Cheng turned the invitation down by making an excuse that he was busy. Wang asked, "What business do you have?" Cheng was flustered and couldn't make up a plausible story. Seeing that he could not come up with a good reason, Wang said, "If you have nothing to do, why do you spoil the fun by declining my offer?" Ignoring the Cheng's reluctance, he and a few of his young fellows shoved Cheng to come along with them. After they got there, Wang became interested in the whore, so he paid the money and acted as the host and decided to spend the night with her. Cheng felt restless at being held up there, as if he was on pins and needles. After he downed a couple of drinks, he fled.

It was about midnight. Brother Li Fang had gone to the home of one of his friends on an excuse. Cheng rushed to Li's tavern and saw that the door was ajar. He understood she was there awaiting him. He entered and locked the gate. The rooms in the tavern were not pretty large. Looking through the door, he saw the gleam of candlelight in the main room and a table loaded with food and wine. All was dead silence. He walked into the room and found no one inside. As he picked up a light from the table and took a close look around, he uttered a scream, "Horrible!" What he saw hit him like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. On the floor was a pool of blood in which a headless body of a woman rested. He was so stunned by the scene that his teeth chattered in trepidation. He dashed to open the





便走。到了家里，只是打颤，蹲跚不定，心头丕丕的跳。晓得是非要惹到身上，一味惶惑不题。

且说李方哥在朋友家里，捱过了更深，料道程朝奉与妻子事体已完，从容到家，还好趁吃杯儿酒。一步步踱将回来，只见店门开着，心里道：“那朝奉好不精细！既要私下做事，门也不掩掩着。”走到房里，不见甚么朝奉，只有个没头的尸首躺在地下。看看身上衣服，正是妻子，惊得乱跳道：“怎的起？怎的起？”一头哭，一头想道：“我妻子已是肯的，有甚么言语冲撞了他，便把来杀了？须与他讨命去！”连忙把家里收拾干净了，锁上了门，径奔到程朝奉家敲门。

程朝奉不知好歹，听得是李方哥声音，正要问他个端的，慌忙开出门来。李方哥一把扭住道：“你干得好事！为何把我妻子杀了？”程朝奉道：“我到你家里，并不见一人，只见你妻子已杀倒在地。怎说是我杀了？”李方哥道：“不是你是谁？”程朝奉道：“我心里爱你的妻子，若是见了，奉承还恐不及，舍得杀他？你须访个备细，不要冤我。”李方哥道：“好端端两口住在家里，是你来起这些根繇。而今却把我妻子杀了，还推得那个？和你见官去，好好还我一个人来！”两下你争我嚷。天已大明，结扭了一直到府里来叫屈。

府里见是人命事，准了状，发与三府王通判审问这件事。



gate and raced back home. Shaking all over, he couldn't squat or stand still. His heart pounded against his ribs. He was sure that he had invited disaster upon himself. Let's leave him with his terror for now.

Brother Li Fang, in the meantime, stayed in his friend's home until well after midnight. Reckoning that the business between his wife and Cheng must be over, he strolled back home. On his way home, he calculated he might as well be able to have a drink with them too. As he got there, he noticed that the gate to his store was open. "This Chaofeng is so careless," he thought. "He was having an affair but he did not even bolt the gate." Brother Li Fang went into the room and found no sign of Cheng, but saw a headless body on the floor. A closer look at the clothes assured him that it was his wife. Startled, he yelled out, "What happened?! What happened?!" He sobbed and wondered, "My wife was willing to do it with him. But what could she have said to hurt Cheng so that he would kill her? I must find him and take revenge!" He cleaned up the mess, locked the gate and raced to Cheng's place.

Cheng, still unable to make sense of the murder, heard a knock on his door. He could tell it was Brother Li Fang, so he opened the door, hoping to find out from him what on earth had happened. Brother Li Fang seized him and began questioning, "What a horrible thing you did! Why did you kill my wife?" Cheng replied, "When I arrived at your place, I didn't see anybody. I only found your wife on the floor, murdered. Why do you say I killed her?" Brother Li Fang said, "Who else, if it was not you?" Cheng said, "I loved your wife. If she had been with me, I would have never had enough intimacy with her. Why would I have turned out to be so cruel as to kill her? You have to look into this matter thoroughly. Don't accuse me rashly." Brother Li Fang said, "My wife and I had a peaceful life before. It is you who stirred up all this trouble, and now you have killed her! On whom do you want to shift the responsibility? Let's go to court. You must give me back my wife!" They kept shouting at each other until it was well into the next morning. Then, as they wrangled, they went to the yamen.

After learning it was a murder, the Prefect accepted the lawsuit and assigned Assistant Prefect Wang to look into the murder case. Assistant



王通判带了原被两人，先到李家店中相验尸首。相得是个妇人身体，被人用刀杀死的，现无头颅。通判着落地方把尸盛了，带原被告到衙门来。先问李方哥的口词。李方哥道：“小人李方，妻陈氏，是开酒店度日的。是这程某看上了小人妻子，乘小人不在，以买酒为繇，来强奸他。想是小人妻子不肯，他就杀死了。”通判问程某如何说，程朝奉道：“李方夫妻卖酒，小人是他的熟主顾。李方昨日来请小人去吃酒，小人因有事，去得迟了些。到他家里不见李方，只见他妻子不知被何人杀死在房。小人慌忙走了家来。与小人并无相干。”通判道：“他说你以买酒为繇，去强奸他；你又说是他请你到家。他既请你，是主人了，为何他反不在家？这还是你去强奸是真了。”程朝奉道：“委实是他来请小人，小人才去的。当面在这里，老爷问他，他须赖不过。”李方道：“请是小人请他的，小人未到家，他先去强奸杀了人了。”王通判道：“既是你请他，怎么你未到家，他倒先去行奸杀人？你其时不来家做主人，倒在那里去了？其间必有隐情！”取夹棍来，每人一夹棍，只得多把实情来说了。李方哥道：“其实程某看上了小人妻子，许了小人银两，要与妻子同吃酒。小人贪利，不合许允请他吃酒是真。小人怕碍他眼，只得躲过片时。后边到家，不想妻子被他杀死在地，他逃在家里去了。”程朝奉道：“小人喜欢他妻子，要营勾



Prefect Wang accompanied the plaintiff and the accused to Li's tavern to examine the body. The examination showed that it was a woman's body. She was killed with a knife and her head was missing. The Assistant Prefect ordered the local authorities to have the body laid into a container and put away, and then he brought the plaintiff and the accused back to his office. He first let Brother Li Fang tell his side of the story. Brother Li Fang said, "I'm Li Fang and my wife was Chen. We have made a living by keeping a tavern. This man Cheng was attracted to my wife and sneaked into my house on the excuse of buying wine while I was away, and then he intended to rape her. My wife must have refused him, so he killed her."

The Assistant Prefect turned to Cheng and asked how he would explain this. Cheng said, "The husband and wife ran the tavern and I was a regular customer. Li invited me to have a drink in his home yesterday. I got there late because I was held up by some other business. I didn't see Li in his home, but only found his wife on the floor dead. I was frightened and ran back home. I had nothing to do with the murder." Assistant Prefect Wang said, "He said you went there to buy wine as an excuse and tried to rape her. But you said you were invited. If he invited you as the host, why was he not at home? It appears that you are a rapist!" Cheng said, "He did invite me. So I went there. Now he's here. You can question him about it. He can't deny it!" "I did invite him," Li Fang said, "but he went there before I got back home, and raped and killed my wife."

Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "Since you invited him, why were you not at home when he got there and committed rape and murder? You must both be concealing some details from me!" The Assistant Prefect had cramps brought out and put both the plaintiff and the accused on rack, and this made them tell the truth. Brother Li Fang now said, "In fact, Cheng fancied my wife and promised me some silver, requesting a drink with my wife. I was driven by the desire for money and reluctantly agreed. It's true that I invited him to come and have a drink. As I knew that I would be in his way, I left home for a while. When I got back, I was surprised to find that he had killed my wife and had fled home." Cheng said, "I admit I was interested in his wife and plotted to seduce her. He

他是真。他已自许允，请小人吃酒了，小人为甚么反要杀他？其实到他家时妻子已不知为何杀死了，小人慌了，走了回家。实与小人无干。”通判道：“李方请吃酒，卖奸是真；程某去时，必是那妇人推拒，一时杀了，也是真。平白地要谋奸人妻子，原不是良人行径，这人命自然是程某抵偿了。”程朝奉道：“小人不合见了美色辄起贪心，是小人的罪了。至于人命，委是不知。不要说他夫妇商同请小人吃酒，已是愿从的了，即使有些勉强，也还好慢慢央求，何至下手杀了他？”王通判恼他奸淫起祸，那里听他辨说？要把他问个强奸杀人死罪，却是死人无头，又无行凶器械，成不得招。责了限期，要在程朝奉身上追那颗头出来。正是：

官法如炉不自繇，这回惹着怎干休？

方知女色真难得，此日何来美妇头？

程朝奉比过几限，只没寻那颗头处。程朝奉诉道：“便做道是强奸不从，小人杀了，小人藏着那颗头做甚么用？在此挨这样比较！”王通判见他说得有理，也疑道是或者另有人杀了这妇人，也不可知。且把程朝奉与李方哥多下在监里了，便叫拘集一干邻里人等，问他事体根繇与程某杀人真假。邻里人等多说：“他们是主顾家，时常往来的，也未见甚么奸情事。至于程某，是个有身家的人，贪淫的事，或者有之，从来也不曾





did grant my request and invited me for a drink. Why would I have changed my mind and killed her? In reality when I arrived there, his wife was already dead. I was shocked and ran back home. I had nothing to do with it." The Assistant Prefect then said, "Li Fang played host in name, but pandered in actuality. When Cheng got there, the woman rejected him and so he killed her on the spot. That should be how it was. It is despicable to seduce the wife of somebody else. Cheng should pay with his own life." Cheng said, "It is my fault to harbor wild desires at sight of beautiful woman. As for the murder, I'm indeed ignorant. Furthermore, the husband and wife talked and agreed on the arrangement of asking me to come to their tavern and have a drink. Even if his wife had been reluctant, I would have certainly taken time to plead with her. Why would I have gone to such an extreme as to kill her?"

Assistant Prefect Wang abhorred Cheng's lust as the source of the crime and wouldn't listen to him any more. He thought of sentencing him on the capital crime of rape and homicide, but the woman's head was missing from her body and no murder weapon had been found at the scene. So the case lacked enough evidence to be concluded. Assistant Prefect Wang thus demanded that Cheng come up with the head by a certain deadline.

Government ordinance allows of no trifling.

How can he be let off easily after he's caused trouble?

Not until now has he realized womanizing never comes easy.

Where can he get the head of the beauty?

After the deadline was renewed several times, however, Cheng still presented no clue as to the whereabouts of the missing head. He pleaded, "Even if I had been refused in a rape attempt and killed her, what's the use for me to keep the chopped head? There is no reason for me to be subject to interrogation now!" Finding his words reasonable, Assistant Prefect Wang began to suspect that the killer might be another man. He ordered that both Cheng and Brother Li Fang be detained in jail and had their neighbors rounded up in court for investigation.

The neighbors all said, "Li and Cheng were a seller and customer in frequent contact. We've never heard about any adultery between them. As for Cheng, he's married, and it's likely that he has committed seduction.



见他做甚么凶恶歹事过来。人命的事，未必是他。”通判道：“既未必是程某，你地方人必晓得李方家的备细，与谁有仇，那处可疑，该推详得出来。”邻里人等道：“李方平日卖酒，也不见有甚么仇人。他夫妻两口做人多好，平日与人斗口的事多没有的。这黑夜间不知何人所杀，连地方人多没猜处。”通判道：“你们多去外边访一访。”众人领命，正要走出，内中一个老者走上前来禀道：“据小人愚见，猜着一个人，未知是否。”通判道：“是那个？”只因说出这个人来，有分交：乞化游僧，明投三尺之法；沉埋朽骨，趁白十年之冤。正是：

善恶到头终有报，只争来早与来迟。

老者道：“地方上向有一个远处来的游僧，每夜敲梆高叫，求人布施，已一个多月了。自从那夜李家妇人被杀之后，就不听得他的声响了。若道是别处去了，怎有这样恰好的事？况且地方上不曾见有人布施他的，怎肯就去？这个事着实可疑。”通判闻言道：“杀人作歹，正是野僧本等，这疑也是有理的。只那寻这个游僧处？”老者道：“重赏之下，必有勇夫。老爷唤那程某出来，说与他知道。他家道殷富，要明白这事，必然不吝重赏。这游僧也去不久，不过只在左近地方，要访着他也不



But we've never seen him behave brutally. He might not have been involved in the murder." Assistant Prefect Wang then said, "If he's not the murderer, you local inhabitants must be familiar with the Li family. Then you know something about Li's foes. Is there anything suspicious that you can tell me about?" The neighbors said, "Li Fang ran his tavern every day and didn't have any foes. He and his wife were good people and never bickered with others. We can't figure out who committed the murder that night. It's really a puzzle for us neighbors." Assistant Prefect Wang said, "You should go around and make inquiries about it." With that demand placed on them, the neighbors were about to leave when one elder stepped forward and said, "On the basis of my humble guess, there is a man who might be the murderer." Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "Who?" The mention of this person will unfold the truth of this case and lead us farther into the details of another.

