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大中华文库

汉英对照

太平广记选

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OF THE TAIPING ERA

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I



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总 序

杨牧之

《大中华文库》终于出版了。我们为之高兴，为之鼓舞，但也倍感压力。

当此之际，我们愿将郁积在我们心底的话，向读者倾诉。

—

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



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

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

二

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

三

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

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

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



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

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

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

1999年8月 北京



PREFACE TO THE *LIBRARY OF CHINESE CLASSICS*

Yang Muzhi

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

1

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



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

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

2

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

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

After generations of internecine strife, China was unified by Emperor



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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

3

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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前 言

《太平广记》是宋代的第二个皇帝宋太宗敕命编撰的古代小说总集，主编人是当时的户部侍郎李昉。全书于太平兴国三年（978年）编成，因此定名太平。分500卷，收录了上古至宋初大约400种图书中的约7000篇小说。当时小说二字并非作今日之解，而是如其字面所示，乃指与经史相对的无关宏旨之说。其涵盖之广由原书目录可见一斑（见附录V），除了故事，还包括了自然地理、风俗习惯、技艺之术、传记语录、笑话幽默等等。《太平广记》在中国文学发展史上有着巨大的影响，它所引用的书目，大多已经湮灭，但正是由于它的编辑成书，保存了大量的文献，使后世的研究者能够窥其一斑，甚至能够还原其中相当一部分。

本书入选的主要是日臻成熟的唐代（618年~907年）小说，同时也考虑到了选篇的覆盖面。唐朝是中国历史上最大气磅礴的朝代。在文学上，不仅以诗流芳百世，于文亦文采飞扬。写“小说”，亦即写故事，已不再被文人学士看作不屑，更有甚者，小说已成为诗赋之外，用来投献给达官贵人以获得推举甚或经济支持的手段，史称行卷、温卷。在这种风气之下，小说成为了文学上的自觉。

简而要之，唐代小说有三个主要来源，即史传的传统、神话传说和讲故事。

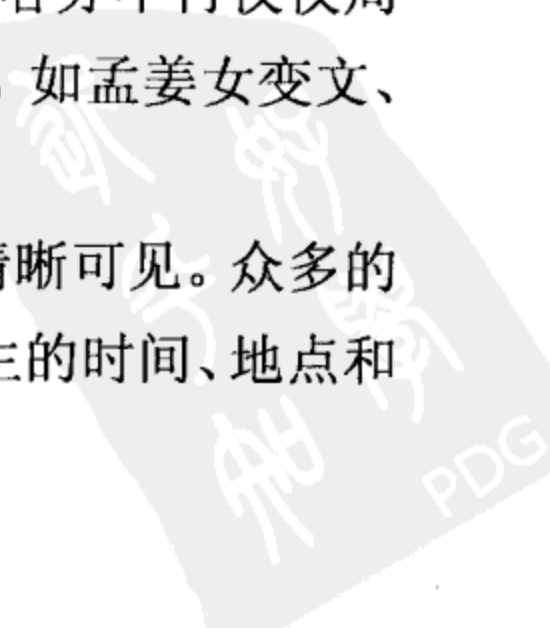


中国有文字记载的正史至少可以上溯到公元前841年。正史的记载有两种方法：一是《春秋》所代表的编年法，二是如司马迁（公元前145年~公元前90年）的《史记》那样，围绕历史人物展开的纪传体，分本纪、表、书、世家、列传五部分，尤以列传为优美散文，绝非干巴巴的条目。其实，古代的历史著作与文学作品并不像如今这样有明显的分野。

正史非史实不载，然而，普天之下还有很多的“事实”或因其荒诞，或因其不可考而不能进入正史，这正如孔子所谓的“不语怪力乱神”。这类“事实”多以神话传说的形式流传于民间。至魏晋南北朝（220年~589年），则发展出一种文学题材，号称“志怪”，即记录怪事。其虽属于“小说”，但距真正的虚构文学（fiction）尚有一步之遥。当时的作者是把这些有趣的异闻当作事实来记载的，而不是作为创作。

讲故事是人类与生俱来的本领，但由于其口头和鄙俗性质一直无人予以记录，其早期形式也就无从知晓。20世纪伊始，人们在敦煌藏经洞的经卷中意外地发现了一种鲜为人知的写本——变文，这种韵白交替的形式当年是以边讲边唱的方式表现的。东汉（25年~220年）以来，佛教东渐，佛理高深，僧人则利用民俗的形式向大众宣讲佛法和佛本生故事，颇有些像欧洲中世纪教堂里唱诗班搬演宗教剧的做法。同样，当这一做法逐渐普及，走出庙堂，讲唱的内容亦不再仅仅局限于佛经，进而包括了民间传说和英雄事迹，如孟姜女变文、伍子胥变文等等。

在《太平广记》的故事中，史传的痕迹清晰可见。众多的故事开门见山、直白无误地告诉读者事件发生的时间、地点和





人物的身份背景。一些作者为了表明确有其事，在故事之后还专门加上了一段跋，如“王宙”所做。其目的并不是为了使故事听起来更真实，而是为了证明其非杜撰。

又如，《太平广记》中各篇的标题多依《史记》笔法，直接标以主要人物的名字。然而，本书对照的英文译文若直接用汉语拼音转写，将会给英文读者造成很大的困惑。因此，译文大多根据情节予以重新命名，只有少数保留了原标题，如“赵泰”、“李生”、“张山人”诸篇。

入唐以后，志怪的传统依然存在，但有了一些细微的差别。人们可以隐约感到这些“记录”不再是纯粹的客观描述，此时的神灵精怪更加像现实中的人，故事的背景也更像人类世界。作者更注重的是利用这些拟人化的灵怪借题发挥，表述自己的观点想法。而这一点正是记录历史与文学创作的分水岭。

由变文滥觞，诗词似乎成了故事的一个组件。写诗本来就是文人硕儒最拿手、最引以自豪的表现形式，点缀于故事之中抒情摹景，似乎理所当然。由此也造就了后世长篇小说中，诗成了不可或缺的成分。这个特点，与英文小说对照，则分外明显：英文小说是不掺杂诗歌的。

古文凝练的特点也充分体现在这些故事中。直到宋初，故事都相当简短，往往不足200字。千字以上，可算长篇，而像“淳于棼”那样超过4000字的则颇为罕见。英文读者可能不习惯这种简短，需要靠联想和想象力来填充字里行间的细节。

唐代的历史大致可以分为三个阶段。早期由618年建国至741年开元末。经过将近两个世纪的战乱和短暂的隋朝，唐初政治基本稳定，使得国力恢复，经济持续增长，社会繁荣，在



开元年间达到了巅峰。玄宗40余年治下的太平盛世，使得他日渐骄侈，沉迷声色。腐败之风渐盛，以藩镇为代表的割据势力趁机抬头，终于酿成安史之乱（755年~763年）。即便是安史败后，中央与割据、藩镇与藩镇之间的局部战争仍此起彼伏，直到宪宗收复了淮西。820年宪宗被宦官谋杀标志着唐代步入晚期。在这一时期，宦官成了左右政局的强大势力。以其得近天颜、专断言路，不仅可以谋太子立废，且干预朝政，勾结命官。朝官亦结为朋党，相互倾轧，此时的宰相如同走马灯一般，你方唱罢我登场。常年战乱，民不聊生，国力衰竭。据载，安史之乱前，一文钱可买一升盐，战后则涨至11文，至贞元年间（785年~805年）更跃至37文。懿宗（859年~873年）以降，农民起义接二连三，875年黄巢起义，甚至一度攻占了首都长安。虽然起义军在884年被镇压，但唐朝终未能恢复以前的强盛。907年唐亡，全国又一次陷入连年的战乱之中，直到960年宋朝立国，重新获得了统一。

总的来说，唐帝国思想开放，具有容纳百川的胸怀，疆域内外，民族和睦，早期尤其如此。与周边国家贸易发达，商旅如梭，异域文化、新奇物事不断涌入。故事中常常写到西来的僧侣、识宝的波斯商人，“淳于棼”中甚至提到看婆罗门舞。“瞻波异果”、“阳羨书生”、“板桥三娘子”等故事均有着明显的印度渊源。向东，皇朝的使团漂洋涉海，出访新罗、“长须国”，历险遇奇。

唐代的李姓帝王们自认为是李耳的后裔，因此崇奉道教，神仙、道术类故事在《太平广记》中所占的卷数比例就是明证，但这丝毫没有妨碍宗教上的宽容。“圆观”故事说得明白：“二公一旦约游蜀州，抵青城峨嵋，同访道求药。”身为和尚的圆



观并不介意拜访道教的圣地青城山。除了会昌年间武宗短暂的灭佛之外，唐代释道儒之间并没有你死我活的争斗。

道教鼓吹长生不死、得道成仙。神仙世界，无忧无虑，悠闲自在，向往者从“韦自东”中的道士到财主李清不乏其人。一部分人力图通过自身的修炼提升境界，如“麒麟客”中的王夔，另一部分人则试图炼制长生不老之丹，炼丹术由是大行其道。在“冯俊”一文中我们就可以看到道士“于市买药”。炼丹所用的“药”以硫磺、硝石为主。烧炼时温度的控制至为关键，稍有不慎，轻则失火，重则炉毁人亡。“杜子春”和“韦自东”各自的后半部分是对其困难和艰辛的形象描述。

今日神仙二字并举，但《太平广记》故事中，神与仙不同。神乃指天上神灵，而仙是由凡人变成的（间或地上其他生灵，如狐仙），析字为：“人入山也。”所谓得道成仙，按其中一说，大致分为：死后得以成仙；居深山，不食人间烟火，游于天地之间；能够升天与神为伍等三个层次。“麒麟客”中的王夔大约处于第二到第三层次的过渡阶段。

道士们改变物质性质的本领引起了人们有关他们法术的种种传说。除了常规的书符念咒、往来无阻，茅安道不但自己能够变成巨鸢，还能够把徒弟变成鼠；张山人能以雷电为武器；“冯俊”中的道士则有呼风唤雨之术。

佛教则强调灵魂不死，肉身仅为暂居的躯壳。在“华阳李尉”中，我们看到张节度使的灵魂被李尉“执之出门”，而节度使的躯体仍“仆于林下矣，眼鼻皆血，唯心上暖”。“王宙”与“灵应传”中的灵魂不但可以如生人一般独立存在，还可以做出种种丰功伟绩。“齐推女”中关于生人三魂七魄的解释似乎更加复杂。



灵魂轮回的观念在“赵泰”中展现得淋漓尽致。所谓“善有善报，恶有恶报，不是不报，时候未到”，与此紧密相关的宿命论思想可见于“订婚店”和“李君”。因此，一个有出息的人，无论年轻时何等窘困，注定是要出头的。尉迟敬德（585年~658年）、李靖（571年~649年）、马燧（726年~795年）均为唐朝名将。在这三个故事中分别讲述了他们尚未得志时的“异象”。另一方面，恶人也是前定，卢杞即是一例。史载，卢杞德宗（780年~805年）时为相，忌能妒贤，陷害大臣。“太阴夫人”中展示的是远在他默默无闻之际，就是一个无信无义之徒。在“汪凤”中则把安禄山贬作一只猴。

万物有灵的思想在唐代也颇为盛行。任何东西，无论是动物、植物，甚至物体，只要年深日久即可成精，如“姚坤”里的狐狸、“卢虔”里的大柳树、“光化寺客”里的百合、“岑顺”里的棋子、“陈仲躬”里的铜镜、“居延部落主”里的皮口袋。甚至画像也可以成精，如“画工”和“黄花寺壁”所述。“黄花寺壁”里的妖怪竟然还有一番哲理。他说：“形本是画，画以象真，真之所示，即乃有神。况所画之上，精灵有凭可通，此臣所以有感，感之幻化。”

信神不免信鬼。“南缙”把阴阳两界看作一种镜像关系。“订婚店”中的月下老人不无讥讽地说：“今道途之行，人鬼各半，自不辨耳。”鬼，或寂寂一身，如“赵合”中的鬼；或依其身份，现于居所。贵者豪宅深院，奴仆成群，如“黎阳客”中已故的荀使君；贫者则“野中迴室”，如“李佐文”中的老农。纵观彼时的鬼，并非一味面目狰狞，“谈生”中的鬼下体虽如枯骨，心却极善。



中国古人对狐狸似乎有特别的兴趣，在《太平广记》里占九卷之多，篇幅为众兽之魁。有趣的是，在汉文化和英语文化里，狐都有着“狡猾”和“妖艳”的贬义内涵，如“僧晏通”所示。然而，“李参军”里的群狐并不显得那么坏，“姚坤”里的老狐知恩必报，“李令绪”里的阿姑和金花更是人情脉脉。后世蔚为大观的狐狸故事由此发端，也成就了清代蒲松龄《聊斋志异》缤纷的狐狸角色。

如前所述，唐代具有后世不常见的博大胸怀，丝毫不是一个思想禁锢的时代。《太平广记》中质疑迷信、揭露迷信的故事俯拾皆是，如“润州楼”、“袁继谦”。“画琵琶”更是对盲信进行了有力的讽刺。

不怕鬼的故事也是一大亮点，以“宋定伯”最为著名。“新鬼”则进一步揭示，鬼的存在与为害，完全是由于人的无端恐惧。“秦巨伯”清楚地告诉我们，信之越深，其害越甚。

神灵也远非完美。在故事里有些看上去更像人间的恶霸贪官。“陈鸾凤”中的雷公，狰狞霸道，受飧而不雨，任凭庄稼焦枯。他们有着人类常见的坏品质：欺负老婆（“三卫”），赌博、受贿（“浮梁张令”），逼良为盗（“峡口道士”）。陈鸾凤敢于反抗，大获全胜。“陈袁生”中的道成，平庙宇、毁神像。最有意思的是，道成是一个和尚。

其实和尚道士中亦多虚妄。道士明思远自欺欺人，结果葬身虎腹。“蕴都师”和“宁王”中不守戒律的和尚招来杀身之祸。“东岩寺僧”刻画了一个劫掠女子的淫僧，“僧侠”中的僧半生剪径，“姚坤”中的知庄僧惠沼更是视人命如草芥。

除了上述神灵鬼怪，大量的故事还是关于普通人和他们

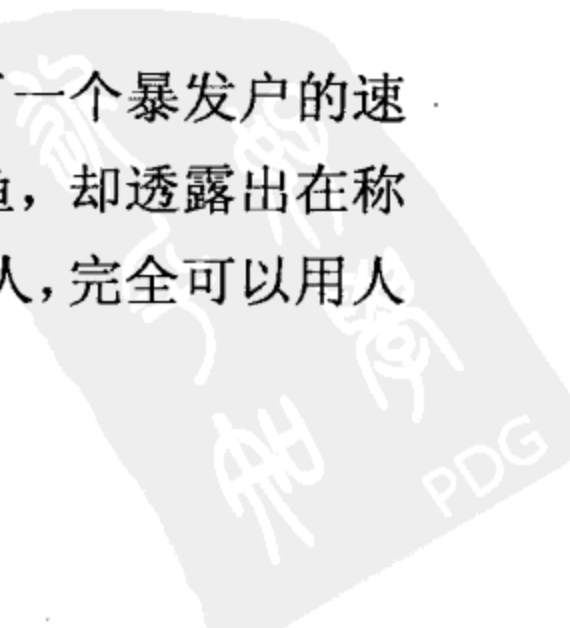
的生活。“李诞女”大力歌颂了小女孩李寄的机智勇敢，“陈鸾凤”歌颂的是一个普通农民的勇气。荀巨伯对朋友的忠诚，管宁的不为金钱声望所动，卢佩的孝道都在故事中得到了反映。

从这些故事中我们也可以看到安史之乱及其后连年的战火带给人民的灾难。“僧晏通”中路边成堆的尸骨，“马燧”中荒废的家园皆为这一方面的写照。唐后期藩镇的将领演变成了割据的军阀，横行霸道，欺压百姓。在“李生”中，我们看到一个杀人不眨眼的镇帅狗少，“马拯”中辛辣地把将军比作吃人的老虎，“李抱贞”中的镇帅为筹措军饷，不惜欺骗信众，进而烧死老僧，以掩其诈，“胡媚儿”更是演绎了一个军阀打劫皇纲的故事。

横征暴敛之下，民不聊生，因此专事打抱不平、为民除害的侠客应运而生。《太平广记》里这类故事往往最为精彩。“红线”与“聂隐娘”可谓代表之作。

24 社会现实总是直接或间接地反映在故事里。在“浮梁张令”里，我们看到了一个典型的贪官污吏的形象，其“家业蔓延江淮间，累金积粟，不可胜计”。即便是旅途之中，吃的也是“海陆珍美毕具”。区区县令，刮敛如此，上层的官僚可想而知。然而，百姓拿他们是没有办法的，作者往往不得不借助神灵之力予以惩罚。

“侯遁”通过捡四块石头的故事，刻画了一个暴发户的速起与速落。“薛伟”的故事虽然讲的是人变鱼，却透露出在称兄道弟的表面之下，官场上常常是翻脸不认人，完全可以用人吃人来形容。





讽刺是解剖人性的手术刀。“汉世老人”虽短，却栩栩如生地刻画出了一个守财奴的嘴脸。“薛氏子”告诫人们，贪心不但最终吃亏，还吃哑巴亏。“啮鼻”挖苦的是昏官，“娄师德”和“京都儒士”将高官和儒士的虚伪暴露无余。

在读书人眼里，科举是头等大事。一旦榜上有名，即可获取一官半职，光宗耀祖。对寒儒来说，更是改变身份的唯一途径。但科举并非那么公平。“李俊”把找关系开后门表现得淋漓尽致，“李君”则告诉我们，钱可通神。

爱情是文学中永恒的母题，《太平广记》里的爱情故事也是五彩缤纷、可歌可泣。但须记，过去的婚姻是包办婚姻，无父母之命、媒妁之言，不可为。虽在某些特殊情况下，男子或可有所选择，但仍不能不顾虑门第关系。因此就女子来说，对婚姻的渴求和对婚姻自由的向往，就强烈地反映在文学作品里。以“崔护”为例，乡间女子就因无法表达对崔护的爱慕，郁郁而亡。即便是上层人家的小姐，也无法袒露自己的心声，哪怕是告诉父母。“王宙”里的情娘惟有憧憬于精神的自由，方有可能实现心愿。

然而，被压抑的东西总是要以某种形式爆发出来的，在文学作品里则常常以“设反”的形式表现，即以与现实情况相反的情形出现。例如，原本处于地位低的、毫无主动权的女方，在人神恋的故事中，却成了主动方，而且女方是神，男方是地位很低的人。以“马士良”为例，女方是谷神之女，马士良是一个犯了罪的逃犯。在“吴堪”中，女方是“天”派来的，吴堪是一个穷县吏。这似乎成了一种定式。



当男女地位大致相当时，女方则常常表现为上层人家未出阁的女儿的鬼魂，如“张果女”里的鬼，为易州司马张果的女儿，男方为张果继任者之子。这类故事往往借助复活的形式展开。但“谈生”例外，故事中的鬼为睢阳王之亡女，谈生却是贫困潦倒之人。

爱情故事也常常以设喻的方式表现。“申屠澄”的人虎恋和“光化寺客”的人与百合之恋都相当哀婉动人。

本书也选译了一部分不乏趣味的关于自然地理、技艺之术的短篇。如“南海大鱼”中的三奇：大鱼实际上是海中一次火山爆发，蟾蜍可能是某种海藻的大爆发，长蛇则明显是海上龙卷风。表面上写的三大怪，实际上是三种自然现象。

另外本书还选了两篇蛇陷城为主复仇的故事。一篇是“邛都老姥”，一篇是“担生”。尽管两个故事的地点相距千里，但不难看出二者同源，而且前者更接近于源头，因为文中明白无误地描写了大震发生前的低频隆隆。中央电视台2006年关于在云南玉溪市抚仙湖湖底发现一座沉睡的古城的报道，可以为这两篇故事做一个有力的注脚。通过对比这两篇文字，我们也可以看出，“事实”是如何逐步发展成“故事”的。

但这并不意味着一千多年前的中国人对科学一无所知。从“吕生”中可以看出当时的人对水银是非常熟悉的，水银的种种特性被十分巧妙地编排到了老姬的身上，便成了一个有趣的故事。

“太阴夫人”中展现出的航空航天知识令人称奇。像鸟一样飞翔，一直是人类的梦想。人们想象着能够有“乌君山”那样的羽衣，或者有“襄阳老叟”那样的有翼飞行器。同时人



们居然知道仅凭翅膀是飞不到月亮的，于是，“太阴夫人”有了飞船——有着良好流线型外形的葫芦，以及宇航服——油衣。关于越高越寒和火箭撕裂空气的轰鸣都是非常正确的描写。

“嘉兴绳技”中，1200年前越狱犯人的想象力也令人拍案叫绝，其巧思远胜现代版的直升飞机劫狱。

同样令人惊异的是，许多被认为是很现代的观念，却可以在这些古代故事中找到共识，如“吴堪”中的环保意识。不同的是，现今依赖的是法律，而古代靠的是上苍的奖惩。

《太平广记》中也有关于科学试验的故事。“绛州僧”中的老僧嘱其弟子在他死后“开吾胸喉，视有何物”，这种为医学献身的精神令后人钦佩。过去，在中国内陆地区俗称大脖子病的甲状腺肿是很常见的。也正是由于有刁俊朝妻这样的勇气，人们才意识到，该病是可以通过手术治疗的。

木工的高超技艺在“杨务廉”、“襄阳老叟”、“华阳李尉”等故事中得到了充分的反映。“李邈”中关于古墓的难以置信的设计也在现代考古中获得了验证。

总之，正如希腊神话是整个欧洲文学的基石，《太平广记》也是后世戏曲小说的原料宝库。

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本书的译文以中华书局1961年版的《太平广记》为底本，在外文出版社1998年出版的英文版《太平广记选（*Into the Porcelain Pillow – 101 Tales from Records of the Taiping Era*）》



的基础上增译而成。此次共新译了52篇，恢复了大部分节略的跋和诗，并作了少量文字上的订正和修改。

本书的故事按照它们在《太平广记》中的原顺序排列。为保证阅读的流畅，译文中尽量不插入注释性括号和脚注，而是将必要的解释用附录的形式统一置于书末。如英语读者对中国古代的人文背景不熟悉的话，先浏览一下附录Ⅲ，当会有所助益。

译 者





INTRODUCTION

Records of the Taiping Era, compiled under the general editorship of Li Fang at the decree of the second emperor of the Song Dynasty, is a comprehensive collection of almost all the written stories up to the beginning of that dynasty. Since it was completed in the third year (978) of Taiping Xingguo reign, it was named after the reign title "Taiping," which means "peaceful."

Records of the Taiping Era has exerted a tremendous influence on Chinese literature, and stands as a landmark in the literary history of China. Most of the reference books it cites no longer exist, but the work itself has preserved a large number of original documents, making them available for study, and making reconstruction of some of the lost parts possible.

The collection consists of nearly 7,000 "records" in 500 volumes from about 400 source books. These records all came under the ancient heading of *xiao shuo*, or "small talk" if the two words are translated literally, in contrast to more serious works such as the Confucian classics. Besides stories, the modern sense of *xiao shuo*, it also includes accounts of geographical wonders, unusual natural phenomena, local customs, skills and arts, biographical sketches, jokes, quotations, and so forth. A look at its table of contents (see Appendix V) can demonstrate the diversity of the types and their proportion.

The principal focus of this present anthology, while giving full consideration to its coverage as is shown in Appendix V, is on the more mature



fiction of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907), which was one of the most prolific dynasties in China's long history. Literature boomed not only in poetry but in other types of prose as well. Writing stories was no longer disdained by Confucian scholars as an inferior pastime. It even became a fashion for them to send their stories, in addition to their poems and essays, to influential nobles as a way to win favor and recommendation. Stories thus became a conscious effort of literary creation.

Tang Dynasty short stories developed from three chief sources: historical records, myths and legends, and oral storytelling.

In China, keeping written official records of history is a practice perhaps as old as the written language itself. From 841 B.C., systematic imperial records were compiled. There are two major styles of composition for these records. One is the listing of events chronologically, as in *The Spring and Autumn Annals*; the other represents history as revolving around historical figures, the most representative of which is Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian*, which consists of five parts: the basic annals, tables, treatises, hereditary houses and biographies, with emphasis on the last. As a matter of fact, these records of people are not just collections of cut-and-dried facts, but are good narrative prose. In ancient times, history books and literary works were not separated as they may be now.

What was written down in the historical records was considered to be authentic facts, yet there were other "facts" too eccentric to be preserved in the official records. Confucius stated that he would talk about neither prodigies nor spirits. And these off-the-official-record events, mostly passed down as myths and legends, developed into a literary genre of their own, known as "records of strange things" in the Kingdom of Wei (220 – 265) and the Jin Dynasty (265 – 420), and continued through the Northern and



Southern Dynasties (420 – 589) up to the Tang Dynasty. Though they were all indiscriminately called “stories” by the ancients, the majority of them are still one step away from fiction, for the mysteries were treated as facts. Rather than make an artist’s attempt at creative writing, the writers were “recording” events that might have interested them and might likewise be interesting to others.

Storytelling is an age-old popular entertainment. Because of its vocal and vulgar nature, very little has been handed down to reveal its earliest form. However, in the Tang Dynasty there bloomed a literary genre called *bian wen*, or translated as “transformation texts.” This written literature was discovered at the turn of the 20th century in the Dunhuang caves. It is in a verse-prose form originally employed by Buddhist monks for liturgical purposes. Buddhism came to China in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 – 220), and flourished in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. In order to propagate this alien religion, the monks strove to make the abstruse doctrines easy to remember and comprehend. Thus a kind of storytelling about the life and teachings of the Buddha, blended with singing and humming through the verses, became popular, somewhat like the liturgical plays staged by the churches of medieval Europe. And also like the development of the liturgical plays when they spread from the temples to the streets, the topics of *bian wen* were no longer confined to religious stories but expanded to include stories of lay heroes and ordinary people.

Traces of record-keeping are still obvious in these stories. A great number of them start by telling the reader unequivocally the year and the place of the event, and the family origin of the protagonist. Some authors even go out of their way to attach a postscript to the story in order to provide the reader with the source of the information, as in *The Departed Soul*. This is not an artistic trick to make fiction sound like fact; on the

contrary, it is a sincere effort to convince the reader that what is written down is not fictitious.

Other traces of historical records remain. For instance, most of the titles of the stories are named after the main character in the tradition of the *Records of the Historian*. As a transliteration of those names into Chinese phonetic symbols will be meaningless to readers unfamiliar with Chinese history, this translation has retitled most of the selected stories. A few, such as *Zhao Tai*, *Mr Li*, and *Hermit Zhang*, are left unchanged.

The Tang Dynasty carried on the tradition of writing about the strange and mysterious. But we can feel a subtle change in its intent. The accounts are no longer attempting to be an objective and impartial record of events; now, the deities and spirits are personified and put into a more or less realistic setting that reflects human society. The authors may employ these personified figures to tell a story and to pass on their views of the world, and herein lies the fundamental distinction between fiction and historical records.

Pioneered by *bian wen*, poems have embedded themselves into these stories. They became a comfortable and familiar vehicle for the writers to vent their feelings or to describe scenery. This verse-in-prose style was further developed in later dynasties to become a conspicuous ingredient of Chinese novels.

Due to the characteristic succinctness of classical writing, stories composed up to the Tang Dynasty are usually very short, often less than 200 Chinese characters. Stories of over 1,000 characters are considered "long," and stories of the length of *The Southern Bough*, that is, over 4,000 characters, are scarce. Western readers may feel the want of descriptive touches and transitional elements, which here must be filled in by using one's imagination.





The history of the Tang Dynasty can be divided roughly into three stages. The early stage (618-741), after almost two centuries of wars known as the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the very brief interval of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), was characterized by political stability, which allowed the national economy to recover and grow. General prosperity reached its height in Kaiyuan reign of Emperor Xuanzong.

More than 40 years of peace during the reign of Xuanzong turned him into a pleasure-seeker. Corruption crept in while regional powers gathered force. From Tianbao reign to the end of Yuanhe reign, the country was torn by the struggle between the central government and separatist warlords, culminating in An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion from 755 to 763, and sporadic but incessant local wars in its wake until Emperor Xianzong suppressed the major separatist force in the Huai River region.

Xianzong, however, was murdered by court eunuchs in 820. This marked the beginning of the last stage of the dynasty when eunuchs emerged as a powerful political force. Being closest to and most trusted by the throne, they not only held sway over the monarch and the fate of the crown prince, but usurped a great share of political power from the cabinet. Cabinet members aligned themselves either with or against the eunuchs, and prime ministers went in and out of office as though riding a merry-go-round. At the same time, the country never fully recovered from the disasters of the civil wars ongoing since An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion. The national economy plummeted. Before the rebellion, salt was sold at one copper coin a liter, but after the rebellion, it rose to 11 coins a liter, and went up to 37 coins a liter in Zhenyuan reign. A nationwide peasant uprising began as Emperor Yizong ascended the throne in 859. A peasant army led by Huang Chao even drove the emperor from the capital and



occupied the city. Though Huang Chao's uprising was finally crushed in 884, the dynasty was too exhausted to regain its former glory. In 907, the Tang Dynasty fell and the country was once again plunged into the chaos of war and quick successions of one short-lived dynasty after another until the Song Dynasty reunified the country in 960.

Generally speaking, the rulers of the Tang Dynasty were relatively liberal and open-minded, especially in the early period. Cross-border commerce and travel flourished, and many new things were introduced into the country. The dynasty lived peacefully with the various ethnic groups within its borders and beyond. Foreign monks and Persians, who were renowned traders coming by the Silk Road, occur frequently in the stories. There is an explicit reference to watching a Brahman dance in *The Southern Bough*. Diplomatic missions overseas are mentioned in *The Long-Beard Kingdom* and *The Kingdom of Silla*, and they brought back stories of adventure. Some stories probably originated in India and came into China along with Buddhism, for example, *The Golden Berry*, *A Ride in a Goose Cage* and *The Proprietress at Wooden Bridge*.

Religious tolerance is obvious in the stories, though royal preferences did exist since the House of Li regarded themselves as descendants of Li Er (Lao Tzu), the spiritual founder of Taoism. This preference is plainly reflected in the number of stories related to Taoism and Taoist priests, which far exceeds those concerning Buddhism and Buddhist monks, as is indicated by the table of contents of the original collection. But royal endorsement and religious contention did not take the extreme forms of one trying to eliminate all others. In *The Two Friends*, for example, a monk visits both the Qingcheng and Emei Mountains, the former a mountain sacred to Taoism and the latter a mountain sacred to Buddhism. Unlike in



previous and later dynasties, Taoist priests, Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars could live harmoniously with each other.

The Taoist aspiration for longevity and becoming immortals was rife and had a strong hold on many, from Taoist priests, as reflected in *Wei Zidong*, to lay believers like Li Qing in *Li Qing the Dyer*. The life of the immortal world is depicted as a kind of paradise where one can enjoy all the leisure and luxury of life without any worries or cares.

To realize that dream, some, like Wang Xiong in *The Kylin Rider*, insist on various kinds of self-realization while others try to obtain that goal by experimenting with longevity elixirs. Therefore alchemy was very popular among Taoist priests, and in *A Hired Hand's Errand* we see them buying ores at the market. As sulfur, realgar, and niter were the most widely used components, and temperature control during calcination was still at a rudimentary stage, incidents of houses burning down and serious physical injuries caused by fires and explosions are found in records of the time. The latter parts of *A Sigh for Millions* and *Wei Zidong* could be reflections on the difficulties of controlling furnace temperature and the consequent frustration on the part of the alchemists.

Immortality, according to one school, can be subdivided into three levels depending on one's "merits." Those who attain immortality after death are of the lowest level; those who roam the deep mountains are of the second level; and those who are able to lift themselves up into the air and ascend to heaven are of the highest level. Wang Xiong, the immortal being in *The Kylin Rider*, is probably at a transition point from the second to the highest level.

The Taoist alchemists' ability to change elements must have contributed to their reputation for magic arts. They can change their shapes (*Priest Andao and His Two Disciples*), evoke lightning and thunder (*Hermit Zhang*)

and manipulate the winds (*A Hired Hand's Errand*), to say nothing of traveling through space and turning base metals into gold.

Buddhism teaches that the soul has an entity of its own and goes through an eternity of circles. The body of a person is merely its temporary residence, and the soul can live separately from the body and resume its shape while the carcass remains partially alive. *The Pink Sleeve* tells how the soul can be dragged away (the "him" in the sentence "Zhang's attendants watched him being dragged out of the gate" actually refers to Zhang's soul) while the dying body lies in a bamboo grove. More fascinating examples can be found in *The Departed Soul* and *The Ninth Princess of the Dragon*, where the soul can act like a normal person and do heroic deeds. However, there might be more complicated explanations of the composition of one's soul, as detailed in *A Collected Soul*.

The Buddhist idea of karma was prevalent, of which *Zhao Tai* is typical. Retribution never fails to come; it is only a matter of time. Inseparable from this is the belief that one's fate is predestined. *Love-Knot Inn* and *Three Confidential Letters* are examples of the latter.

Consequently, a great man was thought to be destined for greatness even if he lived in obscurity in his early days. Yuchi Jingde (585 – 658) (in *The Blacksmith's Money*), Li Jing (571 – 649) (in *Li Jing the Demigod*) and Ma Sui (726 – 795) were all famous generals of the Tang Dynasty. Yuchi was even worshiped as one of the door gods by later generations. On the other hand, bad men were always born bad. Lu Qi was a real historical figure who served at Emperor Dezong's court. Being a vicious man, he was recorded in history as one of the bad prime ministers, and he was believed to have been treacherous from the start (*The Lunar Goddess*). An Lushan, the rebel general who devastated northern China is portrayed as a dangerous monkey in *The Monkey in the Copper Jar*.





Apart from religious beliefs, superstition abounds. It was believed that anything, no matter whether it was animate or inanimate, could gain a spirit, and probably a human form, if it lived long enough; for example the fox in *Sealwort*, the willow tree in *General Willie*, the lily in *The Lily*, the chess pieces in *The Kingdom of Golden Elephant*, the bronze mirror in *The Girl in the Well* and the bags in *The Tribal Chief of Juyan*. Even paintings could come to life, as in *The Maiden on the Painted Screen* and *A Mural in the Temple of Chrysanthemum*, the painted creature of the latter even has a philosophy for his corporeality.

There was a common belief in the existence of ghosts and netherworld spirits. *Yin-Yang Doubles* proposes a mirror effect of the world above ground and below. The old man in *Love-Knot Inn* claims, "Of all those walking creatures in the streets, probably half are humans and half are ghosts," of course a statement not without a touch of sarcasm. Ghosts may occur as lone figures, as in *The Desert Ghosts*, or with houses and all the necessities of life, which usually match their social status. For instance, a poor peasant lives in a shabby low hut (*Night at the Coffin Hut*), but a former prefect occupies a magnificent house with servants (*The Traveler in Liyang County*). Ghosts in the Tang Dynasty stories are often not presented as dark and hideous beings. In *Mr Tan's Bedmate*, the ghost, though physically ugly, has a gentle heart.

The portrayal of foxes is of particular interest. In both Chinese and English cultures, the fox, especially as its adjective implies, carries the connotation of "cunning" and "sexuality." The association is traditionally negative, as presented in *The Fox Vampire*. In *Lieutenant Li's Wife*, however, the foxes do not seem to be so bad. In *Sealwort*, the old fox has a strong sense of gratitude. And in *Li Lingxu and His Fox Aunt*, the fox aunt and her maid Gold Bloom are really kindhearted and generous women.



These stories laid the foundation for fox stories in the following centuries, culminating in the Qing Dynasty writer Pu Songling's lovely fox maidens in *Strange Tales from Make-Do Studio*.

On the other hand, not all people believed in spirits, superstitions or religious ideologies. As mentioned above, the Tang Dynasty had a broadness and openness which later dynasties lacked. Superstitious beliefs are questioned and their falsehood exposed in such stories as *Smoke from the Longevity Tower* and *The Shattered Specter*. Blind faith is ridiculed in *The Magic Lute*.

There are also people who challenge the power or even the very existence of ghosts. In *A Daredevil*, Song Dingbo shows that there is really nothing to fear and man is cleverer than ghosts. *A New Ghost* suggests that it is our fear of the unknown that creates ghosts. In fact, the more seriously you believe in them, the more seriously you will be harmed (*You Won't Be Fooled Twice?*).

Even celestial deities are challenged. In *The Rain Master*, Chen Luanfeng stands up to the thunder god and wins. Gods are not always above criticism or worldly vices. In fact, they may look more like wicked nobles familiar to human society. They bully the weak (*The Mountain God's Daughter-in-Law*), they gamble and take bribes (*The Courier in a Yellow Jacket*), they force people to do bad things (*The Tiger at the Yangtze Gorges*) and they have all the other weaknesses of human beings. *The Ocher River God* is of special interest in that a bad god is overpowered by a human being, and a monk at that. The monk takes such a pragmatic attitude toward the god and temple that his approach borders on atheism.

There were many who were certainly not awed by religious beliefs and their preachers. The boasted power of Taoist priests is ridiculed in *The Meditator*; in *The Wax Figurine* and *Prince Ning*, we find licentious monks who betray the commandments; in *The Monk at East-Mountain Temple*,



one who rapes; in *The Monk Bandit*, a monk who is no different from a bandit; and in *Sealwort*, a monk who has no qualms about taking lives.

Besides deities and spirits, there are plenty of stories about ordinary people and their lives. *The Lis' Youngest Daughter* sings the praises of a young girl named Li Ji. Her bravery not only helps her kill a python but saves the lives of many other girls. Chen Luanfeng, an ordinary peasant in *The Rain Master*, is another example of courage, when he dares to fight the evil thunder god. Exemplary personalities of the Confucian school are extolled, such as Xun Jubo and Guan Ning in *Guan and Hua*. Lu Pei in *The Woman in White* is such a filial son that even netherworld spirits are moved.

From the stories we can also get a glimpse of the devastation caused by An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion and the incessant warfare in its wake. Skeletons are heaped up by the roadside (*The Fox Vampire*) and homes are abandoned (*Ma Sui*). Starting in the later part of the Tang Dynasty, the regional military commanders gradually grew into semi-autonomous warlords and rode roughshod over the people under their jurisdiction. *Mr Li* tells us how the son of such a commander can kill a person without the need of an excuse. In *Man-Eaters*, a general is likened to a tiger. *Red Strand* tells of the conflicts and collusions among warlords. In *The Monk's Immolation*, a garrison commander makes use of believers' trust in a venerable monk to collection money, and to keep his scheme a secret he burns the monk to death. In *The Magic Bottle*, warlord Li Shidao, whose family had been ruling what is roughly present-day Shandong Province for three generations, is bold and powerful enough to hijack an imperial caravan.

The insecurity of life and the cruel oppression and exploitation of the warlords generated a special type of stories about *xiake* – valiant persons with a strong sense of righteousness and adept in martial arts. Among the stories under the category of “gallantry” *Red Strand* and *The Invisible*



Swordsgirl are the most representative.

The stories often criticize the widespread corruption of the day. In *The Courier in a Yellow Jacket* we find a county magistrate who “had amassed an amazing fortune in grain and gold during his term of office, and his property extended from the Yangtze valley to the Huai River.” His meals are prepared according to “elaborate recipes [that] demanded the rarest produce from land and sea.” If a county magistrate lived like that, one can well imagine the lives of officials at higher levels. As common people seemed helpless in the face of official corruption, the writers of the stories frequently turn to supernatural forces for aid in getting retribution or justice.

Other aspects of social life are also exposed. *The Lucky Stones* draws a picture of the quick rise and fall of a parvenu. *A Carp's Story* reveals that beneath the superficial courtesy and gentility, relations in official circles could literally be man-eat-man.

Satire is a sharp weapon for diagnosing human weaknesses. *An Old Man of the Han Dynasty*, short as the story is, is a vivid picture of a miser. *The Two Brothers* tells how one can be cheated by one's own avarice. *The Bitten Nose* satirizes a muddle-headed magistrate. *The Disciplinarian* exposes the hypocrisy of a high official, and *The Erudite Gentlemen in the Capital* does the same to pretentious scholars.

In China's traditional Confucian society, passing the imperial examinations was of critical importance. Success would bring an official post and glory to one's family and ancestors. But the examinations were not as fair as they should have been. Backdoor bargains did take place. *A Successful Candidate* gives us a telling example of how people in power could pull strings, and *Three Confidential Letters* discloses how money could buy success.



Love is a permanent motif in any literature, and love stories in this anthology are many and mosaic. We have to keep in mind the fact that marriage in the past was literally "arranged" by the parents, and choosing a spouse of one's own preference was out of the question for a woman, if not entirely impossible for a man. Even if a man could make his own choice under special circumstances, he still had to take into consideration many things, especially the matching of the social and economic status of family backgrounds.

The longing for the freedom to choose and to love, especially on the part of women, is strongly expressed in the stories. Take *The Blushing Cheeks* for example. A country girl has no way to express her liking of Cui Hu, and if it were not for Cui's accidental return she would simply have passed away unnoticed. Even women of the upper classes could not openly express their love, nor even tell their parents. Qianniang in *The Departed Soul* is a remarkable example. The story could be understood as a proclamation that although the feudal code of behavior could shackle the body, it could not constrain the soul.

What is suppressed often finds vent in one way or another, and the suppressed craving for the freedom to choose and love finds antithetical expression in literary works, such as marriage after death or in a dream, or love affairs between a human being and a deity, a ghost, an animal, or even a plant. Although in real life men had relatively higher status and more freedom in choosing a spouse, in these stories it is often the woman who takes the initiative. There seems to be an interesting pattern that when the love affair is between a human being and a deity, and thus of unequal status, the celestial being is usually the woman. Take for example *Charcoal Valley*, where the daughter of a valley god falls in love with a fugitive man, or *The Conch Girl*, in which the girl is from heaven while the man is a poor



low-level government clerk.

If the two are of comparable status, the woman is often presented as the ghost of a virgin from a high class. For example, the girl in *Zhang's Daughter* is the daughter of an official and the man she seeks is the son of her father's successor. In this story we can see the prototype of the famous Ming Dynasty play *The Peony Pavilion* by Tang Xianzu. This kind of spouse-seeking is often presented as a resurrection. *Mr Tan's Bedmate*, however, is an exception in that Tan is extremely poor, while the ghost is the daughter of a prince.

Moreover, love can be expressed metaphorically. *Mr Shentu's Wife* is a touching story about the love between a man and a tigress. *The Lily* is an extraordinary story of love between the spirit of a plant and a Confucian scholar.

From the numerous accounts of natural phenomena and technical wonders in *Records of the Taiping Era*, a few have been chosen for the richness of their storytelling.

The strange creatures in *Sea Giants* are actually three natural phenomena. The first one is a volcano eruption. The fish's gaping mouth is nothing but the crater of the volcano. The second may be an exceptionally large seaweed pad or a plankton bloom – their size is certainly much exaggerated. Seaweed and plankton are usually phosphate-rich and can give off phosphorescent light under certain conditions. The third is a description of a typhoon. Its cyclonic funnel does look like a coiling snake to an imaginative eye. Though it is not difficult for modern readers to figure out what they are, to the ancients they were mysteries.

Two stories are selected about a snake taking revenge for its master by deluging a town. Although the locales of the incidents are far apart – A

Granny in Qiongdu County is set in the remote mountainous region of the southwest, while *The Snake on the Shoulder-Pole* is set in the flood plain of the Yellow River, these two tales obviously developed from the same source. The cause of these disasters was probably an earthquake, for the former tale, which seems closer to its origin, still bears a typical indication of a quake – the rumbling noise. The discovery reported by China Central Television (CCTV) in 2006 of the remains of an ancient town at the bottom of Lake Fuxian, Yuxi City, Yunnan Province, can be a good footnote to the incident. These two accounts may serve as a clue to the evolution of a story from a natural phenomenon.

Yet the Chinese people more than a millennium ago were not ignorant of science. *The Old Midget* proves that they were very familiar with the characteristics of mercury. It can be cut into smaller and smaller balls without losing its features; it can be rolled back into one again, and can also dissipate into tiny holes or cracks in the floor and remain unsoiled. It is interesting to note how the author successfully wove those features into a fascinating story.

What is more amazing is that in *The Lunar Goddess* people already had distinct ideas about space travel and flying off the ground like birds, ideas which we can also find in *Mount Raven* and *The Carpenter and His Wooden Cranes*. Wings, as was correctly perceived, are not sufficient to carry one to the moon, so spaceships (in this case streamlined gourds) are needed, as well as protective clothing. The temperature drop at higher altitudes and the booming sound of rockets tearing through the air are also accurate speculations.

One may wonder how the prisoner in *The Rope Acrobat* contrived his escape at a time when flying machines were unknown, and managed it without outside assistance. Meticulously conceived plans by modern



prisoners for breaking out of jail by helicopter lose their novelty when compared with this artful prisoner 12 centuries ago.

Surprisingly, what seems to be modern can often be found in ancient stories. For instance, environmental protection is a concern of *The Conch Girl*. One difference is that nowadays we protect our environment by law, while the ancients resorted to rewards and punishments from heaven.

Scientific experiments in the manner of trial and error are also recorded. The protagonist of *The Monk in Jiang Prefecture* who dedicated his body to medical science nearly 1,400 years ago still merits our respect.

In a similar vein, Diao Junchao's wife asks her husband to excise a tumor and see what is inside. By luck, this turns out to be a successful surgical operation. Thyroid tumors were common in the old days in China, but a lack of scientific knowledge shrouded them in an aura of mystery. To some extent, it was by the brave experiments of people like Diao Junchao and his wife in *The Tumor* that it was gradually learned that such tumors could be surgically removed.

Technical wonders, too, find their way into stories. *The Ingenious Carpenter*, *The Carpenter and His Wooden Cranes* and *The Pink Sleeve* are all examples of the carpenters' skills. And the amazing descriptions of tomb design in *An Ancient Tomb* tally well with archeological findings.

To sum up, just as Greek mythology forms a background to European literature, *Records of the Taiping Era* has served as an inexhaustible reservoir for subsequent writers and playwrights.

*

The present translation is based on the 1961 edition by Zhong Hua Book Company. It is an enlarged edition of *Into the Porcelain Pillow* – 101



Tales from Records of the Taiping Era published in 1998 by Foreign Languages Press, Beijing. Fifty-two newly translated stories have been added, and most of the postscripts and poems omitted from the first edition have been restored. Slight revisions and corrections have been made to the original 103 tales. (*The Woman's First Mirror* and *The Bitten Nose* were under one title in the previous edition, and *A Granny in Qiongzhou County* was treated as an appendix to *The Snake on the Shoulder-Pole*) Now, instead of 42, this edition covers 51 of the 92 categories in the original text.

The stories are arranged in their original order. For smoother reading, footnotes, as before, are kept to a minimum and the necessary explanations are collected into appendices at the back of the book. So, if one finds the background of the stories rather unfamiliar, it is advisable to read Appendix III first, which is intended as a simple but helpful guide to China and her traditions.



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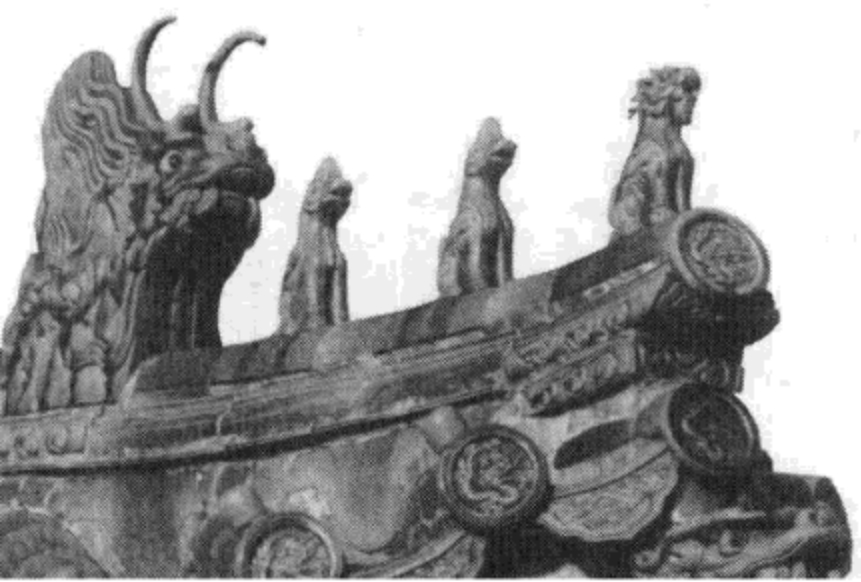
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老子

木公

廣成子

黃安

孟岐

第二

神仙二

周穆王

燕昭王

彭祖

魏伯陽

第三

神仙三

漢武帝

明刻本《太平廣記》書影

Facsimile of a page from the famous Ming Dynasty
annotated edition of *Anthology of Tales from Records of the Taiping Era*



张老

张老者，扬州六合县园叟也。其邻有韦恕者，梁天监中，自扬州曹掾秩满而来。有长女既笄，召里中媒媪，令访良婿。

张老闻之喜，而候媒于韦门。媪出，张老固延入，且备酒食。酒阑，谓媪曰：“闻韦氏有女将适人，求良才于媪，有之乎？”曰：“然。”曰：“某诚衰迈，灌园之业，亦可衣食，幸为求之，事成厚谢。”媪大骂而去。他日又邀媪。媪曰：“叟何不自度。岂有衣冠子女，肯嫁园叟耶？此家诚贫，士大夫家之敌者不少，顾叟非匹。吾安能为叟





Old Zhang

Old Zhang was a gardener in Liuhe County, Yangzhou Prefecture. Among his neighbors was a Mr Wei, a retired official from the prefectural government, who settled there in Tianjian reign of the Liang Dynasty. Wei's eldest daughter was coming of age, so one day he called in a matchmaker, an old lady, to find him a good son-in-law.

The news excited Old Zhang. He waited at Wei's gate for the matchmaker to come out, and ushered her into his house as soon as she emerged. A table was laid out with wine and food. In the heat of the meal, he said, "I heard Mr Wei's daughter is looking for a husband. Is that true?"

"Yes?"

"Although I might look a bit too old, my garden provides enough to feed and clothe a family. Would you kindly make a proposal for me? I'll give you a hefty commission if you can have me engaged."

The matchmaker threw down her chopsticks and left the room with a stream of angry words. Yet, in a few days, he invited her to dinner again.

"Why can't you measure yourself properly?" said the frustrated woman. "What makes you imagine a girl from the high class would marry a gardener? To be sure, the Weis are not rich, but they won't have a problem finding a match among the gentry. You're far from her match. Do you think, simply because I've had a cup of wine at your table, I'd bring shame upon myself by suggesting this crazy thing to Mr Wei?"



一杯酒，乃取辱于韦氏。”叟固曰：“强为吾一言之。言不从，即吾命也。”

媪不得已，冒责而人言之。韦氏大怒曰：“媪以我贫，轻我乃如是？且韦家焉有此事！况园叟何人，敢发此议？叟固不足责，媪何无别之甚耶？”媪曰：“诚非所宜言，为叟所逼，不得不达其意。”韦怒曰：“为吾报之，令日内得五百缗则可。”

媪出，以告张老。乃曰：“诺。”未几，车载纳于韦氏。诸韦大惊曰：“前言戏之耳。且此翁为园，何以致此。吾度其必无而言之。今不移时而钱到，当如之何？”乃使人潜候其女，女亦不恨。乃曰：“此固命乎！”遂许焉。

张老既娶韦氏，园业不废，负秽镬地，鬻蔬不辍。其妻躬执爨濯，了无怍色。亲戚恶之，亦不能止。





“Just put in a word for me, please. If it’s turned down, that’s fate. I won’t blame you.”

Pestered by his entreaties, the matchmaker went over to talk to Wei.

“How can you insult me so!” Wei exploded. “I’m not so poor as to marry my daughter to a gardener! Go and ask around if any Wei had sunk so low. Who is he that he dares make such a proposal? A rustic laborer like him is beneath my reproach, but you, experienced and respected, how can you lose your sense of value?”

“I do know it was not proper for me to suggest this, but I was obliged and had to pass on his word.”

“Tell him then,” Wei accented his words, “if he can give me a bride-price of five hundred strings of coins before the sun goes down, I will give him my daughter.”

The matchmaker went out to tell Old Zhang.

“Fine,” was all Zhang said, and in good time he had a cartload of coins sent to the Weis.

The Weis were dumbfounded. “How can a gardener have so much money, and in ready cash?” exclaimed Mr Wei. “I was just kidding him. I never thought he could have that much. Now the money is here and the sun is still high, what shall we do?”

He had someone seek out his daughter’s opinion. “That must be fate,” she said calmly. So the marriage was agreed upon.

Old Zhang didn’t give up gardening and selling vegetables after the marriage. He went on collecting manure and hoeing the field as he used to do, and his wife did all the daily cooking and washing without a word of complaint. The Weis and their relatives were ashamed of them, but the couple didn’t give that a thought.

数年，中外之有识者责恕曰：“君家诚贫，乡里岂无贫子弟，奈何以女妻园叟？既弃之，何不令远去也？”他日恕致酒，召女及张老。酒酣，微露其意。张老起曰：“所以不即去者，恐有留念。今既相厌，去亦何难？某王屋山下有一小庄，明旦且归耳。”天将曙，来别韦氏：“他岁相思，可令大兄往天坛山南相访。”遂令妻骑驴戴笠，张老策杖相随而去。绝无消息。

后数年，恕念其女，以为蓬头垢面，不可识也，令其男义方访之。到天坛南，适遇一昆仑奴，驾黄牛耕田。问曰：“此有张老家庄否？”昆仑投杖拜曰：“大郎子何久不来？庄去此甚近，某当前引。”遂与俱东去。初上一山，





Several years thus passed, during which Mr Wei was often censured by his more respectable clansmen. "We know you're not well off," some would say, "but isn't there any poor gentlemen in your neighborhood good enough for your daughter? Why on earth did you marry her to an old gardener? If you don't think much of your daughter, why don't you send her out of sight?"

So one day Wei invited Old Zhang and his wife over to dinner, and, after many cups of wine, dropped a hint that they should move away.

"I thought you might miss your daughter," Zhang stood up and replied. "That's why we didn't go away right after our marriage. Now that you're bored by our company, we'll leave tomorrow morning. There is no trouble in moving, for I have a small farm at the foot of the Wangwu Mountains."

Early next morning, he and his wife came over again to say goodbye. "In case you want to see us in the future," said Zhang, "you can send Elder Brother to look for us on the southern slopes." He placed a straw hat on his wife's head and helped her onto a donkey. He himself followed with a stick.

Thus they went away and out of reach.

Before many years had passed, however, Mr Wei began to miss his daughter, painting in his mind's eye doleful pictures of her haggard and shabby looks. He doubted if he could even recognize her now, so he asked his eldest son Yifang to go and see.

On the southern slopes of the Wangwu Mountains, Yifang came upon a dark slave tilling the land with an ox and plow. "Is there an Old Zhang who has a farm around here?" he asked.

The dark man dropped his whip and bowed, "Big Master, what took you so long to come? The manor house isn't far off. Would you

山下有水，过水连绵凡十余处，景色渐异，不与人间同。忽下一山，其水北朱户甲第，楼阁参差，花木繁荣，烟云鲜媚，鸾鹤孔雀，徊翔其间，歌管廖亮耳目。昆仑指曰：“此张家庄也。”韦惊骇莫测。俄而及门，门有紫衣人吏，拜引入厅中。铺陈之华，目所未睹。异香氤氲，遍满崖谷。忽闻珠珮之声渐近，二青衣出曰：“阿郎来此。”次见十数青衣，容色绝代，相对而行，若有所引。俄见一人，戴远游冠，衣朱绶，曳朱履，徐出门。一青衣引韦前拜。仪状伟然，容色芳嫩，细视之，乃张老也。言曰：“人世劳苦，若在火中，身未清凉，愁焰又炽，而无斯须泰时。兄久客寄，何以自娱？贤妹略梳头，即当奉见。”因揖令坐。未几，一青衣来曰：“娘子已梳头毕。”遂引入，见妹于堂前。其堂沉香为梁，玳瑁帖门，碧玉窗，珍





please follow me?"

They walked east over a ridge and down across a creek. As more ridges and creeks took their turns, the view grew increasingly exotic. Descending one slope, Yifang saw on the northern side of the stream a complex of elegant brick houses adorned with red woodwork amidst what must be an enormous garden of flowers. Cranes and peacocks flew among the trees; sweet music floated in the air. "That's the Zhang's," the slave pointed. Yifang could hardly believe his eyes and ears.

An attendant in a purple gown met him at the gate and led him into the reception hall. He had never before laid eyes on such a lavishly decorated room. The hall and the entire valley seemed filled with an unnamable fragrance.

Suddenly, tinkling jewels and bracelets were heard approaching. Two waiting maids entered to announce the master of the house was coming. Next, a score of maids, all beautiful beyond description, filed into the hall in pairs as if leading a royal procession. Then, a tall and handsome man stepped into the room, clad head to foot in fine silk and satin. Yifang bowed. At a closer look he found that this man with soft fair skin was none other than Old Zhang.

"A man labors in the world as if tramping over scorching fire," Zhang said, "and before he can cool down he's engulfed anew in the flames of worry and care, giving him not a moment of peace. I wonder how Elder Brother manages in that transient world. Your sister is refreshing herself. She'll attend you in a moment." They then sat and chatted.

Shortly, a maid came in to announce, "Her Ladyship is ready," and she led Yifang into an inner court.

The beams of the living chambers were of precious eaglewood, the doors were inlaid with polished sea-turtle shell, the window frames

珠箔，阶砌皆冷滑碧色，不辨其物。其妹服饰之盛，世间未见。略叙寒暄，问尊长而已，意甚卤莽。有顷进饌，精美芳馨，不可名状。食讫，馆韦于内厅。

明日方曙，张老与韦生坐。忽有一青衣，附耳而语。张老笑曰：“宅中有客，安得暮归？”因曰：“小妹暂欲游蓬莱山，贤妹亦当去，然未暮即归。兄但憩此。”张老揖而入。俄而五云起于庭中，鸾凤飞翔，丝竹并作。张老及妹，各乘一凤，余从乘鹤者十数人，渐上空中，正东而去。望之已没，犹隐隐闻音乐之声。韦君在后，小青衣供侍甚谨。

迨暮，稍闻笙簧之音，倏忽复到，及下于庭。张老与妻见韦曰：“独居大寂寞。然此地神仙之府，非俗人得游。以兄宿命，合得到此，然亦不可久居，明日当奉别耳。”及时，妹复出别兄，殷勤传语父母而已。张老曰：“人世遐远，不及作书。”奉金二十镒，并与一故席帽





were carved out of jade, the screens were stringed pearls, and the doorsteps were of a glazy green, of what material he could not tell. His sister met him at the door, wearing layers of rich garments beyond compare. She made the routine greetings and asked after her parents with a note of indifference in her voice. A dinner was then spread out. The food tasted marvelous, though Yifang did not know what he was eating. After dinner, he was put up in a guestroom.