An itinerant Buddhist monk, begging alms from door to door,  
Commits murder.

A man's head buried deep

Brings to light another murder case happened ten years ago.

This exactly verifies the saying: Good and evil will always be rewarded; it is only a question of time.

The elder said, "There was a wandering monk from far away in our place. He beat his clapper and cried for alms every night for more than a month. After the murder of Li's wife, I didn't hear his voice any more. Could it be just a coincidence that he left right after the murder? Moreover, I never heard about anyone ever giving him alms. Would he have been satisfied before he left? That is something suspicious." Assistant Prefect Wang said, "It is wandering monks' nature to commit atrocities. Your doubt is not groundless. But where can we hunt for him?" The old man said, "When a high reward is offered, brave fellows will come forward. You can summon that Cheng and let him know the situation. His family is wealthy and will surely be willing to offer a handsome reward for the capture of the real criminal. I don't think the monk has gone too far away. He should be somewhere in the vicinity. So it won't be too difficult to find him."





难的。”通判依言，狱中带出程朝奉来，把老者之言说与他。程朝奉道：“有此疑端，便是小人生路。只求老爷与小人做主，出个广捕文书，着落几个应捕，四处寻访。小人情愿立个赏票，认出谢金就是。”当下通判差了应捕出来。程朝奉托人邀请众应捕说话，先送了十两银子做盘费。又押起三十两，等寻得着这和尚，即时交付。众应捕应承去了。

元来应捕党与极多，耳目最众，但是他们上心的事，没有个访拿不出的。见程朝奉是可扰之家，又兼有了厚赠，怎不出力？不上一年，已访得这叫夜僧人在宁国府地方乞化，夜夜街上叫了转来，投在一个古庙里宿歇。众应捕带了一个地方人，认得面貌是真，正是在岩子镇叫夜的了。众应捕商量道：“人便是这个人了，不知杀人是他不是他。就是他了，没个凭据，也不好拿得他。只可智取。”算计去寻了一件妇人衣服，把一个少年些的应捕打扮起来，装做了妇人模样，一同众人去埋伏在一个林子内，是街上回到古庙必经之地。守至更深，果然这僧人叫夜转来，撵了梆，正自独行。林子里假做了妇人，低声叫道：“和尚，还我头来！”初时一声，那僧人已吃了一惊，立定了脚，昏黑之中，隐隐见是个穿红的妇人，心上虚怯不过了。只听得一声不了，又叫：“和尚，还我头来！”连叫不止。那僧人慌了。颤笃笃的道：“头在你家上三家铺架上不是？休要



Assistant Prefect Wang agreed. Cheng was brought out from jail and told what the old man had said. Cheng said, "This clue gives me a chance of life. I only hope my lord will take charge of this matter, issue a wide-search dispatch and assign a few arrest-runners to launch a large-scale hunt. I'm willing to make an offer of a reward and pay the money upon receiving information about the murder." Assistant Prefect Wang immediately selected a few arrest-runners. Cheng asked someone to invite the arrest-runners to see him. Then he gave them ten taels of silver as their traveling expenses, and put aside thirty taels of silver as a reward, which would be handed to them upon the capture of the monk. The runners agreed to this and set off for the hunt.

The arrest-runners had many colleagues and they were well informed. They never failed in whatever they set out to do. With the knowledge of Cheng's rich family background plus the generous reward, they spared no effort to accomplish their mission. In less than a year the monk was discovered in Ningguo Prefecture, begging on the street and retiring in an old temple at night. The runners had taken a local man with them, and the local man identified the monk as the one who had begged in the town of Yanzi. The arrest-runners discussed the matter among themselves. "He's the man for sure," they deliberated. "But we don't know whether he's the murderer or not. Even if he is, we can't arrest him without any evidence. We will have to use strategy to get him."

Thus, they decided to find a woman's garment and let a younger runner wear it. He was to go with them in disguise into an ambush in a wood next to the sole path by which one could go from the street to the old temple. They kept watch there until midnight when the monk was seen walking along the path alone, with his clapper in hand. In the woods the arrest-runner in the disguise of a woman muttered, "Monk, give me back my head!" The monk was taken aback. He came to a stop and vaguely caught sight in the darkness of a woman in red. Fear gripped him immediately. Another such utterance rose right after the first, "Monk, give me back my head!" Then the phrase became a steady repetition. The monk shivered in dread, replying, "Isn't your head on the rack of the store three doors up from your house? Don't importune me!" The arrest-

来缠我！”众人听罢，情知杀人事已实，胡哨一声，众应捕一齐钻出，把个和尚捆住，道：“这贼秃！你岩子镇杀了人，还躲在这里么？”先是一顿下马威，打软了，然后解到府里来。

通判问应捕如何拿得着他，应捕把假装妇人吓他，他说出真情，才擒住他的话，禀明白了。带过僧人来。僧人明知事已露出，混赖不过，只得认道：“委实杀了妇人是的。”通判道：“他与你有甚么冤仇，杀了他？”僧人道：“并无冤仇。只因那晚叫夜，经过这家门首，见店门不关，挨身进去，只指望偷盗些甚么。不晓得灯烛明亮，有一个美貌的妇人，盛装站立在床边。看见了，不繇得心里不动火，抱住求奸。他抵死不肯。一时性起，拔出戒刀来杀了，提了头就走。走将出来，才想道要那头做甚么。其时把来挂在上三家铺架上了。只是恨他那不肯，出了这口气。当时连夜走脱此地。而今被拿住，是应得偿他命的，别无他话。”

通判就出票去，提那上三家铺上人来，问道：“和尚招出人头在铺架上，而今那里去了？”铺上人道：“当时实有一个人头挂在架上，天明时见了，因恐怕经官受累，悄悄将来移上前去十来家赵大门首一棵树上挂着，已后不知怎么样了。”通判差人押了这三家铺人，来提赵大到官。赵大道：“小人那日早起，果然见树上挂着一颗人头。心中惊惧，思要首官。诚恐



runners in ambush knew by this that the monk was undoubtedly the murderer. With a whistle, they sprang out, seized him and tied him up, shouting, "Bald villain! You committed murder in the town of Yanzi, but have hidden yourself here!" A solid beating subdued the monk. Then the monk was taken back to the prefecture court.

Assistant Prefect Wang asked the arrest-runners how they had captured the man. They recounted the trap set with the disguise of a woman, the monk's panic and his release of the truth, and their final capture of him. The monk was brought into the court. He knew that his crime was discovered and he could not get off, so he confessed, "Yes, I killed the woman." Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "What rancor was between you and her?" The monk answered, "I didn't have rancor against her. That night I howled for alms and went by the house and saw the gate open, so I stole inside, hoping to steal something. Then I was surprised to see that the candles were lit brightly and a beautiful woman was standing by the bed in dazzling attire. I just couldn't hold back my urges. So I clasped her in my arms and attempted to have sex with her. But she desperately resisted. In a fit of anger, I pulled out my knife and killed her. I picked up the chopped head and ran off. Then I thought, 'Why do I need this head?' So I put it on the rack in the store three doors up the road. I was angry that she had not yielded to my request but felt released after I killed her. On that very night I fled to Ningguo Prefecture. Now I've been arrested. I should pay with my life, and have nothing else to say."

Assistant Prefect Wang issued an order and had the manager of the store brought into court, and asked him, "The monk confessed that there was a human head on your shelf. Where is it now?" The manager answered, "Yes, there was a human head there. When I saw it in the morning, I was afraid I would get involved and become a suspect in a murder. So I took it to Zhao Da's home, about ten doors further up the road, and hung it on a tree outside his house. I have no idea what happened after that." Assistant Prefect Wang sent some men with the store manager to bring Zhao Da to the court.

Arriving at the court, Zhao Da said, "That morning I saw a head hanging on the tree. I was shocked and was going to report this to the *yamen*, but

官司牵累，当下悄地拿到家中，埋在后园了。”通判道：“而今在那里么？”赵大道：“小人其时就怕后边或有是非，要留做证见，埋处把一棵小草树记认着的，怎么不现在？”通判道：“只怕其间有诈伪，须得我亲自去取验。”

通判即时打轿，抬到赵大家里，叫赵大在前引路。引至后园中，赵大指着一处道：“在这底下。”通判叫人掘将下去。刚钁得土开，只见一颗人头，连泥带土，鞞碌碌滚将出来。众人发声喊道：“在这里了！”通判道：“这妇人的尸首，今日方得完全。”从人把泥土拂去，仔细一看，惊道：“可又古怪！这妇人怎生是有髭须的？”送上通判看时，但见这颗人头：

双眸紧闭，一口牢关。颈子上也是刀刃之伤，嘴儿边却有须髯之覆。早难道骷髅能作怪，致令得男女会差池？王通判惊道：“这分明是一个男子的头，不是那妇人的了。这头又出见得作怪，其中必有跷蹊。”喝道：“把赵大锁了！”寻那赵大时，先前看见掘着人头不是妇人的，已自往外跑了。王通判就走出赵大前边屋里，叫抬张桌儿做公座坐了，带那赵大的家属过来，且问这颗人头的事。赵大妻子一时难以支吾，只得实招道：“十年前，赵大曾有个仇人，姓马，被赵大杀了，带这头来埋在这里的。”通判道：“适才赵大在此，而今躲在那里了？”妻子道：“他方才见人头被掘将出来，晓得事发，他一径出门，连家里多不说那里去了。”王通判道：“立刻的事，他不过走在亲眷家里，料去不远。快把你家甚么亲眷住址，一一



I feared I might be involved in a legal case. So I buried it in my back garden." Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "Is it still there?" Zhao Da answered, "I thought that it might someday be useful as a piece of evidence, so I marked a small shrub on the spot I buried it. How can it not be there?" Assistant Prefect Wang said, "I doubt what you've said is true. I must go there and take a look for myself."

Assistant Prefect Wang rode in a sedan chair to Zhao Da's home, with Zhao Da leading the way. As they reached the back garden, Zhao Da pointed to a spot and said, "It's just underneath there." Assistant Prefect Wang had his men dig up the ground. As soon as some earth was removed, a human head rolled out. It was caked with mud. The followers called out, "We got it!" Assistant Prefect Wang then said with relief, "That woman's body is now complete." The followers flicked away some of the dirt and looked more closely.

They were shocked, saying, "It is strange! How could the woman be wearing a beard?" The head was presented to Assistant Prefect Wang and he saw that the eyes were closed, mouth shut, the neck bore knife wounds and a beard covered the chin. Can a skull perform magic and turn a woman's head into a man's? Assistant Prefect Wang screamed, "This is a man's head, not a woman's. Its mysterious appearance shows that there are other hidden facts behind the scenes!" He shouted, "Lock up Zhao Da!" But Zhao Da had run out the moment he had seen that the unearthed head was not that of a woman.