Next morning, Old Zhang came to keep him company. Their conversation was interrupted by a maid who whispered into Zhang's ear. "We have a guest. How can we spend the night there?" he chuckled and turned to Yifang. "My sister wishes to make an excursion to Penglai, the mountain of the gods. Your sister is going too. However, we'll be back before it is dark. Meanwhile, you can enjoy yourself here." He bowed and retired into the inner court.

Presently, a rosy cloud lifted from the courtyard and music sprang up. Yifang saw Old Zhang and his sister each riding a phoenix and a score of others followed on white cranes. Higher and higher they rose and gradually faded into the eastern sky, leaving only a trailing sound of music.

Yifang stayed behind and was meticulously attended to by the maids. As dusk descended, instruments were heard again and there they were, landing in the courtyard. Old Zhang and his wife greeted him, "It must have been quite boring to stay alone, and yet ordinary folks won't be lucky enough to visit this fairy land. You have it in your fate to be here once, but it's not for you to stay long. You may go home tomorrow."

Next day, his sister came out to see him off, asking him to convey her best wishes to their parents. "We're too far from your world to write," Old Zhang said as he handed Yifang five hundred ounces of

曰：“兄若无钱，可于扬州北邙卖药王老家，取一千万，持此为信。”遂别，复令昆仑奴送出。却到天坛，昆仑奴拜别而去。

韦自荷金而归，其家惊讶。问之，或以为神仙，或以为妖妄，不知所谓。五六年间金尽，欲取王老钱，复疑其妄。或曰：“取尔许钱，不持一字，此帽安足信？”既而困极，其家强逼之曰：“必不得钱，亦何伤？”乃往扬州，入北邙，而王老者方当肆陈药。韦前曰：“叟何姓？”曰：“姓王。”韦曰：“张老令取钱一千万，持此帽为信。”王曰：“钱即实有，席帽是乎？”韦曰：“叟可验之，岂不识耶？”王老未语，有小女出青布帏中曰：“张老常过，令缝帽顶，其时无皂线，以红线缝之。线色手踪，皆可自验。”因取看之，果是也。遂得载钱而归，乃信真神仙





gold and a worn straw hat. "If Elder Brother should need money, you can take this hat to Old Wang and he'll give you ten million coins. He owns a drug store in the northern quarter of Yangzhou City." In that way they parted. The dark slave led him to where they had first met and bowed his retreat.

Yifang carried the gold home and the whole family was more than surprised. They questioned him over and over. Some guessed that Old Zhang was a celestial being, others believed that he was a kind of sorcerer. No one of them could convince the others.

After five or six years, however, the gold was exhausted. They started to think about the money at Old Wang's, but most feared it was merely a hoax. "It's incredible anyone could claim such a huge amount for a hat without a note signed in black and white," some reasoned. Then things went worse for the family. "It'll do you no harm to try, even if you can't get a penny," they argued this time. Under their pressure, Yifang set out for Yangzhou.

He asked his way to the northern quarter of the city. In the pharmacy an elderly man was arranging herbs. "May I have the honor of knowing your family name?" Yifang asked as he entered the store.

"Wang," the old man replied.

"Old Zhang said I can get ten million from you for this hat."

"The money is ready, but is the hat really Old Zhang's?"

"Why don't you see for yourself? You must be able to tell."

Before Old Wang could answer, a girl emerged from behind a gray cloth curtain. "Once when Old Zhang passed by," she put in, "he asked me to mend the crown of his hat for him. It just happened that I'd run out of black thread, and had to sew it up with some red thread instead. I can certainly tell if it is the thread and my needlework." So she checked the hat and assured Old Wang that it was Old Zhang's.



也。其家又思女，复遣义方往天坛南寻之。到即千山万水，不复有路。时逢樵人，亦无知张老庄者。悲思浩然而归。举家以为仙俗路殊，无相见期。又寻王老，亦去矣。

后数年，义方偶游扬州，闲行北邙前，忽见张家昆仑奴前曰：“大郎家中何如？娘子虽不得归，如日侍左右，家中事无巨细，莫不知之。”因出怀金十斤以奉曰：“娘子令送与大郎君。阿郎与王老会饮于此酒家，大郎且坐，昆仑当入报。”义方坐于酒旗下，日暮不见出。乃入观之，饮者满坐，坐上并无二老，亦无昆仑。取金视之，乃真金也，惊叹而归，又以供数年之食。后不复知张老所在。





So Yifang went home with the money and with a firm belief that Old Zhang was nothing less than a celestial being.

Again, the Weis grew anxious to see their daughter and Yifang was sent to the Wangwu Mountains. The hills and streams turned out to be more than a mere dozen, and there were no longer any roads. He asked many woodcutters, but no one seemed to have heard of Old Zhang and his manor. He turned home utterly disappointed. The family concluded that the celestial world was inaccessible to man, and their daughter was lost to them forever. Neither could they find Old Wang and his store again.

Years later, Yifang happened to be wandering through the streets of the northern quarter of Yangzhou when he was accosted by Old Zhang's dark slave.

"How's Big Master doing?" the dark man asked. "Although Her Ladyship cannot go home, she knows every family event, big or small, as if she were there herself." He took out two hundred ounces of gold from his bag. "Her Ladyship asked me to give this to you. My master is chatting over a cup of wine with Old Wang in this pub. Please take a seat here and allow me to go in and tell him of your presence."

Yifang sat under the wine banner and waited till the sun dropped behind the roofs, but he didn't see Old Zhang come out. He entered the pub. It was packed, but neither Old Zhang nor Old Wang was there, nor the dark slave. He tested the gold and found it was real. He hurried home exhilarated. That sustained the family a number of years, and that was the last they heard from Old Zhang and his wife.

PDF
PDG



杜子春

杜子春者，盖周隋间人。少落拓，不事家产，然以志气闲旷，纵酒闲游。资产荡尽，投于亲故，皆以不事事见弃。

方冬，衣破腹空，徒行长安中，日晚未食，彷徨不知所往。于东市西门，饥寒之色可掬，仰天长吁。有一老人策杖于前，问曰：“君子何叹？”春言其心，且愤其亲戚之疏薄也，感激之气，发于颜色。

老人曰：“几缗则丰用？”子春曰：“三五万则可以活矣。”老人曰：“未也。”更言之：“十万。”曰：“未





A Sigh for Millions

Du Zichun, a man who lived around the time between the Northern Zhou and Sui dynasties, was a loafer in his youth with no sense of responsibility and no thought of a career. He squandered away his days and his inheritance in wine and idleness, and his relatives were soon tired of his incessant pleas for assistance.

Winter set in. With rags on his back and an empty stomach, he wandered aimlessly through the streets of the capital, Chang'an; his famished looks had long been a familiar sight from the east market to the west gate of the city. From dawn to dusk on that particular day, he had not had a single bite, and could not think of anyone to turn to. He stared into the blankness of the firmament and let out a deep, long sigh. Just then an old man approached, leaning on a stick. "Sir," he asked, "what makes you sigh so mournfully?" As Du poured out his grievance, his disgruntlement at the coldness of his relatives was unconcealed.

"How much do you think is needed to make a good living?" inquired the old man.

"I can live on thirty or fifty thousand."

"That probably won't be enough. Why not ask for more?"

"A hundred thousand, then."

"Raise it."

"A million?"

"Raise it."



也。”乃言：“百万。”亦曰：“未也。”曰：“三百万。”乃曰：“可矣。”于是袖出一缗曰：“给子今夕，明日午时，候子于西市波斯邸，慎无后期。”及时子春往，老人果与钱三百万，不告姓名而去。

子春既富，荡心复炽，自以为终身不复羁旅也。乘肥衣轻，会酒徒，征丝管，歌舞于倡楼，不复以治生为意。一二年间，稍稍而尽，衣服车马，易贵从贱，去马而驴，去驴而徒，倏忽如初。既而复无计，自叹于市门。发声而老人到，握其手曰：“君复如此，奇哉。吾将复济子。几缗方可？”子春惭不应。老人因逼之，子春愧谢而已。老人曰：“明日午时，来前期处。”子春忍愧而往，得钱一千万。

未受之初，愤发，以为从此谋身治生，石季伦、猗顿小竖耳。钱既入手，心又翻然，纵适之情，又却如故。不一二年间，贫过旧日。





“Three million?” uttered Du in breathtaking disbelief.

“Well, that might do,” said the old man calmly as he pulled out a string of a thousand coins from his sleeve. “Take this. You’ll need it tonight. At noon tomorrow I’ll be waiting for you at the Persian Mansion in the west market. But don’t be late.”

Du went as he was bidden. The old man handed him the three million and left without even disclosing his name.

Money rekindled his old habit of lavishness and he imagined he would never again have to live a vagrant’s life. He was seen riding fine steeds through the streets, wearing expensive furs, drinking in taverns, and wallowing in music and songs in brothels. His enterprising ambition was flung to the winds. In a year or two the money had slipped through his fingers. His grand carriage and costly clothes were replaced by cheaper brands. Next, he gave up horses for donkeys. Then, he trudged on foot instead of riding. Before he realized it, he had exhausted his means. What could he do but heave the heaviest sigh? At that moment the old man reappeared. Clasp ing his hands, the old man exclaimed, “Sir, you’re a real marvel. How can you be so poor so soon? I’ll give you another chance. How much do you think you’ll need this time?”

As shame clutched his throat, he kept his head bowed no matter how earnestly the old man entreated him. “Come tomorrow at noon,” said the old man soothingly, “to our last meeting place.”

Overcoming his embarrassment, Du kept the appointment and this time received ten million. He had made up his mind to turn over a new leaf and invest wisely so as to outshine the wealthiest men in history. But as soon as the money was deposited in his hands, his determination wavered. He sank back into his old spendthrift self. In another year or two he was worse off than before.

复遇老人于故处，子春不胜其愧，掩面而走。老人牵裾止之，又曰：“嗟乎拙谋也。”因与三千万，曰：“此而不痊，则子贫在膏肓矣。”子春曰：“吾落拓邪游，生涯罄尽，亲戚豪族，无相顾者，独此叟三给我，我何以当之？”因谓老人曰：“吾得此，人间之事可以立，孤孀可以衣食，于名教复圆矣。感叟深惠，立事之后，唯叟所使。”老人曰：“吾心也！子治生毕，来岁中元，见我于老君双桧下。”子春以孤孀多寓淮南，遂转资扬州，买良田百顷，郭中起甲第，要路置邸百余间，悉召孤孀，分居第中。婚嫁甥侄，迁祔族亲，恩者煦之，仇者复之。

既毕事，及期而往。老人者方啸于二桧之阴。遂与登华山云台峰。入四十里余，见一处，室屋严洁，非常人





Once again, he came upon the old man in the street. Covering his burning cheeks with his sleeve, he turned around and took to his heels. The old man gripped him by the hem of his gown and said, "You're really a bad manager of your life." Placing thirty million in his hand, he warned, "If you can't do better this time, you are incurable."

He had been down and out, and none of his affluent relatives or friends gave him a coin, while this old man helped him not once but thrice. How could he repay his beneficence? He said to the old man thoughtfully, "With this money, I'll be able to embark on any project a man could wish to undertake. The old and homeless could be fed and clothed, and the Sage's teachings can be carried out. I'm deeply indebted to you, and I'll be at your service when these things are accomplished."

"That's just what I have in mind," replied the old man. "When you have completed your plan, come to see me under the two entwined juniper trees by the Temple to Lao Tzu on the full moon night of the seventh month next year."

Du calculated that the area south of the Huai River was the most distressed. He therefore invested his money in Yangzhou, where he bought a hundred hectares of rich farmland, constructed mansions in the city proper, and built hostels at the main country-road intersections. He offered the old and homeless free board and lodging, provided for the weddings of his nieces and nephews, and for the funerals of his poorer relatives. He rewarded those who had been kind to him and revenged himself on those who had maltreated him. When all was done, he went to his appointment with the old man.

The old man was practicing whistle calls in the shade of the entwined juniper trees. He led Du on a climb up the Cloud Terrace Peak of Mount Hua. About a dozen miles into the mountain, Du saw a



居。彩云遥覆，惊鹤飞翔其上。有正堂，中有药炉，高九尺余，紫焰光发，灼焕窗户。玉女九人，环炉而立；青龙白虎，分据前后。其时日将暮，老人者，不复俗衣，乃黄冠缝帔士也。持白石三丸，酒一卮，遗子春，令速食之。取一虎皮，铺于内西壁，东向而坐，戒曰：“慎勿语。虽尊神恶鬼夜叉，猛兽地狱；及君之亲属，为所困缚万苦，皆非真实。但当不动不语，宜安心莫惧，终无所苦。当一心念吾所言。”言讫而去。

子春视庭，唯一巨瓮，满中贮水而已。道士适去，旌旗戈甲，千乘万骑，遍满崖谷，呵叱之声，震动天地。有一人称大将军，身长丈余，人马皆着金甲，光芒射人。亲卫数百人，皆杖剑张弓，直入堂前，呵曰：“汝是何人？敢不避大将军。”左右竦剑而前，逼问姓名，又问作何物，皆不对。问者大怒，摧斩争射之声如雷，竟不应。将军者极怒而去。





courtyard of unusual solemnity and serenity set off by a backdrop of rosy clouds. Red-crowned snow-white cranes soared above. In the main hall there was an alchemist's furnace about nine feet tall. Purple tongues of fire licked out from the stove-door, tinting the window panes with their flickering hue. Nine maidens stood around the furnace while a black dragon and a white tiger crouched in front and behind. The sun was then setting behind the peaks. The old man had changed into full Taoist attire complete with yellow hat and cape. He gave Du three white pills and a goblet of wine to wash them down. Then, pulling out a tiger skin and laying it by the west wall of the room, he asked Du to sit on it and face east.

"Don't utter a sound," he cautioned, "no matter what you might see, be it a god, a demon, a carnivore, or infernal tortures of yourself or those dearest to you. All those are nothing but illusions. Don't budge, don't say anything. As long as you keep composed, you won't be hurt. Remember what I said." So saying, he left the hall. As Du looked out into the yard, he saw nothing but a gigantic vat filled to the brim with water.

The priest was hardly gone when tens of thousands of flags and armored cavalymen came pouring over the hills and valleys toward Du. Their war-cries reverberated among the peaks. At the head of a large group of sword-brandishing, arrow-ready soldiers, a man about ten feet tall, clad, along with his horse, in shining gold armor rode straight up to him. "Who are you that dare block my way?" the general blustered. His soldiers wielded their swords and pressed for an answer. Du made no reply. The horde was so enraged that they vied with one another in an attempt to chop him to pieces and to shoot him to death. The noise was deafening. Du, however, kept his mouth shut. At last, the general left in a fury.



俄而猛虎毒龙，狡狴狮子，蝮蝎万计，哮吼拿攫而争前欲搏噬，或跳过其上，子春神色不动。有顷而散。既而大雨滂澍，雷电晦暝，火轮走其左右，电光掣其前后，目不得开。须臾，庭际水深丈余，流电吼雷，势若山川开破，不可制止。瞬息之间，波及坐下，子春端坐不顾。

未顷而将军者复来，引牛头狱卒，奇貌鬼神，将大镬汤而置子春前，长枪两叉，四面周匝，传命曰：“肯言姓名即放，不肯言，即当心取叉置之镬中。”又不应。因执其妻来，拽于阶下，指曰：“言姓名免之。”又不应。及鞭捶流血，或射或斫，或煮或烧，苦不可忍。其妻号哭曰：“诚为陋拙，有辱君子，然幸得执巾栉，奉事十余年矣。今为尊鬼所执，不胜其苦！不敢望君匍匐拜乞，但得公一言，即全性命矣。人谁无情，君乃忍惜一言？”雨泪





In a moment pouncing tigers, venomous dragons, lions, vipers and scorpions by the thousands came snarling forward to bite and kill. They bore down on him and some even leaped over his head, but he kept perfectly calm and collected. After a while they had spent themselves and vanished as fast as they had come.

Presently, the sky grew ominously dark and rain came pelting down in buckets. Fireballs bounced left and right; thunderbolts dashed before and behind. He was almost dazzled by the glaring lights. The booming torrents sweeping down the hillsides joined the thunder above as if the mountains had cracked and crumbled. The water in the yard rose ten feet high and the waves began to lap at his seat. Yet, he did not move a muscle.

Then the general in gold returned with a group of eerie ox-head devils. They placed a big cauldron filled with boiling oil in front of him. With their iron forks pointed at his heart they surrounded him and yelled, "Tell us your name and we'll let you off, otherwise we'll throw you into this cauldron!" Du gave no response. Then the devils brought forth his wife and threw her down on the ground before the stairs. "Tell us your name," they bellowed, "if you want us to spare her." Du made no answer. They started to whip her. Blood oozed out at once from her fair skin. They made gashes in her soft body and jabbed her with arrows; they dipped her in the cauldron and scorched her on the fire by turns. It was beyond endurance.

"I might be stupid and ugly," pleaded his wife hoarsely, "and might be an unworthy wife, but at least I've been attending to you for more than a decade. Now you see me suffering so at the hands of these most respected devils, can't you put in a word to save my life? I'm not asking you to prostrate yourself at their feet. A man must have feelings. Why grudge me even a word?" Her tears rained down her



庭中，且咒且骂，春终不顾。将军且曰：“吾不能毒汝妻耶！”令取锉碓，从脚寸寸锉之。妻叫哭愈急，竟不顾之。将军曰：“此贼妖术已成，不可使久在世间。”敕左右斩之。

斩讫，魂魄被领见阎罗王。曰：“此乃云台峰妖民乎？捉付狱中。”于是熔铜铁杖、碓捣碓磨、火坑镬汤、刀山剑树之苦，无不备尝。然心念道士之言，亦似可忍，竟不呻吟。狱卒告受罪毕。王曰：“此人阴贼，不合得作男，宜令作女人。”配生宋州单父县丞王劝家。

生而多病，针灸药医，略无停日。亦尝坠火堕床，痛苦不齐，终不失声。俄而长大，容色绝代，而口无声，其家目为哑女。亲戚狎者，侮之万端，终不能对。





cheeks as she begged and scolded in the yard. But Du seemed unaffected.

“If you think I have no more ways to torture her,” croaked the general, “you are mistaken!” He called for a file and pestle and mortar and started to file his wife from her feet up. She shrieked at the top of her voice, but Du simply ignored it. “That knave’s black art is accomplished,” groaned the general in disappointment. “We must not allow him to continue his life in this world.” He ordered that Du be put to death.

After his execution his soul was brought before the King of Hell. “Is this the evil soul from the Cloud Terrace Peak? Throw him into jail!” the king commanded. What followed was a succession of tortures. He was tied to a red hot copper stake, lashed by iron whips, pestled in a mortar, ground in a mill, baked in a pit of fire, submerged in a cauldron of boiling oil, pulled over a mountain of knives and driven through a forest of swords. However, as he kept the priest’s word in mind, it seemed that the miseries were somewhat bearable – he didn’t even let out a moan. Finally, the devils reported that they had exhausted their implements of punishment. The king decreed, “Since this soul is of a purely negative nature, it shouldn’t be reincarnated as a male, but as a female. Let it be born into the family of Wang Quan, deputy magistrate of Shanfu County.”

Du was born a weak baby. Acupuncture treatment and bitter herbs were her daily fare. She had fallen off the bed, stumbled over a fire pan, but no matter how great the pains, she never uttered a sound. In this way she gradually grew up as a girl of exceptional beauty. Mouth she had, but it never issued a sound. Her family thought she was mute. And she was never able to retort to the gibes and insults from flirts and rascals.



同乡有进士卢珪者，闻其容而慕之，因媒氏求焉。其家以哑辞之。卢曰：“苟为妻而贤，何用言矣？亦足以戒长舌之妇。”乃许之。卢生备六礼，亲迎为妻。

数年，恩情甚笃，生一男，仅二岁，聪慧无敌。卢抱儿与之言，不应；多方引之，终无辞。卢大怒曰：“昔贾大夫之妻鄙其夫，才不笑，然观其射雉，尚释其憾。今吾陋不及贾，而文艺非徒射雉也，而竟不言！大丈夫为妻所鄙，安用其子？”乃持两足，以头扑于石上，应手而碎，血溅数步。子春爱生于心，忽忘其约，不觉失声云：“噫……”噫声未息，身坐故处，道士者亦在其前。

初五更矣，见其紫焰穿屋上，大火起四合，屋室俱焚。道士叹曰：“错大误余乃如是。”因提其发，投水瓮中，未顷火息。道士前曰：“吾子之心，喜怒哀惧恶欲皆





Also living in that county was a learned young scholar Lu Gui. He had caught wind of her beauty and was enamored. A matchmaker was dispatched, but the marriage proposal was at first declined by her parents on grounds of her muteness. "What is important for a wife," remarked Lu, "is her virtuousness. There is no need for her to talk. Moreover, talkative wives usually turn gossipy." So the marriage was agreed upon. Lu personally went to her door to bring her home in a grand wedding ceremony. Their love grew with their years of marriage, and a son was duly born – a very bright child.

One day when the boy was a full year old, Lu held the child up to her, hoping to wheedle out an utterance of affection. Yet, she remained silent and wordless. Whatever he tried, he just couldn't get a response. Finally he cried out in exasperation, "History tells of a Mr Jia, whose wife refused to smile because he looked ugly. But when she saw how he excelled in archery, she did give him a big sweet smile. I'm not nearly so ugly as that Mr Jia! Besides, my learning is not something that Jia could have dreamed of, and yet you refuse to speak to me! If a man is so despised by his wife, why should he raise her child?" So saying, he grabbed the child by the legs and dashed the boy's head against a rock. The head exploded at the collision and blood splashed several feet. Her motherly love made Du forget his obligation and he let out an "Ouch!" Even before that "Ouch" had died down, he found himself sitting on the tiger skin in the room. The priest was standing beside him. It was almost daybreak.

Purple tongues shot out from the furnace and leaped onto the roof. A fire broke out on all sides and the house went up in flames. "You meager wretch! You have let me down!" moaned the priest. He grabbed Du up by the hair and dropped him in the water vat. Before long the fire burned itself out. The priest approached him and said,



忘矣，所未臻者爱而已。向使子无噫声，吾之药成，子亦上仙矣。嗟乎，仙才之难得也！吾药可重炼，而子之身犹为世界所容矣，勉之哉。”遥指路使归。子春强登基观焉，其炉已坏，中有铁柱，大如臂，长数尺。道士脱衣，以刀子削之。

子春既归，愧其忘誓，复自效以谢其过。行至云台峰，绝无人迹，叹恨而归。





“Sonny, you’ve almost overcome all the weaknesses of a human being, those of joy, anger, sorrow, fear, hate and desire, all except one, and that is love. If you had kept your mouth shut a moment longer, my magic pills would have been made and you and I would have become celestial beings by now. Oh, heavens! How difficult it is to find a qualified person! Though the tempering of magic pills can be started anew, you have to return to the realm you’ve come from. There is no help about that.” So saying, he waved him toward the trail leading down the peak. Du insisted on having a final look, and was allowed to ascend the foundation of the ruined house. Where the furnace once stood, only an iron rod was left erect. It was several feet long and as thick as one’s arm. The priest had taken off his gown and was scraping the charred pole with a knife.

At home, Du was haunted by shame as he could not forgive himself for his breach of faith. To redeem himself, he resolved to make another try. Cherishing that determination, he once again ascended the Cloud Terrace Peak, but there was no trace of human activity there. He returned home with bitter regret.



薛肇

薛肇，不知何许人也。与进士崔宇，于庐山读书。同志四人，二人业未成而去。崔宇勤苦，寻已擢第。唯肇独以修道为务，不知师匠何人，数年之间，已得神仙之道。

庐山下有患风劳者，积年医药不效，尸居候时而已。肇过其门，憩树荫下，因语及疾者。肇欲视之，既见曰：“此甚易耳，可以愈也。”留丹一粒，小于粒米，谓疾者所亲曰：“明晨掐半粒，水吞之，自当有应。未愈，三日外更服半粒也。”其家自以久疾求医，所费巨万，尚未致愈，疾者柴立，仅存余喘，岂此半粟而能救耶？明日试服之，疾者已起，洎午能饮食，策杖而行。如此三日，充盛





The Harp Player

Xue Zhao and Cui Yu studied together in Mount Lu. There had been four of them, but two had quit halfway. Cui exercised great diligence in the Confucian classics and successfully passed the imperial examination. Only Xue devoted himself entirely to the study of Taoism. We have no idea who his teacher was, but after many years he seemed to have attained the Way.

At the foot of the mountain there lived a man who had been paralyzed for years. Medicine failed to show any effect and he was reduced to a living corpse, waiting for the final hour to come.

One day Xue came along the road and happened to take a rest in the tree shade by the sick man's gate. When he learned about the case he asked for permission to see the paralytic. "It's nothing serious," he said to the patient. "I can cure you." He took out a pill, which was smaller than a grain of rice, and handed it to the man's family. "Let him take half of this pill with water tomorrow morning, and his condition will improve. If he's not fully recovered in three days, give him the other half." The sick man's family was incredulous. They had engaged doctors by the dozens and wasted tens of thousands on medicine, and still, the patient was no better than a bundle of bones puffing its last. How can half a pill work? Anyway, they gave him half of the pill the next morning. By noon, the sick man could sit up and start to eat, and then, leaning on a stick he was able to walk! Thus in three days' time he seemed to have recovered. The other half of the pill restored a glitter



康壮，又服半粒，即神气迈逸，肌肤如玉，髭发青鬢，状可二十岁许人。月余，肇复来曰：“子有骨箴，值吾此药，不唯愈疾，兼可得道矣。”乃授其所修之要。此人遂登五老峰，访洞府而去。

崔宇既及第，寻授东畿尉。赴任，过三乡驿，忽逢薛肇，下马叙旧。见肇颜貌风尘，颇有哀嗟之色。宇自以擢第拜官，扬扬矜负。会话久之，日已晡矣。薛谓崔曰：“贫居不远，难于相逢，过所居宵话，可乎？”崔许之，随薛而行，仆乘皆留店中。

初入一小径，甚荒梗。行一二里间，田畴花木，皆异凡境。良久已及，高楼大门，殿阁森沉，若王者所理。崔心惊异之。薛先入，有数十人拥接升殿。然后召崔升阶，与坐款话。久之，谓崔曰：“子有好官，未可此住，但一宵话旧可尔。”促令召乐开筵。顷刻，即于别殿宴乐。更无诸客，唯崔薛二人。女乐四十余辈，拜坐奏乐。选女妓十辈同饮。





to his eyes, his hair turned jet black and his skin jade smooth as if he were again in his twenties.

Xue returned in a month and said to the man, "You're just the right person to study Taoism. My pill has not only driven away your disease but has purged your body." He then taught the man the fundamentals of Taoism. As it happened, the man later became a hermit in Mount Lu.

Cui, on the other hand, having succeeded in the imperial examination, was appointed lieutenant of a suburban county of the East Capital. On his way to take office he came across Xue at the Sanxiang posthouse. They talked about the old days. Cui, full of pride at his success in official circles, could not help but show pity on his old friend's unkempt and time-worn looks. They chatted till the sun declined in the west. "It's a long time since we met last," Xue said. "Why don't we go over to my humble cottage and have a good night's chat? It's not far away." Cui agreed and followed, leaving his horse and attendants at the posthouse.

First they went along a narrow footpath through barren fields. After half a mile or so they came upon rare trees and flowers. Finally there appeared an imposing gate-tower and high walls. The buildings were august and magnificent like a king's palaces. Cui hesitated while Xue went straight in. Scores of attendants came to wait on him and accompanied him to his seat in the main hall. He invited Cui in and offered a seat beside him. "You've got a good position in official circles," he remarked, "so this is not a place for you to remain. But for this one night it won't harm your career." He gave orders for a banquet and music, and everything was ready in minutes. Together they went into another hall where an elaborate feast was spread out. Besides the two of them, there were no other guests. Around them were over forty girl musicians playing soft tunes on their various instruments while another



有一箜篌妓，最为姝颖，崔与并坐。崔见箜篌上有十字云：“天际识归舟，云间辨江树。”崔默记之。席散，薛问崔坐中所悦，以箜篌者对。薛曰：“他日与君，今且未可。”及明，与崔送别，遗金三十斤，送至官路，惨别而去。

崔至官月余，求婚得柳氏，常疑曾识而不记其处。暇日，命取箜篌理曲。崔见十字书在焉，问其故。云：“某时患热疾，梦中见使人追云：‘西城大仙陈溪薛君有客，五百里内解音声处女尽追，可四十余人。’因随去，与薛及客崔少府同饮一夕，觉来疾已愈。薛君即神仙也，崔少府风貌，与君无异。”各话其事，大为惊骇，方知薛已得道尔。





ten served wine and food. Sitting nearest to Cui was a girl playing the harp. He judged her the best looking of the whole band. He also noticed that there were two lines of verse inscribed on her harp, which read:

Afar I know you by the boat you ride;

Atop the clouds I watch trees greet the tide.

After the feast, Xue asked if there was any girl he liked in particular. Cui mentioned the harp player. "You'll have her all right," Xue laughed, "but not tonight."

The day was dawning and it was time to move on. Xue offered five hundred ounces of gold as a farewell present. So reluctant were they to part that they walked hand in hand till they hit the main road.

Hardly had a month slipped by since Cui assumed office when he was engaged to a local beauty, whose surname was Liu. He always felt that he had met her somewhere before, but simply couldn't recall the occasion. One day, his wife took out her harp to play him a tune, and on her harp he saw the two lines of the poem that he clearly remembered. "Have you played at a party recently?" he asked.

"On a certain day some time ago," his wife recalled, "I was in bed with a fever. I dreamed of a herald coming after me. Taoist Master Xue to the west of town is entertaining an important guest tonight, he announced. All virgins within a hundred miles with some musical talent must go to serve the occasion. He had already collected more than forty girls, so I followed. We served a night at the banquet in honor of a Mr Cui. When I woke up, the fever was gone. That Master Xue must be an immortal, and that Mr Cui, as I think of it now, looks like you!"

The complementary parts of their stories surprised them. Only then did Cui realize that Xue Zhao had attained immortality.

阴隐客

唐神龙元年，房州竹山县百姓阴隐客，家富。庄后穿井二年，已浚一千余尺而无水，隐客穿凿之志不辍。

二年外一月余，工人忽闻地中鸡犬鸟雀声。更凿数尺，傍通一石穴。工人乃入穴探之。初数十步无所见，但扞壁傍行。俄转有如日月之光，遂下，其穴下连一山峰。工人乃下山，正立而视，则别一天地日月世界。其山傍向万仞，千岩万壑，莫非灵景，石尽碧琉璃色。每岩壑中，皆有金银宫阙。有大树，身如竹有节，叶如芭蕉。又有紫花如盘，五色蛺蝶，翅大如扇，翔舞花间。五色鸟大如鹤，翱翔树杪。每岩中有清泉一眼，色如镜；白泉一眼，白如乳。

工人渐下至宫阙所，欲入询问。行至阙前，见牌上署曰“天桂山宫”，以银字书之。门两阁内，各有一人惊





A Well Digger's Adventure

A rich country gentleman in Zhushan County, named Yin Yinke, hired workers to dig a water well behind the village. Two years had passed and the shaft had been already sunk to the depth of a thousand feet, but, strange to say, no water was found. Yinke was resolved and wouldn't give up.

One month into the third year of digging – that was the first year of Shenlong reign – the digger at the bottom suddenly heard muffled noises of roosters crowing and dogs barking coming through the ground. A few more feet down, a tunnel appeared in the side of the shaft and the digger ventured in. He fumbled ahead for dozens of steps. Then the darkness seemed to be dispelled by some natural light and he continued to descend.

The tunnel opened onto a high mountain peak. There he stood facing another world. Mountain ranges of glazy rocks unfurled before his eyes and in each valley there were palaces of gold and silver. There were gigantic trees too, whose trunks had joints like those of the bamboo, yet whose leaves were no smaller than those of a palm tree. Colorful birds, cranes perhaps, swooped amidst tree tops. Multicolored butterflies of the size of fans were dancing up and down among purple flowers larger than cushions. Among the rocks were twin springs. The water of one was limpid and clear, the other milky white. He came down to the palaces, hoping to see someone who could satiate his curiosity. Above the gate arch hung a board inscribed in silver with



出。各长五尺余，童颜如玉，衣服轻细，如白雾绿烟，绛唇皓齿，须发如青丝，首冠金冠而跣足。顾谓工人曰：“汝胡为至此？”工人具陈本末。言未毕，门中有数十人出云：“怪有昏浊气。”令责守门者。二人惶惧而言曰：“有外界工人，不意而到，询问途次，所以未奏。”须臾，有绯衣一人传敕曰：“敕门吏礼而遣之。”工人拜谢未毕，门人曰：“汝已至此，何不求游览毕而返？”工人曰：“向者未敢，倘赐从容，乞乘便言之。”门人遂通一玉简入，旋而玉简却出。门人执之，引工人行至清泉眼，令洗浴及浣衣服。又至白泉眼，令盥漱之。味如乳，甘美甚，连饮数掬，似醉而饱。遂为门人引下山。每至宫阙，只得于门外，而不许入。

如是经行半日，至山趾。有一国城，皆是金银珉玉为宫室城楼，以玉字题云“梯仙国”。工人询于门人曰：





the characters "Celestial Osmanthus Palace."

Out from the janitor's room on each side hurried two men about five feet tall, their faces bean-curd soft, their lips naturally red, their hair silkily black and their clothes light and filmy like smoke. On their heads they wore a coronet of gold, but they walked bare-footed. They asked the digger who he was and how he managed to come to this place. The digger did not have time to finish explaining when a throng gathered at the gate demanding to know why there was such a smell of filthy mortal. Blamed for not reporting sooner, the janitors meekly replied that a worker from the outside world, who had trespassed by accident, was just asking his way.

Presently, a messenger in red arrived with a decree, ordering the janitors to send the intruder away with due courtesy. The digger bowed his thanks.

"Since you're already here, why don't you ask for permission to have a look around before you leave?" one janitor suggested.

"I was afraid of being ill-mannered. If sightseeing is possible, do you mind putting in a good word for me?"

The janitor then threw in a jade slat, which returned as quick as a boomerang. With the slat in hand, he led the worker first to the clear spring to wash himself and his clothes, and next to the milky spring to rinse his mouth. It tasted like cow's milk, sweet and natural. The worker drank several mouthfuls. It seemed to quench his hunger and at the same time brought on a slight feeling of tipsiness.

The janitor guided him from palace to palace without entering any. In about half a day, they reached a walled city on the outskirts of the mountains. Even the walls were made of bricks of gold and silver. Three huge characters in jade were inscribed above the town gate: "Stairway to Heaven."

“此国何如？”门人曰：“此皆诸仙初得仙者，关送此国，修行七十万日，然后得至诸天，或玉京蓬莱、昆阇姑射，然方得仙宫职位，主篆主印，飞行自在。”工人曰：“既是仙国，何在吾国之下界？”门人曰：“吾此国是下界之上仙国也。汝国之上，还有仙国如吾国，亦曰梯仙国，一无所异。”言毕，谓工人曰：“卿可归矣。”遂却上山，寻旧路，又令饮白泉数掬。

临至山顶求穴，门人曰：“汝来此虽顷刻，人间已数十年矣，却出旧穴，应不可矣。待吾奏请通天关钥匙送卿归。”工人拜谢。须臾，门人携金印及玉简，又引工人别路而上。至一大门，势侔楼阁，门有数人，俯伏而候。门人示金印，读玉简，划然开门。门人引工人上。才入门，为风云拥而去，因无所睹，唯闻门人云：“好去，为吾致意于赤城贞伯。”





“What place is this?” asked the digger.

“This city is where the newly converted immortals reside. They must live here seven hundred thousand days preparing themselves morally before they can rise to the heavens and have a place in one of the various paradises. And only after that can they be appointed heavenly positions with responsibility, and then they’ll be able to travel freely through space.”

“Since yours is a heavenly paradise, how come it is *below* my world?”

“My country is in fact the upper sphere of the underworld, just as there is a heavenly paradise above your world exactly like mine. ... Now, it’s time for you to return.”

They traced their way up the mountains. At the milky spring, the janitor stopped to give the worker a chance to take a few more drinks. Reaching the peak, however, the digger could not find the tunnel through which he had come.

“Though it might have seemed only a moment to you here,” said the janitor, “decades have crept by in your world. It’s unlikely that you’ll find the old tunnel. Let me make a request for the key to the Heavenly Gate for you.”

The digger thanked him for the trouble.

In no time the janitor returned with a gold seal in one hand and a jade slat in the other. He led the worker up another peak to an imposing gate-tower. The guards bowed most respectfully at the sight of the seal. The janitor pronounced a command from the jade slat. Instantly, the gate flung open, and as soon as the digger stepped across the threshold wind and clouds swept him off his feet, so fast that all scenes were blurred and only a trailing string of words from the janitor’s lips were caught: “Bon voyage. Remember me to ...”

须臾云开，已在房州北三十里孤星山顶洞中。出后，
询阴隐客家，时人云：“已三四世矣。”开井之由，皆不
能知。工人自寻其路，唯见一巨坑，乃崩井之所为也。时
贞元七年矣。工人寻觅家人，了不知处。自后不乐人间，
遂不食五谷，信足而行。数年后，有人于剑阁鸡冠山侧近
逢之，后莫知所在。





Before long, the clouds dispersed and he found himself in a cave on top of Mount Lone Star, ten miles to the north of his hometown. Asking about Yin Yinke, he learned that he was now in the seventh year of Zhenyuan reign and Yinke's great-grandson had come into inheritance of the farm. Nobody remembered that anyone had ever tried to sink a well behind the village.

He found his way to a huge pit where the well had once been – it must have caved in long ago. He looked for his own kinsfolk but they seemed to have passed into oblivion.

The mortal world no longer appealed to him. Food became distasteful. He wandered about for some time. Years later, rumor had it that he was seen in the Cockscomb Mountains, and that was the last anyone ever heard of him.





冯俊

唐贞元初，广陵人冯俊，以佣工资生，多力而愚直，故易售。

常遇一道士，于市买药，置一囊，重百余斤，募能独负者，当倍酬其直。俊乃请行，至六合，约酬一千文，至彼取资。俊乃归告其妻而后从之。道士云：“从我行，不必直至六合，今欲从水路往彼，得舟且随我舟行，亦不减汝直。”俊从之。

遂入小舟，与俊并道士共载。出江口数里，道士曰：“无风，上水不可至，吾施小术。”令二人皆伏舟中。道士独在船上，引帆持楫。二人在舟中，闻风浪声，度其船如在空中，惧不敢动。数食顷，遂令开船，召出。至一处，平湖渺然，前对山岭重叠。舟人久之方悟，乃





A Hired Hand's Errand

Early in Zhenyuan reign there lived in Guangling Prefecture a man called Feng Jun, who made his living as a hired hand. He was sturdily built and reliable, so it was not difficult for him to find work.

One day, an elderly Taoist priest who had purchased a heavy sack of ores in the market was offering an attractive sum of one thousand copper coins to anyone who would help him carry the sack to Liuhe County, some forty miles to the west. Feng volunteered. He then rushed home to tell his wife that he would be out of town for a few days.

"Now come with me," said the priest when they were ready. "Instead of taking the more direct land route, I'd rather follow the water course up the Yangtze River. If we happen upon an upstream boat, you can rest your muscles. I won't take a coin out of your pay."

They found a boat all right, but once out on the open waters the wind dropped.

"How can we go against the stream without a good tail wind?" remarked the priest. "Let me invoke some magic power."

Feng and the boatman were ordered to lie face down in the cabin while the priest remained on deck, managing the sails and rudder. The two in the cabin could only hear the sound of whistling winds over the waves. The boat seemed to be lifted out of its element and flying. They shut their eyes tight, transfixed with fear.

It didn't seem to be a long ride when the priest called them out of the cabin. They were on a serene lake, facing row upon row of sun-



是南湖庐山下星子湾也。道士上岸，令俊负药，船人即付船价。舟人敬惧不受。道士曰：“知汝是浔阳人，要当时至，以此便相假，岂为辞耶？”舟人遂拜受之而去，实江州人也。

遂引俊负药，于乱石间行五六里，将至山下。有一大石方数丈，道士以小石扣之数十下，大石分为二。有一童出于石间，喜曰：“尊师归也。”道士遂引俊入石穴。

初甚峻，下十丈余，旁行渐宽平。入数十步，其中洞明，有大石堂，道士数十，弈棋戏笑。见道士皆曰：“何晚也？”敕俊舍药，命左右速遣来人归。前道士命左右曰：“担人甚饥，与之饭食。”遂于瓷瓿盛胡麻饭与之食。又与一碗浆，甘滑如乳，不知何物也。道士遂送俊出，谓曰：“劳汝远来，少有遗汝。”授与钱一千文，令系腰下，至家解观之，自当有异耳。又问家有几口。云：





kissed mountains. It took the boatman quite a while to realize that they were in Meteor Bay at the foot of Mount Lu.

The priest jumped ashore and took out his pouch to pay, but the boatman was too awed by his magic power to accept the fare.

"Take it," said the priest. "I took liberties with your boat because I knew you live in Xunyang and wish to get home as early as you can. You've done your job and here's your pay." The boatman accepted with a most grateful bow.

The priest then told Feng to shoulder the sack. They threaded their way through a beach of boulders until they came upon a large table rock dozens of feet square at the very foot of the mountain. The priest picked up a stone and knocked on the flat rock in a sort of code. The rock split open and out stepped a neophyte. "Welcome back, Master," he beamed.

The priest led Feng into a cave. At first, the way was difficult, a treacherous and long descent. Then it leveled off and the tunnel became wider. Further on, it grew brighter. There was a spacious hall in which scores of Taoist priests were rollicking about, some playing chess. When they saw the elderly priest they all asked how he was so late. They told Feng to put down the sack and ordered him out immediately. The elderly priest intervened, saying that having traveled all day Feng must be hungry, and now that it was almost dinner time, better let him eat something before he set off again. So Feng was given a bowl of sesame rice and a bowl of soup. Thick and sweet, the milky soup was like nothing he ever had before.

"Thanks for carrying that heavy sack for me. Here's the thousand coins I promised you," said the elderly priest as he accompanied Feng to the cave mouth. "Tuck this pouch in your belt. Remember, don't look at the contents until you get home. It'll bring you good fortune."



“妻儿五口。”授以丹药可百余粒。曰：“日食一粒，可百日不食。”俊辞曰：“此归路远，何由可至？”道士曰：“与汝图之。”遂引行乱石间，见一石卧如虎状，令俊骑上。以物蒙石头，俊执其末，如执辔焉，诫令闭目，候足着地即开。俊如言骑石，道士以鞭鞭石，遂觉此石举在空中而飞。时已向晚，如炊久，觉足蹶地。开目，已在广陵郭门矣，人家方始举烛。比至舍，妻儿犹惊其速。遂解腰下，皆金钱也。自此不复为人佣工，广置田园，为富民焉。里人皆疑为盗也。

后他处有盗发，里人意俊同之，遂繫以诣府。时节使杜公亚，重药术，好奇说。闻俊言，遂命取其金丹。丹至亚手，如坠地焉而失之。兼言郭外所乘之石犹在，遂舍之。





Then he asked Feng about his family. There were five of them, Feng replied, a wife and children.

The priest also poured out a-hundred-odd tiny pills from his medicine gourd and handed them to Feng. "One pill," he said, "will sustain you a hundred days without the need to eat any food."

"So far away from home, how shall I go back?" Feng muttered to himself as they emerged from the cave.

"Don't worry. I'll take care of that, too," said the priest, leading him to the rocky beach where he looked around and picked out a boulder shaped like a crouching tiger. "Climb onto it," he commanded, and wrapping a piece of cloth around the tiger's head, he placed the ends in Feng's hands as if they were reins. "Don't open your eyes until your feet step on firm ground," he warned. So saying, he whipped the rock with his horse-tail whisk and Feng felt the rock taking off into the air.

His feet touched ground again. He opened his eyes to see that he was at the city gate of Guangling, where people were just starting to light candles.

His family was amazed to see him back so soon. He untied the pouch and poured out the coins – they were all gold. He no longer needed to work as a hired hand and could have his own land to farm!

His overnight richness, however, aroused the suspicion of his neighbors. So when a case of robbery was reported, they believed that Feng was involved and dragged him to the government.

It happened that the governor himself was an alchemy and magic enthusiast. He was only too pleased to hear Feng's story and requested to see the coins and pills. But strange to say, once the pills were placed in his hand, they slipped through his fingers and vanished. Feng then referred to the tiger-shaped boulder which was still standing outside

亚由是精意于道，颇好烧炼，竟无所成。俊后寿终，子孙至富焉。



the city gate. The governor was convinced by this and acquitted him.

Encouraged by Feng's evidence, the governor became even more devoted to alchemy, yet he never managed to produce a magic pill. Feng and his descendants enjoyed long and comfortable lives.





李清

李清，北海人也。代传染业。清少学道，多延齐鲁之术士道流，必诚敬接奉之，终无所遇，而勤求之意弥切。家富于财，素为州里之豪氓。子孙及内外姻族，近百数家，皆能游手射利于益都。

每清生日，则争先馈遗，凡积百余万。清性仁俭，来则不拒，纳亦不散。如此相因，填累藏舍。年六十九，生日前一日，忽召姻族，大陈酒食，已而谓曰：“吾赖尔辈勤力无过，各能生活，以是吾获优贍；然吾布衣蔬食，逾三十年矣，宁复有意于华侈哉！尔辈以吾老长行，每馈吾生日衣装玩具，侈亦至矣；然吾自以久所得，緘之一室，曾未阅视，徒损尔之给用，资吾之粪土，竟何为哉！幸天未录吾魂气，行将又及吾之生辰，吾固知尔辈又营续寿之





Li Qing the Dyer

Li Qing, a native of Beihai, was a descendant of a dyer's family. He became interested in Taoism at an early age and had sought advice from almost every Taoist priest or alchemist in that region, treating them with deep respect. But he was never able to come face to face with a real immortal. That disappointment only made him more determined in his search and studies.

He was one of the richest men in the city. His sons and grandsons, including their spouses' relations, extended the family to over a hundred households. All were shrewd in business and well off. On his birthdays they would pile him with gifts. Yet being a thrifty man, he never availed himself to the luxuries, though he would accept what they gave without objection and hoard the presents in the storehouse. Thus he accumulated millions in wealth.

A fortnight before his sixty-ninth birthday he invited all his descendants and relatives to a grand banquet.

"Thanks to your diligence and competence," he said, "I was amply provided for. But for more than three decades I've lived only on vegetables and plain clothes, and I have no intention to change my habits now. Out of respect for my seniority, you've given me an extravagance of birthday gifts. That was much more than I needed. I've locked them up in a storeroom without even checking to see what they are. It's only a waste of things adding to my mortal dust. You shouldn't have taken that trouble. By heaven's permission I'm going to see an-



礼，吾所以先期而会，盖止尔之常态耳。”子孙皆曰：“续寿自远有之，非此将何以展卑下孝敬之心？愿无止绝，俾姻故之不安也。”清曰：“苟尔辈志不可夺，则从吾所欲而致之，可乎？”皆曰：“愿闻尊旨。”清曰：“各能遗吾洪纤麻縻百尺，总而计之，是吾获数千百丈矣，以此为绍续吾寿，岂不延长哉！”皆曰：“谨奉教。然尊旨必有所以，卑小敢问？”清笑谓曰：“终亦须令尔辈知之。吾下界俗人，妄意求道，精神心力，夙夜勤劳，于今六十载矣，而曾无影响。吾年已老耄，朽蠹殆尽，自期筋骸不过三二年耳，欲乘视听步履之尚能，将行早志。尔辈幸无吾阻。”

先是，青州南十里有高山，俯压郡城，峰顶中裂，豁为关崖。州人家家坐对岚岫，归云过鸟，历历尽见。按图经云：“云门山，俗亦谓之劈山。”而清蓄意多时，及是





other birthday. I guess you're preparing gifts again, and that's exactly why I'm having you here today. I'd like you to abandon that practice."

"Birthday celebrations have been a long tradition," his children and grandchildren contended. "Otherwise how can we younger ones show our filial respects to our elders? If you deprive us of this opportunity, we'll suffer a guilty conscience."

"If you insist on celebrating my birthday, could you do it the way I wish?"

"With pleasure," they chorused.

"So this year," he said, "if you want to give me a present, each household can give me a hundred feet of thick hemp rope so I can have thousands of yards altogether. That would be a good way to wish me longevity, wouldn't that?"

"Your wish shall be respected, for you must have your reasons. Do you mind giving us a clue?"

"Well, I'd have to let you know anyway," he smiled. "As you know, for nearly sixty years, year after year, night after day, I've devoted myself to Taoism and tried all means to seek the Way of Tao, but I'm still held down as an ordinary mortal. Now I'm old and useless. I know full well there couldn't be more than a couple of years in store for me. So I must have this one thing done while I still can move about. Hope you wouldn't argue against my plans."

Several miles to the south of the city there was a high mountain, and running all the way down its highest peak was a fathomless cleft, giving it the appearance of a pair of doorposts. From their windows the townspeople could see this lofty peak and the clouds and birds that sailed past. According to the book *Topography*, the peak's formal name was Cloud Gate, while it was also known as Cleft Peak by the locals. Li had long dreamed of exploring the place. So he said to his offspring,



谓姻族曰：“云门山神仙之窟宅也，吾将往焉。吾生日坐大竹箬，以辘轳自缢而下，以纣縻为媒焉；脱不可前，吾当急引其媒，而则出吾于媒末。设有所遇而能肆吾志，亦当复来归。”子孙姻族泣谏曰：“冥冥深远，不测纪极；况山精木魅，蛇虺怪物，何类不储。忍以千金之身，自投于斯，岂久视永年之阶乎！”清曰：“吾志也。汝辈必阻，则吾私行矣。是不获行箬洪縻之安也。”众知不可回，则共治其事。

及期而姻族乡里，凡千百人，竞赍酒馔。迟明，大会于山椒。清乃挥手辞谢而入焉。良久及地，其中极暗，仰视天才如手掌。扞四壁，止容两席许。东南有穴，可俯偻而入。乃弃箬游焉。初甚狭细，前往则可伸腰。如此约行三十里，晃朗微明。俄及洞口，山川景象，云烟草树，宛非人世。旷望久之。惟东南十数里，隐映若有居人焉。因徐步诣之，至则陡绝一台，基级极峻，而南向可以登陟。遂虔诚而上，颇怀恐惧。及至，窥其堂宇甚严，中有道士





“Cloud Gate must be where the immortals live, and I’m going there. On my birthday, put me in a large basket and let me down the cliff by a pulley. That’s the use of the long rope. If I don’t find anything at the bottom, I’ll give the rope a few quick jerks and then you pull me up. If I happen upon something that can fulfill my lifelong wish, you just go home without me. I’ll be able to return by myself.”

“The abyss is so deep and dark and no one has ever been down there,” his descendants protested. “It might be haunted by serpents or beasts, ghosts or spirits. How can your venerable self venture there in person? That couldn’t be the longevity you’ve been seeking.”

“My mind is set,” Li said firmly. “If you’re not going to help, I’ll go by myself without the rope and basket.”

As they realized that he could not be dissuaded, they went home to prepare the rope.

The day came. At dawn the hundreds of members of his large family gathered at the mountain peak with food and wine. Li waved them goodbye and stepped into the basket. It took him a long while to reach the bottom of the crevice. It was murky dark there and the sky looked merely the size of one’s palm. He felt for the sides. The space was no larger than two reed mats. In the southeastern corner there was a cave which one could bend to enter. He left his basket and went in.

At first it was low and narrow, but gradually he could stand straight. In about ten miles it brightened up and soon he reached an opening. He stared in amazement at the exotic view that stretched out before him. Wondering, he thought he could discern a cluster of houses a few miles to the southeast, toward which he walked and found himself standing before a huge mound with precipitous sides. There were scary stairs zigzagging up the southern face, which he climbed in reverence and awe. Upon reaching the top, he saw a group of magnificent build-

四五人。清于是扣门。俄有青童应门问焉。答曰：“青州染工李清。”青童如词以报。清闻中堂曰：“李清伊来也。”乃令前。清惶怖趋拜。当轩一人遥语曰：“未宜来，何即遽至？”因令遍拜诸贤。其时日已午，忽有白发翁自门而入，礼谒，启曰：“蓬莱霞明观丁尊师新到，众圣令邀诸真登上清赴会。”于是列真偕行，谓清曰：“汝且居此。”临出顾曰：“慎无开北扉。”

清巡视院宇，兼启东西门，情意飘飘然，自谓永栖真境。因至堂北，见北户斜掩，偶出顾望。下为青州，宛然在目，离思归心，良久方已，悔恨思返。诸真则已还矣，其中相谓曰：“令其勿犯北门，竟尔自惑，信知仙界不可妄至也。”因与瓶中酒一瓯，其色浓白。既而谓曰：“汝可且归。”清则叩头求哀，又云：“无路却返。”众谓清曰：





ings and four or five Taoist priests inside. He knocked on the gate and a neophyte came to answer the door.

"I'm Li Qing, a dyer from Qingzhou," he responded to the inquiry.

He heard the neophyte make a report and someone in the hall said, "Li Qing has come."

He was invited in. He stepped forth and made a respectful bow. Someone by the window muttered, "What's the hurry? It's not your time yet." He was introduced to the others in the room.

It was noontime then. Without being announced, an old man with flowing white hair came in through the south gate and saluted the priests, "Abbot Ding of the Bright Clouds Temple on Penglai Isle has arrived. The gods are inviting you to join them at a welcome party."

"You may stay here while we're away," the priests said to him before they left, "but mind you, do not open the north gate."

Li looked around the compound and opened the east and west gates to peer out. He felt exhilarated to think that he could thereafter live in this immortal world. He strolled around to the north of the house and saw that the north gate was slightly ajar. He stepped out to have a look and found Qingzhou City was right below. The streets and houses spread out clear and distinct. For a prolonged moment he was caught in an insuppressible homesickness. He even regretted he had come.

By that time the priests had returned. "We told you not to open the north gate," one of them said, "and now you've submitted yourself to temptation. That only proves no one can come uninvited to the immortal world."

They poured him a cup of wine from a bottle. The wine was white and thick. "You can go now," they announced.

Li knelt and pleaded, and resorted to the excuse that he had lost

“会当至此，但时限未耳。汝无苦无途，但闭目，足至地则到乡也。”清不得已，流涕辞行。或相谓曰：“既遣其归，须令有以为生。”清心恃豪富，讶此语为不知己。一人顾清曰：“汝于堂内阁上，取一轴书去。”清既得，谓清曰：“脱归无倚，可以此书自给。”

清遂闭目，觉身如飞鸟，但闻风水之声相激。须臾履地。开目即青州之南门，其时才申末。城隍阡陌，彷彿如旧。至于屋室树木，人民服用，已尽变改。独行尽日，更无一人相识者。即诣故居，朝来之大宅宏门，改张新旧，曾无仿像。左侧有业染者，因投诣与之语。其人称姓李。自云：“我本北海富家。”因指前后闾闾：“此皆我祖先之故业。曾闻先祖于隋开皇四年生日，自缢南山，不知所





the way he came.

“Although you have it prescribed in your fate to come and join us, it’s not your time yet,” they told him. “Don’t worry about the way back. Just close your eyes. When you feel your feet are on solid ground, you’re home.”

With remorseful tears, Li bid the priests farewell.

“If we send him back, we must give him something to live on,” he heard them say. He was surprised that they didn’t know he was such a wealthy man.

“Go to the inner room and pick a book from the shelf,” one of them said to him, which he did. “If you have lost your means of living when you’re home, you can live by this book.”

Li closed his eyes and felt he was flying like a bird. He could only hear the wind rushing by his ears and soon he was on the ground again. He opened his eyes and found he was at the south gate of Qingzhou City.

It was midafternoon. The city and streets looked as usual, but people’s clothing, the trees, and the houses had all changed. He walked along the streets till the sun went down but didn’t see even one familiar face. He went home, but the house he left in the morning had changed beyond recognition. To the left was a dyer’s, so he stepped in to make inquiries.

The proprietor, who introduced himself as a Li, told him that his family was once among the richest in the city. He swept his hand in a circle and said that all the houses in the neighborhood were once his family property. It was passed down in the family that their great ancestor, in the fourth year of Kaihuang reign of the Sui Dynasty, went into the south mountain on his birthday and descended into the crevice, and was lost thereafter. The family then declined.



终，因是家道沦破。”清悒快久之，乃换姓氏，寓游城邑。因取所得书阅之，则疗小儿诸疾方也。其年青州小儿疠疫，清之所医，无不立愈。不旬月，财产复振。

时高宗永徽元年，天下富庶，而北海往往有知清者，因是齐鲁人从而学道术者凡百千辈。至五年，乃谢门徒云：“吾往泰山观封禅。”自此莫知所往。





It took him a long while to shake off the melancholy of his discovery. He changed his name and wandered about. The book he had picked out randomly was a book on pediatrics. That year when an epidemic broke out among children, he was able to save many lives with the help of the prescriptions in the book, and pretty soon he became rich again.

It was then the first year of Yonghui reign of the Tang Dynasty. There was a general prosperity. Li became a well known figure in the region and hundreds gathered around him to study Taoism. In the fifth year of that reign, Li dismissed his followers, saying that he was leaving for the royal enshrining ceremony at Mount Tai. Since then nobody has seen him again.



黑叟

唐宝应中，越州观察使皇甫政妻陆氏，有姿容而无子息。州有寺名宝林，中有魔母神堂，越中士女求男女者，必报验焉。政暇日，率妻孥入寺，至魔母堂，捻香祝曰：“祈一男，请以俸钱百万贯缔构堂宇。”陆氏又曰：“倘遂所愿，亦以脂粉钱百万，别绘神仙。”既而寺中游，薄暮方还。

两月余，妻孕，果生男。政大喜，构堂三间，穷极华丽。陆氏于寺门外筑钱百万，募画工，自汴、滑、徐、泗、扬、润、潭、洪，及天下画者，日有至焉。但以其偿





The Man with a Dark Countenance

In Baoying reign, the governor of Yue Prefecture was Huangfu Zheng. His wife, known as Madame Lu, was very beautiful, but was sterile.

The prefecture boasted of a Buddhist temple named Treasure Forest, in which there was a shrine consecrated to the Magic Mother. Women from all over the prefecture who wished for children would come and pray before her statue. It was said that not one of those prayers had been left unanswered. So one holiday Huangfu brought his wife to the temple, where they went directly to the shrine to offer incense.

“Give me a son,” Huangfu prayed, “and I’ll dedicate a million out of my salary to a new hall for Your Ladyship.”