Assistant Prefect Wang went into the main room of Zhao Da's house and had a table placed there as his desk. He took a seat and summoned Zhao Da's wife in front of him for interrogation. Zhao Da's wife, unable to cover the matter up, had to confess, "Ten years ago Zhao Da had a foe surnamed Ma. Zhao Da killed him. He brought his head home and buried it here." Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "Zhao Da was here a moment ago. Where has he gone?" His wife said, "He saw the head dug up and knew that his murder was out. So he fled without even telling me where he was going." Assistant Prefect Wang said, "It was only moments ago. He must have gone to the home of one of his relatives. He can't be far away. Be quick to tell me the address of all your relatives." The wife



招出来。”妻子怕动刑法，只得招道：“有个女婿姓江，做府中令史，必是投他去了。”通判即时差人押了妻子，竟到这江令史家里来拿。通判坐在赵大家里，立等回话。果然——

瓮中捉鳖，手到拿来。

且说江令史是衙门中人，晓得利害。见丈人赵大急急忙忙走到家来，说道是杀人事发，思要藏避。令史恐怕累及身家，不敢应承，劝他往别处逃走。赵大一时未有去向，心里不决。正踌躇间，公差已押着妻子来要人了。江令史此时火到身上，且自图灭熄，不好隐瞒，只得付与公差，仍带到赵大自己家里来。妻子路上已自对他说道：“适才老爷问时，我已实说了。你也招了罢，免受痛苦。”赵大见通判时，果然一口承认。通判问其详细，赵大道：“这姓马的先与小人有些仇隙，后来在山路中遇着小人，因在那里砍柴，带得有刀在身边，把他来杀了。恐怕有人认得，一时传遍，这事就露出来。所以既剥了他的衣服，就割下头来，藏到家里，把衣服烧了，头埋在园中。后来马家不见了人，寻问时，只见有人说山中有个死尸，因无头的，不知是不是，不好认得。而今事已经久，连马家也不提起了。这埋头的去处，与前日妇人之头相离有一丈多地。因为有这个头在地里，恐怕发露，所以前日埋那妇人头时，把草树记认的。因为隔得远，有胆气掘下去。不知为何，一掘倒先掘着了。这



feared torture and had to say, “We have a son-in-law surnamed Jiang, who works as clerk in the prefecture *yamen*. I think he must have gone to his place.” Assistant Prefect Wang at once sent runners with Zhao Da’s wife to the home of Jiang. Assistant Prefect Wang waited at Zhao Da’s house. As it would turn out, just like catching a turtle in a jar, the runners got Zhao Da easily.

Meanwhile Jiang, as a *yamen* official, knew the consequence of compliance with the law. When his father-in-law Zhao Da came to his home and said his murder had been discovered and he had to hide himself in his place, Jiang feared that he himself might become involved in the case. So he rejected Zhao Da and told him to find another place to hide. Zhao Da couldn’t think of any place to go, and, as he hesitated, the runners arrived with his wife. Jiang found himself caught in trouble. Eager to free himself, Jiang couldn’t do anything but turn Zhao Da over to the runners. Zhao Da was brought back to his own home. On the way, his wife said to him, “The lord questioned me and I told him everything. You should confess as well so as to avoid torture.”

Zhao Da confessed everything to Assistant Prefect Wang. Upon further questioning by Assistant Prefect Wang, Zhao Da said, “This Ma had a long-term feud with me. One day I ran into him on a trail in the hills. That day I had an ax with me for chopping wood. I killed him with my ax. I thought that if I left some traces behind, the murder would be discovered. Therefore, I stripped the body of clothing and chopped off the head. Then I set fire to the clothing and buried the head in my back garden. Later, the family of Ma found him missing and inquired about him. They heard a dead body had been found in the hills. The body had no head, so they found it hard to identify it. It’s been long time since the family of Ma have mentioned this matter. I buried Ma’s head about three meters away from the spot where the woman’s head is buried. Because a head had been buried in my back garden, I feared it might be discovered. So I planted a shrub as a mark when I buried the woman’s head. The two spots were some distance apart, so I didn’t flinch to have people dig out the woman’s head without revealing Ma’s head. But it happened that Ma’s head was dug out first. This is a debt I owed in my previous life and I’m





也是宿世冤业，应得填还。早知如此，连那妇人的头也不说了。”通判道：“而今妇人的头，毕竟在那里？”赵大道：“只在那一块，这是记认不差的。”通判又带他到后园，再命从人打旧掘处掘下去，果然又掘出一颗头来。认一认，才方是妇人的了。通判笑道：“一件人命，却问出两件人命来，莫非天意也？”

锁了赵大，带了两颗人头，来到府中。出张牌去，唤马家亲人来认。马家儿子见说，才晓得父亲不见了十年，果是被人杀了，来补状词。王通判准了。把两颗人头，一颗给与马家埋葬去，一颗唤李方哥出来认看，果是其妻的了。把叫夜僧与赵大各打三十板，多问成了死罪。程朝奉不合买奸，致死人命，问成徒罪，折价纳赎。李方哥不合卖奸，问杖罪的决。断程朝奉出葬埋银六两，给与李方哥，葬那陈氏。三家铺人不合移尸，各该问罪，因不是这等不得并发赵大人命，似乎天意明冤，非关人事，释罪不究。

王通判这件事问得清白，一时清结了两件没头事，申详上司，各各称奖，至今传为美谈。只可笑程朝奉空想一个妇人，不得到手，枉葬送了他一条性命，自己吃了许多惊恐，又坐了



doomed to pay it back now. If I had known the result in advance, I would never have told about the burial of the woman's head."

Assistant Prefect Wang asked, "Where's the woman's head now?" Zhao Da said, "It should be there. There's no mistake." Assistant Prefect Wang took him to the back garden and had his followers dig again on the same spot. As expected, another head was unearthed. It was identified as the woman's head. Assistant Prefect Wang laughed and said, "The investigation of one murder has led to the solution to two. That must be the will of Heaven!"

Zhao Da was chained and the two heads were brought to the court, and an order was issued to bring the family of Ma for identification of the head. Only then did the son of the Ma, ten years after his father disappeared, find proof that his father had been murdered. The son then filed a make-up indictment, and Assistant Prefect Wang approved it. The family of Ma was allowed to take the head back home to bury it. Brother Li Fang was called in to identify the other head, which was indeed his wife's. The monk and Zhao Da were each flogged thirty times and sentenced to death. Since Cheng had committed the crime of paying for a seduction, which led to the murder of the woman, he was sentenced to imprisonment, but was allowed to redeem himself by paying a sum of money. The offense of Brother Li Fang resided in his taking money for his wife's adultery, so he was sentenced to the penalty of a cudgel flogging. According to the verdict, Cheng had to pay Brother Li Fang six taels of silver for the burying expenses for Li's wife. The manager of the store, three doors from Brother Li Fang's house, would have been sentenced for his crime of transporting the head, but he actually received a verdict of being not guilty. The reason for this was that Zhao Da was to be executed for his murder as well as his burial of the transported head, so justice was already done as if at the request of Heaven.

Assistant Prefect Wang's thorough examination concluded two unsettled murders. His performance was reported to higher levels of government, widely commended and has since become a popular and admirable story. It is interesting to note that Cheng started with the desire to seduce a woman, but ended in a failure to obtain her, which caused her



一年多监，费掉了百来两银子，方得明白。有甚便宜处？那陈氏立个主意，不从夫言，也不见得被人杀了。至于因此一事，那赵大久无对证的人命，一并发觉，越见得天心巧处。可见欺心事做不得一些的。有诗为证：

冶容诲淫从古语，会见金夫不自主。  
称觞已自不有躬，何怪启宠纳人侮。  
彼黠者徒恣强暴，将此头颅向何许？  
幽冤郁积十年馀，彼处有头欲出土。

meaningless death, his own suffering from fright, his more-than-one-year imprisonment and his fine of about one hundred taels of silver. The lesson for him was severe. Chen would not have met her violent death if she had stuck to her own will, regardless of her husband's plan. As for the discovery of Zhao Da's murder, on the basis of Chen's death, which was committed long before with almost no possibility of being resolved, it demonstrated a deliberate arrangement of Heaven. The moral is crystal clear that a person should never do evil.

From time immemorial, seductive make-up invites adultery.  
Involuntarily a woman will always yield to a man of wealth.  
Once a woman trifles with her own chastity,  
Undoubtedly she'll fall into the pit of disgrace.  
A crafty ruffian commits atrocities recklessly.  
Where is he to hide the woman's head?  
Another man's wronged spirit has lingered for ten years.  
And now his head, though buried deep in the ground,  
is struggling to come up.





## 卷二十九

### 赠芝麻识破假形 撷草药巧谐真偶

诗曰：

万物皆有情，不论妖与鬼。

妙药可通灵，方信岐黄理。

话说宋乾道年间，江西一个官人，赴调临安都下。因到西湖上游玩，独自一人，各处行走。走得路多了，觉得疲倦。道傍有一民家，门前有几株大树，树傍有石块可坐，那官人遂坐下少息。望去屋内有一双鬟女子，明艳动人。官人见了，不觉心神飘荡，注目而视。那女子也回眸流盼，似有寄情之意。官人眷恋不舍，自此时时到彼处少坐。那女子是店家卖酒的，就在里头做生意，不避人的。见那官人走来，便含笑相迎，竟以为常。往来既久，情意绸缪。官人将言语挑动他，女子微有羞涩之态，也不恼怒。只是店在路傍，人眼看见，内有父母，要求谐鱼水之欢，终不能勾。但只两心眷眷而已。



## *Tale 29*

### **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**

A poem reads thus:

All creatures on earth have their feelings,  
No matter they are evil spirits or ghosts.  
Cure-all has miraculous power of understanding.

Therefore all people gasp in admiration for the Classic of Internal Medicine.

During the Qiandao reign (1165-1174) of the Southern Song Dynasty, there lived an official in Jiangxi. Once upon a time he arrived at the capital Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou) to accept a commission. While staying in Lin'an, he went to the West Lake alone for sightseeing. Having strolled around the lake for quite a considerable time, he felt pretty tired. Just at this moment, a house standing by the road came into his sight. In front of the house were several big trees, beside which was a stone seat. The official then sat down on the stone seat for a rest. He looked into the house and saw a beautiful charming girl with two coils of hair. Fixing his eyes on the girl, he was deeply infatuated by her beauty. The girl looked back at him too, casting sidelong lingering glances, as if she was interested in the official. As he was sentimentally attached to the girl, the official often went to the stone seat to rest for a while.

The girl was a wine seller, and she didn't avoid seeing people. Each time the official came over to her, she would greet him with all smiles. After some time, the two became very much attracted to each other. When occasionally the official tantalized her with flirtatious remarks, the girl would flush slightly with shyness, but never became angry. Though both were seized with the desire to share sexual bliss, they just couldn't make

官人已得注选，归期有日，掉那女子不下，特到他家告别。恰好其父出外，女子独自在店，见说要别，拭泪私语道：“自与郎君相见，彼此倾心。欲以身从郎君，父母必然不肯。若私下随着郎君去了，淫奔之名，又羞耻难当。今就此别去，必致梦寐焦劳，相思无已，如何是好？”那官人深感其意，即央他邻近人将着厚礼求聘为婚。那父母见说是江西外郡，如何得肯？那官人只得怏怏而去，自到家收拾赴任，再不能与女子相闻音耗了。

隔了五年，又赴京听调。刚到都下，寻个旅馆，歇了行李，即去湖边寻访旧游。只见此居已换了别家在内，问着五年前这家，茫然不知。邻近人也多换过了，没有认得的。心中怅然不快。回步中途，忽然与那女子相遇。看他年貌，比昔时已长大，更加标致了好些。那官人急忙施礼相揖，女子万福不迭，口里





it, because the wine shop was just by the road, along which many passers-by came to and fro, and the girl's parents were always within the house. As a result of this, their love for each other could only be sealed up in their hearts.

Before long, the official received an assignment and was about to leave in a couple of days. Unwilling to part with the girl, he made a call at the girl's house to say goodbye to her. It so happened that her father was not in. The girl was at home alone. Upon learning the official was leaving, the girl wiped away her tears and said to him in a low voice, "We fell in love with each other at first sight. Though I'm willing to marry you, my parents definitely will not agree. If I elope with you, I'm afraid I won't be able to put up with the ill reputation of being licentious. But I will miss you very much and I will never forget you even if in my dreams. What should I do about it then?"

Deeply moved by the girl, the official asked one of the girl's neighbors to take huge gifts to the girls' family and make an offer of marriage on his behalf. When learning that the official was a native of Jiangxi, which was extremely far away from Lin'an, the girl's parents declined his offer of marriage. Feeling disappointed, the official had to return to his native home and make arrangements for going to his post. From then on, he and the girl went out of touch.

Five years later, the official was again summoned to the capital to await a transfer order. Arriving at Lin'an, he instantly settled himself down in an inn. Losing no time, he set out for the girl's house by the lake. To his surprise, he found the people living in this house now were no longer the girl's family. When he inquired about the girl's family who lived here five years ago, the present dwellers told him they had no clue of the girl's family whatever. Moreover, all the neighbors were new comers and were completely in the dark about the whereabouts of the girl's family. Feeling dejected, the official left.