“If you do give us a son,” his wife added, “I’ll chip in a million out of my powder and rouge allowance to paint you a new portrait.” Then they visited the other halls of the temple. Twilight was coming on when they returned home.

In two months the wife became pregnant and a boy was duly born. Huangfu was overjoyed. He kept his promise and built a three-purlin-width new hall, luxuriously decorated. In the yard his wife heaped a million coins inviting a painter to fresco the walls. As the news spread, painters from near or distant neighborhoods and even from remote corners of the country converged at the temple, but the reward being unusually high, all hesitated to undertake the task.



过多，皆不敢措手。忽一人不说姓名，称剑南来，且言善画，泊寺中月余。一日视其堂壁，数点头。主事僧曰：“何不速成其事耶？”其人笑曰：“请备灯油，将夜缉其事。”僧从其言。至平明，灿烂光明，俨然一壁，画人已不见矣。政大设斋，富商来集。政又择日，率军吏州民，大陈伎乐。

至午时，有一人形容丑黑，身長八尺，荷笠莎衣，荷鋤而至。闾者拒之，政令召入。直上魔母堂，举手鋤以刷其面，壁乃頽。百万之众，鼎沸惊闹，左右武士欲擒杀之，叟无怖色。政问之曰：“尔颠痫耶？”叟曰：“无。”“尔善画耶？”叟曰：“无。”曰：“缘何事而刷此也？”叟





Among them was a man who refused to disclose his name and origin except that he was a master painter from Shu. He had loitered in the temple for more than a month when one day he stared fixedly at the blank walls of the newly built hall and gave several confident nods.

“Why not bring this business to a quick end?” suggested the abbot tentatively.

“Please have plenty of oil lamps ready,” the man smiled. “I’ll do it tonight.”

The abbot did as bidden.

When day broke in the east, the painting was done, resplendent and magnificent. But the painter was nowhere to be found.

Huangfu held a grand vegetarian feast at the temple, attracting hordes of merchants and wealthy men. He then picked another auspicious day on which the prefectural functionaries, local gentry and the secular were all invited to attend the consecration ceremony. Music and dancing were in abundance. At noon a man wearing a lotus-leave hat and a straw cloak came to the temple with a hoe in hand. He was over eight feet tall and had a very unpleasant dark countenance. The guards stopped him at the gate, but Huangfu ordered him to be let in. The man walked straight up to the front, raised his hoe, and scraped out the face of the Magic Mother. The plaster of the wall crumbled; the congregation seethed; and the guards moved in to catch and kill, but the man showed no fear.

“Are you out of your mind?” Huangfu asked.

“No,” replied the man.

“Do you consider yourself a better painter?”

“No.”

“Then why did you destroy the mural?”

“Because I hate to see the painter cheat you. Your Excellency and





曰：“恨画工之罔上也。夫人与上官舍二百万，图写神仙，今比生人，尚不逮矣。”政怒而叱之。叟抚掌笑曰：“如其不信，田舍老妻，足为验耳。”政问曰：“尔妻何在？”叟曰：“住处过湖南三二里。”政令十人随叟召之。

叟自苇庵间，引一女子，年十五六，薄傅粉黛，服不甚奢，艳态媚人，光华动众。顷刻之间，到宝林寺。百万之众，引颈骇观，皆言所画神母，果不及耳。引至阶前，陆氏为之失色。政曰：“尔一贱夫，乃蓄此妇，当进于天子。”叟曰：“待归与田舍亲诀别也。”政遣卒五十，侍女十人，同诣其家。

至江欲渡，叟独在小游艇中，卫卒、侍女、叟妻同一大船。将过江，不觉叟妻于急流之处，忽然飞入游艇中。人皆惶怖，疾棹趋之。夫妻已出，携手而行。又追之，二人俱化为白鹤，冲天而去。





Your Ladyship donated two million for a portrait of a goddess, yet that fellow left you a portrait with plainer looks than an ordinary dame!" Huangfu's reprimand only made the man laugh. Rubbing his palms, he said, "You're incredulous? Go and have a look at my ugly woman and you'll believe me."

"Where is she?" demanded Huangfu.

"At home right now. That's only a mile or so south of the lake."

At Huangfu's order, a team of ten soldiers escorted the man home to fetch his wife. From a hut of reeds and sticks the man called out a woman of about sixteen, slightly powdered. Her clothes were cheap but her features were beyond description, her looks most appealing. Before long, they were back at the temple. The multitude stretched their necks for a glimpse. Everyone agreed that the painted goddess was not her match. Compared to her, Madame Lu looked pale and plain.

"How can a man as low born as you," rebuked Huangfu, "horde such a wife! She must be presented to the emperor!"

"All right, but please let her go home and say goodbye to her relatives and friends," said the man.

Huangfu consented and dispatched ten waiting women and fifty soldiers to escort her home. Reaching the lake, they boarded a big boat while the dark man got on a small yacht alone. Midstream, the man's wife suddenly jumped overboard into the yacht. The soldiers were taken aback and they rowed hard in pursuit. The couple had reached shore and walked hand in hand while the soldiers followed at their heels. The two then turned into a pair of white cranes and soared up into the sky.

Chinese characters and 'PDG' watermark.

裴航

唐长庆中，有裴航秀才，因下第游于鄂渚，谒故旧友人崔相国。值相国赠钱二十万，远挈归于京，因佣巨舟，载于湘汉。同载有樊夫人，乃国色也。言词问接，帷帐昵洽。航虽亲切，无计道达而会面焉。因赂侍妾袅烟，而求达诗一章曰：“同为胡越犹怀想，况遇天仙隔锦屏。倘若玉京朝会去，愿随鸾鹤入青云。”

诗往，久而无答。航数诘袅烟，烟曰：“娘子见诗若不闻，如何？”航无计。因在道求名酝珍果而献之。夫人乃使袅烟召航相识。乃褰帷，而玉莹光寒，花明丽景；云





Blue Bridge Posthouse

In Changqing reign there was a young scholar named Pei Hang, who, after failing that year's imperial examination, went to Ezhu to visit an old family friend, the former Prime Minister Mr Cui, from whom he received a gift of two hundred strings of copper coins, which enabled him to charter a large boat up the Han River back to the capital. Traveling on the same boat was a Madame Fan, a woman of peerless beauty. Their brief conversation, though separated by a curtain, ensured him that she was sweet and friendly. Yet, no matter how earnestly he wished, he just couldn't find an opportunity to meet her face to face. He composed a poem and coaxed her maid Smoke Slim to pass it on to her mistress, which read:

*Great distance cannot sever longing thoughts;
Yet thin gauze cuts me off from fairyland.
If you are going to ascend to sky,
I'd like to follow on an aerial ride.*

The poem produced no effect. "Don't blame me!" the maid replied every time he pressed for an answer. "She just ignored your poem."

All he could think of was buying the lady all kinds of local specialties along the way, such as fruits and wine. Finally, it must have been out of politeness, the lady invited him to her cabin.

As he lifted the door flap, he felt his eyes had fallen on a piece of glistening jade, or a blooming bud. Her hair was a silky cloud; her

低鬟鬓，月淡修眉，举止烟霞外人，肯与尘俗为偶？航再拜揖，聘聆良久之。夫人曰：“妾有夫在汉南，将欲弃官而幽栖岩谷，召某一诀耳，深哀草扰，虑不及期，岂更有情留盼他人？的不然耶，但喜与郎君同舟共济，无以谐谑为意耳。”航曰：“不敢。”饮讫而归。操比冰霜，不可干冒。夫人后使裊烟持诗一章曰：“一饮琼浆百感生，玄霜捣尽见云英。蓝桥便是神仙窟，何必崎岖上玉清。”航览之，空愧佩而已，然亦不能洞达诗之旨趣。后更不复见，但使裊烟达寒暄而已。遂抵襄汉，与使婢挈妆奁，不告辞而去，人不能知其所造。航遍求访之，灭迹匿形，意无踪兆，遂饰妆归辇下。

经蓝桥驿侧近，因渴甚，遂下道求浆而饮。见茅屋三四间，低而复隘，有老姬缉麻苧。航揖之求浆，姬咄曰：





eyebrows were like the curve of a young crescent. She didn't belong to this mortal world, and he must have been crazy to think of striking up close relations with her. He bowed once more, too awed to say anything.

"My husband is in Hannan," she said. "He's summoned me for a farewell, for he's decided to give up his office and go to live in seclusion in the mountains. He gave me short notice, and I'm worried that I may not make it in time. I hope you can understand that I'm in no mood for making new friends. Anyway, it's a pleasure to have your company, but don't take liberties of my presence."

"I certainly won't," he promised. He finished his cup and went out. She was like a piece of spotless crystal that does not allow impurities. Later she had the maid bring him a poem in reply to his. It went like this:

*A cup of wine evokes a host of thoughts;
When herbs are pounded you win mica's hand.
Blue Bridge is dreamland in reality;
You do not have to take a tortuous ride.*

He read with admiration, yet he couldn't fully understand it. That was the only and last time he met her during the long journey, though she would ask Smoke Slim to convey her greetings from time to time. At Xiangyang she disembarked without a word of goodbye, the maid carrying her handbag. He had no idea where she went.

He made many inquiries around, but it seemed that she had left no trace behind. Disappointed, he continued his trip to the capital.

It happened that he was caught in a burning thirst when he approached the Blue Bridge Posthouse. He left the main road to look for a drink and saw a thatched house, low and ramshackle. An old woman was hand-twisting a hemp rope in the yard. He bowed and asked for some water.



“云英擎一瓯浆来，郎君要饮。”航讶之，忆樊夫人诗有云英之句，深不自会。俄于苇箔之下，出双玉手捧瓷，航接饮之，真玉液也，但觉异香氤郁，透于户外。因还瓯，遽揭箔。睹一女子，露裛琼英，春融雪彩，脸欺膩玉，鬓若浓云。娇而掩面蔽身，虽红兰之隐幽谷，不足比其芳丽也。

航惊怛，植足而不能去。因白姬曰：“某仆马甚饥，愿憩于此，当厚答谢，幸无见阻。”姬曰：“任郎君自便。”且遂饭仆秣马。良久谓姬曰：“向睹小娘子，艳丽惊人，姿容擢世，所以踌蹰而不能适，愿纳厚礼而娶之，可乎？”姬曰：“渠已许嫁一人，但时未就耳。我今老病，只有此女孙，昨有神仙，遗灵丹一刀圭，但须玉杵臼捣之百日，方可就吞，当得后天而老。君约取此女者，得玉杵臼，吾当与之也。其余金帛，吾无用处耳。”航拜谢





"Mica," she croaked, "fetch a bowl of water. A gentleman wants to have a drink."

The name surprised him, for he clearly remembered Madame Fan had mentioned it in her poem. A coincidence? Presently, a pair of cream-white hands held out a porcelain bowl from behind a reed screen. He took the bowl and drained it. It was as sweet and refreshing as anything he could imagine. He even thought he could smell a fragrance pouring out from the room. He lifted the screen to return the bowl and beheld a girl who looked like a dewy bud, or rather, the balmy spring breeze that melts the snow. Her cheeks were smoother than the finest jade; her hair was jet black. She covered her face in coyness and withdrew. Even the most blushful orchid bud hidden in a virgin dale couldn't be her match. He was so stunned that his feet seemed planted in the ground.

"Both my servant and my horse are hungry," he turned to the old woman and ventured. "Can we take a break at your place? I'll pay you handsomely. Please don't drive us away."

"Do as you please," the old woman replied.

While his horse was feeding and the servant eating, he spoke to the old woman again. "To be frank, I'm lingering here because of the young lady I just saw. She's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I would like to give you a large betrothal gift. Would you accept it?"

"She's already engaged," the old woman replied, "and her wedding is only a matter of time. I'm old and weak and have only this granddaughter with me. Yesterday, a goddess gave me some herbs for longevity, but she said they needed to be pounded in a jade mortar with a jade pestle for one hundred days before I can take it. If you can give me a jade mortar and a jade pestle, I'll marry her to you. Gold and silk are no use to me."

曰：“愿以百日为期，必携杵臼而至，更无他许人。”姬曰：“然。”航恨恨而去。

及至京国，殊不以举事为意，但于坊曲闹市喧衢，而高声访其玉杵臼，曾无影响。或遇朋友，若不相识，众言为狂人。数月余日，或遇一货玉老翁曰：“近得虢州药铺卜老书，云有玉杵臼货之，郎君恳求如此，此君吾当为书导达。”航愧荷珍重，果获杵臼。卜老曰：“非二百缗不可得。”航乃泻囊，兼货仆货马，方及其数，遂步骤独挈而抵蓝桥。

昔日姬大笑曰：“有如是信士乎？吾岂爱惜女子，而不酬其劳哉。”女亦微笑曰：“虽然，更为吾捣药百日，方议姻好。”姬于襟带间解药，航即捣之，昼为而夜息，





He bowed in gratitude. "Please allow me one hundred days and I'll bring you a jade mortar and a jade pestle, but please don't engage her to anyone else during that time."

"Agreed," she said.

With great reluctance he left.

Back in the capital, he put aside all thoughts of preparing for the examination but roamed from marketplace to marketplace and from store to store, questing aloud for a jade mortar and pestle. Nevertheless, it seemed jade mortars and pestles had never existed. Engrossed in his search he would walk past hailing friends without recognition. People thought he had gone out of his right mind.

One day months later he came across an elderly jade dealer. "I've recently received a message from Mr Bian. He owns a drug store in Guo Prefecture. He said he has a set of jade mortar and pestle to sell. If you really want to buy it, I can write you an introduction letter."

Pei thanked the old man and went to Bian's store, where he saw the jade mortar and pestle, but Bian wouldn't sell it for anything less than two hundred strings of copper coins. So Pei emptied his purse and sold his horse and servant to make up the sum. Then he raced straight back to the Blue Bridge Posthouse with his purchase. This time alone and on foot.

The old woman was still there. "You're indeed a faithful man," she laughed. "I must reward you for your efforts. You see, I'm not so mean as to keep my granddaughter as a spinster."

Mica smiled too. "But," she said, "you still have to pound the herbs for one hundred days before we can discuss marriage."

The old woman took out the herbs from a small pouch on her belt. He pounded away during the day and rested at night. The old woman would take the mortar and pestle inside for the night and he



夜则姬收药臼于内室。航又闻捣药声，因窥之，有玉兔持杵臼，而雪光辉室，可鉴毫芒，于是航之意愈坚。如此日足，姬持而吞之曰：“吾当入洞而告姻戚，为裴郎具帐帟。”遂挈女人山，谓航曰：“但少留此。”

逡巡车马仆隶，迎航而往。别见一大第连云。珠扉晃日，内有帐幄屏帟，珠翠珍玩，莫不臻至，愈如贵戚家焉。仙童侍女，引航入帐就礼讫。航拜姬，悲泣感荷。姬曰：“裴郎自是清冷裴真人子孙，业当出世，不足深愧老姬也！”及引见诸宾，多神仙中人也。后有仙女，鬢髻霓衣，云是妻之姊耳。航拜讫，女曰：“裴郎不相识耶？”航曰：“昔非姻好，不醒拜侍。”女曰：“不忆鄂渚同舟回而抵湘汉乎？”航深惊怛，恳悃陈谢。后问左右，曰：“是小娘子之姊云翘夫人，刘纲仙君之妻也，已是高真，





could hear the sound of pounding coming out from her room. He stole a peep into the room and saw a rabbit doing the job. The whole room was bright as the reflection of snow-covered fields, a brightness in which one could perceive the awns of wheat. He became more determined than ever by the knowledge.

On the hundredth day the drug was done and the old woman swallowed it at one gulp. "Now I'm going back to the mountains to notify my relatives of Mica's wedding," she said, "and prepare a dowry for her. You may stay here and wait a few days." She then led Mica away.

Before long, servants and carriages came to pick him up. He was led to a large complex of cloud-reaching buildings, its pearl-studded gate shining in the sunlight. Inside, curtains and screens, jades and gems were all of the most elegant kind, like those of an extremely rich lord. Virgin boys and girls conducted him into the wedding hall. When the ceremony was over, he bowed to the old woman in utmost gratitude.

"You don't have to feel so indebted to me," she said, "for you're the grandson of Pei the Immortal, and it's your destiny to be an immortal yourself."

She introduced him to the other guests, mostly celestial beings. Among them was a beautiful lady with her hair done up tall and wearing a rainbow-colored gown, who was introduced as his wife's elder sister. He bowed deeply.

"Mr Pei," she said, "don't you recognize me?"

"I'm afraid I never had the honor to meet Your Ladyship, since we were not related," he muttered.

"Don't you remember we traveled by the same boat from Ezhu to Xiangyang?"

Astonished, he apologized. "She's your wife's elder sister named

为玉皇之女吏。” 姬遂遣航将妻入玉峰洞中，琼楼殊室而居之，饵以绛雪琼英之丹。体性清虚，毛发绀绿，神化自在，超为上仙。

至太和中，友人卢颢，遇之于蓝桥驿之西，因说得道之事。遂赠蓝田美玉十斤，紫府云丹一粒，叙话永日，使达书于亲爱。卢颢稽颡曰：“兄既得道，如何乞一言而教授？” 航曰：“老子曰，‘虚其心，实其腹。’ 今之人，心愈实，何由得道之理？” 卢子懵然。而语之曰：“心多妄想，腹漏精溢，即虚实可知矣。凡人自有不死之术，还丹之方，但子未便可教，异日言之。” 卢子知不可请，但终宴而去。后世人莫有遇者。





Yunqiao," he was told. "Her husband is Liu Gang the Immortal and she herself holds a high position in heaven. She's a woman officer directly under the Jade Emperor."

He and his wife were assigned to live in a luxurious cave on Jade Peak. Their food was magic pills. He felt the worldly dirt was gradually purged from his body and his hair became slick and shiny. Soon he attained the freedom of a celestial being.

In Taihe reign, Lu Hao, a former friend of his, met him west of Blue Bridge. Pei told him of his story and gave him a gift of ten pounds of the famous Lantian jade and a pill. They talked a whole day and he asked Lu to carry letters to his kinsfolk.

"Since you've attained the Way, would you tell me how I can do that?" Lu bowed in request.

"Lao Tzu says, 'Fill your stomach but empty your heart.' Nowadays, however, people's hearts are overfilled. How can there be room for the Way?"

Seeing Lu puzzled, he continued, "Just see the host of desires one has in his heart and how he sluices away his essence of life and you can better understand what I mean. In fact, everyone can look forward to immortality and there is always the longevity pill, but your time has not yet come. We may talk about this later."

Lu knew that Pei wouldn't say more on that topic. They parted after the dinner and that was the last time Pei Hang was seen.





麒麟客

麒麟客者，南阳张茂实客佣仆也。茂实家于华山下，唐大中初，偶游洛中，假仆于南市，得一人焉。其名曰王复，年可四十余，佣作之直月五百。勤于无私，出于深诚，苟有可为，不待指使。茂实器之，易其名曰大历。将倍其直，固辞，其家益怜之。

居五年，计酬直尽。一旦辞茂实曰：“复本居山，家业不薄。适与厄会，须佣作以禳之，固非无资而卖力者。今厄尽矣，请从此辞。”茂实不测其言，不敢留，听之去。日暮，人白茂实曰：“感君恩宥，深欲奉报。复家去此甚近，其中景趣，亦甚可观，能相逐一游乎？”茂实喜曰：“何幸，然不欲令家人知，潜一游可乎？”复曰：“甚





The Kylin¹ Rider

The kylin rider once worked as a farmhand for Zhang Maoshi, a native of Nanyang Prefecture who had a farm at the foot of Mount Hua. He was hired from the south market of the East Capital Luoyang during Zhang's visit there in the first year of Dazhong reign. This man, whose name was Wang Xiong, was in his forties, and he agreed to work for a mere five hundred coins a month. He was an earnest and diligent man. Furthermore, he seemed to take delight in working and never waited to be told what to do. Zhang liked him so much that he offered to double his pay, but that was declined. This made the Zhangs hold him in even higher regard.

At the end of the fifth year, however, after settling the accounts Wang told his master that he would like to quit. He had lived quite well off in the mountains, he explained, but in the face of an impending twist of fate, he had to apply himself to hard manual labor in order to avert it. In this way he was unlike those deprived laborers who worked for pay. Now that misfortune had been warded off, it was time for him to go home. Mystified by the story, Zhang didn't venture to stop him.

At sunset that very day Wang came in to make his farewells. "Sir," he said, "I'm very grateful to you for all the favors you've done me. In return, I'd like to invite you to my place. It isn't far off and does have a few scenes worth seeing. Would you like to come with me?"

"I'm much honored," replied Zhang, "but I don't want my fam-

易。”于是截竹杖长数尺，其上书符，授茂实曰：“君杖此人室，称腹痛，左右人悉令取药。去后，潜置竹于衾中，抽身出来可也。”茂实从之。复喜曰：“君真可游吾居者也。”

相与南行一里余。有黄头执青麒麟一，赤文虎二，候于道左。茂实惊欲回避。复曰：“无苦，但前行。”既到前，复乘麒麟，茂实与黄头各乘一虎。茂实惧不敢近。曰：“复相随，请不须畏。且此物人间之极俊者，但试乘之。”遂凭而上，稳不可言。于是从之上仙掌峰。越壑凌山，举意而过，殊不觉峻险。如到三更，计数百里矣。

下一山，物众鲜媚，松石可爱，楼台宫观，非世间所有。将及门，引者揖曰：“阿郎何来？”紫衣吏数百人，罗拜道侧。既入，青衣数十人，容色皆殊，衣服鲜华，不可名状，各执乐器引拜。遂于中堂宴食毕，且命茂实坐。复入更衣，返坐，衣裳冠冕，仪貌堂堂然，实真仙之风度也。其窗户阶闼，屏帟茵褥之盛，固非人世所有；歌鸾舞





ily to know of it. Can we slip away without their noticing?"

"That's very easy," said Wang. He lopped off a bamboo stem several feet long and drew a few magic figures on it. Handing it over to Zhang, he said, "Take this with you into your bedroom and pretend a stomach ache. Send away the servants by asking them to fetch medicine. When they are all gone, hide this bamboo stick beneath the quilt and then come out to join me." Zhang carried out the plan perfectly. Satisfied, Wang said, "You're really the one who is worthy of a visit to my place."

They went south for less than a mile when they saw a groom holding the reins of a gray kylin and two orange-striped tigers by the roadside. The sight of them made Zhang wince, but Wang told him not to panic and just go forward. Wang himself mounted the kylin and bade Zhang and the groom ride the tigers.

"No fear," Wang encouraged. "I'll be at your side. The tiger is the most beautiful animal on earth. Just try it."

Zhang mounted and found the ride was smooth and steady. They scaled cliffs and canyons at will, as if traveling over level ground. By midnight they had covered more than a hundred miles. As they descended one peak, the scenery became phenomenal. The wind-fashioned pine trees, the rocks sculptured by nature, and the mansions and palaces were all fabulous.

In front of a gate a steward bowed and said, "Welcome back, Master." Hundreds of officers and officials in purple robes were kneeling by the driveway. Inside the gate were scores of maids playing an assortment of musical instruments. Their beauty and their clothing were unknown to man. After a banquet in the main hall, the host retired into a private room to change clothes, leaving Zhang at his seat to observe the place. The window lattice and door frame were elegantly carved



凤，及诸声乐，皆所未闻。情意高逸，不复思人寰之事，欢极。主人曰：“此乃仙居，非世人所到。以君宿缘，合一到此，故有逃厄之遇。仙俗路殊，尘静难杂，君宜归修其心。三五劫后，当复相见。复比者尘缘将尽，上界有名，得遇太清真人，召入小有洞中，示以九天之乐，复令下指生死海波。且曰：‘乐虽难求，苦亦易遣。如为山者，掬土增高，不掬则止，穿则陷。夫升高者，不上难而下易乎？’自是修习，经六七劫，乃证此身。回视委骸，积如山岳。四大海水，半是吾宿世父母妻子别泣之泪。然念念修之，倏已一世。形骸虽远，此不忘修致，其功即亦非远。亦时有心远气清，一言而悟者，勉之。遗金百镒，为营身之助。”复乘麒麟，令黄头执之，复步送到家。





and painted, the floor and steps richly carpeted, the songs and dances heavenly. Hearing that music, one simply forgets all human worries and care. Soon Wang reappeared. He looked an entirely different man. In fact, he looked in every way as one imagines a celestial being.

“This is a celestial abode,” informed the host, “and inaccessible to worldly beings, but you have it in your fate to be a guest here once. That’s why I chose to spend five years at your place to elude adversity. Immortals and mortals go separate ways, and earthly and heavenly things do not mix. So, you should go home and cultivate your moral characters. After three or five adversities, we’ll be able to meet again. I’m concluding my worldly affairs and will soon ascend to heaven. I’ve brought you into this Cave of the Haves just to give you a glimpse of heavenly pleasures. In a while I must send you back to the mortal seas. Listen: Though celestial pleasures are difficult to obtain, worldly sufferings on the other hand can be made easier to bear. It’s as if we carry earth to build a mountain. Every handful contributes to its height. If you stop adding earth, it will cease to grow; if you dig under it, it will collapse. For the climber, isn’t it far more difficult to ascend than to descend? From now on, cultivate your morals. After six or seven adversities, your soul will be purified. By then, when you look back, you’ll see your earthly discards piled mountain high, and you’ll discover that the four seas are mostly composed of tears from your worldly parents, wife and children. Never stop cultivating yourself and a lifetime is but a fraction of eternity. The more firmly you persist, the farther away you’ll be from your mortal flesh, and the closer you’ll be to success. Usually, when I meet someone with an aspiring heart and clean spirit who can be awakened, I encourage him and also provide him with a thousand ounces of gold for his family’s livelihood.”

He helped Zhang onto the kylin, and with the groom leading the



家人方环泣。茂实投金于井中，夔抽去竹杖，令茂实潜卧衾中。夔曰：“我当至蓬莱谒大仙伯。明旦莲花峰上，有彩云车去，我之乘也。”遂揖而去。茂实忽呻吟，众惊而问之。茂实给之曰：“初腹痛时，忽若有人见召，遂奄然耳，不知其多少时也。”家人曰：“取药既回，呼之不应，已七日矣。唯心头尚暖，故未敛也。”

明日望之，莲花峰上，果有彩云。遂弃官游名山。后归，出井中金与眷属。再出游山，后不知所在也。





reins he accompanied Zhang home on foot.

Zhang's family was crying around his bed when they arrived. Zhang dropped the gold into the well and Wang retrieved the bamboo stick and asked Zhang to slip back beneath the sheets.

"Tomorrow morning, I'm going to visit Penglai Isle. You'll be able to see rosy clouds on the Lotus Peak. That's my carriage," Wang whispered into Zhang's ear as he bowed his retreat.

Zhang suddenly let out a moan. His family was surprised and asked him how he felt.

"At first I felt a pain in my stomach," he invented, "and all of a sudden I sensed someone summoning me, and then lost consciousness. I really wonder how long it has been."

"It's seven days already," they replied. "We hurried to fetch medicine only to return and find you had passed out. But as your body remained warm, we didn't place you in a coffin."

The next morning, Zhang watched and indeed saw a patch of rosy cloud on the Lotus Peak. He resigned from office and went roaming among the sacred mountains. Later he returned home, dredged up the gold from the well and gave it to his family. He left again for the mountains, and never returned.





太阴夫人

卢杞少时，穷居东都，于废宅内赁舍，邻有麻氏姬孤独。杞遇暴疾，卧月余，麻婆来作羹粥。疾愈后，晚从外归，见金犊车子在麻婆门外。卢公惊异，窥之，见一女年十四五，真神人。明日潜访麻婆，麻婆曰：“莫要作婚姻否？试与商量。”杞曰：“某贫贱，焉敢辄有此意。”麻曰：“亦何妨！”既夜，麻婆曰：“事谐矣。请斋三日，会于城东废观。”

既至，见古木荒草，久无人居。逡巡，雷电风雨暴起，化出楼台，金殿玉帐，景物华丽。有辎辂降空，即前





The Lunar Goddess

Lu Qi was poor when he was young and for a time lived in a miserable hut in the East Capital. Among his neighbors sharing the compound was a lonely dame nicknamed Pocked Granny. When he was struck down with a serious illness for a month, she would come over every day to cook some porridge for him. It was due to her care that he managed to pull through.

Coming home one day, he was surprised to see a gold-foiled ox carriage parked at Granny's door. He peeped in and beheld a girl of fourteen or fifteen years old. "A fairy beauty!" his heart exclaimed.

The next day he strolled over to strike up a bush-beating chat with Pocked Granny about the girl.

"Would you like her to be your wife?" Granny asked. "I can talk it over with her."

"Oh, no! Poor as I am, I wouldn't even dream of that!"

"No harm in asking," she said.

That night she dropped in and announced, "All is settled. I've arranged an appointment with her at the deserted Taoist temple outside the east gate of town, but you must first hold a three-day fast."

Only wild grass and eerie trees distorted by the years greeted them on the former temple ground. Just then, a thunderclap brought forth a violent storm and a palace in all the splendor of jade and gold emerged before their eyes. A carriage landed from the sky and a young lady stepped out to meet him. It was the girl he had seen the other day.



时女子也。与杞相见曰：“某即天人，奉上帝命，遣人间自求匹偶耳。君有仙相，故遣麻婆传意。更七日清斋，当再奉见。”女子呼麻婆，付两丸药。须臾雷电黑云，女子已不见，古木荒草如旧。

麻婆与杞归，清斋七日，刷地种药，才种已蔓生。未顷刻，二葫芦生于蔓上，渐大如两斛瓮。麻婆以刀剖其中，麻婆与杞各处其一。仍令具油衣三领。风雷忽起，腾上碧霄，满耳只闻波涛之声。久之觉寒，令着油衫，如在冰雪中。复令着至三重，甚暖。麻婆曰：“去洛已八万里。”

长久，葫芦止息。遂见宫阙楼台，皆以水晶为墙垣，被甲伏戈者数百人。麻婆引杞入见，紫殿从女百人。命杞坐，具酒馔。麻婆屏立于诸卫下。女子谓杞：“君合得三事，任取一事：常留此宫，寿与天毕；次为地仙，常居人





"I'm a celestial being," she stated. "By permission of His Almighty, I may pick myself a spouse from the human world. Since you have the extraordinary features of divinity, I've asked Pocked Granny to convey my inclination to you. Please fast another seven days and we'll meet again." She beckoned Granny over and handed her two pills.

Dark clouds and thunder closed in and she disappeared. The grand palace once again gave way to the unruly grass and ancient trees.

On the seventh day of Lu's fast, Pocked Granny dug a couple of holes in the earth and planted the two pills. They sprouted almost instantly. Vines grew and two gourds were borne, which swiftly swelled to the size of giant water-vats. She scooped out the pulp and, handing him three oilskin coats, told him to get into one of the gourds while she took the other. A wind rose, and his ears were filled with the booming of waves as he rocketed up into the firmament. Gradually, he started to feel cold. Granny told him to put on an oilskin. It seemed they were traveling through ice and snow. He was instructed to put on another coat, and when he had all three layers on, he felt rather warm.

"We're already thirty thousand miles from the East Capital," he heard Granny say.

After what seemed a long while, the gourd finally stopped. Before his eyes were palaces and pavilions built of luminous crystal, and hundreds of spear-bearing guards in shining armor. Granny led him into a purple palace where the young lady was waiting with her train of maids. He was offered a seat and a feast was laid out. Pocked Granny retreated to the side of the hall.

"Sir," the young lady said, "you have three possibilities before you, and now you must decide on one. First, you may choose to stay in this palace forever and live as long as heaven itself; second, you may choose to be an immortal living on earth and enjoy occasional visits to



间，时得至此；下为中国宰相。”杞曰：“在此处实为上愿。”女子喜曰：“此水晶宫也。某为太阴夫人，仙格已高，足下便是白日升天，然须定，不得改移，以致相累也。”乃赍青纸为表，当庭拜奏，曰：“须启上帝。”

少顷，闻东北间声云：“上帝使至！”太阴夫人与诸仙趋降。俄有幢节香幡，引朱衣少年立阶下。朱衣宣帝命曰：“卢杞，得太阴夫人状云，欲住水晶宫。如何？”杞无言。夫人但令疾应，又无言。夫人及左右大惧，驰入，取鲛绡五匹，以赂使者，欲其稽缓。食顷间又问：“卢杞！欲水晶宫住、作地仙、及人间宰相？此度须决。”杞大呼曰：“人间宰相！”朱衣趋去。





this place; third, you may choose to be the prime minister of the Central Kingdom.”

“Of course my first choice is to live here forever,” Lu replied.

“That’s a wise decision,” the lady beamed. “You know, this is the crystal palace and I’m the Lunar Goddess, quite a high position in heaven. That you can live here is no less an accomplishment than realizing a daydream. But you must make sure you won’t change your mind, or you’ll not only mar your own fortune but mine as well.” She then wrote a petition on a sheet of aqua-blue paper and, with full ceremony, sent it to the Almighty.

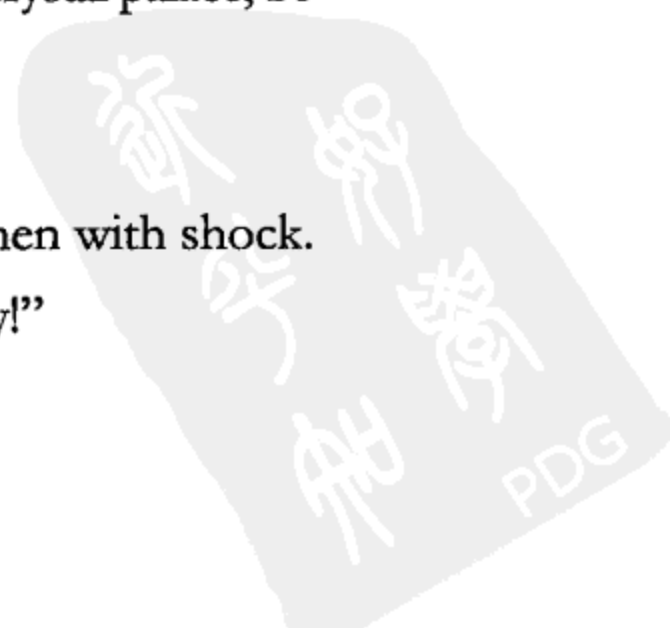
Presently, a voice was heard in the northeastern direction, “Here comes His Almighty’s special envoy.”

The goddess and other celestial beings descended the palace steps to extend their welcome. Amidst a cloud of banners and fragrant smoke, a youth in red arrived at the steps. “Lu Qi,” he pronounced from a scroll, “we received a petition from Her Ladyship the Lunar Goddess that you wish to live forever in the crystal palace. Is that your true wish?”

Lu made no reply. Despite the goddess’ urges, he just held his tongue. The goddess and those present were horrified. She hurried in and brought out five bolts of “dragon gauze” to bribe the envoy for time. After a brief intermission, the envoy spoke again, “Lu Qi, you must decide right now whether you wish to live in the crystal palace, be an immortal on earth, or become a prime minister.”

“I want to be prime minister!” Lu burst out.

The youth whisked off, leaving the goddess ashen with shock. “You, Pocked Granny, have failed me! Take him away!”



太阴夫人失色曰：“此麻婆之过，速领回！”推入葫芦。又闻风水之声，却至故居，尘榻宛然。时已夜半，葫芦与麻婆，并不见矣。



He was pushed back into the gourd and the sound of rolling waves filled the space. When he opened his eyes, he found himself lying on his crumpled bed in his filthy room. Nothing had changed, except that it was past midnight. There was no gourd, no Pocked Granny.





马士良

唐元和初，万年县有马士良者，犯事。时进士王爽为京尹，执法严酷，欲杀之。士良乃亡命入南山。至炭谷湫岸，潜于大柳树下。才晓，见五色云下一仙女于水滨，有金槌玉板，连扣数下，青莲涌出，每蕊旋开，仙女取擘三四枚食之，乃乘云去。

士良见金槌玉板尚在，跃下扣之，少顷复出。士良尽食之十数枚，顿觉身轻，即能飞举，遂扞萝寻向者五色云所。俄见大殿崇宫，食莲女子与群仙处于中。睹之大惊，趋下，以其竹杖连击，坠于洪崖涧边。涧水清洁，因惫熟睡。





Charcoal Valley

In the early years of Yuanhe reign, a man named Ma Shiliang committed an offense against the law. Under the administration of the then mayor of the capital, a Mr Wang who was renowned for favoring harsh punishments, a crime like that usually meant a death sentence. So Ma fled into the Southern Mountains and huddled behind a big willow tree by a pond in Charcoal Valley.

At daybreak he saw a fairy descending to the water-side on a puff of rosy cloud. She picked up a gold hammer and knocked several times on a jade slab. A bud stemmed from the lotus in the pond and gradually bloomed open, revealing a green seedpod in its hold. The fairy plucked three or four seeds from the pod and ate. Then she rode off on the cloud.

Seeing that the hammer and slab were left on the ground, he jumped out from his hiding place and knocked as the fairy had done. The lotus didn't fail to bud and bloom again. As he savored the dozen remaining seeds, he felt himself becoming weightless. So up the vines he climbed toward where the rosy cloud had disappeared. Once atop, he saw a complex of magnificent palaces. Among the celestial beings was the fairy he had seen. Surprised at the sight of an intruder, they rushed down the steps and hit him with their bamboo sticks. He fell down and down through the air, and landed beside a creek, where he dozed off with exhaustion.



及觉，见双鬟小女磨刀谓曰：“君盗灵药，奉命来取君命。”士良大惧，俯伏求救解之。答曰：“此应难免。唯有神液，可以救君。君当以我为妻。”遂去。逡巡持一小碧瓿，内有饭白色，士良尽食，复寝。须臾起，双鬟曰：“药已成矣。”以示之，七颗光莹，如空青色。士良喜叹。看其腹有似红线处，乃刀痕也。女以药摩之，随手不见。戒曰：“但自修学，慎勿语人。倘漏泄，腹疮必裂。”遂同住于湫侧。又曰：“我谷神之女也，守护上仙灵药，故得救君耳。”

至会昌初，往往人见。渔者于炭谷湫捕鱼不获，投一帖子，必随斤两数而得。





When he woke up, he saw a girl sharpening a knife. Her hair was combed up in double curls. "I'm ordered to take your life, because you've stolen the forbidden pills," she said.

He dropped to his knees in a panic and begged for mercy.

"There is no way to escape a fatal stab," she said. "Only the magic elixir can save you, but you must make me your wife."

Having his word of honor, she excused herself, and after a while returned with steamed rice in a small aqua-green porcelain bowl. No sooner had he finished off the rice than he fell into a slumber.

When he awoke, the girl told him that the medicine was ready and produced, to his great admiration, seven sparkling translucent pills. Following her gaze, he looked down to see a faint scarlet cut in his chest as though done by a sharp blade. As she rubbed the pills over the wound, it healed without even leaving a scar.

"Don't tell anyone of the secrets," she warned, "or the gash will burst. I'm the daughter of the Charcoal Valley god guarding the forbidden pills. That's why I'm able to save your life."

They lived in the valley ever after, and up to the beginning of Huichang reign, people going there would chance upon them from time to time. If a disappointed angler should be going home empty-handed, he could drop a note into the pond. Fish of the exact weight he asked for would then be dangling on his hook.





张山人

唐曹王贬衡州。时有张山人，技术之士。王常出猎，因得群鹿十余头，围已合，计必擒获，无何失之，不知其处，召山人问之。山人曰：“此是术者所隐。”遂索水，以刀汤禁之。少顷，于水中见一道士，长才及寸，负囊拄杖，敝敝而行。众人视之，无不见者。山人乃取布针，就水中刺道士左足。遂见跛足而行。即告曰：“此人易追，止十余里。”遂命走向北逐之。十余里，果见道士跛足而行，与水中见者状貌同，遂以王命邀之。道士笑而来。山人曰：“不可责怒，但以礼求请之。”





Hermit Zhang

During one of his many hunting trips in the mountains of Heng Prefecture, the Prince of Cao, who had been banished from Court, flushed out a dozen deer and had them surrounded. However, the herd simply disappeared from what he thought was a sure catch.

As there lived in the mountains a Hermit Zhang, a highly reputed master of magic arts, the prince summoned him to explain this uncanny event.

“The deer are concealed by someone who is versed in the Taoist arts,” said the hermit.

He asked for a bowl of water, chanted an incantation and danced with his sword. In a while, to the surprise of everyone present, there appeared in the bowl a Taoist priest about an inch tall trudging in the water with a stick in one hand and a bag over one shoulder. The hermit took out a sewing needle and pricked the priest in the left foot. The priest limped on in the bowl.

“Now you can overtake him,” said the hermit. “He’s only a few miles away to the north.”

The prince’s men galloped off in that direction. In less than three miles they caught up with a limping priest, who looked exactly like the miniature figure they had just seen in the bowl. They summoned him in the name of the prince and the priest smilingly obliged.

“No harsh words, please,” the hermit advised the prince. “It may be better if you treat him respectfully.”

道士至，王问鹿何在。曰：“鹿在矣。向见诸鹿无故即死，故哀之，所以禁隐，亦不敢放。今在山侧耳。”王遣左右视之，诸鹿隐于小坡而不动。王问其患足之由，曰：“行数里，忽患之。”王召山人，与之相视，乃旧识焉。其足寻亦平复，乃是郴州连山观侯生。即从容遣之。

未期，有一客过郴州，寄宿此观，缚马于观门，粪污颇甚，观主见而责之。客大怒，诟骂道士而去。未十日，客忽遇张山人。山人谓曰：“君方有大厄，盖有所犯触。”客即说前日与道士争骂之由。山人曰：“此异人也，为君致祸。却速往辞谢之。不然，不可脱也。此为震厄，君今夕所至，当截一柏木，长与身齐，致所卧处，以





“Does Your Honor know where the deer are?” the prince asked when the priest was brought before him.

“I do,” replied the priest. “I’ve had them concealed, because I hate to see them die for no good reason. Yet, in spite of my personal feelings, I didn’t dare to release them into the forest without Your Highness’ consent. They’re now on the other side of the mountain.”

The prince dispatched a couple of guards to check this out, and they reported that the deer were all lying quietly on the slope.

“What happened to your foot?” the prince teased.

“I’ve been walking a couple of miles and it suddenly started to hurt.”

The prince beckoned the hermit to come forth and found that the two were in fact acquaintances. The priest turned out to be the abbot of Chain-Peaks Temple in neighboring Chen Prefecture. The pain in his foot was gone, and the prince saw him off with due courtesy.

Not long after that event, a traveler passing through Chen Prefecture dropped in at Chain-Peaks Temple for the night. His horse, which he left tethered to a post by the gate, made a mess with its excrement. When he was censured by the abbot in the morning, he flared up and spewed out a mouthful of profanity before he departed.

Several days later, the traveler chanced upon Hermit Zhang. “An imminent threat overhangs your life,” the hermit observed. “You must have offended someone.” The man then related his squabble with the abbot.

“That priest is no ordinary priest,” remarked the hermit. “He can bring misfortune onto you. If you don’t hurry back and make a timely apology, I’m afraid you won’t be able to avert it. Your adversity comes from the thunder. If you take my advice, wherever you put up tonight, find a length of cypress tree as tall as yourself, lay it in your bed and

衣衾盖之。身别处一屋，以枣木作钉子七枝，钉地依北斗状，仍建辰位，身居第二星下伏，当免矣。”

客大惊，登时却回，求得柏木。来郴州，宿于山馆，如言设法。半夜，忽大风雨，雷电震于前屋，须臾电光直入所止。客伏于星下，不敢动。电入屋数四，如有搜获之状，不得而止。比明前视，柏木已为粉矣。

客益惧，奔谢观主，哀求生命，久而方解。谓客曰：“人不可轻也。毒蛇之辈，尚能害人，岂合无状相作乎？今已舍子矣。”客首罪而去。遂求张山人，厚报之也。





cover it with your clothes and quilt, while you yourself take shelter in another room. Hack out seven date-wood spikes, stick them in the ground in the pattern of the Big Dipper, and squat by the second star. Only this may save you life.”

The stunned traveler immediately reversed his course. By nightfall, he arrived at a mountain inn in Chen Prefecture with a cypress log and date-tree timber, which he arranged as the hermit had told him.

At midnight a storm broke out. The house trembled with the rumble of thunder. A flash of lightning shot into the room. The man held his breath, his muscles scared stiff. Several more bolts struck in succession, as if searching for a target. Then the lightning gave up.

Day broke before the man ventured to look about – the log was smashed to splinters. Appalled, he rushed all the way to the temple to beg forgiveness. After his repeated pleadings, the priest finally spoke, “Never slight anyone, much less insult someone without cause. What if he is a man with the heart of a scorpion? Now you’re pardoned. Better move on.”

The man bowed his way out. He then looked up the hermit and loaded him with gifts.





陈季卿

陈季卿者，家于江南，辞家十年，举进士，志不能无成归，羈栖辇下，鬻书判给衣食。

常访僧于青龙寺，遇僧他适，因息于暖阁中，以待僧还。有终南山翁，亦伺僧归，方拥炉而坐，揖季卿就炉。坐久，谓季卿曰：“日已晡矣，得无馁乎？”季卿曰：“实饥矣，僧且不在，为之奈何？”翁乃于肘后解一小囊，出药方寸，止煎一杯，与季卿曰：“粗可疗饥矣。”季卿啜讫，充然畅适，饥寒之苦，洗然而愈。东壁有《寰瀛图》，季卿乃寻江南路。因长叹曰：“得自渭泛于河，游





A Boat Ride on the Map²

Chen Jiqing, a native of the south, had tarried ten years in the capital for the imperial examination, because he had sworn that he would not return until he accomplished something of consequence. He managed a living by writing letters for the illiterate and copying lawsuit documents. Occasionally, he would go to the Black Dragon Temple to visit the abbot.

On one such visit it happened that the abbot was out. He decided to wait in the inner room. As he lifted the door curtain, he found an old man already waiting by the fireplace, who introduced himself as a hermit in the Southern Mountains and invited him to take a seat by the fire. It was a long wait. The hermit turned to him and asked, "The afternoon is waning. Aren't you hungry?"

"Oh, indeed," replied Chen, "but the abbot is not back yet."

The hermit removed a small pouch from under his arm and took out a piece of dried herb about an inch square. He stewed it in a cup of water and handed it over to Chen. "This might cure your hunger," he said. As Chen sipped it down, he felt a sense of relief. Cold and hunger were entirely swept away.

On the eastern wall of the room was a map of the country. To kill time, Chen traced the map with his fingertip to locate his hometown. "If one could actually sail down along these rivers," he sighed, "starting right here from the Wei River, into the Yellow River, passing through the East Capital, then down the Huai River into the Yangtze, and all the



于洛，泳于淮，济于江，达于家，亦不悔无成而归。”翁笑曰：“此不难致。”乃命僧童折阶前一竹叶，作叶舟，置图中渭水之上，曰：“公但注目于此舟，则如公向来所愿耳。然至家，慎勿久留。”

季卿熟视久之，稍觉渭水波浪，一叶渐大，席帆既张，恍然若登舟。始自渭及河，维舟于禅窟兰若，题诗于南楹云：“霜钟鸣时夕风急，乱鸦又望寒林集。此时辍棹悲且吟，独向莲花一峰立。”明日，次潼关，登岸，题句于关门东普通院门云：“度关悲矢志，万绪乱心机。下坂马无力，扫门尘满衣。计谋多不就，心口自相违。已作羞归计，还胜羞不归。”自陕东，凡所经历，一如前愿。

旬余至家，妻子兄弟，拜迎于门。夕有《江亭晚望》诗，题于书斋云：“立向江亭满目愁，十年前事信悠悠。田园已逐浮云散，乡里半随逝水流。川上莫逢诸钓叟，浦边难得旧沙鸥。不缘齿发未迟暮，吟对远山堪白头。”此夕谓其妻曰：“吾试期近，不可久留，即当进棹。”乃吟一章别其妻云：“月斜寒露白，此夕去留心。酒至添愁饮，诗成和泪吟。离歌栖风管，别鹤怨瑶琴。明夜相思处，秋风吹半衾。”将登舟，又留一章别诸兄弟云：“谋身非不早，其奈命来迟。旧友皆霄汉，此身犹路歧。北风微雪后，晚景有云时。惆怅清江上，区区趁试期。”一更后，复登叶舟，泛江而逝。兄弟妻属，恸哭于滨，谓其鬼物矣。

一叶漾漾，遵旧途至于渭滨。乃赁乘，复游青龙寺，宛然见山翁拥褐而坐。季卿谢曰：“归则归矣，得非梦



way home by boat, it would be the accomplishment of a lifetime.”

“Your wish is not that difficult to attain,” smiled the hermit. He asked a neophyte to fetch him a bamboo leaf from the courtyard and folded it into the shape of a boat. He placed the “boat” on the map where the Wei River lay and said, “Sir, now concentrate your mind and keep your eyes fixed on this boat, and you’ll be able to fulfill your life-long wish. But, remember one thing: Don’t stay too long at home.”

After staring at the boat for a while, he sensed that waves were rising on the Wei River and the leaf-boat had expanded. A sail was hoisted and he felt himself stepping aboard. The boat set sail, floating down the Wei River to the Yellow River. Everything happened exactly as how he had traced it over the map. On his way he stopped over at scenic spots and historical sites, and paid visits to famous temples, leaving a poem here and there on the walls.

He reached home in about ten days. His wife and brothers welcomed him at the gate. In his excitement he penned a poem on the white walls of his study lamenting the swift passage of time and his uneventful life. That evening he said to his wife, “The date set for the imperial examination is drawing near. I can’t stay. I must return tonight.”

When it was completely dark, he boarded his leaf-boat and disappeared up the stream. His wife and brothers wailed at the riverside, thinking that his ephemeral appearance was but an apparition of his ghost.

The leaf retraced its route upstream back to the Wei River. Off the boat he chartered a coach and rode up to the Black Dragon Temple. There he saw the hermit sitting by the fireplace with a shaggy cape tightly wrapped around his shoulders.

“I’m back from my visit home,” he exclaimed gratefully, “but



乎？”翁笑曰：“后六十日方自知。”而日将晚，僧尚不至，翁去，季卿还主人。

后二月，季卿之妻子，赍金帛，自江南来，谓季卿厌世矣，故来访之。妻曰：“某月某日归，是夕作诗于西斋，并留别二章。”始知非梦。明年春，季卿下第东归，至禅窟及关门兰若，见所题两篇，翰墨尚新。后年季卿成名，遂绝粒，入终南山去。





wasn't all that a mere dream?"

"You'll be able to tell for yourself in sixty days," replied the hermit with a smile on his lips.

The day was getting late, yet there was still no sign of the abbot's return. The hermit had left, and Chen went back to his rented room in town.

Two months after that incident, his wife suddenly arrived from the south. She was surprised to find him alive, for she had thought him dead and had come with sufficient money to take his remains home. She explained that she came because he showed up unexpectedly at home one day and vanished the same night leaving a doleful verse on the wall of his study. Only then did he believe that what he experienced was not a dream.

Next spring, as he was once again disappointed in the imperial examination, he decided that it was really time to go home. On the temple walls along the way he located his poems in his own handwriting. The ink still looked fresh.

He made a name for himself the following year. Thereafter, he abstained from food and social life, and disappeared into the Southern Mountains.





茅安道

唐茅安道，庐山道士，能书符役鬼，幻化无端。从学者常数百人，曾授二弟子以隐形洞视之术。有顷，二子皆以归养为请。安道遣之，仍谓曰：“吾术传示，尽资尔学道之用，即不得盗情而炫其术也。苟违吾教，吾能令尔之术，临事不验耳。”二子授命而去。

时韩晋公滉在润州，深嫉此辈。二子径往修谒，意者脱为晋公不礼，则当遁形而去。及召入，不敬。二子因弛慢纵诞，摄衣登阶。韩大怒，即命吏卒缚之。于是二子乃行其术，而法果无验，皆被擒缚，将加诛戮。二子曰：





Priest Andao and His Two Disciples

Mao Andao, a Taoist priest in Mount Lu, was not only versed in the art of drawing magic figures and employing ghosts but also a master of transformation. Among his hundreds of disciples there were two whom he had taught the magic arts of invisibility and visual penetration. These two, however, soon thought of quitting, excusing themselves on the grounds that their aged parents at home needed to be taken care of.

The priest permitted them to go, but warned, "I taught you the art of invisibility only to facilitate your learning of Taoism. It's not a trick for you to go around and show off, or for any other indecent purposes. Should you go against my teaching, I can revoke your power the moment you attempt it." The two nodded and left.

Ruen Prefecture was then governed by the Duke of Jin, who held adverse opinions about Taoism and its practitioners. After leaving the mountains, however, the two went straight to the Duke's official residence to solicit favors, thinking that if the Duke should show any displeasure, they could slink away with the help of invisibility.

The Duke did receive them, but did not treat them as important guests. Feeling slighted, the two behaved audaciously. They even swaggered up to the Duke's seat. The Duke was infuriated. He ordered the guards to have them tied up. It was then that the two resorted to their art of invisibility but, as the priest had warned, their art wouldn't work. So they were caught and condemned to death.

“我初不敢若是，盖师之见误也。”韩将并绝其源，即谓曰：“尔但致尔师之姓名居处，吾或释汝之死。”二子方欲陈述，而安道已在门矣。

卒报公，公大喜，谓得悉加戮焉，遽令召入。安道庞眉美髯，姿状高古。公望见，不觉离席，延之对坐。安道曰：“闻弟子二人愚騃，干冒尊严。今者命之短长，悬于指顾。然我请诘而愧之，然后俟公之行刑也。”公即临以兵刃，械系甚坚，召致阶下。二子叩头求哀。安道语公之左右曰：“请水一器。”公恐其得水遁术，固不与之。安道欣然，遽就公之砚水饮之，而噉二子。当时化为双黑鼠，乱走于庭前。安道奋迅，忽变为巨鸢，每足攫一鼠，冲飞而去。晋公惊骇良久，终无奈何。





“We wouldn’t have dared to behave like that if we hadn’t been taught by our master. It’s his fault,” the two contended.

The Duke had long wished to have the whole Taoist school rooted out, so he said, “Probably you can save your neck, if you just tell me the name and whereabouts of your master.”

The two were about to speak when the guards announced that a priest was at the gate. Overjoyed by this opportunity to have them all here and exterminated once and for all, the Duke immediately asked the priest to come in.

The priest entered with an air of nobility. His beautiful flowing long beard and thick eyebrows gave him a venerable look. For a moment the Duke forgot he was receiving a hated priest. He rose from his seat to extend his welcome and offered the priest a chair beside him.

“I heard,” the priest said, “my two disciples acted foolishly in front of Your Excellency and now their lives hang upon your mercy. But before Your Excellency carries out the execution, may I first talk to them and make them realize they were wrong?”

Escorted by a troop of guards, the two in heavy pillories and shackles were led to the hall steps with naked swords pressed against their necks. They kowtowed and pleaded for life.

“May I have some water?” the priest asked the Duke’s attendants. He was refused, for fear that water might be a medium of escape.

The priest didn’t seem annoyed. He picked up the ink slab from the table, took a sip and sprayed the ink over the two, who turned on the spot into a couple of black mice, scurrying hither and thither in the courtyard. Before anyone realized what was happening, the priest himself changed into an eagle. Clenching one mouse in each claw, he soared up into the sky.

The stunned Duke shook his head and sighed.



吕翁

开元十九年，道者吕翁，经邯郸道上邸舍中，设榻施席，担囊而坐。俄有邑中少年卢生，衣短裘，乘青驹，将适于田，亦止邸中。与翁接席，言笑殊畅。久之，卢生顾其衣装弊褻，乃叹曰：“大丈夫生世不谐，而困如是乎！”翁曰：“观子肤极腴，体胖无恙，谈谐方适；而叹其困者，何也？”生曰：“吾此苟生耳，何适之为？”翁曰：“此而不适，而何为适？”生曰：“当建功树名，出将入相，列鼎而食，选声而听，使族益茂而家用肥，然后可以言其适。吾志于学而游于艺，自惟当年，朱紫可拾。今已过壮





Into the Porcelain Pillow

This occurred in the nineteenth year of Kaiyuan reign. An elderly Taoist priest stopped at a roadside tavern on his way to Handan City. He took a table and laid down the bundle he was carrying.

Presently, a youth in a short peasantry coat appeared along the road riding a black colt. He was the young master of the Lu family from a nearby village and was on his way to the fields. He jumped off at the tavern and took up a seat beside the priest. A casual conversation sprang up between the two, which went on merrily until the young man glanced down at his shabby coat and sighed, "See how miserable one can be if he's out of luck!"

"Your skin looks smooth and soft, your body seems in excellent condition, and your speech sounds intelligent. It doesn't seem befitting for one of your status to complain of ill luck," the priest commented.

"This life of mine is no better than a dog's. You can't call it a man's life, can you?"

"If this is not, then what is a man's life like?"

"A man in his life should fulfill high aims and make a name for himself. He should either rise to be a great army general or a cabinet member. His tongue should taste nothing but delicacies; his ears should hear the sweetest music; he should have a legion of offspring and be able to provide them with the luxuries of the world. That's a real man's life! As for me, starting from an early age, I studied hard at the books and learned all the fine arts a man should acquire. In that way I thought



室，犹勤田亩，非困而何？”言讫，目昏思寐。是时主人蒸黄粱为馔，翁乃探囊中枕以授之曰：“子枕此，当令子荣适如志。”其枕瓷而窍其两端，生俯首就之。

寐中，见其窍大而明朗可处，举身而入。遂至其家，娶清河崔氏女。女容甚丽而产甚殷，由是衣裘服御，日已华侈。明年，举进士，登甲科，解褐授校书郎，应制举，授渭南县尉，迁监察御史、起居舍人，为制诰。三年即真，出典同州，寻转陕州。生好土功，自陕西开河八十里以济不通，邦人赖之，立碑颂德。迁汴州岭南道采访使，入京为京兆尹。





I had secured a place in high society. But look at me now! Already beyond the prime of life, I'm still tilling the fields. If this isn't ill luck, what is?" With that, his spirits seemed to have plummeted and his eyes grew dreamy. Behind the counter, the proprietor was preparing lunch. Lu watched him put the millet rice into a grill-steamer on the stove.

The priest reached into his bundle and pulled out a pillow. "Place this under your head," he said as he handed it over, "and your wishes will come true."

It was a porcelain pillow, hollow and with a small hole at each end. Lu tucked it under his head and snoozed off. Soon he sensed the hole was enlarging and effused with light. He stepped in and found himself in his own house.

He married a Miss Cui from a wealthy family in Qinghe County. She was quite a beauty and her dowry bountiful. Before long, his habits became extravagant. The following year he succeeded in the imperial examination and won a position in the imperial academy, thus being able to throw away his peasantry coat for a robe. Then he took the selection tests for administrators and was consequently assigned to Weinan County as county lieutenant. Later, he was elected to the Central Supervisory Commission, and not long after designated to the royal secretariat in charge of drafting His Majesty's edicts. In three years, he was made a department chief and was nominated special commissioner to Tong Prefecture. Shortly after, he was transferred to Shan Prefecture. There, as the craving for grand projects had always been in him, he had a thirty-mile-long canal cut through the rocky hills which greatly improved transportation and irrigation. People lauded this feat and erected steles in his honor. With that achievement, he was promoted to high commissioner of the region south of the Yellow River with his headquarters in Bianzhou City, and finally, he returned to the capital as its mayor.



是时神武皇帝方事夷狄，吐蕃新诺罗、龙莽布攻陷瓜、沙，节度使王君复与之战于河隍败绩。帝思将帅之任，遂除生御史中丞、河西陇右节度使。大破戎虏七千级，开地九百里，筑三大城以防要害。北边赖之，以石纪功焉。归朝策勋，恩礼极崇，转御史大夫、吏部侍郎。物望清重，群情翕习，大为当时宰相所忌，以飞语中之，贬端州刺史。三年征还，除户部尚书。未几，拜中书侍郎、同中书门下平章事，与萧令嵩、裴侍中光庭同掌大政。十年，嘉谋密命，一日三接，献替启沃，号为贤相。

同列者害之，遂诬与边将交结，所图不轨，下狱。府吏引徒至其门，追之甚急，生惶骇不测，泣其妻子曰：





At that time, the country was at war with Tubo in the southwest. Guazhou and Shazhou, important outposts in the western regions, had just fallen into enemy hands. Even Wang Junchuo, the famed general who had been successfully defending the region, was slain. His Majesty, in desperate need of an armed force commander to save the situation, raised him to deputy chief of the Central Supervisory Commission and placed him in command of all forces in the western regions. Under his masterful command, the imperial army not only destroyed seven thousand enemy troops but also pushed Tubo back three hundred miles. At his orders, three fortified towns were built at strategic locations in the newly recovered territory. He was looked upon as the savior of the frontiers and monuments were raised in memory of his victories. Upon his return to Court, he was received with praise and honors. The emperor appointed him chief of the Central Supervisory Commission and concurrently deputy minister of the Personnel Ministry. His reputation and new fame won the jealousy of the prime minister, whose slanders had him condemned to the remotest south as prefect of Duan Prefecture.

At the end of his three-year term there he was recalled to Court and appointed minister of the Revenue Ministry. Before long, he was further promoted to associate premier, sharing administrative power with Xiao Song and Pei Guangting for a decade. He gained the personal trust of His Majesty and implemented many highly received policies. He was known as the "good premier."

Jealousy stepped in again. His peers accused him of conspiring with frontier generals against the throne. An arrest warrant was duly issued and soldiers were soon knocking on his gate. In apprehension of the inevitable, he made a tearful farewell with his wife, saying, "I



“吾家本山东，良田数顷，足以御寒馁，何苦求禄？而今及此，思复衣短裘，乘青驹，行邯郸道中，不可得也。”引刀欲自裁，其妻救之得免。共罪者皆死，生独有中人保护，得减死论，出授驩牧。

数岁，帝知其冤，复起为中书令，封赵国公，恩旨殊渥，备极一时。生有五子：傅、侗、俭、位、倚。傅为考功员外，俭为侍御史，位为太常丞。季子倚最贤，年二十四，为右补阙。其姻媾皆天下族望，有孙十余人。凡两窜岭表，再登台铉，出入中外，回翔台阁，三十余年间，崇盛赫弈，一时无比。末节颇奢荡，好逸乐，后庭声色皆第一。前后赐良田甲第，佳人名马，不可胜数。

后年渐老，屡乞骸骨，不许。及病，中人候望，接踵于路，名医上药毕至焉。将终，上疏曰：“臣本山东书





can't help thinking of my native place on the eastern plains, where I had many acres of rich farmland. That was more than enough to keep us from hunger and cold, but I chose to come here to seek a fortune. Now that the die is cast, gone are the carefree days when I could wear a short coat and take a casual ride on my black colt along the Handan Road." So saying he raised his sword to his neck, but was held back by his wife.

All those involved in that scandal were sentenced to death, all except him, for he still had a few powerful friends in Court to pull strings. Though he managed to elude a death sentence, he was again dismissed from Court and demoted to prefect of Huan Prefecture in the barbarian south. Years later, His Majesty realized that he was wronged, thereupon he was summoned back to Court to resume his office as the prime minister. Royal bounties and favors showered down once more. To crown it all, he was given the title Duke of Zhao.

He had five sons, all high officials and wedded to powerful families. His grandsons grew to more than a dozen. In retrospect, his career was most miraculous. Rarely could one who had twice been banished to the remote areas be twice appointed prime minister. For over thirty years he had held various key positions both in regional governments and in Court and he certainly was the most celebrated and influential statesman of his time. The emperor had on many occasions bestowed on him farmland and houses, beauties and horses. His life became one of extravagance and dissipation. His private troupe, for example, was the best in the capital.

Now he was in his eighties, old and sick. He had thought of resigning and going back to his native place, but this was not permitted. High officials flocked to his bedside to console and comfort him, bringing with them the best doctors and best medicine. On his deathbed, he wrote to the emperor:



生，以田圃为娱。偶逢圣运，得列官序，过蒙荣奖，特受鸿私。出拥旄钺，入升鼎辅，周旋中外，绵历岁年。有忝恩造，无裨圣化。负乘致寇，履薄战兢，日极一日，不知老之将至。今年逾八十，位历三公，钟漏并歇，筋骸俱弊，弥留沉困，殆将溘尽。顾无诚效，上答休明，空负深恩，永辞圣代，无任感恋之至。谨奉表称谢以闻。”诏曰：“卿以俊德，作余元辅。出雄藩垣，入赞缉熙。升平二纪，寔卿是赖。比因疾累，日谓痊除，岂遽沉顿，良深悯默。今遣骠骑大将军高力士就第候省，其勉加针灸，为余自爱，燕冀无妄，期丁有喜。”其夕卒。

卢生欠伸而寤，见方偃于邸中，顾吕翁在傍，主人蒸





Your Majesty's humble subject was once a poor scholar on the eastern plains, raising a farm. By chance I entered the official circle and it was only by Your Majesty's trust and favor that I have for so many years served various offices at Court and in the local governments. I regret to say that my humble service did not bring new glory to regal splendor, but only invited attacks and turbulences. However, I was scrupulous in carrying out my duties, day after day, as if walking on a thin crust of ice, and did not realize that age was creeping on until now when I find myself beyond eighty years of age. Both my body and mind are exhausted like the sandglass running on its last trickle of sand. In retrospect, I am most ashamed to say that I did not live up to Your Majesty's high expectations. May this letter bear witness to my lifelong gratitude and lasting loyalty to Your Majesty.

The emperor wrote back:

Your virtue makes you my trusted man. On the frontiers you are a fortress against invaders; at Court you bring new light to the administration. It is by your efforts that we have been enjoying over two decades of peace and prosperity. When you first fell ill, we thought it was only a fleeting malady, and it pains us to see it turned out serious. I am sending General Gao Lishi to your residence to convey in person my well-wishing. For my sake at least, take good care of your health. We all look forward to your speedy recovery.

That night he died.

Just then, he stretched and yawned. Looking around he saw himself lying in the tavern. The elderly priest was sitting beside him, the



黄粱尚未熟。触类如故，蹶然而兴曰：“岂其梦寐耶？”翁笑谓曰：“人世之事，亦犹是矣。”生然之。良久谢曰：“夫宠辱之数，得丧之理，生死之情，尽知之矣。此先生所以窒吾欲也，敢不受教。”再拜而去。





millet rice steaming on the stove. Everything seemed unchanged. He sat up and asked, "Was I dreaming?"

"Life is a dream," the old man said.

He nodded thoughtfully and said, "Thank you, sir, for having shown me the ups and downs of life, the turns of fortune and even death itself. I'm now thoroughly awakened and your enlightening is most gratefully appreciated." He made a deep bow and went down the road.





张 佐

开元中，前进士张佐常为叔父言：少年南次鄂杜，郊行，见有老父，乘青驴，四足白，腰背鹿革囊，颜甚悦怿，旨趣非凡，始自斜径合路。佐甚异之，试问所从来。叟但笑而不答。至再三，叟忽怒叱曰：“年小子乃敢相逼。吾岂盗贼椎埋者耶？何必知从来！”佐逊谢曰：“向慕先生高躅，愿从事左右耳，何赐深责？”叟曰：“吾无术教子，但寿永者，子当嗤吾潦倒耳。”遂复乘促走。佐亦扑马趁之，俱至逆旅。

叟枕鹿囊，寝未熟。佐乃疲，贯白酒将饮，试就请





A Kingdom in the Ear³

Zhang Zuo, a scholar of the Confusion school who passed the imperial examination in mid Kaiyuan reign, once traveled south of the capital. Riding along the road, he was joined by an old man astride a white-footed gray donkey entering from a back road. The man, carrying a deer-skin bag on his back, looked perfectly contented with life and dignified in spite of his plain attire.

Impressed, Zhang tried to strike up a conversation by asking where he came from. The old man only smiled. When Zhang made yet another approach, the man flared up. "What an insolent young man you are! How dare you question me as if I were a fugitive escaping with stolen money! Is it your business to know where one comes from and where one goes to?"

"I asked," Zhang replied apologetically, "because I admire your poised and knowledgeable air and was thinking of being your pupil. Does that deserve your anger?"

"But I don't think I have anything to teach you. I'm only an old man who has lived very long. You might be laughing up your sleeve at my shabbiness." So saying, he whipped the donkey to a canter.

Zhang spurred his horse and followed. That night they stayed at the same inn. The old man lay down promptly, pillowing his head on the deer-skin bag. But Zhang felt like having a drink to quench the exhaustion of the day and he tentatively invited the old man to join him.



曰：“单瓢期先生共之。”叟跳起曰：“此正吾之所好，何子解吾意耶。”饮讫，佐见翁色悦，徐请曰：“小生寡昧，愿先生赐言，以广闻见，他非所敢望也。”

叟曰：“吾之所见，梁隋陈唐耳，贤愚治乱，国史已具，然请以身所异者语子。吾宇文周时居岐，扶风人也，姓申名宗。慕齐神武，因改宗为观。十八，从燕公子谨征梁元帝于荆州。州陷，大将军旋。梦青衣二人谓余曰：‘吕走天年，人向主，寿不千。’吾乃诣占梦者于江陵市。占梦者谓余曰：‘吕走迴(回)字也，人向主住字也，岂子住乃寿也。’

“时留兵屯江陵，吾遂陈情于校尉拓跋烈。许之。因却诣占梦者曰：‘住即可矣，寿有术乎？’占者曰：‘汝前生梓潼薛君胄也，好服术蕊散，多寻异书，日诵黄老一百纸。徙居鹤鸣山下，草堂三间，户外骈植花竹，泉石萦绕。八月十五日，长啸独饮，因酣畅，大言曰：薛君胄疏





The old man leaped to his feet. "That's the one thing I enjoy. I wonder how you figured out this weakness of mine."

As they drank, the old man's face seemed to soften. Seizing the opportunity, Zhang ventured meekly, "I'm young and ignorant. Does Your Honor mind enlightening me a little? I just wish to learn more about the world."

"What I've seen is but the rise and decline of the Liang, Chen, Sui and Tang dynasties. All that is now put down in your history books. Perhaps I may tell you something particular about myself.

"In the Northern Zhou Dynasty, I lived in Qi Prefecture. My name was Shen Zong. I was then eighteen, a lieutenant in an expeditionary force attacking Jingzhou City held by Emperor Yuandi of Liang. We captured the city and my general was to lead the triumphant troops back north.

"That night I had a dream. Two men in blue robes read me a word-riddle. Early in the morning I went directly to a dream-reader. According to his interpretation, it meant I must stay here if I want to attain longevity. So I petitioned my superior and was permitted to remain and join the garrison force.

"I went again to see the dream-reader and tell him I had managed to stay, but I really doubted if longevity could be thus acquired.

"He told me I lived in Zitong County in my previous life, and my name then was Xue Junzhou. I indulged in taking exotic herb medicine and took delight in studying Taoist scriptures. Later, I moved to the foot of Honking Crane Peak, built myself a thatched cottage by a spring, and planted flowers and bamboo all around.

"Intoxicated on the full moon night of the eighth lunar month, I whistled and whooped into the crystal clear night. I loudly demanded why, as detached and transcendent as I was, there wasn't any super-



澹若此，岂无异人降止？忽觉两耳中有车马声，因颓然思寝。头才至席，遂有小车，朱轮青盖，驾赤犊，出耳中，各高三二寸，亦不觉出耳之难。车有二童，绿帟青帔，亦长二三寸。凭轼呼御者，踏轮扶下，而谓君胄曰：吾自兜玄国来。向闻长啸月下，韵甚清激，私心奉慕，愿接清论。君胄大骇曰：君适出吾耳，何谓兜玄国来？二童子曰：兜玄国在吾耳中，君耳安能处我？君胄曰：君长二三寸，岂复耳有国土？倘若有之，国人当尽焦螟耳。二童曰：胡为其然，吾国与汝国无异。不信，请从吾游。或能便留，则君离生死苦矣。一童因倾耳示君胄。君胄覘之，乃别有天地，花卉繁茂，薨栋连接，清泉萦绕，岩岫杳





natural being present to accompany me in my lone drinking.

“All of a sudden, I seemed to hear the rumbling of carriages in both ears and for no reason at all, I felt sleepy and dozed off. As soon as my head touched the straw mat, a tiny carriage a couple of inches high with red wheels and a black canopy, pulled by a cinnamon-colored calf of comparable size, rolled out of my ear. Strange to say, it didn’t seem to be a problem for them getting out of my ear. On the carriage were two lads, also about two inches tall, clad in blue cloaks with their hair done up in green headcloth. They leaned against the handrail and ask the driver to halt. Stepping down, they introduced themselves as envoys from the Kingdom of Divine. They came because they had heard my vibrant whistling under the moon, which they greatly admired, and they wished to converse with me.

“You gentlemen just came out from my ear. Why did you say you came from the Kingdom of Divine?” I asked, not without some surprise.

“The Kingdom of Divine is in *our* ears. How can *your* ear hold *our* kingdom!” they retorted.

“With your height of two inches, how much room can there be in *your* ear for a kingdom? Well, granting what you said is true, your countrymen must be smaller than fleas.’

“Be it so, there isn’t much difference between our two countries. If you don’t believe us, just come along and see with your own eyes. If you have the luck to stay in our kingdom forever, you’ll escape the cycles of life and death.’

“A lad then inclined his ear for me to peep in. I saw flowers and trees, house after house, meandering streams and ragged mountain ranges extending into the boundless distance. I held his ear and threw myself into it. I found myself in a metropolis. The city walls were high,



冥。因扞耳投之，已至一都会，城池楼堞，穷极壮丽。君胄彷徨，未知所之。顾见向之二童，已在其侧，谓君胄曰：此国大小于君国。既至此，盍从吾谒蒙玄真伯？蒙玄真伯居大殿，墙垣阶陛，尽饰以金碧，垂翠帘帷帐，中间独坐。真伯身衣云霞日月之衣，冠通天冠，垂旒，皆与身等。玉童四人，立侍左右，一执白拂，一执犀如意。二人既入，拱手不敢仰视。有高冠长裾缘绿衣人，宣青纸制曰：‘肇分太素，国既有亿。尔沦下土，贱卑万品，聿臻于如此，实由冥合。况尔清乃躬诚，叶于真宰，大官厚爵，俾宜享之，可为主策大夫。’君胄拜舞出门，即有黄帔三四人，引至一曹署。其中文簿，多所不识，每月亦无请受。但意有所念，左右必先知，当便供给。因暇登楼远望，忽有归思，赋诗曰：风软景和煦，异香馥林塘。登高一长望，信美非吾乡。因以诗示二童子。童子怒曰：吾以君质性冲寂，引至吾国。鄙俗余态，果乃未去。乡有何忆耶？遂疾逐君胄。如陷落地，仰视，乃自童子耳中落，已





the streets wide and straight. I was wondering where to turn when the two lads appeared by my side. They told me that their country was as vast as mine, and since I was there, they suggested I pay my respects to Xuanzhen the Great.

“Xuanzhen lived in a palace of gold. The screens on doors and windows were strings of pearls. There he sat in the center of a grand hall, his robe embroidered with patterns of the sun and moon floating above rosy clouds, his hat tall and dangling with jade beads hanging from the front and back brims. Four virgin boys stood by his side. The two lads entered with bent heads and lowered eyes. An official in a tall hat and green robe proclaimed from a scroll that I was conferred the title of Grand Secretary of the Dossier. Four men in yellow cloaks led me to my office, where I soon discovered that the words in the documents were mostly unintelligible to me. Throughout the month, however, nobody came to make reports or receive orders. Whatever thought I might have in mind, my attendants would know even before I could utter it, and would see to all my needs.

“Idling about from day to day, I happened to ascend a tower. The scenery awakened a spasm of homesickness and inspired a poem:

*A gentle breeze across the land
Sends fragrance through the woods and dome.
Staring out from this lofty stand,
I realize this scene isn't home.*

Later, when I showed it to the two lads, they were infuriated at what they called the impurgeable vulgarity ingrained in my nature. They said it was a mistake to have brought me to their kingdom. They had misjudged me as a man above temporal desires, and I still think of my worldly home!

“As they chased me, I felt the ground giving way under my feet. I



在旧去处。随视童子，亦不复见。因问诸邻人，云失君胄已七八年矣。君胄在彼如数月。未几而君胄卒，生于君家，即今身也。占者又云：‘吾前生乃出耳中童子，以汝前生好道，以得到兜玄国。然俗态未尽，不可长生，然汝自此寿千年矣。吾受汝符，即归。’因吐朱绢尺余，令吞之。占者遂复童子形而灭。自是不复有疾，周行天下名山，迨兹向二百余岁。然吾所见异事甚多，并记在鹿革中。”

因启囊，出二轴书甚大，字颇细。佐不能读，请叟自宣。略述十余事，其半昭然可纪。其夕将佐略寝，及觉已失叟。后数日，有人于灰谷湫见之。叟曰：“为我致意于张君。”佐遽寻之，已复不见。





only had time to look up to see that I had fallen out of the lad's ear and landed in my own courtyard. I looked again, and the lads were gone. When I talked to my neighbors, they told me that Xue Junzhou, that was me, had left seven or eight years ago, though I felt it was only a matter of months. I did die soon afterwards, and was reborn as Shen Zong.

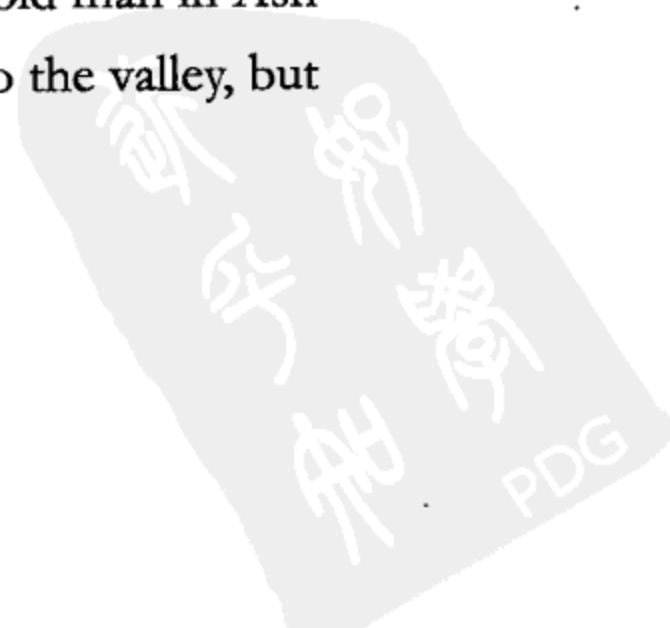
"The dream-reader then said that in his former life he was none other than one of the lads from my ear. Because of my devotion to Taoism in my previous life, I was granted that visit to the Kingdom of Divine, but as my earthly roots were not entirely severed, I was not able to attain immortality, yet I could enjoy a peaceful life of one thousand years. He retrieved from his mouth a foot-long strip of scarlet silk inscribed with magic figures and asked me to swallow it. Then, he revealed himself as the lad and disappeared.

"Two hundred years have passed since that day, and I've never suffered an illness during my constant tours through the sacred mountains. I've been through many strange events and had them all recorded. Here they are in my bag."

He opened the deer-skin bag and showed Zhang two thick scrolls. The words were tiny and illegible. Zhang begged him to read out a few passages, which he did.

When Zhang woke up in the morning, the old man was gone.

Several days later, someone who had met the old man in Ash Valley passed on his compliments. Zhang hurried to the valley, but could not find the old man.





柳城

贞元末，开州军将冉从长轻财好士，儒生道者多依之。有画人宁采，图为竹林会，甚工。坐客郭萱、柳城二秀才，每以气相轧。柳忽眇图，谓主人曰：“此画巧于体势，失于意趣。今欲为公设薄伎，不施五色，令其精彩殊胜，如何？”冉惊曰：“素不知秀才此艺。然不假五色，其理安在？”柳叹曰：“我当出入画中治之。”萱抵掌曰：“君欲给三尺童子乎？”柳因要其赌。郭请以五千抵负，冉亦为保。

柳乃腾身赴图而灭，坐客大骇，图表于壁，众摸索不





One Who Paints Without Brush and Colors

At the end of Zhenyuan reign, a General Ran was garrisoned at Kai Prefecture. His hospitality and generosity had won him many friends among the literati.

Among his entourage were two scholars of the Confusion school, a Mr Guo and a Mr Liu. The two had always been jealous of each other.

One day, the group gathered at the general's sitting room to view a new painting entitled *Seven Saints Amidst the Bamboo Grove*. Liu turned to the host and commented, "Though this painting is scrupulously done in the details, it has no life. I may be able to show you a hand of art today. What do you say if I polish up this painting without resorting to brush and colors?"

"I never knew you are an artist," remarked the general somewhat surprised. "But how can you paint without applying the colors?"

"I know better than that. I will go into the painting in person to do the job."

Guo clapped his hands in a fit of laughter. "Do you take us for poor little kids who will be swindled by your nonsense?"

Liu proposed a bet, which Guo gladly accepted and laid down a wager of five thousand, with the general as a witness.

Before the crowd realized what was happening, Liu leaped up into the painting on the wall and disappeared. The stunned crowd fumbled all over the surface but could not locate where Liu was hiding.



获。久之，柳忽语曰：“郭子信未？”声若出画中也。食顷，瞥自图上坠下，指阮籍像曰：“工夫只及此。”众视之，觉阮籍图像独异，唇若方啸。宁采睹之，不复认。冉意其得道，与郭俱谢之。数日竟他去。

宋存寿处士在冉家时，目击其事。





Presently, Liu's voice came out from the painting. "Mr Guo, do you believe me now?" it said.

After about the time it took for a meal, Liu jumped out from the painting. He pointed to the prominent figure of Ruan Ji in the painting and said, "That's as much as I can manage."

Upon closer inspection the group noticed that Ruan's figure was indeed different from the others in that he was more lifelike – his lips pursed as if giving a high-pitched whistle. Even the painter himself agreed that it was far superior to what he had originally done.

The general and Guo made a deep bow to Liu. A few days later, Liu was gone without leaving a word of farewell. The general believed that he had attained immortality.





吴堪

常州义兴县，有鰥夫吴堪，少孤无兄弟，为县吏，性恭顺。其家临荆溪，常于门前，以物遮护溪水，不曾秽污。每县归，则临水看玩，敬而爱之。

积数年，忽于水滨得一白螺，遂拾归，以水养。自县归，见家中饮食已备，乃食之。如是十余日。然堪为邻母哀其寡独，故为之执爨，乃卑谢邻母。母曰：“何必辞。君近得佳丽修事，何谢老身？”堪曰：“无。”因问其母。母曰：“子每入县后，便见一女子，可十七八，容颜端丽，衣服轻艳，具饌乞，即却入房。”堪意疑白螺所为，





The Conch Girl

Wu Kan, a submissive and kind-hearted clerk of the government of Yixing County, was a bachelor. As he was orphaned in early childhood, he had no brothers or relatives. He lived alone by a spring, and loved the stream so much that he built a low fence along that stretch of flow to prevent the water from being contaminated. Every day when he came home from office he would watch it ripple and murmur along. He felt a deep respect and attachment for it.

Years passed, and one morning he discovered a white conch in the shallows of the stream. He brought it home and kept it in a water-vat. That day when he returned from work he found that dinner was waiting for him on the table, at which he sat down to eat. Things went on like that for nearly a fortnight. He guessed that it was a kindness from the old woman living next door, who often took pity on his lonely condition. She must have dropped by to help him with the cooking. So he went over to express his gratitude.

"You don't need to be shy," the old woman said. "I know you've recently got a nice girl. As for me, I didn't do anything that deserves your thanks."

"Don't kid me, ma'am. You know I'm too poor to marry."

"Me, kidding? Every day after you've left for your office, I see a charming girl of seventeen or eighteen years old coming out from your house. Her clothes are bright and flimsy. And she retires into the house as soon as she finishes cooking."⁴



乃密言于母曰：“堪明日当称入县，请于母家自隙窥之，可乎？”母曰：“可。”

明旦诈出，乃见女自堪房出，入厨理爨。堪自门而入，其女遂归房不得。堪拜之，女曰：“天知君敬护泉源，力勤小职，哀君鰥独，敕余以奉媿。幸君垂悉，无致疑阻。”堪敬而谢之。自此弥将敬洽，闾里传之，颇增骇异。

时县宰豪士闻堪美妻，因欲图之。堪为吏恭谨，不犯笞责。宰谓堪曰：“君熟于吏能久矣，今要虾蟆毛及鬼臂二物，晚衙须纳。不应此物，罪责非轻。”堪唯而走出。度人间无此物，求不可得，颜色惨沮。归述于妻，乃曰：“吾今夕殒矣。”妻笑曰：“君忧余物，不敢闻命。二物





Suspecting that it was the white conch, he arranged with the old woman that the next day he would pretend to go to the office as usual, but would sneak back instead and hide in her house to see for himself.

As he peeped out through a chink next morning, he saw a girl emerge from his cottage and enter the kitchen to prepare food. He slipped home and barred the door, blocking the girl's retreat into the house and into her shell. He made a deep bow.

"Heaven appreciates your efforts to protect the water source," the girl said. "You've done your share. Heaven is also aware of your loneliness, so I'm sent here to be your wife. Hope you can accept my sincerity without suspicion."

He was more than pleased.

They became a most happy couple, and their story quickly spread throughout the neighborhood. Of course, not without some exaggeration.

In no time their story reached the ear of the county magistrate, and the rumored beauty of Wu's wife brewed his lustful dreams. But Wu had always been a cautious man, betraying no convenient excuse for a penalty.

One day the magistrate said to Wu, "You're a veteran on my staff, and a competent one. Now, go and get me some frog hair and a ghost arm. If you fail to hand them in by the end of the day, you shall be severely punished!"

Wu didn't dare to object, though he clearly knew those things did not exist on earth. Depressed and worried, he went home to impart the bad news to his wife. "Darling," he sighed, "I'm done for."

"If he had asked for something else, I might not be able to procure them, but these two things won't cause a problem," his wife smiled reassuringly.

之求，妾能致矣。”堪闻言，忧色稍解。妻曰：“辞出取之。”少顷而到，堪得以纳令。令视二物，微笑曰：“且出。”然终欲害之。

后一日，又召堪曰：“我要蜗斗一枚，君宜速觅此。若不至，祸在君矣。”堪承命奔归，又以告妻。妻曰：“吾家有之，取不难也。”乃为取之。良久，牵一兽至，大如犬，状亦类之。曰：“此蜗斗也。”堪曰：“何能？”妻曰：“能食火，奇兽也。君速送。”堪将此兽上宰。宰见之怒曰：“吾索蜗斗，此乃犬也。”又曰：“必何所能？”曰：“食火，其粪火。”宰遂索炭烧之。遣食，食讫。粪之于地，皆火也。宰怒曰：“用此物奚为？”令除火扫粪。方欲害堪，吏以物及粪，应手洞然，火飏暴起，焚蒸墙宇，烟焰四合，弥亘城门。宰身及一家，皆为煨烬。乃失吴堪及妻。其县遂迁于西数步，今之城是也。





Though he couldn't help being skeptical, his wife's confidence somewhat relieved his mind. She excused herself from the room and presently returned with the two articles, which he handed to the magistrate.

"Well done," the magistrate sneered. "You can leave now." Yet, in his mind he was still thinking of ways to have Wu killed.

Another day, he summoned Wu again. "I want a snail polliwog," he said. "Better hurry, or you'll be courting death."

Wu rushed home to tell his wife.

"That's not very difficult to obtain," his wife said calmly. "I happen to have one at home. Let me go and fetch it."

After what seemed an eternity, she returned with a dog-shaped animal and claimed it was a snail polliwog.

"What's so special about it?" Wu asked.

"It's a unique species. It can eat fire. I think you must run now."

"I asked for a snail polliwog, not a mongrel dog!" snarled the magistrate as soon as he saw the animal Wu led in. "Well, anything extraordinary about it?"

"Yes, sir, it eats fire and its droppings are fiery, too," Wu replied.

The magistrate wasted no time to send for burning charcoal. The animal devoured it and discharged burning excrement on the floor.

"What good is this damned animal!" raged the magistrate. "Choke the fire and sweep up the droppings!"

He was about to order Wu's execution when the footman's broom touched the droppings. Flames shot up to the ceiling, smoke shrouded the whole town, and the magistrate and his whole family were burned to ashes. Wu and his wife were never seen again. The town was consequently moved several rods west to its present site.



掩耳道士

利州南门外，乃商贾交易之所。一旦有道士，羽衣褰褛，来于稠人中，卖葫芦子种。云：“一二年间，甚有用处。每一苗只生一颗，盘地而成。”兼以白土画样于地以示人，其模甚大。逾时竟无买者，皆云：“狂人不足可听。”道士又以两手掩耳急走，言风水之声何太甚耶。巷陌孩童，竟相随而笑侮之。时呼为掩耳道士。

至来年秋，嘉陵江水，一夕泛涨，漂数百家。水方渺弥，众人遥见道士在水上，坐一大瓢，出手掩耳，大叫水声风声何太甚耶，泛泛而去。莫知所之。





The Priest Who Plugs His Ears

Outside the south gate of Lizhou City was a thriving market. One day, amidst the throng of peddlers a shabby Taoist priest was hawking gourd seeds. He claimed that in a year or two his gourd could be put to great use. Besides, all one needed to do was put the seed in the ground without going to the usual trouble of constructing a trellis. Each seed, he emphasized, would sprout and bear only one, but giant, gourd. He also chalked out on the ground the size of his promised gourd, which was incredibly big. Nevertheless, despite his persistent efforts no one bought even a single seed. "Don't be taken in by that crazy priest," was the crowd's comment.

Then the priest covered both ears with his hands and scurried through the market, shouting that the din of wind and torrents was deafening. He was trailed by a swarm of laughing kids, who thought him good fun and nicknamed him the ear-plugging priest.

One autumn night the following year, the Jialing River flooded. Water rampaged as far as the eye could see and hundreds of families were either drowned or washed adrift. In the distance, they beheld the priest sitting in a scooped-out gourd, his hands over his ears, crying that the noise was too much to bear.

Nobody knew where he sailed to.





相卫间僧

相卫间有僧，自少博习经论，善讲说。每有讲筵，自谓超绝，然而听者稀少，财利寡薄。如此积年，其僧不愤。遂将经论，遍历名山，以访知者。后至衡岳寺，憩泊月余，常于寺闲斋独坐，寻绎经论。又自答曰：“所晓义理，无乃乖于圣意乎？”

沉思之次，忽举头见一老僧，杖锡而入曰：“师习读何经论？穷究何义理？”僧疑是异人，乃述其由，兼自答曰：“倘遇知者，分别此事，即钳口结舌，不复开演耳。”老僧笑曰：“师识至广，岂不知此义，‘大圣犹不





An Unpopular Monk

There was an erudite monk in the area of Xiang and Wei who started to learn the Buddhist scriptures early on. He was good at preaching the scriptures, at least he thought so, but his audience was disappointingly small and his disciples were few. Consequently, contributions and donations were hard to come by. Unhappy with his unpopularity through the years, he decided to tour the sacred mountains to further his studies and seek opinions from great masters.

His tour brought him to the temple of Mountain Heng. During the month he stayed he often chose to sit alone in a quiet hall to ponder over the meaning of the scriptures. "Is it possible that I've misunderstood the import of the scriptures?" was the question he asked himself over and over again.

One day as he was thus absorbed in contemplation, he raised his eyes to see an old monk leaning on a ceremonial staff. The old monk walked in and asked him which sutra he was reading and which conception was bothering him.

There was something unusual about the old monk that made him pour out his bewilderment. "If only some wise person could tell me what was wrong with me!" he grumbled. "I don't mind having my mouth clammed up for the rest of my life and I'll never preach again."

"As well read as you are," the old monk smiled soothingly, "how can you be unaware of such a simple maxim that 'Even the greatest



能度无缘之人，况其初心乎？’师只是与众僧无缘耳。”僧曰：“若然者，岂终世如此乎？”老僧曰：“吾试为尔结缘。”因问师今有几许费粮。僧曰：“自徂南县，历行万里，粮食所费，皆以竭矣。今惟大衣七条而已。”老僧曰：“只此可矣。可卖之，以所得直皆作糜饼油食之物。”

僧如言作之，约数千人食。遂相与携至平野之中，散掇，梵香长跪，咒曰：“今日食我施者，愿当来之世，与我为弟子。我当教之，得至菩提。”言讫，鸟雀乱下啄食，地上蝼蚁，复不知数。老僧谓曰：“尔后二十年，方可归开法席。今且周游，未用讲说也。”言讫而此僧如言。后二十年，却归河北开讲。听徒动千万人，皆年二十已下，老壮者十无一二。





cannot convert those without predestined affinity,' to say nothing of those complete strangers to Buddhism. Your problem is that you haven't established any predestined relations with them."

"If it's just like what you've said, doesn't that mean I can't have followers in my present life?"

"Perhaps I can help you make an affinity. Let's see what assets you have."

"I'm down at the bottom of my means, for I've been traveling thousands of miles, starting from my home temple at the south of Culai Mountain. All I have now are seven pieces of outer clothes."

"That's enough," the old monk replied. "Sell them and use the money to buy grain and cooking oil for porridge and pancakes."

He took the advice and collected enough money to feed thousands. They carried the food to an open expanse and spread it on the ground. Then he lit joss sticks and knelt. "I wish all those who eat my food today would be my disciples in their next lives," he prayed. "I'll teach them so that their souls can be delivered." As soon as that was said, countless birds swooped down to peck at the food; innumerable ants crawled out to eat.

"Wait twenty years before you go back to your temple and give sermons," the old monk said. "You may take this period to travel around without preaching."

Bearing that in mind the monk didn't return to Xiang and Wei until twenty years later. When he preached again, thousands upon thousands came to listen. The congregation was mostly made up of young people – no more than two in ten could be over twenty.

PDF
PDG



鉴师

唐元和初，有长乐冯生者，家于吴，以明经调选于天官氏，是岁见黜于有司，因侨居长安中。有老僧鉴其名者，一日来诣生，谓生：“汝吾姓也。”因相与往来，近岁余。及冯尉于东越，既治装，鉴师负笈来，告去。冯问曰：“师去安所诣乎？”鉴师曰：“我庐于灵岩寺之西庑下且久，其后游长安中，至今十年矣。幸得与子相遇。今将归故居，故来告别。然吾子尉于东越，道出灵岩寺下，当宜一访我也。”生诺曰：“谨受教。”后数月，冯生自长安之任，至灵岩寺门，立马望曰：“岂非鉴师所居寺乎？”即入而诣焉。





A Monk Named Mirror

In early Yuanhe reign there was a Mr Feng, a native of Changle County, who was summoned from Wu County to the capital by the Personnel Ministry through the examination system as a candidate official, but that year he did not win an appointment and thus lingered in the city.

One day an old monk paid him a visit at his place, whose first name, as he introduced himself, was Mirror. He said they were kin because they had the same family name Feng. A friendship was soon struck up.

It was almost a year later when Feng was assigned to an office position in Yue. As he was packing up, the old monk came with a basket on his back. He was coming to say farewell.

“Where do you intend to go?” Feng asked.

“To be frank, I belong to the Temple of Magic Rock in Wu County and have a reserved place in the west wing. I arrived in the capital about ten years ago and now it’s time for me to return. I really appreciate our friendship. Since you’re going to Yue, the post road will take you right past my temple. I hope you’ll drop in to see me. So, until then.”

Feng made a promise. Months later, when he was passing by the Temple of Magic Rock, he reined back his horse and searched the hill with his eyes. Wasn’t this where Mirror said he lived? He entered and saw a monk in the courtyard.



时有一僧在庭，生问曰：“不知鉴师庐安在，吾将诣之。”僧曰：“吾曹数辈，独无鉴其名者。”生始疑异，默而计曰：“鉴师信士，岂欺我耶？”于是独游寺庭，行至西庑下，忽见有群僧画像，其一人状同鉴师。生大惊曰：“鉴师果异人也！且能神降于我。”因慨然泣下者久之。视其题曰：“冯氏子，吴郡人也。年十岁，学浮图法，以道行闻。卒年七十八。”冯阅其题，益异之。



“May I beg to ask in which room Master Mirror resides? I’m his friend and have come to visit him.”

“I know everyone here,” the monk replied, “but there’s no one by that name.”

Feng was puzzled, but he was confident that Mirror wasn’t joking. He wandered through the courtyards and halls. As he walked along the west verandah he saw a row of portraits of the late masters. To his greatest surprise, one looked exactly like Mirror. He must have gained supernatural powers, he thought, or how could he have appeared in a theophany and even befriended me? He stood before the portrait for a long time, tears trickling down his cheeks. The caption read: Feng, renowned for his attainments, native of Wu, devoted himself to Buddhism since age ten and passed on at seventy-eight.





赵泰

赵泰字文和，清河贝丘人。公府辟不就，精进典籍，乡党称名。年三十五，宋太始五年七月十三日夜半，忽心痛而死，心上微暖，身体屈伸。

停尸十日，气从咽喉如雷鸣，眼开，索水饮，饮讫便起。说初死时，有二人乘黄马，从兵二人，但言捉将去。二人扶两腋东行，不知几里，便见大城，如锡铁崔嵬。从城西门入，见官府舍，有二重黑门，数十梁瓦屋，男女当五六十。主吏著皂单衫，将泰名在第三十。须臾将入，府君西坐，断勘姓名。复将南入黑门，一人绛衣，坐大屋下，以次呼名前，问生时所行事，有何罪过；行功德，作何善行。言者各各不同。主者言：“许汝等辞。恒遣六师





Zhao Tai⁵

At midnight on the thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month in the fifth year of Taishi reign of the Jin Dynasty, Zhao Tai, a well-known scholar in Qinghe County, died of a sudden heart attack at the age of thirty-five. But, strangest of all, his body remained warm and his limbs flexible.

Ten days after his death, his throat let out a loud gurgle, his eyes opened, and he asked for water. Then he was able to sit up.

He told his family that the moment he passed out he saw two men galloping toward him on two sorrels, followed by two footmen. "Catch him!" they shouted, and the footmen grabbed him under the arms and raced eastward. Whizzing through space for heaven knew how many miles, they reached a magnificent walled city built with what looked like iron and tin. They entered through the west gate and came upon rows and rows of office buildings. He was led through two black gates into a courtyard amidst several dozen tiled houses. There were some fifty or sixty men and women standing in the yard and an officer in a dark robe was tagging them with numbers. He was assigned number thirty. Then they were ushered into a big hall where a lord sat facing west. Their names were checked against a list, and he was sent on through another black door in the south.

Under a massive roof, an official in scarlet was making a roll call. He asked each one what he or she did during their lifetime, whether they sinned or achieved merits. He warned that they had to tell the



督录使者，常在人间，疏记人所作善恶，以相检校。人死有三恶道，杀生祷祠最重。奉佛持五戒十善，慈心布施，生在福舍，安稳无为。”泰答一无所为，上不犯恶。断问都竟，使为水官监作吏，将千余人，接沙著岸上，昼夜勤苦啼泣，悔言生时不作善，今堕在此处。

后转水官都督，总知诸狱事。给马，东到地狱按行。复到泥犁地狱，男子六千人，有火树，纵广五十余步，高





truth, for their words would be compared with their records. There were observers constantly walking the land, he said, and noting down every deed one performs, good or bad. Of the six ways of reincarnation, he continued, three were bad, and to kill was the most serious crime. On the other hand, if one devoted himself to Buddhism and stuck to the five don'ts and ten do's, was kind and charitable, he would be reborn in a happy land and be exempt from all sufferings.

The crowd's confessions varied from person to person. When it came to Zhao's turn, he said that his whole life was devoted to the books, and that he had never sinned.

When the interrogation was over, Zhao was appointed supervisor of the water bureau, overseeing the reconstruction of river banks. Under his watch, more than a thousand sinners carried sand from the shallows up the bank night after day without a break. They wailed with unendurable pain and regretted that they did not do good in their lives so as to have sunk so low.

Later on, he was promoted to commissioner of the water bureau in charge of all prison camps. He was given a horse and told to inspect the camps. He saw sinners whose tongues were pierced by needles, blood trickling over their bodies, or a group of the naked, driven by officers holding heavy clubs, walking in pairs toward white-hot iron beds and glowing copper pillars. As they stretched out on the bed or hugged the pillar, their skin and flesh were scorched and seared, but the moment their charred bodies were peeled off, they healed themselves, only to go through the agony once again. And there were huge caldrons on whirling furnaces, heads and severed limbs bobbing up and down in the boiling oil. Three or four hundred men and women stood in lines waiting their fate, and yakshas⁶ with long forks rhythmically flopped them in, one at a time, despite their howling and clinging



千丈，四边皆有剑，树上燃火。其下十十五五，堕火剑上，贯其身体。云：“此人咒诅骂詈，夺人财物，假伤良善。”泰见父母及一弟，在此狱中涕泣。见二人赍文书来，敕狱吏，言有三人，其家事佛，为有寺中悬幡盖烧香，转法华经咒愿，救解生时罪过。出就福舍，已见自然衣服。

往诣一门，云开光大舍，有三重黑门，皆白壁赤柱。此三人即入门。见大殿，珍宝耀日，堂前有二狮子并伏，负一金玉床，云名狮子之座。见一大人，身可长丈余，姿颜金色，项有日光，坐此床上。沙门立侍甚众，四坐名真人菩萨，见泰山府君来作礼。泰问吏何人，吏曰：“此名佛，天上天下度人之师。”便闻佛言：“今欲度此恶道中及诸地狱人皆令出。”应时云有万九千人，一时得出，地狱即空。见呼十人，当上生天，有车马迎之，升虚空而去。





to each other. And there was a giant tree with twigs of swords and leaves of knives. Arguing among themselves, the damned climbed up as if in competition, while their bodies were cut to bleeding pieces. He saw his parents and a brother whining among the crowd.

Then came two messengers with papers in their hands, which they delivered to the jailer and mentioned three names. They said that their families, having been converted to Buddhism, had offered joss sticks and banners⁷ in the temple and had been chanting the Buddhist scriptures to mend the bad deeds those three had committed, so they should be transferred to the happy land. So saying, Zhao saw that the three men already had nice clothes on their backs, and out they went to a place called Hall of Revelation. He followed them through three black gates set in white walls and arrived at a radiant palace decorated with shining jewels. In the hall were two crouching lions bearing a marble couch, on which sat a golden man over ten feet tall with a halo circling his head. Numerous monks, together with bodhisattvas and immortals, stood around with bent heads. He saw the Lord of Hell saluting the golden man in a most respectful way. "Who is the one on the couch?" he asked an attendant.

"He is Buddha, who possesses the power to save all souls on or below the earth."

Just then Buddha opened his mouth to speak. He had come to convert and save, he said, and any soul detained in hell, no matter which religion it once embraced, was allowed to attend his sermons. The sermons would last seven days, within which period all those converted would be delivered in time, depending on the extent of their previous merits and sins. Nineteen thousand turned out to listen, and even before Zhao left the compound he saw ten men rise up into the heavens.



复见一城，云：“纵广二百余里，名为受变形城。”云：“生来不闻道法，而地狱考治已毕者，当于此城，受更变报。”入北门，见数千百土屋，中央有大瓦屋，广五十余步。下有五百余吏，对录人名，作善恶事状。受是变身形之路，从其所趋去。杀者云当作蜉蝣虫，朝生夕死；若为人，常短命。偷盗者作猪羊身，屠肉偿人。淫逸者作鹄鹳蛇身。恶舌者作鸱鸺鸺鹞，恶声，人闻皆咒令死。抵债者为驴马牛鱼鳖之属。大屋下有地房北向，一户南向，呼从北户，又出南户者，皆变身形作鸟兽。

又见一城，纵广百里，其瓦屋安居快乐。云：“生时不作恶，亦不为善，当在鬼趣千岁，得出为人。”

又见一城，广有五千余步，名为地中。罚谪者，不堪苦痛。男女五六万，皆裸形无服，饥困相扶，见泰叩头啼哭。

泰按行毕还，主者问地狱如法否：“卿无罪，故相挽为水官都督。不尔，与狱中人无异。”泰问人生何以为





He moved on to another walled city called the City of Reincarnation. Those who refused to be converted but had gone through the infernal trials were held there before they were transmigrated. Entering from the north gate he saw thousands of earthen huts encircling a tiled brick mansion about fifty yards wide. Over five hundred officers were busy checking names and documents, and dispatching individuals on their respective ways. Those who killed would become mayflies that are born in the morning and meet their death at the end of the day; those who robbed or stole would be reborn as pigs and lambs to repay with their own flesh; those who indulged in luxury would be hatched as wild geese or snakes; those who slandered or cursed would be turned into owls or crows whose voices only induce loathing from anyone who hears; and those who repudiated a debt would be beasts of burden. The mansion had a basement facing north and a door opening onto the south. Those summoned entered from the north, and by the time they exited in the south they were either beasts, birds or insects.

He traveled on. At another walled city he found people living in brick houses who seemed to be enjoying their time. He was told that they were the ones who did neither good nor bad things during their lifetime. After a thousand years as contented ghosts, they could be reborn as humans.

There was still another walled city about five thousand yards across, called Earth Center. Held there were fifty to sixty thousand naked figures languishing in the pangs of eternal hunger. On seeing him, they kowtowed and shrieked for mercy.

Completing his tour, he reported back to the official in scarlet, who asked him whether he found everything in order, and told him that his privilege as an administrator, instead of being one of those



乐，主者言：“唯奉佛弟子，精进不犯禁戒为乐耳。”又问：“未奉佛时，罪过山积；今奉佛法，其过得除否？”曰：“皆除。”主者又召都录使者，问赵泰何故死来。使开滕检年纪之籍，云：“有算三十年，横为恶鬼所取，今遣还家。”由是大小发意奉佛，为祖及弟，悬幡盖，诵《法华经》作福也。





tortured, was simply because he never sinned.

“What is happiness?” Zhao asked.

“One’s happiness lies in his devotion to Buddhism and abiding by its principles,” the official replied.

“What if one has committed mountains of sins before he’s converted? Can he still be pardoned?”

“No doubt about that,” the official assured him. Then he turned to a secretary and asked him to look up the cause of Zhao’s death. After fumbling through the records which were kept in a cane trunk, the secretary reported that Zhao was in fact abducted by two villainous devils while he still had thirty years of life in store. Zhao was thereupon sent home.

After his recovery, Zhao and his family became pious adherents of Buddhism. He chanted the scriptures and held services to redeem his parents and brother.





陈义郎

陈义郎，父彝爽，与周茂方皆东洛福昌人，同于三乡习业。彝爽擢第，归娶郭愔女。茂方名竟不就，唯与彝爽交结相誓。

唐天宝中，彝爽调集，受蓬州仪陇令。其母恋旧居，不从子之官。行李有日，郭氏以自织染缣一匹，裁衣欲上其姑。误为交刀伤指，血沾衣上。启姑曰：“新妇七八年温清晨昏，今将随夫之官，远违左右，不胜咽恋。然手自成此衫子，上有剪刀误伤血痕，不能浣去。大家见之，即不忘媳妇。”其姑亦哭。彝爽固请茂方同行。其子义郎，才二岁，茂方见之，甚于骨肉。





The Blood-Stained Coat

Chen Yishuang and Zhou Maofang, both natives of Fuchang County southwest of the East Capital, Luoyang, were classmates at a local school in the small town of Sanxiang. As it turned out, Yishuang succeeded in the imperial examination and came home in glory to marry a girl from the Guo family, while Maofang failed both in the exam and in getting himself a wife. They remained good friends, however.

In mid Tianbao reign, Yishuang was appointed to an official position as magistrate of Yilong County in Shu. As was the custom, his family was to follow him to his new job. His mother, however, was reluctant to leave her birthplace and preferred to stay behind.

The date for their departure was drawing near. As part of the hectic preparations for leaving, Yishuang's wife wove and dyed a bolt of silk to make her mother-in-law a new coat. But while she was cutting out the garment, the scissors slipped and cut her finger, leaving a blood stain on the coat.

"Mother," she said as she presented the coat to her mother-in-law, "we've lived happily together for seven or eight years and I hate to leave you alone at home, but I must go with my lord. Since I can no longer wait on your daily needs, here's a new coat I just made for you. It's a pity this blood stain can't be washed off. Anyway, it may remind you of me whenever you see it." She broke down in tears and her mother-in-law wept too.

At Yishuang's insistence, Maofang was going with them. Maofang



及去仪陇五百余里，磴石临险，巴江浩渺，攀萝游览。茂方忽生异志，命仆夫等先行，为吾邮亭具饌。二人徐步，自牵马行，忽于山路斗拔之所，抽金锤击彝爽，碎颡，挤之于浚湍之中。佯号哭云：“某内逼，北回，见马惊践长官殂矣，今将何之？”一夜会丧，爽妻及仆御致酒感恻。茂方曰：“事既如此，如之何？况天下四方人一无知者，吾便权与夫人乘名之官，且利一政俸禄，速可归北，即与发哀。”仆御等皆悬厚利。妻不知本末，乃从其计。





was very fond of Yishuang's son, who was then two years old.

Over mountains and rivers they traveled to within two hundred miles of Yilong County. The mountain path wound along the edge of steep cliffs overhanging a turbulent river. It was thrilling to see the pounding torrents plow its way through the bedrock of the virgin mountains right under one's feet. Often, despite the dangers, Yishuang and Maofang would cling to the vines for a better view. A vicious idea suddenly sprang up in Maofang's mind and seized him. He told the servants to go ahead and wait for them at the next posthouse with a meal ready, for they would linger awhile at this magnificent sight. So, leading their horses by the reins, he and Yishuang took a leisurely walk along the path. At a sheer drop, Maofang suddenly pulled out a copper hammer, thwacked Yishuang hard on the back of the head, and pushed the body down into the raging torrents below. Then he wailed his way into the posthouse to announce that his friend's mount shied and threw its master over the precipice into the stream. He said that he went stooling in the bush and when he was about to rejoin his friend he saw the terrible thing happen.

A memorial was held that evening. Yishuang's widow and the servants wept and moaned over the death of the master. "What has happened has happened," Maofang said to the widow. "What is important is what we're going to do next. Since nobody else knows about this incident except the servants and us, we probably can go on if you let me assume office in your husband's name. In that way, we at least can collect his official stipend through the following three years, and save enough to go home. Then we can formally announce his death and hold the proper services." As she did not know the truth, the widow agreed to the plan. Maofang promised hefty rewards to all the servants if they kept their mouth shut.



到任，安帖其仆。一年以后，谓郭曰：“吾志已成，誓无相背。”郭氏藏恨，未有所施，茂方防虞甚切。秩满，移官，家于遂州长江。又一选，授遂州曹掾。居无何，已十七年，子长十九岁矣。茂方谓必无人知，教子经业，既而欲成。遂州秩满，挈其子应举。

是年东都举选，茂方取北路，令子取南路，茂方意令覘故园之存没。涂次三乡，有鬻饭媪留食，再三瞻瞩。食讫，将酬其直。媪曰：“不然，吾怜子似吾孙姿状。”因启衣篋，出郭氏所留血污衫子以遗，泣而送之。其子秘于囊，亦不知其由，与父之本末。





So Maofang became the magistrate of Yilong County. In less than a year the servants were made submissive, and he was bold enough to come up to the widow and claim, "Now I have achieved my ambitions. Don't you try to betray me!" As he kept a close eye on her, she could find no chance to get her revenge. She had to bury the hatred deep in her heart.

The three-year term soon expired. Instead of retiring, Maofang managed to be transferred to Changjiang County as magistrate. And at the end of another term he was even promoted to department chief in the prefectural government. Seventeen years thus passed and the son, Yilang was nineteen and well read. Thinking that the long years should have obliterated anyone's memory of the past, and as his present term of office was expiring, Maofang judged it time for him to take Yilang to the capital for the imperial examination, which was to be held in the East Capital that year.

He, however, decided to take the northern route while sending Yilang along the southern one, which led right through Sanxiang Town. By that way, he figured he might be able to learn how things stood at home without risk.

At Sanxiang, Yilang stopped for a meal at an old woman's food stall. Throughout the meal, the old woman kept glancing at him, and when he was paying for the food, she refused to take his money. "You look so much like my son when he was young. This is my treat," she muttered as she fumbled in a trunk and took out the blood-stained coat her daughter-in-law had made for her, which she gave to the young man with watery eyes but without further explanation. Though he couldn't understand why she was so upset and didn't suspect anything related to his father, he kept the coat at the bottom of his bundle. He, however, failed to win himself a name in the exam and returned to



明年下第，归长江。其母忽见血迹衫子，惊问其故。子具以三乡媪所对。及问年状，即其姑也。因大泣，引子于静室，具言之：“此非汝父，汝父为此人所害。吾久欲言，虑汝之幼，吾妇人，谋有不臧，则汝亡父之冤，无复雪矣，非惜死也。今此吾手留血襦还，乃天意乎？”其子密砺霜刃，候茂方寝，乃断吭，仍挈其首诣官。连帅义之，免罪。即侍母东归。其姑尚存，且叙契阔。取衫子验之，歔歔对泣。郭氏养姑三年而终。





Changjiang County the following year.

His mother, putting away his clothes upon his return, was astonished to see the coat. She asked how he came into possession of such a coat, and he told her about the old woman he met at Sanxiang. Inquiries about the age and looks of the old woman assured her that it could be none other than her mother-in-law. She pulled her son into a vacant room, shut the door, and told him amidst bitter sobs that his so-called father was not his father but his father's murderer. "I'd wished to tell you all this long ago," she said, "but I was afraid you were too young to handle it. I'm a woman, and you're our only hope. If your move should miscarry, there'll be no one else to avenge your father. I've lived to this day, not because I fear death. And now it could only be a sign from heaven to have this blood-stained coat sent back to me!"

Yilang secretly sharpened a knife. He waited till Maofang was fast asleep and slashed the throat of the usurper. With the head, he surrendered himself to the governor, who pardoned him for his righteous revenge.

The widow and her son later returned to Sanxiang. The reunion of three generations was a mixture of joy and sorrow. She died after caring for her mother-in-law three more years.



华阳李尉

唐天宝后，有张某为剑南节度使。中元日，令郭下诸寺，盛其陈列，以纵士女游观。有华阳李尉者，妻貌甚美，闻于蜀人，张亦知之。及诸寺严设，倾城皆至，其从事及州县官家人看者，所由必白于张。唯李尉之妻不至，异之。令人潜问其邻，果以貌美不出。张乃令于开元寺选一大院，遣蜀之众工绝巧者，极其妙思，作一铺木人音声，关戾在内，丝竹皆备。令百姓士庶，恣观三日。云：“三日满，即将进内殿。”百里车舆阗噎。





The Pink Sleeve

The garrison commander of Jiannan Military Region after An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion was a Mr Zhang. With the advent of the *Ullambana* Festival on the full-moon of the seventh lunar month, he ordered that all temples in the city be decked out and throw their doors open to the public during the festival season.

The whole town, old and young, men and women, turned out for the occasion, all except the wife of a Mr Li, a county official under Zhang's jurisdiction. As Li's wife was reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the region, he had long coveted a look. He was pretty sure that she didn't come out because he had his subordinates' households watched, and any of their movements would be immediately reported to him.

Her reclusion fascinated him. He approached her neighbors through middlemen and the reports they brought back confirmed the gossip that her beauty required her prudence. Yet, he was determined to bait her out.

He gathered the best carpenters from all over the region to Kaiyuan Temple and told them to pool their minds and make a whole band of wooden musicians which, operated by an internal mechanism, could play the various stringed and wind instruments. Upon its completion he had it proclaimed in the streets that the band would be put on public display for three days, and three days only. After that, it would be sent to the capital as a tribute to the emperor.



两日，李君之妻亦不来。三日欲夜人散，李妻乘兜子从婢一人而至，将出宅，人已奔走启于张矣。张乃易其衣服先往，于院内一脱空佛中坐，觐覩之。须臾至，先令探屋内都无人，乃下。张见之，乃神仙之人，非代所有。

及归，潜求李尉之家来往者浮图尼及女巫，更致意焉。李尉妻皆惊而拒之。会李尉以推事受赃，为其仆所发，张乃令能吏深文按之，奏杖六十，流于岭徼，死于道。张乃厚赂李尉之母，强取之。适李尉愚而陋，其妻每有庸奴之恨，遂肯。置于州，张宠敬无与伦比。

然自此后，亦常仿佛见李尉在于其侧，令术士禳谢，竟不能止。岁余，李之妻亦卒。数年，张疾病，见李尉之





For two days the streets leading to the temple were jammed with people from as far as a hundred miles coming on foot, on horseback, in sedan chairs and in carriages. But Li's wife did not show up.

In the twilight of the third day when the last crowds were dispersing, Li's wife finally emerged from the gate of her house in a sedan chair, accompanied by a serving maid. Zhang was immediately notified. He took off his official robe and hurried to the temple in disguise, where he hid himself in the cavity of a hollow Buddha statue and peered out.

Li's wife soon arrived. Having first sent in the maid to make sure that the hall was vacant, she got off the sedan and walked in. How could she be anyone but the goddess of beauty herself!

Once home, he secretly summoned the nuns and women soothsayers who had any contact with Li's wife and bade them convince her of his admiration. However, all his advances were bashfully turned down.

It just happened then that Li was accused by his servant of taking bribes. Zhang had a confidant preside over the trial, who dutifully exiled Li to the remotest frontiers with sixty strokes across his back, all in the name of law. Li died along the way.

Zhang showered Li's mother with gifts, and with her acquiescence he was able to gain Li's widow as a concubine. The widow, on the other hand, did not put up a fight, because, Li being unpolished and plain-looking, she had often rued her low marriage. Zhang kept her in his official mansion and petted her with jewelry and favors.