While he was on his way back to the inn, he met the girl unexpectedly. He found the girl looked a bit older than before, but much prettier. The official saluted her immediately by making a bow with hands clasped. The girl answered his greeting with a curtsy in return and said, "Long





道：“郎君隔阔许久，还记得奴否？”那官人道：“为因到旧处寻访不见，正在烦恼，幸喜在此相遇。不知宅上为何搬过了？今在那里？”女子道：“奴已嫁过人了，在城中小巷内。吾夫坐库务，监在狱中，故奴出来求救于人，不匡撞着五年前旧识。郎君肯到我家啜茶否？”那官人欣然道：“正要相访。”两个人一头说，一头走。先在那官人的下处前经过，官人道：“此即小生馆舍，可且进去谈一谈。”那官人正要营勾着他，了还心愿，思量下处尽好就做事，那里还等得到他家里去？一邀就邀了进来，关好了门，两个抱了一抱，就推倒床上，行其云雨。那馆舍是个独院，甚是僻静。馆舍中又无别客，止是那江西官人一个住着。女子见了光景，便道：“此处无人知觉，尽可偷住，与郎君欢乐，不必到吾家去了。吾家里有人，反更不便。”官人道：“若就肯住此，更便得紧了。”一留半年。女子有时出外，去去即时就来，再不提着家中事，也不见他想着家里。那官人相处得浓了，也忘记他是有夫家的一般。

那官人调得有地方了，思量回去，因对女子道：“我而今同你悄地家去了，可不是长久之计么？”女子见说要去，便流



time no see. Do you still remember me?" The official said, "I went to look for you in that house, but I was told you no longer live there. It's really nice to meet you here again! Why did you move away? Where do you live now?" "I'm married," answered the girl, "and my home is in a small lane in the town. My husband got implicated in a case relating to a storehouse and is now in jail. I'm going to seek help so as to get him out. I never expected I could meet you, an old friend I became acquainted with five years ago. Would you like to come to my home and have a cup of tea?" "Sure," said the official. So saying, the official and the girl made their way to the girl's home.

While passing by the inn, the official said, "This is my dwelling place. Would you like to go to my room and have a chat?" At the moment the official was planning to fulfill the wish of making love with her. He thought his room in the small inn would be the best place for it. How could he possibly wait till they reached her home? Without the slightest hesitation, the girl consented and followed the official into his room. Closing the door, they fell into each other's arms. The official took her onto the bed and then they started to make love.

It was a one-household quadrangle and the house the official lived in was located in an out-of-the-way place. What's more, this official from Jiangxi was the only guest living in this house. Seeing it was a quiet secluded place, the girl said, "No one else will come to this place. So we can stay here to seek pleasure and make merry. No need to go to my home, for there are many people in my house and it will be much more inconvenient for us." "It couldn't be better if you're willing to stay here with me," said the official. Thus the girl lived with the official for half a year in this inn. There were times when the girl was out, but she never stayed out long. And she never mentioned her family, nor did she think of her home. As she had lived together with the official for quite some time, it seemed she had forgotten he was someone's wife.

When the official was appointed a new post, he thought of going back to his native place. One day he said to the girl, "Isn't it a permanent solution if you go to my home with me?" Hearing that he was about to leave, the girl said, tears streaming down her cheeks, "I have something



下泪来道：“有句话对郎君说，郎君不要吃惊。”官人道：“是甚么话？”女子道：“奴自向时别了郎君，终日思念，恹恹成病，期年而亡。今之此身，实非人类，以夙世缘契，幽魂未散，故此特来相从这几时。欢期有限，冥数已尽，要从郎君远去，这却不能勾了。恐郎君他日有疑，不敢避嫌，特与郎君说明。但阴气相侵已深，奴去之后，郎君腹中必当暴下，可快服平胃散，补安精神，即当痊愈。”官人见说，不胜惊骇了许久。又闻得教服平胃散，问道：“我曾读《夷坚志》，见孙九鼎遇鬼，亦服此药。吾思此药皆平平，何故奏效？”女子道：“此药中有苍术，能去邪气，你只依我言就是了。”说罢，涕泣不止；那官人也相对伤感。是夜同寝，极尽欢会之乐。将到天明，恸哭而别。出门数步，倏已不见。果然别后，那官人暴下不止，依言赎平胃散服过才好。那官人每对人说着此事，还凄然泪下。可见情之所钟，虽已为鬼，犹然眷恋如此。况别后之病，又能留方服药医好，真多情之鬼也。

而今说一个妖物，也与人相好了，留着些草药，不但医好



to tell you. Don't panic please." "What is it?" asked the official. The girl said, "I thought of you very much all day long since we parted the other year and I became seriously ill. In the same year I died. Actually my present body is no human at all. As we're fated to be together, my spirit didn't leave me, though I'm dead. So I especially came to live with you for about half a year. As the time of our reunion is limited, our days of being together now have come to the end. I'm afraid I won't be able to go to your home with you. Fearing that you might have apprehensions one day, I've now told you the truth about my identity. However, as you've been living with my spirit for such a long while, you'll have to loose bowels after I leave you. Once it happens, take some stomach-nourishing pills to build up your health. Then you'll get cured."

Hearing these words, the official remained dumbfounded for a long while. Remembering the stomach-nourishing pill the girl had told him to take, he asked, "I read *Tales of Yi Jian* by Hong Mai years ago. In one of the tales, Sun Jiuding takes this medicine too after he has stayed with a ghost for some time. In my opinion it is but a pretty common medicine. Why is it so effective?" The girl replied, "This medicine contains rhizome of Chinese atractylodes which can ward off evil spirits. Anyway, just do it as I told you." Finishing these words, she started weeping sadly. The official was overcome with grief too. At night they made love to their hearts' content. At dawn, they cried their hearts out and parted with each other. Immediately the girl went out of sight. As it turned out later, the official did begin to have loose bowels after the girl left. As was told, he took some stomach-nourishing pills and then got fully recovered from the illness.

Each time when the official told people about his encounter with the girl, he would shed tears sadly. It is true indeed that true lovers will be eventually united even though they've turned to ghosts. Moreover, the girl even told the official a prescription of curing him of his illness. What a tender and affectionate ghost she was!

\* \* \*

Now I'd like to tell you a tale about a fox spirit. She fell in love with a man and gave the man some medicinal herbs before she left him. Strange



了病，又弄出许多姻缘事体，成就他一生夫妇，更为奇怪。有《忆秦娥》一词为证：

堪奇绝，阴阳配合真丹结。真丹结，欢娱虽就，精神亦竭。殷勤赠物机关泄，姻缘尽处伤离别。伤离别，三番草药，百年欢悦。

这一回书，乃京师老郎传留，原名为《灵狐三束草》。天地间之物，惟狐最灵，善能变幻，故名狐魅。北方最多，宋时有“无狐魅，不成村”之说。又性极好淫，其涎染着人，无不迷惑，故又名狐媚，以比世间淫女。唐时有“狐媚偏能惑主”之檄。然虽是个妖物，其间原有好歹。如任氏以身殉郑六，连贞节之事也是有的。至于成就人功名，度脱人灾厄，撮合人夫妇，这样的事往往有之。莫谓妖类，便无好心，只要有缘遇得着。

国朝天顺甲申年间，浙江有一个客商，姓蒋，专一在湖广、江西地方做生意。那蒋生年纪二十多岁，生得仪容俊美，眉目动人。同伴里头，道是他模样可以选得过驸马，起他混名，叫



enough, these medicinal herbs not only cured the man of his illness, but also helped bring him a happy marriage. The following *ci* poem to the tune of “Yiqin’e” may serve as a proof:

How amazing! A fox spirit mates with a man to achieve immortality. To achieve immortality, the fox spirit makes the man become ill due to excessive lovemaking, gratified though the man is. A gunny bag of sesame seeds finally unmasks the true colors of the fox spirit, thus bringing the end of their relationship. Overcome with sorrow, they two have to part. When parting, the fox spirit presents the man three bundles of medicinal herbs and these medicinal herbs help bring the man a happy marriage.

This tale, originally entitled *The Three Bundles of Medicinal Herbs of a Fox Fairy*, has been passed down from an early storyteller who lived in the capital city. Of all the living creatures on the earth, foxes are the most intelligent and have miraculous powers. As they are adept at changing their forms of existence, they are usually called “fox fairies.” Most foxes live in the northern part of our country. The saying “There will be no villages without fox fairies” was spread far and wide during the Song Dynasty. Obscene and licentious, they entice men by their coquettish charms. For this reason, they are also called “bewitching spirits,” a term often used to refer to women of easy virtue. “Fox spirits are especially good at enticing their masters” is a line by the early Tang Dynasty poet Luo Binwang. However, the fact is that some foxes are good and some evil, though they are generally regarded as evil spirits. For instance, Lady Ren, a fox spirit who had a strong sense of moral integrity, died for love of Zheng Liu.<sup>1</sup> It’s not right to say all spirits are ill-intentioned, because it’s common practice for them to help people get rid of their calamities or help young couples become husbands and wives, if these people are fortunate enough to meet such kindhearted fox fairies.

During the last year of the Tianshun reign (1464) of emperor Yingzong of our Ming Dynasty, there was once a Zhejiang merchant surnamed Jiang who did business in Hubei, Guangdong, Guangxi and Jiangxi provinces. Jiang, who was then in his twenties, was a remarkably handsome young man. His friends gave him the nickname of Jiang Fuma, meaning Emperor’s Son-in-law Jiang, for they all held the identical view that, with

做蒋驸马。他自家也以风情自负，看世间女子，轻易也不上眼，道是必遇绝色，方可与他一对。虽在江湖上走了几年，不曾撞见一个中心满意女子。也曾同着朋友，衙衙人家走动两番，不过是遣兴而已。公道看起来，还则是他失便宜与妇人了。一日置货到汉阳马口地方，下在一个店家，姓马，叫得马月溪店。那个马月溪是本处马少卿家里的人，领着主人本钱，开着这个歇客商的大店。店中尽有幽房邃阁，可以容置上等好客，所以远方来的斯文人，多来投他。

店前走去不多几家门面，就是马少卿的家里。马少卿有一位小姐，小名叫得云容，取李青莲“云想衣裳花想容”之句，果然纤姣非常，世所罕有。他家内楼小窗，看得店前人见。那小姐闲了，时常登楼，看望作耍。一日正在临窗之际，恰被店里蒋生看见。蒋生远望去，极其美丽，生平日中所未睹，一步步走近前去细玩。走得近了，看得较真，觉他没一处生得不妙。蒋生不觉魂飞天外，魄散九霄，心里妄想道：“如此美人，得以相叙一宵，也不枉了我的面庞风流。却怎生能勾？”只管仰





his handsome appearance, he could be selected to be the emperor's son-in-law. Priding himself on his bearing, Jiang was full of disdain for the worldly common girls. He often said he would not get married unless he met an unrivalled beauty and fell in love with her. Though he had tramped from place to place for years, not a single girl he ran into caught his fancy. Occasionally he went whoring with his friends for fun. To be fair, the prostitutes were often regarded to have taken an undue advantage.

One day he stopped at a gorgeous inn called Ma Yuexi Inn after he arrived at Makou, Hanyang of Hubei on business. Ma Yuexi, a member of Ma Shaoqing's family, ran this inn with Ma Shaoqing's money. With many quiet and beautiful rooms, Ma Yuexi Inn could accommodate rich and influential people. So all the refined gentlemen from afar would love to find accommodation at this inn.

Ma Shaoqing's house and the inn were separated only by a couple of shops. Ma Shaoqing had an exceedingly beautiful daughter with the pet name of Yunrong. Ma Shaoqing drew this name for his daughter from "The wandering cloud, the liquidation of her silk dress and the flower in full bloom, her charming delicate looks," a line from one of the great Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai's poems. As expected, Yunrong really grew up a delicate and charming girl, a beauty seldom seen in this world. Standing by the window at the upper part of Ma Shaoqing's house, one could easily see the people in the inn. While Yunrong was free, she would often climb upstairs and look around for fun.