Their good days didn't last long, for Zhang soon fancied that he saw Li around. He hired sorcerers to drive away Li's spirit, but to no avail. In about a year, Li's widow died. A few years later, it was his turn to fall ill. In his sickness, Li's image flickered on ever more frequently



状，亦甚分明。忽一日，睹李尉之妻，宛如平生。张惊前问之。李妻曰：“某感公恩深，思有所报。李某已上诉于帝，期在此岁。然公亦有人救拔，但过得兹年，必无虞矣。彼已来迎，公若不出，必不敢升公之堂，慎不可下。”言毕而去。其时华山道士符篆极高，与张结坛场于宅内，言亦略同。张数月不敢降阶。李妻亦同来，皆教以严慎之道。

又一日黄昏时，堂下东厢有丛竹。张见一红衫子袖，于竹侧招己者，以其李妻之来也，都忘前所戒。便下阶，奔往赴之。左右随后叫呼，止之不得。至则见李尉衣妇人衣，拽张于林下，殴击良久，云：“此贼若不著红衫子招，肯下阶耶？”乃执之出门去。左右如醉。及醒，见张仆于林下矣，眼鼻皆血，唯心上暖，扶至堂而卒矣。





and vividly. Then one day he saw Li's wife standing before his eyes, as beautiful as she had always been. He greeted her with a thrill of joy and surprise.

"I owe you a lot," she said, "and would like to do something for you in return. Li has brought his case before His Almighty, and the final verdict should come out before the end of the year. But don't worry. You have people up there defending you. If only you can make it into next year, you'll be all right. His spirit is already here waiting for an opportunity to fetch your soul, but as long as you stay within doors, you're safe, for he dare not enter an official mansion. Take care. Don't venture out." So saying, she disappeared. A venerable Taoist priest from Mount Hua, who had set up an altar in the courtyard at Zhang's request, had said the same thing. So, for several months, with the assistance of Li's wife and the priest, Zhang carefully restrained from crossing the threshold.

At dusk one day Zhang saw a pink sleeve beckoning to him from the bamboo grove in the yard. Thinking that it must be Li's wife, he ran out from his room toward the grove, forgetting all the warnings and ignoring the desperate calls from his attendants for him to come back. Who he met behind the grove was none other than Li in woman's clothes. Li caught hold of him and gave him a good long beating, saying, "Only a pink sleeve can make you voluntarily come to your death."

Overpowered by a sense of drunken numbness, Zhang's attendants watched him being dragged out of the gate. When they were able to move again, they discovered Zhang's body prostrate in the grove, his nose and ears bleeding, but not quite dead yet. By the time they carried him back into the room, he had drawn his last breath.



李生

唐贞元中，有李生者，家河朔间。少有膂力，恃气好侠，不拘细行，常与轻薄少年游。年二十余，方折节读书，为歌诗，人颇称之。累为河朔官，后至深州录事参军。生美风仪，善谈笑，曲晓吏事，廉谨明干。至于击鞠饮酒，皆号为能，雅为太守所知。

时王武俊帅成德军，恃功负众，不顾法度，支郡守畏之侧目。尝遣其子士真巡属郡，至深州，太守大具牛酒，所居备声乐，宴士真。太守畏武俊，而奉士真之礼甚谨。又虑有以酒忤士真者，以故僚吏宾客，一不敢召。士真大喜，以为他郡莫能及。





Mr Li

Mr Li, a native of the region north of the Yellow River in Zhenyuan reign, was a tough man when he was young and loved a good fight. As decency rarely bothered him, he was often seen mixed up with the local rascals. He did not begin to read books until he was in his twenties, yet the poems he composed won praise from many. With that, he was able to obtain a job in the local government as a clerk, and gradually rose to a position as minor official in the government of Shen Prefecture. He was a capable official and quite discreet when it came to office policy. He also had a graceful deportment and a good sense of humor. As for games and drinking, he excelled most, and in that respect he was known to the prefect.

At that time, the commander of Chengde Military Region was a General Wang Wujun, an arrogant and impudent man who did not hesitate to bend the law to his own desires. The prefects under his jurisdiction were subjected to his constant tyranny, which they could not but grin and bear. In addition, he often sent his son, Wang Shizhen, on inspection tours through the prefectures.

On one such inspection, Shizhen arrived in Shen Prefecture. Cowed by the father, the prefect took exceptional pains to please the son. A luxurious banquet was held in Shizhen's honor with fragrant wine and roasted calves. Musicians and singers were collected to entertain. Still, the prefect was afraid that someone might forget his manners when sodden with wine and unwittingly offend the distinguished guest. He



饮酒至夜，士真乃曰：“幸使君见待之厚，欲尽欢于今夕，岂无嘉宾，愿得召之。”太守曰：“偏郡无名人，惧副大使之威，不敢以他客奉宴席。唯录事参军李某，足以侍谈笑。”士真曰：“但命之。”于是召李生入。趋拜。士真目之，色甚怒。既而命坐，貌益恭，士真愈不悦，瞪顾攘腕，无向时之欢矣。太守惧，莫知所谓，顾视生，眦然而汗，不能持杯。一坐皆愕。有顷，士真叱左右，缚李某系狱。左右即牵李袂疾去，械狱中。已而士真欢饮如初，迨晓宴罢。

太守且惊且惧，乃潜使于狱中讯李生曰：“君貌甚恭，且未尝言，固非忤于王君，君宁自知耶？”李生悲泣





therefore kept the size of company down to the minimum.

Shizhen was pleased with the banquet, thinking that it was better than at other prefectures. Drinking late into the night, he turned to the prefect and said, "Thanks for this cordial reception. Let's thoroughly enjoy ourselves tonight, but, I don't see much company here. Why didn't you summon more?"

"I beg Your Excellency's pardon. My poor jurisdiction doesn't have any celebrities to boast of. On the other hand, with regard to Your Excellency's high position, I didn't dare to invite anyone of low status. Among my subordinates there is a Mr Li. He's a good companion at the table. If you don't mind, I'll send for him."

"Do, please," Shizhen rasped.

Li bowed deep and respectfully as he entered the room, but the smile disappeared from Shizhen's face the moment he caught sight of him. Then Li was offered a seat, and he sat humbly at the table. Shizhen seemed even more displeased. Li held his hands stiffly and stared vacantly ahead, entirely different from the jolly man he used to be.

Not knowing what went wrong, the prefect was scared to death. He tried to catch Li's eye, but to his surprise he saw beads of sweat oozing out on his subordinate's forehead, whose hands shook so that he could hardly hold his cup. All those present were stunned. Then Shizhen burst out to his attendants to have Li tied up and thrown into prison. The attendants grabbed Li by the sleeves and whisked him out to jail. With Li out of the room, Shizhen regained his cheerfulness and started to drink again.

When the banquet finally came to an end at daybreak, the prefect was more worried than relieved. He secretly dispatched a confidant to the jail to question Li: "You behaved most respectfully, and you didn't even say a word, so you couldn't have offended that man in any way. Is



久之，乃曰：“常闻释氏有现世之报，吾知之矣。某少贫，无以自资，由是好与侠士游，往往掠夺里人财帛。常驰马腰弓，往还大道，日百余里。一日遇一少年，鞭骏骡，负二巨囊。吾利其资，顾左右皆岩崖万仞，而日渐曛黑，遂力排之，堕于崖下。即疾驱其骡逆旅氏，解其囊，得缯绮百余段，自此家稍贍。因折弓矢，闭门读书，遂仕而至此，及今凡二十七矣。昨夕君侯命与王公之宴，既入而视王公之貌，乃吾曩时所杀少年也。一拜之后，中心惭惕，自知死不朝夕。今则延颈待刃，又何言哉！为我谢君侯，幸知我深，敢以身后为托。”有顷，士真醉悟，急召左右，往李某取其首。左右即于狱中斩其首以进，士真熟视而笑。

既而又与太守大饮于郡斋，酒醉。太守因欢，乃起曰：“某不才，幸得守一郡。而副大使下察弊政，宽不加





there some reason I don't know?"

It was quite a while before Li could control his sobs and pull himself together to reply. "There is a Buddhist saying that retribution doesn't have to wait till one's next life. I believe it now. As you know, I was very poor when I was young and had no means to support myself. So I associated myself with bad company and we often stole and robbed in the villages. We sometimes would prowl a good stretch of highway on horseback with arrows and bow. One day I saw a youth driving a beautiful mule with two bulky sacks on its back. As it was getting dark and it happened to be a craggy stretch of road, I thought he was easy prey. I dashed forth and shoved him down the cliff. Then I galloped away with the mules. When I opened the sacks in my tavern room, I found more than a hundred bolts of silk. I became well off. So I discarded my arrows and bow and turned to the books. Thanks to that, I became a clerk and rose to this position today. It all happened twenty-seven years ago, but yesterday at my lord's banquet, the moment I saw His Excellency Mr Wang, I recognized the youth I killed. When I bowed to him, I actually bowed with my deepest regret. I know I can't escape this time and I'm waiting for the headsman with my neck stretched. I don't want to defend myself. Please bring my heartiest gratitude to the prefect for treating me well. My only wish is that he'll take care of my remains."

Meanwhile, Shizhen had awakened out of his hangover. The first thing he did was send his adjutants to the jail to fetch Li's head. Li was beheaded, and his head was presented to Shizhen, who examined it with a contented smile.

Then Shizhen was invited to another feast at the prefect's place. Seeing him intoxicated, the prefect sighed and rose from his seat. "I should say," he ventured, "I'm an incompetent governor. It's only by



罪，为恩厚矣。昨日副大使命某召他客，属郡僻小无客，不足奉欢宴者。窃以李某善饮酒，故请召之。而李某愚戇，不习礼法，大忤于明公，实某之罪也。今明公既已诛之，宜矣。窃有所未晓，敢以上问李某之罪为何，愿得明数之，且用诫于将来也。”士真笑曰：“李生亦无罪。但吾一见之，遂忿然激吾心，已有戮之之意。今既杀之，吾亦不知其所以然也。君无复言。”及宴罢，太守密讯其年，则二十有七矣。盖李生杀少年之岁，而士真生于王氏也。太守叹异久之，因以家财厚葬李生。





your favor and leniency that I can continue to hold this position, for Your Excellency must have found many unsatisfactory things during your inspection. As Your Excellency may see, my prefecture is deprived and has little to offer. So yesterday when Your Excellency told me to summon more company, I thought of that Mr Li. He used to be fun at the table and a good drinker as well. Who knew he would be so ignorant and without manners as to affront Your Excellency. It was really my fault for having him come. He deserved his death, as Your Excellency has punished him. Yet I wonder, excuse my ineptitude, in what name he was executed. I hope Your Excellency will enlighten me so that I might be wiser next time.”

“As a matter of fact,” Shizhen chuckled, “that Mr Li did not do anything wrong. I don’t know why, but as soon as I saw his mug, I felt a kind of revulsion and would like to have him eliminated from earth. Now that he is dead, do not mention it again.”

After the feast, the prefect probed and learned that Shizhen was twenty-seven years old, that is, he was born into the Wang family in the very year Li killed the youth.

Amazed by the workings of providence, the prefect gave Li a proper burial.





崔无隐

唐元和中，博陵崔无隐言其亲友曰，城南杜某者，尝于汴州招提院，与主客僧坐语。忽有一客僧，当面鼻额间，有故刀瘢，横断其面。乃讯其来由。僧良久颦惨而言曰：“某家于梁，父母兄嫂存焉，兄每以贾贩江湖之货为业。初一年，自江南而返大梁，获利可倍；二年往而不返；三年，乃有同行者云：‘兄溺于风波矣。’父母嫂俱服未阕，忽有自汉南贾者至于梁，乃访召某父姓名者。某于相国精舍，应曰：‘唯。’贾客曰：‘吾得汝兄信。’某乃忻骇未言，且邀至所居，告父母。而言曰：‘师之兄以江西贸折，遂浪迹于汉南。裨将怜之，白于元戎。今于汉南，虽缙鞶且尽，而衣衾似给，以卑贫所系，是未获省拜，故凭某以达信耳。’父母嫂悲忻泣不胜。





The Scarred Monk

During Yuanhe reign, a Mr Du was visiting a Buddhist temple in Bianzhou City when he noticed a monk with a long horizontal scar across his face between the nose and the brow, as if severing the face into upper and lower halves. Upon his inquiry, the monk sank into a dreamy retrospection and slowly related his story.

He said: I'm a native of the town, and I lived with my parents and a married elder brother. My brother was a merchant, trading between Bianzhou and the Yangtze valley. Later, he expanded his business to the south. On his first trip, he gained a double profit. Next year, he set off again, but this time he did not return. In the year that followed, a fellow merchant came back to announce that my brother had drowned when his ship capsized. Our whole family went into mourning. However, before the mourning period was over, yet another merchant from Hannan came asking for my father. He chanced upon me at the temple, and when I told him I was the son of the man he was seeking, he said he was carrying a message from my brother. Somewhat shocked but anxious for any good tidings, I led him home to see my parents.

My brother's business, according to that messenger, suffered heavy losses in the south. He went broke and somehow wandered to Hannan, where an army officer took pity on him and recruited him with permission from the garrison commander. Though penniless, for the moment at least he did not have to worry about food and clothing. Being too poor and ashamed to return in person, he had beseeched the



“翌日，父母遣师之汉南，以省兄。师行可七八日，入南阳界。日晚，过一大泽中，东西路绝，目无人烟，四面阴云且合。渐暮，遇寥落三两家，乃欲寄宿耳。其家曰：‘师胡为至此？今为信宿前有杀人者，追逐未获，索之甚急，宿固不可也。自此而南三五里，有一招提所，师可宿也。’某因言而往。阴风渐急，飒飒雨来。可四五里，转入荒泽，莫知为计，信足而步。少顷，前有烛光，初将咫尺，而可十里方到。风雨转甚，不及扣户而入。造于堂隍，寂无生人，满室死者。瞻视次，雷声一发，师为一女人尸所逐。

“又出，奔走七八里，至人家。雨定，月微明，遂入其家。中门外有小厅，厅中有床榻。卧未定，忽有一夫，





man to bring his parents his good wishes.

The news made my parents and sister-in-law cry with renewed grief and hope. The very next day they sent me off to Hannan to look up my brother.

Seven or eight days of trekking brought me into Nanyang. Late one afternoon I found myself deep in a boundless swampland. As far as the eye could stretch there were no human beings, no houses, no farmland, and no traces whatever of human activities except for the faint trail beneath my feet. Dark clouds were closing in. At sunset I finally reached a hamlet of two or three huts. I begged for shelter for the night. My presence, however, seemed to have alarmed the villagers. They told me to move on because a murder had just happened the night before and officials were hunting for the fugitive. They added that there was a temple a mile or so to the south where I might stay for the night. So there I headed. A chilly wind rose, sprinkling cold raindrops. The swamp became wilder with every step and I soon lost my way. Wandering aimlessly, I suddenly perceived a candle light ahead, which didn't seem far away, but I must have covered a couple of miles before I saw a cottage. As wind and rain were gaining momentum, I dashed right into the room without stopping to knock, only to find a room of dead bodies, not a breath of life. Just at that moment thunder cracked. A woman corpse leaped to her feet, her hair electrified. She flung herself toward me, chasing me out of the room into the rain. I fled headlong for probably another couple of miles until I caught sight of a compound. The rain had stopped and the moon was peering out from behind the dispersing clouds. I entered the parlor in the outer yard and was content to find a couch in the room. I dropped myself onto the couch and was going to stretch my weary legs when I beheld a man over seven feet tall entering from the gate with a shining



长七尺余，提白刃，自门而入。师恐，立于壁角中。白刃夫坐榻良久，如有所候。俄而白刃夫出厅东，先是有粪积，可乘而覘宅中。俄又闻宅中有三四女人，于墙端切切而言。须臾，白刃夫携一衣襖入厅，续有女人从之，乃计会逃逝者也。白刃夫遂云：‘此室莫有人否？’以刃绕壁画之。师帖壁定立，刃画其面过，而白刃夫不之觉，遂携襖领奔者而往。

“师自料不可住，乃舍此又前走。可一二里，扑一古井中。古井中已有死人矣，其体暖。师之回遑可五更。主觉失女，寻趁至古井，以火照，乃尸与师存焉。执师以闻于县。县尹明辩。师以画壁及墙上语者具狱，于宅中姨姑之类而获盗者，师之得雪。

“南征垂至汉南界，路逢大桧树，一老父坐其下，问





broadsword in his hand. As there was no way for me to escape unnoticed, I hastily slid into a dark corner, standing bolt upright against the walls, holding my breath.

The tall man sat on the couch for quite a while as if expecting someone. Then he stood up and went outside. Against the wall separating the outer and inner yards was a heap of manure, standing on which one could easily survey the living quarters. Three or four women's hushed voices effused from the other side of the wall and in a while the tall man reappeared with a bundle in his other hand, followed by a woman. They must be eloping. The tall man must have had a hunch, for he muttered to himself whether there was someone hiding in the room. He held out his broadsword at arm's length, swiveled around on his heels, and dragged the tip of the blade along the walls. The blade scratched past my face. Luckily, he didn't seem to sense any difference and left with the bundle and the woman.

Realizing that it was unwise to stay any longer, I set out again. I couldn't have gone half a mile when I stumbled and fell into a dry well. To my surprise, I found I was not alone, for lying at the bottom of the well was a corpse, its body still warm. Day finally broke over a long and troubled night. The master of the compound must have noticed a girl missing, for he and his men traced the footprints to the well. A torch was lowered and I was discovered with the corpse.

I was brought before the county magistrate who appeared to be a reasonable man. I showed him the sword mark and told him what I overheard. An aunt of the family was found to be involved. Her confession cleared me of all suspicion and I was free to continue my south-bound trip.

Approaching Hannan, I came upon an old man sitting under a big juniper tree by the roadside. He asked me where I was from, which



其从来。师具告。父曰：‘吾善《易》，试为子推之。’师呵蓍。父布卦嘘唏而言曰：‘子前生两妻，汝俱辜焉。前为走尸逐汝者，长室也；为人杀于井中同处者，汝侧室也。县尹明汝之无辜，乃汝前生母也；我乃汝前生之父。汉南之兄已无也。’言毕，师泪下。收泪之次，失老父所在。及至汉南，寻访其兄，杳无所见。其刀瘢乃白刃夫之所致也。”

噫！乃宿冤之动作，征应委曲如是。无隐云，杜生自有传，此略而记之。





I told him, and he offered to read my fortune, claiming that he was an expert in the art. I prayed to a bunch of yarrow grass stems and let them fall. After some calculation of their positioning, he sighed and pronounced that I'd had two wives in my previous life, and I had mistreated them both. The woman corpse that chased me at the cottage was my first wife, and the one I lay with in the dry well was my second. The sympathetic county magistrate was none other than my former mother, and he himself my former father. The brother I was looking for lived no more. These revelations brought blurring tears to my eyes. When they cleared, the old man had vanished.

Despite his prophecy, I went on to Hannan, but could by no means find my brother.

Ah! How weirdly retribution strikes!





郑生

唐荥阳郑生，善骑射，以勇悍趯捷闻，家于巩洛之郊。尝一日乘醉，手弓腰矢，驰捷马，独驱田野间。去其居且数十里，会天暮，大风雨，生庇于大木下，久之。及雨霁，已夕矣，迷失道，纵马行，见道旁有门宇，乃神庙也。生以马系门外，将止屋中，忽栗然心动，即匿身东庑下，闻庙左空舍中窸窣然。生疑其鬼，因引弓震弦以伺之。

俄见一丈夫，身长衣短，后卓衣负囊仗剑自空舍中出，既而倚剑扬言曰：“我盗也，尔岂非盗乎？”郑生曰：“吾家于巩洛之郊，向者独驱田间，适遇大风雨，迷而失道，故匿身于此。”仗剑者曰：“子既不为盗，得无害我之心乎？且我遁去，道必经东庑下，愿解弓弦以授我，使





Mr Zheng

Living east of Luoyang was a Mr Zheng, a native of Xingyang County. He was brave and agile, and an expert in horsemanship and archery.

Intoxicated one day, he raced out alone on a fast horse with his bow in one hand and arrows in a quiver hanging from his belt. Dusk found him in the open fields dozens of miles from home and rain was pelting down on a strong wind. He cowered under a big tree. When the storm finally subsided, it was completely dark and he could not find his way. He gave his horse free reins and before long a building came into view, which turned out to be a temple. He tied his horse outside the yard and went in to look for shelter. Suddenly he was alarmed and squatted below the east verandah, for he thought he had heard a rustling in one of the wing-rooms. Afraid that he had run into some evil spirit, he drew his bow and held his breath.

Shortly, a tall man in a tight dark jacket stepped out from a room with a sword in one hand and a bundle in the other. The man stopped short and brandished his sword. "You there!" he bellowed. "I'm an outlaw. You same?"

"No," Zheng replied. "I live around here. Just now I rode out and got caught in the storm. I've lost my way and am looking for shelter."

"You say you're no mobster, but how can I believe you?" the man with the sword snarled. "I just want to take leave but you're holding that bow in my way. If you really mean no harm, remove the



我得去。不然，且死于竖子矣。”先是生常别以一弦致袖中，既解弦，投于剑客前，密以袖中弦系弓上。贼既得弦，遂至东庑下，将杀郑生以灭口。急以矢系弦，贼遂去，因曰：“吾子果智者，某罪固当死矣。”生曰：“我不为害，尔何为疑我？”贼再拜谢。生即去西庑下以避贼。既去，生惧其率徒再来，于是登木自匿。

久之，星月始明，忽见一妇人，貌甚冶，自空舍中出，泣于庭。问之，妇人曰：“妾家于村中，为盗见诱至此，且利妾衣装，遂杀妾空舍中，弃其尸而去，幸君子为雪其冤。”又曰：“今夕当匿于田横墓，愿急逐之，无失。”生诺之。妇人谢而去。及晓，生视之，果见尸。即驰马至洛，具白于河南尹郑叔则。尹命吏捕之，果得贼于田横墓中。





bowstring and throw it over. Or I'm afraid you might shoot."

Zheng used to keep a spare string in his sleeve. As he untied the bowstring and threw it to the man, he at the same time stealthily pulled out the spare string and fastened it on. The man, now in possession of the bowstring, pressed forward to kill.

Zheng hurriedly notched an arrow, forcing the man to retreat. "You're a smart guy," the man muttered. "I'm probably doomed today."

"I told you I mean no harm," Zheng said. "Why can't you believe me?"

The man bowed deeply and Zheng moved cautiously out of his way to the west verandah.

After the man was gone Zheng climbed up a big tree and hid among the leaves for fear that the tall man might return with other members of the gang.

The moon peeped through the clouds. Without warning, he saw a nice-looking woman coming out from the room where the man had emerged. She stood weeping in the courtyard. Zheng asked.

"I lived in the neighboring village," she replied. "That scoundrel lured me to this temple and he had no qualms in killing me just for my clothes! And he even left my body exposed in that dusty room! Can you avenge me?"

"Tonight," she added, "he'll be hiding in Tian Heng's tomb. Go and catch him there. Don't let him run away this time."

Zheng gave her his word and the woman went away in gratitude. When the sun rose up, he went to check the room and there he found the corpse of the woman. He galloped to the capital and reported the incident to the mayor.

That night the constables caught the man in Tian Heng's tomb.



汪 凤

唐苏州吴县氓汪凤，宅在通津，往往怪异起焉。不十数年，凤之妻子洎仆使辈，死丧略尽。凤居不安，因货之同邑盛忠。忠居未五六岁，其亲戚凋陨，又复无几。忠大忧惧，则损其价而标货焉。吴人皆知其故，久不能售。

邑胥张励者，家富于财，群从强大，为邑中之蠹横，居与忠同里。每旦诣曹，路经其门，则遥见二青气，粗如箭竿，而紧锐彻天焉。励谓实玉之藏在下，而精气上腾也。不以告人，日日视之。因诣忠，请以百缗而交关焉。

寻徙人，复晨望，其气不衰。于是大具畚鍤，发其气





The Monkey in the Copper Jar

Wang Feng, a peasant in Wu County, Suzhou, had a house on the main road leading to the ford. The house was plagued by sinister incidents, for in about ten years his wife, his sons, and even his servants died one after another. Frightened, he sold the house to a townsman named Sheng Zhong. And in just five or six years, most of Sheng's family members died too. The terrified Sheng was eager to get rid of the house even at a bargain price, but for a long time he couldn't find a buyer because the locals all knew about the house.

On that same street lived a man called Zhang Li, a low-level officer in the county government. He had wealth and a spiderweb of family relatives – and was a recognized bully in the town. Passing by Sheng's gate every morning on his way to office, he would see two beams of bluish light, each the thickness of an arrow shaft, rising straight up from the house into zenith. He figured that was due to a mine of fair jade beneath the house, because in popular belief a real piece of treasure has a spirit of its own and must manifest itself some way or other. He kept that a secret to himself and watched every day. Finally, he went to Sheng and closed a bargain with one hundred strings of coins.

He moved in, and to his delight the two beams of light remained bright and distinct in the serenity of dawn. Confident now, he prepared shovels and baskets and dug at the place where the light beams shot up. About six or seven feet down they came upon a large flat



之所萌也。掘地不六七尺，遇盘石焉。去其石，则有石柜，雕镌制造，工巧极精，仍以铁索周匝束缚，皆用铁汁固缝，重以石灰密封之。每面各有朱记七窠，文若谬篆，而又屈曲勾连，不可知识。励即加钳锤，极力开拆。石柜既启，有铜釜，可容一斛，釜口铜盘覆焉，用铅锡锢护。仍以紫印九窠，回旋印之，而印文不类前体，而全如古篆，人无解者。励拆去铜盘，而釜口以绋纆三重幂之。励才揭起，忽有大猴跳而出。众各惊骇，无敢近者。久之，超逾而莫知所诣。励因视釜中，乃有石铭云：禎明元年，七月十五日，茅山道士鲍知远，囚猴神于此。其有发者，发后十二年，胡兵大扰，六合烟尘，而发者俄亦族灭。禎明即陈后主叔宝年号也。

励以天宝二年十月发，至十四年冬，禄山起戎，自是周年，励家灭矣。





stone, which they were able to remove. An elegantly carved stone chest was revealed. It was bounded in iron hoops; the seams of the slabs were filled with melted iron and made doubly airtight by putty and mortar. There were seven red stamp-seals on every side. The characters seemed ancient and entangled, making them illegible. Sledge hammers and pliers were applied to break open the chest. Inside was a copper jar the capacity of a bushel. Soldered to the mouth of the jar was a copper lid, on which were nine purple stamp-seals in a circle. The characters were different from those in red. They looked even more primitive and were beyond anyone's knowledge. He removed the lid and found the mouth further covered by three layers of rosy silk. The moment he lifted the silk a large monkey jumped out. All were so stunned that no one dared to move. Moments later, the monkey leaped over the wall and disappeared.

He looked into the jar and found an inscribed stone tablet. The epigraph read: A monkey demon is shut in this jar by Taoist priest Bao Zhiyuan from Mount Mao on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month in the first year of Zhenming reign. Should someone open this jar, in twelve years alien tribes will invade the land, war will devastate the country, and the entire clan of the excavator shall perish.

Zhenming was the reign title of the last emperor of the Chen Dynasty. Zhang dug up the jar in the tenth month of the second year of Tianbao reign and his whole family died within a year. In the winter of the fourteenth year of that reign General An Lushan revolted in the north.





尉迟敬德

隋末，有书生居太原，苦于家贫，以教授为业。所居抵官库，因穴而入，其内有钱数万贯，遂欲携挈。有金甲人持戈曰：“汝要钱，可索取尉迟公帖来，此是尉迟敬德钱也。”

书生访求不见。至铁冶处，有煅铁尉迟敬德者，方袒露蓬首，煅炼之次。书生伺其歇，乃前拜之。尉迟公问曰：“何故？”曰：“某贫困，足下富贵，欲乞钱五百贯，得否？”尉迟公怒曰：“某打铁人，安有富贵，乃侮我耳！”生曰：“若能哀悯，但赐一帖，他日自知。”尉迟不





The Blacksmith's Money

Toward the end of the Sui Dynasty, there was a poor scholar in Taiyuan City, who managed a meager living by teaching a handful of private students. As his house happened to be next to a government warehouse, he hit upon the idea of digging an underground tunnel into the storeroom, which he did, and found himself amidst millions upon millions of copper coins. He was about to take some when he was stopped by an iron-armored guard with a spear. "If you want to take any money out of this room," said the guard, "you must have a payment note from Lord Yuchi Jingde. This is his money."

The scholar had no idea who Lord Yuchi was. As he inquired about town, he came upon a blacksmith's shop whose owner answered to the name of Yuchi Jingde. The blacksmith was working bare-chested by the furnace, his face smudged with sweat and his hair disheveled. The scholar waited till he took a break and stepped forth with a bow.

"What can I do for you?" the blacksmith asked, somewhat tickled by the undue respect.

"I'm impoverished and you're wealthy. I just wonder if you could help me with five hundred thousand."

"Are you insulting me?" the man snarled. "I am a blacksmith. Where do I get that money?"

"If you care to show some compassion for my embarrassed conditions, you only need to write me a payment note. You'll understand some day."



得已，令书生执笔，曰：“钱付某乙五百贯。”具月日，署名于后。书生拜谢持去。尉迟公与其徒，拊掌大笑，以为妄也。

书生既得帖，却至库中，复见金甲人呈之。笑曰：“是也。”令系于梁上高处。遣书生取钱，止于五百贯。

后敬德佐神尧，立殊功，请归乡里。敕赐钱，并一库物未曾开者，遂得此钱。阅簿，欠五百贯，将罪主者，忽于梁上得帖子。敬德视之，乃打铁时书帖。累日惊叹，使人密求书生。得之，具陈所见。公厚遣之，仍以库物分惠故旧。





It was such a simple request that no one could refuse. So he told the scholar to write: "Give five hundred thousand to the person who bears this note," and signed his name.

The scholar made a grateful bow and marched off with the note. As soon as he was out of hearing, the blacksmith and his apprentices slapped their thighs with laughter. They had seen the biggest fool in the world.

Meanwhile, the scholar went straight to the warehouse and handed the note to the iron-armored guard.

"That's it," the guard grinned, and pinned the note onto a beam. The scholar went away with five hundred thousand.

Many years later, Yuchi became the right-hand man of Emperor Taizong in conquering the land. When he petitioned for retirement back to his native place, the emperor awarded him a whole storeroom of money. Checking the accounts with the stock he found that five hundred thousand was missing. In his anger, he was going to punish the keeper when he caught sight of a note pinned to the beam. He had it taken down and was surprised to find that it was the note he signed when he was still a blacksmith. Discreet confidants were sent out to look for the scholar while he kept wondering over the matter for days.

The scholar was found, and he related his tunnel experience. Yuchi sent him home with lavish gifts, and distributed the money among his friends and subordinates.



李君

江陵副使李君尝自洛赴进士举。至华阴，见白衣人在店。李君与语，围炉饮啜甚洽。同行至昭应，曰：“某隐居，饮西岳，甚荷郎君相厚之意。有故，明旦先径往城中，不得奉陪也。莫要知向后事否？”君再拜恳请，乃命纸笔，于月下凡书三封。次第缄题之：“甚急则开之。”乃去。

五六举下第，欲归无粮食，将住，求容足之地不得，曰：“此为穷矣，仙兄书可以开也。”遂沐浴，清旦焚香启之，曰：“某年月日，以困迫无资用，开一封。可青龙寺门前坐。”见讫遂往。到已晚矣。望至昏时，不敢归。心自笑曰：“此处坐，可得钱乎？”少顷，寺主僧领行者





Three Confidential Letters

On his way to the capital, Chang'an, for the final round of the imperial examination Mr Li met a man in plain clothes at an inn in Huayin County. A conversation sprung up between them and Li invited him to a drink at the fireside. Together they continued their journey. At Zhaoying the man said, "I'm afraid I can't accompany you any further, for I'm otherwise engaged and must leave early for town. I'm a recluse, but your hospitality at Huayin has drawn me out. Don't you want to know something about your own future?"

Li begged to know. The man asked for paper and pen, and wrote three letters by the moonlight. He then sealed them one by one and marked the envelopes. "You may read them at critical moments in the marked order one at a time." Having said that, he left.

For five times in succession Li failed to pass the examinations. He thought of going home, but he was too poor even to afford the traveling expenses; he thought of staying in the capital, but he couldn't find a place to live. "I'm at the bottom of life," he said to himself. "Now I may open the first letter written by that recluse." He bathed, and at the first rays of dawn lit a stick of incense and opened the letter. "On such and such a day you are to find yourself in dire poverty and open this letter. Go to the Black Dragon Temple and sit at the gate."

He immediately set off. When he reached the temple it was already late in the afternoon. Dusk soon fell, but he sat there stubbornly. "Can one get money just sitting here?" he laughed bitterly to himself.



至，将闭门。见李君曰：“何人？”曰：“某驴弱居远，前去不得，将寄宿于此。”僧曰：“门外风寒不可，且向院中。”遂邀入，牵驴随之。具馔烹茶。夜艾，熟视李君，低头不语者良久。乃曰：“郎君何姓？”曰：“姓李。”僧惊曰：“松滋李长官识否？”李君起颦蹙曰：“某先人也。”僧垂泣曰：“某久故旧，适觉郎君酷似长官。然奉求已多日矣，今乃遇。”李君涕流被面。因曰：“郎君甚贫，长官比将钱物到求官，至此狼狈。有钱二千贯，寄在某处。自是以来，如有重负。今得郎君分付，老僧此生无事矣。明日留一文书，便可挈去。”李君悲喜。及旦，遂载馿而去。鬻宅安居，遽为富室。





After some time the abbot appeared with a few junior monks to lock the gate. "Why are you sitting here?" the abbot asked when he saw Li.

"There's a long way to go, but my poor donkey is exhausted," Li said. "I guess I'm stuck. May I stay for the night?"

"It's windy and cold outside," the abbot said. "Why don't you come in?"

Li led his donkey in. The abbot offered tea and food. All the while he kept studying Li's face. Night grew deep. "May I ask you of your family name?" the abbot blurted out after a long silence.

"It's Li."

"Do you happen to know Magistrate Li of Songzi County?" asked the abbot with an insuppressible thrill in his voice.

"He was my father," Li bowed, his face clouded over.

Tears trickled down the abbot's cheeks. "He was my friend. The very sight of you reminded me of him, for you bear a striking resemblance to your father. I've been looking for you for years and now I finally find you!"

Li's face was wet with tears.

"It seems that you're not in a desirable condition," the abbot continued. "Your father once came to the capital with money and gifts to seek promotion, but misfortune overtook him. He had left two thousand strings of coins in my hand and that became a burden on my mind. Now I can return the money to you and be relieved. Write me a receipt tomorrow and you can take the money away."

Li's grief turned into glee. He took the money and left the next day. With that money he bought a house in the capital and lived luxuriously.

Another three years rolled by and he was still unable to pass the

又三数年不第，尘土困悴，欲罢去，思曰：“乃一生之事，仙兄第二缄可以发也。”又沐浴，清旦启之，曰：“某年月日，以将罢举，可开第二封。可西市鞦韆行头坐。”见讫复往。至即登楼饮酒。闻其下有人言：“交他郎君平明即到此，无钱。”即道：“元是不要钱及第。”李君惊而问之，客曰：“侍郎郎君有切故，要钱一千贯，致及第。昨有共某期不至者，今欲去耳。”李君问曰：“此事虚实？”客曰：“郎君见在楼上房内。”李君曰：“某是举人，亦有钱，郎君可一谒否？”曰：“实如此，何故不可。”乃却上，果见之，话言饮酒。曰：“侍郎郎君也。”云：“主司是亲叔父。”乃面定约束。明年果及第。





examination. He was thinking of giving up, but that being a critical decision, he thought it might be time to read the second letter. So he bathed and opened the letter at first light. "On such and such a day you'll think of quitting the examinations and open this letter. Go to the harness and leather trader in the west market and sit there."

So there he went and took an upstairs seat with a flask of wine.

"I told his son to come early in the morning, but it seems he failed to scrape up the money." Li heard someone say downstairs.

"I didn't know money could help one pass the exams," another voice said.

Li was very much surprised and came downstairs to ask.

"The son of the Vice Minister of Rites is in urgent need of one thousand strings of coins. Whoever can give him that much he'll let that person's name appear on the list of successful candidates. I made an appointment with a guy yesterday but he didn't show up. I don't think I'm going to sit here and wait for him forever."

"You're not kidding, are you?" Li questioned.

"If you don't believe me, the Minister's son is waiting in an upstairs room."

"I'm a candidate and I have money," Li ventured. "Can I see the young master?"

"As long as you have money, why not?"

The man led him up to the dandy's room.

"This is the Minister's son," the man introduced as they sat down to join the drinking.

"In fact," the young dandy said, "the minister in charge of the examination is my first uncle." An agreement was reached, and as it turned out Li successfully passed the examination in the following year.

Later, at the post of Vice Prefect of Jiangling, he suffered a heart

后官至殿中江陵副使，患心痛，少顷数绝，危迫颇甚。谓妻曰：“仙师第三封可以开矣。”妻遂灌洗，开视之，云：“某年月日，江陵副使忽患心痛，可处置家事。”更两日卒。



attack and passed out several times. With death around the corner he said to his wife, "Now it's time to open the third letter." His wife helped him wash up. The letter read, "On such and such a day the Vice Prefect of Jiangling is to suffer a heart attack. It's time for him to draw a will."

Two days later he died.



定婚店

杜陵韦固，少孤。思早娶妇，多歧，求婚不成。贞观二年，将游清河，旅次宋城南店。客有以前清河司马潘昉女为议者，来旦期于店西龙兴寺门。

固以求之意切，旦往焉，斜月尚明。有老人倚巾囊，坐于阶上，向月检书。覘之，不识其字。固问曰：“老父所寻者何书？固少小苦学，字书无不识者。西国梵字，亦能读之。唯此书目所未覩，如何？”老人笑曰：“此非世间书，君因得见。”固曰：“然则何书也？”曰：“幽冥之





Love-Knot Inn

Wei Gu, orphaned in infancy, had a wish to marry early and have a family, but he was always turned down whenever he proposed.

In the second year of Zhenguan reign while he was traveling to Qinghe County, he stopped at a small inn south of a town called Songcheng. A fellow lodger offered to introduce him to the daughter of a retired official in Qinghe County, and arranged for them to meet the very next morning at the gate of Dragon Rising Temple west of the inn.

Anxious and excited, Wei was up when the moon was still hanging in the sky, and went straight to the temple. An old man resting against a cloth bag was sitting on the steps, studying a book by the moonlight. Wei leaned forward to have a look, but found the characters in the book altogether unintelligible.

“What’s this book you’re reading?” he asked with curiosity. “I’ve devoted myself to books ever since school age and, no bragging, I can read any kind of writing, including writings in Sanskrit. How come I’ve never seen characters like these?”

“This book isn’t intended for humans,” the old man smiled in reply. “Little chance that you’ve come across it.”

“But please tell me, what book is it?” Wei persisted.

“This is our book in the netherworld.”

“If you mean you belong to the netherworld, how is it you’re out here?”

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书。”固曰：“幽冥之人，何以到此？”曰：“君行自早，非某不当来也。凡幽吏皆主人生之事，主人可不行其中乎？今道途之行，人鬼各半，自不辨耳。”固曰：“然则君何主？”曰：“天下之婚媾耳。”固喜曰：“固少孤，尝愿早娶，以广后嗣。尔来十年，多方求之，竟不遂意。今者人有期此，与议潘司马女，可以成乎？”曰：“未也。君之妇适三岁矣，年十七，当入君门。”因问囊中何物，曰：“赤绳子耳，以系夫妇之足，及其坐则潜用相系。虽仇敌之家，贵贱悬隔，天涯从宦，吴楚异乡，此绳一系，终不可道。君之脚已系于彼矣，他求何益？”曰：“固妻安在？其家何为？”曰：“此店北卖菜家姬女耳。”固曰：“可见乎？”曰：“陈尝抱之来，卖菜于是。能随我行，当示君。”





“Don’t accuse me of being out here. Just ask yourself why you’re up and about at this hour. Since it’s we nether officials who are in charge of the life and death of you humans, do you think it possible for us to avoid mingling ourselves with you? Look, of all those walking creatures in the streets, probably half are humans and half are ghosts. It’s a pity your mortal eyes can’t tell who is which.”

“If that be the case, what are you responsible for?”

“I arrange all the marriage contracts under the moon.”

“Gee!” Wei beamed with joy. “You know, I grew up an orphan and have looked forward to an early marriage to extend the family line. However, for the past ten years at least, all my wooing efforts have come to naught. Today, a friend is going to introduce me to the daughter of an ex-official. Will I succeed this time?”

“I’m afraid not. Your destined wife is only three years old at this moment. She’ll not become your bride until she reaches seventeen.”

“What do you carry in your bag?” Wei shifted the topic.

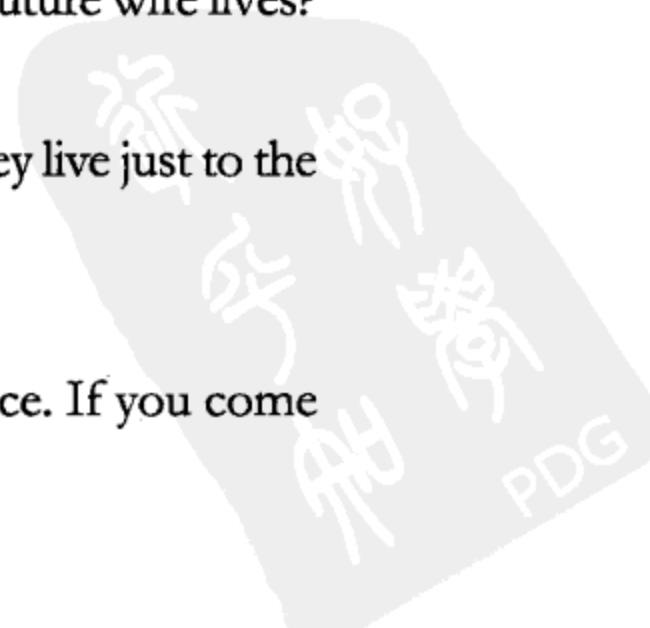
“Some red thread. I use it to tie up a man with his predestined wife by each’s ankle. They won’t even notice it, but once they’re thus connected, there’s no way for them to escape their fate, no matter whether they are from opposite sides of a bitter feud or their families sharply differ in wealth and status, and no matter how far apart they may be living at the moment. Your foot has been tied to that girl’s. It’s no use trying to court anyone else.”

“In that case, do you mind telling me where my future wife lives? What’s her family?”

“She’s the daughter of a greengrocer woman. They live just to the north of the inn.”

“Is it possible for me to steal a look at her?”

“The woman often carries her to the marketplace. If you come with me, I’ll point her out.”





及明，所期不至，老人卷书揭囊而行，固逐之入菜市。有眇姬，抱三岁女来，弊陋亦甚。老人指曰：“此君之妻也。”固怒曰：“杀之可乎？”老人曰：“此人命当食大禄，因子而食邑，庸可杀乎？”老人遂隐。固磨一小刀，付其奴曰：“汝素干事，能为我杀彼女，赐汝万钱。”奴曰：“诺。”明日，袖刀入菜肆中，于众中刺之而走。一市纷扰，奔走获免。问奴曰：“所刺中否？”曰：“初刺其心，不幸才中眉间。”尔后求婚，终不遂。

又十四年，以父荫参相州军。刺史王泰俾摄司户掾，专鞫狱，以为能，因妻以女。可年十六七，容色华丽。固





The sun rose out of the east but the people Wei was expecting didn't show up. The old man replaced his book into the bag and set off for the market. Wei followed. From the other side came a woman blind in one eye, carrying a child about three years old, both raggedly dressed.

"She'll be your wife," the old man pointed.

"Can she be killed by some means?" growled Wei, humiliated by the sight.

"No, that's unlikely. As humble as she may seem, this girl has a bright future in store for her, and by virtue of her son, she is to become a titled lady. How can she be prematurely killed!" So saying, the old man faded from sight.

Wei went back to the inn to sharpen a dagger, which he handed to his servant. "You've never let me down," he said. "Now, go and get rid of that girl for me and I'll give you ten thousand coins!"

"I will," said the servant.

Next morning, the servant went to the market with the dagger hidden in his sleeve. He spotted the girl in the crowd, stabbed, and fled amidst the chaos.

"Did you make it?" Wei asked eagerly.

"I aimed at her heart, but somehow the knife landed between the brows."

Fourteen years went by, during which time Wei made many more matrimonial attempts, but, as always, his efforts didn't lead to a marriage. Then, as a posthumous honor to his deceased father, a position was opened for him in the Xiang Prefecture garrison force. Wang Tai, the prefect, appointed him a deputy chief of the law department. His abilities soon won Wang's favors and he decided to give Wei the hand of his beautiful seventeen-year-old daughter.



称愜之极。然其眉间常贴一花钿，虽沐浴闲处，未尝暂去。岁余，固逼问之。妻潸然曰：“妾郡守之犹子也，非其女也。畴昔父曾宰宋城，终其官。时妾在襁褓，母兄次歿。唯一庄在宋城南，与乳母陈氏居，去店近，鬻蔬以给朝夕。陈氏怜小，不忍暂弃。三岁时，抱行市中，为狂贼所刺，刀痕尚在，故以花子覆之。七八年间，叔从事卢龙，遂得在左右，以为女嫁君耳。”固曰：“陈氏眇乎？”曰：“然。何以知之？”固曰：“所刺者固也。”乃曰奇也。因尽言之，相敬愈极。后生男鯤，为雁门太守。封太原郡太夫人。知阴鹭之定，不可变也。

宋城宰闻之，题其店曰“定婚店”。





Wei was gratified to have a wife but, strange to say, she always wore a flower sticker between her brows. She would not remove it even when they were home alone, not even when she was taking a bath.

After a year of dogged questioning, Wei finally managed to draw out his wife's unhappy past. She, in fact, was a niece of the prefect, not his daughter, she confided. Her father had been the mayor of Songcheng and died at his post while she was still in her infancy. Then her mother and brother passed away, too. All that was left was a farm house south of the town, where she and her wet nurse took shelter. The nurse grew vegetables and sold them at a nearby market to make a living. Reluctant to leave her alone at home, the wet nurse would often take her along. Then one day in the marketplace, when she was about three, a scoundrel struck her with a knife and left her a permanent scar, which she had been trying to hide with a flower sticker. Seven or eight years after that, her uncle was transferred to Lulong. He found her and raised her as his own child.

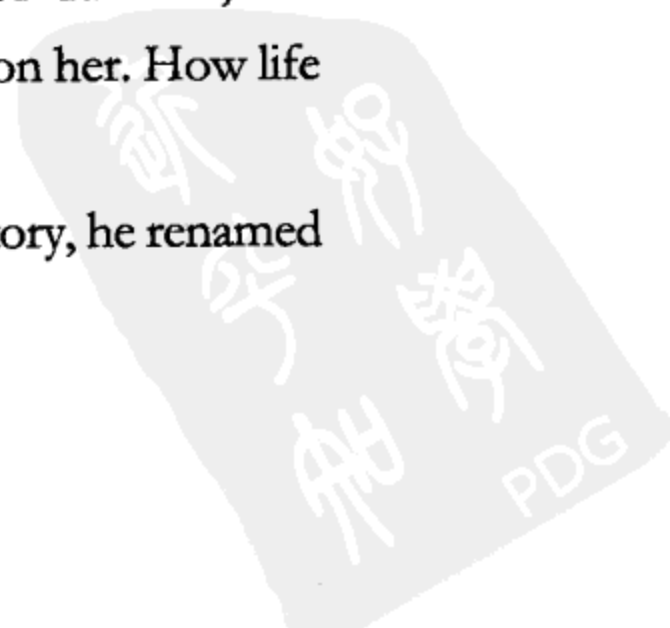
"Was your wet nurse blind in one eye?" Wei asked.

"She was! How do you know?"

"It was me who had you stabbed!" Wei confessed, and told her the whole story. They marveled at their fate, and their marriage seemed all the sweeter to them after all those misadventures.

A son was born, who later became the prefect of Yanmen, and his mother consequently had a ladyship conferred upon her. How life is predestined!

When the new mayor of Songcheng heard this story, he renamed the inn Love-Knot Inn.



简雍

蜀简雍，少与先主有旧，随从周旋，为昭德将军。时天旱禁酒，酿者刑。吏于人家索得酿具，论者欲令与造酒者同罚。

雍从先主游观，见一男子路中行，告先主曰：“彼人欲淫，何以不缚？”先主曰：“卿何以知之？”雍对曰：“彼有淫具，与欲酿何殊？”先主大笑，而原舍酿者罪。





A Potential Rapist?

Jian Yong, one of the chief counselors to Liu Bei, king of Shu in the Three Kingdoms period, had followed the king faithfully through wars and hardships since his youth.

One year, the Kingdom of Shu was hit by a severe drought, and wine-making was therefore strictly prohibited. Anyone who dared to violate the prohibition was unrelentingly punished.

During a search, wine-making equipment was discovered in a farmer's cottage. The magistrate judged the possession of the equipment as bad a crime as producing wine.

Jian was accompanying the king on an inspection tour when the case was brought before the king. Jian suddenly pointed at a man walking down the street and exclaimed, "Why don't you arrest that man? He's going to rape!"

"How do you know?" asked the king incredulously.

"He possesses sex organs!" Jian asserted. "Isn't having the organs the same as having the equipment?"

The king burst out in laughter and ordered the farmer to be released.



汉世老人

汉世有人，年老无子。家富，性俭嗇，恶衣蔬食。侵晨而起，侵夜而息，营理产业，聚敛无厌，而不敢自用。或人从之求丐者，不得已而入内，取钱十。自堂而出，随步辄减；比至于外，才余半在。闭目以授乞者。寻复嘱云：“我倾家贍君，慎勿他说，复相效而来。”老人俄死，田宅没官，货财充于内帑矣。





An Old Man of the Han Dynasty

In the Han Dynasty there was an heirless old man. He was rich but stingy. What he wore was rags; what he ate was coarse rice and vegetables. He rose with the sun and worked till it was too dark to see. To him money could never be too much, yet he would never spend a coin on his own comfort. If a beggar could not be driven off, sometimes he might go inside and count out ten coins. Caressing them in his palm, he would put away a coin every few steps on his slow return. By the time he reached the door, only half of the coins would remain in his hand. Always shutting his eyes to the painful sight as he placed them in the beggar's hand, he would repeatedly say, "I'm ruining my business to assist you. Don't let others know, lest they follow you here."

Before long, the old man died. His house and land were confiscated by the government; his store and money went into the imperial coffer.



杨素

陈太子舍人徐德言之妻，后主叔宝之妹，封乐昌公主，才色冠绝。德言为太子舍人，方属时乱，恐不相保，谓其妻曰：“以君之才容，国亡必入权豪之家，斯永绝矣。倘情缘未断，犹冀相见，宜有以信之。”乃破一镜，各执其半。约曰：“他日必以正月望卖于都市。我当在，即以是日访之。”

及陈亡，其妻果入越公杨素之家，宠嬖殊厚。德言流离辛苦，仅能至京。遂以正月望访于都市。有苍头卖半镜者，大高其价，人皆笑之。德言直引至其居，予食，具言





The Re-Matching of the Broken Mirror

Xu Deyan was a counselor to the crown prince of the Chen Dynasty. His wife was the beautiful and gifted sister of the emperor.

It was a chaotic time. Realizing that the fall of the empire was but a matter of days, Xu said to his wife, "Because of your charm and talent, I'm afraid you can't escape the fate of being seized and concubined by some enemy general when the city is occupied. We might never be able to meet again. If you then still have a place for me in your heart and hope to see me, here's a token of faith." So saying, he broke a bronze mirror in half and gave his wife one piece.

"Try to sell this piece at a major market on the first full-moon day of the year. If I'm alive, I'll search for it in the markets on that very day," he said as a farewell promise.

The Chen Dynasty was overthrown, and as he had predicted, the princess was taken by Yang Su, commander-in-chief of the triumphant army. Yang didn't hesitate to lavish money and affection on her.

Meanwhile, Xu fled town and wandered from place to place in utter distress. He finally managed to reach the capital of Sui.

On the full-moon day of the first lunar month, he went to the town market. There he saw a man-servant hawking a half mirror for a forbidding price, which drew taunts and jeers from passers-by.

Xu hurried the servant to his quarters and offered him food. While disclosing his story, he took out the other half of the mirror. The two pieces matched perfectly. On the mirror he wrote:



其故，出半镜以合之。乃题诗曰：“镜与人俱去，镜归人不归。无复嫦娥影，空留明月辉。”

陈氏得诗，涕泣不食。素知之，怆然改容。即召德言，还其妻，仍厚遗之。闻者无不感叹。仍与德言陈氏偕饮，令陈氏为诗曰：“今日何迁次，新官对旧官。笑啼俱不敢，方验作人难。”遂与德言归江南，竟以终老。





*Gone is she whom it once portrayed;
It now returns to reunite,
Without the image it relayed –
Blank as the full moon's aimless light.*

The princess shed night-long tears over the poem and refused to eat any more. Yang was moved when he learned of the reason. He sent for Xu. At the banquet, Yang asked the princess to compose a poem in response. She wrote:

*Is fate again to flip a latch,
To make my new lord face my old?
Neither should I be glad or sad,
For life as always holds a catch.*

The banquet being over, Yang handed back the princess to Xu, together with a handsome endowment. Xu and his wife returned to the south and lived happily ever after.



蒋恒

贞观中，卫州板桥店主张迪妻归宁。有卫州三卫杨真等三人投宿，五更早发。夜有人取三卫刀杀张迪，其刀却内鞘中，真等不之知。至明，店人追真等，视刀有血痕，囚禁拷讯。真等苦毒，遂自诬。上疑之，差御史蒋恒覆推。至，总追店人十五以上集。为人不足，且散。惟留一老婆年八十以上，晚放出。令狱典密覘之，曰：“婆出，当有一人与婆语者，即记取姓名，勿令漏泄。”果有一人共语，即记之。明日复尔，其人又问婆：“使人作何推





Let the Suspect Suspect

In Zhenguan reign the proprietor of Wooden Bridge Inn in Wei Prefecture, a man named Zhang Di, was murdered while his wife was away visiting her parents at her maiden home. That night there were three guests at the inn: Yang Zhen, an officer of the royal guards, and two others, who departed together at daybreak. During the night someone had used Yang's sword to kill the proprietor and then replaced the sword in the sheath. Yang didn't notice anything until they were chased down by the inn attendants later in the morning and fresh blood stains were discovered on his sword. The three were thrown into prison and interrogated. As they couldn't bear the torture, they chose to own up to the crime. The emperor, however, doubted their confession and sent Jiang Heng, a supervisory commissioner, to re-examine the case.

Jiang arrived and told the officers to round up all those above fifteen who might have something to do with the case. As all suspects could not be gathered on the first day, he dismissed the group but kept an old woman in her eighties a while longer. He instructed an officer to tail her. "When she leaves this building," he told the officer, "someone will approach and speak to her. Find out who that one is, but don't alarm him."

Indeed a man approached the old woman and spoke to her. The officer marked out the man.

Jiang did the same the following day. The man again probed the old woman for the commissioner's intentions. For three days it was the

勘？”如是者三日，并是此人。恒总追集男女三百余人，就中唤与老婆语者一人出，余并放散。问之具伏。云：“与迪妻奸杀有实。”奏之，敕赐帛二百段，除侍御史。





same person talking to the granny.

By then more than three hundred men and women had been taken into custody. Jiang singled out the person who talked to the old woman and released all the others. On interrogation, the man confessed to his adultery with the proprietor's wife and the murder.

Jiang reported to the emperor. He was rewarded two hundred bolts of silk and promoted.





苏无名

天后时，尝赐太平公主细器宝物两食合，所直黄金千鎰，公主纳之藏中。岁余取之，尽为盗所将矣。公主言之，天后大怒。召洛州长史谓曰：“三日不得盗，罪！”长史惧，谓两县主盗官曰：“两日不得贼，死！”尉谓吏卒游徼曰：“一日必擒之。擒不得，先死！”

吏卒游徼惧，计无所出。衢中遇湖州别驾苏无名，相与请之至县。游徼白尉：“得盗物者来矣。”无名遽进至阶，尉迎问故。无名曰：“吾湖州别驾也，入计在兹。”尉呼吏卒：“何诬辱别驾？”无名笑曰：“君无怒吏卒，抑有由也。无名历官所在，擒奸搃伏有名。每偷，至无名





The Princess' Stolen Treasures

Empress Wu once bestowed upon Princess Taiping two coffers of antiques and jewelry worth tens of thousands of ounces in gold. The princess locked them up in a secure storeroom in her palace, but when she came to pick out some a year or so later, she was appalled to find all the treasures stolen.

Infuriated by her daughter's report, the empress summoned the assistant mayor in charge of the East Capital's security and told him that if he could not have the case solved within three days he would be punished. The terrified assistant mayor in turn summoned the county sheriff and ordered him to get the treasures back within two days, or he should die. The sheriff sent for the sergeant and allowed him one day either to catch the thief or be the first to die. The petrified sergeant dashed out into the street without the least idea how to start.

Wandering through the streets, the sergeant happened upon Su Wuming, deputy prefect of Hu Prefecture, and led him to the sheriff's office. "I've got the man!" he announced excitedly to the sheriff.

Su was already at the hall steps when the sheriff came out and asked in confusion, "Who are you?"

"I'm the deputy prefect of Hu. I'm in the capital on business."

"How dare you joke about His Excellency!" the embarrassed sheriff growled at the poor sergeant.

"Don't blame him, sir," said Su with a soothing smile. "He has his reason to say that, for at the various posts I held through my career, I've won a reputation for being a shrewd detective. No criminal can



前，无得过者。此辈应先闻，故将来，庶解围耳。”尉喜，请其方。无名曰：“与君至府，君可先入白之。”尉白其故，长史大悦，降阶执其手曰：“今日遇公，却赐吾命，请遂其由。”无名曰：“请与君求见对玉阶，乃言之。”

于是天后召之，谓曰：“卿得贼乎？”无名曰：“若委臣取贼，无拘日月，且宽府县，令不追求。仍以两县擒盗吏卒，尽以付臣。臣为陛下取之，亦不出数十日耳。”天后许之。无名戒吏卒：“缓则相闻。”

月余，值寒食，无名尽召吏卒，约曰：“十人五人为侣，于东门北门伺之。见有胡人与党十余，皆衣缁经，相随出赴北邙者，可踵之而报。”吏卒伺之，果得，驰白无





escape my eyes. Sergeants like him must have heard of my name. I think he brought me here to help him out of his predicament.”

“How shall we go about it?” asked the overjoyed sheriff eagerly.

“Let’s go and see the assistant mayor first. Say, why don’t you go ahead and request an interview?”