One day while she was standing by the window, Jiang caught sight of her from the inn. Looking at her in the distance, Jiang was deeply attracted by her unraveled beauty. As he had never seen such a beauty throughout his life, he moved forward toward Yunrong to have a closer look. As he was close enough to her, he saw her clearly and found she was truly a beauty in every sense of the word. Greatly infatuated by Yunrong's beautiful looks, Jiang thought in his mind, "My handsome appearance would not have been wasted if I could spend one night with such a beauty. But how am I going to make it?" Lost in thought, Jiang looked up and fixed his eyes on her. Realizing a handsome young man was watching her, Yunrong hid half of her face behind the window, but she looked as if



面痴看。那小姐在楼上瞧见有人看他，把半面遮藏，也窥着蒋生是个俊俏后生，恰像不舍得就躲避着一般。蒋生越道是楼上留盼，卖弄出许多飘逸身分出来，要惹他动火。直等那小姐下楼去了，方才走回店中，关着房门，默默暗想：“可惜不曾晓得丹青！若晓得时，描也描他一个出来。”次日问着店家，方晓得是主人之女，还未曾许配人家。蒋生道：“他是个仕宦人家，我是个商贾，又是外乡，虽是未许下丈夫，料不是我想得着的。若只论起一双的面庞，却该做一对才不亏了人。怎生得氤氲大使做一个主便好！”大凡是不易得动情的人，一动了情，再接纳不住的。蒋生自此行着思，坐着想，不放下怀。

他原卖的是丝绸绫绢、女人生活之类，他央店家一个小的，拿了箱笼，引到马家宅里去卖，指望撞着那小姐，得以饱看一回。果然卖了两次，马家家眷们你要买长，我要买短，多讨箱笼里东西自家翻看，靛面讲价。那小姐虽不十分出头露面，也在人丛之中遮遮掩掩的看物事，有时也眼瞟着蒋生，四目相视。蒋生回到下处，越加禁架不定，长吁短气，恨不身生双翅，飞到他闺阁中做一处，晚间的春梦也不知做了多少。蒋生眠思梦想，日夜不置，真所谓：

思之思之，又从而思之。

思之不得，鬼神将通之。

一日晚间关了房门，正待独自去睡，只听得房门外有行步之声，轻轻将房门弹响。蒋生幸未熄灯，急忙捺明了灯，开门



she was reluctant to steer clear of him. Jiang intentionally put on a more showy graceful bearing so as to arouse her feelings, and he didn't return to the inn until the girl went downstairs. Back in his room, Jiang closed the door and thought to himself, "What a pity I don't know how to paint! Were I a painter, I would make a portrait of this beauty."

On the next day Jiang inquired the innkeeper who that girl was. He was told that the girl was the daughter of the innkeeper's master Ma Shaoqing and was not betrothed yet. "She was from an official's family," Jiang said to himself, "while I'm merely a merchant from some other place. Though she is not betrothed, I'm afraid I won't be able to make her my wife. However, considering our delicate facial features, she and I should make a couple. How nice it would be if the goddess of marriage could make a decision for me!" Unable to keep his feelings for her in check, Jiang fell for her completely.

Jiang was actually a private businessman dealing with silks and daily necessities for women. One day, he had an attendant of the inn take him to Ma Shaoqing's house to sell his goods, hoping that he could meet the girl and feast his eyes on her. Taking his suitcases with him, Jiang visited Ma Shaoqing's house a couple of times. The womenfolk of the Ma family all rushed over to his suitcases to take a look at the goods for themselves and many of them purchased lots of their favorite things after heated bargaining. The girl Yunrong also joined the crowds to take a look at Jiang's goods, though she tried to conceal herself. Occasionally she would also give Jiang a sidelong glance and the four eyes would meet.

After returning to his room in the inn, Jiang could hardly restrain himself from sighing as well as thinking of her. How he wished he could have wings and fly into her bedroom so that he could make love with her! He couldn't remember how many pipe dreams he had had at night. As he was totally lost in myriads of thoughts for her day and night, Jiang's dreams were all about her. He was attracted to her so much that deities would come to his help.

One night as he closed the door and was about to go to bed, Jiang suddenly heard the sound of footsteps, followed by several gentle knocks at the door. The lamp in his room was still on. Instantly he clipped the

出看，只见一个女子闪将入来。定睛仔细一认，正是马家小姐。蒋生吃了一惊，道：“难道又做起梦来了？”正心一想，却不是梦，灯儿明亮，俨然与美貌的小姐相对。蒋生疑假疑真，惶惑不定。小姐看见意思，先开口道：“郎君不必疑怪，妾乃马家云容也。承郎君久垂顾盼，妾亦关情多时了。今偶乘家间空隙，用计偷出重门，不自嫌其丑陋，愿伴郎君客中岑寂。郎君勿以自献为笑，妾之幸也。”蒋生听罢，真个如饥得食，如渴得浆，宛然刘、阮入天台，下界凡夫得遇仙子，快乐侥幸，难以言喻。忙关好了门，挽手共入鸳帷，急讲于飞之乐。云雨既毕，小姐分付道：“妾见郎君韶秀，不能自持，致于自荐枕席。然家严刚厉，一知风声，祸不可测。郎君此后切不可轻至妾家门首，也不可到外边闲步，被别人看破行径。只管夜夜虚掩房门相待，人定之后，妾必自来。万勿轻易漏泄，始可欢好得久长耳。”蒋生道：“远乡孤客，一见芳容，想慕欲死。虽然梦寐相遇，还道仙凡隔远，岂知荷蒙不弃，垂盼及于鄙陋，得以共枕同衾，极尽人间之乐。小生今日，就死也瞑目了。何况金口分付，小生敢不记心？小生自此足不出户，口不轻言，只呆呆



wick of the lamp and opened the door. A girl got into his room like a flash. Gazing fixedly at the girl, Jiang realized she was Ma Shaoqing's daughter. Jiang mumbled with a start, "Am I dreaming again?" Collecting his thoughts, he knew he was not dreaming, for the light was still on and the beautiful girl was right beside the light. Panic-stricken, Jiang remained perplexed and uneasy. Seeing Jiang was alarmed and confused, the girl said, "You needn't feel puzzled and suspicious. I'm Yunrong, Ma Shaoqing's daughter. I do feel it an honor that you've been thinking of me for a long time. I've fallen for you for a long time too. Seizing the opportunity, I've sneaked out of the countless gates of my house with a stratagem and have come to see you regardless of my plain looks. I'd like to keep you company while you're residing here alone. I would be greatly honored if you do not laugh at me for my coming to you on my own initiative."

Hearing these words, Jiang was carried away with enormous joy and happiness. Closing the door, Jiang and the girl went onto the bed, hand in hand. When their lovemaking was over, the girl said, "The moment I saw your handsome appearance the other day I fell for you and I couldn't restrain myself from missing you. So now I've come to you on my own initiative. However, my father is extremely strict with me. Once he knows about my conduct, the misfortune awaiting me will be unimaginable. From now on, you'd better not approach my house or go out of your room and move round offhandedly. Otherwise our affair will be seen through by others. Just leave your door half closed every night and wait for me. I will come to see you when everybody becomes quiet. Do not disclose our affair to other people. Only in this way can we have a longer happy time."

Jiang said, "As a lonely guest from a distant place, I was extremely attracted to you when I first saw your beautiful looks and I was simply dying for you. Though I dreamed of you time and again in my sleep, I thought an ordinary man like me and a fairy girl like you must be separated by a great distance. I never expected you would descend onto my humble place and sleep with me. I will rest easy in my grave even if I die today. How dare I will not bear in mind your instructions! From now on, I will just stay in this room and keep my mouth shut and wait for your arrival at



守在房中，等到夜间，候小姐光降相聚便了。”天未明，小姐起身，再三计约了夜间，然后别去。蒋生自想，真如遇仙，胸中无限快乐，只不好告诉得人。

小姐夜来明去。蒋生守着分付，果然轻易不出外一步，惟恐露出形迹，有负小姐之约。蒋生少年，固然精神健旺，竭力纵欲，不以为疲。当得那小姐深自知味，一似能征惯战的一般，一任颠鸾倒凤，再不推辞，毫无厌足。蒋生倒时时有怯败之意。那小姐竟像不要睡的，一夜何曾休歇？蒋生心爱得紧，见他如此高兴，道是深闺少女乍知男子之味，又两情相得，所以毫不避忌，尽着性子喜欢做事，难得这样真心，一发快活，惟恐奉承不周。把个身子不放在心上，拚着性命做，就一下走了阳死了也罢了。弄了多时，也觉有些倦怠，面颜看看憔悴起来。正是：

二八佳人体似酥，腰间仗剑斩愚夫。

虽然不见人头落，暗里教君骨髓枯。

且说蒋生同伴的朋友，见蒋生时常日里闭门昏睡，少见出外；有时略略走得出来，呵欠连天，像夜间不曾得睡一般；又不曾见他搭伴夜饮，或者中了宿醒；又不曾见他妓馆留连，或者害了色病；不知为何如此。及来牵他去那里吃酒宿娼，未到晚，必定要回店中，并不肯少留在外边一更二更的。众人多各疑心道：“这个行径，必然心下有事的光景，想是背着人做了些甚么不明的勾当了。我们相约了，晚间候他动静，是必要捉



night.” Before dawn, the girl got up and told Jiang that she would come to him at night. Then she left. Overcome with joy, Jiang felt as if he had met a fairy. However, he had his mouth shut about this matter and kept the joy to himself.

When night fell, the girl would come to the inn to date Jiang and then leave the inn before dawn. Fearing that he might let the cat out of the bag and let the girl down Jiang kept his word and seldom moved out onto the streets. Young and energetic, Jiang never got tired of making love with the girl. The girl, like a seasoned warrior, responded to Jiang’s affection with even greater enthusiasm, as if her desire could never be gratified. Constantly Jiang would feel sort of timid and concede defeat. On the contrary, the girl kept on making love with Jiang all night long, as though she needed no sleep at all. Seeing the girl was always in such high spirits when making love with him, Jiang responded to her affection with even greater exertion, always fearing that he might not gratify her sensual desires. Thus, Jiang made love with her like crazy, totally regardless of his own health. After a considerable period of time, Jiang felt a bit tired, and a haggard look appeared on his face. This is just like:

A beautiful young lady may kill a foolish man with the invisible sword  
hung at her waist.

Though she never chops off the head of the man, she secretly makes his  
bone marrow run dry.

Some of Jiang’s friends thought it rather strange when they found that Jiang always slept in his room at daytime and was seldom seen to go outdoors. When occasionally Jiang’s friends caught sight of him, they would certainly see Jiang yawning repeatedly, as if he hadn’t slept at all at night. None of Jiang’s friends could figure out why he appeared to be so strange, for they knew he neither drank wine with anyone nor did he go whoring the previous night. Occasionally Jiang was forced by his friends to go out for a drink or visit prostitutes, but he would certainly return to the inn before nightfall. Feeling puzzled and suspicious, Jiang’s friends said to each other, “Jiang must be doing something secret behind us. Let’s make an appointment. We’ll get to the inn tonight and see how things stand with him. Sure we can make out what he is up to.”

破他。”当夜天色刚晚，小姐已来。蒋生将他藏好，恐怕同伴疑心，反走出来谈笑一会，同吃些酒，直等大家散了，然后关上房门，进来与小姐上床。上得床时，那交欢高兴，弄得你死我活，哼哼唧唧的声响，也顾不得傍人听见。又且无休无歇，外边同伴窃听的道：“蒋驸马不知那里私弄个妇女，在房里受用，这等久战。”站得不耐烦，各自归房，自去睡了。

次日起来，大家道：“我们到蒋驸马房前守他，看甚么人出来。”走在房外，房门虚掩，推将进去，蒋生自睡在床上，并不曾有人。众同伴疑道：“那里去了？”蒋生故意道：“甚么那里去了？”同伴道：“昨夜与你弄那话儿的。”蒋生道：“何曾有人？”同伴道：“我们众人多听得，怎么混赖得？”蒋生道：“你们见鬼了！”同伴道：“我们不见鬼，只怕你着鬼了。”蒋生道：“我如何着鬼？”同伴道：“晚间与人干那话，声响外闻，早来不见有人，岂非是鬼？”蒋生晓得他众人夜来窃听了，亏得小姐起身得早，去得无迹，不被他们看见，实为万幸。一时把说话支吾道：“不瞒众兄说，小生少年出外，鰥旷日久，晚来上床，忍制不过，学作交欢之声，以解欲火。其实只是自家喉急的光景，不是真有个人在里面交合。说着甚是惶恐，众兄



As usual, the girl showed up at Jiang's room immediately after nightfall. Jiang hid her well in his room. Fearing his friends might suspect him, he came out of his room and joined his friends in their chatting and drinking. After his friends dispersed, he came back and closed the door behind him. Then he and the girl started to make love in high spirits, moaning and groaning recklessly in bed. Moreover, they made love endlessly. The friends of Jiang's who were then eavesdropping heard everything. "Where has Jiang got this woman?" they wondered. "How amazing they can do it for so long!" Unable to stay there for such a long time, the eavesdroppers all went back to sleep.