The assistant mayor was exhilarated at the news and descended the hall steps to welcome Su. Clasp ing Su’s hand tightly, he said, “You must have been sent here by heaven to save my life. I would appreciate your advice.”

“I would like to have an audience with Her Majesty,” replied Su succinctly.

At the assistant mayor’s request, an audience was arranged. “So you can capture the thieves and recover the stolen treasures, can’t you?” the empress came right to the point.

“If Your Majesty trusts me with the case,” replied Su, “I shall beg Your Majesty to grant me two requests. First, no deadlines, and relieve the municipal and county officials of their responsibility regarding this case. Second, I’ll need to have the local agents at my disposal. Then, I’ll hand Your Majesty the thieves. It shouldn’t take more than a couple of months.”

The empress granted him his requests.

“Don’t take any action,” Su instructed the agents, “and clues will appear in time.”

A month thus passed and then it was the Cold Food Festival.

Su gathered all the agents and divided them into teams of five or ten. He told them to position themselves at the eastern and northern city gates and look out for a party of Persians in mourning gowns. If they were seen going in the direction of the public cemetery in the Northern Hills, tail them and report back.



名。往视之，问伺者：“诸胡何若？”伺者曰：“胡至一新冢，设奠，哭而不哀。亦撤奠，即巡行冢旁，相视而笑。”无名喜曰：“得之矣。”因使吏卒，尽执诸胡，而发其冢。冢开，割棺视之，棺中尽宝物也。

奏之，天后问无名：“卿何才智过人，而得此盗？”对曰：“臣非有他计，但识盗耳。当臣到都之日，即此胡出葬之时。臣亦见即知是偷，但不知其葬物处。今寒节拜扫，计必出城，寻其所之，足知其墓。贼既设奠而哭不哀，明所葬非人也；奠而哭毕，巡冢相视而笑，喜墓无损伤也。向若陛下迫促府县，此贼计急，必取之而逃；今者更不追求，自然意缓，故未将出。”天后曰：“善。”赐金帛，加秩二等。





Before long, word came that a group thus described was discovered. Su set out immediately. He asked the agents how the Persians behaved. "They stopped at a new grave," reported one, "and held a memorial service. They wept a lot, but their cries didn't sound very sad. Also, they didn't leave the site after the service was over, but tarried around the grave and looked at each other with knowing smiles."

"We've got them!" exclaimed Su cheerfully. He ordered his men out of their hiding to arrest every one of the group. The coffin was dug up and pried open. Instead of containing a corpse it was filled with the stolen treasures.

The empress praised Su for his exceptional ingenuity and was curious to know how he figured out the case.

"Your Majesty's humble servant is no wiser than others," Su replied. "My only advantage is that I can tell who is a thief by intuition. The day I arrived in the capital I happened to pass by those Persians in a funeral procession. As soon as I saw them, I knew they were thieves. What I didn't know was where they buried their stolen goods. At the Cold Food Festival, as people go to sweep their 'ancestors' tombs, I reckoned they would take that opportunity to get out of town among the crowds to check their cache. We only needed to follow them to find the place. Their unemotional crying only proved that what was buried down there was not a corpse. They strolled about the grave after the service and grinned at each other because they were glad to find the grave intact. If we had pressed the case, they would have been forced to take action and risk fleeing with their booty. But since we slackened up our search, they would most probably abide their time and wait for the heat to cool off entirely."

The empress was pleased. She loaded him with gold and silk, and promoted him two ranks.

袁 滋

李汧公勉镇凤翔，有属邑编氓因耨田，得马蹄金一瓮。里民送于县署，公牒将置府庭。宰邑者喜获兹宝，欲自以为殊绩。虑公藏主守不严，因使寘于私室。

信宿，与官吏重开视之，则皆为块矣。瓮金出土之际，乡社悉来观验，遽为变更，靡不惊骇，以状闻于府主。议者金云：“奸计换之。”遂遣理曹掾与军吏数人，就鞠其案。于是获金里社，咸共证。宰邑者为众所挤，拥沮莫能自由。既而诘辱滋甚，遂以易金伏罪。词款具存，未穷隐用之所。令拘繫仆隶，胁以刑辟。或云藏于粪壤，





The Gold Ingots

When Li Mian was the prefect of Fengxiang, a peasant in the prefecture found a jar of gold ingots while plowing the fields. The villagers took the find to the county government. The county magistrate was overjoyed, thinking that this would be a commendable achievement for his official career. He ordered his secretaries to draw up a report to be sent along with the gold to the prefectural office the next day, and afraid that the office storeroom was not a safe place to keep such valuables during the night, he had it hidden in his home. But the next day when he and his colleagues came to retrieve the hoard, they were surprised to find there were only clay bars in the jar.

At the time of finding, the village elders had carefully examined the content in the jar, and now the gold ingots had become clay bars! Could anything be more scandalous than that? A report was immediately sent to the prefectural office. The consensus of opinion was that the gold had been replaced. Law officers and sergeants were dispatched to the county to investigate the case.

The villagers and elders all testified to the discovery of gold. Against so many mouths and under increasing public pressure, the frustrated magistrate had no way to prove his innocence but to plead guilty. His confession and the testimonies left no room for doubt, yet the officers couldn't find where he had hidden, or how he had spent, the gold. They apprehended his attendants and servants and threatened them with torture, extracting from them a confusion of leads. Some said he



或云投于水中，纷纭枉挠。结成，具司备狱，以案上闻。汧公览之亦怒。

俄而因有宴，停杯语及斯事。列坐宾客，咸共谈谑。或云效齐人之攫，或云有杨震之癖。谈笑移时，以为胠箠穿窬，无足讶也。时袁相国滋亦在幕中，俯首略无词对。李公目之数四曰：“宰邑者非判官懿亲乎？”袁相曰：“与之无素。”李公曰：“闻彼之罪，何不乐甚乎？”袁相曰：“甚疑此事未了，便请相公详之。”汧公曰：“换金之状极明，若言未了，当别有所见，非判官莫探情伪。”袁相曰：“诺。”因俾移狱于府中案问。

乃令阅瓮间，得二百五十余块，诘其初获者，即本质





had sunk the gold in the outhouse's manure pit; some said he had thrown it into the pond, or anywhere that could be imagined. The case was then reported to the prefectural office.

The trial report on the greed of the magistrate filled Prefect Li with indignation and disturbed him so much that at the subsequent official banquet he went to attend he laid down his cup and brought up the case, which stirred up a brisk discussion among the guests. Some compared the magistrate to the man from Qi during the Warring States Period, who grabbed the gold and ran. When he was caught, he said he didn't see anyone around, for all he saw was gold. Some jokingly contrasted him with Yang Zhen, a Court minister of the Han Dynasty, who declined the gold secretly sent to his home during the night. Whatever kind of person he was, he was just another pitiable petty thief.

Among the party was a man called Yuan Zi, who had been sitting silently all the time with his head lowered. Having eyed him several times, the prefect finally asked, "Is that magistrate any relation of yours?"

"No, I don't know the man at all," Yuan replied.

"Then why do you look so unhappy when others are censuring his crime?" Li asked.

"There seems to be something dubious about the case. I hope Your Excellency will look into it."

"The conclusion seems only too evident to us. If you think it's not proved beyond doubt, you must have a reason. Since you're a prefectural judge, you may re-examine it."

"All right," Yuan said, and the case was transferred to the prefectural office.

Yuan ordered his subordinates to count the clay bars. There were altogether two hundred fifty pieces. When questioned, the villagers



存焉。遂于列肆索金，熔写与块形相等。既成，始秤其半，已及三百斤矣。询其负担人力，乃二农夫，以竹舁至县境。计其金大数，非二人以竹担可举，明其即路之时，金已化为土矣。于是群疑大豁。宰邑者遂获清雪。汧公叹伏无已，每言才智不如。其后履历清途，至德宗朝为宰相。

愚常闻金宝藏于土中，偶见者或变其质。东都敦化坊有麟德废观，殿悉皆颓毁。咸通中，毕诚相国，别令营造，建基址间，得巨瓮，皆贮白银。辇材者与工匠三四十人，当昼，惧为官中所取，遂辇材木盖之，以伺昏黑。及夜，各以衣服包裹而归。明旦开之，如坚土削成为银挺。所说与此正同。





agreed that it was the same number and shape as they first discovered it. Yuan collected gold from the gold shops in town and had the gold molded into ingots of the same shape and size. Half way through the weighing, the pile was already over three hundred pounds. He asked the villagers how the gold was sent to the county government and learned that the whole jar was carried by two peasants on a bamboo pole. The total weight of the gold and jar would far exceed what a bamboo pole can lift. That could only mean that even before they set off for the county government the content had already turned into clay.

The case was solved and the magistrate was cleared of the charges. Yuan's ingenuity impressed all. Prefect Li was often heard to say that he was not half as clever as Yuan.

Yuan had a smooth career and rose to the position of prime minister during Emperor Dezong's reign.

*

I often hear stories that long-buried precious metals would turn into earth as soon as they are exposed to air. For example, when Linde Temple in Dunhua District of the East Capital was reconstructed on its ruins in Xiantong reign at the order of Prime Minister Bi Xian, workers digging the foundation pits found a large vat of silver. Afraid that it would be confiscated by the government, they covered it with the building planks. Returning during the night, each of them took home several pieces wrapped up in their clothes. But when they examined their spoils in the morning light, they found it was nothing but hardened bars of clay. That can be a footnote to this story.



刘崇龟

刘崇龟镇南海之岁，有富商子少年而白皙，稍殊于稗贩之伍，泊船于江。岸上有门楼，中见一姬年二十余，艳态妖容，非常所睹。亦不避人，得以纵其目逆。乘便复言：“某黄昏当诣宅矣。”无难色，颌之微哂而已。既昏暝，果启扉伺之。比子未及赴约，有盗者径入行窃。见一房无烛，即突入之，姬即欣然而就之。盗乃谓其见擒，以庖刀刺之，遗刀而逸。其家亦未之觉。商客之子旋至，方入其户，即践其血，汰而仆地。初谓其水，以手扪之，闻鲜血之气未已。又扪着有人卧，遂走出。径登船，一夜解维。比明，已行百余里。

其家迹其血至江岸，遂陈状之。主者讼穷诘岸上居人，云：“某日夜，有某客船一夜径发。”即差人追及，





The Butcher's Knife

This story happened when Liu Chonggui was the governor of Canton. There was a young son of a rich merchant, whose fair complexion made him stand out from among the ordinary. One day he saw a woman looking out from an upstairs window of a house on the bank of the Pearl River where his boat was moored. She was a charming beauty in her early twenties. When he looked, she didn't pretend to shy away from his steady gaze. "I'll visit you tonight," he hollered.

She didn't seem embarrassed at all, but smiled and gave a slight nod. That night, she didn't bolt her door.

However, before the young merchant arrived, a burglar happened by. Seeing no light in the house and a door ajar, he went straight in. The woman sailed across the room with open arms, thinking that he was the young merchant, but the burglar interpreted that as a move to catch. He struck with a butcher's knife, dropped the weapon and fled the spot. It happened so quick and fast no one in the house noticed anything.

The merchant's son arrived almost on the heels of the killer. Entering the room, he slid on the pool of blood and fell. At first he thought somebody had sprinkled water on the floor, but the stickiness and smell on his hand told him differently. Fumbling, he touched a body on the floor. He ran back to his boat and cast off under cover of darkness. By daybreak, he was already scores of miles away.

The woman's family traced the blood stains to the riverside and reported the murder to the authorities.

The official in charge questioned residents along the bank and



械于圜室，拷掠备至，具实吐之，唯不招杀人。其家以庖刀纳于府主矣。府主乃下令曰：“某日大设，合境庖丁，宜集于球场，以候宰杀。”屠者既集，乃传令曰：“今日既已，可翌日而至。”乃各留刀于厨而去。府主乃命取诸人刀，以杀人之刀，换下一口。来早，各令诣衙请刀。诸人皆认本刀而去，唯一屠最在后，不肯持刀去。府主乃诘之。对曰：“此非某刀。”又诘以何人刀，即曰：“此合是某乙者。”乃问其住止之处，即命擒之，则已窜矣。于是乃以他囚之合处死者，以代商人之子，侵夜毙之于市。窜者之家，旦夕潜令人伺之。既毙其假囚，不一两夕，果归家，即擒之。具首杀人之咎，遂置于法。商人之子，夜入人家，以奸罪杖背而已。彭城公之察狱，可谓明矣！





learned that a certain boat had set sail during the night. Officers were dispatched and the merchant's son was arrested and thrown into jail.

Under interrogation the young man admitted that he had made an appointment with the woman, but refused to plead guilty to the murder. The case and the butcher's knife were then placed before Liu Chonggui.

Liu proclaimed that the government was going to hold a grand official banquet and all butchers in town must gather on the sports field for the butchering of fowls and animals.

The butchers duly reported themselves to the government. Then they were dismissed and instructed to leave their knives in the kitchen and come back in the morning to work. Liu then had the knives collected and replaced one of them with the one found at the site of the murder.

The next morning the butchers were told to come to the office to pick up their own knife. Soon only one knife and one butcher remained. "This is not my knife," he insisted when questioned. And he was able to name the owner of the knife. Yet the owner had already fled home when the officers arrived.

A government bulletin was put up, announcing the execution of the merchant's son in the public square after nightfall. But at Liu's secret arrangement the person actually executed was another criminal who had been sentenced to death.

The fugitive's family had kept a close eye on the development. Informed of the execution and thinking that the case should therefore have been closed, the butcher soon returned home, and was caught by the waiting officers. He pleaded guilty and was executed.

The merchant's son received a flogging for housebreaking and licentious conduct.

It was really ingenious of Liu Chonggui.



嘉兴绳技

唐开元年中，数敕赐州县大酺。嘉兴县以百戏，与监司竞胜精技。监官属意尤切，所由直狱者语于狱中云：“倘若有诸戏劣于县司，我辈必当厚责。然我等但能一事稍可观者，即获财利，叹无能耳。”乃各相问。至于弄瓦缘木之技，皆推求招引。

狱中有一囚笑谓所由曰：“某有拙技，限在拘系，不得略呈其事。”吏惊曰：“汝何所能？”囚曰：“吾解绳技。”吏曰：“必然，吾当为尔言之。”乃具以囚所能白于监主。主召问罪轻重，吏云：“此囚人所累，逋缙未纳，余无别事。”官曰：“绳技人常也，又何足异乎？”囚





The Rope Acrobat

Emperor Xuanzong often ordained special county fairs and feasts. On one such occasion the administration of Jiaxing County was going to hold an acrobatic contest with the penitentiary. The warden was very enthusiastic about the event. If they should let the administration outshine them in every performance, he told the prison guards, they would no doubt be ridiculed, but if they could present something striking, even if it was only one item, they might be able to win donations and benefactions. Reflecting upon his men's incompetence in acrobatic skills, he let out a deep sigh.

The guards talked this over among themselves and in front of the prisoners, ready to recommend anyone who was able to do a trick or two, such as juggling balls or climbing tall poles.

Overhearing their discussion, one of the prisoners laughed and boasted to a guard of having learned a trick. But, he said, since he was a convict, he was not in a position to perform it.

Pleasantly surprised, the guard asked him what kind of trick this was.

"I know how to perform on the rope," the prisoner answered.

"If that is true, I'll make a report to the warden," said the guard.

The warden asked for what crime the man was punished, and was told that this prisoner was involved in a case of tax default, and nothing more.

"Rope tricks are quite common. I don't think there is much to



曰：“某所为者，与人稍殊。”官又问曰：“如何？”囚曰：“众人绳技，各系两头，然后于其上立周旋。某只须一条绳，粗细如指，五十尺，不用系着，抛向空中，腾踞翻覆，则无所不为。”官大惊喜，且令收录。

明日，吏领至戏场。诸戏既作，次唤此人，令效绳技。遂捧一团绳，计百余尺，置诸地，将一头，手掷于空中，劲如笔。初抛三二丈，次四五丈，仰直如人牵之。众大惊异。后乃抛高二十余丈，仰空不见端绪。此人随绳手寻，身足离地，抛绳虚空，其势如鸟，旁飞远颺，望空而去。脱身行狴，在此日焉。





brag about," said the warden when the prisoner was brought before him.

"What I do," answered the prisoner, "is a little different from ordinary ways."

"How's that?"

"Well, usually, a performer would have both ends of the rope secured to posts and then walk on it and perhaps turn a few somersaults. All I need is no more than a length of finger-thick rope about fifty feet long. I don't need to tie the ends to anything. I'll just throw it into the air and then do all kinds of acrobatic tricks on it."

The warden was delighted, and entered the prisoner's name in the contest.

The next day the prisoner was escorted by the guards to the fairground. It was really a scene of bustling excitement. Then, it was the prisoner's turn to perform.

The prisoner entered the arena with a coil of rope about a hundred feet long, which he placed on the ground. He picked up one end and threw it into the air. The rope stood erect like a pencil, reaching a height of some thirty feet. The next throw sent the rope up to about fifty feet, straight as if being pulled by someone at the other end. The audience was awe-struck. When the whole length was thrown up into the air, the upper end was lost from sight, no matter how one might crane his neck and strain his eyes.

The man started to climb up the rope, his feet now off the ground. He kept climbing and casting the rope further up. Like a bird on wings, he fluttered away into the depth of the firmament.

What an ingenious way to escape from jail!

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车中女子

唐开元中，吴郡人入京应明经举。至京，因闲步坊曲。忽逢二少年着大麻布衫，揖此人而过，色甚卑敬，然非旧识，举人谓误识也。后数日，又逢之，二人曰：“公到此境，未为主，今日方欲奉迓，邂逅相遇，实慰我心。”揖举人便行，虽甚疑怪，然强随之。

抵数坊，于东市一小曲内，有临路店数间，相与直入，舍宇甚整肃。二人携引升堂，列筵甚盛。二人与客据绳床坐定。于席前，更有数少年各二十余，礼颇谨。数出门，若伫贵客。至午后，方云来矣。闻一车直门来，数少年随后，直至堂前，乃一钿车。卷帘，见一女子从车中出，年可十七八，容色甚佳。花梳满髻，衣则纨素。二人罗拜，此女亦不答；此人亦拜之，女乃答。遂揖客人。女





The Girl in the Carriage

In mid Kaiyuan reign, a scholar from the southeast came to the capital to take the final round of the imperial examination. Strolling along the streets and alleys of the city, he encountered two youngsters in linen shirts, who raised their hands to salute him as they passed by. They looked rather respectful, though he couldn't recall when and where he had met them before. They must have mistaken him for somebody else, he thought. A few days later, he ran into the two again.

"It's really nice to meet you here," they saluted him. "We've been thinking of inviting you to our place. Would you honor us with an opportunity to play host?"

Although the man had some misgivings, he followed them past a few blocks to a small shop on an alley near the east market. The storefront was not wide but it had good depth and the buildings were in excellent conditions.

The two young men led him into a banquet hall and sat down on weaved easy chairs. Also present were several twenty-somethings, courteous and serious. From time to time they would go to the door to watch, as if expecting an important guest. It was past noontime when they finally announced, "Here she comes." A richly decorated carriage, followed by several youths, came right through the gate and stopped in front of the hall. The curtain was drawn aside and a young woman about eighteen years old stepped out. She was a real beauty, wearing a snow-white silk gown with a headful of flowers. The two stood up to



乃升床，当局而坐，揖二人及客，乃拜而坐。又有十余后生皆衣服轻新，各设拜，列坐于客之下。陈以品味，饌至精洁。饮酒数巡，至女子，执杯顾问客：“闻二君奉谈，今喜展见。承有妙技，可得观乎？”此人卑逊辞让云：“自幼至长，唯习儒经，弦管歌声，辄未曾学。”女曰：“所习非此事也。君熟思之，先所能者何事？”客又沉思良久曰：“某为学堂中，著靴于壁上行得数步。自余戏剧，则未曾为之。”女曰：“所请只然，请客为之。”遂于壁上行得数步。女曰：“亦大难事。”乃回顾坐中诸后生，各令呈技，俱起设拜。有于壁上行者，亦有手撮椽子行者，轻捷之戏，各呈数般，状如飞鸟。此人拱手惊惧，不知所措。少顷女子起，辞出。举人惊叹，恍恍然不乐。





bow but was ignored. The scholar bowed too, which she returned and led the way to the table. She took the main seat facing the door and gestured the two and the guest to sit down. They bowed and took their seats. There were about a dozen other young men, all wearing light new clothes, who bowed and sat down the line. Food was served, fresh and delicate. They drank several rounds. When it was the girl's turn again, she held up her cup and said to the scholar, "I've often heard the two talking about you, and it's my honor to meet you today. They say you have special skills. Would you please show us one or two?"

"All I've learned are some Confucian classics," the man said humbly. "I never learned to play any musical instruments, wind or stringed."

"No, I didn't mean that," the girl said. "Think of something else. Didn't you learn something early on?"

"In elementary school," the man said after some thinking, "I could walk on the face of a vertical wall without taking off my boots. That's probably the only naughty trick I was able to play."

"That's what I was referring to. Would you please do it for us?"

The man tried and was able to walk a few steps on the wall.

"That's something," the girl commented. She swept her eyes over the youths and asked them to perform their skills.

They bowed to her order. Some walked on the wall, some moved along the ceiling by swinging from rafter to rafter. They were all as agile and weightless as birds. Amazed, the man bowed in awkward admiration. Presently, the girl rose and left. The scholar was lost in bewilderment.

A few days later, he met the two young men again in the streets.

"Can we borrow your horse?" they asked.



经数日，途中复见二人曰：“欲假盛驷，可乎？”举人曰：“唯。”至明日，闻宫苑中失物，掩捕失贼，唯收得马，是将馱物者。验问马主，遂收此人，入内侍省勘问。驱入小门，吏自后推之，倒落深坑数丈。仰望屋顶七八丈，唯见一孔，才开尺余。自旦入至食时，见一绳缒一器食下。此人饥急，取食之。食毕，绳又引去。深夜，此人忿甚，悲惋何诉。仰望，忽见一物如鸟飞下，觉至身边，乃人也。以手抚生，谓曰：“计甚惊怕，然某在，无虑也。”听其声，则向所遇女子也。云：“共君出矣。”以绢重系此人胸膊讫，绢一头系女人身。女人纵身腾上，飞出宫城，去门数十里乃下。云：“君且便归江淮，求仕之计，望俟他日。”此人大喜，徒步潜窜，乞食寄宿，得达吴地。后竟不敢求名西上矣。





“Of course,” he replied.

Next morning rumors circled around that the palace was burglarized. Subsequent searches only discovered a horse, which must have been used to carry the spoils. The horse led to its owner and the scholar was apprehended and taken into the palace for interrogation. The guards pushed him through a very small door and he fell into a deep pit. He looked up. The roof was some eighty feet above, in which there was a hole about one foot in diameter. At dinner time a rope was let down from the roof with a container of food. Having been jailed since morning, he was hungry. He grabbed the food and ate. When he finished, the container was pulled up.

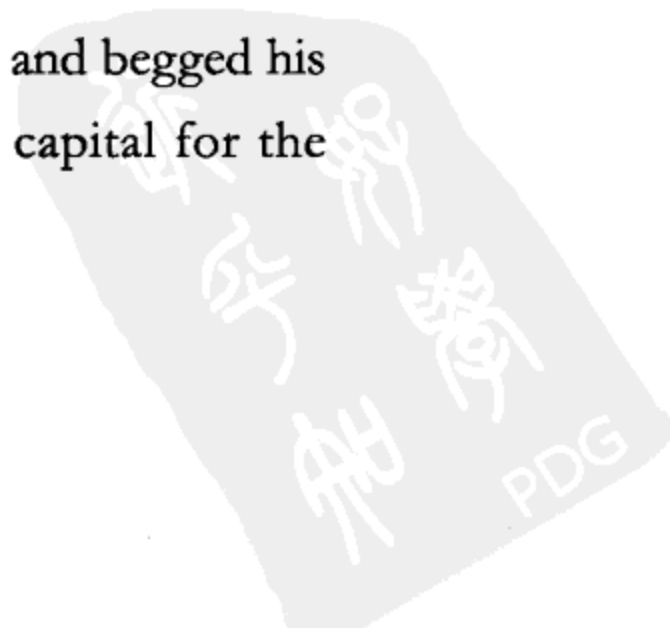
Night grew deep. The man was left in anger and regret, but he had no one to pour out his grievance to. As he looked up, he imagined he saw a bird descending from the roof down to his side. It was a human being!

“You must have been scared,” a voice said as a hand grabbed him. “Now I’m here, you don’t need to worry. I’ll take you out.” It was the girl’s voice.

She wrapped a silk band around his chest and tied the other end to herself. In one leap she flew out of the palace, and when they landed it was a dozen miles out of town.

“For the moment,” she said, “you’d better forget about the imperial examination and go straight home.”

Overjoyed with his freedom, the man sneaked and begged his way home. Never again did he dare to go to the capital for the examination.



昆仑奴

唐大历中，有崔生者，其父为显僚，与盖代之勋臣一品者熟。生是时为千牛，其父使往省一品疾。生少年，容貌如玉，性禀孤介，举止安详，发言清雅。一品命妓轴帘，召生入室。生拜传父命，一品欣然爱慕，命坐与语。时三妓人艳皆绝代，居前，以金瓿贮含桃而擘之，沃以甘酪而进。一品遂命衣红绡妓者，擘一瓿与生食。生少年赧妓辈，终不食。一品命红绡妓以匙而进之，生不得已而食。妓哂之。遂告辞而去。一品曰：“郎君闲暇，必须一相访，无间老夫也。”命红绡送出院。





The Dark Slave

During Dali reign, there was a Mr Cui holding an honorary position in the imperial guards as an officer. He was a quiet young man with a soft white face. Though he was one of few words, his conversation was intelligent.

His father was a high official and the friend of a very powerful cabinet dignitary. On one occasion, his old man sent him over to pay a courtesy visit to the bigwig, who happened to be afflicted with an indisposition.

A maid lifted the bamboo door-drape and ushered him into the big shot's bedroom. He kowtowed and conveyed his father's best wishes. The bigwig took an immediate liking to him and asked him to sit down for a friendly chat.

Three pleasure-girls came forth with fresh cherries in gold bowls. It would be no exaggeration to say that they were the beauties of beauties. With their gentle fingers they removed the kernels and steeped the pulp in sweet cream. One of the girls wearing a red silk blouse knelt and held up the bowl for him. Unused to the service of pleasure-girls, Cui shied away from the cherries. The bigwig told the girl to feed him with a spoon, so he had to take mouthfuls. His innocence made the girl chuckle.

He stood up to take leave. "Do drop in when you have time. I hope you haven't been bored by the company of an old man," the bigwig said as he motioned the girl in red to see Cui to the gate.



时生回顾，妓立三指，又反三掌者，然后指胸前小镜子云：“记取。”余更无言。生归，达一品意。返学院，神迷意夺，语减容沮，恍然凝思，日不暇食，但吟诗曰：“误到蓬山顶上游，明珰玉女动星眸。朱扉半掩深宫月，应照琼芝雪艳愁。”左右莫能究其意。

时家中有昆仑奴磨勒，顾瞻郎君曰：“心中有何事，如此抱恨不已？何不报老奴。”生曰：“汝辈何知，而问我襟怀间事。”磨勒曰：“但言，当为郎君释解，远近必能成之。”生骇其言异，遂具告知。磨勒曰：“此小事耳，何不早言之，而自苦耶？”生又白其隐语，勒曰：“有何难会，立三指者，一品宅中有十院歌姬，此乃第三院耳；返掌三者，数十五指，以应十五日之数；胸前小镜





Out of the gate, he glanced back to see the girl raise three fingers. Then, flapping her hand round three times, she pointed to the little round mirror hanging from her neck and muttered, "Don't forget." And that was all she said.

He returned home to report his mission to his father, then buried himself in his study. His usual light-heartedness gave way to moody thoughts, so much so that he forgot his meals and indulged in dream-talking to himself. His immediate servants could often hear him hum a poem:

*A visit misled me to Penglai Isle,
Where I was mesmerized by starry eyes.
Only the moon may peep behind the doors,
And bathe the beauty in her snow-white light.*

But they couldn't figure out what was wrong with him.

There was a dark slave working in his house. "What's worrying my master?" he asked, studying his face. "Why not share your concerns with your old servant?"

"What do you know?" he snapped. "Can one like you relieve my heart?"

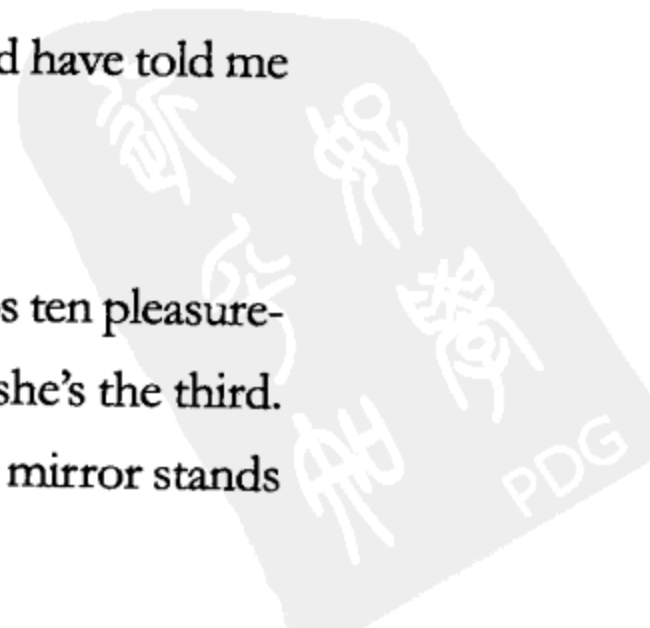
"Just tell me what it is. Maybe I can help you work it out, no matter where it might take me."

Taken aback by his self-assurance, the young man poured out his story.

"Trifling matter," the slave said lightly. "You should have told me earlier. Why let that worry you so much?"

He then described the girl's gestures.

"That's not difficult to figure out. That bigwig keeps ten pleasure-girls in his backyard. She raised three fingers to tell you she's the third. Turning her hand round three times means fifteen. The mirror stands





子，十五夜月圆如镜，令郎来耶。”生大喜不自胜，谓磨勒曰：“何计而能导达我郁结？”磨勒笑曰：“后夜乃十五夜，请深青绢两匹，为郎君制束身之衣。一品宅有猛犬，守歌姬院门，非常人不得辄入，入必噬杀之。其警如神，其猛如虎，即曹州孟海之犬也。世间非老奴不能毙此犬耳。今夕当为郎君挝杀之。”遂宴犒以酒肉。至三更，携炼椎而往。食顷而回曰：“犬已毙讫，固无障塞耳。”

是夜三更，与生衣青衣，遂负而逾十重垣，乃入歌妓院内，止第三门。绣户不扃，金缸微明，惟闻妓长叹而坐，若有所俟。翠环初坠，红脸才舒，玉恨无妍，珠愁转莹。但吟诗曰：“深洞莺啼恨阮郎，偷来花下解珠珰。碧云飘断音书绝，空倚玉箫愁凤凰。”侍卫皆寝，邻近阒然。生遂缓褰帘而入。良久，验是生，姬跃下榻，执生手曰：“知郎君颖悟，必能默识，所以手语耳。又不知郎君





for the full moon. So she's asking you to come on the fifteenth of the month."

He could hardly contain his joy. "But how can I get there?" he asked.

"The day after tomorrow is the fifteenth. May I ask you for two bolts of dark blue silk? I need to make you a tight-fitting suit. The bigwig has the courtyard guarded by a pack of bloodhounds. No one can enter without his permission. If an intruder tries to break in, the hounds will tear him to pieces. They are as fierce as tigers and as vigilant as gods. Nobody in this world can beat them, nobody except me. I'll go first and have them killed to clear the way for you."

Cui bought him a good meal of wine and meat. At midnight of the fifteenth, the slave set off with a sling hammer. One couldn't have finished a meal before he was back to announce that the dogs were dead, so now the only obstacle was overcome. He helped Cui into the dark blue suit and carried him on his back. They scaled a dozen high walls and arrived at the third door in the backyard.

The door was unbolted, shedding a strip of yellow light into the yard. They could see the girl sitting on the bed sighing, her hairpins and jewels removed. She was chanting a poem to herself:

*Deep in the cave the oriole bemoans
The quick evaporation of her hope.
Swifter than a passing cloud he is gone;
Will a phoenix answer her jade flute song?*

The guards were all asleep and the night was dead quiet. Cui cautiously lifted the curtain and entered the room. It seemed that she could hardly believe her eyes when she beheld him. She jumped off her bed and grasped his hands. "I knew at first sight you're intelligent and could understand my gestures. But how on earth have you man-



有何神术，而能至此？”生具告磨勒之谋，负荷而至。姬曰：“磨勒何在？”曰：“帘外耳。”遂召人，以金瓿酌酒而饮之。姬白生曰：“某家本富，居在朔方。主人拥旄，逼为姬仆。不能自死，尚且偷生。脸虽铅华，心颇郁结。纵玉箸举饌，金炉泛香，云屏而每进绮罗，绣被而常眠珠翠，皆非所愿，如在桎梏。贤爪牙既有神术，何妨为脱狴牢。所愿既申，虽死不悔。请为仆隶，愿侍光容，又不知郎君高意如何？”生愀然不语。磨勒曰：“娘子既坚确如是，此亦小事耳。”姬甚喜。磨勒请先为姬负其囊橐妆奁，如此三复焉。然后曰：“恐迟明。”遂负生与姬，而飞出峻垣十余重。一品家之守御，无有警者，遂归学院而匿之。及旦，一品家方觉。又见犬已毙，一品大骇曰：“我家门垣，从来邃密，扃锁甚严，势似飞腾，寂无形迹，此必侠士而挈之。无更声闻，徒为患祸耳。”





aged to reach my room?”

He told her about the dark slave.

“Where’s he now?”

“Right outside your door.”

She invited him in and offered him wine in a gold goblet. “I was born in a well-off family in the north,” she told Cui, “but unfortunately, the governor had his eyes on me and I was forced to work as a servant in his house. I hate myself for having lived so long. Every day, though I put on powder and a smile, my heart is cold and congealed. Though I eat with jade chopsticks, wear silk and satin, sleep in an embroidered bed behind pearl curtains and live in scented rooms among utensils of gold, I hate this life. It’s no better than serving an endless prison term. Since your servant has such magic powers, why don’t you let him take me away from this dungeon? If only I can escape from this kind of life, I don’t care what may befall me. I’d like to be your serving maid and attend upon your needs. It’s all up to you.”

Cui made no response.

“If you’re that determined,” the dark slave put in, “it won’t be difficult to take you out.”

Exhilarated, the girl packed up frantically. It took the dark man three trips to carry her belongings. “The sun will soon be up,” he finally said, “we must leave now or never.” So he carried both of them on his back and scaled the walls back to Cui’s study, where they hid the girl.

None of the guards sensed anything until broad daylight. The bigwig was horrified to see his dogs dead and the girl missing. “Up till now,” he said, “my house has been safe and secure, and well guarded. It’s strange nobody heard anything. It must have been the work of someone who has mastered the art of weightlessness.” “That man is a potential threat. Don’t let this incident leak out,” he warned his servants.

姬隐崔生家二岁，因花时，驾小车而游曲江，为一品家人潜志认，遂白一品。一品异之，召崔生而诘之事。惧而不敢隐，遂细言端由，皆因奴磨勒负荷而去。一品曰：“是姬大罪过，但郎君驱使逾年，即不能问是非，某须为天下人除害。”命甲士五十人，严持兵仗围崔生院，使擒磨勒。磨勒遂持匕首，飞出高垣，瞥若翅翎，疾同鹰隼。攒矢如雨，莫能中之。顷刻之间，不知所向。然崔家大惊愕。后一品悔惧，每夕，多以家童持剑戟自卫，如此周岁方止。后十余年，崔家有人，见磨勒卖药于洛阳市，容颜如旧耳。





For two years the girl lived safely in Cui's house. Then one spring she took an outing to a scenic bend of the river, where she was recognized by a servant of the bigwig, who was surprised by the report. He then summoned Cui to ask about the girl. Since it was useless to lie, the young man revealed every detail of what had happened. She was carried out by his family slave, he said.

"That girl deserves severe punishment," the bigwig said, "but since she's been yours for more than a year, I won't push charges. Nevertheless, I must stamp out the potential danger to our society."

He dispatched fifty soldiers to surround Cui's house and catch the slave. All of a sudden, the dark man rose from behind the high walls with a dagger in hand and fluttered away as swiftly as a falcon. The soldiers shot, but their arrows missed. In a blink he had disappeared. The whole household of the Cuis looked on in utter disbelief.

The slave's escape filled the bigwig with dread that the man might seek revenge. He reproached himself for having acted so tactlessly. Every night after, he had his servants bear arms to guard the house. This lasted a full year before he slacked off.

A decade later, a member of the Cui family spotted the dark man in the East Capital peddling herbs. In spite of all the years, he didn't look a day older.





僧 侠

唐建中初，士人韦生移家汝州。中路逢一僧，因与连镳，言论颇洽。日将夕，僧指路歧曰：“此数里是贫道兰若，郎君能垂顾乎？”士人许之，因令家口先行。僧即处分从者，供帐具食。

行十余里，不至。韦生问之，即指一处林烟曰：“此是矣。”及至，又前进。日已昏夜，韦生疑之，素善弹，乃密于靴中取张卸弹，怀铜丸十余，方责僧曰：“弟子有程期，适偶贪上人清论，勉副相邀，今已行二十里，不至何也？”僧但言且行。是僧前行百余步，韦生知其盗也，乃弹之，僧正中其脑。僧初若不觉，凡五发中之，僧始扞





The Monk Bandit

In Jianzhong reign a Mr Wei was moving home to Ru Prefecture. On his way he met a monk and they traveled together, chatting happily.

The sun was declining toward the west. The monk pointed to a fork in the road and said, "From here it's only a mile or so to my temple. Can I be honored by your presence?"

Wei accepted the invitation and sent his family and the carts ahead, and the monk dispatched his attendants to prepare bed and board, while the two of them ambled behind.

After three or four miles no temple came in sight. At Wei's inquiry the monk pointed to a patch of woods ahead and said, "It's just there."

They went on and beyond. Wei's suspicion and uneasiness grew with the deepening of the twilight. An expert with the slingshot, he secretly pulled it out from his bootleg and loaded it. He had with him a dozen copper pellets.

"I'm on a tight schedule," Wei said sternly. "I agreed to make a detour to your place only because I enjoyed talking with you and you said it was just one mile away, but now we've already covered six or seven. Tell me, where on earth is it?"

"It's just ahead," the monk said without stopping. That confirmed Wei's suspicion that his companion was a bandit rather than a monk. He let go the shot and hit the monk in the back of the head, but the monk seemed unconscious of the blow. Wei shot five pellets in



中处，徐曰：“郎君莫恶作剧。”韦生知无可奈何，亦不复弹。

良久，至一庄墅，数十人列火炬出迎。僧延韦生坐一厅中，笑云：“郎君勿忧。”因问左右：“夫人下处如法无？”复曰：“郎君且自慰安之，即就此也。”韦生见妻女别在一处，供帐甚盛，相顾涕泣。即就僧，僧前执韦生手曰：“贫道盗也，本无好意。不知郎君艺若此，非贫道亦不支也。今日固无他，幸不疑耳。适来贫道所中郎君弹悉在。”乃举手搦脑后，五丸坠焉。有顷布筵，具蒸饍，饍上扎刀子十余，以齏饼环之。揖韦生就座，复曰：“贫道有义弟数人，欲令谒见。”言已，朱衣巨带者五六辈，列于阶下。僧呼曰：“拜郎君！汝等向遇郎君，即成齏粉矣！”

食毕，僧曰：“贫道久为此业，今向迟暮，欲改前非。不幸有一子技过老僧，欲请郎君为老僧断之。”乃呼





succession. The monk raised his hand to his head and said nonchalantly, "Don't play this kind of practical joke on me." Wei gave up shooting as he realized he couldn't get the upper hand.

After what seemed an endless journey they finally reached a manor house. Scores of people were waiting outside the gate with torches in their hands. The monk invited him in and offered a seat in the main hall.

"Don't be alarmed," the monk said with a smile. He turned to his attendants and asked, "Is Her Ladyship well provided for?" He then turned to Wei and said, "You may go and see for yourself how they are and then come back to this room."

Wei was relieved to find his wife and daughter comfortably accommodated. He went back to the hall.

The monk stepped forth and clasped his hands. "To be honest, I'm a bandit and I'd harbored foul intentions. I didn't know you have such skills. Had it been someone else, you would have laid him flat. Now we're friends, please make yourself at home. Here are your pellets." He scratched the back of his head and the five pellets fell off.

In a moment a dinner was ready. In a circle of ginger pancakes a steamed calf was laid on the table with a dozen knives stuck in its back. The monk bowed and invited him to sit. "I have several sworn brothers," he said, "and I'd like them to meet you." Half a dozen men in red coats and wide belts appeared at the door. "Pay your respects," the monk commanded. "Lucky that you didn't try to rob His Excellency, or you would have been blown to pieces."

"I've been in this business for years," the monk said after dinner. "Now I'm old, I'd like to give up and return to normal life, but unluckily I have a son. His martial arts are even better than mine. Would you please help me get rid of him?"



飞飞出参郎君。飞飞年才十六七，碧衣长袖，皮肉如腊。僧曰：“向后堂侍郎君。”僧乃授韦一剑及五丸，且曰：“乞郎君尽艺杀之，无为老僧累也。”引韦入一堂中，乃反锁之。堂中四隅，明灯而已。飞飞当堂执一短鞭。韦引弹，意必中，丸已敲落，不觉跃在梁上，循壁虚蹶，捷若猱獾。弹丸尽，不复中。韦乃运剑逐之，飞飞倏忽逗闪，去韦身不尺。韦断其鞭数节，竟不能伤。僧久乃开门，问韦：“与老僧除得害乎？”韦具言之。僧怅然，顾飞飞曰：“郎君证成汝为贼也，知复如何？”僧终夕与韦论剑及弧矢之事。天将晓，僧送韦路口，赠绢百匹，垂泣而别。





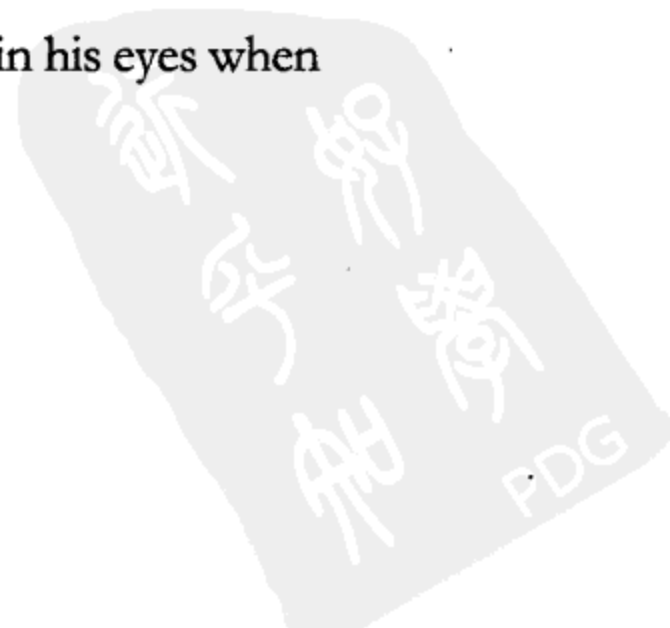
He called for his son, Feifei, to come and pay respects. The young man was about sixteen years of age, wearing a green shirt with long sleeves. His stringy muscles were like cured meat. "Now you go to the rear hall and wait there for His Excellency," he said to his son.

"Sir, use whatever skill you have to kill him so that he won't drag me into trouble," the monk said as he handed Wei a sword and the five pellets.

He ushered Wei into a room and locked the door. The room was spacious and empty, except for a lamp at each corner. Feifei was standing in the center of the room with a short whip in one hand. Wei drew his slingshot and let go, thinking that it was a sure hit, but the pellet was knocked down and Feifei was already up on a beam. He darted along the wall's vertical surface like a most agile ape. Wei soon exhausted his pellets without making a single hit. He drew his sword and chased but Feifei was elusive, though he always seemed less than a mere step away. Wei managed to slash his whip into several pieces but could by no means hit the body. After a long while the monk opened the door and asked, "Have you got rid of that scoundrel for me?"

Wei gave a brief account of the fight. The monk looked lost. He glanced at Feifei and said, "His Excellency has proved you're bound to be a bandit. Heaven knows what'll become of you!"

All night the monk talked with Wei about swordplay and archery. At daybreak he accompanied Wei to the intersection of the road and gave him a hundred bolts of silk. Tears were blinking in his eyes when he waved goodbye.



聂隐娘

聂隐娘者，唐贞元中，魏博大将聂锋之女也。年方十岁，有尼乞食于锋舍，见隐娘悦之。云：“问押衙乞取此女教。”锋大怒，叱尼。尼曰：“任押衙铁柜中盛，亦须偷去矣。”及夜，果失隐娘所向。锋大惊骇，令人搜寻，曾无影响。父母每思之，相对涕泣而已。

后五年，尼送隐娘归，告锋曰：“教已成矣，子却领取。”尼款亦不见。一家悲喜，问其所学。曰：“初但读经念咒，余无他也。”锋不信，恳诘。隐娘曰：“真说又恐不信，如何？”锋曰：“但真说之。”曰：“隐娘初被尼挈，不知行几里。及明，至大石穴之嵌空数十步，寂无居





The Invisible Swordgirl

Nie Yinniang was the daughter of Nie Feng, a senior general with the Wei-Bo regional command during Zhenyuan reign. Once a Buddhist nun came begging for alms at their gate. She was thrilled to see Yinniang, who was then ten years old. "Sir," she said to Feng, "may I take this girl away to teach?" The general raged at the request.

"I'll take her away even if you should lock her up in an iron safe," the nun proclaimed. And that very night Yinniang was lost. The stunned general ordered a search but couldn't find a trace. The abduction broke the parents' hearts.

Five years later, the nun brought Yinniang back. "She's yours now," she said to Feng. "She's learned well." As abruptly as she had emerged, she vanished.

The family was happy beyond words. Feng asked Yinniang what she had learned.

"Nothing but reading the scriptures and chanting incantations," she replied.

That couldn't satisfy Feng and he insisted on knowing.

"If I tell you the truth," she said, "I'm afraid you won't believe me either, will you?"

"Just tell me the truth."

"The night the nun led me away, I had no idea how far we traveled. At daybreak we reached a large cave high up in a rocky cliff. Not a soul was in sight, except for monkeys and apes. The mouth of the cave was



人，猿狖极多，松萝益邃。已有二女，亦各十岁，皆聪明婉丽不食。能于峭壁上飞走，若捷猱登木，无有蹶失。尼与我药一粒，兼令长执宝剑一口，长二尺许，锋利，吹毛令刳，逐二女攀缘，渐觉身轻如风。一年后，刺猿狖，百无一失。后刺虎豹，皆决其首而归。三年后能飞，使刺鹰隼，无不中。剑之刃渐减五寸，飞禽遇之，不知其来也。至四年，留二女守穴，挈我于都市，不知何处也。指其人者，一一数其过曰：‘为我刺其首来，无使知觉。’定其胆，若飞鸟之容易也。受以羊角匕首，刀广三寸。遂白日刺其人于都市，人莫能见。以首入囊，返主人舍，以药化之为水。五年，又曰：‘某大僚有罪，无故害人若干。夜可入其室，决其首来。’又携匕首入室，度其门隙，无有障碍，伏之梁上。至暝，持得其首而归。尼大怒曰：‘何太晚如是！’某云：‘见前人戏弄一儿可爱，未忍便下手。’尼叱曰：‘以后遇此辈，先断其所爱，然后决之。’某拜谢。尼曰：‘吾为汝开脑后藏匕首，而无所



hidden by pines and vines. When I arrived there were already two girls there. They were the same age as me, both good looking and clever. They'd learned to go without food, and can walk on the cliff as sure-footed as monkeys climbing trees. The nun gave me a pill and a sword about two feet long. The blade was so sharp that if you hold a hair to it a puff of air will cut it. She told me to chase the two girls. Gradually I felt as light as wind. In a year, I was able to kill a monkey with just one stroke of the sword, no misses. In two years, I could behead tigers or leopards. In three years, I was able to fly and pierce eagles and vultures, right through their hearts. By then the blade of my sword had shortened to five inches. Even the birds wouldn't notice its approaching. In the fourth year, she told the two other girls to stay in the cave while she took me to a big city – I don't know which one it was. She would point out certain people and recount their sins one by one. Then she would ask me to cut off their heads, slaying them in their unawareness. As long as one has the guts, it's as easy as killing fowl. Then she gave me a dagger. The handle was made of sheep-horn, its blade only three inches long. I can take the life of anyone in a daytime crowd and wouldn't be noticed. I would put the head into a bag and give it to her, and she'd dissolve it in some magic water. In the fifth year, she said, 'That high official is a villain. He had wronged and killed many. Go to his place tonight and fetch me his head.' I went with my dagger. To me, a crack in a door is just a door wide open. So I hid myself on the roof beams. I returned to the nun at night with his head. She was angry and accused me of being late. I explained that I waited a while longer because the man was playing with a lovely child, and I didn't want to hurt the kid. 'Next time with a villain, first kill whomever he loves and then wipe him off.' I apologized. 'Now,' the nun said, 'I'll open your skull for you so that you have somewhere to hide the dagger. It won't



伤，用即抽之。’曰：‘汝术已成，可归家。’遂送还。云后二十年，方可一见。”

锋闻语甚惧，后遇夜即失踪，及明而返。锋已不敢诘之，因兹亦不甚怜爱。忽值磨镜少年及门，女曰：“此人可与我为夫。”白父，父不敢不从，遂嫁之。其夫但能淬镜，余无他能。父乃给衣食甚丰，外室而居。数年后，父卒。魏帅稍知其异，遂以金帛署为左右吏。如此又数年。

至元和间，魏帅与陈许节度使刘昌裔不协，使隐娘贼其首。隐娘辞帅之许。刘能神算，已知其来。召衙将，令来日早至城北，候一丈夫一女子，各跨白黑卫。至门，遇有鹊前噪夫，夫以弓弹之，不中，妻夺夫弹，一丸而毙鹊者。揖之云：“吾欲相见，故远相祗迎也。”衙将受约束，遇之。隐娘夫妻曰：“刘仆射果神人，不然者，何





hurt and you can pull it out whenever you need it. Now you've learned everything, you can go home.' She said I won't see her again until twenty years later. And she sent me back."

Feng was terrified by the revelation. From then on she would often disappear at night and return before daybreak. Though he asked no questions, his affections waned.

One day a young mirror-polisher came to their gate. "I'd like to have him as my husband," Yinniang said to her father. Not daring to raise objections, Feng married her off with a good allowance and a separate house. Except for polishing mirrors, however, the young man seemed to have no other skills.

When Feng died a few years later, the regional commander had caught wind of Yinniang's extraordinary expertise. He offered her money and silk to enlist her service. Thus several years passed.

It was then in Yuanhe reign. The commander of Wei-Bo was on bad terms with Liu Changyi, the commander-in-chief of Chen-Xu Military Region. He ordered Yinniang to go and get Liu's head. Liu, however, was good at prophesying. The moment Yinniang set out from Wei, he had already learned of her mission. He summoned a junior officer and told him to go and wait at the city's north gate the next morning and look out for a couple riding a black and a white donkey respectively. As they approach town a magpie would pester the man and the annoyed man would take out a slingshot and shoot at the bird but miss the target. The woman would grab his slingshot and kill the bird with just one shot. The officer then should step forth to salute them and tell them that the commander would like to meet them and had sent him waiting with a personal welcome. The officer went and things happened exactly as Liu had predicted.

"General Liu must have supernatural powers," the couple



以洞吾也，愿见刘公。”刘劳之。隐娘夫妻拜曰：“合负仆射万死。”刘曰：“不然，各亲其主，人之常事。魏今与许何异，顾请留此，勿相疑也。”隐娘谢曰：“仆射左右无人，愿舍彼而就此，服公神明也。”知魏帅之不及刘。刘问其所须，曰：“每日只要钱二百文足矣。”乃依所请。忽不见二卫所之，刘使人寻之，不知所问。后潜收布囊中，见二纸卫，一黑一白。

后月余，白刘曰：“彼未知住，必使人继至。今宵请剪发，系之以红绡，送于魏帅枕前，以表不回。”刘听之。至四更却返曰：“送其信了，后夜必使精精儿来杀某，及贼仆射之首。此时亦万计杀之，乞不忧耳。”刘豁达大度，亦无畏色。





marveled, "or how could he have known? We'd like to meet him."

"Our attempt at Your Excellency's life is unpardonable," the couple said at Liu's warm reception.

"Don't mention that," Liu replied. "You were just carrying out orders. That's what any faithful subordinate would do. As long as you make a living by taking orders, would there be much difference whether you serve Wei-Bo or Chen-Xu? If you can trust me, you're welcome to stay."

"If we can be any service to Your Excellency, we'd like to be under your command. You've won our hearts," Yinniangu said, for she knew the commander of Wei-Bo was no match to Liu.

Liu asked them how they would like to be paid.

"Two hundred coins a day would be enough for us," they said.

Liu agreed, and it suddenly occurred to him that while they were talking the two donkeys had disappeared. He sent people to look around for the animals but they were nowhere to be found. It was only later that he discovered Yinniangu had two paper-cut donkeys in her bag, one white, one black.

About a month later Yinniangu spoke to Liu, "Since the commander of Wei-Bo has no idea that we've deserted him and are staying here, he'll most probably send others along to finish the job. I'll cut off a lock of my hair, wrap it in a piece of red silk, and lay it by his pillow tonight so that he'll know that we're not returning to him." Liu gave his permission.

Yinniangu returned at daybreak. "I've sent him the message," she reported. "I guess he'll send Jingjinger over tomorrow night for both my head and yours. But you don't need to worry. I can cope with the situation."

Having confidence in Yinniangu, Liu showed no sign of fear.



是夜明烛，半宵之后，果有二幡子一红一白，飘飘然如相击于床四隅。良久，见一人自空而踏，身首异处。隐娘亦出曰：“精儿已毙。”拽出于堂之下，以药化为水，毛发不存矣。隐娘曰：“后夜当使妙手空空儿继至。空空儿之神术，人莫能窥其用，鬼莫得蹶其踪，能从空虚之入冥，善无形而灭影。隐娘之艺，故不能造其境，此即系仆射之福耳。但以于闾玉周其颈，拥以衾，隐娘当化为蠓螻，潜入仆射肠中听伺，其余无逃避处。”刘如言。至三更，瞑目未熟，果闻颈上铿然，声甚厉。隐娘自刘口中跃出。贺曰：“仆射无患矣。此人如俊鹞，一搏不中，即翩然远逝，耻其不中。才未逾一更，已千里矣。”后视其玉，果有匕首划处，痕逾数分。自此刘转厚礼之。

自元和八年，刘自许入觐，隐娘不愿从焉。云：“自此寻山水，访至人，但乞一虚给与其夫。”刘如约。后渐





Candles were left burning. Midnight passed. Two diminutive pennons fluttered around the bed like fencing, one red and one white. At long last, a man fell out from the air, his head and body severed. Yinniang revealed herself, saying, "I've killed him." She dragged the corpse into the courtyard and liquefied it. Even the hair and bones were dissolved. "I'm most certain that the peerless Kongkonger will arrive tomorrow night to kill us. His blows and strokes are too fast for the human eye. He can move through air or earth. He can be invisible to the extent that he makes no shadow. And he's more elusive than a ghost. My martial arts are no match to his. So you have to count on your luck. I suggest you make a collar out of quality jade from the Yutian mines in the Western Regions and put it on when you go to bed, and then cover yourself with a heavy quilt. I'll change into a gnat and hide in your bowels. That's probably our only chance."

Liu followed her advice and at midnight while he was half awake he heard a sharp screech on his neck. Yinniang jumped out from his mouth and said, "My congratulations. Your Excellency is safe now. Kongkonger acts like a falcon. It makes only one strike at a prey. If it misses it would give up and fly away, because it'd be ashamed of its failure. By now he's hundreds of miles away."

They examined the jade collar and saw a deep knife cut. After that, Liu treated Yinniang with greater respect.

In the eighth year of Yuanhe reign, Liu was transferred to the capital. Yinniang declined to go along, saying that she would rather take to the mountains and valleys to look up great hermit masters. All she asked of Liu was a title for her husband so that he could be provided for, which Liu readily bestowed.

After that Yinniang seemed to have evaporated, yet when Liu died at the position of commander of the capital's garrison force,



不知所之。及刘蕤于统军，隐娘亦鞭驴而一至京师，枢前恸哭而去。开成年，昌裔子纵除陵州刺史，至蜀栈道，遇隐娘，貌若当时，甚喜相见，依前跨白卫如故。语纵曰：“郎君大灾，不合适此。”出药一粒，令纵吞之。云：“来年火急抛官归洛，方脱此祸，吾药力只保一年患耳。”纵亦不甚信，遗其繒彩，隐娘一无所受，但沉醉而去。后一年，纵不休官，果卒于陵州。自此无复有人见隐娘矣。





Yinniāng came to the capital on her donkey and poured heart-broken tears over his coffin.

In Kaicheng reign Liu's son, Zong, was appointed Prefect of Ling. On his way to take up his position in Shu, he met Yinniāng on the plank-road winding along the cliffs. She looked unchanged and was still riding her white donkey as she used to. They were glad to meet.

"Sir, you're putting your life in great danger by coming to Shu," she said as she took out a pill and told Zong to swallow it. "This pill can only guarantee one year's safety. Resign next year and return to the capital as soon as you can. You'll be safe there." But Zong was not convinced.

She declined his gift of colorful silk. After an intoxicating drink they went their separate ways.

Zong didn't resign from office in the following year, and, as Yinniāng had warned, he died at his post. Yinniāng was never seen thereafter.



红线

唐潞州节度使薛嵩家青衣红线者善弹阮咸，又通经史。嵩乃俾掌其笈表，号曰内记室。时军中大宴，红线谓嵩曰：“羯鼓之声，颇甚悲切，其击者必有事也。”嵩素晓音律，曰：“如汝所言。”乃召而问之，云：“某妻昨夜身亡，不敢求假。”嵩遽放归。

是时至德之后，两河未宁，以浚阳为镇，命嵩固守，控压山东。杀伤之余，军府草创。朝廷命嵩遣女嫁魏博节度使田承嗣男，又遣嵩男娶滑亳节度使令狐章女。三镇交为姻娅，使使日浹往来。





Red Strand

General Xue Song, garrison commander of Lu Military Region with its headquarters in Fuyang City, had a housemaid called Red Strand. She was very good at playing the lute and was also well-read and intelligent. As he often asked her to draft his communication and reports, she won the nickname Domestic Secretary.

Here is just one story showing how talented she was.

Once during an army banquet she called Xue's attention to the music, saying that the drummer must have something weighing on his mind, for the drums sounded rather melancholy. Xue, cultured in music himself, listened and agreed. Upon his query, the drummer disclosed that his wife had passed away the previous night, and since there was this banquet going on, he didn't dare to ask for leave. Xue granted him immediate permission to go home.

It was just after An Lushan and Shi Siming's rebellion. The eastern plains were still in the turbulent aftermath of war, the population was sparse and the administrative system shattered. Located near the southern tip of the Taihang Mountain Range where the Yellow River pours out onto the plains, Fuyang was a place of strategic importance, and Xue's troops were deployed there to deter the eastern provinces. To further ensure regional stability, the Court had ordered him to marry his daughter to the son of General Tian Chengsi, garrison commander of Wei-Bo Military Region, and to marry his son to the daughter of the garrison commander of Hua-Bo Military Region. As the three military



而田承嗣常患肺气，遇热增剧，每曰：“我若移镇山东，纳其凉冷，可以延数年之命。”乃募军中武勇十倍者，得三千人，号外宅男，而厚其恤养。常令三百人夜直州宅，卜选良日，将并潞州。

嵩闻之，日夜忧闷，咄咄自语，计无所出。时夜漏将传，辕门已闭，杖策庭际，唯红线从焉。红线曰：“主自一月，不遑寝食。意有所属，岂非邻境乎？”嵩曰：“事系安危，非尔能料。”红线曰：“某诚贱品，亦能解主忧者。”嵩闻其语异，乃曰：“我知汝是异人，我暗昧也。”遂具告其事曰：“我承祖父遗业，受国家重恩，一旦失其疆土，即数百年勋伐尽矣。”红线曰：“此易与耳，不足劳主忧焉。暂放某一到魏城，观其形势，覘其有





regions in that triangle area of a hundred miles were thus related by marriage, traffic and trade flourished.

Tian was suffering from a severe case of pulmonary emphysema, which worsened when the days grew hot. "If only I could be re-stationed in Fuyang and enjoy the summer coolness of its higher altitude," he said many times, "I might have more years to live."

With that in mind, he hand-picked three thousand soldiers from his bravest troops to form an elite force which he called his Private Braves. Every night three hundred of them took turns guarding his official residence. Even a date was set to attack and annex Fuyang.

Xue was greatly upset by this news. Day and night he was lost in thought, but could not come up with a satisfactory counter plan.

Night had fallen again, the gates were locked and he silently paced the courtyard. Only Red Strand followed. "My lord," she broke the silence, "in the past month you've lost both appetite and sleep. There must be something worrying you. Is it because of our neighbor?"

"It's a matter of life and death. You girls don't understand."

"I know I'm not in a position to discuss this, but I think I can be of some help."

Surprised by her confidence, he said, "I had a hunch you're not an ordinary chamber maid, but I didn't expect you to have some exceptional prowess." He told her of the imminent threat and continued, "If I should lose any territory in my care to some defiant general, the several hundred years of glory attached to my family name would be tarnished at my hands. How shall I face my ancestors and His Majesty!"

"Don't worry, my lord. This is but a trifle. With your leave, I'll make a trip to Wei City right away to size up the situation there and see what I can do. Meanwhile, please draw up a complimentary letter to



无。今一更首途，二更可以复命。请先定一走马使，具寒暄书，其他即待某却回也。”嵩曰：“然事或不济，反速其祸，又如之何？”红线曰：“某之此行，无不济也。”乃入闺房，饬其行具。乃梳乌蛮髻，贯金雀钗，衣紫绣短袍，系青丝轻履，胸前佩龙文匕首，额上书太一神名。再拜而行，倏忽不见。嵩乃返身闭户，背烛危坐。常时饮酒，不过数合；是夕举觞，十余不醉。

忽闻晓角吟风，一叶坠露。惊而起问，即红线回矣。嵩喜而慰劳曰：“事谐否？”红线曰：“不敢辱命。”又问曰：“无伤杀否？”曰：“不至是，但取床头金合为信耳。”红线曰：“某子夜前二刻，即达魏城。凡历数门，遂及寝所。闻外宅儿止于房廊，睡声雷动。见中军士卒，





General Tian, and have a dispatch rider on stand-by. I'll come back before daybreak."

"What if you were caught? Wouldn't that make things worse?"

"Everything will turn out well. There's nothing to worry about, my lord." So she went back to her room to prepare herself.

She twisted up her hair into a snug bun and secured it with a gold pin, changed into a tight-fitting dark-blue jacket, put on a pair of light, black cloth shoes, fastened a carved dragon dagger to her belt, and wrote the magic name of the polestar god on her forehead. All done, she knelt down and bowed to the god's statue, and whisked out of the room.

Xue also retired to his room and shut the door behind. With his back to the candle, he tried to relieve his anxiety by drinking. He was not a big drinker, and at ordinary times a few cups would send him reeling, but on that particular night, his head remained especially clear, though he had poured down more than a dozen cups. Suddenly, he heard a breeze brushing a flag and dew drops shaken off a leaf. He sprang to his feet and whispered, "Is it you, Red Strand?"

It was.

A smile of relief cracked on his face as he asked how things stood.

"You know, I couldn't afford to fail my mission," she replied.

"Hope you didn't have to hurt anyone."

"No, that wasn't necessary. I only took this gold box from beside General Tian's pillow. That was enough of a warning."

"I reached Wei City well before midnight," she went on with a fuller account. "There were sentries and patrols everywhere, demanding passwords, but I had no trouble passing through gates and barricades. Outside his official residence, I could hear those Private Braves snoring



徒步于庭，传叫风生。乃发其左扉，抵其寝帐。田亲家翁止于帐内，鼓跌酣眠，头枕文犀，髻包黄縠。枕前露一星剑，剑前仰开一金合，合内书生身甲子与北斗神名，复以名香美珠，散覆其上。然则扬威玉帐，坦其心豁于生前，熟寝兰堂，不觉命悬于手下。宁劳擒纵，只益伤嗟。时则蜡炬烟微，炉香烬委，侍人四布，兵器交罗。或头触屏风，鼾而弹者；或手持巾拂，寝而伸者。某乃拔其簪珥，縻其襦裳，如病如醒，皆不能寤，遂持金合以归。出魏城西门，将行二百里，见铜台高揭，漳水东流，晨鸡动野，斜月在林。忿往喜还，顿忘于行役。感知酬德，聊副于依归。所以当夜漏三时，往返七百里，入危邦一道，经过五六城，冀减主忧，敢言其苦。”

嵩乃发使人魏，遗田承嗣书曰：“昨夜有客从魏中来云，自元帅床头获一金合，不敢留驻，谨却封纳。”专使





as loud as thunder on the verandahs. I pushed open the left plank of his bedroom door and there I stood right beside his curtained bed. My lord's in-law was lying on his back in a sound sleep, his legs crossed, his hair tied up with a piece of yellow gauze. The gem-studded handle of a sword was protruding from beneath his rhino-skin pillow. Beside it was a gold box, its lid open. Inside was a piece of silk inscribed with his Eight Characters of life and the symbol of the Wain, overlaid with pearls and rich spices. He imagined himself secure on his curtained bed, yet he didn't realize his heart was lying exposed; he slept peacefully in his protected room, yet he didn't know his life was hanging by a thread. He was not even worth my catching. I only pitied him.

"By that time the candles had burned out and the fireplace was in cinders. There were soldiers all about the place, their weapons tangled up. Some leaned their heads against the wall snoring, some stretched out on the floor with towels and fans still in their hands. I plucked the pins from their hair and tied the tails of their coats together while they slept like the dead. I left with this gold box without encountering any trouble. When the moon touched the distant tree tops and the first rooster began to crow, I had already reached our border. I was so happy to have completed my mission that exhaustion was swept away. So, by covering two hundred miles in a night and through half a dozen fortified towns, I at last am able to repay your kindness to me over the years."

Thereupon, Xue sent the messenger on his way with the gold box and a letter to Tian. "Last night," the letter read, "I had a guest from Wei. He offered me a gold box which he said he had taken from the side of Your Excellency's pillow. I dare not keep such a precious thing as this, and I am sending it back to you by special carrier."

The rider galloped through villages and towns without taking a



星驰，夜半方到。见搜捕金合，一军忧疑。使者以马箠挝门，非时请见。承嗣遽出，使者乃以金合授之。捧承之时，惊惶绝倒。遂留使者，止于宅中，狎以宴私，多其赐赆。明日，专遣使赉帛三万匹、名马二百匹、杂珍异等，以献于嵩曰：“某之首领，系在恩私。便宜知过自新，不复更贻伊戚。专膺指使，敢议亲姻。彼当捧毂后车，来在麾鞭前马。所置纪纲外宅儿者，本防他盗，亦非异图。今并脱其甲裳，放归田亩矣。”由是一两个月内，河北河南信使交至。

忽一日，红线辞去。嵩曰：“汝生我家，今欲安往？又方赖于汝，岂可议行？”红线曰：“某前本男子，游学江湖间，读神农药书，而救世人灾患。时里有孕妇，忽患蛊症，某以茺花酒下之，妇人与腹中二子俱毙。是某一举杀其三人，阴力见诛，降为女子，使身居贱隶，气禀凡俚。





rest. It was nearly midnight when he arrived at Wei. The whole city was in chaos. Soldiers swarmed the streets and were making a house-to-house search. He went straight up to the commander's mansion and knocked on the gate with the butt of his horsewhip. Tian received him in person, though it was an unusual hour for an audience, and he all but swooned when the messenger produced the box. He feasted the man and piled him with gifts.

The very next morning, he dispatched an envoy with thirty thousand bolts of silk, two hundred thoroughbreds, and myriads of jewelry to Xue. In an accompanying letter he wrote:

"I am most grateful to Your Excellency for not taking my head. Guilt loads my heart and I shall mend my ways. Now I pledge complete loyalty to Your Excellency and shall forever remain your humble servant and obey your orders. The so-called Private Braves were for no other purpose than a precaution against burglars. They shall be disbanded and sent home at once."

In the months that followed, ambassadors from many neighboring army chiefs converged at Fuyang to pay their respects and tribute.

One day, however, Red Strand announced her intention to leave.

"This is your home," Xue said. "Where are you planning to go? You know how much I need you. How can you leave me at this moment?"

"In my previous life," she replied, "I was a man, studying medicine with an ambition to relieve people of their sufferings. There was a pregnant woman with a parasitic disease. I treated her with an alcohol extract of lilac daphne to purge the worms, but killed her instead with the twins in her womb. Because of that, the nether force reincarnated me into a woman of inferior status. It was very fortunate indeed for me to be born in Your Excellency's household. During my nineteen



幸生于公家，今十九年矣。身厌罗绮，口穷甘鲜，宠待有加，荣亦甚矣。况国家建极，庆且无疆。此即违天，理当尽弭。昨往魏邦，以是报恩。今两地保其城池，万人全其性命，使乱臣知惧，烈士谋安。在某一妇人，功亦不小，固可赎其前罪，还其本形。便当遁迹尘中，栖心物外，澄清一气，生死长存。”嵩曰：“不然，以千金为居山之所。”红线曰：“事关来世，安可预谋。”

嵩知不可留，乃广为饯别，悉集宾友，夜宴中堂。嵩以歌送红线酒，请座客冷朝阳为词。词曰：“彩菱歌怨木兰舟，送客魂消百尺楼。还似洛妃乘雾去，碧天无际水空流。”歌竟，嵩不胜其悲。红线拜且泣，因伪醉离席，遂亡所在。



years of life, I was clad in silk and fed with delicacies. And it is also good fortune to see law and order prevail again. People should be allowed to live in peace. That I took it upon myself to abort a traitor's undertaking was first to do my lord a service, second to prevent a confrontation that could have taken thousands of innocent lives. As one of the fair sex, such a feat is enough to atone for my previous sin and clear me of any worldly obligations. No more shall I be bound by this material world. I'm going to seek the immortality of a pure existence."

"What do you say if I build you a temple in the nearby mountains?" Xue suggested.

"Thanks, but one's afterlife cannot be pre-set."

Seeing that she was determined to go, Xue held a grand farewell party in her honor. In front of the guests from near and far, he sang her a toast:

*There waiting on the stream a painted boat,
My song is crying over every note.
The mist will ferry you to new abode;
Toward the edge of earth the river flows.*

Then he broke down in sobs.

With tears welling up, she bowed her gratitude and excused herself for feeling tipsy. She was never seen again.



京西店老人

唐韦行规自言，少时游京西，暮止店中。更欲前进，店有老人方工作，谓曰：“客勿夜行，此中多盗。”韦曰：“某留心弧矢，无所患也。”

因行数十里。天黑，有人起草中尾之。韦叱不应，连发矢中之，复不退。矢尽，韦惧奔焉。有顷，风雷总至。韦下马，负一大树。见空中有电光相逐，如鞞杖，势渐逼树杪，觉物纷纷坠其前。韦视之，乃木札也。须臾，积札埋至膝。韦惊惧，投弓矢，仰空中乞命。拜数十，电光渐





The Old Man at the Inn

This is a story recounted by Wei Xinggui about his own youthful experience.

At sunset one day as he was traveling west of the capital, he dropped in at a roadside inn for a meal and was ready to set off again.

“Don’t travel at night. Bandits roam this area,” warned an old man making a bucket in the hall.

“Don’t you worry. I’m expert with the bow and arrow,” replied Wei as he stepped out into the thickening twilight.

It was completely dark before he had covered many miles. Suddenly, he sensed that there was someone following him in the tall grasses along the roadside. He shouted at the figure but got no response. He raised his bow and shot in quick succession, believing that he must have hit the target. The figure, however, kept following him. In no time he was out of arrows and out of his wits. He began to run for dear life.

Soon a strong wind rose up and thunder was heard approaching. He jumped off his horse and pressed his back against a big tree. Lightning flashed like lashes across the sky, chasing one another to the top of the very tree under which he was hiding. He felt things falling all about him. An intent look told him that they were wood chips, and before long, the chips had piled up to his knees. Unnerved, he threw down his bow and bowed and bowed to heaven begging for mercy. Gradually, the clouds seemed to be lifting, the thunder trailed off and the wind



高而灭，风雷亦息。韦顾大树，枝干尽矣，鞍馱已失。

遂返前店，见老人方箍桶。韦意其异人也，拜而且谢。老人笑曰：“客勿恃弓矢，须知剑术。”引韦入后院，指鞍馱，言却领取，聊相试耳。又出桶板一片，昨夜之箭，悉中其上。韦请役力承事，不许。微露击剑事，韦亦得一二焉。



died down. He raised his eyes and examined the tree, which by then was bare of all its branches. His horse was nowhere in sight so he had to walk back to the inn. The old man was just beginning to hoop his bucket.

Believing that the old man was behind all this, Wei thanked him for sparing his life.

“Never be self-deceived by your archery,” the old man smiled. “Swordsmanship is also very important.”

He led Wei into the backyard and showed him his horse. “Here’s your nag. Hope you aren’t offended. I was just testing your art,” the old man said as he picked up a stave. Wei saw his arrows sticking in it.

The old man refused to accept Wei as an apprentice. However, from what he revealed about the art, Wei learned a thing or two.



义侠

顷有仕人为畿尉，常任贼曹。有一贼系械，狱未具。此官独坐厅上，忽告曰：“某非贼，颇非常辈。公若脱我之罪，奉报有日。”此公视状貌不群，词采挺拔，意已许之，佯为不诺。夜后，密呼狱吏放之，仍令狱吏逃窜。既明，狱中失囚，狱吏又走，府司谴罚而已。

后官满，数年客游，亦甚羁旅。至一县，忽闻县令与所放囚姓名同，往谒之。令通姓字，此宰惊惧，遂出迎拜，即所放者也。因留厅中，与对榻而寝，欢洽旬余，其宰不入宅。





The Assassin

A scholar once served as county lieutenant in charge of public security in the capital's suburbs. Held in custody was a suspect in connection with a burglary case waiting to be tried. The lieutenant was sitting alone in the hall when the suspect suddenly said, "I'm no burglar, neither am I any ordinary peasant. If Your Honor can have me acquitted, I may one day render you a service in return."

Though he shouted down the request as nonsense, he did notice that the man had some unusual traits and sounded well-educated. In his heart, he had already decided to pardon him.

After nightfall, he secretly summoned the jailer on duty and instructed him to set the suspect free, and then flee town himself.

The jailbreak was discovered in the morning, but since the jailer on the night shift was also gone, the case seemed self-evident. The lieutenant only received a mild reprimand from his superior.

After his term of office, the scholar took to traveling. He arrived in a county where the magistrate, as he found out, bore the same name as the suspect he had acquitted. So he went to the magistrate's official mansion to pay him a visit.

The magistrate, who was indeed the former suspect, was startled to see the scholar's card. He hurried to the gate in person to accord him a cordial welcome. The scholar was put up in the official mansion, and the magistrate himself accompanied him night after day, sharing the same room. For nearly a fortnight, he didn't even go home.



忽一日归宅，此客遂如厕。厕与令宅，唯隔一墙。客于厕室，闻宰妻问曰：“公有何客，经于十日不入？”宰曰：“某得此人大恩，性命昔在他手，乃至今日，未知何报？”妻曰：“公岂不闻，大恩不报。何不看时机为？”令不语，久之乃曰：“君言是矣。”

此客闻已，归告奴仆，乘马便走，衣服悉弃于厅中。至夜，已行五六十里，出县界，止宿村店。仆从但怪奔走，不知何故。此人歇定，乃言此贼负心之状，言讫吁嗟，奴仆悉涕泣之次。忽床下一人，持匕首出立。此客大惧。乃曰：“我义士也，宰使我来取君头。适闻说，方知此宰负心。不然，枉杀贤士。吾义不舍此人也。公且勿睡，少顷，与君取此宰头，以雪公冤。”此人怕惧愧谢，此客持剑出门如飞。二更已至，呼曰：“贼首至！”命火观之，乃令头也。剑客辞诀，不知所之。





The magistrate did go home one day. The scholar went to the outhouse, which happened to be separated from the magistrate's private residence only by a low wall. In the privy, the scholar heard the magistrate's wife ask, "What important guest has kept you at your office for these ten days?"

"He's my benefactor," the magistrate replied. "He once saved my life! Now that he is here, I really don't know how to repay him."

"Haven't you heard the saying: A debt too big to repay is not to be paid at all? Why don't you get rid of him?"

There was a long silence. Then he heard the magistrate say, "You're right."

The scholar rushed to the stable to get his horse. "No time to pack up. Just follow me!" he shouted to his puzzled servants and galloped away. By sundown they had covered some twenty miles and were out of the county when they stopped at a village inn.

His servants finally had a chance to ask why he fled in such haste. When his panting subsided, he told them how ungrateful the magistrate was. He sighed and sighed, and the servants wiped their impassioned tears from their eyes. At that moment, a man sprang out from beneath the bed with a dagger in hand, scaring the scholar out of his wits.

"Don't be afraid," the man said. "I'm a man of honor. The magistrate hired me to take your head, but from what you said, I now realize what an ungrateful scoundrel he is. He almost made me kill a good man. Such a scoundrel shouldn't live. Wait for me here. I'll be back in a moment with his head. The wrong must be redressed."

The scholar thanked him for sparing his life and the assassin dashed out with the speed of a whirlwind. He returned before midnight. "Here he is," he shouted. By torch light, they could see it was the head of the magistrate.

The assassin excused himself and disappeared into the night.

黄花寺壁

后魏孝文帝登位初，有魏城人元兆能以九天法禁绝妖怪。先邺中有军士女年十四，患妖病累年，治者数十人并无据。一日，其家以女来谒元兆所止，谒兆。兆曰：“此疾非狐狸之魅，是妖画也。吾何以知？今天下有至神之妖，有至灵之怪，有在陆之精，有在水之魅，吾皆知之矣。汝但述疾状，是佛寺中壁画四天神部落中魅也。此言如何？”其女之父曰：“某前于云门黄花寺中东壁画东方神下乞恩，常携此女到其下。又女常惧此画之神，因夜惊魘，梦恶鬼来，持女而笑，由此得疾。”兆大笑曰：“故无差。”





A Mural in the Temple of Chrysanthemum

When Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei Dynasty ascended the throne, there lived in Wei City a Taoist priest named Yuan Zhao. It was said that he could subdue all kinds of demons and evil spirits with his “Magic Arts of the Nine Heavens.”

A soldier of the garrison force stationed in Ye County nearby had a fourteen-year-old daughter who had been suffering a strange disease for years. None of the scores of practitioners she went to could provide a cure for her illness, so her father brought her to the city to see the priest.

“Her malady,” said the priest, “was not caused by such things as a fox vampire but by an evil painting. How do I know? I know all the tricks of the deities in heaven, the devils in the netherworld, the elves in the forests and the nymphs in the waters. From what you described, it must be a painted figure among the train of the four guardian gods on a Buddhist temple mural. Am I right?”

“Indeed, sir,” the father replied. “For some time I had been praying before the God of Orient painted on the east wall of the Temple of Chrysanthemum. I sometimes took my daughter with me. She seemed to be afraid of a particular figure in that picture – it filled her with nightmares. She would dream of a monster clutching her with sinister laughter. That’s how she contracted this illness.”

“So it is,” the priest burst out laughing. Then, all of a sudden, he started to talk with someone in the sky. All those in the room could



因忽与空中人语，左右亦闻空中有应对之音。良久，兆向庭嗔责之云：“何不速曳，亟持来！”左右闻空中云：“春方大神传语元大行，恶神吾自当罪戮，安见大行？”兆怒，向空中语曰：“汝以我诚达春方，必请致之，我为暂责，请速锁致之。”言讫，又向空中语曰：“召二双牙八赤眉往要，不去闻东方。”

左右咸闻有风雨之声，乃至。兆大笑曰：“汝无形相，画之妍致耳，有何恃而魅生人也？”兆谓其女曰：“汝自辨其状形。”兆令见形。左右见三神皆丈余，各有双牙长三尺，露于唇口外，衣青赤衣。又见八神俱衣赤，眼眉并殷色，共扼其神，直逼轩下。蓬首目赤，大鼻方口，牙齿俱出，手甲如鸟，两足皆有长毛，衣若豹鞞。其家人谓兆曰：“此正女常见者。”兆令前曰：“尔本虚空，而画之





hear the other voice speaking in the air. After a lengthy exchange of words the priest raised his voice and demanded sternly, "Why don't you just bring it here immediately!"

"The God of Orient," the invisible voice responded, "asks me to convey to Your Excellency that he will take it upon himself to discipline any culprit under his patronage without inquiring assistance from Your Excellency."

The priest flared up and shouted into the sky, "Please tell the God of Orient explicitly that this offender must be sent to me. I am going to punish him myself. Bring him here in chains at once!"

"Send two Long-fangs and eight Red-brows," he added. "There is no need to obtain permission from the God of Orient."

The sound of wind and rain soon approached from afar. "You miserable thing!" the priest ridiculed merrily. "You didn't even have a shape until you were painted. What face do you have to charm a living person?" Then he turned to the girl, "Now tell me if this is the thing that haunts you."

"Show yourselves!" he commanded.

Eight deities clad in red with even redder brows and eyes appeared in the courtyard, as well as two tall ones in black and red with pairs of long fangs sticking almost three feet out of their lips. They pushed to the steps of the hall a tightly held creature with teeth protruding from a broad mouth under a giant nose, its eyes red, its hair disheveled, its hands like the claws of a bird, its feet hairy, and wearing something that seemed to have been made out of leopard skin.

"That's exactly what my daughter often sees," the father remarked.

The priest ordered the creature to step forth. "You were but formless," he said, "and it is the painting that gives you some definite shape. How is it you acquired such devilish ways?"



所作耳，奈何有此妖形？”其神应曰：“形本是画，画以象真，真之所示，即乃有神。况所画之上，精灵有凭可通。此臣所以有感，感之幻化。臣实有罪。”兆大怒，命侍童取罐瓶受水，淋之尽，而恶神之色不衰。兆更怒，命煎汤以淋，须臾神化，如一空囊，然后令掷去空野。其女于座即愈，而父载归邺。

复于黄花寺寻所画之处，如水之洗，因而骇叹称异。僧云敬见而问曰：“汝此来见画叹称，必有异耶，可言之。”其人曰：“我女患疾，为神所扰，今元先生称是此寺画作妖。”乃指画处所洗之神。僧大惊曰：“汝亦异人也。此寺前月中，一日昼晦，忽有恶风玄云，声如雷震，绕寺良久，闻画处如擒捉之声。有一人云：‘势力不加元大行，不如速去。’言讫，风埃乃散，寺中朗然。晚见此处一神如洗，究汝所说，正符其事。”兆即寇谦之师也。





“This form is but the result of painting,” the creature retorted. “A painting is but the reflection of a verity. What the verity shows is a spirit. Therefore, it’s nothing strange that a spirit should inhabit a painting. In that way I acquired feelings, and feelings of many kinds. I won’t deny my guilt.”

Enraged by its defiance, the priest had a houseboy fetch a jar of water to rinse it, yet it did not even change color. The infuriated priest then told the assistant to use boiling water and pour it over the creature. This time it dissolved, leaving on the ground something like an empty sack, which he ordered to be cast away in the wastelands. The girl recovered on the spot, and her father took her home happily.

Later, the man revisited the temple. Standing before the mural, he was very much astonished to see that the place where the image had been looked as if it had been washed. Seeing his expression, the abbot sidled up to him and asked politely, “Is there anything unusual about this mural, sir, that makes you gaze at it with such startled looks?”

“My daughter was possessed by an evil spirit,” the man replied as he pointed to the wet stains. “Mr Yuan, the great master, said it was a painted deity in this temple.”

“You must have unusual perceptions!” the monk exclaimed. “To tell you the truth, one day last month, without any warning, the sun was blocked out by menacing dark clouds and fierce winds. Thunder cracked right above the roofs for a fearfully long time. I heard wrestling sounds coming from this very hall. ‘Mr Yuan is more powerful than me. Better give up and go,’ I heard a voice say. As soon as that was said the clouds dispersed and sunlight bathed the temple again. I inspected the halls afterward and saw that the figure painted here had been washed off. What you said explains it.”

范山人

李叔詹常识一范山人，停于私第。时语休咎必中，兼善推步禁咒。止半年，忽谓李曰：“某将去。有一艺，欲以为别，所谓水画也。”乃请后厅上掘地为池方丈，深尺余，泥以麻灰，日汲水满之。候水不耗，具丹青墨砚，先援笔叩齿良久，乃纵毫水上。就视，但见水色浑浑耳。经二日，拓以致绢四幅。食顷，举出观之，古松怪石，人物屋木，无不备也。李惊异，苦诘之。唯言善能禁彩色，不令沉散而已。





Water Painting

Mr Li Shuzhan had a friend called Hermit Fan, who had been a guest at his house for half a year. Fan was versed in astronomy and in chanting incantations. He was also something of a prophet and his predictions were quite accurate. One day, he mentioned that he was leaving. To repay his host's hospitality, he said he would like to show him an art – what he called “water painting.”

First, a ten-by-ten pool about a foot deep was dug out in the backyard. Next, the sides and bottom were carefully plastered and the pool filled with water. When the seeping had stopped, Fan laid out his brushpens, ink and pigment by the pool. He sat musing for quite a while, tapping his teeth with the shaft of his brushpen. Then, abruptly, he ran his pen over the surface of the water. Li looked into the pool but could distinguish nothing out of the turbid waters. Two days later, Fan told the servants to stretch four parallel lengths of white silk on the surface. After about the time it took for a meal, he said they could lift the cloth from the pool. There, printed on the silk were people and houses, trees and rocks, everything that was needed to be the greatest of paintings.

Astonished, Li begged him to tell how he did it.

“All I did,” said Fan simply, “was concentrate the pigment in the water so that it wouldn't diffuse.”



绛州僧

永徽中，绛州有一僧病噎，都不下食。如此数年，临命终，告其弟子云：“吾气绝之后，便可开吾胸喉，视有何物，欲知其根本。”言终而卒。

弟子依其言开视，胸中得一物，形似鱼而有两头，遍体悉是肉鳞。弟子致钵中，跳跃不止。戏以诸味致钵中，虽不见食，须臾，悉化成水。又以诸毒药内之，皆随销化。时夏中蓝熟，寺众于水次作靛。有一僧往，因以少靛致钵中。此虫恇惧，绕钵驰走，须臾化成水。世传以靛水疗噎疾。





The Monk in Jiang Prefecture

This happened in Yonghui reign. A Buddhist monk in Jiang Prefecture was dying. For years he had suffered from a lump in his throat and could hardly eat solid food. At his final moments, he summoned his disciples to his bedside and told them that after he had breathed his last they should dissect his throat and chest to find out what had been choking him for so long. In that way they might be able to learn about the cause of his death.

His disciples did as bidden and discovered in his chest an alien object shaped like a fish, but with two heads and fleshy scales over its body. It jumped and flipped when it was thrown into a bowl. Out of curiosity, they placed many different kinds of food in the bowl. Though it did not actually eat any of the food, all the food was turned into water after a short while. Then they tried miscellaneous types of poison, and as before, everything was invariably resolved into watery transparency.

It was summer then, harvest time for the indigo plant. By the stream near the temple the other monks were busily making pigment out of this plant. One disciple happened to go there and returned with a little of the pigment which he dropped into the bowl.

The fish-shaped thing started to scud along the circumference of the bottom as if attempting to avoid the indigo. Before long, the fleshy lump was dissolved in the water.

People now believe that indigo pigment can cure esophageal tumors.



刁俊朝

安康伶人刁俊朝，其妻巴姬项瘿者。初微若鸡卵，渐巨如三四升瓶盎。积五年，大如数斛之鼎，重不能行。其中有琴瑟笙磬埙篪之响，细而听之，若合音律，泠泠可乐。积数年，瘿外生小穴如针芒者，不知几亿。每天欲雨，则穴中吹白烟，霏霏如丝缕，渐高布散，结为屯云，雨则立降。

其家少长惧之，咸请远送岩穴。俊朝恋恋不能已，因谓妻曰：“吾迫以众议，将不能庇于伉俪。送君于无人之境，如何？”妻曰：“吾此疾诚可憎恶。送之亦死，拆之亦死。君当为我决拆之，看有何物。”俊朝即磨淬利刃，挥挑将及妻前。瘿中轩然有声，遂四分披裂。有一大獠，跳





The Tumor

Entertainer Diao Junchao's wife, a native of eastern Shu, had a tumor on her neck. At first it was no bigger than an egg, but gradually it grew to the size of a gallon jar. And in five years it became as big as a huge water-vat, so heavy that she could hardly move. What was more frightening was that faint sounds like those made by a band of wind and stringed instruments could be heard within, and if one listened attentively, one could even recognize certain melodies.

Years later, millions of tiny pores appeared on the surface of the tumor, from which threads of white vapor would issue whenever it was about to rain. And when the opaque wisps gathered into a cloud, rain would fall.

Diao's relatives were so terrified that they implored him to send his wife away into the deep mountains. Though he was reluctant to part with his wife, he could no longer ignore the increasing social pressure.

"I can't hold out any longer however much I care for you," he said to his wife at last. "I have to find you a cave in the uninhabited mountains and send you there. You can understand, can't you?"

"I know this disease is disgusting," muttered his wife. "I'm dying anyway, whether you send me away or keep me here. So, why don't you cut it off for me and see what's in there?"

Diao went to sharpen a knife, and when he returned to his wife's bedside a loud commotion was heard within the tumor. It suddenly burst, and a simian jumped out and skipped away. All Diao could do



跃蹋而去。即以帛絮裹之。虽瘿疾顿愈，而冥然大渐矣。

明日，有黄冠扣门曰：“吾乃昨日瘿中走出之獠也。吾本猕猴之精，解致风雨。无何与汉江鬼愁潭老蛟还往，常与覘船舸将至，俾他覆之，以求舟中糗粮，以养孙息。昨者太一诛蛟，搜索党与，故借君夫人螭蛭之领，以匿性命。虽分不相干，然为累亦甚矣。今于凤凰山神处，求得少许灵膏，请君涂之，幸当立愈。”俊朝如其言涂之，随手疮合。俊朝因留黄冠，烹鸡设食。食讫，贯酒欲饮，黄冠因啜喉高歌，又为丝匏琼玉之音，罔不铿锵可爱。既而辞去，莫知所诣。时大定中也。





was dress the gaping wound with gauze. Although the tumor was now removed, his wife had slipped into a deep coma.

Next day, a Taoist priest knocked at the gate. "I'm the simian from the tumor," he introduced himself. "To be frank, I'm a monkey spirit, and I can evoke winds and rain. To cut a long story short, I somehow got involved with the old dragon living in the Devil's Headache Gorge of the Han River. I would predict the approaching of vessels and he would have them capsized so I could collect the food on board for my offspring.

"The other day, His Almighty had the evil dragon executed and was searching for his accomplices. To save my life, I was forced to seek shelter in your wife's beautiful neck. Though that in no way impaired her fortune, I did cause her much discomfort over the years. So yesterday I paid the god of Mount Phoenix a visit and asked him for a little magic ointment. You may try it now. It should show immediate effects."

As soon as the medicine was applied, the wound healed. Diao was so happy that he killed chickens to make dinner for the priest. Satiated with food and drink, the priest started to sing, and accompanied himself with vocal mimicries of various kinds of musical instruments, which sounded as sweet as real ones. After that meal, no one ever saw him again.

This happened in Dading reign of the Northern Zhou Dynasty.





王布

永贞年，东市百姓王布知书，藏钱千万，商旅多宾之。有女年十四五，艳丽聪悟。鼻两孔各垂息肉，如皂荚子，其根细如麻纒，长寸许，触之痛入骨髓。其父破钱数百万治之，不差。

忽一日，有梵僧乞食，因问布：“知君女有异疾，可一见，吾能止之。”布被问大喜，即见其女。僧乃取药色正白，吹其鼻中，少顷摘去之。出少黄水，都无所苦。布赏之百金。梵僧曰：“吾修道之人，不受厚施。唯乞此塞肉。”遂珍重而去，势疾如飞。布亦意其贤圣也。

计僧去五六坊，复有一少年，美如冠玉，骑白马，遂





The Polyps

In the year of Yongzhen, there lived in the capital a literate businessman named Wang Bu. He was very rich, and his business relations spread far and wide.

He had a lovely daughter of about fifteen. She was talented and pretty, except for an inch-long polyp hanging out from each nostril on fine filaments, like pea pods dangling on a plant. An accidental touch would send a sharp pain down her spine. Millions were spent on it, but no doctor or medicine ever worked.

One day a Buddhist monk came begging for alms at the gate. "I hear your daughter is affected with an unusual disease," he remarked to Wang. "May I see her? I might have a cure."

Wang was overjoyed and immediately sent for his daughter. The monk took out some white powder and blew it into the girl's nostrils. After a while, he plucked the polyps off. Except for the oozing of a little yellow fluid, the girl didn't even feel pain.

The monk declined the hundred ounces of gold Wang offered in reward, saying that monks had no need for money, but he begged for permission to keep the two polyps, which Wang ungrudgingly gave. Holding them dearly, the monk ran away as if escaping. Wang thought that this must be the way holy persons behave.

The monk couldn't have gone half a dozen blocks when a handsome lad with a face as white and smooth as alabaster came riding on a similarly white horse. He knocked at the gate and inquired whether



扣其门曰：“适有胡僧到无？”布遽延入，具述胡僧事。其人吁嗟不悦曰：“马小蹶足，竟后此僧。”布惊异，诘其故。曰：“上帝失乐神二人，近知藏于君女鼻中。我天人也，奉命来取，不意此僧先取之，当获谴矣。”布方作礼，举手而失。





they had seen a foreign monk. Wang invited him in and told him what had happened.

The lad sighed and groaned, "If only my horse hadn't hurt its hoof! How could I have let him get the better of me!"

Wang was puzzled, and asked why.

"I'm a celestial being," the lad confided. "Two music gods are missing from heaven and His Almighty just learned they were hiding in your daughter's polyps. He therefore ordered me to bring them back, but I let that monk take them first! I'm doomed."

Wang bowed in respect. When he raised his head, the lad was already out of sight.



杨务廉

将作大匠杨务廉甚有巧思。常于沁州市内刻木作僧，手执一碗，自能行乞。碗中钱满，关键忽发，自然作声云布施。市人竞观，欲其作声，施省日盈数千矣。





The Ingenious Carpenter

Yang Wulian, the imperial carpenter, often came up with ingenious ideas.

Once at Qinzhou City, he made a wooden monk which, holding a bowl in its hand, could go begging on its own. When the bowl was filled with copper coins, a switch would click on, and the monk would utter a prayer in gratitude for the alms.

People from all over the city flocked to see that wooden wonder. As they were eager to hear it speak, the bowl was frequently filled. In that way, the wooden monk could earn several thousand copper coins a day.



陈仲躬

唐天宝中，有陈仲躬家居金陵，多金帛。仲躬好学，修词未成，携数千金，于洛阳清化里，假居一宅。其井甚大，常溺人，仲躬亦知之，以靡有家室，无所惧。

仲躬常习学不出。月余日，有邻家取水女可十数岁，怪每日来于井上，则逾时不去，忽坠井而死。井水深，经宿，方索得尸。仲躬异之。

闲日，窥于井上，忽见水中一女子。其形状少丽，依时样妆饰，以目仲躬。凝睇之际，以红袂半掩其面微笑。妖冶之姿，出于世表。仲躬神魂恍惚，若不支持，乃叹曰：“斯为溺人之由也。”遂不顾而退。





The Girl in the Well

During Tianbao reign there was an industrious young scholar named Chen Zhonggong from an affluent family in Jinling. He had come to the East Capital to further his studies, and had rented a house in Qinghua District.

In front of the house was a deep well, notorious for having drowned many. That, however, did not bother him, for he did not have family and kids to worry about. Usually, he would shut himself in his room to study his books.

As days grew into months, he noticed that every morning a neighbor's teenage maid would come to fetch water from the well. It was peculiar that she was apparently reluctant to leave even after her pails were filled, and one day she fell headlong into the well and was drowned. So deep was the water that her corpse was not dredged up until the next day.

This provoked his curiosity. So one day he strolled over to the well and peeped down. All of a sudden a girl appeared in the water. She was quite a beauty and dressed in the latest fashion. Her eyes were engaging, her lips full. A transient smile flashed across her face, which she coyly attempted to conceal with her flowing robe sleeve. It was soul-catching! And he felt himself pulled toward her. Now realizing why so many had so willingly plunged to their death, he pulled himself together and backed away.

It was a hot and dry summer. The drought was serious, yet the



后数月炎旱，此井水不减。忽一日水竭。清旦，有人叩门云：“敬元颖请谒。”仲躬命人，乃井中所见者，衣绯绿之衣，其装饰铅粉，悉时制耳。仲躬与坐，讯曰：“卿何以杀人？”元颖曰：“妾非杀人者。此井有毒龙，自汉朝绛侯居于兹，遂穿此井。洛城内有五毒龙，斯其一也。缘与太一左右侍龙相得，每为蒙蔽。天命追征，多托故不赴集。好食人血，自汉以来，杀三千七百人矣。而水不耗涸。某乃国初方坠于井，遂为龙所驱使，为妖惑以诱人，用供龙所食，甚于辛苦，情所非愿。昨为太一使者交替，天下龙神尽须集驾。昨夜子时，已朝太一矣。兼为河南旱，勘责三数日方回。今井内已无水，君子诚能命匠淘之，则获脱斯难矣。若然，愿终君子一生奉养，世间之事无不致。”言讫，便失所在。

仲躬当时即命匠，命一亲信，与匠同入井，嘱曰：





water level of this well remained as high as ever. Then one night it dried up without the slightest warning.

Early in the morning he heard a knock on his door and a voice announced itself as a Miss Jing Yuanying.⁸ He opened the door and standing before his very eyes was the belle he had seen in the well, her clothes in style and her face powdered and rouged. Politely, he offered her a seat, but didn't mince his words in accusing her of killing innocent people.

"That wasn't my doing," she replied. "This well has been occupied by a venomous dragon ever since it was dug in the Han Dynasty. To be exact, he's just one of the five bad dragons in town. Like the other four, he enjoys the patronage of a dragon adjutant to His Almighty. So every time he was asked to report to heaven he was able to excuse himself from going. That's how he managed to survive till now. He loves sucking human blood, and so far has killed three thousand seven hundred people altogether. In that way, he maintained a high water level. My poor self was dropped into this well in the early years of the dynasty, and had since been enslaved by him and employed as a decoy. You must understand, I was abused against my will. Yesterday, as it was time for the beginning of a new term of office, all dragons on earth were obliged to go up to heaven to pay homage to the new commissioner. He left at midnight and probably won't be back for a couple of days, since he'll be detained to account for the severe drought plaguing this region. Now that the well is dry, if you can have it dredged and have me released from this endless suffering, I promise you my service throughout your lifetime. All your wishes will be granted." Having said that, she disappeared.

Diggers were immediately called in. He had his most trusted servant go down with the men. "Bring up whatever you find unusual," he instructed.



“但见异物即收。”至底无别物，唯获古铜镜一枚，阔七寸七分，仲躬令洗净，贮匣内，焚香以奉之。斯所谓敬元颖也。一更后，元颖忽自门而入，直造烛前设拜。谓仲躬曰：“谢生成之恩，照浊泥之下。某昔本师旷所铸十二镜之第七者也。其铸时，皆以日月为大小之差，元颖则七月七日午时铸者也。贞观中，为许敬宗婢兰苕所堕。以此井水深，兼毒龙气所苦，人人者闷绝，故不可取，遂为毒龙所役。幸遇君子正直者，乃获重见人间耳。然明晨内，望君子移出此宅。”仲躬曰：“某已用钱僦居，今移出，何以措足之所？”元颖曰：“但请君子饰装，一无忧也。”将辞去，仲躬复留之。问曰：“汝安得有红绿脂粉状乎？”





The only thing unearthed was an antique bronze mirror seven and seven tenth inches across. Careful washing revealed an elaborate pattern on its back side. Around the rim were twenty-eight ancient characters, each representing a constellation, encircling the sun and the moon in the center. The inner ring consisted of the four icons – a dragon, a tiger, a sparrow and a tortoise, symbolizing the four bearings of earth. He gently placed the mirror in a case in the niche and offered his homage and incense, thinking that it must be somewhat related to the girl.

As night fell, a shadow slipped through the door and made straight to the niche and bowed. It was Jing. Turning to face him, she said, “Thanks for raising me out of the mud and mire. Honestly, I’m the seventh of a series of twelve mirrors cast by the famous musician Shi Kuang more than ten centuries ago. Each of us was cast on a certain date of each month. I was cast at high noon on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. In mid Zhenguan reign, this house was occupied by a Court minister. Accidentally, his maid dropped me into the well. As the water was deep and the well was filled with noxious gas, all those sent down to retrieve me were suffocated. So there I remained until now. It must be a stroke of luck to have you take this house, and I owe my deliverance to your virtues and moral strength. As a piece of advice, you’d better move out of this house by tomorrow morning.”

He argued that he had put down a hefty deposit and an unscheduled move would deprive him of the means to rent another house.

“Don’t worry,” she assured him. “I’ll see to it. You just pack up and get ready.” And she was ready to leave.

“Since you’re a mirror, how did you come into a human form, and a pretty one at that?” he asked, in the hope of prolonging her company.



对曰：“某变化无常，非可具述。”言讫，即无所见。

明旦，忽有牙人叩户，兼领宅主来谒仲躬，便请移居，并夫役并足。未到斋时，前至立德坊一宅中。其大小价数，一如清化者。其牙人云：“价直契本，一无遗缺。”并交割讫。后三日，其清化宅井，无故自崩，兼延及堂隅东厢，一时陷地。

仲躬后文战累胜，为大官，有所要事，未尝不如移宅之效也。其镜背有二十八字，皆科斗书，以今文推而写之曰：“维晋新公二年七月七日午时，于首阳山前白龙潭铸成此镜，千年在世。”于背上环书，一字管天文列宿。依方列之，则左有日而右有月，龟龙虎雀，并如其位。于鼻四旁题云：“夷则之镜。”





“I can change into any form I wish, but we’re not going to discuss this now.” So saying, she vanished from sight.

Early next morning the house agent made an unexpected call, followed by the landlord himself, who apologized for the inconvenience of having to ask him to change residence at short notice. Porters were waiting outside and before noon he was comfortably resettled in another district in a house of exactly the same size and rent. The agent already had the new lease drawn up.

Three days later, the well at his former dwelling caved in, bringing down a wing of the house with it.

From then on he succeeded in every exam he took and rose to a high position. Anything he wished would be carried out with the same planned smoothness as his first change of residence.





渔人

苏州太湖入松江口，唐贞元中，有渔人载小网，数船共十余人，下网取鱼，一无所获。网中得物，乃是镜而不甚大。渔者忿其无鱼，弃镜于水。移船下网，又得此镜。渔人异之，遂取其镜视之，才七八寸，照形悉见其筋骨脏腑，溃然可恶。其人闷绝而倒，众人大惊，其取镜鉴形者，即时皆倒，呕吐狼藉。其余一人，不敢取照，即以镜投之水中。良久，扶持倒吐者既醒，遂相与归家，以为妖怪。明日方理网罟，则所得鱼多于常时数倍。其人先有疾者，自此皆愈。询于故老，此镜在江湖，每数百年一出。人亦常见，但不知何精灵之所恃也。





The Fisherman and the Bronze Mirror

In Zhenyuan reign, a fisherman and a dozen others were fishing on Lake Tai near its outlet to River Song in their small boats. His first haul brought in no fish, but at the bottom of the net he found a small bronze mirror. Annoyed by that vain effort, he tossed the mirror into the water and punted to a new spot to cast his net.

Again, there was no fish in the net, but to his great surprise, there was that very same mirror. He examined it this time, which was seven to eight inches in diameter. He looked into it and saw his own skeleton alive with his internal organs, sickening and revolting. He fainted. Startled by his sudden collapse, his friends hastened to his aid. Those who picked up the mirror and looked into it would throw up and pass out. Without even venturing a glance, the remaining person snatched up the mirror and flung it into the lake. After a long while, the fainted men gradually came around and helped each other back home. They thought the mirror was a curse.

The next day, however, they had an easy and bumper catch of fish, many times more than that on an ordinary day. The fisherman also found that his chronic disease was gone! From his inquiries of the elders he learned that this was not the first appearance of the mirror, for it would show up every few centuries, but no one could explain why it possessed such magic powers.

荀巨伯

荀巨伯远看友人疾，值胡贼攻郡。友人语伯曰：“吾且死矣，子可去。”伯曰：“远来视子，今有难而舍之去，岂伯行耶？”贼既至，谓伯曰：“大军至此，一郡俱空。汝何人？独止耶。”伯曰：“有友人疾，不忍委之，宁以己身代友人之命。”贼闻其言，异之。乃相谓曰：“我辈无义之人，而人有义之国。”乃偃而退，一郡获全。





Xun Jubo

Xun Jubo had traveled over a great distance to visit an ailing friend and he arrived at a time when the tribal minorities were attacking the city.

“Leave me and go,” his friend said to him. “I’m a dying man.”

“I came from afar to see you and you want me to abandon you when you’re in trouble? No, I’m no such man!”

The tribal soldiers soon occupied the city. “Who do you think you are that dare stay behind alone?” they growled at him. “Look! When we entered, your whole town had fled.”

“My friend is ill,” Xun replied. “I can’t leave him behind and run for my own life. If you want to kill, just kill me and spare my friend.”

The soldiers looked at each other in amazement. “We’re barbarians in a cultured land!” they muttered. Silently their troops withdrew, leaving the town intact.



管宁

魏管宁与华歆友善。尝共园中锄菜，见地有黄金一片。管挥锄不顾，与瓦石无异；华捉而掷之。又尝同席读书。有乘轩冕者过门，管读书如故，华废书出看。管割席分坐曰：“子非吾友也。”





Guan and Hua

Guan Ning and Hua Xin were friends. Once they were hoeing the vegetable garden together when they dug up a lump of gold in the earth. Guan hoed on without stopping as if it were a mere piece of broken roof tile. Hua picked up and examined it, and then threw it away. On another occasion they were sitting on the same mat reading when some dignitary's cavalcade passed by outside. Guan read on, but Hua laid down his book and went out to watch. Guan cut the mat into two and said, "Our friendship ends here."





宁王

宁王尝猎于鄠县界，搜林，忽见草中一柜，扃钥甚固，命发视之，乃一少女也。询其所自，女言姓莫氏，父亦曾仕。昨夜遇一伙贼，贼中二人是僧，因劫某至此。含颦上诉，冶态横生。王惊悦之，遂载以后乘。

时方生获一熊，置柜中，如旧锁之。值上方求极色，王以莫氏衣冠子女，即日表上之，且具所由。上令充才人。经三日，京兆府奏：“鄠县食店，有僧二人，以万钱独赁房一日夜，言作法事，唯舁一柜入店中。夜深，膈膊





Prince Ning

Prince Ning, elder brother of Emperor Xuanzong, often went hunting in the suburbs of the capital. One day as he and his men were searching through the woods, they came upon a tightly locked chest hidden in tall grass. The prince ordered it to be opened, and in it lay a young girl.

When asked, she said she was the daughter of the Mo family. Her father had been an official. She was kidnapped in the previous night by a gang of bandits, among whom were two Buddhist monks. It was they who locked her up in this chest. Her woes, as she poured them out, in no way effaced her grace and charm, which the prince did not fail to notice with surprised delight. He offered her a seat in the back of his carriage. Having caught a bear that day, he told his men to lock in the bear instead, and leave the chest exactly where it had been found.

It happened then that the emperor was looking for beautiful girls. Since Miss Mo was from a decent family, the prince decided that she would be a strong candidate. So that very day he sent her to the palace together with a memorandum relating her story. She was accepted and was given the title of "talented girl."

Three days later, the municipal government sent in a report. Two monks, the report said, paid an unusually high price of ten thousand to rent all the rooms of a certain inn for one night. They claimed they were going to hold a Buddhist ritual there. A witness saw them carry in a heavy chest and neighbors said they heard brawls in the stillness of

有声。店主怪日出不启门，撒户视之，有熊冲人走去。二僧已死，体骨悉露。”上知之，大笑。书报宁王：“大哥善能处置此僧也。”莫氏能为新声，当时号莫才人嘽。





the night before all went quiet. The morning sun was high, but there was neither movement nor sound within, and the doors and windows remained shut up. When the mystified owner of the inn forced open the door, a bear dashed past him. The two monks were found sprawled out on the floor, white bones protruding from their dead bodies.

The report gave the emperor a hearty laugh. "Elder Brother," he wrote to Prince Ning, "you really had a way to deal with those monks."

The girl had a real talent for composing new tunes, which became popularly known as the tunes of Mo.



薛氏子

有薛氏二子野居伊阙，先世尝典大郡，资用甚丰。

一日，木阴初盛，清和届候。偶有叩扉者，启关视之，则一道士也。草履雪髯，气质清古，曰：“半途病渴，幸分一杯浆。”二子延入宾位，雅谈高论，深味道腴。又曰：“某非渴浆者。杖藜过此，气色甚佳。自此东南百步，有五松虬偃在疆内否？”曰：“某之良田也。”道士愈喜。因屏人曰：“此下有黄金百斤，宝剑二口。其气隐隐，浮张翼间，张翼洛之分野。某寻之久矣。黄金可以分赠亲属甚困者，其龙泉自佩，当位极人臣。某亦请其





The Two Brothers

Two brothers of the Xue family lived in Yique, south of Luoyang, the East Capital. Their ancestor had been a high official governing a large jurisdiction, so the family was quite affluent.

One fine day in early summer, a venerable Taoist priest with a flowing silvery beard and wearing a pair of straw sandals appeared at their gate, begging for a cup of water to quench his burning thirst. He had been traveling far, he said.

The two brothers invited him into the reception hall, where he talked volubly and vehemently about the Way of Tao. He didn't drop in just to seek a random drink, he confided, but was captivated by the geomantic omens of this place. "Aren't there five twisted pine trees about a hundred rods to the southeast of your mansion?"

"Indeed there are," responded the brothers, "right in the middle of our best farmland."

The priest seemed excited. He requested a private conversation, and when the servants had withdrawn, he lowered his voice to a whisper and told the brothers that buried under the pines were thousands of ounces of gold and a pair of priceless swords. He had been treasure hunting for years and espied an ethereal aura hovering above this area. The bearer of the swords would rise to become a top official. The brothers could keep one, and he would like to have the other to facilitate his magic arts in eliminating evil spirits. As for the gold, they might pass it out to their poorer relatives.



一，效斩魔之术。”二子大惊异。道士曰：“命家僮役客辈，悉具畚鍤，候择日发土，则可以目验矣。然若无术以制，则逃匿黄壤，不复能追。今俟良宵，剪方为坛，用法水噀之，不能遁矣。且戒僮仆，无得泄者。”问其结坛所须，曰：“徽纆三百尺，赤黑索也。随方色彩缣素甚多，泊几案炉香茵褥之具。”且曰：“某非利财者，假以为法。又用祭膳十座，酒茗随之，器皿须以中金者。”二子则竭力经营，尚有所缺，贷于亲友。又言：“某善点化之术，视金银如粪土，常以济人之急为务，今有囊篋寓太微宫，欲以暂寄。”二子许诺。即召人负荷而至，巨笈有四，重不可胜，絨繡甚严，祈托以寄。





The two brothers were greatly intrigued.

“Tell your servants to get their spades and pickaxes ready. We’ll choose an auspicious day to break earth. Then you can see for yourself if what I said is true. But, the slightest disturbance could make the treasures dissipate into the earth and vanish completely if we lack the power to confine them there. So, on that very night we must build an altar on the spot. I’ll ascend it to cast a magic spell over the area so that the treasures do not escape. Meanwhile, you must warn your servants against divulging our secret.”

“What would Your Reverence need to build the altar?” the brothers inquired.

“Three hundred feet of pure black rope and lots of silk and satin of the five colors for the five positions, that is, green for the east, white for the west, red for the south, black for the north, and yellow for the center, and of course incense burners, joss sticks, tables and chairs, cushions, and other necessities. Don’t think I covet material goods. These are for the magic arts. Also, prepare ten tables of dishes for the gods, complete with wine and fragrant tea. The utensils must all be gold.”

The two brothers frantically went about their preparations. It was a demanding task at such short notice, and they were forced to borrow from friends and relatives.

“I’m versed in alchemy,” the priest mentioned casually. “To me gold and silver are as cheap as dirt. It’s only a means for me to help the needy, and I have trunks of them stored in a temple. Do you mind if I have them transferred here and placed in your trust?”

The brothers were only too pleased to consent.

Without delay, the priest called for his men. They carried in four enormous trunks, heavy beyond measure and securely locked and sealed.



旋至吉日，因大设法具于五松间。命二子拜祝讫，亟令返居，闭门以俟，且戒：“无得窥隙，某当效景纯散发衔剑之术，脱为人窥，则祸立至。俟行法毕，当举火相召。可率僮仆，备畚鍤来，及夜而发之，冀得静观至宝也。”

二子依所教，自夜分危坐，专望烛光，杳不见举。不得已，辟户覘之，默绝影响。步至树下，则掷杯覆器，饮食狼藉。彩缣器皿，悉已携去。轮蹄之迹，错于其所。疑用徽纆束固以遁。因发所寄之笈，瓦砾实中。自此家产甚困，失信于人。惊愕忧惭，默不得诉。





In due course the selected day arrived. A grand ceremonial ritual was held amidst the five pines. The brothers were asked to prostrate themselves before the gods, and then told to go home and wait. "Lock the gate and do not try to peep out," the priest emphasized. "If I'm spied on while performing magic arts, immediate disaster will strike me, and you as well. When the spell is cast, I'll raise a torch. Then you can bring in your servants with spades and baskets to do the digging. We can have it done before daybreak. You can't imagine what you'll behold!"

The brothers sat through the night craning their necks toward the distant darkness, but no torch light was seen. Morning came and they threw open the gate. It was very quiet outside, nothing stirred. They walked to the pines. Wine goblets, empty bowls and used plates littered the ground. The gold ceremonial utensils, the colored silk and satin were all gone. Tracks of cart wheels and hoofprints crisscrossed the site. It seemed that even the dark ropes were exploited to fasten the spoils onto the carts.

The two brothers rushed home to pry open the trunks, and what they found was nothing but stones and crumbled bricks.

The brothers were weighed down by self-reproach and debt, and in spite of their being derided as swindlers by their creditors, they were too ashamed to explain. The family had been in decline ever since.





吃人

隋朝有人敏慧，然而口吃。杨素每闲闷，即召与剧谈。尝岁暮无事对坐，因戏之云：“有大坑深一丈，方圆亦一丈，遣公入其中，何法得出？”此人低头良久，乃问云：“有梯出否？”素云：“只论无梯。若论有梯，何须更问。”其人又低头良久，问曰：“白白白白日？夜夜夜夜地？”素云：“何须云白日夜地，若为得出？”乃云：“若不是夜地，眼眼不瞎，为甚物入人里许？”素大笑。

又问云：“忽命公作军将，有小城，兵不过一千以下，粮食唯有数日，城外被数万人围，若遣公向城中，作何谋计？”低头良久，问云：“有有救救兵否？”素云：“只





The Stutterer

Yang Su, a cabinet member during the Sui Dynasty, would often call in a stutterer for a witty chat when he was free from his office duties.

One day near the end of the year, Yang and the stutterer sat facing each other.

“Suppose you were placed in a steep pit a dozen feet deep and a dozen across,” Yang teased, “how are you going to get out?”

The man dropped his head to think. After a long moment he asked, “Can I...I have a ladder?”

“Say no, or why should I have asked?”

The man bent his head again. After another extended while, he asked, “Day...day...daytime or...or ni...night?”

“Never mind if it’s day or night. As long as you can get out, what does that matter?”

“If...if it were not p...pitch dark, and I...I were not b...blind, how...how could I...I’ve fallen into that pit?”

Yang burst out laughing and came up with another question. “Say, one day you were made a general to defend a tiny town with less than a thousand soldiers and provisions that would last you no more than a few days. The enemy besieging the town is ten times your number. What strategy would you adopt?”

“A...are there re...reinforcements a...coming?” the man stammered out after a prolonged deliberation.



缘无救，所以问公。”沉吟良久，举头向素云：“审审如公言，不免须败。”素大笑。

又问云：“计公多能，无种不解。今日家中，有人蛇咬足，若为医治？”此人即应声报云：“取取五月五日南墙下雪雪涂涂，即即治。”素云：“五月何处得有雪？”答云：“若五月五日无雪，腊月何处有蛇咬？”素笑而遣之。



“I’m afraid not. That’s why I asked you,” Yang replied.

The man brooded over the problem. Finally, he raised his head and looked Yang in the eye. “If...if it rea...lly were as you said, the town is finished.”

Yang almost split his sides. “It seems you have a way out of every difficult situation. Now, we’re sitting here chatting. What if a snake should bite someone’s foot? How would you treat the bite?”