On the next morning Jiang's friends said to each other, "Let's go and see who will come out of Jiang's room." Arriving at the inn, they found the door of Jiang's room was half open. They entered his room, but found Jiang was alone in the room, sleeping on the bed. "Where has she gone?" asked Jiang's friends, feeling suspicious. "Who are you talking about?" interrogated Jiang, pretending not to know what they were asking about. "The woman who made love with you last night," replied Jiang's friends. Jiang said, "No one was with me last night." Jiang's friends said, "We heard everything. How can you deny it?" Jiang said, "You're just imagining things!" Jiang's friends retorted, "We're not imagining things. We guess you were bewitched." Jiang asked, "Why do you say I was bewitched?" Jiang's friends replied, "You made love with a woman last night and we all heard you doing it clearly. But the woman is not in your room now. Isn't she a spirit?"

Upon hearing these words, Jiang felt convinced that his friends had eavesdropped his making love with the girl. He also felt it was really fortunate that the girl got up early and left the inn before they broke in. Humming and hawing, he said, "To be frank, my friends, I was just mimicking the moaning and groaning of making love on my bed to give vent to my carnal desire. You know I've been living alone for a long time, and I could no longer suppress my carnal lust. Actually I did it all by myself and I wasn't having sex with a woman. I do have a feeling of fear when I talk about this. There is no need to be suspicious." Jiang's friends said, "Our carnal lust is the same with yours and we do that thing too.





不必疑心。”同伴道：“我们也多是喉急的人，若果是如此，有甚惶恐？只不要着了甚么邪妖，便不是耍事。”蒋生道：“并无此事，众兄放心。”同伴似信不信的，也不说了。

只见蒋生渐渐支持不过，一日疲倦似一日，自家也有些觉得了。同伴中有一个姓夏的，名良策，与蒋生最是相爱。见蒋生如此，心里替他耽忧，特来对他说道：“我与你出外的人，但得平安，便为大幸。今仁兄面黄肌瘦，精神恍惚，语言错乱。及听兄晚间房中，每每与人切切私语，此必有作怪跷蹊的事。仁兄不肯与我每明言，他日定要做出事来，性命干系，非同小可。可惜这般少年，葬送在他乡外府，我辈何忍？况小弟蒙兄至爱，有甚么勾当，便对小弟说说，斟酌而行也好，何必相瞒？小弟赌个咒，不与人说就是了。”蒋生见夏良策说得痛切，只得与他实说道：“兄意思真恳，小弟实有一件事，不敢瞒兄。此间主人马少卿的小姐，与小弟有些缘分，夜夜自来欢会。两下少年，未免情欲过度。小弟不能坚忍，以致生出疾病来。然小弟性命还是小事，若此风声一露，那小姐性命也不可保了。再三叮嘱小弟慎口，所以小弟只不敢露。今虽对仁兄说了，仁兄万勿漏泄，使小弟有负小姐。”夏良策大笑道：“仁兄差矣！马家是乡宦人家，重垣峻壁，高门邃宇，岂有女子夜夜出得来？



That being the case, what should you fear about? We only hope you were not bewitched by some evil spirits. It will be of no joking matter if you are bewitched.” “You may just rest assured, my friends, that I’m not bewitched,” said Jiang. Half-believing, half-doubting, Jiang’s friends dropped the matter.

As time passed, Jiang was gradually overcome with fatigue and became weaker and weaker one day after another. He himself realized it too.

Among his friends was one called Xia Liangce. Xia and Jiang were best friends. Upon seeing that Jiang’s health was getting worse, Xia became very much worried and said to him, “Both you and I are strangers in this place. The most important thing for us is to be safe and sound. You look lean and haggard and you’re always in a trance. Moreover, your words often appear to be in disorder. I often heard you whisper with a woman in your room at night. There must be something strange in it. I know you’re not willing to tell us the truth, but this is by no means a joking matter. Your life will be at stake once something amiss happens. How can I bear to see you lose your young life in this strange land? As we’ve been bosom friends for years, you’d better tell me what’s on your mind so that we can tide over your difficult time with concerted effort. You don’t have to keep it from me! I swear I’ll keep my mouth shut about it.”

Deeply moved by Xia’s sincerity, Jiang told Xia the truth, “You’re really so kind to me. I dare not withhold the truth from you. Ma Shaoqing’s daughter comes to see me every night. As we are both young, unavoidably we give ourselves to sexual indulgence. For this reason, I become ill. What I care most is not my health. If my affair with Ma’s daughter is divulged, Ma’s daughter’s life will be threatened. This is what matters. She told me time and again not to disclose our affair to anyone, so I kept my mouth shut about it. Now I’ve told it to you. Please don’t tell anyone else. Otherwise I’ll fail to come up to her expectations.”

“You must be wrong!” said Xia, laughing. “Ma Shaoqing is a rural gentry and he used to hold official positions in the past. His house is encircled with many high walls and the gates are all heavily guarded. How could it be possible for a girl to steal out every night? Moreover, there are always many people in the inn. How can a girl come in and get



况且旅馆之中，众人杂沓，女子来来去去，虽是深夜，难道不隄防人撞见？此必非他家小姐可知了。”蒋生道：“马家小姐我曾认得的，今分明是他，再有何疑？”夏良策道：“闻得此地惯有狐妖，善能变化惑人，仁兄所遇，必是此物。仁兄今当谨慎自爱。”蒋生那里肯信？

夏良策见他迷而不悟，踌躇了一夜，心生一计道：“我直教他识出踪迹来，方才肯住手。”只因此一计，有分交：深山妖牝，难藏丑秽之形；幽室香躯，陡变温柔之质。用着那神仙洞里千年草，成就了卿相门中百岁缘。

且说蒋生心神惑乱，那听好言？夏良策劝他不转，来对他道：“小弟有一句话，不碍兄事的。兄是必依小弟而行。”蒋生道：“有何事教小弟做？”夏良策道：“小弟有件物事，甚能分别邪正。仁兄等那人今夜来时，把来赠他拿去。若真是马家小姐，也自无妨。若不是时，须有认得他处。这却不碍仁兄事的。仁兄当以性命为重，自家留心便了。”蒋生道：“这个却使得。”夏良策就把一个粗麻布袋，袋着一包东西，递与蒋生。蒋生收在袖中。夏良策再三叮嘱道：“切不可忘了。”蒋生不知何意，但自家心里也有些疑心，便打点依他所言试一试看，料也无碍。

是夜小姐到来，欢会了一夜。将到天明去时，蒋生记得夏良策所嘱，便将此袋出来赠他道：“我有些少物事，送与小姐拿去，且到闺阁中慢慢自看。”那小姐也不问是甚么物件，见



out of the inn without avoiding to be seen by others, though at night? It is obviously clear this girl is not Ma Shaoqing's daughter." Jiang said, "I know Ma's daughter. The girl is unmistakably Ma's daughter. How could you have doubt about it?" Xia answered, "I often hear people say there are many fox spirits around this place and these fox spirits often take human forms to bewitch people. The girl you met must be a fox spirit. You must be careful about it." But how would Jiang believe Xia?

Seeing Jiang was so perverse, Xia, after pondering over the matter for a whole night, hit upon a ruse. He thought to himself, "Jiang won't stop at it until I let him see the true features of the girl with my ruse." Xia's ruse was really miraculous: A female spirit residing in the deep mountains will no longer cover up her true colors; a beautiful young girl from a rich family will suddenly change into a fox. The medicinal herbs of one thousand years old obtained from the land of the immortals will help Jiang bring about his happy marriage.

Confused and misled, how would Jiang listen to Xia's good advice? Finding it difficult to talk Jiang round, Xia came over to him and said, "I have something more to tell you. I don't think it will put you into trouble. So, hope you can do it as I tell you." "What is it?" asked Jiang. Xia answered, "Now I've got something on me. It can distinguish the good from the evil. When you see the girl tonight, just give it to her. There will be no harm in her taking it if the girl is Ma Shaoqing's daughter. Even though she is not Ma's daughter, we will be able to find out where she lives. In the first place, you need to take care of yourself." "This I can agree," said Jiang. Then Xia gave Jiang something contained in a gunny bag. Jiang accepted it and tucked it into his sleeve. Xia urged him again and again, "Don't forget what I told you." Jiang could not figure out why Xia asked him to do this. Though seized with doubts and suspicions, Jiang decided to do it as he was instructed by Xia.

At night the girl came and made love with Jiang as usual. Before dawn, when the girl was about to leave, Jiang remembered Xia's words and gave the gunny bag to the girl, saying, "Here is something for you. Just take it and see what's in the bag when you get home." The girl took it with pleasure and left without asking what's within.



说送他的，欣然拿了就走，自出店门去了。蒋生睡到日高，披衣起来，只见床面前多是些碎芝麻粒儿，一路出去，洒到外边。蒋生恍然大悟道：“夏兄对我说，此囊中物，能别邪正。元来是一袋芝麻。芝麻那里是辨别得邪正的？他以粗麻布为袋，明是要他撒将出来，就此可以认他来踪去迹。这个就是教我辨别邪正了。我而今跟着这芝麻踪迹寻去，好歹有个住处，便见下落。”

蒋生不说与人知，只自心里明白，逐步暗暗看地上有芝麻处便走。眼见得不到马家门上，明知不是他家出来的人了。纤纤曲曲，穿林过野，芝麻不断。一直跟寻到大别山下，见山中有个洞口，芝麻从此进去。蒋生晓得有些诧异，担着一把汗，望洞口走进。果见一个牝狐身边，放着一个麻布袋儿，放倒头在那里鼾睡。

几转雌雄坎与离，皮囊改换使人迷。

此时正作阳台梦，还是为云为雨时。

蒋生一见大惊，不觉喊道：“来魅吾的，是这个妖物呀！”那狐性极灵，虽然睡卧，甚是警醒。一闻人声，倏把身子变过，仍然是个人形。蒋生道：“吾已识破，变来何干？”那狐走向前来，执着蒋生手道：“郎君勿怪。我为你看破了行藏，也是缘分尽了。”蒋生见他仍复旧形，心里老大不舍。那狐道：“好



On the next day Jiang didn't get up until the sun was high up in the sky. To his surprise, he found lots of sesame seeds in front of his bed and around the door. Looking closely, he also saw lots of sesame seeds along the road leading to the outside of the inn. All of a sudden he saw the light. "Xia told me the thing in the bag can distinguish the good from the evil," Jiang said to himself. "Now it has turned out it's a bag of sesame seeds. How can sesame seeds distinguish the good from the evil? Xia put the sesame seeds in a gunny bag. Definitely the sesame seeds will leak through the gunny bag. With the help of these sesame seeds I will be able to find out the traces of her movements. This must be reason why Xia told me this bag could tell the good from the evil. Now I'll follow the traces of these sesame seeds and find out where she lives."

Thus, without telling anyone about it, Jiang moved on forward along the traces of the sesame seeds. After he had covered a distance, he realized the girl was definitely not from the Ma family. Zigzagging down the forests and hills, the sesame seeds stretched farther and farther and finally reached the foot of the Dabie Mountains (located to the northeast of present-day Wuhan city, Hubei Province). There was a cave at the foot of the mountain. Jiang noticed some sesame seeds at the entrance of the cave. Holding his breath in suspense, he entered the cave with bewilderment. Greatly astonished, he found the gunny bag was right beside a sleeping fox.

Many a time you return to the human world for your mate.

Changing your leather bag, you do bewitch all men.

Are you now in your pipe dreams,

Or are you thinking of lovemaking?

Jiang shouted, "After all you're a fox, and I was bewitched by a fox spirit!" Foxes are very clever. Though sleeping, the fox was a very light sleeper. Upon hearing the arrival of a man, it instantly changed into the girl. Jiang said, "I've seen your true features. What's the use of your changing into the girl again?" Moving closer to Jiang, the girl held Jiang's hands in hers and said, "Don't be angry, please. Now that you've seen my original shape, our relationship has come to an end." Seeing that the fox had changed into the girl again, Jiang was extremely sad.

The fox continued, "To tell you the truth, I've been practicing austerities



教郎君得知，我在此山中修道，将有千年，专一与人配合雌雄，炼成内丹。向见郎君韶丽，正思借取元阳，无门可入。却得郎君钟情马家女子，思慕真切，故尔效仿其形，特来配合。一来助君之欢，二来成我之事。今形迹已露，不可再来相陪，从此永别了。但往来已久，与君不能无情。君身为我得病，我当为君治疗。那马家女子，君既心爱，我又假托其貌，邀君恩宠多时，我也不能忽然。当为君谋取，使为君妻，以了心愿，是我所以报君也。”说罢，就在洞中手撷出一般希奇的草来，束做三束，对蒋生道：“将这头一束，煎水自洗，当使你精完气足，壮健如故。这第二束，将去悄悄地撒在马家门口暗处，马家女子即时害起癩病来。然后将这第三束去煎水与他洗濯，这癩病自好，女子也归你了。新人相好时节，莫忘我做媒的旧情也！”遂把三束草一一交付蒋生。蒋生收好，那狐又分付道：“慎之，慎之，莫对人言！我亦从此逝矣。”言毕依然化为狐形，跳跃而去，不知所往。

蒋生又惊又喜，谨藏了三束草，走归店中来。叫店家烧了一锅水，悄悄地放下一束草，煎成药汤。是夜将来自洗一番，果



in the mountain for about one thousand years. I sought chances to make love with men, and by doing so I longed to achieve immortality. One day I caught sight of your beautiful appearance and felt deeply attached to you. While I was wondering how to develop an affair with you, I realized you fell in love with Ma Shaoqing's daughter. Therefore, I visited you and made love with you in the form of Ma's daughter. On the one hand, you could enjoy sexual pleasure with me; on the other hand, our love-making could help me to accomplish my pursuit for immortality. Now my original shape has been brought to light, I won't be able to come and see you any more. From now on, we'll have to part forever. However, as we've been getting along pretty well with each other, I can't be heartless. Now you're ill because of me. I'll cure you of your disease. Since I know you love Ma Shaoqing's daughter very much, and I've made love with you for quite a long time in her form, I should not remain indifferent at the matter and leave it as it is. I'll help you marry her to fulfill your wish. This is what I'm going to repay you for your kindness to me."

Finishing these words, the fox took out some medicinal herbs from the cave and made them into three bundles. Turning to Jiang, the fox said, "Put this first bundle in water and boil it. Then use the water to wash yourself and your energy will come back to you. You'll become as strong and healthy as you used to be. Put this second bundle quietly at secret places near the entrance of the Ma's house and Ma's daughter will be affected with leprosy. Then boil the third bundle in water and use the water to wash Ma's daughter. Then she'll be cured. Naturally she'll become your wife. After you get married, hope you won't forget me, your matchmaker." So saying, the girl gave Jiang the three bundles of medicinal herbs one after another, and Jiang accepted them. After this, the girl again said, "Do remember my words. Never disclose this matter to anyone else! Now I'll have to disappear forever." Having said these words, the girl changed into a fox and jumped off into the distance.

With a mixed feeling of surprise and joy, Jiang returned to the inn with the three bundles of medicinal herbs. He told the inn assistant to boil a pot of water for him. When the water was boiled, he quietly put the first bundle of medicinal herbs into the water and had them decocted. At night





然神气开爽，精力陡健。沉睡一宵，次日将镜一照，那些萎黄之色，一毫也无了，方知仙草灵验。谨闷其言，不向人说。

夏良策来问昨日踪迹，蒋生推道：“寻至水边已住，不可根究，想来是个怪物。我而今看破，不与他往来便了。”夏良策见他容颜复旧，便道：“兄心一正，病色便退。可见是个妖精。今不被他迷了，便是好了，连我们也得放心。”蒋生口里称谢，却不把真心说出来。只是一依狐精之言，密去干着自己的事。将着第二束草，守到黄昏人静后，走去马少卿门前，向户槛底下、墙角暗处，各各撒放停当。自回店中，等待消息。

不多两日，纷纷传说马家云容小姐生起癞疮来。初起时不过二处，虽然嫌憎，还不十分在心上。渐渐浑身癞发，但见：

腥臊遍体，臭味难当。玉树亭亭，改做鱼鳞皴皴；花枝袅袅，变为虫蚀累堆。痒动处不住爬搔，满指甲霜飞雪落；痛来时岂胜啾唧，镇朝昏抹泪揉眵。谁家女子恁般撑，闻道先儒以为癞。

马家小姐忽患癞疮，皮痒脓腥，痛不可忍。一个绝色女子，



he washed himself with the water and felt greatly relieved, and vim and vigor immediately returned to him. After a night's sound sleep, he got up and looked into the mirror and found that his lean and haggard looks had already gone completely. From this he knew these medicinal herbs were really magical and effective. Jiang well kept the fox spirit's words in mind and was very careful not to reveal the matter to anyone else.

On the next day Xia came over to Jiang and asked him about the traces of the sesame seeds. Jiang answered, "I followed the sesame seeds to the waterside and then they disappeared. I failed to get to the bottom of the matter. The girl must be an evil spirit, I guess. Now that I've seen through her true colors, I'll put an end to my relationship with her right now." Seeing that Jiang had recovered from his poor health, Xia remarked, "Your haggardness vanished the moment you made up your mind to end your relationship with her. Obviously she is an evil spirit. Since you're getting better, I do feel greatly relieved." Jiang expressed his indebtedness to Xia, but didn't tell him the truth. As was instructed by the fox spirit, he was just engaged in carrying out his plan.

When evening fell and everybody was quiet, Jiang got to the entrance of Ma Shaoqing's house quietly with the second bundle of medicinal herbs and scattered them in secret places like the wall corners and the threshold. This being done, he returned to the inn to wait for the news. Within a couple of days, words came out that Ma Shaoqing's daughter Yunrong was affected with leprosy. In the beginning there were only a few boils on her body. Detestable as they were, Yunrong didn't take them seriously. However, she was gradually covered up with leprosy from head to heel.

A foul smell comes from all over her body, terribly stinky. A beautiful girl standing gracefully tall and erect once is now in chaps and wrinkles like the scales of a fish. A beautiful flower swaying in the wind once, but now it seems she is covered up with piles of biting insects. When it itches, she has to scratch unceasingly and, like frostwork and snowflakes, scabs fall off her fingernails. Unable to endure the unbearable pain, she weeps and melts into tears all day long. Why does this girl have to suffer this? Doctors say she is affected with leprosy.

弄成人间厌物。父母无计可施，小姐求死不得。请个外科先生来医，说得甚不值事，敷上药去就好。依言敷治，过了一会，浑身针刺，却像剥他皮下来一般疼痛，顷刻也熬不得，只得仍旧洗掉了。又有内科医家前来处方，说是：“内里服药，调得血脉停当，风气开散，自然痊可。只是外用敷药，这叫得治标，决不能除根的。”听了他，把煎药日服两三剂，落得把脾胃烫坏了，全无功效。外科又争说是他专门，必竟要用擦洗之药；内科又说是肺经受风，必竟要吃消风散毒之剂。落得做病人不着，挨着疼痛，熬着苦水，今日换方，明日改药。医生相骂了几番，你说我无功，我说你没用，总归没帐。



Yunrong suffered terribly from the unbearable pain and itched of this unexpected disease. A once extremely beautiful girl now turned into an ugly toad, horribly stinking and disagreeable. At their wits' end, her parents were at a loss what to do, while Yunrong herself wished she would rather die than drag out such a painful existence. Soon a doctor trained in surgical Chinese medicine was invited over to her home to treat her. The doctor said it was no big deal at all to cure her of her disease and the leprosy would be healed soon after his ointment was applied on her body. However, a moment after the ointment application was done according to the doctor's instructions, Yunrong felt pinpricked all over her body. It hurt so much that she felt as if her skin was being stripped. Unable to stand the unbearable pain for even one minute longer, she had the ointment washed off.

Then a physician trained in Chinese herbal medicine was invited over to her home to treat her. The physician said, "My oral medicine will help you improve your blood circulation and remove the internal cold in your lungs. Naturally you will come back to full recovery after you take my medicine. Medicine for external application can merely alleviate the symptoms of an illness and it can never effect a permanent cure." Following this physician's instructions, Yunrong took a couple of decoctions of medicinal herbs each day. But it was in no way effective. On the contrary, her stomach and spleen were seriously injured.

The doctor trained in surgical Chinese medicine insisted that he was expert in this field and ointment application was the only way to her of her leprosy. The physician trained in herbal medicine insisted that the leprosy was resulted from a cold in her lungs and passages through which vital energy circulated, regulating bodily functions, and the only way to cure it was to take herbal decoctions orally so as to take dispel the chill and relieve her internal heat. Not knowing who was in the right, poor Yunrong had to receive both treatments. Suffering from both the pain and the bitter medicine, she tried this treatment one day and then that treatment on the next day. The two doctors heaped several rounds of mutual reproaches, denouncing each other by saying, "Your treatment is no good at all." All in all, they ended in a draw.



马少卿大张告示在外：“有人能医得痊愈者，赠银百两。”这些医生看了告示，只好咽唾。真是孝顺郎中，也算做竭尽平生之力，查尽秘藏之书，再不曾见有些些小效处。小姐已是十死九生，只多得一口气了。马少卿束手无策，对夫人道：“女儿害着不治之症，已成废人。今出了重赏，再无人能医得好。莫若舍了此女，待有善医此症者，即将女儿与他为妻，倒赔妆奁，招赘入室。我女儿颇有美名，或者有人慕此，献出奇方来救他，也未可知。就未必门当户对，譬如女儿害病死了。就是不死，这样一个废人，也难嫁着人家。还是如此，庶几有望。”遂大书于门道：

小女云容，染患癩疾。一应人等，能以奇方奏效者，不论高下门户，远近地方，即以此女嫁之，赘入为婿。立此为照。

蒋生在店中，已知小姐病癩出榜招医之事，心下暗暗称快。然未见他说到婚姻上边，不敢轻易兜揽。只恐远地客商，他日便医好了，只有金帛酬谢，未必肯把女儿与他。故此藏着机关，静看他家事体。果然病不得痊，换过榜文，有医好招赘



Ma Shaoqing put up a notice on the street, which read, "He who can cure my daughter will get a hundred taels of silver as a reward." Seeing the notice, the physicians and surgeons who had tried but failed to cure Yunrong could only drool with envy, while other doctors of Chinese medicine worked to the best of their ability and consulted all their closely guarded medicine books. However, Yunrong still remained as sick as ever. When seeing Yunrong was incurably ill and breathing her last, Ma Shaoqing found himself at the end of his tether. Turning to his wife, Ma Shaoqing said, "Our daughter is now beyond cure. Though still alive, she is but a disabled good-for-nothing. We offered a handsome reward, but no doctors succeeded in curing her. It would be better for us to give her up by marrying her to the man who can cure her of the disease and have him move into our house after marriage. Our daughter is renowned for her beauty. It might as well be possible that someone yearning for her beauty will come to save her with a miraculous cure. The marriage may not be well-matched in social status. We can just set our minds on the presumption that she has died of this disease. Anyway, it will be extremely hard for a girl with leprosy to find a husband even though she survives. Only by doing so can we have a gleam of hope." Thus decided, Ma Shaoqing wrote another notice and put it up at the entrance of his house. It read thus:

My daughter Yunrong is affected with leprosy. Anyone who can cure my daughter, regardless of his social status or where he is from, can take her as his wife and move into my house after marriage. This notice will serve as a pledge.

Jiang was filled with secret joy when he learned that Yunrong was affected with leprosy and saw the first notice asking for doctors to cure her. However, he didn't take actions offhandedly, for words about Yunrong's marriage were not mentioned on the notice. Being a businessman from a distant place, he feared that he would be only rewarded with some money if he cured her. He was afraid that Ma Shaoqing would not necessarily consent to marry his daughter to him. So, he remained quiet and waited to see what would happen next. As expected, all the doctors' medical treatment proved to be ineffective and Ma Shaoqing put



之说。蒋生抚掌道：“这番老婆到手了！”即去揭了门前榜文，自称能医。门公见说，不敢迟滞，立时奔进通报。

马少卿出来相见，见了蒋生一表非俗，先自喜欢，问道：“有何妙方，可以医治？”蒋生道：“小生原不业医，曾遇异人，传有仙草，专治癩疾，手到可以病除。但小生不慕金帛，惟求不爽榜上之言，小生自当效力。”马少卿道：“下官止此爱女，德容俱备。不幸忽犯此疾，已成废人。若得君子施展妙手，起死回生，榜上之言，岂可自食？自当以小女馀生奉侍箕帚。”蒋生道：“小生原籍浙江，远隔异地，又是经商之人，不习儒业，只恐有玷门风。今日小姐病颜消减，所以舍得轻许。他日医好复旧，万一悔却前言，小生所望，岂不付之东流？先须说得明白。”马少卿道：“江浙名邦，原非异地；经商亦是善业，不是贱流。看足下器体，亦非以下之人。何况有言在先，远近高下，皆所不论，只要医得好。下官忝在缙绅，岂为一病女，就做爽信之事？足下但请用药，万勿他疑。”



up a second notice with the pledge that he who had the ability to cure Yunrong could marry her and move into the Ma's house after marriage. Clapping his hands with delight, Jiang said, "This time I'm going to make it!" Taking off the notice on the gate of the Ma's house, he told the doorkeepers that he could cure Ma's daughter. Upon hearing this, the doorkeepers went in without the least delay and reported the matter to Ma Shaoqing.