“F...fetch May fifth snow from the f...foot of the sun...sunny side of the wall, and a...apply it to the bite,” the man answered without a moment’s hesitation.

“How can there be snow in May?” Yang retorted.

“If snow doesn’t fall in May, how can a snake strike in this deep winter?”

Yang had a good laugh and sent the stutterer home.



不识镜

有民妻不识镜。夫市之而归，妻取照之。惊告其母曰：“某郎又索一妇归也。”其母亦照曰：“又领亲家母来也。”



The Woman's First Mirror

A peasant bought a mirror at the market and gave it as a present to his wife, who had never seen a mirror before. At her first glance, his wife cried out in alarm, "My lord has brought home a new wife!" Her mother came running in, grabbed the mirror, looked, and burst out indignantly, "Not only a new wife, but the mother-in-law as well!"





啮鼻

甲与乙斗争，甲啮下乙鼻。官吏欲断之，甲称乙自啮落。吏曰：“夫人鼻高而口低，岂能就啮之乎？”甲曰：“他踏床子就啮之。”





The Bitten Nose

Two men had a fight, and one bit off the other's nose. Before the magistrate, the offender asserted that the nose was bitten off by the victim himself.

"Nonsense!" shouted the magistrate. "The nose is above the mouth. How can his mouth reach his nose?"

"That's easy enough," the offender replied. "He could have stood on a stool."





李诞女

东越闽中有庸岭，高数十里。其下北隰中，有大蛇，长七八丈，围一丈，土俗常惧。东治都尉及属城长吏多有死者，祭以牛羊，故不得福。或与人梦，或喻巫祝，欲得啖童女年十二三者。都尉、令长患之，共求人家生婢子兼有罪家女养之，至八月朝，祭送蛇穴口，蛇辄夜出吞啖之。累年如此，前后已用九女。

一岁将祀之，募索未得。将乐县李诞家有六女无男，其小女名寄，应募欲行。父母不听。寄曰：“父母无相留。今惟生六女，无有一男，虽有如无。女无缙紫济父母之功，既不能供养，徒费衣食，生无所益，不如早死。卖





The Lis' Youngest Daughter

The humid lowlands north of Mount Yong was once occupied by a gigantic python about three feet thick and seventy or eighty feet long. Its presence scared away the natives from the vicinity and caused unexpected deaths among local functionaries. Cows and lambs were sacrificed to no avail.

Then it was revealed through dreams and the prophecy of witches that virgin girls about twelve years old were most desired. The authorities had no choice but to scrounge around for girls to please the python. They would usually opt for girls from criminal families or those who were born household slaves. Early in the eighth lunar month, the designated girl would be sent to the temple built outside the python's cave where the sacrificial rites were held. The python used to come out at night and devour the poor girl. It went on like this year after year until a total of nine girls had been sacrificed.

The eighth lunar month was approaching again, but this year officials had not yet been able to find a girl for the occasion.

There in Jiangle County was a Li family with six daughters and no son. The youngest one, named Ji, resolved to offer herself, but her parents fought against the idea.

"There's no sense in keeping me," she argued with her parents. "What's the use of having six daughters when you don't have a son? Daughters are always married into other families. They can neither carry on the family line nor provide for you when you're old. It's just a waste



寄之身，可得少钱以供父母，岂不善耶？”父母慈怜不听取，终不可禁止。

寄乃行，请好剑及咋蛇犬。至八月朝，便诣庙中坐，怀剑将犬。先作数石米糍蜜麩以置穴口。蛇夜便出，头大如困，目如二尺镜。闻糍香气，先啖食之。寄便放犬，犬就啗咋，寄从后斫。蛇因踊出，至庭而死。寄人视穴，得其九女髑髅，悉举出。咤言曰：“汝曹怯弱，为蛇所食，甚可哀愍！”于是寄女缓步而归。

越王闻之，聘寄为后，拜其父为将乐令，母及姊皆有赐赏。自是东治无复妖邪之法，其歌谣至今存焉。





of food and money to raise daughters, and it doesn't make much difference with one less. If I sell myself, at least I can get you some money. Isn't that reasonable?"

Though her parents would not hear of it, she was persistent and finally had her way.

She asked the authorities for a sharp sword, a snake hound, honey, glutinous rice and wheat flour. She steamed the rice and baked the flour, and mixed them with honey into a huge sticky rice ball.

The day came. She and her huge rice ball were carried to the python's cave. She placed the ball right outside the cave mouth and sat waiting in the temple with the sword on her lap and the hound beside her feet.

Deep into the night, the python emerged from its cave, its head as big as a fodder silo, its two eyes like king-size bronze mirrors. It caught the sweet smell of the rice ball and swallowed it at one gulp. Instantly, she let go of the leash. The hound pounced at the python while she hacked it from behind. The python squirmed out of the cave and lay dead.

She went into the cave and collected nine skeletons. "What a shame!" she said contemptuously. "You died because you didn't have the guts to fight." Then she strolled back to her village.

Her story reached the King of Yue, who made her Queen, appointed her father magistrate of Jiangle County, and bestowed many gifts upon her mother and sisters.

Her story was passed down in song.



崔护

博陵崔护资质甚美，而孤洁寡合，举进士第。清明日，独游都城南。得居人庄，一亩之宫，花木丛萃，寂若无人。扣门久之，有女子自门隙窥之，问曰：“谁耶？”护以姓字对，曰：“寻春独行，酒渴求饮。”女人，以杯水至。开门，设床命坐。独倚小桃斜柯伫立，而意属殊厚，妖姿媚态，绰有余妍。崔以言挑之，不对，彼此目注者久之。崔辞去，送至门，如不胜情而入。崔亦眷盼而归，尔后绝不复至。

及来岁清明日，忽思之，情不可抑，径往寻之。门





The Blushing Cheeks

Cui Hu, a handsome young scholar who had just succeeded in the imperial examination, was a quiet man, not the type that enjoyed a rowdy association with friends and peers.

On the day of Qingming, a spring holiday in memory of the dead, he went on a lone excursion out of the capital into the southern suburbs. His roving led him to a village where he saw among the spring blossoms a little cottage. It was all quiet as if unoccupied. He knocked at the gate. After a long pause, a girl peeped out. "Who's it?" she asked.

He gave his name. "I came out of town alone," he explained, "to have a look at spring. I'm thirsty. May I have some water?"

The girl went back into the house and returned with a cup of water. She opened the gate and offered him a stool. Then she leaned against an extended bough of a blooming peach tree to watch him. She was rather good-looking, more charming perhaps than he had expected of a village girl. Her eyes twinkled with eloquence. He tried to strike up a conversation without success. Nevertheless, that didn't make them avoid each other's gaze.

Now it was time to leave. She saw him to the gate and suddenly dashed back into the room as if her emotions might burst at any moment. With each step he took, he glanced back over his shoulder.

He didn't visit that village again until Qingming in the following year. The festival reminded him of the girl and the urge to see her was so strong that he could not help going in that direction.



院如故，而已扃锁之。崔因题诗于左扉曰：“去年今日此门中，人面桃花相映红。人面不知何处去，桃花依旧笑春风。”

后数日，偶至都城南，复往寻之。闻其中有哭声，扣门问之。有老父出曰：“君非崔护耶？”曰：“是也。”又哭曰：“君杀吾女。”崔惊怛，莫知所答。父曰：“吾女笄年知书，未适人。自去年已来，常恍惚若有所失。比日与之出，及归，见在左扉有字，读之。入门而病，遂绝食数日而死。吾老矣，惟此一女，所以不嫁者，将求君子，以托吾身。今不幸而殒，得非君杀之耶？”又持崔大哭。崔亦感恻，请入哭之，尚俨然在床。崔举其首枕其股，哭而祝曰：“某在斯！”须臾开目，半日复活。老父大喜，遂以女归之。





The cottage stood silently as it had before, but a lock was hanging on the gate. Disappointed, he wrote a poem on the left plank of the double door.

*This day last year behind the double door
Peach blooms contended with her rosy cheeks.
Where are those blushing cheeks that smile no more?
Alone the blossoms face the vernal breeze.*

Several days later, business happened to take him to the southern suburbs, so he made a detour to the village. Wails and moans issued from the courtyard. He knocked to inquire. An elder answered the door. "You are Cui Hu, aren't you?" he asked.

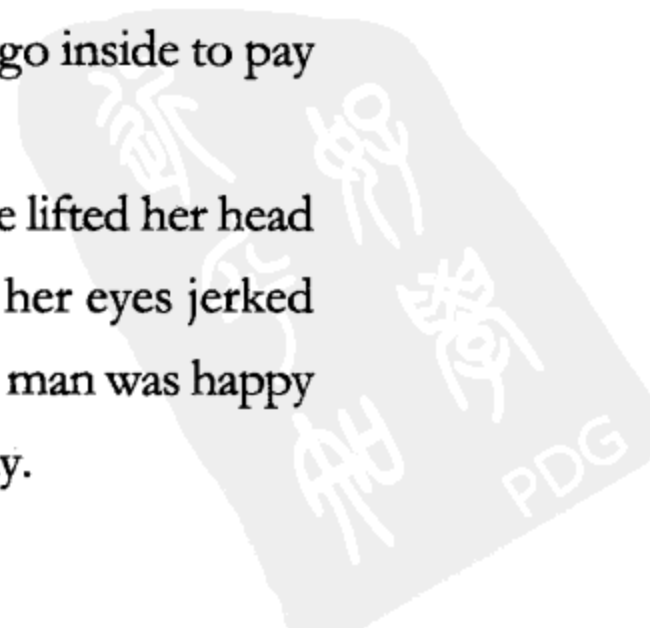
"That's me."

"You killed my daughter!" the old man burst out in tears.

Taken by surprise, he didn't know what to say.

"She was fifteen and had learned to read and write. Starting from about this time last year, I found she was often lost in a trance. Several days ago when we returned home, there was a poem on the left plank of the gate. She read it and went straight to bed, down and ill. She ate not a grain after that, and now she's dead! She was my only child. I'm old, and had hoped to engage her to a gentleman so I wouldn't have to worry about my remaining years. That's why I didn't hurry to marry her off. But she should not have died so young! Isn't it you who killed her?" He threw himself on Cui's shoulders and sobbed bitterly. Cui was touched to the quick. He asked for permission to go inside to pay his last respects.

She was lying on her bed as if in a sound sleep. He lifted her head onto his lap and wailed, "It's me! It's me!" Suddenly her eyes jerked open, and after a while she regained her senses. The old man was happy beyond words. He approved their marriage right away.





独孤遐叔

贞元中，进士独孤遐叔，家于长安崇贤里，新娶白氏女。家贫下第，将游剑南，与其妻诀曰：“迟可周岁归矣。”

遐叔至蜀，羁栖不偶，逾二年乃归。至郾县西，去城尚百里，归心迫速，取是夕及家，趋斜径疾行。人畜既殆，至金光门五六里，天已暝，绝无逆旅，唯路隅有佛堂，遐叔止焉。时近清明，月色如昼。系驴于庭外，入空堂中，有桃杏十余株。夜深，施衾褥于西窗下，偃卧。方思明晨到家，因吟旧诗曰：“近家心转切，不敢问来人。”至夜分不寐。





A Telepathic Dream

In Zhenyuan reign there was a young scholar named Dugu Xiashu living in Congxian District of the capital, Chang'an, who had recently married a girl from the Bai family. As he failed in the last round of the imperial examination and could not find sufficient means to support himself, he decided to go south and try his luck in Shu. "It wouldn't take me more than a year," he promised his wife at their parting.

But things in Shu didn't go smoothly either, and two years had passed before he could actually set out on a return trip.

Subsequently, he reached Hu County, some thirty miles southwest of Chang'an. Eager to be home that very night, he took a shortcut and pressed forward. By nightfall both he and his mount were exhausted, and it was still a couple of miles from the west gate of the capital. There was no inn or cottage in sight except for a temple, where he headed for the night.

It was near Qingming and the moon was shining as bright as day. He tied his donkey outside and entered. The temple was deserted. In the courtyard there were a dozen peach and apricot trees.

Night grew deep and he spread out his bedding on the floor beneath the western window and lay down. Thinking that he would be able to reach home next morning, he silently chanted two famous lines from a poem:

*The heart beats faster as his home draws near,
Yet he's afraid of what may greet his ear.*



忽闻墙外有十余人相呼声，若里胥田叟，将有供待迎接。须臾，有夫役数人，各持畚鍤箕帚，于庭中粪除讫，复去。有顷，又持床席牙盘蜡炬之类，及酒具乐器，闾咽而至。遐叔意谓贵族赏会，深虑为其斥逐，乃潜伏屏气，于佛堂梁上伺之。铺陈既毕，复有公子女郎共十数辈，青衣、黄头亦十数人，步月徐来，言笑宴宴，遂于筵中间坐。献酬纵横，履舄交错。中有一女郎。忧伤摧悴，侧身下坐，风韵若似遐叔之妻。窥之大惊。既下屋袱，稍于暗处，迫而察焉，乃真是妻也。方见一少年，举杯瞩之曰：“一人向隅，满坐不乐。小人窃不自量，愿闻金玉之声。”其妻冤抑悲愁，若无所控诉，而强置于坐也。遂举金爵，收泣而歌曰：“今夕何夕，存耶没耶？良人去兮天之涯，园树伤心兮三见花。”满座倾听，诸女郎转面挥涕。一人曰：“良人非远，何天涯之谓乎！”少年相顾大笑。遐叔惊愤久之，计无所出，乃就阶陛间，扞一大砖，





Midnight found him still awake. Suddenly he heard a hubbub outside as if an assembly of village elders were arranging for a reception. Presently, several farmhands were called in with brooms, baskets and shovels. They cleaned up the courtyard and left, but returned in a moment with mats, tables, candles, drinking utensils and musical instruments, which filled the little court. They must be fixing up a party for the nobles, he thought, and fearing that they might shoo him away he hid himself among the roof beams and held his breath. Soon he saw a group of a dozen young men and women stroll merrily in, attended by as many servants and maids. They seated themselves and toasted each other, their shoes scattered around the mats.

Among the women, one seemed rather dispirited and unhappy, sitting sidewise at the edge of the mat. To his surprise, she looked so much like his wife! He slid down from the beam and sneaked into the shadows behind the window to get a closer view. Who could she be but his wife! Just then a young man raised his cup to toast her. "One unhappy person will ruin the whole party," he said, his eyes lusting over her body. "May I make bold to ask you for a song?"

It looked as if she was forced to the party and was trying to suppress her sorrows. She raised her gold cup and sang: "What day is today? Where does he stay? My man has gone to the edge of earth. The trees have blossomed thrice in tears."

The whole group listened attentively and the women turned aside to wipe off tears. "Your man is not at the edge of earth," said one dandy. "He's sitting right before your eyes." The young men leered at the women and guffawed.

Dugu was fuming with helpless anger. He fumbled in the dark, picked up a loose brick and hurled it toward the group. The instant the brick hit the ground, the courtyard fell quiet and became as empty as it had been.



向座飞击。砖才至地，悄然一无所有。遐叔怅然悲惋，谓其妻死矣，速驾而归。前望其家，步步凄咽。

比平明，至其所居，使苍头先入。家人并无恙，遐叔乃惊愕，疾走入门。青衣报娘子梦魇方寤。遐叔至寝，妻卧犹未兴。良久乃曰：“向梦与姑妹之党，相与玩月。出金光门外，向一野寺，忽为凶暴者数十辈，胁与杂坐饮酒。”又说梦中聚会言语，与遐叔所见并同。又云：“方饮次，忽见大砖飞坠，因遂惊魇殆绝。”才寤而君至，岂幽愤之所感耶！





His wife had died, he thought pathetically, and what he saw must have been an apparition of her ghost. He immediately set off for home, shedding tears at every step. At daybreak he was outside his house. Not daring to face the heart-breaking discovery, he sent in his servant first. Everyone was safe and sound, the servant reported. Puzzled, he dashed into the house. The maid told him that his wife had just waked up from a dream. He entered the bedroom to find her still lying in bed and it took her a long while to come up with words. "Just now," she muttered, "I was dreaming that I went out with my sisters to enjoy the moonlit night. Out of the city's west gate, we were kidnapped by a group of gangsters to a forlorn temple. They forced us to drink with them." Her description of the party accorded exactly with what he had witnessed. "We were drinking when a brick flew over. That startled me out of my dream and you're back home."

Isn't that some kind of telepathic communication induced by intense anxiety and longing?





阳羨书生

东晋阳羨许彦于绥安山行，遇一书生，年十七八，卧路侧，云“脚痛”，求寄彦鹅笼中。彦以为戏言，书生便入笼。笼亦不更广，书生亦不更小，宛然与双鹅并坐，鹅亦不惊。彦负笼而去，都不觉重。

前息树下，书生乃出笼。谓彦曰：“欲为君薄设。”彦曰：“甚善。”乃于口中吐一铜盘奩子，奩子中具诸饌殽，海陆珍羞方丈。其器皿皆是铜物，气味芳美，世所罕见。酒数行，乃谓彦曰：“向将一妇人自随，今欲暂要之。”彦曰：“甚善。”又于口中吐出一女子，年可十五六，衣服绮丽，容貌绝伦，共坐宴。





A Ride in a Goose Cage

In the Eastern Jin Dynasty, Xu Yan, a native of Yangxian County, once traveled through the Suian Mountains, carrying on his back a pair of geese in a cage. He came upon a student-scholar about eighteen years old lying by the roadside and complaining of sore feet. He didn't take the young man seriously when he asked for a lift in his goose cage. But while he was musing over this whimsical notion, the youth had slipped through the bars into the cage and sat side by side with the geese. Strange to say, the geese showed no alarm and the cage did not in any way expand, neither did the scholar seem to contract. As he picked up his load to continue his trip, he was surprised to find that it was not any heavier.

Having traveled thus for some distance, he stopped for a rest under a shady tree. The scholar stepped out from the cage and said, "How about me offering you a quick snack?" "That'll be fine," Xu replied. Then from his mouth, the young man produced a round, bronze food-container, from which he extracted delicious dishes of the rarest sea and land produce, and laid them out on the ground before Xu – all on shining bronze plates. It would have taken a very large table to hold them all. The smell of the food itself was appetizing enough to attract the gods. After drinking a few cups, the youth said, "I've a habit of bringing a mistress along. You won't mind if I call her forth?" "Do as you please," said Xu.

Finding no objection from Xu, the scholar disgorged from his



俄而书生醉卧。此女谓彦曰：“虽与书生结好，而实怀外心，向亦窃将一男子同来，书生既眠，暂唤之，愿君勿言。”彦曰：“甚善。”女人于口中吐出一男子，年可二十三四，亦颖悟可爱，仍与彦叙寒温。书生卧欲觉，女子吐一锦行幃，书生仍留女子共卧。

男子谓彦曰：“此女子虽有情，心亦不尽，向复窃将女人同行，今欲暂见之，愿君勿泄言。”彦曰：“善。”男子又于口中吐一女子，年二十许，共宴酌。戏调甚久，闻书生动声，男曰：“二人眠已觉。”因取所吐女子，还内口中。

须臾，书生处女子乃出，谓彦曰：“书生欲起。”更吞向男子，独对彦坐。书生然后谓彦曰：“暂眠遂久，君独坐，当悒悒耶。日已晚，便与君别。”还复吞此女子，





mouth a girl of the budding age of sixteen, her clothes bright with color, her features of celestial beauty. She sat down and dined with them.

Soon the scholar seemed to be overcome with wine and dozed off. The girl turned to Xu and said, "Though I'm his mistress, I've got a lover of my own choice, and I always sneak him along. Now that he's asleep, I shall invite my man. Hope you won't mention this to the scholar." "Do as you please," was Xu's reply. Thereupon the girl extracted from her mouth a young man in his early twenties with a handsome and intelligent look, who cordially exchanged compliments with Xu. Just then, the scholar stirred as if he were about to wake up. The girl immediately took out a portable brocade screen from her mouth and set it up. She then went behind it to sleep with the scholar.

The handsome man turned to Xu and whispered, "A lovely girl, isn't she? Yet, a man, you see, sometimes may have more than one mistress. I keep another woman. This seems a good opportunity for a fast date. Please don't give away my little secret." "As you please," Xu said dutifully. The man opened his mouth and brought out a woman in her early twenties. They sat and dined, hugging and kissing all the time. A good while passed when a rustling was heard behind the screen. "They're waking up," the man said. He grabbed up the woman and stuffed her back into his mouth.

In a moment the girl reappeared from behind the screen. "The scholar is going to wake up," she said to Xu as she swallowed her man and sat down opposite Xu. The scholar then emerged and said apologetically to Xu, "Sorry for napping so long and leaving you unattended. You must have been bored. It's getting late. I must say goodbye to you now." He threw the girl and all the bronzeware back into his mouth, except for one king-size plate about two feet across which he handed

诸铜器悉内口中。留大铜盘，可广二尺余。与彦别曰：“无以藉君，与君相忆也。”

大元中，彦为兰台令史，以盘饷侍中张散。散看其题，云是汉永平三年所作也。



to Xu and said, "I've nothing else to show my gratitude. Please accept this plate as a souvenir."

Xu became an archivist during Taiyuan reign of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. He showed the plate to a palace officer, who figured out from the plate's epigraph that it was produced more than three centuries before in the third year of Yongping reign of the Han Dynasty.



东岩寺僧

博陵崔简少敏惠，好异术。尝遇道士张元肃晓以道要，使役神物，坐通变化。唐天宝二载如蜀郡。郡有吕谊者，遇简而厚币以遗，意有所为。简问所欲，乃曰：“继代有女，未尝见人，闺帷之中，一夕而失。意者明公蕴非常之术，愿知所捕，瞑目无恨矣。”简曰：“易耳。”

即于别室，夜设几席，焚名香以降神灵。简令吕生伏剑于户，若胡僧来可执之求女，慎无伤也。简书符呵之，符飞出。食顷间，风声拔树发屋。忽闻一甲卒进曰：“神兵备，愿王所用。”简曰：“主人某日失女，可捕来。”





The Monk at East-Mountain Temple

Cui Jian, a native of Boling County, was an intelligent man and had a fancy for magic arts. He had studied under the famous Taoist master Zhang Yuansu and learned the arts of transmutation and the way to command supernatural forces.

In the second year of Tianbao reign he was traveling in Shu, where he came upon a man named Lü Yi, who lavished money on him with obvious intentions. So Cui asked what he had in mind.

“I have a daughter,” Lü said. “Her life was mostly confined to the family circle and she was never exposed to strangers, but one night she was gone. Sir, I hear you have unusual arts. If you could find her and bring her back, I’d die a happy man.”

“That’s not a big deal,” Cui replied. That very night he set up a table in a spare room and lit joss sticks to summon the spirits. He told Lü to hide behind the door with a sword. “If you see a foreign monk, seize him and ask him to return your daughter, but, mind you, don’t hurt him.”

He then wrote some magic words on a sheet of paper and chanted a charm. The paper flew off. After about the time it took for a meal, a wind rose up, so strong that it could pull up trees and yank off roofs. Suddenly an armored soldier entered the room to announce, “The celestial troops are combat ready and at Your Highness’ command.”

“My client lost his daughter on a certain day,” Cui said. “Find the culprit.”



卒曰：“唯东山上人，每日以咒水取人，得非是乎？”简曰：“若然，可速捕来。”卒去，须臾还曰：“东山上人闻之骇怒，将下金刚伐君，奈何？”简曰：“无苦。”又书符飞之。倏忽有神兵万计，皆奇形异状，执剑戟列庭。

俄而西北上见一金刚来，长数十丈，张目叱简兵。简兵俯伏不敢动。简剑步于坛前，神兵忽隐，即见金刚骇矣！久之无所见。忽有一物，猪头人形，著豹皮水裤，云：“上人愿起居仙官。”简踞坐而命之。紫衣胡僧趋入。简让曰：“僧盗主人女，安敢妄有役使！”初僧拒诈。吕生忽于户间跃出，执而尤之。僧迫不隐，即曰：“伏矣！贫道行大力法，盖圣者致耳，非僧所求。今即归之，无苦相逼。向非仙官之命，君岂望乎？愿令圣者取来。”





"The Buddhist monk in the east mountain is a likely suspect," the soldier replied, "for he kidnaps people now and then by way of a water charm. It must be him."

"Well then, bring him here," Cui commanded.

The soldier returned in a moment. "Your order made him furious," he reported. "He's sending a vajra-warrior to fight you. What shall we do?"

"No fear," Cui wrote and flew another message. In a moment tens of thousands of celestial soldiers appeared in the courtyard. They were strange-looking beings, armed with swords and spears.

Before long from the northwestern sky came a vajra-warrior dozens of feet tall. He blazed and blared at Cui's soldiers, who cowered in frozen fear. Wielding his sword, Cui walked in a magic pattern in front of the temporary altar. Suddenly, the celestial troops vanished and the vajra-warrior retreated. After what seemed a long standstill, a beast with the shape of a human body and a pig's head appeared, wearing a pair of pants made out of leopard skin. "His Reverence would like to meet you," he said.

Cui sat on a chair and waited.

A foreign-looking monk in a purple robe scurried in.

"You abducted my client's daughter," Cui said sternly. "You're a monk. How dare you abuse woman!"

At first the monk denied. Lü jumped out from behind the door, caught hold of him and chided.

"All right," the monk finally gave in. "I did apply my magic power, but the girl was not for me. It was this creature who did the kidnapping. Don't torment me. I'll return her to you. If this were not the wish of Mr Cui the Immortal, you'll never be able to find your daughter. I'll send for her now."



俄顷，见猪头负女至，冥然如睡。简曰：“宜取井花水为桃汤，洗之即醒。”遂自陈云：“初睡中，梦一物猪头人身摄去，不知行近远，至一小房中，见胡僧相凌。问何处，乃云天上也，便禁闭无得出。是夜，有兵骑造门，猪头又至，云：‘崔真人有命。’方得归。然某来时，私于僧房门上涂少脂粉，有三指迹，若以此寻可获。”吕生厚遗简，而阴求僧门所记。

余数月，游东岩寺，入曲房，忽见指迹于门右扇，遽追之，僧宿昔已去，莫知所之。寺与吕生居处，可十里有余耳。





Shortly after, the pig-head carried the girl back. She looked as if she was sleeping.

“Boil peach twigs in fresh well-water,” Cui said. “Bathe her with that water and she’ll regain her senses.”

“At first I had a dream,” the girl recalled after her recovery. “I dreamed of being fetched away by a strange creature with a human body and a pig’s head. I had no idea how far we traveled. I was dumped in a small room, and was insulted by a monk. I asked where I was and he said I was in heaven. He kept the door locked so I had no way to escape. Last night, there were soldiers outside my door, and then the pig-head came again, saying that he was taking me back by order of Mr Cui the Immortal. Before I left, however, I made three finger marks on the door with my rouge. I hope that’ll be a helpful clue.”

Cui was richly rewarded. Lü, however, kept a vigilant lookout for a door marked with three fingerprints.

Several months later, while he was visiting a temple in the east mountain, he unexpectedly noticed three rouge marks on the right plank of a wing-room door. He asked for the room’s occupant only to find that the monk had already left, and nobody had any idea where he had gone.

The temple was some ten miles from his house.



张和

唐贞元初，蜀郡豪家，富拟卓郑。蜀之名姝，无不毕致，每按图求之。媒盈其门，常恨无可意者。或言：“坊正张和，大侠也。幽房闺稚，无不知之，盍以诚投乎。”豪家子乃以金帛夜诣其居告之，张和欣然许之。

异日，与豪家子皆出西郭一舍，入废兰若，有大像巍然。与豪家子升像之座，和引手扞佛乳揭之，乳坏成穴，如碗，即挺身入穴，引豪家子臂，不觉同在穴中。道行数十步，忽睹高门崇墉，状如州县。和扣门五六，有丸髻婉童迎拜曰：“主人望翁来久矣。”有顷，主人出。紫衣贝





A Dandy's Pleasure Trip

During the early years of Zhenyuan reign, the region of Shu bred a handful of super-rich families. Matchmakers swamped their doors, and any young woman with a pretty face would sooner or later be dragged to their dens. There were no means they would not resort to – fishing out beauties by portraits was not an unusual practice. Nevertheless, they often complained that they could not even find one good-looking girl.

Someone recommended Zhang He, a district constable with a reputation for his chivalry, saying that he was a know-all, and there were no secrets in the boudoir that could escape his knowledge. A show of sincerity would probably enlist his assistance.

So one night a dandy from one of those rich families arrived at Zhang's place with presents of gold and silk. Zhang consented to help forthwith.

The next morning, he took the dandy out of the west gate of town to a deserted temple. Though the building was in disrepair, the main Buddha statue still stood intact and majestic. They climbed up the pedestal and Zhang reached out for the statue's nipple and pushed, revealing a hole the size of a plate. Holding the dandy by the arm, he stepped in. Everything happened in a flash and they were walking through a tunnel. All of a sudden, high walls and broad gates like those of a major town loomed up in front. Zhang knocked several times. A handsome lad appeared and bowed respectfully to Zhang, saying that his master had been expecting him. Presently, the host streamed out



带，侍者十余，见和甚谨。和指豪家子曰：“此少君子也，汝可善侍。予有切事须返，不坐而去。”言讫，已失和所在。豪家子心异之，不敢问。

主人延于中堂，珠玑缣绣，罗列满目，具陆海珍膳，命酌。进妓交鬟撩鬓，缥然神仙。其舞杯闪球之令，悉新而多思。有金器，容数升，云擎鲸口，钿以珠粒。豪家子不识，问之。主人笑曰：“此次皿也，本拟伯雅。”豪家子竟不解。至三更，主人忽顾妓曰：“无废欢笑，予暂有所适。”揖客而起。骑从如州牧，列炬而出。

豪家子因私于墙隅，妓中年差暮者，遽就谓曰：“嗟乎！君何以至是？我辈已为所掠，醉其幻术，归路永绝。君若要归，但取我教。”受以七尺白练，戒曰：“可执





with a train of attendants. He wore a purple robe with a shell-studded belt around his waist and seemed very submissive to Zhang.

Pointing to the dandy, Zhang said, "This is my young gentleman friend. Treat him well. I'm not staying, for I've got urgent matters to attend to." With that, he disappeared. The dandy was bursting with questions but he dared not ask.

The host led him into the hall. Decorated with jade beads and pearls, silk and satin, the room was luxurious. The table was laid with delicacies from high mountains and deep seas. The host called in singing girls and told them to pour wine for the guest. What hair! Softly curled like ripples over a lucid lake. How they walked! Lightly as if on cottony clouds. Fairies could not match them. The lithe movements of their bodies when they danced, the silvery voices when they chirped, oh, the elaborate way they entertained was like nothing he knew. What's that vessel they served wine in? A gold bowl set in a constellation of pearls, wide mouthed and deep bellied to hold several liters? Never seen that before. His host laughed and told him that this wasn't the biggest cup they used. A bigger size had been intended. It was all very puzzling.

The strokes of midnight rang out. The host suddenly left his seat and excused himself. "Please don't let my absence interrupt your enjoyment. I've got to leave you a while." He bowed himself out of the room. The splendor of his mounted honor guard exceeded that of a general as the procession marched out with torches lit.

The dandy took the opportunity to relieve himself in a corner of the yard. One of the older singers came up to him. "Alas!" she sighed. "How did you, a gentleman, fall into this place? We poor beings are entrapped by his magic and have no hope of escape. But if you want to go home, do as I tell you." She handed him seven feet of white silk.

此，候主人归，诈祈事设拜，主人必答拜，因以练蒙其颈。”将曙，主人还。豪家子如其教，主人投地乞命曰：“死姬负心，终败吾事。今不复居此。”乃驰骑他去。所教妓即与豪家子居。

二年忽思归，妓亦不留，大设酒乐饯之。饮阑，妓自持锺，开东墙一穴，亦如佛乳，推豪家子于墙外，乃长安东墙下，遂乞食方达蜀。其家失已多年，意其异物，道其初始信。





“Take this. When he comes back, greet him politely. While he returns your bow, he’ll almost certainly do that, loop this length of silk around his neck and throttle him.”

At daybreak, the host returned. The dandy did as he had been told, and the host dropped to the ground, begging for life. “The old hag has betrayed me and ruined my designs. This place is no longer fit to live in.” So saying, he rode off.

The singer and the dandy took possession of the place and lived together for about two years when he suddenly became homesick. The singer showed no objection to his leaving. When the grand farewell banquet was over, she picked up a spade and dug a hole in the east wall, like the earlier one in the statue’s breast. She pushed him through, and he found himself lying at the foot of the capital’s east city wall. He had to beg his way back to Shu.

As he had been missing for a number of years, his family thought him dead. He had to refer to the particulars of his earlier life to convince them that he was not a ghost.





胡媚儿

唐贞元中，扬州坊市间，忽有一技术丐乞者。不知所从来，自称姓胡，名媚儿，所为颇甚怪异。旬日之后，观者稍稍云集，其所丐求，日获千万。

一旦怀中出一琉璃瓶子，可受半升，表里烘明，如不隔物，遂置于席上。初谓观者曰：“有人施与满此瓶子，则足矣。”瓶口刚如苇管大。有人与之百钱，投之，琤然有声，则见瓶间大如粟粒，众皆异之。复有人与之千钱，投之如前。又有与万钱者，亦如之。俄有好事人，与之十万二十万，皆如之。或有以马驴入之瓶中，见人马皆如蝇大，动行如故。

须臾，有度支两税纲，自扬子院，部轻货数十车至，驻观之。以其一时人，或终不能致将他物往，且谓官物不





The Magic Bottle

Sometime during Zhenyuan reign, a woman vagrant became a phenomenon in the streets of Yangzhou City. Nobody knew where she came from or who she was, except that her name was Hu Meir. Anyway, that was how she introduced herself. She made a living by performing magic arts, and her arts were rather outlandish. In a fortnight, as her name spread, a permanent crowd gathered around her. In that way she earned tens of thousands a day.

One morning, she retrieved from the folds of her garment a glass bottle. It was transparent and one could clearly see through it. She placed it on the straw mat and announced that if someone could fill it she would not need to beg any more. It was not a big bottle, about the size of a half-liter jar with a neck no thicker than a reed stem. Someone offered a hundred coins. One could hear the coins clinking to the bottom, but once inside the bottle they looked as small as grains of rice. The audience was fascinated. Another came up with a thousand coins, and still another dropped in ten thousand. Then a dude jingled in a hundred thousand and the bottle was no fuller than it had been. Horses and donkeys were driven in, and they shrank to the size of bugs, but still plodding along as if nothing had happened.

Before long, a high official from the revenue department came along with a caravan of several dozen wagons loaded with local produce on their way to the capital. The official stopped to watch. She could by no means carry off the heavily guarded caravan under his



足疑者，乃谓媚儿曰：“尔能令诸车皆入此中乎？”媚儿曰：“许之则可。”纲曰：“且试之。”媚儿乃微侧瓶口，大喝，诸车辘辘相继，悉入瓶，瓶中历历如行蚁然。有顷，渐不见，媚儿即跳身入瓶中。纲乃大惊，遽取扑破，求之一无所有。从此失媚儿所在。

后月余日，有人于清河北，逢媚儿，部领车乘，趋东平而去。是时，李师道为东平帅也。





nose, he thought, not to say that this was royal property. "Can you transport my whole caravan into your bottle?" he challenged.

"With your permission," she replied succinctly, and he gave his consent.

Tilting the bottle slightly, she let out a loud hoot. The whole caravan rumbled ahead into the bottle like a line of crawling ants. Slowly, the wagons faded from sight. Before the astonished official realized what was happening, she herself jumped into the bottle. He grabbed the bottle and smashed it on the ground. There was nothing in it.

A month later, someone saw Meir in Qinghe County, hundreds of miles to the north of Yangzhou, leading a wagon-train in the direction of Dongping, the capital of warlord Li Shidao.





中部民

唐元和初，有天水赵云，客游郾时，过中部县，县僚有宴。吏擒一人至，其罪不甚重，官僚欲纵之。云醉，固劝加刑，于是杖之。

累月，云出塞，行及芦子关，道逢一人，要之言款。日暮，延云下道过其居。去路数里，于是命酒偶酌。既而问曰：“君省相识耶？”云曰：“未尝此行，实昧平生。”复曰：“前某月日，于中部值君，某遭罹横罪，与君素无仇隙，奈何为君所劝，因被重刑？”云遽起谢之。其人曰：“吾望子久矣，岂虞于此获雪小耻！”乃令左右，拽入一室。室中有大坑，深三丈余，坑中唯贮酒糟十斛。剥





Transfigured

In early Yuanhe reign, Zhao Yun, a native of Tianshui Prefecture, made a tour to Fuzhi, a historic site in Zhongbu County where the ancient rulers offered sacrifices to the Five Emperors. At the county magistrate's dinner party in his honor, a sergeant pushed in a captive. As it was not a serious offense, the magistrate was to release him, but Zhao, being drunk, insisted on a punishment. The man was therefore flogged.

Months later, Zhao traveled beyond the Great Wall. Late one day at Gourd Pass he met a man, who fervently invited him to his place for the night and for a chat. He followed the man several miles off the main road.

"Sir," the man said when they were seated and wine was served, "do you remember me?"

"This is my first time in this area," Zhao replied. "I'm afraid I didn't have the honor of knowing you."

"Not very long ago we met in Zhongbu County. I was caught and brought before the magistrate. There was no hatred or grudge between us. Why did you advise the magistrate to flog me?"

On hearing that, Zhao rose to his feet and bowed an apology.

"I've been looking for you all the while. Now I can take my revenge!" At his order, Zhao was dragged into a room, in the center of which was a large pit about thirty feet deep and filled with wine dregs. He was stripped and pushed into the pit. So there he stayed in a



去其衣，推云于中。饥食其糟，渴饮其汁，于是昏昏几一月，乃缚出之。使人蹙颡鼻额，援捩支体，其手指肩髀，皆改旧形。提出风中，倏然凝定。至于声韵亦改。遂以贱隶蓄之，为乌延驿中杂役。

累岁，会其弟为御史，出按灵州狱，云以前事密疏示之。其弟言于观察使李铭，由是发卒讨寻，尽得奸宄，乃复灭其党。临刑亦无隐匿，云：“前后如此变改人者，数世矣！”





trance-like state for nearly a month, eating the dregs when hungry and drinking the liquid when thirsty.

Then he was pulled out. Someone pressed his nose and kneaded his face, others worked on his arms and hands until his shoulder blades and fingers were all deformed. Next, he was carried out into the open. At the contact with fresh air, his bones started to stiffen. Even his voice was changed. He was made a slave at the Wuyan Posthouse.

Years passed. His younger brother became the supervisory commissioner and arrived in the neighboring Ling Prefecture on an inspection tour. Zhao managed to slip out a letter to his brother, telling him what had happened. His brother passed on the letter to the governor, who dispatched a search squad and caught the whole gang. The man owned up to his crime without the slightest misgivings. "He's not the first one we transfigured," he said before he was executed. "We've been doing this for generations."





板桥三娘子

唐汴州西有板桥店。店娃三娘子者，不知何从来。寡居，年三十余，无男女，亦无亲属。有舍数间，以鬻餐为业。然而家甚富贵，多有驴畜，往来公私车乘，有不逮者，辄贱其估以济之。人皆谓之有道，故远近行旅多归之。

元和中，许州客赵季和，将诣东都，过是宿焉。客有先至者六七人，皆据便榻。季和后至，最得深处一榻，榻邻比主人房壁。既而三娘子供给诸客甚厚，夜深致酒，与诸客会饮极欢。季和素不饮酒，亦预言笑。

至二更许，诸客醉倦，各就寝。三娘子归室，闭关息烛。人皆熟睡，独季和转展不寐。隔壁闻三娘子窸窣，若





The Proprietress at Wooden Bridge

To the west of Bianzhou City there was a tiny village called Wooden Bridge. There, a widow in her thirties, popularly addressed as Third Sister, had opened up a small inn with several rooms. No one knew where she came from. She had no children, nor did she seem to have any relatives or kinsfolk. Yet she was quite wealthy, and could afford to raise a herd of donkeys. Whenever a beast of burden failed a traveler, be he on private or public business, she would happily offer him a replacement at a bargain price. Thus she gained a high reputation for virtue and a steady stream of clients from far and near.

During Yuanhe reign, a man named Zhao Jihe from Xu Prefecture happened to put up at the inn on his way to the East Capital. By the time he arrived there were already half a dozen guests there, who had occupied the best beds. So he was left with the bed at the far end of the room against the partition board separating the guests' room from the proprietress' private room.

The proprietress provided them with a rich dinner, and joined them in their revelry late into the night. Though he habitually abstained from wine, he did not withdraw himself from the party but chatted and joked with the others. Near midnight, drunk and tired, the travelers took to their beds. The proprietress also retired to her room, locked her door and blew out the candle. The other guests snored, but Zhao was unable to fall asleep. As he tossed and turned in bed, he heard slight noises like rat movements coming through the partition. Putting his eye to a chink, he saw the proprietress retrieve a lit candle from



动物之声。偶于隙中窥之，即见三娘子向覆器下，取烛挑明之。后于巾厢中，取一副耒耜，并一木牛、一木偶人，各大六七寸。置于灶前，含水喂之，二物便行走，小人则牵牛驾耒耜，遂耕床前一席地，来去数出。又于厢中，取出一裹荞麦子，受于小人种之。须臾生，花发麦熟。令小人收割持践，可得七八升。又安置小磨子，碾成面讫。却收木人子于厢中，即取面作烧饼数枚。

有顷鸡鸣，诸客欲发。三娘子先起点灯，置新作烧饼于食床上，与客点心。季和心动遽辞，开门而去，即潜于户外窥之。乃见诸客围床，食烧饼未尽，忽一时踏地，作驴鸣，须臾皆变驴矣。三娘子尽驱入店后，而尽没其货财。季和亦不告于人，私有慕其术者。

后月余日，季和自东都回，将至板桥店，预作荞麦烧饼，大小如前。既至，复寓宿焉，三娘子欢悦如初。其夕





beneath an overturned pot and trim its wick. Then, from a bedside trunk she took out a plow, a wooden bull, and a carved wood figure, each no more than half a foot tall, and placed them before the fireplace. Next, she took a sip of water and sprayed them. Directly, the little wood figure jumped to life, grabbed the plow, and started to drive the bull to till the patch of ground before her bed. After a few turns of the plow, she reached for a bag of buckwheat seeds in the trunk and handed it to the little man to sow. In a blink of the eye, wheat grew, flowered and ripened. The little man was ordered to reap and thresh, bringing in a harvest of about one peck. Subsequently, she installed a tiny mill and had the wheat ground into flour. With that done, she placed all the diminutive objects back into the trunk and started to bake pancakes.

Cock crow was soon heard in the distance and the travelers got up to continue their journey. She lighted the lamps and placed the oven-fresh pancakes on the dining table for their breakfast. Zhao had second thoughts and made an immediate departure. However, he did not go far, but hid right outside to see what might happen next.

He saw the travelers sitting around the table eating the pancakes. But before they had finished, they collapsed to the ground, and brayed! In a moment, they all turned into donkeys. The proprietress then drove them behind the house and took possession of their wares. Secretly admiring her magic art, he did not inform against her.

A month later, he returned from the capital. Approaching Wooden Bridge, he stopped to prepare some buckwheat pancakes of the same size and shape as he had observed last time. Thereupon, he took up lodgings at the inn. Third Sister was as hospitable and courteous as she had always been. That night, as he was the only guest staying at the inn, she seemed even more attentive to his needs. At bedtime, she asked



更无他客，主人供待愈厚。夜深，殷勤问所欲。季和曰：“明晨发，请随事点心。”三娘子曰：“此事无疑，但请稳睡。”半夜后，季和窥见之，一依前所为。天明，三娘子具盘食，果实烧饼数枚于盘中讫，更取他物。季和乘间走下，以先有者易其一枚，彼不知觉也。季和将发，就食，谓三娘子曰：“适会某自有烧饼，请撤去主人者，留待他宾。”即取己者食之。方饮次，三娘子送茶出来。季和曰：“请主人尝客一片烧饼。”乃捡所易者与啖之。才入口，三娘子据地作驴声，即立变为驴，甚壮健。季和即乘之发，兼尽收木人木牛子等。然不得其术，试之不成。

季和乘策所变驴，周游他处，未尝阻失，日行百里。后四年，乘入关。至华岳庙东五六里，路傍忽见一老人，拍手大笑曰：“板桥三娘子，何得作此形骸？”因捉驴谓季和曰：“彼虽有过的，然遭君亦甚矣！可怜许，请从此放之。”老人乃从驴口鼻边，以两手擘开。三娘子自皮中跳出，宛复旧身，向老人拜讫，走去，更不知所之。





him whether he wanted anything else. He said that he would like to have a simple breakfast before he left early next morning.

“No problem about that,” she replied. “Have a good sleep.”

When he peeped through the chink after midnight, he was satisfied to see that she was going over her old tricks again.

At daybreak she appeared with a plate of pancakes. When she retreated into the kitchen, he quickly replaced one of her cakes with one of his own. He then called out to her that he happened to have some pancakes with him, and would rather eat his own so that she could save hers for other guests. While he was eating, she re-entered with tea.

“Please have a taste of my cake,” he said politely and offered her the one he had replaced. No sooner had she swallowed a bite than she dropped on all fours and brayed. She was quite a strong donkey, he mused. He jumped on the donkey and rode off, of course not forgetting to collect the wooden figure, the bull and plow. But he was not able to make them work, for he had not acquired the magic.

He traveled around the country on his donkey, often covering scores of miles a day without ever having the slightest trouble with the animal.

Four years later, as he crossed the Tongguan Pass and was nearing the temple of Mount Hua, an old man turned up by the roadside, laughing and clapping his hands. “Third Sister from Wooden Bridge, how come you’ve fallen into this shape?” Catching hold of the donkey, he turned to Zhao, “She does deserve a punishment, but your treatment of her has been harsh enough. Show some mercy now and let her go.” He spread the donkey’s mouth wide open by pulling at its lips, and the proprietress leaped out from the skin. She looked not a bit different from her old self. She made a deep bow to the old man and went away. Nobody has ever seen her since.



关司法

郢州司法关某，有佣妇人姓钮。关给其衣食，以充驱使。年长，谓之钮婆，并有一孙，名万儿，年五六岁，同来。关氏妻亦有小男，名封六，大小相类。关妻男常与钮婆孙同戏，每封六新制衣，必易其故者与万儿。

一旦，钮婆忽怒曰：“皆是小儿，何贵何贱？而彼衣皆新，而我儿得其旧！”甚不平也。关妻问曰：“此吾子，尔孙仆隶耳。吾念其与吾子年齿类，故以衣之，奈何不知分理？自此故衣亦不复得矣！”钮婆笑曰：“二子何异也？”关妻又曰：“仆隶那与好人同？”钮婆曰：“审不同？某请试之。”遂引封六及其孙，悉内于裙下，著地按之。关妻惊起夺之，两子悉为钮婆之孙，形状衣服皆一，不可辩。乃曰：“此即同矣！”关妻大惧，即与司法同祈





Mr Guan's Housemaid

Mr Guan, a law officer with the prefectural government of Yun, had a housemaid whose family name was Niu. Because of her age, she was addressed as Granny Niu, and she had a grandson about five years old living with her, named Waner. Mr Guan's son, Fengliu, was about the same age, and the two boys often played together. Every time Guan's wife had new clothes made for Fengliu she would give the old ones to Waner, but there came a day when Granny Niu flared up. "Both are boys," she said with obvious resentment. "Why are they treated differently? Why does your son always wear new clothes, while my boy has to wear the old ones?"

"How can you be so unreasonable!" Guan's wife retorted. "This is my son and you're but a servant. It's simply because they're of the same age and similar size that I'm giving him the worn clothes. If you don't want them, okay, no more clothes for your grandson."

"I don't see much difference between them," Granny Niu chuckled.

"How can a servant's boy be the same as the master's?"

"You really think so? Let's see." So saying, she pressed the two boys to the ground and covered them under her skirt. Taken aback, Guan's wife leaped for her son, but there were only two Waners – their looks and clothes were indistinguishable. "See? I told you there's no difference."

Guan's wife was terrified. The couple begged for mercy. "We



请恳至，曰：“不意神人在此。自此一家敬事，不敢以旧礼相待矣。”良久，又以二子致裙下按之，即各复本矣。关氏乃移别室居钮婆，厚待之，不复使役。

积年，关氏颇厌怠，私欲害之。令妻以酒醉之，司法伏户下，以钁击之，正中其脑，有声而倒。视之，乃栗木，长数尺。夫妻大喜，命斧斫而焚之。适尽，钮婆自室中出，曰：“何郎君戏之酷也？”言笑如前，殊不介意。郢州之人知之，关不得已，将白于观察使。人见次，忽有一关司法，已见使言说，形状无异。关遂归，及到家，堂前已有一关司法先归矣。妻子莫能辨之，又哀祈钮婆，涕泣拜请。良久渐相近，却成一人。自此其家不复有加害之意。至数十年，尚在关氏之家，亦无患耳。





didn't realize you're a celestial being," they said humbly.

After a while, Granny Niu pushed the two boys under her skirt again, and they returned to their former selves.

From that time on, the whole family treated Granny Niu with great respect. They moved her to a better room, paid her well, and never again asked her to do a servant's work.

Years passed. Mr Guan became fed up with this uncalled-for reverence and was thinking of putting an end to it. He told his wife to make Granny Niu drunk, and he, hiding out of the window, struck with a pick and hit Granny right in the head. Down she fell with a loud thud and turned into a chestnut log several feet long. The couple were overjoyed with relief. They chopped up the log and threw it into a fire. When the firewood was nearly consumed, Granny Niu walked out from the room. "Why did you play such mischief on me?" she said casually as if nothing serious had happened.

As the story quickly spread around the city, Mr Guan felt he had to make a report to the governor. When he entered the reception room, he was surprised to see that a man exactly like himself was already there reporting to the governor. He turned around to go home. Entering his house, he saw the man was already in the hall. Even his wife couldn't tell who was the real one. She sobbed and pleaded with Granny Niu. Slowly, the two men approached each other and merged into one. The family never again thought of getting rid of her.

That happened decades ago, and Granny Niu is still living with the Guans – peacefully.





画 工

唐进士赵颜，于画工处得一软障，图一妇人甚丽。颜谓画工曰：“世无其人也，如何令生，某愿纳为妻。”画工曰：“余神画也。此亦有名，曰真真。呼其名百日，昼夜不歇，即必应之。应则以百家彩灰酒灌之，必活。”颜如其言，遂呼之百日，昼夜不止。乃应曰：“诺。”急以百家彩灰酒灌，遂活。下步言笑，饮食如常。曰：“谢君召妾，妾愿事箕帚。”终岁生一儿。

儿年两岁，友人曰：“此妖也，必与君为患！余有神剑，可斩之。”其夕，乃遗颜剑。剑才及颜室，真真乃泣





The Maiden on the Painted Screen

Zhao Yan, a scholar in the Tang Dynasty, bought a foldable cloth-screen from an artist on which was painted a maiden of unusual charms.

“It’s a pity there isn’t such a beauty on earth,” he remarked. “If she could come to life, I would marry her!”

“Well,” the artist replied, “my painting is no ordinary painting, for it has captured the spirit. This maiden I painted does have a name – she’s called Zhenzhen. If one keeps calling her name for one hundred days continuously, she’ll respond to his calls. What is vital then is he must immediately pour a cup of wine down her throat, and she’ll come to life. The wine should be mixed with ashes of burned multi-colored silk collected from one hundred households.”

Zhao followed the artist’s instructions and mounted a calling vigil. On the hundredth day the maiden on the screen answered, “Fine.” He poured down her throat a cup of ash-mixed wine and the figure stepped down from the screen. “Thank you for summoning me,” she smiled. “I’ll gladly perform the duties of a faithful wife.” She ate and talked in a perfectly human way. In a year she gave birth to a boy.

Their son was one year old when a friend said to Zhao, “Your wife is a devil in human form. If you don’t get rid of her, she’ll bring you bad fortune. I can lend you my magic sword. It’ll do the job.”

That evening, as was promised, his friend had the sword sent over to his place. Hardly had he brought the sword into the room when Zhenzhen started to weep. “Your humble wife is none other



曰：“妾南岳地仙也。无何为人画妾之形，君又呼妾名。既不夺君愿，君今疑妾，妾不可住。”言讫，携其子却上软障，呕出先所饮百家彩灰酒。睹其障，唯添一孩子，皆是画焉。



than the earth goddess of Mount Heng. I don't know how someone could have had my image sketched down, but since you called my name so earnestly, I felt obliged to comply with your wish. Now that you suspect me, I can no longer live with you." So saying, she led their son by the hand and both walked onto the screen. She spewed up the ash wine.

Except for the added boy by her side, the painting looked exactly as it had been two years before – a most lovely portrait on canvas.





襄阳老叟

唐并华者，襄阳鼓刀之徒也。尝因游春，醉卧汉水滨。有一老叟叱起，谓曰：“观君之貌，不是徒博耳。我有一斧与君，君但持此造作，必巧妙通神。他日慎勿以女子为累。”华因拜受之。华得此斧后，造飞物即飞，造行物即行。至于上栋下宇，危楼高阁，固不烦余刃。

后因游安陆间，止一富人王枚家。枚知华机巧，乃请华临水造一独柱亭。工毕，枚尽出家人以观之。枚有一女，已丧夫而还家，容色殊丽，罕有比伦。既见深慕之，其夜乃逾垣窃入女之室。其女甚惊。华谓女曰：“不从，我必杀汝。”女荏苒同心焉。其后每至夜，窃入女室中。

他日枚潜知之，即厚以赂遗遣华。华察其意，谓枚





The Carpenter and His Wooden Cranes

In Xiangyang City there lived a carpenter named Bing Hua. One fine spring day he took a leisurely stroll out of town, got drunk somehow, and fell asleep on the bank of the Han River.

“Get on your feet, young man!” The stern command of a venerable elder startled him out of his soddenness. “You look talented. Don’t squander your life in drinking or gambling. Here is an ax for you. As long as you use it, it’ll bring magic to your work. But remember, never get tangled up with women.” The carpenter bowed in acceptance.

With this ax, his skill became astonishing. He could make objects that would move by themselves and even fly, not to speak of building houses and towers that came from his hand without the least seeming efforts.

On a trip to Anlu County, a local squire of the Wang family, who had heard of his ingenuity, invited him to stay at his place and build a single-pillar pavilion by his garden pond. On the day of completion, the whole family turned out to watch. Among the gathering was Wang’s widowed daughter. Such was her beauty that the carpenter felt a strong urge to possess her.

That night he climbed over the wall and slipped into the widow’s chamber. “If you make a fuss, I’ll kill you!” he threatened, and the terrified woman succumbed. Every night he would come after it was dark and sneak away before dawn.

It didn’t take long for Wang to learn about these goings on. He

曰：“我寄君之家，受君之惠已多矣，而复厚赂我，我异日无以为答。我有一巧妙之事，当作一物以奉君。”枚曰：“何物也？我无用，必不敢留。”华曰：“我能作木鹤，令飞之。或有急，但乘其鹤，即千里之外也。”枚既尝闻，因许之。华即出斧斤，以木造成飞鹤一双，唯未成其目。枚怪问之。华曰：“必须君斋戒，始成之能飞。若不斋戒，必不飞尔。”枚遂斋戒。其夜，华盗其女，俱乘鹤而归襄阳。

至曙，枚失女，求之不获，因潜行入襄阳，以事告州牧。州牧密令搜求，果擒华。州牧怒，杖杀之。所乘鹤亦不能自飞。



decided to dismiss him by offering him an extra bonus.

Bing took the hint and said, "I'm very much indebted to you for having put me up so long. Now you're giving me such a fat bonus, I feel all the more obliged to do something for you in return. Let me show you my prized skill. Give me some wood, and I'll make you something really wonderful."

"What is it? I won't accept something I have no use for."

"I'll make you a pair of wooden cranes that can fly! In case you need to travel and are time-pressed, just ride it. It'll carry you to wherever you wish in a wink."

Wang had long been fascinated by such legendary things, so he readily agreed.

Bing hewed and chiseled with the ax, and a pair of wooden cranes soon took shape. They looked exactly like real ones except for the eyes, which were left uncarved.

"Why's that?" Wang asked.

"Because you need to fast and pray first, or they won't take to the air."

That night, while Wang was reciting his prayers in seclusion, Bing grabbed his daughter and flew back to Xiangyang on the cranes.

Wang found his daughter missing the next morning. There was no trace of her in town. He made a secret trip to Xiangyang and reported the incident to the prefect, who ordered a search throughout the town, and Bing was caught.

The angry prefect had the carpenter beaten to death, but he could by no means make the cranes fly.

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纻干狐尾

并州有人姓纻干，好剧。承间在外有狐魅，遂得一狐尾，缀着衣后。至妻旁，侧坐露之。其妻私心疑是狐魅，遂密持斧，欲斫之。其人叩头云：“我不是魅。”妻不信。走遂至邻家，邻家又以刀杖逐之。其人惶惧告言：“我戏剧，不意专欲杀我。”此亦妖由人兴矣。





The Fox Tail

In Bing Prefecture there was a man who took pleasure in playing practical jokes. Thinking that he could take advantage of people's belief in the fox's ability to bewitch and change shapes, he procured a fox tail while he was out of town. He pinned the tail inside the back of his coat in such a way that when he sat down the tip of it would be dangling out. Thus he went home to his wife.

His wife spotted his tail and suspected he was a fox vampire in her husband's guise. She returned to the room with a hidden ax, and swung it down on him. Dodging and bowing, he proclaimed that he was no fox, but his wife couldn't be convinced. He fled to a neighbor's. They, too, drove him out with swords and sticks. Scared out of his wits, he confessed his silly trick and said he never expected his jokes could almost cause him his life.

Aren't evil spirits created by man himself?





明思远

华山道士明思远，勤修道篆，三十余年。常教人金水分形之法，并闭气存思，师事甚众。

永泰中，华州虎暴。思远告人云：“虎不足畏。但闭气存思，令十指头各出一狮子，但使向前，虎即去。”

思远兼与人同行，欲暮，于谷口行逢虎。其伴惊惧散去，唯思远端然，闭气存思，俄然为虎所食。其徒明日于谷口相寻，但见松萝及双履耳。





The Meditator

For more than thirty years Ming Siyuan, a Taoist priest on Mount Hua, had been diligently practicing the magic arts of Tao. He delighted in giving lectures on alchemy and meditation, and his disciples were many.

In Yongtai reign, Mount Hua was infested with tigers. Ming assured his audience that there was nothing to fear. If only one knew how to regulate his breathing and concentrate his thoughts, he would be able to produce a lion from each fingertip and drive the herd forth with his will power. That alone will frighten away any man-eater.

At sunset one day, he and a group of his disciples came face to face with a tiger at the mouth of a ravine. His followers took to their heels, while he held his ground and plunged into meditation.

His disciples ventured to return the next morning. All they found was his torn shoes in the bushes.

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