Greatly impressed by Jiang's handsome appearance, Ma Shaoqing was very pleased at seeing Jiang. Ma asked, "What miraculous cure do you have to cure my daughter?" Jiang answered, "I'm not a doctor by profession, but I got some miraculous medicinal herbs from an immortal. These medicinal herbs will easily cure your daughter of her leprosy and is now worthless person. I'd like to make clear beforehand that I'm not interested in money. I just hope you can keep your word as stated in the notice after I cure her." Ma Shaoqing said, "Yunrong is my only daughter. She possesses both moral integrity and beauty. Unfortunately she is affected with leprosy. If you can save her from the brink of death, I will surely carry out my word and let her be your wife."

Jiang said, "My native place is Zhejiang which is extremely far away from here. As I'm just a private businessman who has spent little time in Confucian studies, I'm afraid I won't make a worthy husband. Your daughter's beauty has now faded away a bit, so you do not grudge letting her be my wife. If you break your word after I cure her, wouldn't my efforts come to naught? So we'd better make things clear beforehand." Ma Shaoqing said, "Zhejiang is a good place and it is not a bad thing to be in business. Moreover, you do not look like an ordinary person. As I have made it clear in the notice, I will let her be your wife if you can cure her, regardless of your social status or how far away you are from. I have the honor, though I might be unworthy of it, to have been a gentry with an official title. How can I go back on my word for a sick girl's sake? Just set your mind at ease and give her medical treatment."

Having been thus assured, Jiang told Ma Shaoqing to have the bundle of medicinal herbs cooked first, then he asked Yunrong to take a bath with this special water. The pleasant smell of the medicinal herbs in the





蒋生见说得的确，就把那一束草叫煎起汤来，与小姐洗澡。小姐闻得药草之香，已自心中爽快。到得倾下浴盆，通身澡洗，可煞作怪，但是汤到之处，疼的不疼，痒的不痒，透骨清凉，不可名状。小姐把脓污抹尽，出了浴盆，身子轻松了一半。眠在床中一夜，但觉疮痂渐落，粗皮层层脱下来。过了三日，完全好了。再复清汤浴过一番，身体莹然如玉，比前日更加嫩相。

马少卿大喜，去问蒋生下处，元来就住在本家店中。即着人请得蒋生过家中来，打扫书房，与他安下。只要拣个好日，就将小姐赘他。蒋生不胜之喜，已在店中把行李搬将过来，住在书房，等候佳期。马家小姐心中感激蒋生救好他病，见说就要嫁他，虽然情愿，未知生得人物如何。叫梅香探听，元来即是曾到家里卖过绫绢的客人，多曾认得他，面庞标致的，心里就放得下。

吉日已到，马少卿不负前言，主张成婚。两下少年，多是美丽人物，你贪我爱，自不必说。但蒋生未成婚之先，先有狐女假扮，相处过多时，偏是他熟认得的了。一日，马家小姐说道：“你是别处人，甚气力到得我家里？天教我生出这个病来，成就这段姻缘。那个仙方，是我与你的媒人，谁传与你的，不可忘了！”蒋生笑道：“是有一个媒人，而今也没谢他处了。”



water made Yunrong feel pretty good and comfortable. After she washed herself in the water, she felt extremely refreshing from head to heel and the pain and itching were completely gone. Cleaning off the running sore, she got out of the washtub and felt she was much better. After a whole night's sleep, most of the scabs disappeared slowly. Three days later, she was fully recovered. After washing herself one more time with the water, she became as crystal clear as white jade, appearing to be even more beautiful than before.

Overcome with great joy, Ma Shaoqing immediately sent for Jiang. Meanwhile he had his study cleaned so as to put Jiang up. What Ma would do next was to choose an auspicious day for the wedding. Moving his luggage from the inn to Ma's house with pleasure, Jiang settled down in the study and waited for the fulfillment of his marriage with Yunrong. Yunrong felt extremely grateful to Jiang for his saving her life. Upon learning she had been betrothed to Jiang, she was very happy, but what worried her was that she had no idea how he looked like. Meixiang, Yunrong's serving maid, was sent to fish for information about Jiang's looks. When learning Jiang was the very person who had been to her home to sell silks, Yunrong set her mind at rest, for she had seen him before and knew well that he was a man of good appearance.

To carry out his word, Ma Shaoqing had the young couple married when the auspicious day arrived. Being young and handsome persons, Jiang and Yunrong loved each other very much, and there is no need to dwell more upon it.

As Jiang had lived with the fox spirit, who posed itself as Yunrong, for quite some time before his marriage, he appeared to be exceedingly familiar with Yunrong when he was together with her. One day, Yunrong asked him, "You're from a distant place. How did you make it to marry me? It is the will of Heaven that I got such a disease and this disease helped bring about our marriage. The magical medicinal herbs served as our matchmaker. Who gave you these medicinal herbs? We should not forget him or her!" Jiang said with a smile, "It's true a matchmaker helped us a lot. But there is no way now to thank her." "Just tell me who our matchmaker is," Yunrong demanded.



小姐道：“你且说是那个？今在何处？”蒋生不好说是狐精，捏个谎道：“只为小生曾瞥见小姐芳容，眠思梦想，寝食俱废。心意志诚了，感动一位仙女，假托小姐容貌，来与小生往来了多时。后被小生识破，他方才说果然不是真小姐。小姐应该目下有灾，就把一束草，教小生来救小姐，说当有姻缘之分。今果应其言，可不是个媒人？”小姐道：“怪道你见我就像旧识一般，元来曾有人假过我的名来。而今在那里去了？”蒋生道：“他是仙家，一被识破，就不再来了。知他在那里？”小姐道：“几乎被他坏了我名声，却也亏他救我一命，成就我两人姻缘，还算做个恩人了。”蒋生道：“他是个仙女，恩与怨总不挂在心上。只是我和你合该做夫妻，遇得此等仙缘，称心满意。但愧小生不才，有屈了小姐耳。”小姐道：“夫妻之间，不要如此说。况我是垂死之人，你起死回生的大恩，正该终身奉侍君子。妾无所恨矣！”自此，如鱼似水，蒋生也不思量回乡，就住在马家终身，夫妻偕老。这是后话。

那蒋生一班儿同伴，见说他赘在马少卿家了，多各不知其繇。惟有夏良策，曾见蒋生说着马小姐的话，后来道是妖魅的假托，而今见真个做了女婿，也不明白他备细。多来与蒋生庆



Covering the fact that the matchmaker was a fox spirit, Jiang lied, “I fell for you the moment I saw your beautiful looks. I thought of you so much that I forgot to sleep and eat. A fairy maiden was moved by my sincere love for you. So she posed herself as you and came to see me quite often. Later, as I saw her as she really was, she admitted she was not you. She told me you would be in trouble soon, so she gave me a bundle of medicinal herbs and asked me to save your life with them, saying that we would be husband and wife by fate. Now her words have come true. She did serve as our matchmaker, didn’t she?”

Yunrong said, “No wonder you appeared to be so familiar with me, as if we have been old acquaintances. It turns out someone had been seeing you under my name. Where is she now?” Jiang answered, “She is an immortal. She never showed up again after I had seen through her. How could I know where she has gone?” Yunrong said, “She almost ruined my name, but she saved my life and helped us become husband and wife. Naturally I should be deeply indebted to her kindness.” Jiang said, “She is a fairy maiden, so she does not concern herself with gratitude and resentment. Nevertheless, as fate has it, you and I became husband and wife after our own hearts. We were really lucky to have met such a fairy maiden. But, as I’m without talent, I’m afraid I won’t be a perfect match for you.” Yunrong said, “As husband and wife, we love each other very much. So, don’t make such remarks. While I was in my death throes, you saved my life. To repay your great kindness, I should serve you throughout my life, and this is what I’m willing to do!” From then on, the idea of returning to his native home never occurred to Jiang. Feeling like fish in water, Jiang and Yunrong lived together to a ripe old age in conjugal felicity in Ma’s house. More of this later.

Soon all of Jiang’s fellow friends learned about Jiang’s marriage with Ma Shaoqing’s daughter Yunrong, but none had any idea how he had accomplished it. Xia Liangce alone knew something about Jiang’s secret affair with the so-called Ma’s daughter and later he was told by Jiang that she was but a fox spirit. However, upon learning that Jiang had married Ma’s daughter, he too felt rather puzzled at the news. When Xia came to see Jiang with congratulations, Xia inquired Jiang about the matter in

喜，夏良策私下细问根繇。蒋生瞞起用草生癩一段话，只说：“前日假托马小姐的，是大别山狐精。后被夏兄粗布芝麻之计追寻踪迹，认出真形。他赠此药草，教小弟去医好马小姐，就有姻缘之分。小弟今日之事，皆狐精之力也。”众人见说多称奇道：“一向称仁兄为蒋驸马，今仁兄在马口地方作客，住在马月溪店，竟为马少卿家之婿，不脱一个马字。可知也是天意，生出这狐精来，成就此一段姻缘。驸马之称，便是前讖了。”大家相传，以为佳话。有等痴心的，就恨怎生我偏不撞着狐精，得有此奇遇？妄想得一个不耐烦。有诗为证：

人生自是有姻缘，得遇灵狐亦偶然。

妄意洞中三束草，岂知月下赤绳牵！

• 野史氏曰：

生始窥女而极慕思，女不知也。狐实阴见，故假女来。



secret.

Glossing over the fact of using the medicinal herbs to make Yunrong affected with leprosy, Jiang said, "The girl who posed herself as Yunrong and visited me some time ago was a fox spirit from the Dabie Mountains. With the help of the gunny bag of sesame seeds you gave me I traced her up to her cave in the mountains and recognized her true features. She gave me a bundle of medicinal herbs and told me that, if I cured Yunrong of her disease with the medicinal herbs, she and I would become husband and wife. I attribute the fulfillment of my marriage with Yunrong to the help of the fox spirit." After learning about Jiang's romance, Jiang's friends all regarded it as amazing. "No wonder we all call you Jiang Fuma,"

Jiang's friends said to him. "You've been sojourning in Ma Yuexi Inn in Makou and now you've become the son-in-law of Ma Shaoqing. Everything about you is associated with the character 'ma.' Obviously it's the will of Heaven that a fox spirit came to your help and fulfilled your marriage with Ma's daughter. Your name Fuma is really prophetic." Soon the story of Jiang was passed on from mouth to mouth as a popular tale. Totally lost in vain hopes, some daydreamers complained, "Why couldn't I have such a happy encounter with the fox spirit?" The following lines may serve as a proof:

Husbands and wives are fated,

But marriage and a chance encounter with a fox fairy are  
in no way related.

While making wishful guesses at the three bundles of magical medicine,  
Daydreamers are unaware of the truth that union in wedlock is  
always predestined.

An unofficial story-teller says thus:

A young man caught a glimpse of a girl and started to think of her with longing. However, the girl knew nothing about this matter. A fox spirit, clearly seeing this matter, seized the chance and came to the young man in the form of the girl. The young man was deeply attracted by the girl's beautiful looks, but finally it turned out he was bewitched by the fox. Had he not harbored an anxious longing for the girl and had he remained as composed as ever, what should the fox do him? However, though the

生以色自惑，而狐惑之也。思虑不起，天君泰然，即狐何为？然以祸始，而以福终，亦生厚幸。虽然，狐媒犹狐媚也，终死色刃矣。



affair between the young man and the fox spirit started with some misfortune, it ended up in happiness. This was really good fortune for the young man. Though the young man finally married the girl with the help of the fox spirit, using the fox spirit as a matchmaker was exactly the same as being bewitched by the fox spirit. The young man eventually lost his life at the knife-edge of sexual indulgence.







## NOTES

### Tale 20

<sup>1</sup> fifth day of the fifth lunar month.

### Tale 21

<sup>1</sup>Literally meaning 'no dust'.

<sup>2</sup> Literally meaning 'bright moon'.

### Tale 28

<sup>1</sup> Dou measure, square or drum-like, made of wood or bamboo.

### Tale 29

<sup>1</sup> The source of this allusion is from The Story of Lady Ren, a short story written by Shen Jiji of the Tang Dynasty. In this story, Zheng Liu, a poverty-stricken scholar, falls in love with Lady Ren, a fox spirit. Deeply moved by Zheng Liu's true love for her, Lady Ren feels it really hard to turn down his sincere insistence on moving westward, though she is fully aware that she must not go westward. While they are on their way westward, Lady Ren is killed by a dog.



[ G e n e r a l I n f o r m a t i o n ]

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